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## **The Domestic Life of Berkeley Castle**

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# THE DOMESTIC LIFE OF BERKELEY CASTLE

*Illustrated from the Berkeley MSS.*

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THROUGHOUT that period of English history which extends from Magna Charta to the Wars of the Roses, the Barons of England were the strongest power in the State; and they may be said to have formed also the most prominent element in the social life of England. The monarch, after the surrender made by King John at Runnymede, was, in an important sense, subject to the Barons. John and his successors struggled to free themselves from what he felt to be a yoke of bondage, and the stronger of them, like Edward I. and III., achieved a considerable measure of success; others of weaker calibre, like Edward II., were worsted in the conflict, and even lost their own lives in the attempt to curb their turbulent and powerful "subjects." The Commons—the trading classes of the towns and the smaller gentry, franklins and free tenants on the estates of the lords—were as yet not sufficiently strong to stand by themselves; they had not indeed any desire to take part in the public affairs of the country, but looked up to the Barons as their natural leaders and reposed in them "an unwavering trust." In the wars which arose out of the rival claims of the Houses of York and Lancaster to the Crown, the nobles, however, dashed themselves one against another, shattered their own power, and thus enabled Edward IV. to lay the foundation of the "New Monarchy," which, under the Tudors, assumed a character of absolutism such as England had scarce ever known before.

Berkeley has the almost unique distinction of possessing, what may be called, a living connecting link with those

<sup>1</sup> Green, *Short Hist.*, p. 196.

times, in its Castle, retaining to-day, in all its main features the aspect it wore when the Barons virtually ruled this realm of England. And, moreover, in the Berkeley MSS.—compiled by Smyth with all the enthusiasm of a born antiquary, and with a keen, shrewd eye for what was of permanent and general interest in the collection of documents stored up in the Castle, to which he had access—we have a kind of literary telescope whereby we can look across the long interval which separates those far-off ages from our own, and see a good deal at least of the busy life which spent itself within the Castle walls, or found there its focus. The remark of Nieburh that it would be a great thing if the ancient Romans could be made to stand up living and moving before the eyes of the men of the present day, may be said to be realised in Smyth's treatment of the Lords of Berkeley and their affairs.

The Lords of Berkeley exercised a *quasi*-regal authority over the large district extending from the Cotswolds to the Severn, of which Berkeley Castle was the centre; and they had out-lying possessions at Bristol, in Somerset, across the Severn, and in other parts of the country. They were liable to be summoned at any time to attend the King in his wars with the due number of men-at-arms properly equipped. They depended for their own security and consideration upon the power they were able to muster in self-defence, or to hold in subjection the occupants of their manors; hence the household at the Castle in those times was naturally a large one.<sup>1</sup>

“The household and standinge domesticall family of this Lord (Thomas II.,) lodged in house, consisted of 200 persons and upwards, ranked into their degrees of servants, knights, esquires, yeomen, groomes, and pages; besides husbandmen, hindes and such other of lower condition.” (1281-1321.)

Even this large number, however, was surpassed in the time of this Lord's grandson (Thomas III.) under whom the murder of King Edward II. took place, and whose effigy is

<sup>1</sup> *C.f.* Shakespeare, *Richard II.*, Act 11., sc. 3.

to be seen in the nave of Berkeley Church. "I am confident," says Smyth, "that the mouthes of his standing house, each day fed, were 300 at least." This Lord went over to take part in the siege of Calais, when his retinue consisted of one banneret, six knights, thirty archers on horseback, and 200 archers on foot.<sup>1</sup> (1326-1361.)

In Lord Henry I.'s time there were seldom or never less than 150 servants. And later, under the same Lord, when the family possessions had been seriously curtailed so that in consequence the household servants had been "pared down" more than once, and all "unusefull drones" weeded out, the household consisted of threescore and ten persons of all sorts.<sup>2</sup> (1534-1613.)

