

EXTRACTS FROM THE DOCUMENTARY HISTORY OF
THE TOWER OF LONDON.¹

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Actuated no doubt by a desire to make the most of his resources by cutting down expenses, when heavily in debt to various associated companies of foreign merchants, the king soon seems to have thought that the custody of the wild beasts might safely be entrusted to an Englishman at a lower rate of pay, thus enabling the more highly remunerated foreigner to be dispensed with. Before the appointment in 1370 of William de Garderoba the Patent Roll of 1341² contains an entry dated 16th October of the appointment of "Robert son of John le Bowyer of Donecastre, to have the custody of the king's lions and leopards at the Tower of London during pleasure, *videlicet* one lion, one lioness, one leopard, and two whelps of the lioness, receiving daily for his own wages 6d. [just half the amount paid to his foreign predecessor] and for the sustenance of each whelp 4d. and for that of the other beasts 6d. a day; as Berengar Daragoun (who until lately held this office) had it. By the king's mandate in pursuance addressed to the treasurer and chamberlains of the exchequer at Westminster."

For some years Robert de Donecastre appears to have given satisfaction in his office, for in 1345 we find him accepted as one of the "mainpernors" or bails for John Aunsel, who had been captured in Brittany by the king's order for certain contempts and trespasses, and sent as a prisoner to the Tower of London. Robert and four other

¹ The first part of this paper appeared in the *Archaeological Journal*, lxi, 161-172.

² Patent Roll, 14 Edward III, m. 3, pp. 301, 302.

men came forward to give security that he would "stand to right to answer for the above offences, and that he would not cross the seas out of England without the king's special licence," and their bail being apparently considered as quite adequate, an order to set John Aunsel at liberty was sent to the "keeper" of the Tower of London by the king.¹ Shortly after this episode Robert suddenly emerges in a somewhat questionable condition of notoriety: doubtless he had acquired a wider knowledge of life and its possibilities in those legal circles among which he had so recently figured, and he may have even come to consider himself as in some respects quite a privileged individual, for even as the old adage tells us that "familiarity breeds contempt," so his closer acquaintance with the law may have led him to despise and defy it, as will presently be seen. Whether his reprehensible conduct was due to that, or the same bad old custom of allowing the payments due to him for his wages and the maintenance of the animals entrusted to his care to fall into arrears, as in the case of his predecessor, is not stated. However on 29th March, 1346, the king, being then at Westminster, directs the chancellor to send to the sheriffs of London an order to supersede by a mainprise² the king's writ directing them to attach the body of Robert de Donecastre, as the king had ordered them to do so at the suit of Richard de Kent of London, a taverner, so that they should bring Robert before the king 15 days before Easter to answer the said Richard for robbery and breach of the peace. But he being deputed by the king for the custody of his lions in the Tower of London from which he cannot depart, he (Robert) has found in the chancery Hugh de Donecastre and Richard de Donecastre (probably his relations), William de Wakefeld, Richard de Denton of the county of York, John de Aulton of London, and Edmund Sauvage of the county of Derby, who have mainperned³ to have him before the king on the said day to answer Richard.⁴

¹ Close Roll, 10 Edward III, part 2, m. 2d.

³ *Mainpernor* is the former legal definition of "that which may be held to bail."

² *Mainprise* is an old law term for bail.

⁴ Close Roll, 20 Edward III, m. 14d, p. 61.

On the death of the earl of Oxford in 1513 the offices of constable of the Tower and keeper of the lions became vacant, and upon 19th March in that year the king granted the vacant office to Sir Thomas Lovell, knight of the body and treasurer of the royal household, with the usual fee of 100 marks by the year,¹ but upon this occasion the office of the keeper of the lions did not pass with the constablenesship, but was bestowed by another grant dated 14th April, 1513, upon James Worsley, groom of the wardrobe, together with the custody of the other wild beasts then at the Tower, with the usual fee and the premises and allowances appointed for them; but subsequently the keepers seem to have been appointed by the constables.² On the death of Sir Thomas Lovell he was succeeded in May, 1524, by Sir William Kingston, knight of the body, with a fee of £100 per annum,³ under whom Worsley apparently retained his office, for in the accounts of the royal household he is entered as one of the king's servants with a yearly wage of £18 5s. od. with an allowance of 6d. a day each for two lions and three leopards,⁴ which evidently then constituted the entire collection. The bad old custom, to which I have already referred, continued to prevail. Payments not only for wages but for the various alterations, repairs, and other works which were from time to time carried out at the Tower, were allowed to fall into arrears, and the incessant delays in making payments were worthy of that remarkable institution, the Circumlocution Office. That the case of Ralph de Sandwyco was by no means an isolated one is evident from the following entries in the contemporary records. In August, 1339, the chancellor orders "John de Flete, receiver of the king's moneys in the Tower of London, to pay to William le Gyvour the arrears of his accustomed wages for the time when he was in the king's service at the Tower in making engines and springalds."⁵

