

WOMEN IN MEDIEVAL ENGLAND ASSIGNMENT

Based **solely** on the documents provided on Blackboard, submit a five-page double-spaced paper examining the lives of women in medieval England.

I have provided you with several longer sources which offer moral and practical advice on the conduct of women. Avoid the temptation to use these sources exclusively. **Your paper should include a wide range of documents.**

The majority of the sources deal with the experiences of women from the upper class.
What was revealed about the social and economic conditions of women of this class?
Their daily activities?
Their responsibilities?
What was revealed about the material culture?

Some documents focus on the lives of women from lower classes.
What was revealed about their livelihoods?
What dangers did they encounter?

Do not simply go from document to document describing the content of each source. Identify topics you wish to discuss, and then support your statements with material from different sources.

I have attached a Source # to each document. When referencing a primary source, identify the source # following your statement.

Organize your topics.
Edit your writing.
Again, no outside sources, including the Internet, should be used.

SOURCES FOR WOMEN IN MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

Source # 1

HOW THE GOOD WIFE TAUGHT HER DAUGHTER

This poem on raising a daughter may be the product of the late fourteenth century, but it had much wider circulation in the fifteenth century.

THE good wife taught her daughter,
Full many a time and oft,
A full good woman to be;
For said she: "Daughter to me dear,
Something good now must thou hear,
If thou wilt prosper thee.

Daughter, if thou wilt be a wife,
Look wisely that thou work;
Look lovely and in good life,
Love God and Holy Kirk.[84]
Go to church whene'er thou may,
Look thou spare for no rain,
For best thou farest on that day;
To commune with God be fain.
He must needs well thrive,
That liveth well all his life,[85]
My lief[86] child. (Dear child)

Gladly give thy tithes and thy offerings both,
To the poor and the bed-ridden look thou be not loth.
Give of thine own goods and be not too hard,
For seldom is the house poor where God is steward.
Well is he proved
Who the poor hath loved,
My lief child.

When thou sittest in the church, o'er thy beads bend;
Make thou no jangling with gossip or with friend.
Laugh thou to scorn neither old body nor young,
But be of fair bearing and of good tongue.
Through thy fair bearing
Thy worship hath increasing,
My lief child.

If any man offer thee courtship, and would marry thee,
Look that thou scorn him not, whatsoever he be;[87]
But show it to thy friends and conceal it naught.
Sit not by him nor stand where sin might be wrought,
For a slander raised of ill
Is evil for to still,
My lief child.

The man that shall thee wed before God with a ring,
Love thou him and honour most of earthly thing.
Meekly thou him answer and not as an atterling,[88]
So may'st thou slake his mood,[89] and be his dear darling.

A fair word and a meek
Doth anger slake,
My lief child.

Fair of speech shalt thou be, glad and of mild mood,
True in word and in deed, and in conscience good.
Keep thee from sin, from villainy and from blame;
And look thou bear thee so that none say of thee shame,
For he that in good life hath run,
Full oft his weal hath won,
My lief child.

Be of seemly semblance, wise, and other good cheer;
Change not thy countenance for aught that thou may hear.
Fare not as a gig, [90] for nought that may betide.
Laugh thou not too loud nor yawn thou not too wide.
But laugh thou soft and mild,
And be not of cheer too wild,
My lief child.

And when thou goest on thy way, go thou not too fast,
Brandish not with thy head, nor with thy shoulders cast, [91]
Have not too many words, from swearing keep aloof,
For all such manners come to an evil proof.
For he that catcheth to him an evil name,
It is to him a foul fame,
My lief child.

Go thou not into the town, as it were agaze, [92]
From one house to another, for to seek the maze; [93]
Nor to sell thy russet, [94] to the market shalt thou go,
And then to the tavern to bring thy credit low.
For they that taverns haunt
From thrift soon come to want,
My lief child.

And if thou be in any place where good ale is aloft, [95]
Whether that thou serve thereof or that thou sit soft,
Measurably thou take thereof, that thou fall in no blame,
For if thou be often drunk, it falleth to thy shame.
For those that be often drunk-
Thrift is from them sunk,
My lief child.

Go not to the wrestling or shooting at the cock, [96]
As it were a strumpet or a giggelot [97];
Dwell at home, daughter, and love thy work much,
And so thou shalt, my lief child, wax the sooner rich.
A merry thing 'tis evermore,
A man to be served of his own store,
My lief child.

Acquaint thee not with each man that goeth by the street,
Though any man speak to thee, swiftly [98] thou him greet;
By him do not stand, but let him his way depart,
Lest he by his villainy should tempt thy heart.

For all men be not true
That fair words can shew,
My lief child.

Also, for covetousness gifts beware to take;
Unless thou know why else, [99] quickly them forsake;
For with gifts may men soon women overcome,
Though they were as true as steel or as stone.
Bound forsooth is she
That of any man takes fee, [100]
My lief child.

And wisely govern thy house, and serving maids and men,
Be thou not too bitter or too debonaire with them;
But look well what most needs to be done,
And set thy people at it, both rathe[101] and soon.
For ready is at need
A foredone [102] deed,
My lief child.

And if thy husband be from home, let not thy folk do ill,
But look who doeth well and who doeth nil;
And he that doeth well, quit him well his while,
But he that doeth other, serve him as the vile.
A foredone deed
Will another speed, [103]
My lief child.

And if thy time be strait and great be thy need,
Then like a housewife set to work with speed;
Then will they all do better that about thee stand,
For work is sooner done that hath full many a hand.
For many a hand and wight
Makes a heavy work light;
And after thy good service,
Thy name shall arise,
My lief child.

Whate'er thy household doth, about them must thou wend,
And as much as thou mayest, be at that one end,
If thou find any fault, make them soon amend,
As they have time and space, and may them defend.
To compel a deed be done, if there be no space,
It is but tyranny, without temperance and grace,
My lief child.

And look that all things be well when they their work forsake,
Forget thou not the keys into thy ward to take
And beware to whom thou trustest, and for no fancy spare,
For much harm hath fallen to them that be not 'ware.
But, daughter, look thou be wise, and do as I thee teach,
And trust none better than thyself, for no fair speech,
My lief child.

And give your household their hire at their term-day, [104]
Whether they dwell still with thee, or they wend away.
Do well by them of the goods thou hast in hold,

And then shall they say well of thee, both the young and old.
Thy good name to thy friends
Great joy and gladness lends,
My lief child.

And if thy neighbour's wife hath on rich attire,
Therefore mock not, nor let scorn burn thee as a fire.
But thank thou God in heaven for what He may thee give,
And so shalt thou, my daughter dear, a good life live,
He hath ease in his power,
Who thanks the Lord every hour,
My lief child.

Housewifely thou shalt go on the working day,
For pride, rest, and idleness take thrift away;
But when the Holy Day is come, well clothed shalt thou be,
The Holy Day to honour, and God will cherish thee.
Have in mind to worship God alway,
For much pride comes of the evil day,
My lief child.

When thou art a wife, a neighbour for to be,
Love then well thy neighbours as God hath commanded thee.
It behoveth thee so for to do,
And to do to them as thou would'st be done to.
If any discord happen, night or day,
Make it no worse, mend it if thou may,
My lief child.

And if thou art a rich wife, be not then too hard,
But welcome fair thy neighbours that come to-thee-ward
With meat, drink, and honest cheer, such as thou mayest bid, [105]
To each man after his degree, and help the poor at need.
And also for hap that may betide,
Please well thy neighbours that dwell thee beside,
My lief child.

Daughter, look that thou beware, whatsoever thee betide,
Make not thy husband poor with spending or with pride.
A man must spend as he may that hath but easy good, [106]
For as a wren hath veins, men must let her blood. [107]
His thrift waxeth thin
That spendeth ere he win,
My lief child.

Borrow not too busily, nor take thine hire first,
This may make the more need, and end by being worst.
Nor make thee not to seem rich with other men's store,
Therefore spend thou never a farthing more.
For though thou borrow fast,
It must home again at last,
My lief child.

And if thy children be rebel and will not bow them low,
If any of them misdo, neither curse them nor blow; [108]
But take a smart rod and beat them in a row,
Till they cry mercy and their guilt well know.

Dear child, by this lore
They will love thee ever more,
My lief child.

And look to thy daughters that none of them be lorn;
From the very time that they are of thee born,
Busy thyself and gather fast for their marriage,
And give them to spousing as soon as they be of age.
Maidens be fair and amiable,
But in their love full unstable,
My lief child.

Now have I taught thee, daughter, as my mother did me;
Think thereon night and day, that forgotten it not be.
Have measure and lowness, as I have thee taught,
Then whatever man shall wed thee will regret it naught.
Better you were a child unbore
Than untaught in this wise lore,
My lief child.

Now thrift and speed be thine, my sweet bairn [near or far]!
Of all our former fathers that ever were or are,
Of all patriarchs and prophets that ever were alive,-
Their blessing may'st thou have, and well may'st thou thrive!
For well it is with that child
That with sin is not defiled,
My lief child.

The blessing of God may'st thou have, and of His mother bright,
Of all angels and archangels and every holy wight! [109]
And may'st thou have grace to wend thy way full right,
To the bliss of heaven, where God sits in His might!"

Amen.

And, son, as far as you may, go on no evil quests,
Nor bear false witness in any man's matter.
It were better for you to be deaf and dumb than to enter wrongfully into a quest.
Think, son, on the dreadful doom that God shall judge us at the last!

And, son, of another thing I warn you, on my blessing
Take good heed of tavern-haunting, and of the dice, and flee all lechery,
Lest you come to an evil end, for it will lead astray all your wits
And bring you into great mischief.

And, son, sit not up too long at even, or have late suppers,
Though ye be strong and hale, for with such outrage your health shall worsen.
And of late walking comes debate, and of sitting and drinking out of time,
Therefore beware and go to bed betimes and wink.

Source #2
How the Wise Man Taught His Son

And, son, if ye would have a wife, take her not for her money,
But inquire wisely of all her life, and give good heed
That she be meek, courteous and prudent, even though she be poor;
And such a one will do you more good service in time of need, than a richer.

And if your wife be meek and good, and serve you well and pleasantly,
Look ye be not so mad as to charge her too grievously,
But rule her with a fair hand and easy, and cherish her for her good deeds.
For a thing unskilfully overdone makes needless grief to grow,

And it is better to have a meal's meat of homely fare with peace and quiet,
Than a hundred dishes with grudging and much care.
And therefore learn this well that if you want a wife to your case,
Take her never the more for the riches she may have,
Though she might endow you with lands.

And ye shall not displease your wife, nor call her by no villainous names,
For it is a shame to you to miscall a woman; and in so doing, ye are not wise,
For if ye defame your own wife, no wonder that another should do so!
Soft and fair will tame alike hart and hind, buck and doe.

On the other hand, be not too hasty to fight or chide,
If thy wife come to you at any time with complaint of man or child;
And be not avenged till you know the truth,
For you might make a stir in the dark, and afterwards it should rue you both.

Basilia, who was the wife of David Pinel ... and is 18 years old, and was the daughter of Robert Taillard of Merlawe, is in the gift of the Lord King, and she has two thirds of the aforementioned half hide of land, with her children, that is, one son and one daughter, who are in the custody of their mother ... and the son is three years old, and the daughter is two. ...

Cecily of Bowthorpe is in the gift of the Lord King; she has had two husbands, Hugh de Scotia and Eustace of Leyham. By Hugh she had three sons, and by Eustace two sons and two daughters. Reginald, her firstborn son and heir, is 24 years old; his father Eustace was of the family of the count of Meulan and a kinsman of Robert fitzHumfrey. The aforesaid Cecily is of the family of the Earl de Redvers, and she is 50 years old. Her land in Bowthorpe is worth £8 with regular stock. In the same manor Roger of Hoo holds a quarter of a knight's fee from the same Cecily, beyond the land worth £8. The aforesaid Reginald her son has a wife, the niece of the sheriff Wimer, whom, according to Wimer, he received from the King.

She who was the wife of John de Bidun the younger, Matilda by name, is in the gift of the Lord King, and she is 10 years old and was the daughter of Thomas fitz-Bernard. Her land in Kirkby is worth £6, with stock of one plow-team, and it cannot be worth more.

Questions: What facts about the women seem to have been of concern to the royal officials who compiled these records? Looking carefully at the ages given in the document, can you draw any conclusions? What does the evidence in this source tell us about marriage and family life among the nobility?

THE BOOK OF THE KNIGHT OF THE TOWER (1371)

(Work read by English)

The following extracts come from a book of moral instruction written in 1371 by a French knight named Geoffrey de La Tour Landry, for his three daughters, Jeanne, Anne, and Marie. The book, which was full of anecdotes borrowed from literature as well as first-hand advice offered by the father to his girls, became a popular instructional work, being copied many times in the following centuries, being translated into other medieval languages, and passing into print almost as soon as the printing press was invented. Although it presents a prescriptive and idealized picture of how young noblewomen should live, it nevertheless serves as evidence for the values and daily concerns of this social group and of one family within it.

Source #3A

Source: Rebecca Barnhouse, *The Book of the Knight of the Tower: Manners for Young Medieval Women* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

My very dear daughters, I am much older than you and have seen the world longer than you have, so I'll teach you about the world according to my own knowledge, which isn't large. Because of my great love for you, I want you to turn your hearts and your thoughts to God, to fear and serve him. Doing so will bring you happiness and honor in this world as well as in that other world, for certainly all the true happiness, honor, and all of a person's good name comes from God and from the grace of his holy spirit. All things happen according to his pleasure and rule, and he returns a hundredfold all the service done to him. Therefore, my dear daughters, it is good to serve such a Lord.

How matins and hours ought to be said

Because the first work that man and woman must do is to adore and worship our Lord and to say his service, as soon as you wake up you ought to acknowledge him as your Lord and maker and remember that you are his creature. Say your matins, hours, and prayers, and give thanks and praise him. ... It is better to thank and bless our Lord God than to ask him for things. The requesting, the demanding, and the giving of rewards and praise is the office of the angels, who always give thanks, honor, and praise to God. We should thank God instead of asking things of him because he knows better than we do what is good for a man or woman.