Let us now try and take a rapid glance at the inmates of the Castle. There were :

(1) The Lord and Lady and their family. The Lord was the moving and controlling force of the whole large body sheltered within the Castle walls. Over them he possessed something akin to regal power, exercising not only the functions of master, but of magistrate and military captain. He directed the duties and movements of his retainers, held judicial enquiries, and punished evil-doers, even inflicting the capital penalty. His state and consequence were commensurate with the position he held. Arrayed in robes of scarlet, adorned with fur, he took his place among his dependents on important occasions; or clad in armour, he rode forth at their head when summoned to attend upon the King in battle; or to the numerous hunting expeditions and tournaments in which the Lords of Berkeley have always delighted. The Lady, doubtless in dress and bearing, maintained a position suited to her rank, and received the deference which it was the design of the institutions of chivalry to inculcate and secure. Nevertheless, she was not above paying attention to the every-day affairs of the inmates of the Castle and the tenantry. Amongst them, Joan, wife of Lord Thomas II., was pre-eminent. She was endowed with a strong character,

<sup>1</sup> *Lives of the Berkeleys*, ii., p. 284.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 364.

and at any time would have been a notable person. She is described as "a vertuous lady and great huswife, and a wise overseer of such household affairs as were proper to her sex and government." She was a thoroughly practical woman of business and an admirable manager during her husband's long absences from home. As soon as he was gone, she set herself to superintend her household, and the management and accounts of the farms. She spent day after day in riding from one to another, especially devoting herself to the arrangement of the dairy, making enquiries as to the quantity of milk given by each cow, proper allowance being made for the time of year and the land on which it was kept. Her visits were no short passing calls, for she often stayed many hours and had a meal at the farm-house of the value of 3d. or 4d., which was allowed to the tenant at rent-time; and sometimes her attendants ate up a whole cheese of 2 lbs. weight, which was also charged for. She was in all things trusted by her husband, made her own contracts, and sealed with her own seal as if she had been a *femme sole*. When this lady was old, "weake and sickley," and could no longer lead the active life to which she had been accustomed, to amuse herself and give her body the much-needed exercise, she had many billets of wood carried into her chamber, and there cut them into sticks for the use of the household. She was very particular about the saws for the work, which are charged in the accounts at 2d. a piece. It seems strange to find that this stirring, active woman was never known to travel more than ten miles beyond her husband's mansion. She died March xix., 1309, and was buried in St. Augustine's, Bristol.

One at least of the Ladies Berkeley was distinguished by her skill with her needle, for "in the year of her husband (Maurice IV's.) sickness, shee made a newe gowne for herselfe of cloth, furred throughout with cony skins out of the kitchen."<sup>1</sup> [Lady Elizabeth, wife of Maurice IV., died A.D. 1389.]

Of another, however, we are told that she was "mild and devout," but "nothing active in her family." [Lady Margaret,

<sup>1</sup> *Lives*, i., p. 374.

wife of Thomas IV., died 15th year of King Richard II., 1391-2.]

But of yet another,—“country huswifery seemed to be an essential part of this ladies constitution.” [Lady Anne, wife of Thomas VI., died A.D. 1564.]

The sons of the family seem to have been usually trained up at home; and in their education, physical exercises, adapted to give skill, self-command, and courage in battle and tournament, constituted a large part. Such exercises as “the *Pel*—a post or stump of a tree, about 6 ft. in height, which the youth—armed at all points—attacked vigorously, and while he struck or thrust at the various parts which were marked to represent the head, breast, shoulders, and legs of an antagonist, he was taught to cover himself carefully with his shield in the act of rising to the blow. Or the *Quintain*—where the attack was made on horseback. A pole or spear was set upright in the ground with a shield strongly bound to it, and against this the youth tilted with his lance in full career, endeavouring to burst the ligatures of the shield, and bear it to the earth. A steady aim and a fair seat were acquired from this exercise, a severe fall being often the consequence of failure in the attempt to strike down the shield. Sometimes, too, the young squires and pages were taught to career against each other with staves or canes; and sometimes a whole party exhibited on horseback the various evolutions of a battle, but without the blows or bloodshed of a tournament.”<sup>1</sup>

But they were also trained to be good husbandmen. The Lords of Berkeley always attached great importance to this branch of industry; and to teach his sons order and frugality, Lord Thomas II. expressly instructed the reeves at his several manors that they were to “receive noe guests without his expresse letters.”<sup>2</sup>

As to the other inhabitants of the Castle :—

(2) Of Knights there were usually twelve, “often more.” They had their liveries,—cloth of ray, scarlet, and furred.

