

Among the MS. of her writing which still remain there is a letter which announces her husband's death and bequest, and then goes on to notify her solemn donation, as a "year's mind" of Master Bunsby of ten marks to the Reeve of Wike St. Marie, "to the intent that he shall cause skeeful masons to build a bridge at the Ford of Green-a-moor, yea, and with stout stonework well laid and see," she wrote, "that they do no harm to that tree which standeth fast by the brook, neither dispoyle they the rushes and plants that grow thereby; for there did I pass many goodly houres when I was a small mayde, and there did I first see the kind face of a faithful Friend." One so sweet and serviceable, and withal so rich and fair, was not likely to be long without suitors.

The times also were full of danger to lonely and unprotected women, more especially if highly esteemed and well dowered.

We must remember she lived in the reigns of Henry VI. (full of wars and commotions), of Edward IV., of evil life among the fair citizens of London, of Richard III., warring for the crown in a desolate country, till Henry VII. came, ruling sternly but wisely for the good of his people.

Green the historian says of those times: "The break up of the military households, and the return of wounded and disabled soldiers from the wars, introduced a dangerous leaven of outrage and crime. England for the first time saw a distinct criminal class in the organised gangs of robbers which began to infest the land. . . . We see houses sacked, judges overawed or driven from the bench, peaceful men hewn down by assassins, or plundered by armed bands, women carried off to forced marriages, elections controlled by brute force, parliaments degraded into camps of armed retainers."

It was not a time for a woman, young and fair, and known far and wide for her wealth, eminent qualities and singular history to remain alone.

An old chronicler says, "Her dower together with her youth and beauty, procured her to the cognisance of divers well-deserving men, who thereupon made addresses of marriage to her, but none of them obtained her affection, but only Henry Gall of St. Lawrence, Milk Street, an eminent and wealthy citizen of London, a merchant adventurer . . . (The merchant adventurers, at that time, were an off-shoot of the Mercers' Company of London. They were a body of English merchants engaged exclusively in the exportation of woollen cloth. . . . The quarrels and dissensions with foreign merchants and the Staplers, made the ventures of the merchant adventurers full of risks and dangers from pirates and from their rivals at sea.)"

This gentleman made a considerable augmentation of her jointure in case of her survivorship, and they were married. He was very wealthy and uxorious, and enabled his wife to confer many benefits on the poor of her native place, for which she always entertained a lingering fondness (a trait characteristic of the Cornish as of the Swiss themselves). We find that "twenty acres of woodland copse in the neighbourhood were bought and conveyed by that kind and gracious lady, Dame Thomasine Gall, to feoffees and trustees, for the perpetual use of the poor of the parish of Wike St. Marie, for fewel to be hewn in parcels once a year, and finally and equally divided for evermore on the vigil of St. Thomas the Twin.

"To her mother she sends by a waggon which has gone on an enterprise into Cornwall for woollen merchandise, a chest with array of clothing, fair weather and foul, head-gear and body raiment to boot, all the choice and costly gifts to my loving parents, of my good-man Gall and in remembrance, as he charged

me to say, that ye have reared for him a kindly and loving wife."

But a graphic and touching passage in this letter is the message which succeeds.

"Lo! I do send you also here, withal in the coffer a litle Boke, it is for a gift to my cousin John. Tell him it is not written as the whileom usage was, and he was wont to teach me my Christ Cross Rhyme, but it is what they do call emprinted with a strange devise of an iron engin brought from forrin parts. Bid him not despise it, for although it is so small that it will lie in the palm of your hand, yet it did cost me full five marks in exchange."

After the lapse, however, of five years, Henry Gall sickened and died of a mortal distemper, leaving Thomasine a richer widow than he found her, still young and fair, not yet thirty years of age. So she found herself once more alone in the world, and again her husband had: "Endowed his tender wife with all and singular his moneys, and plate, bills, bonds and ventures now at sea," with a long "inventory of precious things beneath the moor," too long to rehearse, but each and all to the sole use, enjoyment and behoof of Dame Thomasine Gall, whose maiden name of Bonaventura was, as her first and loving mistress had foretold her, fulfilled with every change of her fortunes.

Old papers and chronicles tell us much of the sort of life and household which existed in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. And in judging of any character, it is some help (where it happens to be possible) to get an idea of the temper of the times and the state of society in which they lived. So we allow ourselves to make a few extracts from such papers of the time, as we have searched for records of our heroine, and which may interest our young readers.

