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SOCIAL CONDITION OF ENGLAND DURING THE WARS OF THE ROSES.

By VINCENT B. REDSTONE.

Read March 20, 1902.

THE social life of the inhabitants of England during the years of strife which brought about the destruction of the feudal nobility, gave to the middle class a new position in the State, and freed the serf from the shackles of bondage, has been for some time past a subject of peculiar interest to the student of English history. If we desire to gain an accurate knowledge of the social habits and customs prevalent during this period of political disturbance, we cannot do better than direct our attention towards that part of the country which was the least affected by the contest between the Houses of York and Lancaster, the eastern district of England, which since the days of King John had enjoyed a remarkable immunity from civil war. Here the powerful lords of the North and South found little support; the vast estates of the old feudal barons were broken up into numerous independent manors. Moreover the arts of peace, in the shape of the mysteries of trade, manufactures, and commerce, widely flourished among the inhabitants of these regions.

Introduc-
tion.

Whilst Rous was recalling for future generations the chivalrous deeds and romantic history of the House of Warwick, the Pastons were compiling the narrative recording the domestic vicissitudes of their family. The Paston Letters certainly afford us much information which chroniclers and annalists neglect to give; yet it would be unwise to base our opinions of the state of the social life existing, even within

Sources of
informa-
tion.

the limits of the county of Norfolk, solely upon the contents of these epistles, valuable though they be ; for in them we have the social life of a family, and not of a community. A broader comparison of facts is required before any judgment can be given upon what was the actual condition of the people. Correspondence of a private nature naturally overlooks circumstances and events which do not interfere with the writer's immediate welfare ; and, moreover, a discrimination must be used before we accept the views set forth by plaintiffs and defendants concerning the actions and motives ascribed to their opponents. The knowledge obtained from domestic correspondence should supplement that to be derived from more reliable sources, such as contemporary charters, statutes, town records, manorial court rolls, wills, and other permanent records, which neither time nor the iconoclast has destroyed ; though it is only in recent years that access to numerous documents of historical value, both public and private, has been made easy.

Purpose of
this essay.

The purpose of the present essay is to attempt, by the use of a few notes which could be taken from so complete a store of information, to describe the social conditions which actually existed in a part of England comparatively undisturbed by the turmoils of the civil wars of the reigns of Henry VI. and Edward IV.

Baptisma
rites and
cere-
monies.

To begin with the earliest phase in the lives of the members of this community, the ceremonies attending the birth and baptism of children afford some noticeable features. At the time when 'a happy event' was shortly expected to take place messengers were hurriedly despatched for the services of the midwife, who was to be fetched at all hazards. When the child was brought into the world urgent requests were sent to neighbours soliciting them to perform the duties of godparents. On the very day of birth godparents, relatives, and servitors at the first rite of the Church assembled at the home of the new-born child to form a procession to the font. Lads holding tapers, or torches, if the hour of vespers was at hand, together with other youths carry-

ing salt, towels, basins, and ewers of water, accompanied the adults, who proceeded on horseback to the church, laden with fat capons, flagons of wine, and other provisions supplied for the baptismal feast.¹ The child, wrapped in a kerchief of red silk to denote its legitimacy, or as a colour becoming the festive occasion, was borne to the church in the arms of the nurse. At the sight of this array the country-folk would hastily quit their sports and pastimes on the village green to be present at the baptismal service, to share in the bounties to be scattered with lavish hand, or to partake of the feast following the ceremony. As the worshippers were seen to approach, the aged sacristan arranged the stools and hassocks around the font, which was now just within the church, but which he could well remember standing in earlier years within the porch. Friar Stone appears to note this new position of the font when he records the baptism of Thomas Cuckow, April 11, 1471, in the nave of the church after the benediction of the font.² Deviation from early ritual often arises, as in this instance, from altered conditions in social life. The porch was too small to hold the crowded congregation whose attendance was necessary for the survival of any number of witnesses to establish the proof of a man's coming of age. Further, the church porch had become more an adjunct to the market-place, and the continual transaction of business therein had compelled the observance of Church rites, save that of penance, within the holy edifice.

The ceremony of baptism as performed at this period is carved upon many fonts ;³ lads are seen standing on hassocks and holding tapers, towels, and basins ; near at hand are the servitors with the chrism oil, the godmother holding the babe on her left arm, and wearing the conspicuous headdress of the age, the officiating priest with eyes directed towards an

¹ *Proofs of Age*, 38-39 Henry VI., No. 74.

² *The Chronicle of John Stone*, Publications of Camb. Antiq. Soc., No. xxxiv., p. 44, publ. 1902.

³ *Sacramental Fonts*, by Alf. Fryer, F.S.A.

open book held by an acolyte. On these fonts the sculptor not only has left us indelible representations of the sacred rites of the Church, but has also placed on record the extent to which layfolk were allowed to participate in these rites, and the conditions under which they attended them. Man's first food was then the 'salt of wisdom,' brought from the babe's home in a silver dish and placed upon the child's lips by the priest, who afterwards anointed the infant with spittle that its eyes, ears, and nostrils might be opened.

Confirma-
tion.

Usually the ceremony of confirmation immediately followed that of baptism. Edward, son of Henry VI., was born at Westminster about 10 A.M. on October 13, 1453, the day of the translation of Edward, King and Confessor. Upon the following day he was baptized by William Waynflete, Bishop of Winchester. His godparents were Kempe, Archbishop of Canterbury; Edmund, Duke of Somerset; and Anne, Countess of Buckingham. After his baptism he was confirmed by Archbishop Kempe, and the Bishop of Winchester stood as godparent.¹

The water in the basins held near the font was used by the godparents to wash their hands after they had placed them on the anointed head of the child. From the font the babe was carried by the godmother to the altar, there to be presented to God by the godparents. The priest, in some instances one of the child's sponsors, frequently gave a ring or piece of money at the altar to the godmother to present to the babe's mother. Thus it was proved at the lord mayor's court that Sir Nicholas Ashton, priest, gave a noble to Juliana, wife of William Generley, to take to Katherine, mother of the infant Margaret Hendoner, for whom he had performed the rite of baptism.² Circumstances attendant upon the baptism of children of such an early age compelled the mother to be absent from a ceremony which mothers now seldom omit to attend; yet her anxiety for the child's welfare was as great then as it is now. She awaited

Gossips.

¹ *The Chronicle of John Stone*, p. 87.

² *Proofs of Age*, 38-39 Hen. VI., No. 75.

with eagerness the return of godmothers and nurse, who 'adtunc et ibidem immediate venerunt in domum suam ad comedendum et bibendum et adtunc sibi *revelaverunt de baptismo*;' ¹ the anxious mother would listen with eagerness as the 'gossips' narrated the many incidents of the ceremony and discussed the events connected with the child's birth and baptism. The men-folk could not enter into this conversation: they remained to enjoy the feast prepared for the occasion by the godfathers within the Church House or Guild Hall. The anniversary of this day was the child's 'cheve-day,' and to old age it was a day set apart for the giving of presents and the paying of visits. 'I was at Blofield on St. Andrew's Day,' says Margaret Paston, 'wyt the parson, & he understode non noder, but that I came to see his mastership, for it was his cheve-day.'²

The rite of baptism was deemed, even by the poorest parent, to be most essential for a child's welfare. When a poor unfortunate woman in her great sorrow was led to destroy the life of her offspring, she hesitated to commit so heinous a crime upon an unbaptized infant. A sad case was brought before an Ipswich jury in 1468. The jury were overcome by the piteous condition of the defendant, and in mercy they acquitted her of murder. Katherine Drinkasoppe, spinster, had given birth to a man-child, and there and then baptized it, naming it John. After the baptism the mother took the babe's neck in her right hand and broke it, thereby causing its death. On the Monday after the feast of St. Gregory, Katherine placed the body in a receptacle containing dust and refuse from the house and deposited the body thus concealed upon one of the public refuse heaps known as the Colhill.³

Besides the fact of the child's baptism and murder, we have here recorded the circumstance that the refuse from houses within the borough was collected and deposited upon

¹ *Proofs of Age*, 15 Edw. IV., No. 66; 22 Edw. IV., No. 58.

² *Paston Letters*, vol. ii. p. 72.

³ *Gaol Delivery Rolls*, 7 Edw. IV., Ipswich Corporation Records.

a common manure heap, one of which existed in each ward, and was known as 'The Colhill,' an expression still common to many sites on the bounds of various parishes.

The
village
priest.

In this period the younger scions of noble houses no longer sought preferment in the Church, for the Hundred Years' War with France had opened for them a much wider and more glorious field. They had gained honour on the battlefield, and had learned that wealth and riches no longer freely flowed into the coffers of religious houses, but were being steadily acquired and accumulated by the middle class, who were thereby gradually rising into positions of eminence and power. Moreover the laity were now able so to rival churchmen in learning that the administration of the laws was no longer carried out solely by clerics. Church benefices were conferred upon men who for the most part beheld among their congregations their parents and relatives, who tilled the soil as common peasants. They also saw the associates of their early youth, who as boys held superiority over them, both in strength of body and intellectual power. It was mainly the superstitious character of the age that gave the village priest authority over his flock, who lived as he lived. The majority of village priests were men of little or no education, and were unable to give instruction to their own parishioners. Many made companions of most undesirable associates, adding to their limited incomes by pillaging and poaching. At times they were ringleaders of murderous attacks on harmless citizens, whom they plundered and robbed even of their clothing. Few had studied within the walls of the Colleges of Cambridge and Oxford : their education had been received from the inmates of a religious house where there was 'no grammar master.'¹ The veneration of priests by the laity in earlier days stands out recorded on the Sloyey Font, where the priestly figure is made to tower over all else ; but this veneration was unknown in most parishes, where on the fonts he is scarcely distinguishable from the other

¹ *Visitation of the Norwich Diocese, 1492-1522*, p. 54.

figures: he was esteemed only an administrator and celebrant of sacred rites. I shall have cause further on to speak of another reason why the clergy were but little esteemed in the latter half of the fifteenth century.