<sup>1</sup> *Pict. History of England*, p. 649.

<sup>2</sup> *Lives*, i., p. 168.

Each had daily wages allowed him, his "dyet," two servants and a page, and "allowances for the like number of horses."

(3) Of Esquires there were twenty-four, "often more," whose age would range from 14 to 21 years. They also had their daily wages and food, with one man and a page, and allowance for their horses.

(4) In addition to the above were the pages and under-servants, who also had their liveries furred with "cony skins, lamb-skin, and budge, each a degree under other."

The interesting question suggests itself, how this large number of persons found accommodation within the Castle walls, as Smyth expressly says they did. This subject brings before us an aspect of ancient life, in regard to which the usages of our forefathers differed widely from ours. In the matter of sleeping room they were not exacting. The men-at-arms found shelter beneath a wooden shed which surrounded the courtyard of the Castle. It was only, indeed, at a comparatively late period that separate sleeping apartments came to be regarded as necessary or desirable.

Doubtless the general characteristics of dwelling-houses in England in the ages following the Norman Conquest were reproduced in their main particulars here.

"The great hall, the main feature of these buildings, served not only as a general living and eating room, but as a sleeping apartment for servants and guests; while leading from the upper end of this, and built generally over the cellar, a room called the 'solere' chamber or 'solarium' afforded some degree of privacy for the heads of the household. These two rooms, when *Necham* wrote, constituted the whole available accommodation; and according to the Exchequer accounts of the time of Henry II., even the Royal Manors at Clarendon, Kensington, Woodstock, Portsmouth, and Southampton were no better provided."<sup>1</sup>

This arrangement is exemplified, it will be noted, in Berkeley Castle, where the private rooms lead from the further end of the hall. The kitchen also at Berkeley Castle

<sup>1</sup> *Quarterly Review*, Jan. 1894, p. 98.

occupies the usual position behind the screen, which crossed the lower end of the great hall and supported the minstrels' gallery.

“As habits became less primitive, however, and a desire for privacy increased, additional rooms were added. The ‘solere’ chamber was supplemented by the ‘withdrawing room’ and the ladies’ ‘bower,’ and by the middle of the 15th century an inclination was plainly showing itself among the higher classes to abandon the feudal custom of feasting in the hall with their retainers.”

Manners and customs that at one time marked the higher classes are apt to linger, especially in out-of-the-way places, long after they have been abandoned by those who originally used them, and these survivals are often important aids towards reconstructing a mental picture of bygone states of society.

Canon Atkinson, in his delightful book, *Forty Years of a Moorland Parish*, tells us that when he first settled in the Cleveland district of Yorkshire, some fifty years ago, he found that in the farm-houses, whether occupied by tenant farmers or yeomen, “the master and his wife, their children whether under age or adult, and the servants male and female (the large proportion of them engaged in farm work), all lived together. They all sat down to the same table and partook of the same dish. Moreover, as to sleeping apartments—in these farm-houses there was but one long, low room partitioned into four compartments nearly equal in size; partitions in construction and character merely, such as are found between the stalls in a stable, and barely 6½ ft. high, in which the whole household—master, mistress, children, servants of both sexes, found accommodation at night.” Probably in this free mingling of various classes, and in the want of any sense or desire of privacy, we have an exemplification of the state of things in the great feudal establishments during the earlier history of feudalism in this country. The bulk of the inmates of the Castle doubtless slept hard, on benches with perhaps a bag of straw for a bed. Those of

higher rank, indeed, were more luxuriously provided for, and we read of quilts of feathers, cushions or pillows, sheets of linen, coverlets of cloth made of the hair of the badger, cat, beaver, or sable, as in use in early times. Still, there could not have been any strong temptation for the majority to act the part of the sluggard after day had dawned; just as the absence of any very efficient means of artificial illumination must have implied the want of any inducement, as a rule, to sit up late at night.