Before going to sleep, we ought to pray for those who are dead. Also, we should pray for those who pray for dead men. And don't forget the blessed and sweet Virgin Mary, who prays for us night and day. Commend yourself to the holy saints of heaven, and when that is done, then you may go to sleep.

How good daughters ought to fast until they are married

Also, my dear daughters, you ought to fast three or four days a week until you're married. It's important to subdue your flesh so it won't become aroused, and this will keep you pure and sound in the service of God, for which you will be doubly rewarded. If you can't fast three days, at least fast on Fridays in honor of Christ's suffering. And if you can't eat just bread and water, at the very least don't eat anything that has to be killed. ... It's also good to fast on Saturday in honor of Our Lady and her virginity, because she will help keep you chaste, and will help keep evil temptations from mastering you. This is a great victory over the flesh and a very holy thing – and it's not that difficult to get used to. It's as natural as hearing Mass and saying your hours and doing holy works, just as the holy women in the lives of the saints have done.

How good women ought to comport themselves courteously

My daughters, be gracious and modest because you will earn both the grace of God and the love of all people in this way. Courtesy overcomes wretches. ... Courtesy is the path to friendship and all worldly love, and it can vanquish the high spirits and anger of all creatures. ...

Therefore, my fair daughters, show courtesy to the people of lower classes and do them honor, and speak to them fairly and sweetly, and answer them courteously, and they will give you greater reverence, more praise, and more renown than will the great, because the honor and courtesy that's given to the great estates is but their right. But that which is done to small gentlemen and gentlewomen and to others of lesser degree – that honor and courtesy comes of a noble and courteous heart. The low or poor man or woman to whom it is given is happy to receive it and gets great pleasure from it.

How young maidens ought not to turn their heads thoughtlessly here and there

Daughters, don't be like the tortoise or the crane, which turn their heads above their shoulders, winding their heads here and there like a weathervane. Instead, hold yourselves steadfast like the hare, a beast that always looks in front of him without turning his head all about. Always look directly in front of you and if you must look to the side, turn

your face and your body together, holding yourself firm and sure, for those who frivolously cast their eyes about and turn their faces here and there are mocked. ...

And thus ... don't cast your eyes about at others, nor turn your neck here and there, and don't be too full of words, for one who speaks too much isn't thought to be wise. You should understand before you answer, and if you pause a little before you do, you will answer better and more wisely. ...

And therefore, my fair daughters, all gentlewomen and noble maidens of good lineage ought to be quiet, modest, mature, steadfast in manner, and of little speech. They should answer courteously, and not move restlessly nor cast their sight around easily. Those who haven't acted the way they should have lost their marriages.

Of those who are the first to take new fashions

Fair daughters, I beg you not to be the first to try new fashions. Instead, be the last and wait the longest, especially when it comes to new fashions of women from foreign regions. ... [For] you should dress moderately according to the way good women dress in this region. Don't be the first to wear the fashions of foreign women because you'll be mocked and scorned.

But God have mercy on us this day because some will never rest until they have a copy of the new fashion of new kind of gown, and will say to their husband daily, "Such and such a thing would look good on me, and it's very beautiful, and I tell you I must have it."

And her husband says to her, "My love, such a one may have it, but others who are wiser than she is don't."

"What do I care how they dress?" the woman says, and she keeps giving reasons why she must have it. But these women who have their hearts most set on worldly pleasures aren't very wise.

There's currently a habit among serving women of lower classes to wear fur on their collars that hangs down to the middle of their backs, and they also wear fur on their heels, which get all daubed with dirt. I don't recommend this for either winter or summer. It would be better in the winter for them to take the fur that hangs around their heels and put it on their stomachs, because that has more need of heat than their heels, and in summer it would be better not to wear it at all, because it shelters flies.

However, I don't intend to speak against other ladies in this book, but instead to speak to my own daughters, and the women and servants of my house, to whom I may say what pleases me, according to my own will.

Of those who gladly go to feasts and jousts

Don't be overdesirous of going to such feasts, because feasts and revels have been the cause by which many good ladies and gentlewomen lose their reputations. Of course, sometimes they must obey their husbands and their relatives and go to feasts. But my daughters, if you do go because you can't easily refuse, when night comes and the dancing and singing begins, keep yourselves away from it and always have some of your relatives or servants by you. Then if the torches or lights are quenched, they will stay by you to protect you from evil eyes and evil tongues who spy and say more harm than exists. Then you will keep your honor, your name, and your good reputation against liars who will always say evil things and forget the good.

How men ought to love according to their own estate and degree

[Here the girls' mother speaks to their father:] "Sir, I do not want them to take pleasure with those who are of lower estate or degree than they are. No unmarried woman should set her love on a man of lower rank than she is. If she did, her family and friends would consider her degraded. Those who love such people act against their honor, for people ought to desire nothing as much as the honor and the friendship of the world. That's all lost as soon as she takes herself away from their governance and counsel. I could tell you examples of many who have been dishonored in this way and hated by their relatives and friends.

"And therefore, Sir, I, their mother, forbid them to set their love on one of lower degree than their own. Nor should they have as their lord one of higher estate, for the great lords won't take them as wives, but they deceive them to have the delights and pleasures of their bodies, and to bring them to the folly of the world."

How women ought to be charitable according to the example of Our Lady

Every good woman ought to be as charitable as the holy lady who gave the greatest thing she had for the love of God. By her example, Saints Elizabeth, Lucy, and Cecelia and many other holy ladies were so charitable that they gave most of their belongings to the poor, as you can read in their legends.

I want you to know about a good lady of Rome. While she was at Mass she saw a poor woman who was shaking from cold. The good lady had pity on her and privately called to her and took her to her house, which wasn't far away, to give her a good furred gown. While they were gone, the priest who was saying the Mass couldn't speak a word. The moment she returned, however, he spoke as he had before. Afterwards he saw in a vision why had had lost his speech and how God praised the lady's gift before his angels. Every good woman should be as charitable as this lady and not allow her poor neighbors to suffer from cold or hunger or other ills, but ... help them as far as [her] power reaches.

How it is good to shelter and receive the servants and ministers of God in your house

It's good to harbor the servants of God, that is to say the preachers and those who preach the faith. In the same way, we should shelter pilgrims and the poor people of God, as the Holy Gospel tells us. There it says that on the great and dreadful day – Judgment Day – God will ask whether men have visited and sheltered poor people in his name. Then every man and woman must give a reckoning of how they have used their earthly goods. Thus, it is a virtue to shelter the poor and the servants of God, for good may come of it.

Every woman ought to have pity when she sees that somebody wrongs the poor people of God, who are his servants. In the Gospels he says, that which is done to my servants in my name is done to me. And he says more: he will have mercy on those who have been full of pity. Concerning this, the sage says that a woman ought by her nature to be sweeter and more compassionate than a man, for a man should be firmer and of higher spirit. Therefore, those whose hearts are neither meek nor full of pity may be called mannish. Further, the sage says in the book of wisdom that a woman by her nature ought not to stint on things that come easily to her, like tears and a humble heart that has pity for poor parents whom she sees suffering great need.

A father's advice to his daughters, c. 1372¹⁹ [From T. Wright, ed., *The Book of the Knight of La Tour Landry*, Early English Text Society, original series, XXXIII, 1868, revised edition 1906, chapters 10, 18, 53, 90, 96; in English.]

Daughters, you must be meek and courteous, for there is no greater virtue to get the grace of God and the love of all people; for humility and courtesy overcome all proud hearts, just as you may tame a sparrowhawk, be he never so wild, with good and courteous behaviour, and make him come from the tree to your hand... Also I have known many ladies and gentlewomen who have gained much love from great and small by courtesy and humility. Therefore I teach you to be courteous and humble to great and small, to show courtesy and respect, to speak to them kindly, and to be meek in answer to the poor, and they will praise you and give you a better name and reputation than will the great men whom you are courteous to. The great receive the courtesy which is their due, but the courtesy shown to poor gentlemen and others of lower rank comes from a free, gentle, courteous and humble heart.

Therefore the wife ought to allow her husband to be spokesman and master, as that is her duty, and it is shameful to hear strife between them, especially in front of other people. When they are alone, she may talk to him pleasantly, and advise him to mend his ways if he has done wrong. If he can do this he will thank her very much, and say that she is acting as she should. A good woman ought to do this, like Hester the queen of Syria. Her husband the king was fierce and quick-tempered, but when he was angry she would say nothing until he had calmed down. When his anger was over, she might rule him as she pleased. This was very clever of her, and so should all women do.

Fair daughters, hold it in your heart not to put any paint or make-up on your faces which were made in God's image. Keep them as your Creator and nature have ordained. Do not pluck your eyebrows, or your temples or forehead. Do not wash your hair in anything but soap and water.

I shall give you another example of a good woman and a lady who had a daughter named Deborah whom she put to school. By virtue and

19 The Knight compiled his book for the instruction of his daughters; he felt that this was necessary because of his frequent absences from home. He compiled a similar book for his sons, but this has not survived. The book was translated into English in the fifteenth century, and printed by Caxton in 1484.

grace of the Holy Spirit, Deborah showed great patience and wisdom. She loved holy Scripture, lived a holy life, knew the secrets of God, and prophesied the future. Since she had such great wisdom, people took her advice, especially of what was to happen concerning the realm. Her husband was harsh and cruel, but through her great ability and good management she could behave in such a way towards him that she always pleased him more and more, brought him out of his anger, and made him behave peaceably towards her and all other people. With this good example in mind, young women and maidens should be put to school to learn about the virtues from Scripture, so that they may have a better idea and knowledge of their salvation, and avoid everything that is evil in manner, as did the good lady Deborah. In the same way St Katherine through her wit and learning, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, overcame the greatest philosophers of Greece, and by her learning and steadfast faith won the victory of martyrdom. Her body was taken on a twelve-day journey by the angels of Heaven to Mount Sinai where her blessed body yields oil to this day... There are men who consider that they do not want their wives and daughters to know anything of the Scriptures. It is not enough for women only to be able to read the Scriptures; every woman is the better for being able to read and know the law of God, and to have been taught to have virtue and knowledge so as to withstand the perils to the soul, and to carry out the works of salvation. That is something approved and necessary for all women.

A good woman who everywhere bears a good name for honour and goodness must always ensure that she keeps her body clean and undefiled, and refuse the delights of youth and foul pleasures. In this way she wins a good reputation and much honour, and will be numbered with the good ladies and all good women for ever; she also wins the love of God, and of her husband, and of the world, and the salvation of her soul which is the worthiest and best thing of all.

36. Letter from Adam Marsh to Eleanor de Montfort, countess of Leicester, c. 1250 [From J. S. Brewer, ed., *Monumenta Franciscana*, 2 vols, Rolls Series, London, 1858-82, I, pp. 294-6; in Latin]

Friar Adam to the illustrious Lady Eleanor, countess of Leicester.

I have written briefly because there is no time to write more. From that sentence of God which says, 'Let us make for him a helper similar to him' [Genesis, chapter 2, verse 18], we are clearly instructed, since

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Friar Adam to the illustrious Lady Eleanor, countess of Leicester.

I have written briefly because there is no time to write more. From that sentence of God which says, 'Let us make for him a helper similar to him' [Genesis, chapter 2, verse 18], we are clearly instructed, since

the wife is bound very strictly to the husband, that through constant strength, prudence and discretion, and the clemency of kindness, the yoke of help and zeal apply to everything affecting the worship of God, or the just life, or right judgement. On account of this, every conjugal feeling which does not fulfil it in every way is convicted of damnably violating the individual sharing of life which she swore to keep undefiled according to the law of marriage. On this departure from duty, minds are above all proved to incur guilt when through the demonic furies of anger they are not afraid of disturbing the very loving peace of marriage. Therefore there occurs this formidable statement, 'Propensity to anger kills the stupid man, that is in spirit, and envy murders the young.' Truly through anger gentleness is abandoned, the likeness to the divine image is spoiled, wisdom is ruined, life is lost, justice relinquished, companionship destroyed, harmony broken, truth clouded. From anger there come forth quarrels, mental passion, insults, clamour, indignation, feebleness of mind, and blasphemies. Of necessity melancholy follows from which are born malice, rancour, feebleness of mind, despair, sluggishness over precepts, and the mind wandering towards illicit things. In anger the heart beats quickly, it urges excitement, it drives the tongue to evil-speaking, it devastates the mind within, it generates hatred of those most dear, and it dissolves the treaty of friendship. Let it not be that so cursed a scourge drives a spirit exalted with such manifold glory of illustrious titles into the detestable ignominy of the fatal abyss! Let the gentlest grace of the most pious Virgin help, I pray, with the blessed Author of peaceful love, so that the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your heart and mind.

Nor is my acuteness of clear reflection to be wondered at, I beseech you, in that I pursued the most serious matter more zealously with the eloquence of the saints. For the rest, why does more lascivious dress lead matronly modesty into sinister suspicion? Surely the harlots were not different from chastity in expression and appearance? Who is there who does not curse this madness which is carried on from day to day at so great a cost, with so many occupations ministering to the insane fondness for superfluous decoration, through which both the Divine Majesty is provoked and worthy countenances offended, except that it is pleasing to the wantonness of the pimps? Is it not a wrong to the Divinity to make up a face which it embellished with the gift of beauty with I do not know what exotic follies? Let us hear the divine Apostles among whom the chief said, 'Women should be subject to their husbands, so that if any men do not believe the Word, they may gain

from the conversation of women, reflecting in fear on holy talk. Be not outwardly concerned with hair or wealth or clothes; he who in the depths of his heart has the incorruptibility of a quiet and modest spirit is rich in the sight of God' [First epistle of St Peter, chapter 3, verses 1-4]. The teacher of the Gentiles, who became all things to all men so that all might gain, proclaims to all people, 'Women should dress themselves with modesty and sobriety, not with curled hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly robes, but, as is fitting, showing piety through good works.' Would that the heart should be open! How great is the fear of the terrified heart because it is proper to insist, among so many concerns for salvation, on opposing the follies of such great destruction. Unless it is stopped by this sort of foolishness, such necessary talk on the business of salvation would concentrate on the very splendid diligence of your piety. Not in vain do I beseech you, on account of God's wounds, I shall have launched weapons of heavenly emulation into the holy heart; I trust that, by Divine mercy, the more unrestrained extravagance of dress, protracted by so lasting an ignorance, will henceforth fall inwardly into neglect on account of the eagerness for worthy maturity. May I be pardoned, I entreat, because in anxious solicitude I have not held back the rod of bitter chiding, nay rather of persuasion leading to salvation, since I do not know whether the divine element is allowed to live in the flesh until I, who am eager for your advancement, may enjoy a talk with you. I am unwilling to finish this letter. For the talk should be extended to greater length on as many matters as possible, if opportunity were given.