¹ Patent Roll, 4 Henry VIII, p. 2, m. 24.

² *ibid.* p. 2, m. 27.

³ Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, vol. iv, part i, grants in May, 1524. No. 28, s.b. p. 169.

⁴ *ibid.* "The Royal Household," January, 1526, p. 869.

⁵ Close Roll, 13 Edward III, m. 19, p. 179.

On 20th December in the same year we find the chancellor writing to the treasurer and chamberlains an order "to account with Nicholas de la Beche, constable of the Tower of London, for the wages of 20 men-at-arms and 50 archers whom the king directed him to place at the Tower, and to pay him what they find to be due to him, as the king has ordered them to pay these men wages for the time while they shall stay in the Tower (as a part of its regular garrison), *whereof they have hitherto done nothing as the king has learned.*"¹ In October, 1336, the king, then at Leicester, writes to the sheriff of Essex an order "upon sight of these presents to cause all the timber for the repairs of the houses and buildings of the Tower of London purveyed (from the woods) at Havering-atte-Boure to be taken to the Tower, and delivered to the constable, or to him who supplies his place there."² Six weeks later the king, then at Stirling and in the midst of his Scottish campaign, again writes to the sheriff of Essex an order "without making further excuse or delay to cause the timber already mentioned to be taken to the Tower according to the tenor of the king's previous order, *which he has neglected to observe*, so that the said works which the king ordered to be done before a certain day may not be retarded by reason of his negligence, whereby *the king may be obliged to punish him.*"³ On 13th November the king writes from Stirling an order to the sheriffs of London to cause those 200 quarters of sea coal⁴ and 100 quarters of charcoal and 15 cartloads

¹ Close Roll, 13 Edward III, m. 10, p. 313.

² Close Roll, 10 Edward III, m. 15, p. 613.

³ *ibid.* m. 10, p. 631.

⁴ No mention is made of coal as distinguished from charcoal until the time of Henry II. In 1239 Henry III granted a charter to the freemen of Newcastle-upon-Tyne by which they obtained liberty to dig for "cole" and subsequently we read of "sea coal" being carried to London.

The use of sea coal (so called from its transport by sea) was already becoming common, but the earliest reference to a colliery known to me occurs in an inquisition touching the succession to Elena de la Zouche in Scotland under a writ directed to the sheriff of Berwick-upon-Tweed, dated 20th August, 1296, or 25 Edward I,

which mentions "In the *colliery* in the vill of Travirment of fixed rent 46s. 8d." this being at Tranent in the county of Haddington near Prestonpans, in which neighbourhood coal is still being worked. In the year 1307 the nobles and commons assembled in parliament represented to the king that the burning of coal was a public nuisance as it corrupted the air by its smoke and noxious vapours, to which I shall have occasion to revert later, and a commission was issued with powers to punish delinquents by fines and destruction of their furnaces and kilns, but despite this strong opposition coal continued to be used; indeed, but a few years later it had become an inmate of the royal palace, ten shillings having been expended upon coal for use at the king's coronation.

