THE ENGLAND OF FORMER DAYS.

A Lecture delivered for the Wycombe Free Library, in 1876.

BY JOHN PARKER, JUN.

With some of us, perhaps, the most intense curiosity is to know how the generations of the past lived. We have heard the history of their governments, of their kings, but this is the shell; the domestic life, the habits of the people, is as the kernel of the story. The most interesting spots on earth are, perhaps, the excavated cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii, because there, before our own eyes, we see the realities of a bygone age, as the events of every-day life were suddenly arrested by the awful visitation which effaced their names for centuries from human memory. When we think of such cities as Athens, how should we delight to dive into the secrets of the every-day existence of the learned Athenian? Probably some of us in a practical age wonder how he could afford to indulge his fancy, to occupy the day in refined disputations; and without the aid of the unpaid slave—the Helot—no doubt much of the cultivation and learned leisure, and, consequently, the literature of Greece, would have been lost. But our subject is confined to our own country. In the short space of an hour's lecture it is impossible to do more than to touch upon a subject full of deep interest; to take up a fragment here and there of the lives, habits, laws, manners, and customs of our forefathers, and this must be my apology for dealing unsystematically with that, which should receive a most regular treatment.

A difficulty arises at once, when we speak of our forefathers, for our mixed race makes us sceptical of our ancestry. The barrows on our hill-tops, the cromlechs, Stonehenge, all these evidences of the work of human effort, speak of a people having no affinity with ourselves, a Celtic race that has passed away from the spots it once

possessed. Then we are reminded of the Roman occupation, but we cannot boast that Latin blood flows through our veins. It is singular to reflect, that shortly after the Christian era this island, then a Roman colony under the surpassing rule of the great Western Empire, was well defended, and to which the luxury of Rome was transported, that the Roman villas were scattered over the country, and in them might be found all the elegancies of life, all the tastes which civilization of a very high order could invent; and yet the Roman roads, traces of fortifications, some sculpture, pottery, and coins, these are the solitary evidences of the Roman occupation of England. The ruthless race that succeeded the Romans had no eye for beauty, no notion of the comforts of life, for its German forest-life taught nothing but what was very stern, very real, and very pitiless. That race claims us, for the most part, as our true parents, and we are not ashamed of our parentage, we rejoice in our Anglo-Saxon origin. Let me here quote to you a passage from the late lamented Professor Kingsley in one of his lectures before the University of Cambridge, which is a very apt comment on my previous remarks:—

"Menzel, who, though he may not rank very high as a historian, has at least a true German heart, opens his history with a striking passage.

"'The sages of the East were teaching wisdom beneath the palms; the merchants of Tyre and Carthage were weighing their heavy anchors and spreading their purple sails for far seas; the Greek was making the earth fair by his art; and the Roman founding his colossal empire of force, while the Teuton sat, yet a child, unknown and naked among the forest beasts; and yet unharmed, and in his sport he lorded it over them, for the child was of a royal race, destined to win glory for all time to come.'

"To the strange and complicated education which God appointed for this race, and by which He has fitted it to become at least for many centuries henceforth, the ruling race of the world, I wish to call your attention. To-day I wish to impress strongly on your minds the childishness of our forefathers. For good or for evil they were great boys, very noble boys, very often very naughty boys, as boys with the strength of men might well be. Try to conceive such to yourselves, and you have the old Markman, Allman, Goth, Lombard, Saxon, Frank; and the notion may be more than a mere metaphor. Races, like individuals, it has been often said, may have their childhood, their youth, their manhood, their old age, and natural death. It is but a theory, perhaps nothing more. But at least our race had its childhood. Their virtues and their sad failings and failures I can understand on no other theory. The nearest type which we can see now is, I fancy, the English sailor, or the English navvy. A great simple, honest baby, full of power and fun, very coarse and plain-spoken at times, but if treated like a human being, most affectionate, susceptible, even sentimental and superstitious; fond of gamb-

ling, brute excitement, childish amusements in the intervals of enormous exertion; quarrelsome among themselves, as boys are, and with a spirit of wild independence which seems to be strength, but which, till it be disciplined into loyal obedience and self-sacrifice, is mere weakness; and beneath all a deep *practical shrewdness*, an indomitable perseverance, when once roused by need. Such a spirit as we see to this day in the English sailor, that is the nearest analogue I can find now."

It is of this *deep practical shrewdness* which I wish to speak for a few minutes. We can recognize it in the customs which still prevail amongst ourselves. When our Saxon forefathers wished to impress any facts upon the minds of others, they took care that what they intended to convey should be felt, and so when they wished to perpetuate the limits of a district they did not call to their aid a skilled surveyor and mapster, but they first fixed the boundary lines in their own minds' eye, and then set upon the business of making it known and remembered for many a long year. This was easily accomplished by what is termed "beating the boundaries." It is a familiar custom with us—it has descended to us. We are indeed indebted to our rude grandsires for the idea. Perhaps the district boundary crosses a stream. The most effectual way of perpetuating this point of demarcation is to immerse the youngest of the company, who are charged with the duty of "meeting the bounds," or some unfortunate youthful bystander, into this particular water, or to chastise another at a wall or fence, or some particular spot, which it would be otherwise difficult to remember. Sometimes the most important person of the locality is rudely dealt with during the perambulation to impress him, and through him, the whole community for generations to come, with the limits, which it is desired to indicate.