Farewell to your dearest excellence. Farewell illustrious earl. Farewell also to your excellent offspring. May your worthy house also remain in Christ and the most blessed Virgin.

156. The daily life of Cecily duchess of York, c. 1485-95⁶¹ [From *A Source #6* *Collection of Ordinances and Regulations for the Government of the Royal Household*, London, Society of Antiquaries, 1790, pp. 37-9; in English]

Orders and rules of the princess Cecily.

A concise account of the order, rules and organisation of the household of the most excellent princess Cecily, late mother of the most noble prince, King Edward IV.

It seems to me necessary to understand her own routine concerning God and the world.

She is accustomed to rise at seven o'clock and her chaplain is ready to say with her matins of the day and matins of Our Lady. When she is fully ready, she hears a Low Mass in her chamber and after Mass she takes some breakfast. She goes to the chapel to hear the divine service and two Low Masses, and from there to dinner. During dinner, she hears a reading on a holy subject, either Hilton on the contemplative and active life, Bonaventure on the infancy of the Saviour, the Golden Legend, St Matilda, St Katherine of Siena, or the Revelations of St Bridget.⁶² After dinner she gives audience for an hour to all who have any business with her. She then sleeps for a quarter of an hour. After sleeping she continues in prayer until the first bell rings for Evensong. Then she enjoys a drink of wine or ale. Without delay her chaplain is ready to say both evensongs with her, and, after the last bell has rung, she goes to the chapel and hears Evensong sung. From there she goes to supper where she repeats the reading which was heard at dinner to those who are in her presence. After supper she spends time with her gentlewomen in the enjoyment of honest mirth. One hour before going to bed she takes a cup of wine, and then goes to her private closet where she takes her leave of God for the night, bringing to an end her

⁶¹ The duchess's daily routine forms the first part of these household ordinances and this is followed by the rules for the household, showing that even when the lady was living a devout life the household still needed to be organised on a considerable scale. The first part of the document is discussed and set in context by C. A. J. Armstrong, 'The piety of Cecily, duchess of York: a study in late medieval culture', in *England, France and Burgundy in the Fifteenth Century*, London, 1983, pp. 135-56.

⁶² The Life of Christ attributed to Bonaventure was not actually by him. In her will Cecily bequeathed *The Golden Legend*, the Life of St Katherine of Siena and a book of St Matilda of Hackeborn to her granddaughter Bridget, who became a Dominican nun at Dartford priory. Her granddaughter Anne, who was prioress of Syon abbey, was bequeathed a book containing works by Bonaventure and Hilton, and a book of the Revelations of St Bridget; J. G. Nichols and J. Bruce, *Wills from Doctors' Commons*, Camden Society, old series, LXXXIII, 1863, pp. 2-3. The books of St Matilda, St Katherine and St Bridget were all mystical works. Syon was a double monastery following the Augustinian Rule as reformed by St Bridget.

prayers of the day. By eight o'clock she is in bed. I trust ~~O~~ Our Lord's mercy that this noble princess divides up the hours to his great pleasure.

The rules of the house.

On eating days at dinner there is a first dinner by eleven o'clock during the time of High Mass for carvers, cupbearers, sewers and officers.⁶³ On fasting days by twelve o'clock, a later dinner for carvers and waiters.

On eating days, supper for carvers and officers at four o'clock, and for my lady and the household at five o'clock. When my lady is served with the second course at dinner and supper the chamber and the hall are rewarded with bread and ale according to the discretion of the usher. There are no rewards from the kitchen, except to ladies and gentlewomen, the head officers if they are present, the dean of the chapel, the almoner, the gentlemen ushers, the carvers, cupbearers and sewers, the cofferer, the clerk of the kitchen and the marshal. No one dines in their offices, except only the cooks, the scullery, the saucery, the porters, and the bakers if they are occupied with baking. On Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday, the household at dinner is served with boiled beef and mutton and one roast; at supper 'leyched' beef and roast mutton.⁶⁴

On Monday and Wednesday at dinner, one boiled beef and mutton; supper, as above.

On fasting days, salt fish, one fresh fish and butter; at supper, salt fish and eggs.

Wine daily for the head officers when they are present, the ladies and gentlewomen, the dean of the chapel, the almoner, the gentlemen ushers, the cofferer, the clerk of the kitchen and the marshal.

On Friday payment is made for all kinds of fresh food. At the end of every month payment is made for all kinds of other things. The wages for the chapel are paid at the end of each quarter.

Every half year the wages are paid to the household, and livery cloth once a year. Payment of fees outside the household is made once a year.

Proclamation is made four times a year in the market towns round Berkhamsted to find out whether the purveyors, caterers and others make true payment of my lady's money or not, and whether my lady's servants pay their own debts or not; if any fault is found, a remedy is to be provided immediately in recompense.

⁶³ The rules distinguish between eating days when meat was served, and fasting days when fish was eaten. The sewer, like the carver and cupbearer, served at table.

⁶⁴ A leche could be either sweet or savoury, and was sliced, like brawn or gingerbread.

There are no breakfasts, except only for the head officers when they are present, the ladies and gentlewomen, the dean and the chapel, the almoner, the gentlemen ushers, the cofferer, the clerk of the kitchen and the marshal.

All other officers who have to meet to write up their records have their breakfast together in the Counting-house, after the writing has been done. The remains of every office are to be taken at the end of each month, to see whether the officers are in arrears or not.

Livery of bread, ale, fire and candle is assigned to the head officers if they are present, the married ladies and gentlewomen, the dean and chapel, the almoner, chaplains, gentlemen ushers, cofferers, clerk of the kitchen, the marshal, and all the gentlemen within the house if they do not sleep in the town, namely, full livery of all the above things from the feast of All Saints [1 November] to the feast of the Purification of Our Lady [2 February]; and after the Purification half livery of fire and candles until Good Friday, when the time for fire and candle ceases. To all sick men is given a privilege of having all such things as may ease them. If he is a gentleman and prefers his own diet, he has 16d for his weekly board and 9d for his servant, and nothing out of the house. If any man becomes unfit to work, he still has during my lady's life the same wages that he had when he might do best service, and 16d for his weekly board and 9d for his servant. If he is a yeoman, 12d; a groom or a page, 10d.

157. The projected pilgrimage of Sir Andrew Luttrell and his wife Elizabeth to Santiago de Compostella, 1361 [From Public Record Office, London, C54/199, m. 22; in Latin]

The king greets the mayor and bailiffs of Dartmouth or Plymouth. Because our beloved and faithful Andrew Luttrell and Elizabeth his wife and some others in their company are about to set out to [the shrine of] St James with our permission, we order you without delay to have delivered to Andrew one ship out of the ships not arrested for the passage of our beloved and faithful Richard de Stafford, seneschal of Gascony, in either of the ports of Dartmouth or Plymouth where Andrew shall choose to embark. The ship should be suitable for the passage of Andrew and Elizabeth, and twenty-four persons, men and women, and twenty-four horses in their company. Only the ships obtained for the seneschal's passage are excepted, notwithstanding certain mandates or commissions to the contrary. Witnessed by the king at Easthamstead, on 25 July.

aids became increasingly difficult to collect in the later Middle Ages, and many fathers must have had to meet the expense out of their own pockets. Stress was put on a public ceremony, often at the church door, which might be followed by a nuptial mass. The Fourth Lateran Council with its stress on the publication of banns underlined the importance attached to publicising the occasion when the parties pledged their consent.¹⁸ Afterwards, celebration was the order of the day.

Source
17

1. Letter from Margaret Paston to John Paston I, probably in 1463, commenting on possibilities for their daughter's marriage [From J. Gairdner, ed., *The Paston Letters, 1422-1509*, 4 vols, reprint of edition of 1872-75, Edinburgh, 1910, II, no. 479; in English]

To my most worshipful husband John Paston, this letter is to be delivered in haste.

Most worshipful husband,¹⁹ I recommend myself to you. May you be pleased to know that I was at Norwich this week to obtain what I needed for the winter. I was at my mother's, and while I was there a man called Wrothe came in, a relative of Elizabeth Clere's, and he saw your daughter and praised her to my mother and said that she was a good-looking young woman. And my mother asked him to get her a good marriage if he knew of any. And he said he knew of one that would amount to 300 marks a year, that is Sir John Cley's son; Sir John is chamberlain to my lady of York, and the son is eighteen years old. If you consider that the matter should be looked into further, my mother thinks that it could be obtained for less money now than later on, and that applies to this or to any other good marriage...

I pray to Almighty God to have you in his keeping. Written at Caister, Sunday after the feast of St. Martin.

From your M. Paston.²⁰

¹⁸ Banns are discussed by Sheehan, 'Marriage theory and practice', pp. 432-40.

¹⁹ The term worshipful was frequently used as a means of address, meaning honourable and respected.

²⁰ The letter refers to Margery, daughter of John Paston I and Margaret Paston, who subsequently married Richard Calle. Margaret referred to her mother-in-law, Agnes Barry, as her mother.

and said that he took the goods justly, because he had the lord king's writ directed to the sheriff of Devon to levy a reasonable aid from his fees to marry his eldest daughter, and, when all his knights had come to his court as a result of his summons, and especially the steward Richard de Chartray, they granted him twenty shillings from each fee. Because payment was not made from the ten fees that Richard de Chartray held of him, he took Walter's beasts as action against Richard, since Richard had nothing in demesne that was sufficient to pay £10.⁵¹

30. The importance of a public marriage ceremony, 1225 [From *Bracton's Note Book*, 3 vols, London, 1887, no. 1669; in Latin]

Alice who was the wife of James de Cardunville petitioned against Hugh bishop of Lincoln for one-third of two carucates of land with appurtenances in Chiselhampton as her dower with which the said James dowered her on the day that he married her. And the bishop comes and says that he does not consider that she ought to have dower because she was never married in the face of the church, but he married her in his last illness and in his house. He knows well that while he was in good health she was always his mistress, and he seeks judgment as to whether he ought therefore to give her dower.

And Alice says that indeed she was married to the same James in his illness in that house, and he placed the ring on her finger, and afterwards he got better and went from place to place. She says that the banns were announced at the three neighbouring churches for three Sundays before he married her, and he married her in the aforesaid way in his house on the day after the feast of St George [23 April], and he died on the feast of the Nativity of St John the Baptist [24 June]. Similarly she asks for judgment whether she ought to have dower or not. And because she knows that she was not married at the church door nor dowered there, it was decided that the bishop should be quit, and Alice in mercy,⁵² and she should have no dower, because James acted for the salvation of his soul and in peril of death.

Source # 8

⁵¹ Presumably Walter was a vassal of Richard de Chartray.

⁵² Alice was liable to pay an amercement because of her false claim for dower.

could be carried on wherever the lady was living. Although the changing of residences became less frequent than indicated in the 'Rules of St Robert', travel was often undertaken for a variety of purposes, the lady travelling by carriage, litter or on horseback. When the time came to move to another residence, the household packed up its belongings and moved on.

127. The governance of a noblewoman's household, c. 1241⁸ [From 'The Rules of St Robert', in Lamond, *Walter of Henley's Husbandry*, pp. 132-7, 140-1, 144-5; in French]

The ninth rule teaches you what you ought to say often to small and great of your household, that all should do your commands.

Say to all small and great, and that often, that fully, quickly, and willingly, without grumbling and contradiction, they do all your commands that are not against God.

The tenth rule teaches you the particular command that you ought to give to the marshal of your household.

Command those that govern your house before all your household that they keep careful watch that all your household within and without be faithful, painstaking, chaste, clean, honest and profitable.

The thirteenth rule teaches you how by your commandment peace shall be kept in your household.

Command that in no way there be in your household any who make strife, discord, or divisions in the household, but all shall be of one accord, of one will as of one heart and one soul. Command that all those who are your yeomen⁹ be obedient and ready to those who are over them in the things which belong to their occupation.

The fourteenth rule teaches you how your alms shall, by your commandment, be faithfully observed and gathered, and discreetly spent on the poor.

Command that your alms be faithfully gathered and kept, not sent from the table to the grooms, nor carried out of the hall, either at

⁸ See no. 109 for the 'Rules' for the governance of estates.

⁹ The French term used here, *seriaunz de mester*, means literally 'workers at a craft'. However, the term is used in other households (e.g. Public Record Office, London, E101/92/23) as an intermediate rank between esquires and grooms, and it is likely that this is the meaning here.

The twenty-sixth rule teaches how at Michaelmas you may arrange your sojourn for all the year.

Every year, at Michaelmas, when you know the measure of all your corn, then arrange your sojourn for the whole of that year, and for how many weeks in each place, according to the seasons of the year, and the advantages of the country in flesh and in fish, and do not in any wise burden by debt or long residence the places where you sojourn, but so arrange your sojourns that the place at your departure shall not remain in debt, but something may remain on the manor, whereby the manor can raise money from increase of stock, and especially cows and sheep, until your stock acquits your wines, robes, wax, and all your wardrobe, and that will be in a short time if you hold and act after this treatise, as you can see plainly in this way. The wool of a thousand sheep in good pasture ought to yield at the least fifty marks a year, the wool of two thousand a hundred marks, and so forth, counting by thousands. The wool of a thousand sheep in scant pasture ought to yield at the least forty marks, in coarse and poor pasture thirty marks.

The twenty-seventh rule teaches you how much the return from cows and sheep is worth.