of lead, 10,000 of iron (Spanish ?) (probably in osmunds), 200 garbs (sheaves or bundles) of laths (for roofing ?), and 1,000 spears which the king ordered *him (sic)* to buy and purvey, and deliver to Nicholas de la Beche, constable of the Tower, to be bought and purveyed *without delay* if this has not already been done and to be carried to the Tower to be delivered by indenture to Thomas de Stapilford, clerk of the king's works there, for the munition of the Tower.¹ There appears to have been some little delay in the execution of this order, for on 6th May, 1337, the king, then at Dunstable, writes as follows: "Whereas the king lately ordered the sheriffs of London under the great seal to buy and purvey 200 quarters of sea coal, 100 quarters of charcoal, 15 cartloads of lead, 200 sheaves of stakes (*sic*), 1,000 lances and 10 miliaria of iron (whether by weight or number is not stated, but it would be imported iron, most probably Spanish), to be delivered to the constable of the Tower of London, if these were not then bought and purveyed, to cause them to be carried to the Tower and delivered by indenture to Thomas de Stapilford, clerk of the king's works there, for the munition of the said Tower, and William de Brikelesworth and John Norton, sheriffs of London, by virtue of that order delivered to the said Thomas 100 quarters of sea coal costing £6 13s. 4d. 10 miliaria of iron costing £25, 30 sheaves of stakes costing 20s. and 10 cartloads of lead costing £32 3s. 4d. and also incurred divers costs of purveying the said premises, and of carrying them to divers places, which amount to the sum of 23s. 7d. as appears by one part of an indenture under the seal of Thomas which the sheriffs have in their possession, the king orders the treasurer and barons (of the exchequer) to view the said order and indenture and *if they find this to be so* to cause the sheriffs to have due allowance in the ferm of the city of London for the costs *reasonably incurred* by them therein, and receiving from them the king's writ and the indenture aforesaid."² It will be seen from the foregoing that if the treasurer and other officials of the exchequer could find any irregularity, no matter how

¹ Close Roll, 10 Edward III, m. 9, p. 627.

² Close Roll, 11 Edward III. m. 18, p. 52.

small or trifling, such as demurring to any one of the items of the "reasonable expenses" incurred, they could refuse to find "a true bill" or, in other words, to pass the accounts, and so interpose wellnigh interminable delays not merely in the actual payment but in the settlement of the necessary accounts preliminary thereto. In the case of a monarch so deeply indebted as Edward III then was to his Florentine bankers, the house of the Bardi,¹ this conduct, as calculated to postpone payment indefinitely, would doubtless be reckoned as good service to the Crown, though by no means calculated to enhance its credit or to promote any desire to have transactions with it among the trading community in general.

On 11th July, 1338, the king, prior to his departure for the French war, had appointed his eldest son Edward (not yet created prince of Wales) guardian of the kingdom during his absence, and on 20th July the following letter was written from Bury St. Edmunds: "The king to the treasurer and chamberlains. Whereas the king has ordained that Edward duke of Cornwall and earl of Chester (whom he has appointed keeper of England while he himself is in the parts beyond the sea for the defence of the realm and the rights of his crown) shall stay at the Tower of London as shall seem good to him and his council, the king wishes the Tower to be provided (as an additional garrison) with 20 men-at-arms and 50 archers, also 50 tuns of wine, 500 quarters of malt, 700 quarters of wheat, 100 quarters of beans and the same of peas, 20 tuns of great and small salt, 200 quarters of sea coal, and what may be necessary of timber and planks for making brattishes about the Tower, and such iron, steel, lead, (long) bows, crossbows, arrows, quarrels, and armour, as shall be necessary for the defence of the Tower, and that whenever it is necessary more victuals shall be procured and provided by the advice of the chancellor, the treasurer, the constable of the Tower, and others of the council, and delivered to the receiver there. The king

¹ When the Bardi failed in 1345 the king was indebted to them to the extent of 1,000,000 golden guildens, for which

they had as security orders on the collectors of customs at Sandwich and Southampton.

orders the treasurer and chamberlains to cause all the victuals specified above to be purveyed without any delay, taken to the Tower, and delivered to the receiver there by indenture, and to pay reasonable wages to the said men-at-arms and archers when they are placed in the Tower for its defence according to the said advice" (by privy seal).¹ Ten days later there is a further order to Nicholas de la Beche, constable of the Tower, "to cause 20 men-at-arms and 50 archers, with whom the king wished the Tower to be garrisoned, to be placed there for its safe keeping, and to stay there continuously or by turns as he shall see fit, and the king has ordered the treasurer and chamberlains to pay wages to those men-at-arms and archers when they shall be there" (by privy seal).²