Many other customs, showing this practical shrewdness, have thus been handed down to us. Take, for instance, the village stocks, no doubt of Saxon origin. If a man would stray from the paths of sobriety, the wisest course, it was thought, was thus to effectually check his heedless steps. If a coward beat his wife, the best course to shame him was to expose him to his neighbours by the strains of what is termed rough music, persistently played before his unhappy home—a punishment still inflicted on such delinquents, to my own

knowledge, in Oxfordshire villages. But there are still more important legacies bequeathed to us by our Saxon forefathers. The territorial division of this country can, it is believed, be traced back to the first age of the settlement of the Saxons in England.* Our counties, our further subdivisions into Hundreds, consisting at least of a hundred families, and the tything—the hamlet of at least ten families. Over each of these divisions originally presided the count, earl, or alderman over the county, the Hundreden over the Hundred, and the Decanus or Tithingman over the tithing. This divisional government, under the control of the Assembly of Freemen, known as the Witenagemot, or meeting of the wise men, the root from which has sprung our modern English Parliament under the headship of a king—sometimes elective, sometimes hereditary—is another proof of practical shrewdness. It cannot be too strongly impressed upon us that to trace the origin of our love for liberty, we must look back to the remote period of our history, which is now engaging our attention. You have only to reflect a moment to comprehend the great Teutonic race of the present day—the peoples of Germany, of our own country, and the offshoots of America—a race always aspiring, successfully or no, with many advantages, and possibly at times with disastrous results, for liberty, politically and religiously, comparing in these respects very favourably with the Latin races. And the secret of this dogged love of right—this self-assertion—must be traced to a common parentage—the *shrewd practical Saxon ancestor*. But I am rather travelling from my original purpose, and will pursue this topic no farther.

The most interesting evidences of the manners and habits of the Saxon period are to be gained from two sources of inestimable value. The one is the collection of illustrations in the Cotton MSS. in the British Museum, the other the Bayeux Tapestry. The MSS. we should all have readier access to than a sight of the tapestry, therefore I will say a few words on the latter remarkable piece of needlework, which is to be seen, I believe, at the Hotel of the Prefecture of the old Nor-

* Pic. Hist. of England, vol. i., p. 249.

mandy city of Bayeux. "It is a roll of linen 20 inches broad and 214 feet in length, on which is worked with woollen thread of different colours, a representation in seventy-two distinct compartments, the whole history of the Norman Conquest of England from the departure of Harold for Normandy to the rout of the Saxons at the battle of Hastings. . . . Every compartment has a superscription in Latin indicating its subject." * This piece of industry is supposed to have been undertaken by Matilda, the Queen of William the Conqueror. Some idea may be formed of the magnitude of the work, when I mention to you, that it was preserved in the Cathedral of Bayeux till the year 1803, where once for some days every year, it was exhibited in "the nave of the church," round which "it is stated it exactly went." When Napoleon, in 1803, contemplated the invasion of England, he caused this tapestry to be removed from the Cathedral to the National Museum at Paris, no doubt to inspire the French, from their past history, with the notion that a second Conquest might be achieved. "When it had served its purpose it was returned to its original obscurity" † at Bayeux. In 1814 it is mentioned that the colours of the tapestry were as bright and distinct, and the letters of the superscription as legible, as if of yesterday.

The work is made exceedingly interesting by the fact, that so many phases of life are depicted by the skill of the artist. The court costume, the dress and weapons of the soldier, the fleet of the period, the mode of carrying on and the implements of agriculture, the social life, even to the public dinner, all are depicted, perhaps rudely, but, there is very little doubt, faithfully, in the Bayeux tapestry. And to the illustrations that have been taken from this wondrous test of woman's industry, I must refer you for any further information on the subject of the Saxon period.

All conquests are more or less calamities, and the Norman invasion and conquest of England fully share in this general condemnation. The Earldomen and the Thane were for the most part dispersed to make room for the

* Knight's Pic. Hist.,vol. i., p. 196. † Old England, p. 83.

favourites of the Conqueror, and great misery and distress were thereby occasioned. Vasts tracts of country too were depopulated, and the New Forest was thus created to gratify the sporting propensities of the kings. The early Norman rule was an iron rule, but it had its advantages as well as its disadvantages. The Saxon had maintained, as we have been led to see, a solid basis of liberty—had a very clear notion of right—but he was rude and rough as his sea king forefathers. Thus whilst we can point with gratitude to the Saxon for many a time-honoured institution, for many an unacknowledged principle of law, which lingers in the pages of our statute books, for the very *root* and *groundwork* of our present English language (and this last legacy, let me remind you, is no slight one), yet we look in vain for any substantial proof, either from the vestiges of a grand church, a stately castle, or public work, that the Saxon had attained to any great position in the higher civilization of nations. A great race may even be swept from the face of a country it had subdued, without having left any permanent mark of the hand it had laid on the land of its conquests. It has been *naïvely* remarked that, but a few years back, had the British power been driven from India, all that would have been left to attest the energy and brilliant achievements of our countrymen would have been the empty bottles labelled with the trade mark of a popular English brewery. And yet, without any undue conceit, we could say, had this been the case, a mighty people were once the masters of this land. I think this reflection is due to our Saxon progenitors.