Hence the occupations of the day began early. Francis I. of France rose at five, dined at nine, supped at five, and was in bed again soon after eight. Under Henry IV., the Court dined at eleven. Under Henry VIII. of England, the Court dinner was served at ten, and supper at four; and the custom seems to have been old, for Froissart mentions calling on the Duke of Lancaster at five in the afternoon, "after he had supped." These hours probably give a generally correct idea of how our feudal ancestors allotted their days.

The Berkeley MSS. give abundant information as to the fare of those times.

Provisions were brought to the Castle from the reeves or bailiffs of the demesne lands of the various manors belonging to the Lord, and the vast quantities thus delivered, and carefully enumerated in the accounts of the time, seem to have filled Smyth with amazement, and he laboured so hard at these accounts to make sure that his calculations were correct that he tells us "wherein to the akeing of mine eyes I continued sixteene houres obstinate." The result seemed so incredible after all that he had recourse to "and old profane tale" which he says "eased mee." The tale is to the effect that an old priest in the end of the reign of King Henry VIII. was reading in the Gospel for the Day the miracle of the feeding of the 5000, but inadvertently read 500 instead. The clerk observing the error, privately told him that his book had 5000. "I know well enough," said the priest, "but my parishioners will scarcely believe me, though I say but 500." "In like sort," continues Smyth, "my readers like those

parishioners or priest would returne on mee, if I prevent them not in myself; but less labour it is to believe me in this than to re-examine my calculation."

"I verily think," he continues, "that noe two of the greatest houskeepers in this kingdom, amongst the nobility at this day, spend so much in grosse provisions of beoffe, mutton, swines flesh, bread, beere, poultry, pigeons, and eggs, as this Lord (Thomas III.) in his standinge house usually did." This passage will serve to show the nature of the food which the denizens of Berkeley Castle in those days ate, as well as to illustrate the healthy vigour of their digestive organs.

The numbers of sheep reared were very great, and the adaptation of the Cotswold Hills for them was fully recognised. At Beverston, in the 7th year of King Edward III., the Lord of that day sheared 5775 sheep, "which were going in those manors thereto adjoining."

Goats, too, were extensively reared. Herds of these animals were kept across the Severn and adjoining the Forest of Deane, and in the Chase of Micklewood, in Alkington, with an officer to superintend them, called the "master goat-herd." From these herds 300 kids in each year came, when least, to the larder. An enormous number of pigeons, too, were kept at each manor house. From *Hame* alone there came 2151 young pigeons. In Lord Thomas II.'s time, two manors alone supplied 18,000 eggs, 1000 pigeons, 288 ducks, 1000 fowls, 300 pigs, 315 quarters of wheat, and 304 quarters of oats.

We also hear of geese, ducks, peacocks, hens, capons, and chickens in great proportions; of many thousands of eggs yearly from one place; "great store of hony and wax and small nutts" (whereof from the copyholders of Ham he had 15 bushels each year). Of great proportions of "wheat, rye, barley, oates, pease, beanes, and ffetches;" of apples and pears, whereof "great quantities of cider and perry were yearly made."

It appears that the household drank perry, which was

made at the orchards of Slimbridge and Hurst; and fourscore quarters of apples and pears were gathered in one year.

The accounts which were kept at the farms in Lord Thomas II.'s time are surprising, when we consider the low state of education at the time. Every item was entered of things used or sold during the year; how many animals were born, diéd, or were given away, and an exact balance struck with what remained at the end of the year. From these records we learn the exact value of farm stock in those early days. We find that wheat was 2s. to 5s. per qr., an ox was worth 10s. to 12s., a fat porker 2s., a lamb 10d., a goose 3d., 4 pigeons 1d., and 20 eggs 1d. And the wages were small in proportion; even an esquire had only 3d. a day, diet in the house, a horse kept for him and a boy to attend on it, and two suits of clothes trimmed with fur. For greater economy all these clothes were made at home, and the materials supplied from the flocks.

In only one item does anything like extravagance appear in this Lord's time, and that is in the prices given by Lord Berkeley for his horses. But then, as now, there was no better judge of a horse than the Baron of Berkeley; and you may be sure, whether in war, or at the chase, or in the tournament, there was no man better mounted than he, for he gave £100, 100 marks, £50, down to £5 for steeds which were to carry him and his retainers in peace or war. His sons do not seem to have had the pick of his stable. for the horse which Sir Thomas, his son, rode in a Scottish campaign, and which was killed under him, was paid for by the King at the estimated value of 8 marks; but it is described as a "dun curtall horse with white head and a black mane," and such a peculiar-looking beast was not likely to command a high price.