In 1340 the chancellor is again writing an order to the treasurer and barons of the exchequer to "allow £14 5s. od. to master William de Hurle, the king's carpenter, in the sum which is found to be owing to him for his robe and wages, as the king upon the 1st of June, 1336, appointed the said William to be chief carpenter at the Tower of London for life, and also chief surveyor of all works pertaining to the office of the carpentry in the Tower, and in all the other castles of the king this (the south) side Trent, and to ordain in those castles the things which pertain to that office, receiving yearly a robe becoming his estate, and 12d. a day for his daily wages, and he has now besought the king to order such allowance and payment of his wages to be made to him as he is bound to the king in the sum of £14 5s. od. for money received by him for carrying a certain great engine from the Tower to (the siege of) Dunbar castle in Scotland, for his *reasonable expenses*, and the other necessary expenses of the men with him by his account duly rendered at the exchequer (by order of the chancellor upon 8th May, 1339), nevertheless *his robe and wages are in arrear to him for two years and more.*"³ In addition to the order of the chancellor as to master William's accounts there is on 10th

¹ Close Roll, 12 Edward III, m. 22, p. 445.

² *ibid.* m. 22, p. 446.

³ Close Roll, 13 Edward III, m. 47, p. 349.

February, 1339, a warrant to the exchequer "to pay to John Crabbe, who is going abroad in the king's service, £23 19s. 11d. wages and expenses due to him for surveying the construction of engines and 'hourds' at the siege of the castle of Dunbar." Tested by the guardian (of England, the duke of Cornwall), at Kennington palace.¹ This man appears to have superintended the construction of projectile engines and to have worked with de Hurle, who was probably employed in making the massive wooden frames for them, as on 15th March, 1341, the king orders Bartholomew de Burghersh, keeper of the forests this side Trent, to deliver to John Crabbe, appointed to make certain engines and hoardings for the war, and to master William de Hurel, the king's chief carpenter, for timber in the king's forests and woods for the said engines and hoardings (hourdes), to be taken by the view of two lawful men of those parts.²

A further insight into the forcible manner in which workmen were detained for the service of the king is afforded by an order from Sheen, dated 25th March, 1341, and addressed to William de Edyngton, receiver of all the subsidy of the ninth in all the counties this (south) side of Trent, directing him to pay to John Crabbe, whom the king has appointed to make certain engines and hoardings for the war, and to the carpenters and *other workmen whom the king has directed him to arrest for these works, their reasonable wages* as shall be agreed between the receiver and the said John Crabbe.³ In September, 1338, the king writes from Windsor directing William Trussell, escheator this side Trent, to pay to Walter de Weston, clerk of the king's works in the Tower of London, £30 upon his expenses in repairing the walls of the said Tower, and the making of springalds, (long) bows, and crossbows (*balistarum*), and other things necessary for the defence of the said Tower, which sum the king had already ordered to be delivered to Walter by the treasurer and chamberlains, notwithstanding which *it is not paid*

¹ Close Roll, 13 Edward III, m. 45, p. 1.

³ *ibid.* m. 25, p. 49.

² Close Roll, 15 Edward III, m. 36,
p. 27.

to him as may fully appear by a bill of the treasurer delivered in the chancery.¹

At this time Edward was beginning to feel the pinch of straitened circumstances owing to his foreign loans for carrying on his wars in Scotland and abroad, and his foreign money-lenders, the Bardi and Peruzzi of Florence, had begun to press for repayment. Two years before, writing from Perth on 15th July, 1336, the king had sent the following order to Nicholas de la Beche, constable of the Tower: "To cause the gates of the Tower to be closed from setting of the sun to the rising of the same, and to take oath from the officers, ministers, and others dwelling in the Tower for the safe keeping thereof, to conduct themselves well and faithfully in that custody, and not to leave the Tower at night (of which more later) without licence, as was hitherto wont to be done, as on account of certain news which had come to his ears, the king ordered Nicholas to cause the Tower to be safely guarded, and to cause such diligence to be applied in the custody of the walls, gates, and other places thereof that no damage may happen thereto by reason of any crafty deceit or attack of the king's enemies by day or by night, and now the king has been informed that notwithstanding this said order, divers officers, ministers, and others dwelling in the Tower as aforesaid go into the city of London and to other places, often by night, and often after sunset remain there at will."² At the same time the king wrote to the constable of Carisbrooke castle and to the governor of the Isle of Wight directing them in similar terms to display greater watchfulness, as the French had actually landed and burned Portsmouth and several villages in its vicinity and further descents were to be expected. The duke of Cornwall and his council ordered springalds, quarrels, lances, cross and longbows and arrows to be sent out from the stores in the Tower of London, directed the walls of Winchester to be repaired, and forbade the inhabitants of Southampton to leave the town, ordering

¹ Close Roll, 12 Edward III, m. 13, p. 467.