The dearth of clerical schoolmasters brought about the institution of grammar schools, which were unattached to religious houses.¹ There was a consequent growth of the class following the profession of the law by the addition of lay lawyers. Their number greatly increased, and litigation and strife were engendered to such an extent that it was found necessary to appeal against this increase. Parents perceived the professional career to be a profitable one for which to rear their sons, whom they sent to school to be so educated. Reginald Rous, of Dennington, bequeathed his lands to his wife, 'trusting that she will find her children and mine to school, and to learn the law of the land.'² Special bequests were frequently made for the education of children. William Tabard, of Walton, 1459, left the sum of five marks that his son might proceed 'ad scholas secundum discrecionem executorum suorum.' The same year John Odyerne of Walpole bequeathed twenty shillings to John Pyllbart, 'ad sustentacionem ejus ad scholas.' To his own sons, who were less tractable, he gave twopence if they cared to receive so small an amount. Grammar schools were not sufficiently extensive or numerous to supply all the needs of education. Many who were led by a thirst for knowledge studied within the churches those educational treatises which were placed there for public use. The same eagerness which in after days saw the multitudes gather round the chained Bible to catch the words of the reader as he read the English version of the Word set forth by the Reformed Church, led the people to study books of instruction then chained within the sacred buildings. John Gallion, of Lowestoft, in 1472 desired the executors of his will to purchase for forty shillings a 'liber grammaticus,' to be chained within the chancel of the parish

Schools
and
education.

¹ Stow, *London under Elizabeth*, Carisbrooke Library edition, p. 100.

² *Ipswich Wills*, Probate Office, book ii., fol. 130.

church for ever for the use and profit of the men who assembled there.¹ If his estate permitted, a second book was to be bought and used for the same purpose. For more than four hundred years secular instruction was given in the house in which public prayers were daily offered ; the church was the parish schoolroom, and remained such for four centuries.

In several towns grammar schools were founded by the inhabitants. At Ipswich the burgesses founded a school (1460-1470) and decreed that John Squyer, the grammar master, was to have the control over all boys, except those receiving the very rudiments of education or who were required to assist at the prick-song Mass. The boys who were without his control were known as 'petytis vocati Apeseyes and Song.'² The Apeseyes were doubtless so called because they were endeavouring to master their A B C. The prick-song Mass was the bugbear of little boys :—

‘And all for this pevys prik-song not worth to strawes
That we poore sylve boyes abide much woe.’

The scale of fees for scholars attending Ipswich School was fixed according to the ordinance of the Bishop of Norwich ; the 'grammatici,' the most advanced form, were to pay tenpence a quarter ; the 'salti,' which probably comprised 'the remove,' were to pay eightpence a quarter ; while the 'primari' were to pay but sixpence a quarter. In 1482 it was considered advisable to charge a fee of eightpence to all scholars alike. The master was permitted to increase his income by holding the monopoly of selling quarry stones on the town quay ; afterwards a town rate was levied for the maintenance of the school.

School
sports.

Archbishop Kempe in his scheme for the foundation of his college at Wye, near Ashford, Kent, ordained that the grammar master should teach gratis all boys who came to him at certain hours, and permitted him to receive according

¹ *Ipswich Wills*, book ii., fol. 249.

² *Ipswich General Court Books*, Hen. V.—Ric. III., fol. 406 a, Brit. Museum.

to custom on St. Nicholas's Day presents of cocks and pence. The boys re-purchased the fowls to carry out the sport of cock-shying. Truants were to be moderately punished with the rod. The ceremony of the ordination and procession of the Boy-Bishop was practised by schoolboys on St. Nicholas's Day, but the performance could not be held without the master's sanction and support.¹ The high spirit of youth must at times be curbed by the forfeiture of time-honoured privileges. So thought John Gedney and Thomas Hikson, masters of Canterbury School, when in 1464 St. Nicholas's Day passed away without the usual Boy-Bishop procession in the city 'ex defectu magistrorum.'²

But more serious trouble might arise from boyish mischief. We read that Robert Barbour and one Robert Fayred, both of Aylsham, 'with other accompanied in a schole to lerne ther gramer. Of their necligent japyng and disport in the said schole the said Robert Fayred was hurt and in a long time thereafter died, surmised by the adversaries of Robert Barbour of the said hurt and by him done with thought of great malice contrary to all faith and conscience.'³

Upon suspicion, therefore, of having caused the death of his schoolfellow, Robert Barbour found himself, at the age of fourteen years, lodged as a prisoner within the town gaol; and that, too, without any prospect of release. There is a contemporary sketch of a schoolboy in the Register of Wills, Bury St. Edmund's, 1474. With tight-fitting garments, long peaked boots, hands in pockets, and cap on the back of his head, he closely resembles the ruddy curly-headed schoolboy of the twentieth century.

Little is known concerning the education of girls; but from the businesslike capacity with which Margery Paston administered the affairs and estate of her absent lord it is quite evident that some instruction was imparted, and that the education of girls was not entirely neglected. Parents

Education
of girls.

¹ Hook, *Lives of the Archbishops*, vol. v. p. 232.

² *Chronicle of John Stone*, p. 90.

³ *Chancery Proceedings*, temp. Edw. IV., Bundle 27, No. 243.

were chiefly concerned in seeing that their daughters were thoroughly domesticated and provided with wealthy husbands. To secure these advantages, a girl was 'placed out' or boarded in the home of strangers, where she was made to work as a member of the household, and was taught the use of the loom. William Say, of Ipswich, thus placed his daughter 'esse comensal' with one William Peacock, promising to pay for her board a weekly sum of sixpence.¹ Men often made provision for the future support of their wives by ensuring the payment of a weekly sum to strangers. William Wynter, an Ipswich merchant of considerable means, endowed his servant Alice with a vast amount of property, but desired his executors, 1470, to put his wife Katherine to board, and pay for her sevenpence a week for the term of her life. There is nothing to show that she was incapable of managing her own affairs, but it would appear from the existence of many other instances of similar arrangements made for a wife's or daughter's support, that the practice of the boarding out of women was a common custom. It must not be considered that women were treated with any degree of disrespect; on the contrary domestic affection was very marked in this age, and wives reciprocated their husbands' affections with great warmth, rendering themselves fit and sympathetic helpmates. This fact accounts for the great confidence with which husbands trusted their wives to carry on their business during their own absence, often of long duration, and the frequency with which they sent strangers with letters of introduction to enable their friends to enjoy freely the hospitality which they would gladly bestow if they themselves were present in their homes. Hallam, however, considers that family pride predominated, and that a father neglected his paternal duties towards his daughters to enable his son the better to sustain the hereditary dignity of the family.² His conclusions are drawn from entirely erroneous statements, for upon turning to the pages of Cullum's 'History

¹ *Ipswich General Court Book*, 1 Ric. III., Brit. Museum.

² *Middle Ages*, vol. iii. p. 371.

Hawstead,'¹ from which he quotes, it is clear that the historian gave only a cursory reading to a long will, and based his arguments on a false reading of a footnote. Instead of the fact being, as Hallam states, that Sir William Drury, one of the richest men in Suffolk, left the small sum of fifty marks to each of his daughters, we read there that Roger Drury, a man of mean estate, gave as a dowry to each of his granddaughters the sum of fifty marks, which was the largest bequest mentioned in this will, dated January 20, 1493.

The relation between the two sexes was not restrained ; familiarity existed at the earliest acquaintance. Salutations and greetings were open and cordial ; even men welcomed one another with a kiss ; nor was there a maid so coy as to consider it rude for an utter stranger to seal a letter of introduction with this mode of salutation in public. Margaret of Scotland, as Etienne Pasquier informs us, was passing with a suite of dames and knights through a hall where Alain Chartier, the 'Chrysostom of France,' was sleeping. To the astonishment of the company the future queen stooped down and kissed the mouth of the sleeper, asserting that by this act she had not kissed an ill-favoured man, but a mouth whence issued golden speech. Even the sanctity of the church and the solemnity of the service did not prevent the rich London woolmerchant Richard Cely from greeting with a kiss Miss Lemryke and her stepmother when he met them for the first time by appointment at matins in Northleach Church.² After mass he 'whelleynd them and kissed them,' and they thanked him for the gallon of wine which he had sent as a present to them, and requested him to come to their home after dinner to drink the wine with them. The ladies had previously reciprocated Cely's kindness by forwarding to him a heronshaw for his dinner. The custom of wine drinking was common. Events were moving

Relation
of sexes.

¹ P. 141.

² *Cely Letters*, pp. xlv and 103, Royal Historical Society's Publication (Camden, Third Series), vol. i.

quickly and unexpectedly, so that any traveller from a distance who might be the bearer of recent news was received with welcome. Cely was commissioned by one Roger Wyxton to deliver a letter to his wife, 'with whom he desired Cely so much to drynke at Laysetter.'¹

Marriage.