The Norman, with all that was objectionable about him, came to England with a higher civilization, more learning, an improved mode of life. In his habits, in his feasts, the Saxon had become coarse and drunken; the Norman, as in contrast, showed an elegance in his festivities, in his apparel, and in his general mode of life. He introduced into the country a style of architecture of which still there remain some noble specimens. He had his mission undoubtedly to this island, and a great mission it was. The tyranny of the Norman kings gradually brought about a sympathy between the Norman subject and the Saxon, it is well known that the former were equally zealous with the great body of the people

in demanding the restoration of the old Saxon laws and customs; and eventually in the reign of Henry II. the two races mingled, intermarriages took place, and all rejoiced in the common name of Englishmen.

We have now fairly found footing in the Middle Ages, a period in history full of remarkable contrasts—an age of high art, as the minsters of our cathedral cities attest, and yet an age of gross superstition, in which Christianity was fearfully caricatured; an age which could boast of men of learning and of disinterested devotion, that may well engage the attention of our own times, in which, taking their names at random, lived such men as St. Bernard, St. Louis of France, Lanfranc, and Anselm, and yet a time of much ignorance, oppression, and crime. I mention these contrasts, because at the present day there are too often, on the one hand, some who are given unduly to exalt, and others to detract from all that is mediæval.

Having made these few prefatory remarks, it is now my object, if possible, to live with you for a few minutes the life of the Middle Ages. Like all other human story, there will be the mixture of the grave and the gay; and I crave your pardon, if, to endeavour to give a faithful picture, I appear to deal in trivialities. The old street leading up to the Cathedral Precinct gateway of Canterbury will give us a very fair notion of the thoroughfare of a mediæval town; the road covered with round pebbles, no regular footway; the houses, each story overhanging the other, till finally the windows of the uppermost stories of opposite houses almost met. These projections became so objectionable, that among the regulations of the City of London, it was provided, that the pent-houses and *jettees* (a general name for the projection of a house), should be so high that folks on horseback might ride beneath them, and that they should be of the height of nine feet at the very least;* and to pursue the subject of the thoroughfares then existing, I may remark that swine were in mediæval cities, in the less enlightened days of the period, the scavengers, just as in Eastern cities, from time immemorial, the dog has occupied the same position. We remember the allusion in the sacred volume to the

* Liber Albus, p. 237.

dog, as "grinning and going about the city;" and his descendants, we know, may still be seen in Constantinople or any of the towns of Syria.

There is no doubt that the vast tracts of forests of oak in the Middle Ages encouraged the breeding of pigs. In the twelfth century, it is said, that these unsightly creatures were allowed to roam in the streets of Paris. But the most effectual way to put a stop to this nuisance at length occurred, for in 1131 one of the sons of Louis le Gros, while passing in the Rue du Martroi, between the Hôtel de Ville and the Church of St. Gervais, fractured his skull by a fall from his horse, caused by a pig running between that animal's legs. This accident led to the first order being issued by the provosts to the effect that breeding of pigs within the town was forbidden.* The allusions, which I have thus made, are simply to give an illustration of the sanitary condition of mediæval towns.

It has been my good fortune to have my attention called to a most interesting book called the "Liber Albus, or, The White Book of the City of London;" a book compiled in 1419 by the worthy town clerk of the period, John Carpenter, in the Mayoralty of Richard Whittington, and translated by Mr. Riley, a special commissioner appointed to translate the national records. This book is a compilation of the archives of the City of London, preserved in the Record Room at Guildhall. Mr. Riley says in his introduction, that there is no city in existence in possession of archives so complete. For nearly six centuries "its officials have kept an unbroken record of all transactions and events social, political, ecclesiastical, legal, military, naval, local, and municipal, in which closely or remotely the City in its corporate character has been interested," and that through all the chances and changes of its wars, its rebellions, its pestilences, and its conflagrations, to the lasting honour of the Corporation.

The entire account of the election of the Lord Mayor, taken from the "Liber Albus," is exceedingly interesting. It discloses to us how much the habits of the people were interwoven with the religious ceremonies of the pre-

* La Croix's Manners, Customs, and Dress during the Middle Ages, p. 119.

Reformational Church. After describing the procession, probably as singular a spectacle in its way as at the present time, and leaving the Mayor at his house with his invited guests, the writer quaintly continues the narrative as follows:—

"On the same day after dinner it was the custom for the new Mayor to proceed from his house to the Church of St. Thomas de Acton, those of his livery preceding him; and after the Aldermen had there assembled, they then proceeded together to the Church of St. Paul. Upon arriving there at a spot, namely, in the middle of the nave of the church, between the two small doors, it was the custom to pray for the soul of Bishop William, who by his entreaties, it is said, obtained from his Lordship William the Conqueror, great liberties for the City of London, the priest repeating the *De profundis*. They then moved on to the churchyard, where lie the bodies of the parents of Thomas, late Archbishop of Canterbury; * and there they also repeated the *De profundis*, etc., in behalf of all the faithful of God departed, near the grave of his parents before mentioned. After this they returned through the market of Chepe (sometimes with lighted torches, if it was late) to the said Church of St. Thomas, and there the Mayor and Aldermen made an offering of one penny each; which done, every one returned to his home, and the morning and the evening were one day." †

It is singular to see the veneration with which churches were regarded in mediæval times; so much so that the criminal who fled to a church often escaped the punishment which would otherwise be inflicted on him; carried to such an excess, no doubt there was a great deal to be said against the privilege of sacred places, still we should remember that in a rude age there was much to soften and awe the otherwise unrestrained by exalting the place set apart for God's service.