The return from cows and sheep in cheese is worth much money every day in the season, without calves and lambs, and without the manure, which all return corn and fruit.

The twenty-eighth rule teaches you at what times in the year you ought to make your purchases.

I advise that at two seasons of the year you make your principal purchases, that is to say your wines, and your wax, and your wardrobe, at the fair of St Botolph [Boston], what you shall spend in Lindsey and in Norfolk, in the Vale of Belvoir, and in the country of Caversham, and in that at Southampton for Winchester, and Somerset at Bristol; your robes purchase at St Ives.

supper or dinner, by good-for-nothing grooms; but freely, discreetly, and orderly, without dispute and strife, divided among the poor, sick and beggars.

The fifteenth rule teaches you how your guests ought to be received. Command strictly that all your guests, secular and religious, be quickly, courteously, and with good cheer received by the steward from the porters, ushers, and marshals, and by all be courteously addressed and in the same way lodged and served.

The sixteenth rule teaches you in what clothes your people should wait on you at meals.

Command your knights and all your gentlemen who wear your livery, that that same livery which they use daily, especially at your meals, and in your presence, be kept for your honour, and not old tabards and soiled surcoats, and imitation short hose.

The seventeenth rule teaches you how you ought to seat your people at meals in your house.

Make your freemen and guests sit as far as possible at tables on either side, not four here and three there. And all the crowd of grooms shall enter together when the freemen are seated, and shall sit together and rise together. And strictly forbid any quarrelling at your meals. And you yourself always be seated at the middle of the high table, that your presence as lord or lady may appear openly to all, and that you may plainly see on either side all the service and all the faults. And be careful of this, that each day at your meals you have two overseers over your household when you sit at meals, and of this be sure, that you shall be very much feared and revered.

The twenty-first rule teaches you how your people ought to behave towards your friends, both in your presence and absence.

Command that your knights and chaplains, and yeomen and your gentlemen, with a good manner and hearty cheer and ready service receive and honour, in your presence and out of it, all those in every place whom they perceive by your words or your manners to be especially dear to you, and to whom you would have special honour shown, for in so doing can they particularly show that they wish what you wish. And as far as possible for sickness or fatigue, constrain yourself to eat in the hall before your people, for this shall bring great benefit and honour to you.

Paid to John Multon for his pay this year, 26s 8d.
 Paid to Inge Pygot for his pay this year, 20s.
 Paid to Edmund Harsyk for his pay this year, 26s 8d.
 Paid to John Boteler for his pay this year, 26s 8d.
 Paid to Alice Chyrche, laundress of the lady, for her pay this year, 6s 8d.
 Paid to Simon Parker for his pay this year, 10s.
 Paid to Henry Chapman, yeoman of the lady, for his pay this year, 26s 8d.
 Paid to John Dyton, yeoman of the lady, for his pay this year, 33s 4d.
 Paid to friar John Nolewyche celebrating mass for the lady and for the soul of her lord, Lord Morley, and all her benefactors, £4.¹⁸
 Paid to William Stather, clerk, steward of the lady's household and receiver of the lady's money this year, £6 13s 4d.
 Paid to Richard Brandon, Augustinian friar, for celebrating a trental for the soul of Thomas Lord Morley, 10s.
 Sum total: £23 3s 4d.

Fees

Fee of John Heydon, chief steward of the lady, 66s 8d.
 Fee of Edmund Bokyngham esquire of the lady for this year, £4.
 Fee of William Jeneye retained legal expert of the lady's council this year, 26s 8d.
 Fee of Thomas Spyrk attorney of the lady for procuring writs this year, 13s 4d.
 Fee of Robert Brampton surveyor of the lady this year, 40s.
 Fee of Robert Pynnes auditor of accounts of the lady's manors and steward of the courts of the same manors, 53s 4d.
 Sum total: £14.

109. The management of lands in the mid-thirteenth century, according to 'The Rules of St Robert', said to have been written by Robert Grosseteste, bishop of Lincoln, for Margaret countess of Lincoln, c. 1241.¹⁹ [From E. Lamond, ed. and trans., *Walter of Henley's Husbandry*, Royal Historical Society, London, 1890; in French]

The first rule teaches how a lord or lady shall know in each manor all

18 Thomas Lord Morley died in 1435. Isabella was the daughter of Michael de la Pole earl of Suffolk, and Katherine Stafford, she died in 1467; C. Richmond, *Thomas Lord Morley* (d. 1416) and the *Morleys of Hingham*, *Norfolk Archaeology*, XXXIX, 1984-86, pp. 1-12.

19 'The Rules of St Robert' concern the household as well as the estates. Extracts from the Rules covering the lands are given here, and extracts concerning the household in the next chapter, no. 127.

their lands by their parcels, all their rents, customs, usages, services, franchises, fees, and tenements.

Touching your foreign lands,²⁰ to begin with, buy the king's writ, to inquire by the oath of twelve free men in each manor all the lands by their parcels, all the rents, customs, usages, services, franchises, fees, and tenements, and let this be carefully and lawfully inquired into by the most loyal and wisest of the freeholders and villeins, and distinctly enrolled, so that your chief steward may have one whole roll, and you another, and let each bailiff have what belongs to his bailiwick. And if plaintiffs come to you because of a wrong that anyone has done them, or making a petition, first look yourself at the rolls of that manor to which the plaintiff belongs, and according to them give answer and maintain justice.

The second rule teaches how you may know by common inquisition what there is on each manor, movable or not movable.

Next, cause to be made without delay right inquiry, and enrol distinctly in another roll every one of your manors in England, each by itself, how many ploughs you have in each place, small or great, and how many you can have; how many acres of arable land, how many of meadow, how much pasture for sheep, and how much for cows, and so for all kind of beasts according to their number; and what movables you have in each place of live stock;²¹ and keep this roll by you, and often look at the first roll, and this also that you may quickly know how to find what you ought to do. Let all your servants on the manors be set at a fixed sum of money; and after August let your granges be closed.

The third rule teaches the discourse that the lord or lady ought to have with their chief steward before some of your good friends.

When the aforesaid rolls and inquests have been made, and as soon as you can, that the work of your people be not hindered, call your chief steward before any of your people in whom you trust, and speak thus to him: 'Good sir, you see plainly that to have my rights set forth clearly, and to know more surely the state of my people, and of my lands, and what I can henceforth do with what belongs to me and what leave, I have caused these inquiries and enrolments to be made; now I

20 The term 'foreign lands' was probably used to denote manors other than the lady's residence.

21 Movables were personal property, goods and chattels, as distinct from property in land.

Source # 10

command or letter from you or him until threshing-time come. And then let there be sent a faithful man or servant whom the reeve shall take from that place, and another true man from the township, and all the time let them be present at the opening of the granges, and at the close, at threshing, at winnowing, at the delivery, at the survey by tally. And take care that no servant or bailiff receive the money of the returns, but only the reeve and another who shall have wherewithal to be answerable to you.

The seventh rule teaches you how you may know to compare the accounts with the estimate of the survey or the fault of your servants and bailiffs of manors and lands.

At the end of the year when all the accounts shall have been heard and rendered of the lands, and the issues, and all expenses of all the manors, take to yourself all the rolls, and with one or two of the most intimate and faithful men that you have, make very careful comparison with the rolls of the accounts rendered, and of the rolls of the estimate of corn and stock that you made after the previous August, and according as they agree you shall see the industry or negligence of your servants and bailiffs, and according to that make amendment.

110. Examples of accounts of the demesne lands of Isabella de Forz countess of Aumale: Little Humber, 1276-77; Lymington, 1280-81²⁵ [From Public Record Office, London, SC6/1078/16, m. 2d; SC6/984/9, m. 3; in Latin]

The account of Alan Anstyby, reeve of Little Humber from the morrow of Michaelmas in the fourth year of the reign of King E[dward] to the morrow of Michaelmas in the fifth year of the same reign.

Receipts. The same man renders account for £4 17s 1¼d of the arrears of the last account. 33s 4d of the same Alan's arrears from the time he was stockman. 3s 6d from the sale of manure from the cattle-shed. 48s

²⁵ A considerable collection of the ministers' accounts for the estates of Isabella de Forz survives. For general consideration of her household, administration and economic resources, see N. Denholm-Young, *Seigniorial Administration in England*, Oxford, 1937, pp. 13-21, 32-35, and 'The Yorkshire estates of Isabella de Fortibus', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, XXXI, 1934, pp. 388-420; M. Mate, 'Profit and productivity on the estates of Isabella de Forz, 1260-92', *Economic History Review*, second series, XXXIII, 1980, pp. 326-34. As accounting methods became more sophisticated, the sections for receipts and expenses were subdivided into separate paragraphs according to subject. Isabella's estates were being farmed directly, as was usual in the thirteenth and first half of the fourteenth century; the transition to a *rentier* economy came after c.1370, as exemplified by the valor of Anne Stafford.

6d from the sale of 2 oxen and 3 pigs. £32 3s 2d from the sale of 61 quarters of wheat, 25 quarters and 6 bushels of beans, and 77 quarters and 5 bushels of oats. 9s 2d from the sale of plough-service of eleven acres of land. 7d from the sale of the hide of one mare which died of murrain. 8s from the agistment of pasture of eight horses in summer.²⁶ Nothing this year from stubble. 43s 5¼d from 1 quarter and 3 bushels of wheat, and 4 quarters and 6 bushels of oats which were sold on account.²⁷ Sum total of the receipts: £43 21½d. [£44 6s 9¼d]

Expenses. The same accounts for acquittance of rent of the reeve in return for his service, 6s 8d. Iron bought for the ploughs, 2 ploughs bought new accounted for below, wages of the blacksmith with 4 yokes and other things bought for the ploughs, 7s 2d. Wax-silver at Easter, 2d. Purchase of horseshoes for three cart-horses and three halters, 9¼d. Tithe of one colt of issue for last year, 1d.²⁸ One waggon with all its equipment bought new, binding three pairs of wheels with iron, cart-clouts and nails and other things, with tallow and grease bought for the same, 6s 7d, and so more this year, because of carting for the mill at 'Lod'.²⁹ Making half a granary new, all costs included, 3s 10¼d. For thirty-two perches of embankment at 'Herdcroft' next to the River Humber newly made, and mending seventy-two perches of embankment with completing the moving of Westgot, 48s 10d.³⁰ Know that the aforesaid Alan has to maintain all embankments against the Humber belonging to the manor of Little Humber, and he will receive 10s from the countess for this. Threshing and winnowing 118 quarters and 3 bushels of wheat, 27 quarters and 3 bushels of beans, and 137½ quarters of oats, 36s 11d. 3 oxen and 5 pigs purchased, 71s. Hoeing and earthing up all the corn, 5s 4d. Mowing, spreading, tossing and gathering in 7 acres of hay, 2s 3d. Reaping, collecting and binding 75½ acres and 1 rod of wheat and 67½ acres of beans and oats, 63s 2d. In aid of carting and stacking corn in the yard, 2s 1d. Pay of four oxherds, 12s. Pay of one harrower at each sowing, 2s 3d this year on account of the variety of the weather.

Sum total: £13 9s 2d.

²⁶ This was the payment for pasturing other men's horses on the lady's land.

²⁷ This term was used when an item had to be written off.

²⁸ The term 'of issue' was used to denote an item produced on the manor, not purchased or brought from elsewhere.

²⁹ The construction of the windmill at 'Lod' is entered on m. 1.

³⁰ The perch measured 5¼ yards, just over 5 metres; there was however local variation.

Margaret also has the following knights enfeoffed of her demesnes after the death of King Henry [I]; her father and brothers enfeoffed them.

William de Cernay, $\frac{1}{2}$ knight.

William Torel, in 'Cernay', $\frac{1}{4}$ knight.

Elias Cokerel, $\frac{1}{2}$ knight.

Roger son of Alan, $1\frac{1}{2}$ knights.

Richard Murdac, one knight.

116. Letter sent by Edward III to Margaret, widow of Edmund earl of Kent, concerning the defence of the realm, 1335 [From A. Clarke, J. Caley, J. Bayley, F. Holbrooke and J. W. Clarke, eds, *Rymur's Foedera*, 1086-1383, 4 vols, Record Commission, London, 1816-69, II, p. 916; in Latin]

The king greets Margaret who was the wife of Edmund, formerly earl of Kent. As we have learned for certain, divers fleets of warships, are now massed on the sea. The same men and ships have the hostile intention of invading our kingdom, attacking and oppressing us and our people, and perpetrating other evils if possible both by land and sea. Desiring to meet their cunning and presumptuous villainy, and to provide for the salvation and defence of our realm and people, with the Lord's inspiration, and fully trusting in the maturity of your counsel and of other prelates and magnates in your region, we firmly order you in the faith and love in which you are bound to us that, leaving everything else, you should send some of the more discreet of your close advisers to London.⁵⁸ They are to be there on Friday, the morrow of the feast of St Bartholomew the apostle next [25 August], along with some of our faithful men whom we are going to send there on that day, and with certain other prelates, magnates and other faithful men who are going to gather there on our orders. They are to treat and ordain on the safe custody and secure defence of our realm and people, and on resisting and driving out the foreigners; and also on certain other matters concerning us and the state of the realm to be more fully explained to you by our aforesaid faithful men whom we are sending, and you are to give your counsel and advice on the aforesaid business. Notwithstanding this, you should meanwhile arm and array your people, so that they are well arrayed and may set out promptly with other of our faithful men for the defence of the realm and people, and

⁵⁸ The corresponding orders to magnates summoned them in person to London.

of you and yours, to repel powerfully and courageously the presumptuous boldness and malice of our same enemies, with God's help, if those enemies invade. You and the rest of our realm are bound in every possible way to give help for the defence of the kingdom against hostile invasions of this kind, especially as we are in remote parts for the realm's defence, and we are heartily assuming that you would not deservedly be blamed for any negligence or lukewarmness in so great and so arduous a business, but rather be commended for showing strength and mature counsels. Witnessed by the king at Perth on 7 August.

The same orders were sent to:

Marie who was the wife of Aymer de Valence, late earl of Pembroke.
Joan who was the wife of Thomas Botetourt.