² Close Roll, 10 Edward III, m. 20d, p. 695.

all who were absent to return thither immediately.¹ Notwithstanding the above warning Nicholas de la Beche seems to have continued his neglect of the duties of the important office he held and to have relied for safety in so doing on the departure of the duke of Cornwall and his council from the Tower and on the king's absence in Flanders, but as is usually the case, the unexpected happened without warning, and he was caught napping. Unable to obtain supplies either of money or wool to satisfy the clamorous demands of his foreign creditors, in spite of repeated letters to the council in England, the king was finally reduced "to steal away privately," and so to evade his creditors by the pitiable expedient of running away from them, like the ordinary absconding bankrupt of more modern times, but on this occasion the king left Henry of Lancaster, earl of Derby, in pawn for his debts.² Quitting Ghent one day on pretext of taking exercise, he hurried secretly and with but a small escort to Sluys, where he and the queen embarked for England, and after a stormy voyage of three days and nights reached the mouth of the Thames, up which he sailed and landed quite unexpectedly at the Tower late in the evening of 30th November, 1340.³ As might be supposed, his sudden arrival, almost in the middle of the night, took all by surprise. The king was furious on finding that despite his express injunctions the Tower was left quite unguarded, and its constable absent, "for when he enquired for Sir Nicholas de la Beche, the under-constable fell upon his knees at the king's feet, and said 'Sire, he is out of town.' Thereupon the king became even more enraged, and commanded that all the doors throughout the Tower should be instantly opened so that he himself might see all things that were within the Tower, and having done so he further commanded the mayor of London, Andrew Aubrey, to be sent for, and when he came before the king, he fell upon his knees and saluted him, and the king commanded him to rise and under pain of losing life and limb to bring before him that same night without receiving any respite the lord de Wake, Sir John de Stonore,

¹ Rymer : *Foedera*, ii, pp. 1070-1071 ; *England*, Edmund Howe's edition of 1641)
1076-1078.

² Stowe's *Chronicle* (or *Annals* of

p. 237.

³ Rymer : *Foedera*, ii, p. 1141.

Sir William de la Pole, Sir John de Polteneye, Sir Richard de Wyleby, master John de Saint Paul, master Henry de Stratford, cousin of the archbishop of Canterbury, master Michael Wathe, and Sir John de Thorp; and all these being taken the same night by the mayor and the king's serjeants were brought to the king at the Tower, and by his command were cast into separate prisons, each man by himself and having each a keeper for his safe custody; and on the morrow the king gave further order that Sir Nicholas de la Beche, the then constable of the Tower, and also Sir John de Molins, should be sought for and brought to him wherever they might be found. Sir Nicholas was found and brought to the king, but Sir John de Molins took to flight, and the king confiscated all his goods and took possession thereof, but touching Sir Nicholas de la Beche he was by the king's order deprived of his office of constable and remanded by way of punishment to strait prison in the castle of Tickhill in Yorkshire, there to bethink himself upon his heinous disobedience and to abide the king's pleasure until such time as the king considered he was purged of his offence, and Sir Robert de Dalton was appointed as constable of the Tower in his room, while of the other prisoners some were sent to the castles of Corfe, Caerphilly, Devizes, Nottingham, Somerton and Windsor, while Sir John de Thorp, Sir John Chardelowe and master John de Saint Paul remained close prisoners at the Tower."¹

It is easy to imagine the consternation of all concerned at the king's unexpected return: with so many arrests to be made, that night must have been a busy one and long remembered in the city, owing to the disturbance caused by the numerous parties of armed men traversing the dark streets with flaring torches in search of the various delinquents. The mayor himself cannot have felt very comfortable when reflecting that his own freedom from imprisonment, if not worse, depended upon his success in arresting the delinquents. The members of the council, by sending false information about the delay in the collection of the tenths that had been granted, and by failing to remit either money or

¹ Riley, *The French Chronicle of London*, 283-285.

wool as security for his more pressing creditors, had aroused the king's indignation, and richly merited the severe punishment which his anger led him so promptly to inflict upon all, irrespective of rank, ecclesiastical dignity, or the judicial ermine.