Marriage was contracted at an early age. Francis, son and heir of Lord John Lovel, was married at the age of ten years to the daughter of Lord Fitzhugh. To be troth-plight was considered to be legally married. According to Ramsay, 'the grounds of invalidity of the marriage between Edward IV. and Elizabeth Grey were, that no banns had been published, that the service had been performed in a "prophane [unconsecrated] place," a private chamber, and the king already stood married and troth-plight to Dame Elianor Butteler, daughter of the old Earle of Shrewsbury.'² The font-pictures of the marriage ceremony are various: one illustrates the moment at which the priest places the ring on the thumb, forefinger, middle finger, and finally the third finger of the bride's right hand. It was customary until the sixteenth century for the wedding ring to be worn on the right hand.

Rich wards were sought after for the sake of marrying them into the family. Reginald Rous, of Dennington, whose will has already been quoted, desired his wife 'to marry my daughter Ann to my ward, Thomas Falstolf, or else I will she have to her marriage if she be married by her mother £4.' Schemes laid to entrap husbands were many and varied. If no rich ward were in prospect, a neglected maid could visit the north door of St. Paul's or St. Saviour's Church, Bermondsey, and there offer up vows and prayers for a good husband, although he may be of no higher social position than was Reginald Calle, the chandler of Framlingham and future husband of Margery Paston.³ Widows who had taken vows of chastity could not marry. Stow

¹ *Cely Letters*, p. 59.

² *York and Lancaster*, vol. ii. p. 437.

³ *Paston Letters*, vol. ii. p. 233.

states that John Goodnay, draper, mayor of London, 1427, in the year 1444 married the widow of Robert Large, late mayor, which widow had taken the mantle and ring and the vow of chastity; for the breach whereof done by the marriage they were troubled by the Church and put to penance. Nor could a widow who had made a contract of marriage with one man lawfully marry another. John Upham sued John Tychbourne for marrying Elizabeth, late wife of Reynold Barantyne, notwithstanding a prior contract with the petitioner; whereupon the petitioner obtained a divorce, and the said John Tychbourne appealed to Rome. Tychbourne stated that he had lawfully married the woman in church by her assent, and that Upham had come to Brightwell, where Elizabeth Barantyne sojourned, and had carried her away with the assistance of another woman with whom Upham lived.¹

A remarkable feature of the period is the number of handsome bequests made towards the marriage portions of poor maids. Roger Rawson, sheriff of London, 1477, bequeathed towards the assistance of the indigent and to poor maids' marriages the sum of £340.² Feudalism, which received its death-blow in the wars of the Roses, retained a few of its privileges for some time. One of these, which was claimed even in the days of the first Stuart king, was the exaction of fees on the occasion of the marriage of *nativi de sanguine*. Thus we find that in 1448 Joan, daughter of John Hobert, alias Michell of Dedham, *nativus de sanguine*, of the manor of Sutton in Suffolk, paid as a fine, *hac vice*, for permission to marry John Mery of Dedham, 6s. 8d.³ On her previous marriage she had paid 3s. 4d. to the lord of the manor; at her third marriage the fine was again doubled to 13s. 4d.

In the London Courts, Margery, the daughter of Richard Hendoner, of St. John's Wood, Walbrook, successfully

Apprenticeship.

¹ *Chancery Proceedings*, Bundle 15, No. 157.

² Stow, *London under Elizabeth*, p. 135.

³ *Manorial Court Rolls*, Hen. IV.—Hen. VIII.

maintained the proofs of her age as sixteen years before William Hawley, mayor.¹ In the Ipswich borough courts proof of age could be established by the child showing an accurate knowledge how to measure cloth and count money according to standards of weights and measures employed within the borough. The freedom of the borough could be claimed and conferred on any man who could show satisfactory proof of age, and who was free-born or who had served his term of apprenticeship 'fully and honestly' to a burgess trading within the borough. The term of apprenticeship was seven years; those who worked for masters and mistresses not signing indentures, were known as servants. The articles of agreement signed by an apprentice bound him strictly to observe the rules of his master's house, to keep his secrets, and to advance his trade. William Burre, of Leys, co. Essex, when bound to John Whitton, of Ipswich, grocer, promised never to divulge his master's secrets, not to work any damage or permit any to be done to his master's trade to the value of twelpence or more a year, not to play at dice or any other dishonest games, to abstain from adultery or fornication in his master's house, under the penalty of doubling his term of apprenticeship, should he commit either offence, not to be betrothed without his master's consent, not to trade on his own account, nor to frequent taverns.² Should he serve his master faithfully for seven years, he would be clothed and fed at his master's table, and be taught his master's trade. Children occasionally bound themselves as apprentices without the knowledge of their parents; and their indentures could not be cancelled without the consent of the master whom they served. Lewis, of Abergavenny, discovered that his son William had secretly bound himself to one John Sutton, grocer, of Bristol, for nine years. It may be that the father was dissatisfied at a period of servitude of undue length, for he demanded the boy's release, which Sutton refused to give unless he received the sum of eight pounds from the father.

¹ *Proofs of Age*, 38-39 Hen. VI., No. 77.

² *Ipswich Great Court Book*, 25 Hen. VI.

Lewis objected to make such a payment, so the boy, then only fourteen years of age, was cast into the town gaol, 'where he was bound with fetters & cheynes so that he was nigh unto death, & all this was done only to move the father to pity.'¹ This is a second example of the harsh treatment of a lad of tender years by immuring him within prison walls, where, unless he were able to excite the pity of the gaoler or arouse the sympathy of his friends, he would waste away, like a criminal of the worst type, in chains and fetters of iron. Suitable clothing, befitting his calling, was found for the apprentice each year by his master. We gather from the following incident what was the apparel worn by an apprentice. John Smoke had been sent by his master, Henry Reynolds, to transact some business in Ipswich, a town eight miles distant. His journey lay for the greater part of the way across a vast extent of wild heath land, where bracken and gorse grew abundantly. Upon his return homeward, and when he was scarcely two miles beyond the outskirts of the borough, he was suddenly attacked on this heath by two wayfarers and brutally murdered. The murderers—Robert Skales and his brother Thomas, both of the county of Norfolk—stripped the body of all its clothing, which they carried away with them. The clothing consisted of a hood valued at two shillings and twopence, a tunic of the value of five shillings, a doublet valued at three shillings and fourpence, a pair of shoes value sixteen pence, a pair of socks (sotulares) value sixpence, a kirtle, and a shirt. Robert Skales was hanged for the murder, but Thomas, who like his brother was mentioned in the indictment as 'labourer,' pleaded after conviction that he was a 'clerk,' and was therefore handed over to the bishop's officer for trial.²

Servants and labourers were hired to work by the year Servants. or for a fixed period; a heavy penalty was inflicted if the contract was broken. John Manser, a house carpenter of Ipswich, was engaged to work for Gilbert Stonham from

¹ *Chancery Proceedings*, temp. Edw. IV., Bundle 15, No. 165.

² *Gaol Deliveries*, temp. Edw. IV., Record Office.

February 20. 1445, until the following Michaelmas Day. Attracted by the Eastertide festivities, he quitted his work to join in the sports. For this misdemeanour he was summoned to the King's Court, Westminster; but the bailiffs of Ipswich claimed jurisdiction, as the offence had been committed within the borough limits.¹ On another occasion Hans Moleur agreed to assist Peter Shorne at his craft for the space of a year. He carried out his agreement faithfully, until there remained one week only for him to serve, when he suddenly quitted his work. For this offence he was mulcted in a fine of forty shillings.²

Apprentices and servants resorted to taverns and 'common houses' in order to gamble and to play at dice. Sumptuary laws and other strong measures were useless to check this evil. Aliens and foreigners were considered to be responsible for the mischief by the introduction of illicit games, the maintenace of taverns and beerhouses, and by the introduction of fraudulent and illegal practices in trade. Serious complaints were lodged by the burgesses of Bristol in 1462 against the evil doings of foreign settlers. From a close and careful consideration of the alien subsidy rolls it is evident that the Dutch and the Flemings, who settled mainly in the coast towns of the Eastern Counties, did not advance the weaving industry, but introduced many evils with the manufacture of beer. The words of the old woodman of the Black Forest against the covetousness and greed of the Dutch, 'Unvermerkt kamen Geld, Flüche, schlechte Linnen, Trunk und Spiel aus Holland herauf,'³ applies equally, and with justice, to the Fleming immigrants of the fifteenth century. Not that they were the originators of vice among other nations, but they certainly encouraged its growth for their own gain.

Alien im-
migration.

On March 6, 31 Henry VI., a subsidy was granted by Parliament held at Reading to be collected from all aliens

¹ *Claim touching Privileges of the Borough*, Ipswich Corporation Records.

² *Great Court Book*, Ipswich Corporation Records, 1 Ric. III.

³ Hauf, *Das Wirtshaus im Spessart*.

who were householders, sixteen pence per annum ; from aliens who were not householders, sixpence per annum ; and from all persons called ' Venecian, Esterlinge, Italian, Florentyne, Milon, Lucan, Cataloner, Albertyne, Lumbard, Hansard, and Pruce,' merchants, brokers, and factors who were householders, forty shillings per annum ; from such of these as were not householders, twenty shillings per annum. The wealthy foreigners designated in this statute established themselves in the prosperous cities of the south of England. The subsidy roll for Derbyshire, 35 Henry VI.,¹ mentions only three aliens as residing in that county : two were female servants from Scotland, the other bore the significant name, John Frenchman. In Nottinghamshire, during the same year, there were living in the county five aliens, all of whom were servants from north of the Tweed. The subsidy returns for Norfolk and Suffolk,² as seen in the subjoined table, also establish the fact that before the tenth year of the reign of Edward IV. there were few foreigners in these counties.