I find among the pleas of the City of London, in the twelfth year of the reign of Henry III., the following recorded:—

"In that year, Gervaise le Cordewaner being Chamberlain and the aforesaid persons being Sheriffs, it happened that one Henry de Buke, on the Monday next after the Feast of Saint Ethelburga slew one Le Ireis le Tyulour in the street of Fletebrigge‡ with a knife, and then fled to the Church of Saint Mary in Southwerke, and having there acknowledged the deed in presence of the said Chamberlain and Sheriffs abjured the realm." §

Among some very curious statutes and ordinances controlling the fisheries in the Thames and Medway, the following singular piece of history occurs, which if believed in the days of Whittington, I cannot vouch for

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* Thomas à Becket.
‡ Fleet Street.
† Liber Albus, p. 24.
§ Liber Albus, p. 76.

the same credulity at the present day in the precincts of Guildhall :—

"In the year from the beginning of the world 4032, and before our Lord's incarnation 1200, the city that is now called London, founded in imitation of Great Troy, was constructed and built by King Brut, the first monarch of Britain, being at first called New Troy and afterwards Trinovant, of which foundation, building, and construction, the river Thames was the cause. And of this city and river, both Dukes, Mayors, Wardens, Sheriffs, Aldermen, and Nobles of the before-mentioned city have heretofore had and held the governance."

The bells of the churches in mediæval cities were used not only for sacred but for secular purposes. The early morning bell not only rang out the hours of prayer, but also announced the time when the markets opened; of this we shall have some instances presently. The curfew, still rung in many parishes, and within my own memory rung in this parish, told the hour when all well-conducted people should retire to rest. I now give you the following regulation from "Liber Albus"* :—

"It is also forbidden that any person shall be so daring as to be found going or wandering about the streets of the City after curfew rung out at Saint Martin's-le-Grand and Saint Lawrence or at Berkyng Cherche,† with sword or buckler, or with other arm for doing mischief, whereof evil suspicion may arise, or in any other manner, unless it be some great lord or other substantial person of good reputation, or a person of their household, who from them shall have warranty, and who is going from one to another with a light to guide him. And if anyone shall be found going about contrary to the form aforesaid, if he have no occasion to come so late into the City, he shall be taken by the keepers of the peace and put into the Tun,‡ which for such misdoers is assigned. And on the morrow he shall be arrested and be brought before the Mayor of the City and the Alderman; and according as they shall find that such persons have offended and are thereunto accustomed, they shall be punished."

The City must have been truly quiet, if this regulation was well observed, surrounded, as it was, by massive walls and approached by gates, reminding us very much of the condition of a college and its inmates in the present day. Here is an ordinance as to the watch and ward of the City :—

"Every gate shall be kept by day by two men well armed, and shall be shut at night by the Serjeant inhabiting the same; and that every Serjeant shall keep one Wait§ at his own cost."

In proceeding with a narrative of this kind of paternal

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* Page 240.
† All Hallows, Barking, near the Tower.
‡ A prison in Cornhill.
§ Watchman.

government it will, I think, be interesting, as well as amusing, to give some account of the serious liabilities, in which, in the times we are engaged upon, knavish tradesmen and brokers were involved, and first of corn-dealers.

"Also as to corn dealers who bring corn to the City for sale, that no one shall sell, by show or by sample, but they shall come to certain places in the City established, with their carts laden and with their horses having the loads upon them without selling anything and without getting rid of anything, until they reach the established places; that is to say, within the gate of Newgate, before the Friars Minors there, and at Grascherche; and this without putting anything into house or into hiding-place, whether the same arrive by night or by day, and that no corn shall be sold until the hour of Prime* rung at Saint Paul's, under penalty of forfeiting such corn; and that all vessels, scouts, and boats, of whatever kind they may be, that bring corn to sell as well at Billynsgate as elsewhere on the Thames, shall remain upon common sale after they have arrived without selling anything in gross for an whole day, that so the common people may buy for their sustenance what they shall need, and this under heavy forfeiture.

"And whereas some buyers and brokers of corn do buy corn in the City of country folks who bring it to the City to sell, and give, on the bargain being made, a penny or halfpenny by way of earnest; and tell the peasants to take corn to their house, and that there they shall receive their pay; and when they come there and think to have their payment directly, the buyer says that his wife at his house has gone out and has taken the key of the room, so that he cannot get at his money, but that the other must go away, and come again soon and receive his pay; and when he comes back a second time, then the buyer is not to be found; or else if he is found, he feigns something else, by reason whereof the poor men cannot have their pay. And sometimes, while the poor men are waiting for their pay, the buyer causes the corn to be wetted,† and then when they come to ask for their pay, which was agreed upon, they are told to wait until such a day as the buyer shall choose to name or else to take off a part of the price, which if they will not do, they may take their corn and carry it away, a thing which they cannot do because it is wetted and in another state than it was in when they sold it. And by such evil delays on the part of the buyer the poor men lose half of their pay in expenses before they are fully settled with. It is provided that the person towards whom such knavishness shall be committed shall make complaint unto the Mayor, and if he shall be able to make proof and convict the buyer before the Mayor of the wrong so done to him, the buyer shall pay unto the vendor double the value and full damages as well, in case the Mayor shall see that the value aforesaid does not suffice. . . . And if he have not the means of paying the penalty aforesaid, then he shall be put in the pillory, and remain there one hour in the day at least, a Serjeant of the City standing by the side of the pillory with good hue and cry as to the reason why he is so punished."‡

The following proclamation as to the places where corn-dealers should stand in the City of London will

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* The first hour of the day; according to canonical usages, six to seven in the morning.