During the middle ages whales appear to have frequented the North sea, the mouth of the Thames and the English Channel, then called "the Narrow Seas." They were of course valued for their oil, and the flesh when salted was considered as so great and costly a delicacy that it was reserved for the tables of royalty and those of the highest rank, or for great feasts on very special occasions. When captured near the coast or driven on shore, whales, together with sturgeon, porpoise and grampus, were known as "royal fishes," and, no matter where or by whom taken, were all reckoned as the property of the sovereign in consideration of his protecting peaceful merchants and other seafarers with his navy from attacks of pirates and sea robbers. In connexion with the whale a most wonderful legend has been evolved, which states that upon the occasion of any whale being driven on shore or captured at sea the head and body went to the king, the tail being reserved for the queen in order that she might have the whalebone for her stays.¹

Unfortunately this remarkable statement only serves to display its inventor's ignorance of the natural history of the whale, for the so-called "whalebone" or baleen is found not in the whale's tail, but in its mouth. Although the custom of tight lacing was certainly in existence during the reign of William Rufus or Henry I, yet the use of whalebone for stiffening stays only dates from about the middle of the reign of Elizabeth.² Whale, sturgeon, porpoise and grampus, when taken at sea, or embayed and driven ashore on the coast, were claimed at once as a droit of the Crown, and as such were generally taken charge of by the sheriff of the county where the animal was taken, or in the instances to which I am about to refer, by the constable of the Tower of London. In

¹ Viollet-le-Duc, *Dict. mobilier français*, iii, p. 262, s.v. *corset*.

² Planche, *History of British Costume*, ch. ix, p. 117, and ch. xvii, p. 256.

1183, the sheriff of Dorsetshire renders, amongst other accounts, a fine of half a mark (6s. 8d. or about £8 7s. 8d. at present value) from the men of Roger de Pole of Swanage because they had seized upon a whale [unlawfully].¹

There are numerous entries upon the Pipe Rolls of Henry II relating to the capture of whales in the counties of York, Lincoln, Norfolk, Essex, London and Middlesex, Devon, Dorset, Somerset and Cornwall, and to their subsequent salting down. Of those relating to London, to which the salted whale seems generally to have been sent, the first occurs in the year 1165, when 12s. 6d. is paid for taking "*crasso pisce*" from London to Nottingham.² The next occurs in 1166, when a charge of 9s. od. is made for bringing "*crassum piscem*" from Yarmouth to London, while in the same year 6s. od. was paid for sending "*crasso pisce*" from London to Clarendon.³ In 1169 there occurs an entry for the hire of ships conveying "*crassum piscem*" from the castle of Swayn (which in this instance probably is that of Colchester) to the Tower of London, 20s. 4d. and for salting (*salliend' crassis piscibus*) at the Tower of London by the view (i.e. under the supervision) of Edward Blund, £9 15s. 11d. So large a sum taken in conjunction with the preceding item seems to indicate that either a very large whale had been taken (perhaps a Sibbald's rorqual, which attains a length of 70 to 85 feet with a corresponding bulk) or else that, from the employment of several ships to transport the cargoes of whale-beef, several smaller whales, perhaps an entire school, had been driven on shore and killed.⁴

In 1179, there occurs a further entry under London, though this does not necessarily refer to the Tower, of 80 portions of whale-meat, and for its carriage "*ad opus regis*" 49s. 8d. and also "paid for one cartload of lampreys and whale-beef £8 os. od. per breve regis."⁵ In the reign of Edward II an entry in the Chronicle of London tells us: "Be it remembered that on Sunday in the beginning of Lent a whale (*hune baleyne*) was

¹ Pipe Roll, 29 Henry II, p. 32.

² Pipe Roll, 11 Henry II, p. 31.

³ Pipe Roll, 12 Henry II, pp. 17, 130.

⁴ Pipe Roll, 15 Henry II, pp. 134, 170.