—	37-38 Hen. VI.		11 Edw. VI.		20 Edw. IV.	
	Norfolk	Suffolk	Norfolk	Suffolk	Norfolk	Suffolk
Aliens paying 16 <i>d.</i>	23	15	29	9	77	50
„ „ 6 <i>d.</i>	28	8	10	6	50	58

According to the Subsidy Roll 1 Ric. III. there were, in Suffolk alone, three hundred and eight aliens. What were the causes which led to so great an influx of aliens of whom the greater number were Flemings? It may be that many were driven by the loss of their privileges when the Magna Carta of Holland was withdrawn on the accession of Maximilian to sole power in 1482. There were, however, other motives which led the Dutch to seek new homes during the reign of his queen, who granted to them the ' Great Privilege.' The development of trade was the principal motive. Dutch

¹ Subsidy Roll, $\frac{236}{73}$.

² Subsidy Rolls, $\frac{236}{81}$, $\frac{236}{82}$, $\frac{237}{7}$.

settlers found a lucrative employment in the manufacture of beer from hops, then rapidly supplanting the brewing of old English ale, and in the introduction of broad shoes to take the place of long-peaked boots. The names on the roll for 11 Edward IV. are distinctly those of Dutch and Flemish immigrants, all rated under the class other than 'merchants, factors, and brokers.' In addition to the names of the aliens the roll 1 Ric. III. gives a description of the calling which they followed, and frequent mention is also made of the place of birth. From this list we gather that the newcomers congregated near the coast. Blythburgh and Ipswich both had in their midst as many aliens as were found in 20 Edw. IV. to reside in the whole of Norfolk. Of the three hundred and eight immigrants one hundred came from Flanders, forty-eight from Zealand, twenty from Scotland. Very few Flemings settled in the cloth-making centres. At Bildeston John Stansby, clothmaker, employed as servants to aid him in his craft twelve aliens, all *Italians* by birth. Of the whole number of foreigners then engaged in the weaving industry throughout Suffolk only five were Flemings. The immigrants from Flanders and the neighbouring counties followed the callings of 'berebruers, coupers, shoemakers, brykemakers, carvers, & hatmakers.' Of the seventy-seven Flemings in Ipswich in 1485 twenty-five were 'berebruers,' twenty were shoemakers, and twelve were hatmakers. The same distribution of trades appears among the other foreigners who settled along the coast. The 'berebruer' found it more convenient to reside in a locality whence he could easily obtain malt and hops shipped from Holland; the shoemaker found customers more ready to patronise his calling within towns than in the country; but the brickmaker from Flanders was compelled by the necessities of his labours to journey farther inland where there was a greater abundance of material for the manufacture of bricks. Bricks were in great demand,¹ and by their use houses were built of a loftier and more extensive character, the walls retaining

Trades.

¹ *Paston Letters*, vol. ii. p. 224, Statute 17 Edw. IV., c. 4.

their original thickness. This building material was speedily manufactured, and was sold at an inexpensive rate. William Ellys, brickmaker, supplied two hundred thousand bricks for the repair of Dover Castle, 20 Edward IV., at the rate of two and a half hundred for a penny.¹ Beer brewing was not enrolled among the crafts and trades of a town; nor was a hatter or brickmaker present in the procession of trades at the Corpus Christi celebration held at Ipswich, 7 Hen. VII., when over forty other crafts were represented. The particulars of the life of Cardinal Wolsey's father given in the Appendix will illustrate the career of a burgess of the period.

Extravagance in dress and frequent change in costume rapidly developed with the increase of commerce with foreign countries, so that the wealthy landowners discarded their native clothiers for tailors from Picardy, skilled in cladding the person after the French and Italian guise, made the Saxon hairdresser give place to the German barber who could trim the beard after the more recent Continental style, and kept as one of their household a French cook who could heap the table with dainties and subtilities such as were served up at the colossal banquet given by the Duke of Burgundy, at which he vowed to enter on crusade against the Turk, when the fall of Constantinople filled all Europe with consternation. The barber was especially required to give his services during the celebration of funeral obsequies. At the funeral of John Paston the services of William Yonge, barber, were hired for five days.²

But the Flemish craftsman did more than contribute to Artists support the follies of the period. His most noble work still remains, and will remain so long as the British Empire stands. With deft hand he carved the elegant woodwork to be seen in many of our village churches, the walls and timber of which he adorned and embellished with well-executed designs and figures. To him we owe the earliest portraiture as

¹ Palgrave, *Antient Kalendars &c. of the Exchequer*, p. 172.

² *Paston Letters*, vol. ii. p. 266.

drawn from life : he assisted the native carver to work out new designs and to beautify the sacred building with carved benches, crocketed canopies, figures in stained glass, and mural paintings. The magnificent windows in Long Melford Church afford us noble specimens of his art. These windows form picture galleries of fifteenth-century portraits of judges and justices, mayors, citizens and burgesses, prior and priest one and all represented as attired in the garb and after the manner of the day. They are evidently the work of no mean hand ; nor can the monumental carving have been the product of other than a man of genius. The mystery of their origin is easily solved. John Clopton, the owner of Kentwell Hall, narrowly escaped the fate of execution which befell his neighbours and companions, John, Earl of Oxford, Sir Thomas Tuddenham, and William Tyrrell, on Tower Hill, February 20, 1461, on the charge of holding treasonable correspondence with Margaret of Anjou.¹ Clopton wisely retired from party strife, and, staying in seclusion at his country seat, devoted his attention to the enlargement and beautifying of his parish church. Like Frederick, Duke of Urbino, he was unable to rely upon the services of his own countrymen, and was compelled to employ a Fleming skilled in oil painting, and one practised in the art of modelling. The workmen were Antony Ammoson, the artist, and Henry Phelypp, the sculptor. These Flemings were assisted in their work by the rector of the parish, a monk of Bury St. Edmund's. John Clopton also had staying under his roof a native of Flanders who was an eminent physician.

Houses.

Lofty brick and timber houses were gradually taking the place of the lowly dwellings with plaster-built walls. The extraordinary height to which the new buildings were raised caused consternation amongst not only the simple-minded, but even thoughtful men. Stow expresses a belief that the judgment of Heaven fell on those who reared their houses high above those of their neighbours. A great house he tells us, was built by Sir John Crosby, grocer and wool-

¹ Parker, *History of Long Melford*, p. 44.

man, in 1466 of stone and timber, very large and beautiful, and the highest at that time in London.¹ Crosby was knighted in 1471, and died in 1475; 'so short a time enjoyed he his large and sumptuous building.' Brick buildings had massive walls, which time has not been able to deface. The solid brick gaol of Melton, Suffolk, belonging to the liberty of St. Etheldreda, the Cloth Hall of Hadleigh, the gateway in Ipswich erected by Archdeacon Pykenham, the work of this period, still stand firm and bearing the same aspect which they presented four hundred and fifty years ago. Timber, as is seen, was largely used as well as bricks. 'The fraternity of tailors and linen-armourers of St. John the Baptist in London set up in 1452 a large frame of timber containing, in the High Street, one great house.' The wainscoting with which the interior of the walls was lined, as well as the window frames, was imported from Germany. The windows were not fixed, but when a house was left vacant they could be removed for the preservation of the glass. Sir Thomas Everard, parson of Oxned, having a dispute with his diocesan, to whom he owed sums of money, suddenly quitted his parsonage, taking away the windows and doors in his flight.² The borough court of Ipswich enacted a law that all windows should be at a regulated height from the ground. Thomas Juddias, a burgess, complained in 1485 that his neighbours had recently erected houses which in structure did not comply with the by-law. Twelve burgesses were elected to view the premises: their verdict was that the windows were rightly formed, one being in altitude from the ground six feet or more, the other eight feet. The lofty character of these windows favoured the practices of eaves-droppers, '*ascultatores*,' who prowled about at night, '*stantes privata ad audienda et seminandam discordiam contra leges*.' John Manghtedd, shoemaker, '*pluribus noctibus sub parietibus et fenestris diversorum proximorum suorum ascultavit revelanda secreta sua, tam in villa Gippewici quam*

¹ *London under Elizabeth*, p. 186.

² *Paston Letters*, vol. iii. p. 233.

in patria.' Agnes, 'ascultator sub fenestris,' and servant to Catherine Goodwin, carried her malpractices still further, vexing and annoying her neighbours by throwing stones over the roofs of their houses to the damage of the tiles which covered them. She was moreover esteemed to be 'a pursepiker.' Tiles were of recent introduction; thatch was still largely used for the roofs of houses.¹ The first tiled house was erected in Nottingham in 1503. This fact may refer to the walls of brick tiles rather than roof tiles; the abundant supply of stone from the adjacent quarries delayed the use of bricks in that district. The handsome timber roofs of churches were in many instances covered with lead, and bequests of these gifts of piety were of frequent occurrence. Sir Ralph Anstrie, fishmonger, who died in 1494, placed such a roof upon the church of St. Martin's in the Vintry; and Agnes Balston made by will a similar bequest to the church at Denham.²

The more humble dwellings retained mud and plaster walls of no great strength and thickness. John Fettiplate, of Wolvele, Berkshire, was an ardent Yorkist, and by his support given to the dominant faction had earned the ill-will of his fellow-parishioners, who favoured the Lancastrian party in 1463. Late at night, when he and his household had retired to rest, they were aroused by the uproar caused by a party of forty men, headed by one John Estbury, who attacked his house and 'shot at his doors and windows a hundred arrows, which he was ready to show some still sticking in the house.' They shot through the walls, which were but plaster walls, and so into his hall, to the great distress of the petitioner, his wife, children, and servants.³

Rooms and
furniture.