† For the purpose of making malt.

‡ Liber Albus, p. 229.

be interesting, as showing the use made of familiar localities in former days, and the precautions that were taken that so precious an article of food as corn should be sold honestly :—

"Let proclamation be made that all those who bring corn or malt unto the City of London for sale, bring the same solely into the markets in the said City for the sale thereof, at the places from of old used therefor; that is to say, that those from the counties of Camtebrigge,* Huntyndone, Bedeforde, and those who come by Ware, bring all the corn and malt which they shall bring unto the said City for sale unto the market upon the pavement at Graschirche, and there stand for the purposes of sale, and nowhere else, without fraud or evil intent, and without placing or selling any thereof in secret places; and that the same corn and malt be not mixed in deceits of the people under pain of forfeiture of the said corn and malt. . . . .

"And those who come from the parts towards the west of the City, as from Barnet, and those who have to come by that way and by way of other places bringing corn or malt unto the said City for sale, bring the same solely unto the market upon the pavement before the Friars Minors in Newgate, and there stand for the purposes of sale, and nowhere else, without placing or selling any part thereof in secret; and that the same corn or malt be not mixed in deceit of the people under pain of forfeiture, etc., etc." †

The unfortunate position of fraudulent bakers, gathered from the "Book of Customs," and handed down to us in the "Liber Albus," ‡ will tempt me again to quote from this most valuable and unique record :—

"And if any default shall be found in the bread of a baker of the City, the first time let him be drawn upon a hurdle from the Guildhall to his own house, through the great streets, where there may be most people assembled, and through the great streets that are most dirty, with the faulty loaf hanging from his neck. If a second time he shall be found committing the same offence, let him be drawn from the Guildhall through the great street of Chepe, in manner aforesaid, to the pillory; and let him be put upon the pillory and remain there at least one hour in the day. And the third time that such default shall be found, he shall be drawn, and the oven shall be pulled down, and the baker made to forswear the trade within the City for ever."

It will here, I think, be appropriate to give some account of a punishment which in the Middle Ages was of common occurrence—namely, the pillory. It would be quite beside my purpose to enter upon so vast a subject as the punishments which prevailed in mediæval times. They were, indeed, hard times. We should shudder, did we realize the ingenuity, by which the poor

* Cambridge. † Liber Albus, p. 372. ‡ Ibid., p. 232.

human body was then made the subject of torture. Could the dank stone walls of the dungeons of the Tower of London, for instance, speak, what could they reveal to us! This side of these times presents indeed a dark picture, and astonishes us with the striking contrast it presents to the days in which we have the happy privilege to live. But the pillory was rather intended as a position of ridicule than of actual punishment. There is an Act of Parliament, as early as the fifty-first year of Henry III.'s reign,* enacting that the pillory and the tumbrel shall be the punishment of offending bakers and brewers. The pillory, you are aware, was an exposed and elevated platform where the delinquent stood suspended in the air, usually, I believe, with his head and hands in a vice, and, whilst in this position, the crowd would pelt the unfortunate criminal with dirt and rotten eggs. The chief intention of setting a criminal in the pillory was that he should become infamous, and known for such afterwards by the spectators. The Society of Antiquaries many years ago published a collection of prints, showing the manner in which the criminal's head was exposed in the time of Henry VII., whilst in the pillory.†

In speaking of the punishment of bakers, Dalton, a learned writer on Criminal Law,‡ says: "But if the offence be grievous or often, then shall they suffer punishment of the body without redemption (or remitting the offence either for gold or silver), a baker to the pillory, and a brewer to the tumbrel (now called the cooking stool, as it seemeth)." "An author," Dalton tells us, "interprets tumbrel for a dung cart." He says again in the Correction of Assize of Bread and Beer, the magistrates are to have a pillory and a tumbrel to punish bakers and brewers that are faulty. But the pillory was reserved for other transgressors besides bakers. Although I cannot leave them without giving just one more instance of their delinquencies, recorded in the judgments against some of their body, among the judgments of the pillory in the City of London. It is as follows :—

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* 51 Hen. III., st. 6.

† Barrington Ancient Statutes, 5th edition, p. 55.

‡ Dalton's Justice, c. 112, p. 367.

"Judgment of pillory upon certain bakers who had holes in their tables called *moldyng bordes*, by means whereof they stole their neighbour's dough." *

The pillory was, however, the punishment for the following offences, as appears by the "Liber Albus":—

"Judgment of pillory for selling of two stinking capons." "For selling a peck of stinking eels." "For lies uttered against John Tremayn, the Recorder."

There is also a noteworthy record of a similar judgment, which might, even in these days be, if not a punishment, at least a terror, to those who, during monetary and speculative bubbles, live on other people's ruin. It is this: "Judgment of pillory for enhancing the markets."

By a statute in the reign of Queen Anne, the punishment of the pillory for bakers was abolished.