117. The honour court of Isabella de Forz for the Isle of Wight, 1280-81.⁵⁹ [From Public Record Office, London, SC6/984/9, m. 3d; in Latin]

The account of William and Roger de Rugrigge, sergeants of the liberty from the morrow of Michaelmas in the eighth year of the reign of King Edward to the morrow of Michaelmas in the ninth year of the same reign.

Receipts. The same render account of 118s 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ d from the arrears of the last account. 53s 4d from the fine at the view of frankpledge. 7s 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ d from the relief of John the goldsmith for his tenement in Upper Clatford. 13s 4d from the abbot of Titchfield for scutage of one-third of a knight's fee in Cadnam. 13s 4d from the same abbot for making the eldest son of the countess a knight, due from the same tenement. 121s 14d from the pleas and perquisites of the court this year, and so less this year because of the eyre of the [royal] justices in the county. 56s 2d from the sale of one tun and one pipe of wine at Yarmouth and one piece of mast and boards coming from wreck of the sea at Newtown and Chale. 4s from Adam Osbern, formerly reeve of Yarmouth for his arrears.

Sum total of receipts: £28 7s 11d.

Expenses. The same account for the expenses of William the serjeant at Winchester for the eyre of the [royal] justices in the county, with his ferry-passage on divers occasions, 8s 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. Expenses of Roger de

⁵⁹ Isabella de Forz's administration of justice in the Isle of Wight is discussed by Denholm-Young, *Seigniorial Administration*, pp. 99-108.

⁶⁰ Isabella's son Thomas died before 6 April 1269.

my mantle and gown of scarlet and fur-lined, and with the French book of the duke of Lancaster, and my green primer which once belonged to my lord and father, to pray for my soul.⁷⁶

164. Extract from the will of Isabella Despenser, countess of Warwick, 1439, giving details of her tomb [From *The Fifty Earliest English Wills*, ed. F. J. Furnivall, Early English Text Society, original series, LXXVIII, 1882, pp. 116-17; in English]

In the name of God, amen. This is the testament and last will of Lady Isabella countess of Warwick, made in London on 1 December 1439. First I bequeath my soul to Almighty God, and my body to be buried in the abbey of Tewkesbury in the place that I have assigned. My great 'temples'⁷⁷ with the pale rubies are to be sold for the highest price, and the money delivered to the abbot and house of Tewkesbury so that they do not grumble about my burial or about anything that I will have done about my body. My image is to be made completely naked, with nothing on my head and the hair cast back, and is to be of the size and design that Thomas Porchalyn has made. At my head, there is to be Mary Magdalene laying my hands across [my breast]. On the right hand side of my head there is to be St John the Evangelist, and on the left St Anthony, and at my feet a scutcheon of my arms impaled with my lord's and supported by two griffins. All round my tomb poor men and women are to be depicted in their poor array with their beads in their hands⁷⁸...

165. The will of Katherine Peverel, 1375.⁷⁹ [From Lambeth Palace Library, London, Register of Simon Sudbury, fo. 90r-v; in Latin]

In the name of God, amen. On Sunday after the feast of St Luke the evangelist [21 October], 1375, I Katherine, widow of Sir Andrew

⁷⁶ This book was written by Henry duke of Lancaster and entitled *Livre de Seynt Medecines*.

⁷⁷ These were jewels worn on the forehead.

⁷⁸ The naked image reflects the contemporary view that wealth was transient and that the body would decay. This description can be compared with the tomb at Ewelme of Alice duchess of Suffolk where her naked body was depicted at the base of the tomb with her clothed figure on top. Devotion to particular saints was widespread in the late Middle Ages.

⁷⁹ This will, and those of Anne Latimer and Beatrice Lady Roos, have been given in full, in order to show how religious bequests, and those to family and servants, could vary from will to will. This was partly the result of differing religious beliefs and attitudes, but was also an individual matter. Katherine Peverel's will shows the great importance attached by many to their own locality.

Peverel knight, make my testament in this form. First I bequeath my soul to God and blessed Mary and all his saints, and my body to be buried in the monastery of Lewes according to the disposition of the prior there. Item, I bequeath twenty marks to the prior and monks there to pray for my soul. Item, I bequeath to the shrine of St Richard of Chichester, 40s. Item, I bequeath to the friars of Shoreham, 20s. Item, I bequeath to the friars of Lewes 20s. Item, I bequeath to the friars of Arundel, 20s. Item, I bequeath to the Dominican friars of Chichester, 20s. Item, to the Franciscan friars of Chichester, 20s. Item, I bequeath to the prior and convent of Hardham, 66s 8d. Item, to the prior and convent of Pynham, 20s. Item, I bequeath to the prioress and nuns of Ruspér, 66s 8d. Item, I bequeath to the prioress and nuns of Easebourne, 20s. Item, I bequeath to the abbot and convent of Dureford, 100s. Item, I bequeath to the hospital of St James of Chichester, 1/2 mark. Item, I bequeath to the hospital of St Katherine of Shoreham, 1/2 mark. Item, I bequeath to the hospital of St Mary Magdalene of Bidlington, 20s. Item, I bequeath to the hospital of [St Nicholas in] Westout in Lewes, 1/2 mark. Item, I bequeath to the hospital of St James [of Sutton] by Seaford, 1/2 mark. Item, I bequeath to Sir Robert vicar of Cowfold, 100s. Item, I bequeath to the same Robert my best horse called piebald. Item, I bequeath to Nicholas Wilcombe, 40s. Item, I bequeath to John Bysshopestoff, 100s. Item, I bequeath to Andrew Peverel, a kinsman of my lord, 40s. Item, I bequeath to Sir Robert Rett of Slindon, 40s. Item, I bequeath to Katherine Depham my maid for her marriage, 100 marks, and also half of the cloth and bed-hangings of my chamber. Item, I bequeath to William Boteller, 40s. Item, I bequeath to Walter atte Brok 40s. Item, to William the baker, one mark. Item, I bequeath to Roger Helewes 20s. Item, I bequeath to John Deubonee 20s. Item, to John the logger, 20s. Item, I bequeath to John Bayoun 13s 4d. Item, to the lord earl of Arundel my brother, [blank]. Item, to Sir Richard, son of the aforesaid earl, my second best horse. Item, I bequeath to the church of Shernbanbury 20s. Item, I bequeath to Sir John Denarkes, formerly my chaplain, 13s 4d. Item, I bequeath to Sir Richard Cösyn, formerly my chaplain, 1/2 mark. Item, to Sarah my maid, 13s 4d. Item, I bequeath to Sibyl my servant, 20s. Item, I bequeath to Richard my chamberlain, 20s. Item, I bequeath to the laundress, 1/2 mark. Item, I bequeath to Robert Seman, 100 sheep. Item, I bequeath to Katherine Depham my maid one of my horses called sorrel, or the lady's palfrey. Item, I bequeath 100s to be divided among my faithful servants in my household according to the disposition of my executors. To ordain,

know that, on account of the sincere love and deep affection which we have towards our very dear grandmother Joan countess of Hereford, we have granted her for life all the game within our forest of Hatfield, to have as our gift. The countess or her servants may hunt in the forest in summer and winter as often as she pleases, and carry away the beasts of the chase taken there, and dispose of them as she wishes, without any interference or hindrance from us or any of our foresters or officials whatsoever. In testimony of this, we have had drawn up these our letters patent. Witnessed by the king at Westminster on 9 January.

138. Examples of plate, furnishings and jewellery bequeathed by Philippa countess of March, 1378⁷⁴ [From Nichols, *Collection of All the Wills of the Kings and Queens of England*, pp. 99-101; in French]

Item, I bequeath to the church of Bisham all my chapel complete with all its appurtenances, namely vestments, books, chalices, cruets, silver candlesticks, painted and embroidered tablets, to serve at the altar of St Anne, before which altar my body will be buried in the second arch opposite my most honoured lord, my father, on whose soul may God have mercy; with the exception of my best vestments with three copes to match which I bequeath to the abbey of Wigmore, and my white vestments which I bequeath to the house of Limebrook. I bequeath to the same altar of St Anne the best tablet of gold that I bought from John Paulyn. I bequeath to serve at the same altar of St Anne two silver basins with the arms of Mortimer and Montagu in enamel on the base. Item, I bequeath to Edmund my son a bed of blue taffeta embroidered with asses marked on the shoulder with a rose, namely a complete canopy, three curtains of taffeta, a quilt embroidered to match, four tapestry hangings, six hangings of worsted, one canvas, one mattress, two pieces of fustian, a white counterpane, a pair of linen sheets, a coverlet of worsted for the same bed, a blue coverlet lined with trimmed minever, a kerchief of minever and blue camaka, one cup and an ewer of crystal garnished with gold. Item, [to Edmund] one gold ring with a ruby enamelled with russet. Item, to Edmund my son one gold ring with a piece of the true Cross and the inscription, 'In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, amen'. Item, to Edmund a

⁷⁴ For other examples of furnishings, see nos. 68, 69. Philippa was the daughter of William Montagu earl of Salisbury, and this explains her burial in the priory founded by her father at Bisham. Wigmore and Limebrook were both Mortimer foundations.

blue clasp with two hands holding a diamond. Item, a pair of rosaries with the beads of red crosses enamelled; to keep the aforesaid ring with the true Cross, the clasp and rosaries with my blessing. Item, to Edmund one silver goblet with cover with the escutcheon of the arms of Mortimer. Item, to the same Edmund one gilt goblet with cover decorated with a rose.

139. Examples of plate and furnishings bequeathed by Matilda Lady St John, 1452. [From Lambeth Palace Library, London, Register of John Kemp, fo. 314r; in Latin]

Item, I bequeath to Thomas St John, my son, two silver basins engraved with the arms of my lord, his father. Item, I bequeath to the same Thomas twelve dishes, four salt-cellars and three chargers of silver ... Item, I bequeath to the same Thomas one bed of red worsted embroidered with parrots, with the tester and everything for it. Item, I bequeath to the same Thomas one whole bed of silk with the tester of black worsted and everything for it. Item, I bequeath to the same six livery beds. Item, I bequeath to the same Thomas one missal with one chalice and two cruets of silver. Item, I bequeath to the same Thomas one vestment of blue and red velvet, with the whole apparatus for the altar. Item, I bequeath to the same Thomas all my great bed of arras with all its equipment. Item, I bequeath to the same Thomas all my green tapestry hanging in the chamber with the bankers for the same.⁷⁵ Item, I bequeath to the same Thomas one great mattress with two pieces of fustian and six pairs of linen sheets.⁷⁶ Item, I bequeath to the said Thomas all my bed of black and white worsted with all its equipment. Item, I bequeath to John Halsham my son one little bed of tapestry with little green hangings, one mattress, one pair of blankets and two pairs of linen sheets. Item, I bequeath to the said John one basin with one ewer of silver, with the borders engraved with holly leaves ...

140. Examples of the lady's dress from the accounts of Mary de Bohun, countess of Derby, 1387-88⁷⁷ [From Public Record Office, London, DL28/1/2, fos 19-25; in Latin]

⁷⁵ Bankers were the tapestry coverings for benches.

⁷⁶ Fustian was a strong cloth, made of cotton, or a mixture of cotton and flax.

⁷⁷ These accounts are arranged under the types of cloth or fur. The purchase of each type of cloth is given, followed by the way in which it was used for the lady, her children, retainers and servants. Select examples have been translated.

68. Elizabeth de Burgh's bequests to the Bardolf family; the will is dated 1355, but Elizabeth did not die until 1360 [From Lambeth Palace Library, London, Register of Simon Islip, fos 165v-166r; in French]

Item, I bequeath to my daughter Bardolf my bed of green velvet striped with red with whatever belongs to it, with one coverlet of fine cloth lined with pured minever, a half coverlet to match, and a kerchief of blue samite lined with ... and one coverlet of tawny motley lined with gris.⁶³ Item, I bequeath to my said daughter a great room of worsted-hangings, with blue parrots and cockerels on a tawny field, and whatever belongs to them. Item, I bequeath to my said daughter my great carriage with the horse-cloths, hangings and cushions, and whatever belongs to it.⁶⁴ Item, I bequeath to Sir John Bardolf and to my said daughter, his wife, jointly in my manors of Caythorpe and Clopton 26 quarters of wheat for seed for the winter season, and 7 quarters and 4 bushels of maslin and rye.⁶⁵ Item, for the Lent season 17 quarters and 4 bushels of peas, 37 quarters and 4 bushels of barley, 9 quarters and 4 bushels of dredge,⁶⁶ and 22 quarters and 1 bushel of oats, 4 cart-horses, 12 draught animals, 22 oxen, together with my carts and ploughs which belong to the said manors, and all their apparatus.⁶⁷ Item, I bequeath to my young daughter [grand-daughter] Isabel Bardolf to help her to marry one goblet of gold plate, two great cups partly enamelled, and twelve large silver dishes, my bed of pure sendal⁶⁸ with a coverlet of grey motley lined with minever. Item, to Agnes her sister to help her to marry one silver cross, two candlesticks, two salt-cellars, one goblet, one great almsdish, one goblet of embossed silver, one incense-boat, one censer, one clasp with the Annunciation depicted on it, and six new silver chargers. Item, to the said Agnes a bed of indigo of which the hangings and coverlet are of woollen cloth, and one blue coverlet lined with gris.

63 Bequests of beds in medieval wills meant bequests of their hangings and furnishings, not of the wooden bed itself. The nature of the kerchief's lining is not clear in the manuscript, but was presumably some sort of fur. Samite was a heavy silk material; gris was the grey back of the winter skins of the Baltic squirrel; Veale, *English Fur Trade*, p. 228.

64 This type of carriage, drawn by five destriers, is depicted in the Luttrell psalter; J. Backhouse, *The Luttrell Psalter*, British Library, London, 1989, pp. 50-1.

65 Maslin was a mixture of wheat and rye.

66 Dredge was a mixture of barley and oats.

67 These manors were to pass to the Bardolfs, but, unless agricultural equipment was specifically bequeathed, it counted as the property of the executors.