Houses were but scantily furnished, though the increased luxury in dress prevalent among all classes soon necessitated an improvement in this respect. It would be difficult to keep the wardrobe safe and in good condition without suitable

¹ Ramsay, *York and Lancaster*, p. 427.

² *Chancery Proceedings*, temp. Edw. IV., Bundle 35, No. 38.

³ *Ibid.* Bundle 27, No. 428.

provision having been made for its security by the addition of retiring rooms and the use of chests. Small withdrawing rooms or chambers were added to the hall; that on the right was known as 'the parlour,' which was not used as a place for social intercourse but constituted the principal bedroom occupied by the master and mistress of the house. To the parlour was added a 'livery or draught chamber' for a servant's accommodation; the chamber at the upper end of the hall served as a bedroom for the other members of the family. There was no great abundance of tenements, so that when it was apparent that owing to the death of its head the household might be scattered, and some poorer relative thereby be left without the shelter of a roof, provision was made to secure a home for such a one by the reservation of rooms, or of a room, and of the 'easement of the kitchen' within the house. In some cases a house was left conditionally to a child that the wife of the testator might 'have a room with the soler above, at the superior end of the hall, with free ingress and egress.' Each room was scantily furnished according to its requirements. In the hall were kept long boards with the trestles, on which they rested during meal time; forms covered with bankers, and occasionally a turned chair, supplemented the sitting accommodation which the deeply recessed cushioned windows afforded. In the chambers were beds, some raised on 'bedstedols,' others resting on the floor, with a spruce chest containing the wardrobe at the foot; a smaller chest, or 'forcer,' wherein were kept the family jewels, plate, and records; a chair, a 'pleyted' or join-table with three legs and sometimes, but very seldom, a ewer and washing-basin. Lady Millicent Falstolf's chamber was the only one in her father's mansion containing these necessaries.¹ Soap was not expensive: black soap could be bought for one penny a pound, and the price of the same weight of the best Castell soap of Bristol was five farthings. The long towels which are frequently mentioned in inventories of goods were

¹ *Paston Letters*, vol. i. p. 477.

provided for the household and guests to use when they washed their hands at the table both before and after meals.

Fixed or 'naye-fast' furniture was introduced. Beds, bedding, clothing, and furniture constituted by far the greater part of a man's effects. A 'complete bed' consisted, as it does now, of a bed, two sheets, a pair of blankets, a 'coverlyghte,' and a 'quylte.' The upper covering was of good material lined with fur and 'steyned' with a pictorial subject or flowers, or else adorned with green and white stripes. Women would bequeath beds and furniture to the parish priest, to favoured friars, hermits, or anchorites, adding to the gift a piece of black cloth 'steyned' with an image of Death, or of red cloth embroidered with various devices.

The inventory of the goods of Thomas Wath, an Ipswich tavern keeper, discloses the fact that there was ample room for strangers, and all travellers could find rest for themselves, their servants and horses, at the inn. It is no new misfortune to be unable to obtain a comfortable night's rest in a strange bed. Travellers like William Barrett, of Bury St. Edmund's, would take their own beds about with them in their travels, enjoying repose, surrounded by 'a tester with two costers small paled of bukram, blue and better blue, with the image of our Lady in gold paper, and a selour belonging thereto,'¹ which they had trussed with their merchandise. It is evident, as seen from the many contemporary sculptures on fonts depicting the rites of extreme unction and certain legends, that it was customary to take a night's rest in bed without being clad in any garment. Bedrooms were warmed either by huge logs resting on andirons within a wide open fireplace, or by a brazier containing glowing charcoal, standing on a tripod within the room.

The following articles comprised the furniture of a barber's shop: 'An ewer of two gallons, a large *patella* called a ketill of laton, a *patella* called a waxpan, two candelabra of laton, a greater hangyng *lavatorium*, a large chafour ewer, a *verutum* with an iron andiron, a tripod, and an iron tramayle, a dish

¹ Tymms, *Bury Wills*, p. 34.

called a wax ketill, a wax table, a chair, a glass, an almonry, scales and weights, two large *pelves* called broad basins, and a *lavatorium* belonging to the same.¹

The many sumptuary laws passed to regulate prices of provisions were of little effect. Offenders in this respect were numerous, and made frequent appearances before the leet courts. The maintenance of high prices was supported by the habit which pervaded all classes of society of indulging freely both in eating and drinking. There were but three meals—breakfast, dinner, and supper—at all of which there was a well-filled board, which was not quickly deserted. Monk and priest, peer and peasant, found delight in a well-spread table. It mattered not whether the day were a fish-day or a flesh-day, each and every day alike furnished the ambassadors from Canterbury during their stay in London, ‘pro materia de longo pendente inter Civitatem Cantuar. et Monasterium S̄ci. Augustini,’² with good cheer. The abundant supply provided for all comers who visited the city mansion of the Earl of Warwick was partly given to win the goodwill of the citizens; an open house brought its master into favour.³ The Archbishop of Canterbury delighted the hearts of the monks when he gave them free access to his table within his palace, so that prior and monk did not dine in their refectory, but with the prelate of all England himself.⁴ Monks, as good Catholics, rejoiced when fish was abundant. ‘Praised be God, who has sent so large a supply of fish, commonly known as mullet heryng, to the shores of Kent, that ten may be bought for one penny,’⁵ is the ejaculation to be found in the diary of John Stone for the year 1469.

Meals.

Breakfast was served at an early hour. The hour for dinner was 9 A.M. In Chaucer’s day it was earlier.

‘And let us dine as soon as that ye may,
For by my kalender it is the prime of day.’⁶

¹ *Ipswich Wills*, Book iii. fol. 5.

² *Report of Royal Commission on Historical MSS.*, vol. ix. p. 134.

³ *London under Elizabeth*, p. 113. ⁴ *Chronicle of John Stone*, p. 99.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 110.

⁶ ‘The Shipmannes Tale,’ ll. 13135-

One of the complaints lodged against the monks of Mettingham,¹ 1494, was that they broke their fast by eating meat before 'prandium.' Circumstances at times compelled guests to sit down to a late dinner from which they were loth to rise. At the visit of the Earl of Warwick to Canterbury, 1468, this noble, with the Bishop of London, the Prior of St. Augustine, and their suite, sat down to dine at 2 P.M., 'et erat preterita hora quinta antequam prandia-verunt.'² To sup by candlelight was a notable event. 'Et post horam octavam conventus transierunt ad cœnam tam in refectorio quam ad mensam, et fratres ad mensam cenaverunt cum lumine candelarum.'³

Prices.

Prices paid at London inns were high beyond all comparison with those of to-day. Sixteen pence was the charge for a served-up capon, and fourpence was paid at the same time for a rabbit. If we consider the value of money to have then been sixteen times what it now is, the price of a capon would be one guinea, and of a rabbit more than five shillings. This did not include the charge for cooking, or for the fuel used. The price of a comb of wheat was then eightpence; so that two cooked rabbits, or according to other records three rabbits from the field, might be given in exchange for one sack of corn; and two sacks of corn were equal in value to one capon.

The tale of a country vicar who was frightened when poaching for rabbits with dogs and ferrets by the sudden appearance of a parishioner returning clad in devil's garb from acting in a religious play, is well founded.⁴ The circumstances as recorded in the narrative to be met with in 'A C. Mery Tales' agree with those mentioned in the Manorial Court Rolls of Sutton in Suffolk, a village situated two miles from Woodbridge, where religious plays were held by the canons of the Augustinian priory. From the Court Rolls it appears that Robert Latham, Vicar of Sutton in 1475,

¹ *Visitation of Diocese of Norwich, 1492-1532*, p. 46.

² *Chronicle of John Stone*, p. 110.

³ *Ibid.* p. 99.

⁴ *A C. Mery Tales*, Hazlitt's edition.

was discovered poaching as described in the tale, and that his horse was also impounded. He was frequently fined, as were other Sutton vicars, for this misdemeanour, and for breaking into the pound to set free his horse. Poaching was largely carried on by the poor country clergy. John Sparrowe, parson of Ringfield, and John, the parson's man, appeared before the Ipswich Sessions, held July 6, 1486, to answer the charge of capturing with dogs and ferrets, in the lord's warren, two hundred rabbits, valued at forty shillings.¹ There must have been a ready sale for rabbits for the parson to have sought so large a capture. Rabbits' skins were in great request for lining winter clothing. Eggs and oysters formed the chief food supply of the Canterbury watchmen,² whence it may be concluded that they were abundant and cheap: one hundred eggs might be purchased for sixpence. Several Dutchmen were fined at the Borough Court, 1486, for depositing refuse in the common river to the destruction of 'les hoysters.' Some of the current prices of food and of animals during the period were as follows:—A cow, 6s. 8d.; a calf, 2s.; a wether, 2s. 4d.; a sheep, 1s. 6d.; a goose, 7½d.; a lamb, 6d.; a pig, 5d.; a barrel of herring (1,000) imported from Iceland, 10s.; 100 mackerel, 3s. 4d.; a barrel of flesh, 10s.; a barrel of imported onions, 1s. 4d.; a gallon of butter, 6d.; a gallon of cream, 4d.; a gallon of milk, 1d.