Before I pass from the subject of food, it might be interesting to touch on the restrictions that applied to butchers. In England butchers were only allowed to kill bulls after they had been baited with dogs, no doubt with the view of making the flesh more tender. They were forbidden to sell meat on days when abstinence from animal food was ordered by the Church. By disobeying these regulations the consumer was liable to fine and imprisonment, or to severe corporal punishment by the whip or in the pillory. An unfortunate man, by the name of Clement Marot, was imprisoned and nearly burned alive for having eaten pork in Lent. Here is a singular tale: "In a certain town there had been a procession in Lent. A woman who had assisted at it, barefooted, went home to dine off a quarter of lamb and a ham. The smell got into the street; the house was entered. The fact being established, the woman was taken and condemned to walk through the town with her quarter of lamb on the spit over her shoulder and the ham hung round her neck."

Erasmus said: "He who has eaten pork instead of fish, is taken to the torture like a parricide."

An edict of Henry II. of France, 1549, forbade the sale of meat in Lent to persons who should not be furnished with a doctor's certificate.†

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* Liber Albus, p. 519.

† Lacroix's Middle Ages, p. 126.

I now wish to touch upon the subject of the sports of the mediæval age. Hunting, we all know, had a great fascination with the upper classes of the community. Our Norman kings were devoted to the chase. The hall of the baron was adorned with trophies of the hunting-field. But there was one sport only now known to us in story, or by the signs on way-side inns, which entirely captivated civilised Europe in the Middle Ages, and kindled a perfect enthusiasm in knight and fair lady, in priest and peasant—this was falconry. In so great esteem was this pastime held, that a nobleman or his lady never appeared in public without a hawk on the wrist, as a mark of dignity. Even bishops and abbots entered the churches with their hunting birds, which they placed on the steps of the altar itself during the service.

In a poem by Sebastian Brant, called "The Ship of Fools," published at the close of the fifteenth century, the poet complains of the interruption of divine service by the bringing of hawks and hounds into the churches, which the poet severely and very properly rebukes.

The following is the passage:—

"Into the church then comes another sotte,
Without devotion, jetting up and down,
Or to be seene, and show his garded cote.
Another on his fiste a sparhawke or fawcone
Or else a cokow, wasting to his shone.
Before the aulter he to and fro doth wander
With even as great devotion as doth a gander.
In comes another, his hounds at his tayle,
With lynes and leases and other like baggage.
His dogges bark, so that withouten fayle,
The whole church is troubled by their outrage." *

The high-born soldier frequently took his falcon to the wars, and whilst engaged in the battle would give the bird to his squire, till the conflict was over.

A man who had a large establishment was expected, in order to keep up his dignity, to maintain a regular falconry, and this entailed many retainers, horses and dogs of all sorts, which were either used for starting the game or for securing it when down, when it was forced to ground by the birds. A well-trained falcon was a bird

* See Strutt's Sports and Pastimes, p. 25.

of great value, and was the finest present that could be made to a lady, to a nobleman, or to the king himself, by any one who had received a favour.*

Lacroix says: "The Count de Nevers, son of Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, having been made a prisoner at the battle of Nicopolis, was presented to the Sultan Bajazet, who showed him his hunting establishment, consisting of seven thousand falconers, and as many huntsmen. The Duke of Burgundy, on hearing this, sent twelve white hawks, which were very scarce birds, as a present to Bajazet. The Sultan was so pleased with them, that he sent him back his son in exchange."

Lacroix also tells us that "the falcon was held in such respect, that their utensils, trappings, or feeding dishes were never used for other birds. The glove on which they were accustomed to alight was frequently elaborately embroidered in gold, and was never used except for birds of their own species. In the private establishments, the leather hoods which were put on their heads to prevent them seeing, were embroidered with gold and pearls, and surmounted with birds of paradise. Each bird wore on his legs two little bells with his owner's crest upon them. . . . These bells could be heard when the bird was too high in the air to be seen." †

The best bells for this purpose were made at Milan, and silver was commonly mixed with the metal.

Strutt, in his work on "Sports and Pastimes," quotes from an old play entitled, "A Woman Killed with Kindness." ‡

> "Her bels, Sir Francis had not both one weight,
> Nor was one semitune above the other.
> Mei thinkes these Millane bels do sound too full,
> And spoile the mounting of your hawke."

So popular was falconry in the fourteenth century, that in the rooms of inns there were perches made under the large mantelpieces on which to place the birds, while the sportsmen were at dinner.

I should mention that the Grand Falconer of France was a person very much in the same important position

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* Lacroix's Middle Ages, p. 201. † Ibid., pp. 202, 203. ‡ 1617.

which the Master of the Buckhounds now occupies in England. His annual salary was four thousand florins; he was attended by fifty gentlemen and fifty assistant falconers; and he was allowed to keep three hundred hawks.*

As another instance of the value of hawks, I may mention, that in the reign of Edward III. a statute was passed, that when a person found any species of hawk that had been lost by its owner, he was commanded to carry it to the Sheriff of the county, wherein it was found. The duty of the Sheriff was to make a proclamation, to be made in all the principal towns in the county, that he had such a hawk in his custody; and if the person who found the hawk concealed it from the owner or his falconer, he was liable, upon discovery, to pay the price of the bird to the owner, and to suffer two years' imprisonment.†

In the same reign the Bishop of Ely excommunicated certain persons for stealing a hawk that was sitting upon her perch in the cloisters of Bermondsey, in Southwark; but this piece of sacrilege was committed during Divine service in the choir, and the hawk was the property of the Bishop.‡

Hawking, though it attained the climax of its popularity in the Middle Ages, was a pastime of earlier antiquity, for we find it was a favourite sport among the Saxons. Its decline, no doubt, is attributable to the introduction of the musket, which was a far surer method of bringing down game to the sportsman than the catching of other birds by the training of hawks; still, considering it was a pastime that had so much to attract the lady as well as her lord, we may be surprised that it has become almost entirely a sport of the past; for this very reason I have dwelt upon it, perhaps somewhat unduly.

