EUROPEAN AGRICULTURE DURING THE MIDDLE AGES AND
HOW IT WAS INFLUENCED BY THE MONASTERY

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Undoubtedly agriculture was the basis and the most prominent feature of the life of the majority of the people during the Middle Ages. One writer has pointed out that "All classes were close to nature: the king at his hunting and hawking, the knight riding the country ways, the hermit in his wooded retreat, and--our immediate concern--the peasant working in his fields; all gain for us, a certain freshness from their contact with the world out of doors."¹ This dominance of the field and nature is explicable because of the fact that there was virtually no commerce; this, therefore, necessitated a self-sufficiency of each village. Knight explains this necessity:

After the definite retirement from Rome to Constantinople, there remained in the West no central government worthy of the name. With this process of shrinkage eastward out of the main part of Europe had gone a drying-up of commerce between regions in the part of the Empire thus cut off, due largely to want of protection and regulation. Each community now fended for itself as far as it was able. In this situation there was no great need for a stable and unified currency, even if a central government had existed to maintain such a system. The whole process of decay went together, with first one factor and then another most prominent. Without the vanished

¹W. Neilson, Medieval Agrarian Economy, p. 1.
commercial and monetary system, paid armies and administrative staff practically disappeared. The expensive Roman road system had been maintained for military and political, as well as commercial purposes. It now disintegrated and fell into disuse. Many of the marketing centers had grown up around the great camps, and therefore went the way of the army and the roads in the general break-up.  

It is easily seen from this that there was a relatively little exchange of products. Thus, "All but a small percentage of the inhabitants of medieval western Europe lived in agricultural villages which produced practically everything they used and very little that they did not use."  

Hence, the feudal age, which presupposes a weak central government, a civilization predominantly agricultural, and a situation in which military activities are unusually important and necessary, saw the rise of the aristocracy of landowners and a peasantry of cultivators, each class essentially dependent upon the other. "The lower, more extensive plane of peasants had to provide food for all; the upper, more restricted plane of knights and churchmen fought and prayed, receiving food from the labor of the peasants, and in turn supplying protection and spiritual offices."  

The lord, in order to maintain his court and lands, held his assistants to him by homage; he, in turn, was a vassal of crown and was held to

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2 Melvin M. Knight, *Economic History of Europe*, p. 86.  
it by homage. He had to "... take an oath to support him (the king) in case of war with so many properly armed and trained professional soldiers for a given number of days per year. A grant of land called a "fief" is made to the vassal to enable him to maintain the necessary military establishment." Furthermore, from the lord, the peasant received a livelihood in the form of agrarian estates as well as a guarantee of protection and justice; in return, he owed to the lord various forms of services and assistances. Thus, this fief was primarily an office rather than a piece of land. Stephenson states:

In the case of a duke or count the distinction is clear. What was held was essentially a right of government within a particular region, and the accompanying estates served merely to provide a livelihood for the holder. A great officer of the household such as a chamberlain or a seneschal, might be endowed in the same way—provided with lands in return for his special duties at court. Even the small feudal tenant is found, on analysis, to have owed his privileged status to a similar consideration. By furnishing a few knights he was performing a political service. The acres from which he gained his subsistence were his pay.

The typical fief of the Middle Ages was more than a collection of agrarian estates. It was also a unit of government, as the holder exercised a certain political authority over the inhabitants. Stephenson explains:

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5 Knight, Economic History of Europe, p. 102.
6 Carl Stephenson, Medieval History, p. 253.
In many cases the rights of a lord could be traced back to some delegation of authority of the king; in many others the title ultimately rested on nothing more than sheer usurpation. Under such conditions the effective power of a feudal noble depended, first, on the control to which he was subjected from above, and, secondly, on that which he could enforce over his subordinates. Each territory had its own custom.

Because the possession of land was the essential mark and guarantee of power throughout Europe in the Middle Ages, common lands which once belonged to tribal or village communities were as a rule transformed into private possessions. Boissonade states:

By virtue of the right of appropriation attaching to asserts, the area of the common lands was continually diminished to the profit of lay and ecclesiastical lordships, or of their non-noble tenants, who undertook to bring them under cultivation and to pay to the lord as rent a part of the produce of appropriated lands. In most cases the lord seized the common lands as their property, while allowing the use thereof to the community of "roturiers" and serfs in exchange for a rent. Nevertheless, a small number of rural communities in Germanic countries, and notably in the Netherlands, Switzerland, and other parts of Germany, succeeded, even in the full tide of feudalism, in preserving certain marks, the last survivals of the collective property of the village, and in maintaining them as late as the fifteenth century.