68 Sendal was a silk material.

source
14

Will 5

brother, 12d. Also, I leave to Dame Cecily a best brass pot and to my cousin Christiana a brass pot. Also, I leave 6 marks [~~£4~~] for the use of a chaplain saying mass for my soul in the said church of Thursby. Also, I leave the residue of my goods pertaining to me to my lord, Sir Richard de Denton. I appoint these my executors to carry out faithfully my will, viz. my lord, Richard de Denton and his brother John and William de Denton, rector of the church of Ousby. Given at Ousby the aforesaid day and year.

[b] Will of Christiana de Briswode, Dalston nr. Carlisle.

In the name of God, amen. 21 day of January 1367 was proved the will of Christiana, the wife of William son of Gilbert de Briswode of the parish of Dalston made nuncupatively in these words. In the first place she left her soul to God, the blessed Mary, and all the saints, and her body to be buried in the cemetery of the parish church of Dalton with her best draught animal by way of mortuary. Also, she left the vicar of the same church 6d. Also, she left her sister Agnes a cow, half a basket of malt, and half a basket of flour. Also, she left her sister Alice a tunic. She gave the remainder of her goods to the said William, her husband, and directed him to dispose of the said goods for her soul. She made her said husband her executor.

14. Wills, archdeaconry of Buckingham.

Translated from Elvey, ed., *The Courts of the Archdeaconry of Buckingham*.

[a] Will of Agnes Umfrey, widow, Edlesborough. Language: Latin.

In the name of God, amen. In the year of the Lord 1484, 24th day of March. I Agnes Umfrey, late wife of John Umfrey now dead, of sound mind, make my testament in this manner. In the first place I leave my soul etc. Also, I leave to the high altar of the same [church] two measures of wheat. Also, to the light of the crucifix, 4d. Also, to the eight greater lights of the same, 8d. Also, to the light of the image of the Blessed Mary of Pity, 1d. Also, for the repair of the torches, 4d. Also, I leave for the chapel of Dagnall a measure of wheat. Also, for the purchase of a set of vestments for the church of Edlesborough, if such happen to be bought, according to the will of my executors. Also, to the church of Little Gaddesden, 12d. To the fraternity of the church of Great Gaddesden, 20d. Also, I leave for the maintenance of a priest to celebrate in the church of Edlesborough, if the parish happens to provide such, 6s 8d. If not, however, the same sum is to be disposed for

other pious uses by my executors as seems to them most expedient for the salvation of our souls. Also, to each godson and goddaughter of mine, 4d. Also, I leave to Agnes Merston an acre of wheat to be assigned at the will of my executors. Also, to the same a pair of sheets and a brass pot. Also, I leave to Hugh my servant an acre of wheat according to the assignation of my executors. Also, that my message together with the lands pertaining to it be sold and one half of the price be disposed for the salvation of the souls of those from whom it descended. Also, that my obit and those of my husband and other of our blood kin be observed yearly in the church of Edlesborough. I will that the second half of the price be divided equally between my sons, viz. Thomas and George, and I will that Thomas' part be paid to him or his assigns by my executors within the space of four years. The residue of my goods I give and bequeath to my son George and to William Bilyngdon senior whom I make and ordain my executors to dispose for the salvation of my soul.

[b] Will of Jane Kegyll, widow, Edlesborough. Language: English.

In the name of God, amen. The 30th day of the month of December the year of our Lord 1518. I Jane Kegyll, late wife of John Kegyll, with a whole mind make my testament in this manner. First I bequeath my soul to Almighty God and to Our Lady St Mary and my body to be buried in the churchyard of Edlesborough. Also, I give and bequeath to the mother church of Lincoln, 2d. Also, I give and bequeath to the high altar of Edlesborough, a quarter of malt. Also, I give and bequeath to the eight lights of Edlesborough, a quarter of malt. Also, I give and bequeath to the rood light, two bussheles of malt. Also, I give and bequeath to everyone of the small lights in the same church, 1d. Also, I give and bequeath to Sir Thomas Amyes, 20d. Also, I give and bequeath to Agnes Hartley, my best gown. All the residue of my goods I give and bequeath to John Gefray otherwise called John Hartley and to Agnes his wife, which two persons I make and ordain my executors and to keep my children. And if it happen that my children pass away and die, that then the said John Hartley and his wife shall hire an honest priest to read and sing in the parish church of Edlesborough for all Christian souls as long as the goods may extend. These witnesses: Thomas Sowthyn, Richard Sowthin, and Sir Thomas Amyes.

[c] Will of Joan Ingrame, widow, North Marston. Language: English. In the name of God, amen. In the year of Our Lord 1519, the 12th day

Source #16

Source

15

Source
17

MEDIEVAL TOWNS: A READER

88. SINGLEWOMEN IN COVENTRY, 1492-95

The northern English town of Coventry reacted to a severe economic crisis by imposing a series of reforms on the citizenry that had a strongly moralizing tone and included a concerted effort to stamp out prostitution. These extracts represent some of the reform ordinances that dealt specifically with singlewomen, most of whom had probably migrated to Coventry and were working at various low-paid jobs in the city. Indeed, the poor state of the city's economy appears to have driven many able-bodied working men out of the city in search of work.

Source: modernized M. Kowaleski, from *The Coventry Leet Book*, vol. II, ed. M.D. Harris (Early English Text Society, original series, vol. 135, 1907), pp. 545, 568.

1492. Also that no person within this city from henceforth to keep, hold, receive, or favor any tapster [a barmaid, or someone who retails ale], or woman of evil name, fame, or condition with whom any contact is inclined to be sinful, pertaining to lechery, upon the penalty that every such household lose 20 shillings for every offense. And that every person that has such a tenant, keeping such suspect persons within his house after such warning by an officer, unless he evicts such a tenant, is to lose 40 shillings.

1492. Also that no singlewoman, being in good health and strong enough body to work, under the age of 50 years, may henceforth take or keep houses or rooms by themselves, nor may they rent any room with any other person, but they should go into service [that is, domestic service] until they are married. Whoever does to the contrary to lease [a room] at the first default [is to pay] 6 shillings 8 pence and at the second default to be committed to prison, there to abide until they find surety to go into service. And that every such person who receives such women, or sets them any house or room to lease, [is to pay] 20 shillings at the first default and 40 shillings at the second default, and to be committed to prison at the third default, there to remain until he finds surety to conform himself to this ordinance.

1495. And also that every maiden and singlewoman, under the age of 40 years old, who keeps any house alone by herself, should take a room with an honest person, who shall answer for her good behavior, or else [she] is to go into service between this Feast of All Hallows [1 November] and the next coming, upon pain of imprisonment, there to abide until the time that she finds surety to do so, or else to vacate the city. And that the sheriffs should weekly make a search and do execution of and in the premises, upon the pain of losing 100 shillings every time that they be found lax in making searches and not executing [the order] on the premises. That fine is to be levied by the mayor for the time being to the use of the city.

CHAPTER SEVEN: WOMEN

tales and to argue and to lean upon the table, order the Béguine to make them rise and remove their table ... And after their afternoon's work, and upon feast days, let them have another meal, and after that, to wit in the evening, let them be fed abundantly and well as before, and if the weather be cold let them warm themselves and take their ease....

Questions: What was the experience of female servants who worked in the households of the urban elite? Was there any type of hierarchy among the servant class? Does this passage tell us anything about the relationship between the wealthy mistress of the establishment and those she employed?

Source #18

92. FEMALE SERVANTS AND PROSTITUTION

Young women who came to big towns found work easily, but they were often vulnerable to exploitation if they were far from family and friends. This London court case tells the story of one such young woman, whose new employer turned out to be a procuress. For a similar tale of prostitution, see doc. 136.

Source: trans. H.T. Riley, *Memorials of London and London Life in the XIIIth, XIVth and XVth Centuries* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1868), pp. 484-86, revised.

Elizabeth, the wife of Henry Moring, was brought before Nichols Brembre, knight, the mayor, aldermen, and the sheriffs of London, in the Guildhall because, at the information of diverse persons and upon the acknowledgment and confession of one Johanna, her servingwoman, the mayor, aldermen, and sheriffs were given to understand that Elizabeth, under color of the craft of embroidery, which she pretended to follow, took in and retained Johanna and diverse other women as her apprentices and bound them to serve her after the manner of apprentices in such art. Whereas, the truth of the matter was that she did not follow that craft, but that, after retaining them, she incited Johanna and the other women who were with her, and in her service, to live a lewd life and to consort with friars, chaplains [priests], and all other such men as desired to have their company, as well in her own house, in the parish of All Hallows near the wall in Broad Street Ward in London, as elsewhere. And she used to hire them out to friars, chaplains, and other men for such stipulated sum as they might agree upon, as well in her own house as elsewhere, she retaining in her own possession the sum so agreed upon.

And, in particular, on Thursday, May 4th last past, by the compassing and procuring of Elizabeth and of a certain chaplain whose name is unknown, she sent Johanna and ordered her to accompany this chaplain at night so that she might carry a lantern before him to his chamber, but in what parish is likewise

unknown. It was her intention that Johanna should stay the night there with the chaplain, of their own contriving, while Johanna herself, as she says, knew nothing about it. Still, she remained there with the chaplain the whole of that night. When she returned home to her mistress on the morrow, Elizabeth asked if she had brought anything with her for her work that night, to which she made answer that she had not. Whereupon, Elizabeth used words of reproof to her, and ordered her to go back to the chaplain on the following night, and whatever she should be able to lay hold of, to take the same for her trouble, and bring it to her. Accordingly, Johanna by her command went back on the following night to the chaplain at his chamber and again passed the night there. And on the morrow she rose very early in the morning and bearing in mind the words of her mistress, and being afraid to go back without carrying something to her mistress, she took a portifory [breviary] that belonged to the chaplain and carried it off, the chaplain himself knowing nothing about it. Which portifory she delivered to Elizabeth who took it, well knowing how and in what manner Johanna had come by it. And after this Elizabeth pledged this portifory for 8 pence to a man whose name is unknown.

And many other times Elizabeth received the like base gains from Johanna and her other servingwomen, and retained the same for her own use, living thus abominably and damnably, and inciting other women to live in the same manner, she herself being a common harlot and procuress.

Whereupon, on this day, Elizabeth was asked by the Court how she would acquit herself of this, to which she made answer that she was in no way guilty, and put herself upon the country [that is, she asked for a jury trial]. Therefore the sheriffs were instructed to summon twelve good men of this venue to appear here on the 28th day of the month to make a jury thereon, and Elizabeth was in the meantime committed to prison.

Upon which day the good men of the venue appeared ... who declared upon their oath that Elizabeth was guilty of all the things imputed to her, and that she was a common harlot and a common procuress. And because many scandals had befallen the city through such women and similar deeds, and great peril might arise in the future through such transactions, therefore, according to the custom of the city of London provided for such cases, and in order that other women might beware of doing the like, it was adjudged that Elizabeth should be taken from the Guildhall to Cornhill, and be put upon the *thew* [a type of pillory mainly used for women] there to remain for one hour of the day, the cause thereof being publicly proclaimed. And afterwards she was to be taken to some gate of the city and there be made to forswear the city and its liberty to the effect that she would never again enter it on pain of imprisonment for three years and the punishment of the *thew*, at the discretion of the mayor and aldermen for the time being, so often as it should please them that she should suffer such punishment.

Tutivillus: [Speaking of 'females a quantity'] ...

If she be never so foul a dowd / with her nets and her pins,
The shrew herself can shroud / both her cheeks and her chins,
She can make it full proud / with tricks and contrivances,
Her head as high as a cloud, but no shame of her sins
They feel.

When she is thus painted,
She makes it so quaint,
She looks like a saint,
And worse than the devil

She is horned like a cow...

10. Borough records, London.

Language: French. Translation in Riley, *Memorials of London*.

[a] [1281] It is provided and commanded that no woman of the City shall from henceforth go to market or in the king's highway, out of her house, with a hood furred with other than lambskin or rabbitskin, on pain of losing her hood to the use of the sheriffs, save only those ladies who wear furred capes; the hoods of these may have such furs as they may think fit. And this because regratresses, nurses and other servants, and women of loose life dress themselves excessively and wear hoods furred with great vair and miniver in guise of good ladies.

[b] [1351] Whereas the common sort of women who live in the city of London or who come to the same city from other foreign places have now of late from time to time assumed in unreasonable manner the fashion of being dressed and attired in the manner and dress of good and noble ladies and damsels of the realm, it is provided and ordered by the mayor, sheriffs, aldermen, and commons of the said city that no such common sort of woman now being in the said city, or who shall hereafter come to the aforesaid city, shall be so bold as to be attired either by day or night in any kind of clothing trimmed with fur, such as miniver, badger fur, close-trimmed winter squirrel, spring squirrel, 'bys' of rabbit or hare, or any other kind of noble budge, or lined with sendal, buckram, samite, or other noble lining either in winter or summer, nor yet be clothed in either coat, surcoat, or hood set off with fur or lining after the feast of St Hilary next, on pain of forfeiting the same clothes, but let every common sort of woman, going about the city by day or night after that feast of St Hilary, go openly with a hood

of unlined, striped cloth and clothes neither trimmed with fur nor yet lined with lining, and without any kind of decoration, so that everybody, natives and strangers, may know what rank they are, on pain of imprisonment etc.

11. 'Impossible to Trust Women'.

Language: English. Date: later fifteenth century. The uns subtle irony of this poem, typical of this genre of antifeminist verse, may still tangentially reflect social practice. Translated from Davies, ed., *Medieval English Lyrics*.

To the tavern they will not go,
Nor to the alehouse never the more,
For, God knows, their hearts would be woe
To spend their husbands' money so.

... sure whether the said Richard is alive or not. He says, however, that he heard the said Richard say that he espoused Joan, daughter of Peter atte Enges of Patrington, and he does not know to depose further as he says.

12. Papal letter.

Language: Latin. Date: 1391. Translation in *Calendar of Papal Registers*, IV.

To the bishop of Hereford. Mandate to grant dispensation to William Parys and Sibyl Leton so that they may remain in the marriage contracted by them in ignorance that they were related in the third degree of affinity, declaring their past and future offspring legitimate.