The sports of the Middle Ages were numerous, and if we again consult Strutt's work on Sports and Pastimes we shall very probably come to the conclusion that he discourses of mirthful times.

The ridicule with which the common hunt of the citizens of London was stigmatised, I cannot refrain from mentioning here, before leaving the subject of sports. I

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* Strutt's "Sports and Pastimes," p. 28. † 34 Edward III.
‡ Strutt's "Sports and Pastimes," p. 35.

quote from a ballad collected in a work entitled "Pills to purge Melancholy":—

"Next, once a year into Essex a hunting they go;
To see 'em pass along, oh, 'tis a most pretty show.
* * * * * * *
My lord, he takes a staff in hand to beat the bushes o'er;
I must confess it was a work he ne'er had done before.
A creature bounceth from a bush, which made them all to laugh
My lord, he cried, A hare, a hare! but it proved an Essex calf.
And when they had done their sport they came to London, where they dwell,
Their faces all so torn and scratched, their wives scarce knew them well;
For 'twas a very great mercy so many 'scaped alive,
For of twenty saddles carried out they brought again but five."

It would, however, be quite beyond my purpose to enumerate and describe the various ways in which our ancestors employed their leisure hours, but it would be a decided omission did I not mention the one event which of all others engrossed the interest and enthusiasm of bygone days, and this was the Tournament or joust. It has been so often spoken of and depicted by historian, poet, and novelist, that I feel it would be needless minutely to enter upon it. As the arena to the Roman, the bull-fight to the Spaniard, so the tournament or joust was the central attraction to a mediæval crowd. Perhaps the picture of a tournament by the Poet Laureate will most aptly bring to our imagination a thing so entirely of the past. The tale is too remotely conceived to give it a stamp of reality, but still it reflects in imaginative colours what existed in fact in a later age. I quote from "Elaine"*:—

"So spake Lavaine, and when they reached the lists
By Camelot in the meadow, let his eyes
Run through the peopled gallery, which half round
Lay like a rainbow fall'n upon the grass,
Until they found the clear-faced king, who sat
Robed in red samite, easily to be known,
Since to his crown the golden dragon clung,
And down his robe the dragon writhed in gold.
* * * * *
And in the costly canopy o'er him set
Blazed the last diamond of the nameless king.
* * * And anon
The trumpets blew; and then did either side,
They that assailed and they that held the lists,
Set lance in rest, strike spear, suddenly move,

* "Idylls of the King."

Meet in the midst, and there so furiously
Shock, that a man far off might well perceive,
If any man that day were left afield,
The hard earth shake and a low thunder of arms."

And then, describing the bravery of his favourite knight, Sir Launcelot, the poet continues—

"They couched their spears and pricked their steeds, and thus,
Their plumes driv'n backwards by the wind they made
In moving, all together down upon him
Bare, as a wild wave in the wide North Sea,
Green glimmering toward summit bears, with all
Its stormy crests that smoke against the skies,
Down on a bark, and overbears the bark
And him that helms it, so they overbore
Sir Launcelot and his charger."

He is, however, at length victorious,

"Though it seemed
Half miracle. * * * * *
Then the heralds blew,
Proclaiming his the prize who wore the sleeve
Of scarlet, and the pearls; and all the knights,
His party, cried, 'Advance and take your prize,
The diamond!'"

The costumes of the Middle Ages are a study in themselves. To become acquainted with this subject we should examine the tombs of the kings and of the nobles, the painted windows and the brasses in our churches, tapestry work, and the many illuminated mauuscripts, that are still preserved to us. These relics of art are thus valuable, inasmuch as the conventional dress of the period, when the picture was painted, the sculpture was carved, or the work executed, whatever the subject might be, whether a court ceremony of the day, for some incident of early sacred history, we always find aithfully delineated.

The extravagance and eccentricity of male and female dress in our own country seem to have culminated in the reigns of our Henry V., Henry VI., and Edward IV. I shall briefly endeavour to give some instances of the extravagances to which I have referred.

In the reign of Henry V. the fashionable head-covering of the female can be called nothing else than a horned head-dress. Satirical writers of the period compare these head-dresses to wearing a gibbet on the head, or to the appearance of various kinds of the brute

creation. In the church at Arundel may still be seen in the effigy of Beatrice, Countess of Arundel, a specimen of the horned head-dress, as it was actually worn.

In the reign of Edward IV. the ladies ornamented their heads with certain rolls of linen pointed like steeples, generally half, and sometimes three-quarters of an ell in height. Some wore caps of velvet half a yard high.* The costume of Normandy at the present day with regard to shape is very much the same as that which we are now describing. Among the peasantry of Rouen and Caen will still be seen "the steeple caps with the butterflies wings that 360 years ago towered upon the heads of the gentle dames of Paris and London."† These towering caps might have reached, it is said, to far greater heights, had not a certain famous monk—Thomas Conecte—attacked them with great zeal and resolution. His denunciations were so effective that during his sermon many ladies of the audience would throw down their head-dresses and commit them to the flames. Thousands attended his preaching, and so great was the monk's influence, that if any one appeared in public with the denounced head-dress, the rabble flung stones at the unfortunate person who wore it. The men, too, were equally ridiculous in their costume. In the reign of Edward IV. the men wore their hair so long that it came into their eyes, and they covered their heads with bonnets of cloth a quarter of an ell or more in height, and most men wore heavy chains of gold. The shoes, too, became of such extravagant length, and were so pointed, that the points had to be fastened to the knee of the wearer by silver chains, the shoes themselves being made of different coloured leather.