Judging from the above-mentioned prices we may consider that at the Ipswich Town Feast, held upon the occasion of the procession of the Corpus Christi Guild, there were consumed by the burgesses, their wives, and friends ten lambs, two calves, sixteen pigs, seventy chickens, one hundred pigeons, besides a large quantity of beef, bread, ale, wine, and beer. Bread was known as *simnell*, *wastell*, *integer*, *temsyd*, and *French loaves*.

The right to brew ale was common to all Ipswich bur-
gesses; in the majority of the town houses a 'common tune' Brewers.

¹ *Gaol Deliveries*, Ipswich Corporation Records, *temp.* Ric. III.

² *Report of Royal Commission on Historical MSS.*, vol. ix., Pt. I. p. 144.

was kept from which was drawn a supply sold to all comers. This custom was a source of much corruption within the borough, so that all bailiffs were prohibited during their tenure of office from selling ale. The regulated price for the sale of ale in legally stamped measures was $1\frac{3}{4}d.$ for a quart of the best ale and three farthings for a quart of the worst ale. This excessive price did not check the demand ; the lucrative character of the trade is seen by the frequent imposition of fines for the sale of ale at a higher rate. Cardinal Wolsey's father first comes to notice as being fined for this offence. When a person sold '*ale*,' generally the surplus of his household supply, he was classed as a '*brasiator de servicia* ;' if he sold ale as a tavern keeper, he was known as a '*gannoker de servicia*.' I have already drawn attention to the fact that *beer* brewing was a manufacture of recent introduction established by Dutch settlers : they alone were known as '*berebruers*,' or '*brasiatores de scitrol*.' At the various leet courts held in Ipswich in 1466 fourteen persons were convicted in each of the east, north, and south wards for selling ale in false measures. Besides being charged with the illegal sale of '*scitrol*,' the Dutch settlers were convicted of encouraging riotous living and illicit games. Bernard Ducheman, '*leche and fessessian*,' was fined for selling a *dolium* of bad wine. The illicit games, practised chiefly by these settlers, included Closh-bane, Whisstolds, Pelleds, and Quarter-spells.¹

Crime.

The borough courts were convened at the assembling of twelve officers and twenty-four burgesses. The number was not conducive to harmony, and the meetings were often scenes of wrangling and quarrelling. In order that peace and order might reign when the municipal council met for deliberations, and for the good and safe government of the town, it was decreed that the bailiffs and twelve portmen, or even seven, should have the power to call together fourteen burgesses to constitute a Great Court. Peculation as well as discord was rife, and the gain exacted by those who held office

¹ *General Court Books*, 24 Hen. IV.—12 Edw. IV.

was so great that to obtain positions of authority recourse was had to the use of letters of commendation. It was therefore enacted by the Great Court that if any one brought any letter or seal of two knights or *armigeri* whatsoever for the office of bailiff or of parliamentary burgess, or of any other town office, he should not be elected or admitted to those offices, and should be debarred from holding them at any future time. 'Le Kings Watch' was powerless of itself to maintain order in the streets;¹ it was therefore required of all inhabitants to keep within their houses a staff and other weapons, so as to be able to render the bailiffs assistance when they sought to quell disorder or to arrest miscreants within the precincts of the town. So little respect was paid to law and order that often in broad daylight riot and murder were committed; innocent citizens could not carry on their legitimate callings without being liable to assault. It may be that in many cases the process of law was long, tedious, and expensive, and it was therefore found convenient to take the law into one's own hands. Gilbert Debenham, having visited the Ipswich cheesemarket, 1475, was returning home with his purchases, consisting of 'tribulas or showls,' when he was suddenly attacked at the hour of 3 P.M. by five men, three of whom were clergy holding benefices in the immediate neighbourhood. He placed his back against a wall and valiantly defended himself, striking out vigorously with a 'showl.' The bailiffs were summoned to quell the disturbance and to arrest the miscreants, who quickly dispersed at the sight of the law officers, some seeking refuge in 'Le White Hert,' while the rest took sanctuary in the church of the Carmelite friars. There was a state of disorder throughout the country arising from the weak administration of the law in settling disputes with respect to the rightful ownership of lands and estates. The arm of the law was feeble and ineffective. Take, for example, the case of the Abbot of Buildwas (Bildewas, co. Salop) and his tenants, who were subject to the attack of a neighbouring

¹ *Sudbury Court Rolls*, 14 Edw. IV., Record Office.

landowner. 'John Leghton of Leghton, and William his son, with a congregation and a multitude of people, arrayed in manner of war, did several times break the hedges and trespass into the pastures of the Abbey. They came to a chapel of the Abbot & Convent, & breke uppe the dores to the intent to have had a man & woman weddyd unlawfully in the same chapel, & because a monk of the Abbey forbade the weddyng, the said John Leghton & his son beat the monk in the chapel; & knowing that the Abbot & Convent had workmen in the meadows to fell the grass, the said John & William came & drove them away so that some of the meadow stand unmown to this day. John & William sent to the ploughs of the Abbot & Convent great multitude of people, charging the servants of the Abbey, on peynes of ther lyfes, that they should do no husbandry in the Abbey grounds so that the more part lies untilled & unsown. Men lie about the Abbey of Bildewas day & night to beat the servants & seek to imprison the Abbot till he had made to John Leghton a statement of the rent of all the lands were worth that the ancestors of John Leghton had granted the Abbey.'¹ The story of the capture and recapture of Caistor Castle is another example of the prevailing disorder.

Men, women, and even children were thrown into gaol without trial, and unless they could find money sufficient to pay their gaoler at least twenty pence a week² for their wretched fare, their lot was one of extreme discomfort and starvation. Disputants who sought to take the law into their own hands paid little respect to the dignity of a person or to the sanctity of a place. Thomas Faws, goldsmith of Coventry, in his dealings bought of one John Forebury some broken silver, among which was 'a bonde of a maser.' John Honey, yeoman, of the same town, asserted the 'bonde' to be part of his property which had been stolen. He therefore came at night to search the house, 'put out

¹ *Chancery Proceedings*, Bundle 27, No. 390.

² *Paston Letters*, vol. ii. p. 193.

the light there burning, cast down & break such silver harness as there was in the house.'¹ Ecclesiastical dignitaries were molested and arrested without a warrant whilst performing their sacred duties. Sir John Acaster, priest and chaplain to the Bishop of Exeter, Lord Chancellor of England, was imprisoned by one Gybon for debt; nor would he allow the priest bail.² Sir James Belgrave, parson of St. George's, Canterbury, was arrested and cast into prison during the celebration of mass on Sunday because he maintained a right to enter his church by the chancel door leading from his parsonage in opposition to the opinion of his parishioners, Robert Cook and Richard Baseley.³ Sacrilege too was common. William Payne, of Frome in Selwood, yeoman, baker, and brewer, and Robert Heathfield, of Bedminster, yeoman and fyssher, broke into the church of St. Andrew, of Cromehalle, co. Gloucester, and stole therefrom a pair of green silk vestments, a green silke cape, a silver chalice, a red mantel of velvet belonging to the image of the Blessed Mary, with rings of silver and gold to the value of forty pounds.⁴ If arrested and brought to trial criminals frequently escaped justice by collusion with the jury. In 1468 divers persons being common jurors, such as at assizes were forsworn for rewards or favour of parties, were judged to ride from Newgate to the pillory in Cornhill with mitres of paper on their heads.⁵ Servers of writs were maltreated. The riotous scene described by Sir Walter Scott in a note to 'The Abbot'⁶ had its parallel recorded in the Chancery Proceedings.⁷ Richard Talbot of Monks' Eleigh obtained a writ of *sub pœna* directed to Agnes Motte, of Bildeston, widow. The writ was delivered by the son of Richard Talbot and 'by Thomas Gaiford, of my lord's Chapell of Gloucester, when the said Agnes raised

¹ *Chancery Proceedings*, Bundle 15, No. 187.

² *Ibid.* Bundle 27, No. 428.

³ *Ibid.* No. 338.

⁴ *Gaol Deliveries*, 12 Edw. IV., Record Office.

⁵ *London under Elizabeth*, p. 200.

⁶ Note F.