Mention is made of a vineyard at Berkeley in the 41st year of King Edward III.—one of the not unnumerous indications of the somewhat extensive cultivation of the vine in England in former days, until doubtless the progress of commerce made the procuring of the superior wines of France

&c., relatively easy and cheap. The Lords of Berkeley were not, indeed, dependent upon their home-grown vines for wine. In May, of the 18th year of King Edward II. the King gave to Lord Maurice III., for his good service, two hogsheads of wine "yearly for his life out of the port of Bristoll, and a warrant to his officers there to deliver them accordingly." Maurice IV. had a ship of his own for the bringing, amongst other things, of "forren wines and wares needfull for his use."

In regard to these expeditions for the supply of wine, a singular incident is recorded, very characteristic of the times. King Edward IV. writes to Lord Thomas IV. to complain that "divers of this Lord's men and servants in a shipp of his sailing towards Burdeaux" had violently set upon one of the carraks of some Genoese merchants licensed by the King to bring their wares into England. The merchants' carrak, called the *St. Mary and St. Bridget*, was laden with wines and other merchandise, and was sailing towards London. Lord Berkeley's men carried the ship into Milford Haven, and took away the wines and other merchandise. The King required the Lord to cause restitution to be made, or "himself to come and answer the same before his Privy Counsell forthwith." It was an easier thing for kings even to give orders than to achieve their due execution, and Smyth says that the sequel to these high-handed proceedings was that the servants of this Lord, "Sr John Greyndore and others of Bristol did the wrong, made restitution for part, but went away with a great part of the rest of Jenoa goods!"

This incident serves to show how largely the accepted principle for the guidance of conduct in those times was :

" The good old rule, the simple plan,  
That he may take who has the power,  
And he may keep who can."

Another illustration of the same temper of mind I may perhaps bring forward, by the way, for the edification of these democratic days. When Lord Maurice II. determined to form the present Whitecliffe Park, he found himself much

hampered in arranging with the tenants and freeholders whose lands he wished to enclose in the park, and who were not amiable enough to accept the terms he offered. "After some labour spent," says Smyth, "he remembered (as it seemeth) the adage: '*multa non laudantur nisi prius peracta*:' 'many actions are not praiseworthy till they bee done'; he therefore on a sodaine resolutely enclosed soe much of each man's land unto his said wood as he desired; maketh it a park, placeth keepers, and storeth it with Deere. . . They seeing what was done, and this Lord offeringe compositions and exchanges as before, most of them soon agreed, when there was noe remedy; and hee soon after had their grants and releases of land and comon as hee at first desired; '*unguentum pungit, pungentem rusticus ungit*:' 'it is not for a Lord too long to make curtesey to the clowted shoo.' Those fewe that remained obstinate, fell after upon his sonne with suites, to their small comfort and less gaines."<sup>1</sup> Smyth sums up this Lord's character thus: "hee was a Lord that would make way for his will, which was often the rule by which he walked; breake hee might, bend hee would not."<sup>2</sup>

Amidst the agricultural occupations of wider range which were pursued on the Berkeley estates, the humbler one of gardening was not neglected.<sup>3</sup> The accounts record the profits of the Castle Gardens at Berkeley in the reign of King Edward III. Though I have not been able to find any information as to what was grown there, except apples and pears and "hearbes." "Stockes or fruit trees" were yearly planted or grafted. What was not required for the use of the Castle was to be sold at the best market. Nothing was too small to escape notice. Money was made of the herbs in the garden, the stubble from the corn lands, the crop and sets of witheys, and the offal of old hedges, besides nuts and honey; and even when Lord Thomas II. was in London attending to his Parliamentary duties, he kept two men and four horses constantly employed, fetching bread from Wenden, one of his Essex farms where much corn was grown.

<sup>1</sup> i., p. 140.<sup>2</sup> i., p. 151.<sup>3</sup> i., p. 365.