In the Middle Ages all country life was also village life. The village was dominant because some sort of village cooperative unit was necessary in order to produce any kind of products, each individual playing his part in the routine of

7Ibid., p. 252.

8P. Boissonade, Life and Work in Medieval Europe, pp. 120-121.
field and pasture. Normally the manor was a village controlled and exploited by a lord, as distinguished from a free village where the inhabitants worked only for themselves. Seignobos describes a typical village for us:

The master's dwelling had become a fortified house, sometimes a castle, with a reserve (fields, vineyards, meadows, fish-ponds, woods) which was very extensive, to judge by present standards. Near it were grouped the tenant's houses, which were of two different types: the complete house, built around a court and with a garden adjoining, that of the comfortably situated peasant, possessor of a yoke of oxen; and a cottage, a building in one piece, occupied by the peasant which had only the labor of his hands. Through increase of the population the group had become a village sometimes, though rarely, a bourg with a wall. 9

This manor or village was the most characteristic institution in the economic and agricultural history of the Middle Ages. The tenants had small holdings of land which they cultivated for their own use. They were compelled to labor on the lord's land, the demesne, for so many days a week and during the busy seasons of plowing and harvesting, in return for the right to use their own

holdings. Thus, the manor was a unit of agricultural production within itself. One historian notes that, "It had its own name, its own territory, its own officials, and its own customs for the regulation of work and of life. It was a miniature world, a fact recognized in Russia when the dependent village, or manor, was called the mir, which signified both village and world." 10

There were many advantages as well as disadvantages in the establishment of the manor as an agricultural unit. The desire for stability was naturally strong in all classes, and in the absence of a strong central government, stability for the people was attained by regard for customary routine and practices of the manor. Also, as one writer points out:

For the times and conditions, the open-field manor was about as efficient an agricultural unit as could have been found. If its social structure and reliance on tradition hampered progress, on the other hand, they prevented decay. Its greatest drawbacks from our point of view were inherent, rather in the general situation than in the manor itself. There was not enough central government and protection of life and property nor good enough roads to permit of any great interchange of products between localities. If hail or drought resulted in local famine, there was no adequate organization for bringing relief, even from an adjacent prosperous country. There was no great surplus anywhere. All the manors lived practically from hand to mouth. The small yield was an inevitable corollary of want of capital.

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and trade. Few localities—only those nearest the towns—could specialize in the products for which they were best suited, because they could not depend upon marketing them or getting the others from outside.  

One of the characteristics of the life of the working classes on these manors was the extreme simplicity, complete uneventfulness, and "... the terrible condition which might befall the most worthy, should misfortune chance to overthrow them off the narrow path their kind commonly trod. It is, indeed, a matter of some difficulty, fully to comprehend the frugality, the rusticity, the simplicity of those times, or the severity with which those, today deemed the unfortunate, were treated who fell into indigence through illness or lack of employment."  

Davis tells of the extreme and unbelievable poverty of the peasants on the manor in the St. Aliquis region in France during the terrible famine of 1030-32:

At that time we are told that the poor devoured grass, roots, and even white clay. Their faces were pale, their bodies lean, their stomachs bloated, "their voices thin and piping like the voice of birds." Wolves came out of the forests and fed on children. Strangers and travelers were liable to be waylaid in solitary spots and killed simply that they might be eaten. These days, thanks to the saints, seem to be disappearing; yet the danger of pinching hard times is still a real one, even in the fortunate St. Aliquis.  

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11 Knight, Economic History of Europe, p. 190.  
13 William Stearne Davis, Life on a Medieval Barony, p. 255.
The truth seems to be that in normal years there was not much surplus of food. The average working man "... tasted meat but rarely, unless it were pork which he himself raised. This relieved a diet of cereals, potatoes, milk, eggs, and vegetables."\textsuperscript{14} Throughout the medieval period, bread seems to have been the staple food and beer the normal drink of the working classes.\textsuperscript{15} Also, it seems that men pessimistically expected a famine once in every four years; and the working classes seldom got enough ahead to learn the practices of thrift or of budgeting their supplies. Davis points out that:

If the year has been good with an extra supply of barns, and plenty of pigs and chickens fattening, the winter will be spent in gorging and idleness. By spring the old crop is exhausted almost to the seed corn; then perhaps the new crop will be a failure. The next winter these peasants may be glad to make a pottage of dead leaves.\textsuperscript{16}