⁷ Bundle 15, No. 197.

up her neighbours with weapons drawn for to slay the said bringers of the writte, who were compelled for to devoure the same writte, and there sitting upon their knees in saving of their lyvys ette the writte bothe wexe and parchment. William Whitetoppe of Hadleigh cast his writte into a canell & trod it under his feet in disabling and disworshipping the Regalite of our Sovereign Lord King.' The arm of the law was rendered still further powerless by the abuse made of the right of sanctuary. John Pynchebek, Mayor of Coventry, allowed one Robert Michell, who was sued by Philip Hill for a debt of £14, to escape with all his goods to St. Mary's Church.¹ The Duke of Norfolk paid little respect to this privilege: his armed servants entered the churches and carried off all property save that placed upon the high altar. Disrespect for the law is manifest in Fortescue's remark that 'a poor Englishman, seeing how others possess what he wanted, would never scruple to take it by violence rather than be without it.'²

Travelling was unsafe: the roads were infested by robbers and highwaymen, who followed their calling in all parts of the country. 'Yeomen' from Shrewsbury, Manchester, Sandwich, London, were convicted of housebreaking in Lincolnshire; 'labourers' from Norfolk plundered travellers in Essex and Suffolk; escaped felons from the Isle of Wight suffered the extreme penalty of the law in Somersetshire; while natives of Somersetshire were hanged on gibbets in Gloucestershire.³ Night was made hideous by noisy revellers who wandered about 'cum uno tabore coram se et valde male affraiverunt diversos homines.'⁴ Frequently, to escape hanging, after conviction a felon would plead privilege of clergy, and when he had shown ability to read he was handed over to the spiritual courts. Professing clerics were in as degraded

¹ *Chancery Proceedings*, Bundle 33, No. 152.

² Bright, *Mediæval Monarchy*, pp. 353, 354.

³ *Gaol Deliveries*, temp. Edward IV.

⁴ *Sudbury Court Rolls*, 14 Edward IV., Record Office.

a state as were supposititious ministers of the Church ; murder and crimes of the most grievous nature were laid to their charge ;¹ the crimes of the Carmelites and Dominicans of Ipswich priories are of too heinous a character to relate. Let one entry in the Ipswich Session Roll suffice : ‘Nicholaus Aylysham prior domus ordinis fratrum Carmelit’ ville Gippe-wici duodecimo die mensis Septembris, anno regni Regis Edwardi quarti post conquestum septimo vi et armis, videlicet baculo et cultello, domos et clausum Willelmi Geynesburgh de Gippewico, Barbour, apud Gippewicum, fregit et intravit et in Johannam uxorem ipsius Witli insultum fecit et cum ipsa Johanna tunc et ibidem carnaliter concubuit et ipsam felonice rapuit contra pacem domini Regis.’

‘We find that spiritual courts were forbidden to meddle with the suits of laymen, that the secular affairs of the clergy are brought before secular tribunals, and that such courts exercised criminal jurisdiction over ecclesiastics.’² A smaller number than twelve honest neighbours were permitted to assert their belief in the innocence of an accused person. Joan Pykbone was accused of adultery before the episcopal court of Walter, Bishop of Norwich, in 1471. She pleaded her innocence, and a day was fixed for her to appear before the court at Chediston, ‘*cum sexta manu mulierum fide dignarum covicinarum suarum.*’³ Five was a sufficient number to constitute a jury. ‘Thoma Duniswalle habet diem ad veniendum ad proximam curiam ad proficiendam legem suam *cum quinta manu* quod non debuit Rogero Hill.’⁴

It is well to remark that among those in authority there were some who considered it unjust to fill church benefices with illiterate and inexperienced men. Archdeacon Pykenham refused to induct Walter Paston into the benefice or family living at Oxned at Margery Paston his mother’s request, stating, ‘Your son Watre is not tonsured, in mother tongue called Benett ; another cause he is not 24 years

¹ *Paston Letters*, vol. ii. p. 156.

² Robertson, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. viii. p. 367.

³ *Ipswich Wills*, Book ii., fol. 251.

⁴ Sutton, *Manor Rolls*, Hen. VI.—Hen. VIII.

of age, which is required complete; the third, he ought of right to be priest within twelvemonth after that he is parson without he had a dispensation from Rome which I am certain cannot be had.' Margery Paston relied on a custom prevalent to a certain extent in those days to secure the benefice for her son in future years by placing a temporary incumbent in the cure. To secure her purpose she asked her husband 'if he knew any young priest in London that setteth bills upon St. Paul's door peradventure would be glad to have it [*i.e.* the cure] and would be glad also to serve my lady & my mother for a season.'

Travelling.

Travelling was difficult and tedious; the journey from Caistor to London was accomplished in three days. The transit of goods was managed by means of hoys which hugged the coast, and by carriers' carts, the drivers of which were not always honest. A habit existed of 'brochyng' the parcels placed in their keeping. The roads were kept in repair at the expense of private individuals by hermits who received gifts for that purpose. All burgesses were expected to keep in good repair that part of the road and highway alongside their dwellings. John Payn, of St. Nicholas's parish, Ipswich, left a sum of forty pence to the hermit of St. Augustine, a parish without the borough walls, to mend the way near his house; William Warde, hermit of Beccles, maintained the great bridge and its chapel in a state of repair; William Sewell was admitted as burgess on condition that he built anew the Grey Friars' Bridge, Ipswich; and the hermit of Lynn received an annuity of thirteen shillings to keep the town bridge in order. Green faggots were used to mend defective places in the highways, and benighted travellers had but the dimly lighted lanterns placed on the church steeples to guide their steps over irregular paths and broken ways. When Bow steeple was rebuilt in 1478, it was decided that the lanterns should be placed on it only during the winter time. Numerous steeples were added to churches at this period, probably to serve as landmarks.

Although superstition, irreverence, and laxity in morals Religion. regulated men's actions and mode of life, religious persecution was not carried on to any great excess. It is true that John Goos suffered martyrdom for his faith on Tower Hill in 1474; that the works of Wyclif and Pecock were committed to the flames at Oxford in 1476; and that on March 14, 1468, 'by the command of the Cardinal Archbishop, a certain notorious heretic came to Canterbury, and with a contrite spirit did penance. Before the procession, clad only in his shirt & trousers, he bore a fagot of wood upon his back. He listened to a sermon wherein declaration was made of his heretic doctrines to the confusion of the penitent. The text selected was Heb. ix. 12, and explanation was given concerning the Sacraments of the Church as held by the faithful, and taught by all Catholics to be firmly believed.'¹ At the Ipswich Great Court, held in 1467, one Samuel Naylor was fined sixpence, in that 'contra fidem catholicam utitur arte heretica.' It may be that Naylor was a necromancer. Great reliance was given to the words of astrologers, who were consulted as to success in rebellions. Sudden death was ascribed to the wrath of Heaven. 'The fate of John Swift, the despiser of Papal interdicts, who was struck dead, the face and whole body turning black and sending forth a foetid odour, was held up as a warning to the irreligious.'² The destruction of a belfry, or the uprooting of a tree planted for disport in the pavement of Leadenhall during the raging of a fierce storm, was ascribed to the working of a malignant spirit.

Plagues and pestilences were of frequent occurrence; Public health. the years 1457, 1465, 1466, and 1471 were notable years for sickness.³ So fiercely did the plague rage in the year 1471 that a great procession was held in the city of Canterbury, and after the procession Mass was said by the prior, each monk

¹ *Chronicle of John Stone*, p. 108.

² Gairdner, *Letters and Papers illustrative of the Reigns of Richard III. and Henry VII.* pp. 95, 236.

³ *Chronicle of John Stone*, pp. 67, 93, 117

assembled in the choir holding a wax torch which he carried after the Mass where he willed, 'et post hæc cessavit pestilencia.' The medical art was practised by physicians, leeches, and quacks. Jaques Fries was physician to Edward IV., and 'William Hobbs physician and surgeon for the same king's body.' John Clark, this king's apothecary, received 10*l.* for divers medicines provided against the plague; and also the sum of 13*l.* 10*s.* 7½*d.* for divers kinds of medicines, 'ciripp alexandrines, botellis, electuary, the king's gift to the Duke of Gloucester for use against the Scots.'¹

The army for which this medical store was supplied was victorious in its expedition. On its return Edward IV. ordered a general procession, and at night bonfires to be made at every man's door 'as on myddsommer nyghte.'² Stow gives a vivid description of the processions held on the vigils of St. John the Baptist and of St. Peter and St. Paul. These numerous bonfires assisted to purify the air polluted from the accumulation of filth upon the local 'col-hills,' or manure heaps.

Festivities
and sports

Every opportunity was taken to indulge in feasting and in drinking, both in public and in private. 'Whenever there was a stir in the air, a revolution, a law suit or an expected invasion, the wines, red and white, sweet and dry, began to flow in gallons.'³ The day of birth and baptism brought its feast; nuptials were celebrated with banquetings; funeral rites were not complete until mourners, neighbours, and the ever-attending poor had observed the day over their cups. Priest and people celebrated the day so long as the 'ale dole' lasted. The 'church ale,' or village wake, was a day of conviviality and sport. There were wrestling in the fields, martial exercises in the streets, dancing to the tambourine by maidens before the doors of their masters and mistresses, and disporting in the public highways. The whole population, young and old, joined in the fun. No game was so keenly enjoyed as football: it was a game

¹ Palgrave, *Antient Inventories of the Exchequer*, 20 Edw. IV.

² *Cely Letters*, p. 113.