Berkeley Castle gathered to itself the harvest of the waters as well as of the land. We read of fishing weirs at Arlingham, which King John took away from the Lord of that time, who had taken part with the Barons of Magna Charta against the King. Leases were granted of rocks or fishings in the Severn by Lord Maurice II., who reserved to himself, as his rent, all the fish that should be taken therein on Fridays (1243-1248).

A special officer called "Piscator de Berkeley" had charge of the fisheries at Arlingham, where Lord Thomas II. usually spent his Lents, because of "the better and neerer provision of fish." Moreover, we are told that of ancient custom the Constable of Berkeley Castle was, upon the first Sunday in Lent, allowed a salmon for his dinner.

On the whole, therefore, the inmates of the Castle must have fared sumptuously, and one can very well admit that Smyth has good grounds for the remark he makes in one place, that "no moneys were paid so cheerfully as to the steward of the kitchen."

This profusion probably contrasted in marked manner with the scanty fare of the peasantry around, especially of the free labourers and smaller tenants. "I have no penny," says Piers the Ploughman, referring to the long interval from harvest-tide to harvest-tide, "pullets for to buy, nor neither geese, nor pigs; but two green cheeses, a few curds and cream, and an oaten cake, and two loaves of beans and bran baked for my children. I have no salt bacon nor no cooked meat collops for to make, but I have parsley and leeks and many cabbage plants, and eke a cow and a calf, and a cart-mare to draw afield my dung while the drought lasteth, and by this livelihood we must all live till Lammas-tide, and by that I hope to have harvest in my croft."<sup>1</sup>

From old books of cookery and the illustrations of MSS. we can form a pretty correct idea of what the feasts in the Hall of Berkeley Castle were like, especially on important

<sup>1</sup> *Green's Short Hist.*, p. 250.

occasions as when the King paid a visit here, as he sometimes did. Henry III. was here twice.

The fire was in the middle of the room, the smoke finding egress through louvres still to be seen in the roof, an arrangement which, in many houses, continued in use after the fire in the middle had been supplemented by open chimneys at the sides.

The high table stood on a raised dais, on the further side of which, overlooking the company, sat the Lord and Lady with their most honourable guests. Long tables, at right angles to this, ran down the room, at which sat the retainers, the Lord and Lady thus literally eating in the presence of his household. "Everything pertaining to the service of this table was conducted with a ritual of almost ecclesiastical exactness. The duties of carver, server, and cup-bearer were held to be very honourable ones, and could be discharged by men of high rank; and in great establishments, the butler who presided over the buttery, the pantler who presided over the bread-closet, the porter, and the officers of all the several household departments had each his own contingent of grooms and yeomen."<sup>1</sup>

The laying of the table, though in an empty hall, was conducted with reverential observance; special ceremonies attended the placing of the bread and salt by the pantler in front of the seat of honour. The salt occupied a place at the lower edge of the high table, and "below" this were the seats of those of inferior rank.

It would be tedious to recount all the functions performed by the various attendants, whose bows and genuflections must have resembled a solemn dance. The entry of the guests, their washing before taking their seats at the "ewrie" by the side of the room; the tasting of every dish and every drink by the proper official, to ensure their not having been poisoned; the singing by the ministers of the Church of some "proper or godly carroll" as grace; the carving of each several dish according to the most minute and precise rules;

<sup>1</sup> *Quarterly Review*, Jan., 1894, p. 85.

and the handing of the "great covered cup" to the Lord by the cup-bearer. The company ate off trenchers, sometimes off pieces of bread cut from loaves called "trencher-loaves." Each person was provided with a napkin and a spoon. He used the knife which he was accustomed to wear. Forks had not yet come into use: that fingers preceded them is a well-authenticated historical fact. They were not generally used till the 17th century, though gold and silver ones were occasionally kept for special purposes; yet to employ them was generally regarded as effeminate.