13. Manor court rolls, Halesowen.

Language: Latin. Date: 1276. Translated from Wilson, ed., *Court Rolls of the Manor of Hales*.

William le Teining granted in full court half his entire holding to William le Archer together with his own daughter Juliana and the entire holding after his and his wife's deaths on condition that they support him so long as they stay together. If they are not able to stay together, they will have half, not counting the capital house, and live on their own. He gives 12s to the lord.

14. *Fasciculus Morum*.

Language: Latin. Date: ?early fourteenth century. Translated from S. Wenzel, ed., *Fasciculus Morum: A Fourteenth-Century Preacher's Manual*, Philadelphia and London, 1989.

... as a wife wrongly treated by her husband suffers patiently lest her husband loses face by censure, and if, to his shame, by chance a lesion appears without from beatings, she carefully pretends otherwise, claiming she had incurred some other misfortune.

15. Church court, Droitwich.

Language: Latin. Date: 1300. Translated from Pearson, ed., *Records of a rural dean's court of 1300*.

Thomas Louchard ill treated his wife with a rod. The man appears, confesses, and is whipped in the usual manner once through the market. He went away.

HUSBAND AND WIFE

16. Church court, York.

Language: Latin. The plaintiff is here seeking judicial separation (divorce *a mensa et a thoro*) from her husband on the grounds of cruelty. Although she is able to produce two witnesses to the same event, it appears that the court preferred the testimony of the one male witness supported by a further character witness. Translated from BIHR, CP.E.221. Margery, wife of Thomas Nesfeld c. Thomas Nesfeld.

[Following two depositions are dated 13 January 1396.]

Joan White of York, aged 25 years and more...

... this witness was present together with Margery Speight, her fellow witness, and John Semer, servant of Thomas Nesfeld of York in the same Thomas' house in the parish of Bishophill, York, on the Saturday before the feast of St Bartholomew four years ago next within the darkness of night where and when she saw the said Thomas throw Margery, his wife to the ground with a club and beat her severely with the same and afterwards he drew his baslard and gravely wounded her in the arm and broke the bone of that arm, commonly called 'le Spelbon' and he would then have killed her that night if he had not been prevented by this witness, the said Margery, her fellow witness, and John Semer, then servant of the same Thomas. Afterwards for a week or two, as this witness believes, when the same Margery, wife of the same Thomas, was somewhat healed and restored, she went away from Thomas, her husband because she dared not stay longer with him for fear of death...

Margery Speight of the parish of Kildewick, aged 18 years and more...

[Deposition substantially the same as Joan White's.]

[Following two depositions are dated 21 January 1396.]

John Semer of the parish of Ouseburn, aged 20 years, of free condition, a blood relative, servant, or affine of neither party...

Examined on the first article, he says that it contains the truth and this he says he knows because one day in autumn, which day he does not remember, four years ago, the said Margery left her home in the parish of Bishophill and went to a house, the which this witness does not remember, in the city of York without and contrary to the said Thomas, her husband's mandate and precept, and stayed there from noon of that day until the darkness of night. When she returned to the house shared by the said Thomas and the said Margery his wife, Thomas asked why she had left her home against his will and precept.

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#21

#22

69. Year book, 1313-14.

Language: Latin. Translated from Maitland, Harcourt, and Bolland, eds., *Year Books of Edward II*, V.

[a] Joan sued an appeal of rape against one E. who was present and the aforesaid Joan counted against him that he had lain with her in the 13th year etc. and she spoke of no rape.

Justice: For a count to be good it is proper to count the year, the day, the place, and the deed so that the appeal can be duly made, and if one finds any of these wanting, abatement for the default may be asked in the count such as the sergeant ought to have done.

The justice directs the court that Joan go to prison for her bad count and E. is quit of the appeal in regards her suit, but he answers to the suit of the king. Sheriff, put him in irons.

Justice: And you answer to the king that you raped the maid Joan who is thirty years and carries a child in her arms.

The woman was asked whose the child was and she said it was E.'s, and it was said that this was a wonder because a child could not be engendered without the will of both, and it was returned that [E. is] not guilty.

[b] An Alice appealed a John of rape and of breach of the peace of our lord the king and said that on a certain day, in a certain place, in a certain town he had raped her maidenhood by force against the peace etc. John came and defended all manner of felony and whatever was contrary to the peace and the dignity of the crown etc. and said that he was culpable of nothing etc. whereby etc. And because it was found by inquest that he was guilty and that the deed had been done before the statute, unless Alice had on advice withdrawn her appeal, it would have been adjudged that she should tear out John's eyes and cut off his testicles because he was married, but if he had been single, the judgement would have been that he marry her or have the same punishment etc.

70. Letter patent.

Language: Latin. Date: 1350. Calendared translation in Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1348-50, London, 1905.

Pardon, in consideration of good service in a late conflict at Calais, to Nicholas de Bolton of the king's suit for the rape of Eleanor de Merton, wherewith he is indicted or charged, as well of any consequent outlawry.

Homicide and petty treason

See also 'Husband and wife' [29c].

71. Peace sessions, Lincolnshire.

Language: Latin. Kimball, ed., *Records of some Sessions of the Peace in Lincolnshire*.

[a] [1382] Item they say that Richard Demyld of Hardwick and Isabel his wife feloniously killed John de Cotum of Hardwick at Hardwick with a club worth 1d on Wednesday after the feast of the Circumcision in the fifth year of the reign of King Richard II.

[b] [1395] They say on their oath that John Elmesale of Gainsborough and Diota, wife of William Baker of the same on Friday before the feast of St Andrew the apostle in the 18th year of the reign of King Richard II murdered at night in the said John Elmesale's house Alice, the wife of the said John Elmesale and fled as felons of the lord king.

72. Peace sessions, Shropshire.

Language: Latin. Translated from Kimball, ed., *Shropshire Peace Roll*.

[a] [1401] The jurors say that John Motlowe and John Stathum, late servant of John de Wolley on Friday before the feast of the purification of the Blessed Mary ... feloniously murdered and killed Roger Chelmcleve, Alice Motlowe, [and] William, servant of the aforesaid Alice at Ash and feloniously burned the house of the aforesaid Alice against the peace of the lord king on the aforesaid day. And that the same John and John on the aforesaid day in the aforesaid place feloniously stole animals and other goods and chattels of the same Alice to the value of twenty pounds.

[b] [1412] And that Margaret, daughter of Robert Passeuant on Saturday in the feast of St Lucy ... feloniously killed and murdered William Stockton, her husband at the vill called Meadowtown.

73. Coroners' rolls, Essex.

Language: Latin. Date: 1371. Translated from C. Gross, *Select Cases from the Coroners' Rolls A.D. 1265-1413*, Selden Society, IX, 1896.

[a] It happened there that Agnes, the wife of John Dryvere of Little

Roger son of Roger makes plaint of Alice de Bollyng [in a plea] of trespass, pledge to prosecute, William Walker, to wit, that she has not made an enclosure which she is bound to make between his holdings and her own holding in Mikelington, so that for lack of enclosure there divers cattle entered and fed off his corn, to wit, his rye and oats and grass, to his damages of 10s. And the aforesaid Alice defends and says that the aforesaid Roger, and not she, is bound to make an enclosure there, and hereon she puts herself upon the country. But the jurors hereupon elected, tried and sworn, say on their oath that the aforesaid Roger is bound to make the aforesaid enclosure between the aforesaid holdings. And therefore it is awarded that the aforesaid Roger be in mercy [having been convicted] for his false claim, and that the said Alice go without a day.

Questions: What activities of women in the community are revealed in these sources? For what reasons do women appear in court? What kinds of interactions do they have with men? Under what kinds of authority and restrictions do women live? What rights and responsibilities do they have?

Source #24

50. CORONERS' RECORDS: UNEXPECTED DEATHS (13TH-14TH C.)

The following are extracts from the rolls kept by the coroners, English public officials whose duties included (and still include) the investigation of any unexpected death. These documents provide us with two kinds of information. Their main concern is with death and crime, and so they tell us much about law enforcement and the dangers that resulted in sudden death. But in the course of describing the events being investigated, the rolls record a wealth of incidental information about daily life. Because the vast majority of the medieval population belonged to the peasantry, most of the people appearing in these rolls are peasants as well, both male and female. (The eventual outcomes of most of these cases are not included in the following excerpts. When the inquest itself is described, the four towns named are those required by law to provide the members of the inquest jury.)

Source: *Bedfordshire Coroners' Rolls*, ed. R. F. Hunnisett (Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, 1961). Reprinted with the permission of the Controller of Her Britannic Majesty's Stationery Office.

9. On 14 Jan. 1267 Sabinia, an old woman, went into Colmworth to beg bread. At twilight she wished to go to her house, fell into a stream and drowned by misadventure. The next day her son Henry searched for her [and] found her drowned ...
13. Soon after nones on 22 July 1267 Emma, Christine de Furnevall's washerwoman, tried to draw water from a leaden vat full of boiling water with a bowl in Cadbury and by misadventure fell into it. Richard the Brewer of Christine's house was present, tried to drag her from the vat, lost his foothold and fell in. Gregory de Canmori arrived, saw them lying in the vat, raised the hue [to notify others of the death] and called his servant Richard, who dragged them both out. Emma died about vespers on 24 July, having had the rites of the church.
14. On 12 Aug. 1267 William Blaunche's daughters, Muriel aged almost 6 and Beatrice aged almost 3, were in his house in Great Barford, William and his wife Muriel being in the field, when a fire broke out in the house and burned it together with Beatrice.
30. On 24 Sept. Margery wife of Simon Daffe [of] Great Barford went between Great Barford and Roxton by the river Ouse looking for her husband, who had earlier been drowned there, and, coming by a ditch near "Lytle made" meadow, found a poor woman, a stranger, lying dead there, raised the hue and ran to Great Barford, which followed the hue.

Inquest before the same coroner by Great Barford, Roxton, Wilden and Renhold, who knew nothing of this death, the woman having no wound or injury, but they believed that she died of cold and because she was weak. Margery found pledges, Robert the Carpenter and Jordan of Seaton, both of Great Barford.

35. About nones on 2 Oct. 1270 Amice daughter of Robert Belamy of Staploe and Sibyl Bonchevāler were carrying a tub full of grout between them in the brewhouse of Lady Juliana de Beauchamp in the hamlet of Staploe in Eaton Socon, intending to empty it into a boiling leaden vat, when Amice slipped and fell into the vat and the tub upon her. Sibyl immediately jumped towards her, dragged her from the vat and shouted; the household came and found her scalded almost to death. A chaplain came and Amice had the rites of the church and died by misadventure about prime the next day.
58. After nones on 24 May 1270 Emma daughter of Richard Toky of Southill went to "Houleden" in Southill to gather wood. Walter Garglof of Stanford came, carrying a bow and a small sheaf of arrows, took hold of Emma and tried to throw her to the ground and deflower her, but she immediately shouted and her father came. Walter immediately shot an arrow at him, striking him on the right side of the forehead and giving him a mortal wound. He struck him again with another arrow under the right side and so into the stomach. Seman of Southill immediately came and asked him why he wished to kill Richard, and Walter immediately shot an arrow at him, striking him in the back, so that his life was despaired of. Walter then immediately fled. Later Emma, Richard's wife, came and found her husband wounded to the point of death and shouted. The neighbours came and took him to his house. He had the rites of the church, made his will and died at twilight on the same day.
73. About prime on 27 March 1270 Mariot, formerly the wife of Richard the Reeve of Pertenhall, who was infirm, feeble and old, lay in her bed in Pertenhall while Maud Mody, John Spayne and Richard's son Henry were about the affairs of the house, at the plough and elsewhere. She rose from her bed, took a pitcher in her hand, went to a well in her court-yard and tried to draw water, but, because she was feeble, she slipped and fell into the well and drowned by misadventure. Maud Mody came to the house and into the court-yard, saw Mariot lying in the well and raised the hue. John Spayne came to the hue and sprang to Mariot, because he thought to save her, but could not because she was dead.
103. About prime on 16 Feb. 1271 Alexander le Gardiner of Potton, Lady Christine de Fornival's servant, was digging under the walls of an old dovecote in the garden in Lady Christine's court-yard in Sutton to demolish them and, as he dug, the wall by misadventure fell upon him and broke his head so that he immediately died there. His wife Alice came with his breakfast, looked for him, saw his surcoat and cap and the spade with which he dug and so found him dead and his whole body broken.
106. After midday on 16 June 1271 Annora daughter of Agnes Oter, aged 3, went out of the south side of her mother's house in Edworth, while her mother was seeking fuel, by misadventure fell into a ditch outside a wood and drowned. Agnes first found her dead and shouted; the neighbours came.
116. Well into the night of 30 March 1270 Simon and Richard, sons of Hugh the Fisher of Radwell, came from the house of Hugh's daughter Alice towards that of their father in Radwell and wished to cross the court-yard of Robert Ball of Radwell, in which Simon son of Agnes of Radwell and Juliana daughter of Walter the Fisher of Radwell were lying under a haystack. Simon immediately arose and struck Simon the Fisher on the top of the head to the brain apparently with an axe, so that he immediately died. Richard,

seeing this, raised the hue and fled. Simon the felon immediately fled and Juliana with him. The township came and the hue was followed. Robert Ball found pledges, Robert de la More and Simon the Reeve of Radwell. Richard found pledges, his father and Richard Tappe of Radwell. ... It was ordered that Simon and Juliana be arrested. ...

[At the eyre (the court dealing with criminal cases) it was ordered that Simon son of Agnes, who was suspected, be exacted and outlawed, but that Juliana, who was not suspected, could return if she wished. Simon's chattels, worth 21d., were forfeited; Juliana had no chattels.]

228. About prime on 28 Feb., while William Sagar of Sutton was at the plough, his wife Emma took a bundle of straw inside the court-yard of his house in Sutton, intending to go to heat an oven. She came to a part of the court-yard which was near their dwelling-house and near a well on the north of the house, and by misadventure fell into the well and drowned. Maud daughter of Ellis Batte of Sutton was sitting in William's house guarding Emma's child Rose, who was lying in a cradle, heard the noise made by Emma as she sank, immediately went outside [and] found Emma drowned. ...