Will it be too frivolous to give them some idea of ladies' dress at that date? Possibly what the author of *Social England* says of costume in the fourteenth century might interest them. The ladies had given up plaiting their hair in long tails, but rolled it up in a caul or net, sometimes made of gold thread; over this a veil was thrown which was confined in some instances by a chaplet or coronet, and the wimple or gorget was still in use. If no chaplet was worn, the veil was skewered with pins. In the brass of Lady Joan de Cobham, in Cobham church, Kent (1520), she is represented with veil, wimple, and a plain dress almost close-fitting, with tight sleeves buttoned all down the forearm (there were sixty-three buttons on each arm!) The dresses were worn long so as to cover the feet. Even then the senseless, long-trailing dress was in vogue, and the following is a curious satire on a proud woman for her dress in an old Latin story.

"I have heard of a certain woman, whose whites robes dragged on the ground, and trailing behind her, raised the dust as high as the altar and the crucifix. When, however, she would leave the church, and lifted up her tail (train) on account of the dirt, a certain holy man saw a devil laughing and adjured him that he should tell him why he laughed. Who said, 'a companion of mine, was just now sitting on that woman's train, and he was using it as if it were his chariot; when, however, the woman lifted her train, my friend was shaken off into the dirt, and that is the cause of my laughing.' Though the dresses were worn long, the feet were daintily shod. Furs were much worn (chiefly hind and squirrel skins) as linings and trimmings."

The education of girls at this period is also a matter of interest. Music was much cultivated, and had obtained such excellence in England, that when especially good musicians were wanted at the Court of Burgundy, six English musicians by order of the Privy Council

in 1442 were chosen, such as the Emperor desired, to go to his court.

An old critic tells in a poem written about 1490, "How the good wife taught her daughters," and we may see exactly what the canons of good society were as applied to girls at this period. She was to love God, to go to church (not letting the rain stop her) she was to give alms freely, and when at church was to pray and not to chatter. Courtesy to all went without saying, and she was to love her husband and answer him meekly and then he'd love her. She was to be well-mannered, not to be rude or laugh loudly, "but laugh thou softe and milde." Her out-door conduct is thus regulated. "And when thou goest in the way, go not thou too fast, brandish not with thy head, thy shoulders wriggle not, have not thou too many words."

She was to exercise caution in her relations with the other sex and not to accept presents. She was to see that her people worked, and work with them, have faults put right at once, keep her own keys, and be careful whom she trusted.

Add to this that she was to be Lady Bountiful and physician in ordinary to all around her, and we get a good idea of the inner life of a woman of this time.

The wife had her meals with her husband, sat by his side afterwards, and was his daily companion when he was at home, and entertained his friends in his absence.

The parlour was first added to the houses built about this date, and it was used by merchants to receive their friends on business.

She had plenty to do, for she had the direction of the whole establishment, besides looking after her maidens, who were of good degree, and to whom she taught housewifery, and who were on a footing of equality with the family; they spun together, and wove also, carded, wove and heckled flax, embroidered and made garments, whilst the children also had to be taught. There were the pet birds and squirrels in cages to be looked after, cleaned and fed; and there were intervals for music and conversation. They danced, played chess and draughts and read the last things out of romances. They played at ball together and wove garlands and flowers in the garden.

Out of doors the ladies walked freely, disdaining not the company of the male sex, they gathered wild flowers, and in fine weather had their meals upon the grass and organised picnics, at which they had bread, wine, fish and pigeon pies. They rode on horseback and went hunting, hawking, and rabbit-ferreting, and no tournament was complete without their presence, nay, the chivalric ideas of the time allowed them to be Dames of the Garter. Manners and courtesy then, were treated as of the first importance. An old writer said—

"In hall or chamber or where thou gone,
Nurture and good manners maketh
That courtesy from heaven came,
When Gabriel Our Lady greete,
And Elizabeth with Mary meete."

And in whatever society he might find himself, the humblest citizen should therefore so order his behaviour that when he left the table men would say "a gentleman was here." We had marked extracts from the *Paston Letters* (1443), which are exceedingly interesting, but space fails us.

In the healthy activity and variety of such a life our country-women lived, and in such homes were reared the men, who, under Providence carried their country through storm and danger, to her Freedom and Empire.

(To be continued.)