Dogs and cats were allowed to pick up bones and portions of food which the company threw to them among the rushes which covered the floor, in place of a carpet. In the middle of the table might be placed some marvellous product of the cook's ingenuity, such as a swan, peacock, or pheasant dressed with their feathers, their beaks and feet gilt. Lord Henry I., in the second year of Queen Elizabeth, kept his Christmas at Yate, with great pomp and solemnity, as "the extraordinary gilded dishes, the vanities of cookes' arts . . . well declare: whereof one was a whole bore inclosed in a pale workmanly guilt, by a cook hired from Bristol."<sup>1</sup> Of the same Lord—whose career belongs to the period 1534-1613—we are told that such was his "humanity," that in "times of Christmas and other times, when his neighbour townships were invited and feasted in his hall, hee would in the midst of his dinner rise from his own, and going to each of their tables in his hall, cheerfully bid them welcome; and his further order was having guests of honor of remarkable ranke that filled his own table, to seat himself at the lower end; and when such guests filled but half his bord, and a meaner degree the rest of his table, then to seat himself the last of the first rank, and the first of the latter, which commonly was about the midst of the long table neare the salt." When Lord Thomas II. and Lady Berkeley were at home, they seem to have entertained their friends and neighbours with princely hospitality; and many were the long pro-

<sup>1</sup> ii., p. 287.

cessions of guests who rode under the old gateway at Berkeley Castle, and their other mansions; and the Abbot and Convent of Augustine's, Bristol, the Abbot and Convent of St. Mary's, Kingswood, and many others were feasted with all manner of good things, and with plenty of fish (for those who might not eat flesh meat) brought from the celebrated weirs of Rodly, Giron and Puthouse; and we are told how the poor monks, who had nothing else to give, freely gave their prayers and blessings upon Lord Berkeley and all his family. But his hospitalities were not confined to great entertainments in the Castle Hall, for when the Lords of Sudely, d'Anteney, the Abbots of Cirencester, Llanthony, or Flaxly, and any others should be passing through his manors, "the farm-houses were their homes and the graneries their hostelries." Long lists appear in the household accounts of the pigs, geese, capons, and pigeons, wheat and oats which were used in entertaining strangers, whether the Lord was at home or not. The poor who lived on his manors were the constant recipients of his kindness and care; and in years of scarcity he lent them wheat and oats out of his own granaries, to be repaid in kind after harvest, when the price was less than half.

A harper who repeated stories and poems, accompanying them with his instrument, was a common musical attendant at dinners, and minstrels and mountebanks had free access to the hall to amuse the guests. At the marriage feast of Lord Thomas IV., the minstrels were paid 40s. These feasts often lasted a very long time. When the Florentine Poggio Bracciolini visited England in 1420, we are told he found himself in company with wealthy uncultured nobles, who spent chief part of their life in eating and drinking, and during these dinners, which sometimes *lasted four hours*, he was obliged to rise from time to time and bathe his eyes with cold water to keep himself awake.<sup>1</sup>

Roast joints did not play so important a part in these old banquets as is often supposed. Indeed the touching faith

<sup>1</sup> Villari's *Life of Machiavelli*, i., p. 89.

which the average Englishman places in his roast beef as the historic dish of his country is, after all, like some other popular beliefs, groundless. It is nothing, indeed, but a modern superstition. The absence of forks made the eating of meat from joints very inconvenient; it has been thought that such did not become common till towards the end of Queen Elizabeth's reign. As a matter of fact, the "greater number of mediæval cookery recipes are for stews and purées of minced and pounded meats, variously combined with flour, rice, eggs, dried fruits, wine, and other ingredients." "Hew hom (them) smalle and grind hom well," is the oft-repeated injunction of these books on the cook's art.

Doubtless there was not much refinement about these old banquets, but anyone who remembers Thackeray's description of a dinner party in the reign of Queen Anne, given in his lecture on *Steele*, will see that it was a very long time before the tastes and manners of people improved very much.

I might go on to gather up the various particulars contained in the *Lives of the Berkeleys* on a number of other matters more or less connected with the domestic life of the Castle. I can do no more now though than give a hasty summary of some of these.

The education of the younger members of the family, and their marriages:—After hearing so much as we have heard of late years about the evils of early marriages in India, it is somewhat startling to find that these old nobles esteemed it a prudent and just thing to get their sons and daughters married at the age of seven or eight years.