I now quote from the chronicles of Paradin, on the subject of the shoes of the period. He says: "The men wore shoes with a point before, half a foot long; the richer and more eminent personages wore them a foot, and princes two feet long, which was the most ridiculous thing that ever was seen; and when men became tired of these pointed shoes, which were called poulaines, they adopted others in their stead denominated duck-bills, having a bill or beak before of four or five fingers

* "History of British Costume," p. 206. † *Ibid.*, p. 208.

in length. Afterwards, assuming a contrary fashion, they wore slippers so very broad, in front, as to exceed the measure of a good foot." *

These extravagances, however, must have attained to serious proportions, for we find that in the third year of Edward IV. it was deemed necessary to check them by Act of Parliament. One or two provisions of this singular statute I will just notice. It was called an Act for restraining excessive and inordinate apparel: "No knight under the estate of a lord, or his wife or child was to wear cloth of gold, corses wrought with gold, or fur of sables." Penalty £20. "No squire or gentleman under the degrees therein mentioned, should wear any damask or satin, except squires, menial sergeants, officers of the King's Household, etc., having £40 a year; the wives and widows and unmarried daughters of persons having £100 a year. Penalty 100 shillings." "None under the degree of a lord should wear shoes or boots having pikes more than two inches long. Penalty 40 pence, and the like on shoemakers making them." † In perusing this peculiar Act we find that every grade of society is restricted from excess of dress, and each is kept within the bounds considered proper for the particular class of life in which he was moving.

The domestic life of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries is a subject in itself, and therefore merely to be glanced at on this occasion. We have accounts of the banquets of these days. A treatise of the fourteenth century tells us of a feast at which there were thirty dishes, beginning with a sirloin of beef, and ending with a swan, which appeared at table in full plumage:—

"This last was the triumph of cookery, inasmuch as it presented this magnificent bird to the eyes of the astonished guests, just as if he were living and swimming. His beak was gilt, and his body silvered. . . . . Eight banners of silk were placed round, and a cloth of the same material served as a carpet for the whole dish, which towered above the other appointments of the table. The peacock, which was much thought of then, as it is little valued now, was similarly arrayed, and was brought to table amidst a flourish of trumpets, and the applause of all present." ‡

At certain feasts, it is related, that the dishes were brought in by servants in full armour, mounted on capa-

* Chronicles, p. 271. † 3 Edw. IV., cap. 5.
‡ "La Croix's Manners," etc., pp. 163, 176.

risoned horses. Numbers of attendants were required for the service of the table of the wealthy, who would come under the denomination of retainers and varlets.

It is related that Louis of Orleans, the brother of Charles VI. of France, in order that his country might be well represented in a diplomatic mission to Germany, raised the number of his household to more than two hundred and fifty persons, of whom about one hundred were retainers and table attendants.

But we chiefly see in the records of these times the ways and doings of the wealthiest of the community on great occasions; they disguise, however, the actual position of the generality of the people If we even look at the ruined castles, in which the feudal Baron dwelt, we must be struck with the discomforts to our more luxurious eyes of his domestic arrangements—discomforts to which a man of very moderate means in these days would not submit; but the position of the great body of the community, as to home life in all its details, must have been deplorable indeed. The only lesson in domestic life, by which we can usefully profit, no doubt is the general simplicity of the habits of the men and women of the Middle Ages, which must have conduced to health, and counterbalanced many of the evils that otherwise existed. They realized truly the old proverb, which it would do well for us to take to heart, namely, that—

> "To rise at six, dine at ten,
> Sup at six, to bed at ten,
> Makes man live ten times ten."

I have now most imperfectly endeavoured to realize the every-day life of the mediæval period, and in a very disconnected and fragmentary way. It is well, I think to contrast the past with our own days, and to make the history of our species at some particular time our study.

The Middle Ages are of course a fruitful subject for our consideration, presenting most varied and attractive objects to contemplate; for instance, the rise and fall of feudalism; the history of chivalry; the rise and progress of Gothic Architecture; the birth and growth of Christian Art, cradled, as it was, in all the luxury of an Italian climate, the fresco, the cartoon, and finally the masterpieces portrayed on canvas. What themes are here pre-

sented to us, full of interest, full of attraction. We are face to face with striking contrasts, as I have before remarked. Mighty struggles are incessantly occupying our thoughts, between culture of a very high order on the one hand, and the darkest of ignorance on the other—between freedom of thought and gross superstition—between the gentle influences of religion and inhuman cruelty.

But our reflection, on closer study of the daily life of the Middle Ages, will most probably be, that in this respect we shall see a lack of respect for humanity, as such, in the manner of punishing the criminal; an absence of care on the part of the governing power for the general welfare and happiness of the community; and, finally, a sadly low estimate of the value of human life.

It is our good fortune to live in more favoured times. Education, based on an enlightened religion, has surely been the main cause of this remarkable advance from the evils we have noted—an advance which we may confidently believe will not stop with us.