251. About midnight on 12 Aug., when John Clarice was lying near his wife Joan daughter of Richard le Freman, as was his custom, in his bed in the chamber of his house at Houghton Regis in the liberty of Eaton Bray, madness took possession of him, and Joan, thinking that he was seized by death, took a small scythe and cut his throat. She also took a [bill-hook] and struck him on the right side of the head, so that his brain flowed forth and he immediately died. The next day Joan fled to Houghton Regis church. About prime on that day John's son Ralph was troubled that his father was lying in bed so late, entered the chamber, called him [and] found him dead. ...

On 15 Aug. Joan was asked about this felony in the said church before the same coroner and townships. She openly confessed that she had committed it alone without any help. The port of Dover was assigned to her by the road called "le Kokevey," which enters into the king's highway. She then abjured the realm according to the custom of England.

Inquiry was made about the felon's chattels by the same townships, who said that on the day of the felony John and Joan jointly had 2 horses worth 5s., a mare with a foal worth 5s., a stirk worth 20d., a calf worth 12d., 3 pigs worth 4s., 3 young pigs worth 18d., household goods worth 18d., 3 acres of wheat worth 4s. 6d. an acre, 3 acres of maslin worth 4s. an acre and 11 acres of dredge worth 4s. an acre, total £4. 9s. 2d. ...

[At the eyre ... Joan was found to have no chattels. John's were distributed among his boys.]

255. At twilight on 4 Sept. 1300 Nicholas le Swon of Bedford came to his house there, when his wife Isabel was at Robert Asplon's house giving milk to Robert's son, and asked his daughter where her mother was. She said: at Robert Asplon's house; whereupon he immediately went after her because she stayed there too much. As he left his house he met his wife and told her to come home to sleep, saying that he wanted to go to his bed. While Isabel was making his bed, Nicholas drew his sword and struck her in the back so that she immediately died. He immediately fled. His chattels were 3 bushels of corn worth 15d., 2 bushels of oats worth 4d., 8 lbs. of wool worth 2s., wood worth 4d., 2 pigs worth 3d. and a chest worth 4d. ...

259. On 10 Sept. 1301 William son of Peter of Bromham, nephew of the vicar of Wootton, Stephen de Rivers, William the Cobbler and Margery le Wyte came together from a tavern in Bedford towards Wootton, and as they came into Cauldwell road a quarrel arose between them. William the vicar's nephew, seeing John

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her husband, who, she alleges, has committed adultery with Joan, wife of John Ivey, tailor of Sherborne. The abbot is to certify the bishop before Trinity Sunday. Potterne, 8th April 1410.

In Church court, archdeaconry of Buckingham.

Language: Latin. Translated from Elvey, ed., *The Courts of the Archdeaconry of Buckingham*.

[a] [1485] Hartwell. Agnes Chardeley is accused with Edmund Rampton on the sin of adultery. She appeared and denies the article. She appeared with Marion Hikkes, Christine Hare, Alice Smewyn, and Alice Cowper and lawfully purged herself and is dismissed.

[b] [1486] Chesham. Thomas Godyng sold his wife and holds another. He appeared and confesses that he has a wife living and is ordered to abstain from that woman entirely.

[c] ... Roger Calaber on account of the adultery and drunkenness by Elizabeth his wife. He sought a divorce in respect of bed and board. He had a day to prove the said adultery and drunkenness etc. On 28th day of July the year of the lord 1496 in the parish church of Beaconsfield before master Nicholas Treble, the official of the lord archdeacon of Buckingham for the tribunal sitting to carry out the law, the same Roger appeared with William Clerk and Alexander Heron. They were admitted and sworn and a day was assigned for the sentence to be heard shortly. This next day, viz. 7th day of the month of October the year of the Lord 1496, having arrived, the aforesaid Roger Calaber and Elizabeth his wife appeared in person in the parish church of Beaconsfield before master Nicholas Treble, the official of the lord archdeacon of Buckingham sitting for the tribunal. This same Roger alleged adultery committed, as he said, by the said Elizabeth his wife. Because sufficient proof for Roger Calaber's present petition was had in this regard, the judge divorced and separated them in respect of bed and board instructing each and both of them to keep continent and live chastely under penalty of the law...

[d] On which day [6 February 1520] John Cutte of Drayton and Margaret his wife appeared reported for having for a long time lived apart and that the aforesaid Margaret will not abide with her husband. The judge ordered them to live together without delay and that each should live with the other in future under pain of excommunication. But the woman expressly denied the judge's order, therefore the judge

[1] Will of Nicholas Blakburn, merchant, senior, York. Language English. Date: 1432. Translated from BIHR, Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 605.

Also I will that Margery my wife, out of what I have notified her of in my testament, has the means to find herself a gentlewoman's livelihood for herself whilst she lives, a priest, and a servant.

[m] Will of Richard Torald, esquier, York. Language: Latin. Date: 1439. Translated from BIHR, Prob. Reg. 3 fo. 583.

And I leave to Agnes Mirfeld, sister to my wife, 20 marks, but under this condition, that the aforesaid Agnes stay with Elizabeth my wife so long as the same Elizabeth wants the aforesaid Agnes.

15. *Fasciculus Morum*.

Language: Latin. Date: ?early fourteenth century. Cf. Childhood [8]. Translated from Wenzel, ed., *Fasciculus Morum*.

Poor little beggar women, however, carry to the doors of the rich children whom they make to cry so that they may receive alms more readily.

16. Papal letter.

Language: Latin. Date: 1391. Calendars translation from *Calendar of Papal Registers*, IV.

Relaxation, at the petition of Francis, bishop of Palestrina, vice-chancellor of the holy Roman Church, of five years and five forty day periods of enjoined penance to penitents who on the feasts of the Nativity, Annunciation, Purification, and Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, the Resurrection of the Lord, and three days immediately following it (on which three days a great concourse of people takes place) and during the octaves of the said Nativity and Assumption, visit and give alms for the sustentation and conservation of the church of the Augustinian monastery of St Mary Bishopsgate, without the walls, London, the chapels and altars situated therein and those in the solemn hospital of the Blessed Virgin founded within the said monastery, in which hospital very many poor widows and orphans are continually sustained.

17. Coroners' rolls, Bedfordshire.

Language: Latin. Translation in Hunnisett, ed., *Bedfordshire Coroners' Rolls*.

[a] [1273] Towards vespers ... Joan Fine of Milton Bryant came to Houghton Regis carrying Henry, aged two, in her arms and went from door to door seeking hospitality. They came to Richard Red's house, where they were given shelter in a barn. They sat down there and Henry went out of its doors, fell into a ditch, and drowned by misadventure. Joan Flye [sic, presumably for Fine] first found him...

[b] [1270] Towards vespers ... Lucy Pofot, formerly the wife of Thomas of Houghton came from the tavern in the house of John of Cranfield of Aspley Guise in Aspley Guise and went to her house. A lewd stranger came and asked for entertainment and Lucy entertained him. At dawn the next day Andrew, son of Simon of Houghton Regis, servant, came to draw water at a well called 'Swetewell', came to Lucy's house, saw her dead with five wounds to the heart apparently made with a knife...

[c] [January 1274] ... Emma of Hatch came from Beeston, where she had been begging for bread from door to door, and towards vespers she returned towards Beeston to seek lodging. She came to a piece of cultivated land called 'Pokebrokforlong' in Northill, was overcome by cold, and died by misadventure...

[d] [1273] ... Beatrice Bone, a poor woman, went from door to door in Turvey begging for food. She came to Alice Mordant's house in 'Arneburwey', fell down because she was weak and infirm and died there by misadventure between prime and tierce...

18. Coroners' rolls, Oxford.

Language: Latin. Date: 1300. The holding of a coroner's inquest on what was in effect an aborted foetus is very unusual, but see 'Law and custom' [34b]. Deaths of both adult females and males due to crushing in similar circumstances are also found in London coroners' records for the hungry years of the early fourteenth century. Translated from Thorold Rogers, *Oxford City Documents*.

Inquest was made before the coroner of the lord king for the town of Oxford on Saturday in the feast of St George in the 28th year of the reign of King Edward son of King Henry concerning the death of Roger, the son of Emma de Hereford, who was found dead in the parish of St Thomas the Martyr on the previous Friday by the oath of Henry Jolif etc., who say on their oath that they do not know of anyone culpable of the aforesaid Roger's death, but they say that Emma, the

#22

#26

1. Anthony Fitzherbert, *The Boke of Husbandry*.

Language: English. Date: 1528. Translated from Williams, ed., *English Historical Documents*, V.

What tasks a wife should do in general.

And when you are up and ready, then first sweep the house, set the table, and put everything in your house in good order. Milk your cows, suckle your calves, strain your milk, get your children up and dress them, and provide for your husband's breakfast, dinner, supper, and for your children and servants, and take your place with them. Send corn and malt to the mill so that you can bake and brew whenever there is need. Measure it for the mill and from the mill, and see that you have your measure again, less the toll, otherwise either the miller acts dishonestly with you or else your corn is not as dry as it should be. You must make butter and cheese whenever you are able, feed your pigs both morning and evening, and give your poultry their food in the morning. When the appropriate time of year comes around, you must assess how your hens, ducks, and geese lay, and collect their eggs, and when they get broody, put them such that no beasts, pigs, or other vermin may harm them. You should know that all web-footed fowls will sit for a month and all claw-footed will only sit for three weeks except a peahen and large fowls such as cranes, bustards, and the like. When they have hatched their chicks, see that they are well protected from kites, crows, polecats, and other vermin. At the beginning of March, or a little before, it is time for a wife to make her garden and to get as many good seeds and herbs as she can, and especially those that be good for the pot and to eat. As often as shall be necessary, it must be weeded, otherwise weeds will choke the herbs. March is also the time to sow flax and hemp, the reason being that I have heard old housewives say that March coarse flax is better than April flax, but I do not need to show how it should be sown, weeded, pulled, rippled, watered, washed, dried, beaten, bruised in the brake, tawed, heckled, spun, wound, wrapped, and woven for they are knowledgeable enough. From this they can make sheets, broadcloths, towels, shirts, smocks, and other such necessities, and therefore let your distaff always be ready for a pastime so that you are not idle. Although there is no

'Then I make butter later on in the day.

Afterwards I make cheese -- these you consider a joke --

Then our children will weep and they must get up,

Yet you will criticise me if any of our produce isn't there.

'When I have done this, yet there comes even more:

I give our chickens food or else they will be lean;

Our hens, our capons, and our ducks all together,

Yet I tend to our gosling that go on the green.

'I bake, I brew, it will not otherwise be well,

I beat and swingle flax, so help me God.

I heckle the tow, I warm up and cool down [or I winnow and

ruddle [sheep]].

I tease wool and card it and spin it on the wheel.

'Dame,' said the goodman, 'the devil have your bones!

You do not need to bake or brew more than once a fortnight.

I see no good that you do within this big house,

But always you excuse yourself with grunts and groans.'

'Either I make a piece of linen and woollen cloth once a year,

In order to clothe ourselves and our children in together,

Or else we should go to the market and buy it very dear;

I am as busy as I may every year.

'When I have done this, I look at the sun,

I prepare food for our beasts before you come home,

And food for ourselves before it is noon.

Yet I don't get a fair word when I have done

'So I look to our welfare both outdoors and inside'

So that nothing great or small is lacking...

Source #28

... WOMEN FARMWORKERS' DUTIES (CA. 1270)

Source
29

Medieval treatises on estate management, like the one excerpted below, often describe in detail the responsibilities of various agricultural workers. Although most of these employees were male, a few jobs were routinely assumed to belong to women, most notably that of the dairymaid. The job of dairymaid was one in which a peasant woman might earn wages and save up for a dowry before marriage. This anonymous work, known as the *Seneschaucy*, was written in England in the 1260s or 1270s.

Source: Dorothea Oschinsky, *Walter of Henley and Other Treatises on Estate Management and Accounting* (Oxford University Press, 1971).

The dairymaid ought to be loyal, of good repute, and clean; she ought to know her work and what relates to it. She ought not to allow under-dairymaids or anyone else to take or carry away milk, butter, or cream whereby the cheese will be less and the dairy will lose. She ought to know well how to make and salt cheese and how to preserve and look after the vessels of the dairy so that it is not necessary to buy new ones every year. She ought to know the day on which to begin making cheese and of what weight, when to begin making two cheeses and the days when number and weight ought to be changed. Bailiff and reeve ought to inspect frequently the dairy and the cheese, when they increase and decrease in number what their weight is, and that no loss or theft occurs in the dairy whereby the weight might suffer. ... The dairymaid ought to help winnow the corn whenever she can; she ought to keep geese and hens and answer for the yield; and she ought to keep and screen the fire so that no harm arises through lack of supervision. ...

And you ought to have in every place where there is a dairy some person in charge, be it a man or a woman. And if it were a man he ought to do the same things a dairymaid would do. And, because of the benefits which he has from milk he ought to take one quarter of corn every sixteen weeks where other servants have one quarter for every twelve weeks. And the dairymaid ought to winnow all the corn, and half of her pay shall be for paying the woman who will help her. And they ought to winnow four quarters of wheat and of rye for one penny and six quarters of barley, peas, and beans for one penny. And always and with every kind of corn she ought to winnow five quarters stricken of every four heaped. ... The dairymaid ought to look after all the small stock which are kept on the manor such as sucking pigs, peacocks and their issue, geese and their issue, capons, cocks, and hens and their issue in chickens and eggs. ...

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If there is a manor in which there is no dairy then it is always advisable to have a woman there for much less money than a man would take, to take care of the small stock and of all that is kept on the manor and to answer for all the issues there just as the dairymaid would do, that is for sows and their piglets, for peacocks and their chicks, and if there are some, for geese and their goslings and for capons, cocks, hens and their chickens and eggs. And she ought to be responsible for half of the winnowing of the corn just as the dairymaid would be.

Questions: What skills and knowledge did the dairymaid need to have? How responsible a position was this? How independent was she in her job? What evidence is there in this source of how women are treated in comparison with men?