Their amusements—as tournaments, which were not always the peaceful and harmless exercises that poetic imagination has represented them:

" Where throngs of knights and barons bold,  
In weeds of peace high triumphs hold;  
With stores of ladies, whose bright eyes  
Rain influence and judge the prize."

For in the year 1279, Lord Roger de Mortimer went from

London to Kenilworth, in Warwickshire, with a hundred knights "well armed, and with as many ladies going before them singing songs of mirth and joyfullness, where for three whole days they held spear plays, justs, and turniaments in their arms . . . in such an outrageous manner and with such slaughter of noble gentlemen and others, that their turniaments were by divers decrees of ye Church forbidden, upon payne that whosoever therein were slayne, should want Christian buriall in Church or churchyard."

Amongst those who lost their lives on this notable occasion was Maurice, eldest son of Lord Maurice II. and elder brother of Lord Thomas II.

Hunting, as might be expected, held a prominent place in the amusements of the Lords of Berkeley, wherein they were not always careful to keep within the limits of the game laws then existing, for we find, for example, Lord Thomas I. presented before the King's Justices in Eire for having killed a stag in the Forest of Deane, and amerced, though for the offence he obtained the King's pardon.

Falcons and hawks, who played havoc with the poultry on the neighbouring farms, furnished another kind of amusement.

A feature of the domestic life of the Castle, that appears singular to us, is the presence of felons as prisoners, who sometimes were hanged there, and sometimes contrived to make their escape, when the Lord was called upon to account for their disappearance to the King.

Excitement of another kind was provided when a neighbouring Lord took upon him to attack the Castle, as happened in the time of Lord James I. Lord Lisle having first of all hired one of the Lord Berkeley's servants, by name Rice Tewe, came to the Castle early in the morning, when Rice Tewe let him in, "with great numbers of people warlike arrayed, and these took the said Lord James and his fower sons in their beds, and kept them in prison in great dures by the space of eleven weeks: they all that time knowing no

surety nor certainty of their lives, but ever awaiting the hour of their creuell death."

The Castle Chapel is an important element in the life of the place, wherein at one time John of Trevisa, one of the earlier luminaries amongst English writers, translator of Ralph Higden's *Polychronicon*, was chaplain. The services there were evidently carefully performed with the elaborate ritual which characterised the mediæval Church. Lord Thomas IV. gave to the Chapel within Berkeley Castle one pair of "satten vestments, one missale, two chalices, and one pair of cruets." But what shall we say to this? Lord James I., successor of the preceding, having borrowed 22 markes of a certain Mr. Nicholas Pointz—"for assurance whereof he pawned to him one guilt massebook, a chalice of silver weighing 18 ounces, a chesipull with stolys and fanons of red sattin, 3 aubes, 3 amices, one white autercloth with crosses of black silk therein, with one valence fringed sewed thereto, a red cloth of gold, one cloth of red palle to hang afore an aulter of the same, another cloth of the same for a reredote, and 2 ridles of red tartryn."

This took place during the keenly-contested lawsuits in the 15th century, and was occasioned by a letter from Lady Berkeley, who had been in London defending her Lord's interest, and who wrote to say that her circumstances were so distressful that unless he sent her money she must "sell her horse and come home on her feet."

To provide her with the means necessary to her comfortable return, the Lord took the curious measures just related. And upon this transaction Smyth makes an equally curious comment: "Hereby this family seeth the true fidelity of mariage in a just husband to a correspondent wife, who would rather seem to disfurnish God of the ornaments of His worship, than leave her necessitous estate unsupplied."

These details, culled almost at random from the pages of Smyth's volumes, will serve to show what important side-bights those books throw upon the life of the middle ages, loth within and without the Castle walls,—a life so like and

yet so unlike to our own,—and may perchance suggest to some how much that is interesting and instructive may be derived from a personal study of them, for, as the late Mr. Freeman says, “After all, human life is not essentially changed by railways, or excise, or newspapers, or even by the property tax. . . Natural selection and the survival of the fittest have not done away with sin and sorrow, and whatever evolution may have done in the producing of new types, these new types have not swept away the old. . . And as there is no history in which we do not find a sympathy, there is none in which we do not find a lesson.”

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