⁵ Pipe Roll, 26 Henry II, p. 150.

taken in the Thames near to Greenwich, being 80 feet in length and 32 feet in girth," and that as "a royal fish," being promptly claimed for the Crown, "it was brought to the Tower of London, and was then cut up by the constable, Sir John de Cromwell, acting for the king," though probably not by his own hands, for apart from the greasy work of "flensing" or stripping off the blubber to be rendered down for the extraction of the oil, the cutting up of such a huge carcass was a somewhat butcherly business, and he would doubtless prefer to employ his servants for such an unpleasant task.¹ On the 14th June, 1315, a payment is made of 20s. od. to Thomas Springet, William Kempe and Edmond de Greenwich, mariners, this money being received by their own hands of the king's gift for their labour in taking a whale lately caught near London Bridge.² I hardly think that these two items can refer to the same whale, as setting aside the discrepancy of the two dates, the king was at Westminster in April, 1309, and again in 1315, nor is it probable that he would have waited for six years before he rewarded the first set of captors.

Moreover, unless the whale, like the celebrated bird of Sir Boyle Roche, possessed the remarkable power of being in two places at once, it could hardly have been captured on two different occasions, both near Greenwich and also near London Bridge, which by water are nearly five miles apart, though it is undoubtedly a curious coincidence that both events should have occurred in the Thames, in the same reign, and with so comparatively short an interval between them. It is, however, by no means certain that the expression "*crassis piscibus*" invariably refers to whales, as it is also used to denote the grampus, a smaller cetacean, which however only attains a length of 15 to 20 feet, and like its larger brethren was valued chiefly for the oil it yielded. In a corrupted form its old Italian name of *gran pesce*, or great fish, frequently occurs in various later mediaeval accounts of household expenditures as *craspice*, *crospays*, *grapeys*, *grappays*, or *graspeys*. In the laws of king Ethelred it is

¹ *Liber de Antiquis Legibus*, Camden Soc. no. 34, appendix, p. 251.

² Issue Roll, 8 Edward II, p. 126.

provided that the men of Rouen, when coming to London with cargoes of wine or whale-meat, "craspice," are to give one twentieth part of the said "craspice" by way of toll.¹

In 1324 the Durham account rolls record a purchase of 28 lbs. of "grapays," and again for grapays purchased 10d.² In the account of the expeditions of Henry of Lancaster, earl of Derby, to Prussia and the holy land in 1391-1393, among other necessities purchased in England prior to the journey, the clerk of the buttery by the hands of John Payn in 1391 pays for one small barrel de "crospays" 5s. od. and among the provisions laid in at Venice as sea-stock for his voyage to Palestine in 1392 was "uno cado de graspeys" costing 11 ducats (or 34s. 10d. English money).³ In 1489, on 2nd February, mention is made of the capture "ageyns Thornham (near Hunstanton, Norfolk) in the kynges streeme of a whalle fyssh leyng 2 fadam and a half deepe upon the see by Thornham men labouring all nyght on Sunday nyght last was and so have sleyn and brought it too lande," and Sir John Paston's deputy wrote to acquaint him with the capture (of which one half went to the lord high admiral) saying, "Syr the lawe cyvyll seyth thus, if any fyssh ryall bee found on the see, that is to say whalle bales sturghion porpeys or grapeys, my lord admyrall shall have the halvende. Syr, it is a greet fyssh, and a ryall, being 11 fadam and more of length and 2 fadam of bygnes and depnes in the mydde fyssh."⁴

It will be seen that on this occasion the writer was careful to show that while "grapeys" or grampus was a royal fish, yet it was something quite different from whale. "Porpeys" or porpoise was also considered as a great delicacy. The *Form of Cury* (or *Cookery*) in 1390 mentions "porpeis in broth," while during the rebellion of Jack Cade in 1450 the town of Lydd sought to propitiate him by sending a "porpus" as a present "in order to have his good wille." Being considered as "fish," its flesh formed a valuable adjunct to meals on Fridays and

¹ Thorp, *Laws of Ethelred*, etc, i, 300.

² *Durham Account Rolls*, Surtees Soc. vol. 99, p. 42.

³ *The Earl of Derby's Expeditions*, Camden Soc. n.s. vol. 52, pp. 19, 221.

⁴ *Paston Letters*, iii, no. 906, p. 347.

other fast days. The *Liber Cocorum* of 1420 alludes to the practice thus "to serve on fysshe day with grappays," and in two cookery books of 1430 "on fysshe days crabbe or cray fish and graspayes" are directed to be served. Meaning originally the fat fish on account of its coating of blubber which could be rendered down into a valuable oil, the word *craspis*, by a gradual process of etymological alteration became *gran pesce* or great fish on account of its size, and so finally assumed the modern form of *grampus*.