³ Report of Royal Commission on Historical MSS. vol. ix. Pt. I. p. 144.

which royal ambassadors indulged in to while away the tedious hours of waiting for an absentee. So vigorous was the play that the Archbishop of Rheims was incapacitated from his labours owing to a severe 'shinner' which he had received.¹ Severe laws inflicting monstrous penalties were not able to suppress this sport. There was a belief current in Stow's days that the excessive amount of dicing and gambling then prevalent was due to the attempts made to put down outdoor sports. According to Sir James Ramsay, 'Edward IV. also thought it proper to forbid all dicing and playing at "the cardes," except during the twelve days at Christmas. This seems to be the first notice of playing cards in English history.'² The royal household found delight in games of chess and 'marelles.' For the latter game 'two foxes and forty-six hounds of silver overgilt' were purchased to form two sets. One of the earliest festivals of the year was held on the second Monday after Easter Monday, and was known as Hokeday. From the Sudbury Manorial Roll, 1468 *et seq.*, we find that the court leet was held 'die Lune voc. Hokday.' At this court the tenants gave to the lady of the manor for themselves 'et decennariis suis ex antiqua consuetudine, 13s. 4d.' At the Chilton leet court this payment was made in the year 1467 and in following years, 'die Martis voc. Hoktewesday.'³ Upon these days collections were made on Monday by the men from the women, and on Tuesday by the women from the men, to furnish necessaries for the 'potatio de ecclesia sive repast voc. Church-ale.'

The most remarkable feature of the age was the extravagance in dress which pervaded all classes, and was indulged in by both sexes. The clergy and monks in the cloister padded their shoulders with bolsters, and wore short indecent garbs of varied hues. They preferred money to clothing that they might select their own attire. Inordinate length of

Dress

¹ Hook, *Lives of the Archbishops of Canterbury*, vol. v p. 232.

² *York and Lancaster*, vol. ii. p. 285.

³ *Manor Rolls*, temp. Ed. IV., Record Office.

gowns, 'trailing in the dung and in the mire,' long loose gowns, opened to display magnificent silk linings, embroidered with handsome furs and velvet, gave way to short striped or parti-coloured tunics, which exposed to view tight-fitting hose of many colours. Shoes, long and peaked, short and broad, varied also in colour and manufacture. Great pride was manifested in the adornment of the feet on Sundays and holidays: the custom was carried so far that it was found necessary to pass a law forbidding shoemakers to shoe men and women on Sunday.¹ Gowns and cloaks, robes and dress, hose and socks, were worn of those colours which were suitable to the Church's seasons and festivals. The lord mayor and aldermen were accustomed to be present to hear sermons 'in their violets at Paul's on Good Friday, and in their scarlets at the Spital in the holydays, except Wednesday in violet, and the mayor and his brethren on Low Sunday in scarlet at Paul's Cross.' Two yards of cloth 'mustard villars,' a colour out of use in Stow's day, were sufficient for an officer's gown. City functionaries received four yards of broad cloth, rowed or striped athwart with a different colour to make a gown, called a ray gown, which was then the livery of the mayor, and also of the sheriffs, but each differing from others in the colours. Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, clad his band of six hundred men all in red jackets, embroidered with ragged staves before and behind.²

Significant dress was worn at funerals: five men in black attended to signify the five wounds of our Lord, and five women dressed in white represented the five joys of the Virgin. The variety of wearing apparel which comprised a wardrobe is seen in the many bequests enumerating the different garments given to friends. A violet gown with a red hood to one, to another a green gown and amber beads, to a third a blue cloak and a green girdle, to the fourth a black gown. With an equal show of affection gifts were made from the same wardrobe of six pairs of shoes, scarlet,

¹ *London under Elizabeth*, p. 329.

² See also Hook, *Lives of the Archbishops*, vol. v. p. 239.

red, violet, black, and green. Henry VII. sent to Earl Desmond three changes of dress to be worn according to the prevailing fashion. The quality of cloth was then such as to ensure durability; says, worsteds, blankets, friezes, were all of good strong texture. Complaints were lodged by the Bristol weavers that bad cloth of foreign manufacture was brought into the city to be dyed that it might be passed off to customers as produce from English looms. Alum was largely imported into that city for dyeing purposes. This product was originally brought from Asia Minor; but in 1462 newly discovered mines were worked at La Tolfa, which brought in handsome revenues to the papal exchequer. The dress of women was as richly embroidered and adorned as were men's robes; in some instances the priestly garb could with difficulty be recognised from female attire. The clergy were often recipients of gowns from the wardrobes of women. Skins of the badger, rabbit, and lamb, as well as a foreign fur known as 'frend,' were used for linings. The most handsome part of a woman's dress was her zone or girdle, called a 'rybbend,' or 'rybbond.' It was made of rich silk of various colours, harnessed with silver and adorned with jewels. From it were suspended a 'langet' or long pair of beads, of jet, amber, or coral, and a silver chain to which a 'muskeball' was attached. The following extracts from the Ipswich Great Court Books, 1477—'una zona vocata Rybbend cum duabus Aglets' and 'una zona voc. A Rybbond de cerico with two pendants'—seem to imply that the girdle or ribbon of silk was primarily a band of silk for the waist. Filets of velvet ornamented with precious stones and lawn kerchiefs of the finest texture covered the head.

Extravagance in dress had crept into the cloisters, as already stated, so that in the visitation of Mettingham Priory complaints were lodged that the monks even sat down to their meals with their heads uncovered, clad in short parti-coloured gowns of various fashions without hoods. The complaints against the extravagant and indecent attire of the clergy, as

set forth by Archbishop Arundel in the Constitution of the year 1400 and in the Statute 3 Edward IV. cc. 1-4, were recited continuously until the days of the Reformation.

The above are some of the phases of the 'Social Condition of England during the Wars of the Roses' which have been noticed in the course of an examination of the public and private muniments relating to a comparatively small area of the country, but it is believed that they will be found to be fairly characteristic of the social history of the nation at large.

APPENDIX.

The
calling of
Wolsey's
father.

An examination into the early life and boyhood of the great Cardinal, who was born in the year which placed Edward IV. more securely on his throne by the battle of Barnet, will throw a little light on the times when accident of birth formed no hindrance to the rise of genius. Bishop Creighton, in his monograph on Cardinal Wolsey, misled probably by the ill-founded remarks of John Cordy Jeaffreson in his 'Report on the Manuscripts of the Corporation of Ipswich,'¹ states: 'Contemporary slander, wishing to make his fortunes more remarkable, or his presumption more intolerable, represented his father as a man of mean estate, a butcher by trade. However, Robert Wolsey's will shows that he was a man of good position, probably a grazier and a woolmerchant.' The will here mentioned does not speak of any substantial wealth. Robert Wolsey possessed a house, which he had purchased for 8*l.*, and a certain amount of land. Jeaffreson, after stating that 'the rolls of Edward the Fourth's period constitute a cylindrical bundle, almost as big as a small garden roller (!),' complains that the meagre remains of the rolls for the period intervening between the reigns of Edward IV. and Elizabeth could be drawn into

¹ Vol. ix. Pt. I. p. 144.

a single parcel little larger than an ordinary bundle of firewood. He then, unmindful of the fact that the Cardinal was born in 1471, and that his father died in 1496, speaks of 'this extraordinary and suspicious hiatus in the series of curial records as the work of some person or persons who valued the missing rolls for the same considerations that will make their loss a subject for regret to the many students who wish to enlarge and solidify their slight and shadowy information concerning Wolsey's parentage, early training, and domestic story.' It is unfortunate that the writer did not consider it possible to find the information which he lamented as lost within the 'small garden-roller' bundle. His pen would then have given a graphic account of Wolsey's early days. It is clear from these records that Wolsey's father was a native of Combes, near Stowmarket, and, like some of his neighbours, practised the calling of an 'alien' butcher in Ipswich. He also carried on at the same time other trades, as brewer, innkeeper, and general dealer. The first notice alludes to his appearance before the court leet of the south ward, 1465, for keeping an 'hospicium,' whereat he sold 'victuals' for excessive gain. The fine of twelve-pence inflicted for the offence seems to indicate that he had been previously fined. The next leet roll in point of age, 6 Edward IV., shows that Robert Wolsey had moved into the west ward, and still continued the same practices for the sake of gain, selling horse-bread, hay, and oats to his customers against the assize. He was also at the same court, in company with another Stowmarket butcher, one John Woode, fined for selling bad meat in the Ipswich market and for not exhibiting the skins of the beasts which they had slain. He offended with impunity against the bylaws of the borough, heedless of the increase of the fines levied upon him for his misdemeanours during the time he resided in the west ward, 1467-1479. Apparently, notwithstanding the many fines, his calling was a profitable one, for in 1479 he purchased a house in the south ward, St. Nicholas's parish, Ipswich, where he continued until his death in 1496. His malpractices

increased on his return to his old quarters. In 1480 he was the greatest offender brought before the leet. He brewed ale and sold it in illegal measures; he provided horse provender &c. for excessive gain; he permitted his house to be used for immoral purposes; he did not maintain the street gutter before his house in good repair; he permitted his pigs to wander about at large within the borough precincts; and he defiled the highway with filth from his stables instead of placing it within the public pits. This town ordinance with respect to keeping pigs out of the streets mentioned by Mrs. Green in her 'Town Life in the Fifteenth Century,' referred to the placing of all pigs under the care of a public swineherd, who drove the pigs forth to the town pastures, and received as wages $\frac{1}{2}d.$ a head from the owner and $\frac{1}{2}d.$ from the borough exchequer daily. It is characteristic of the times that such an unscrupulous inhabitant as Robert Wolsey should, in spite of his disregard of the by-laws, be found worthy enough to be appointed churchwarden of St. Nicholas's for the year 1493. Let us hope that whilst he held office his character was more honourable than in the year in which he was indicted for selling two dozen half-penny pies containing meat unfit for human food. There was truth in the statement that the 'Carter of Yorcke was the vyle butchers sonne.'