The extreme poverty of the working classes is also reflected in a picture of the houses. Davis describes for us the ugly, dirty appearance of the home of Georges, a typical peasant in the St. Aliquis region of France:

Georges' house stands near the center of the village. To reach it you pick your way down a lane usually deep in mud. In front of each fenced-in cottage there is an enormous dungheap, beloved by

\textsuperscript{14}Stones, \textit{A History of Labour}, p. 141.
\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., p. 139.
\textsuperscript{16}Davis, \textit{Life on a Medieval Barony}, p. 261.
the hens and pigs, which roam about freely. Georges' one-story dwelling is an irregularly built rambling structure of wood, wattles, and thatch, all of dirty brown. This "manso" stretches away in four parts. The rearmost contains the corn cribs, the next mows for hay and straw, then the cattle sheds; and nearest, and smallest, the house for the family.

Pushing back the heavy door, after lifting the wooden latch, one enters a single large room; the timbers and walls thereof are completely blackened by soot. There is really only one apartment. Here everything in the household life seems to go on.

The floor is of earth pounded hard. Upon it are playing several very dirty, half-naked children, come over to visit "grandmother", and just now they are chasing two squealing little pigs under the great oak table near the center. One makes no account of a duck leading her goslings in at the door in hopes of scraps from the dinner.

Heanne has just kindled a lively fire of vine branches and dry billets. She is proud that her house contains many convenient articles not found with all neighbors. By the fireplace is an iron pot hanger, a shovel, large fire tongs, a copper kettle, and a meat hook. Next to the fireplace is an oven in case she does not wish to use that at the castle and yet will pay the baron's fee. On the other side of the fireplace is an enormous bed, piled with a real mountain of feather mattresses--. . . . In this one bed a goodly fraction of Georges' entire family have been able to sleep; of course, with their heads usually pointing in opposite directions. 17

Although the manor did exploit the working class to the utmost, the absolute degradation of the peasant was prevented through the interference of the central government and the Church. Knight explains:

In England and later in the middle ages in France also, the central government took a good deal of interest in the manors. This was some protection against outrageous encroachments by the lord, particularly upon freemen, who had legal rights beyond the

17 Ibid., p. 262.
manor court. The Church, too, helped to guarantee a certain amount of justice and humanity. Peasants on both royal and Church estates were generally the best treated and the moral, legal, and political influence of State and Church beyond their technical domains was great. 18

The manor survived through four stages: the first stage was the beginning and growth of it during the period, 800-1200; the next stage, 1200-1300, saw the manor at the heighth of its power and growth; from 1300-1500, there began the gradual decline of the manor; and after 1500, it survived only in the non-essential aspects. 19 There are many causes for the decline of the manor; Gras states that "One is that the manor and feudalism in a general way go together; the other that the town and a strong national state are or may be closely connected. As the town rose slowly from the ruins of the Roman civilization, it affected the manor in two ways. It gave the manor a brisk market and offered to discontented tenants a place of security within its walls and of opportunity in professions, in trade, and, as time went on, especially in manufacture." 20 Thompson points out further:

Feudalism as a form of government, but not as social structure, began to lose its power and to break down in the thirteenth century with the growth of royal power in Europe—except in Germany, where the ruin of the Hohenstaufen enabled it to continue until well

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18 Knight, Economic History of Europe, p. 167.
19 Gras, History of Agriculture, p. 79.
20 Ibid., p. 95.
down into modern times—with the decline of serfdom, the rise of the towns, the development of trade and commerce, and the competition of a money economy and capitalism with the older agrarian economy, for feudalism could not hold its own under these new conditions. It was undermined by the political, economic, and social changes of the time. Independently, however, of these external forces, feudalism developed adverse conditions within itself. Many nobles, as the result of conquest, marriage, inheritance, or purchase, acquired fiefs that made them simultaneously overlords and vassals of other nobles. The confusion of cross-crown and conflicting claims, the friction arising out of concurrent jurisdictions, due to entanglement of a legal and political nature, finally made things so complicated that the feudal machine jammed and would not work, a condition that afforded easy opportunity for the king as highest suzerain to interfere, always to the advantage of the crown.21

This study will discuss agriculture from the time the manor appeared through the time of its decline in those countries, England, France, and Germany, which dominated that part of the world during the Middle Ages. It is interesting to note how the feudal land system with its characteristic manor as its stronghold originated in these countries and how it dominated them. It was during the tenth century that most of the land of northern France which had so far escaped war was brought completely under the dominion of the feudal vassals or fief-holders.

In practice, some land escaped, though not much in Northern France. Villages which were already cooperative simply had lords superimposed upon them and became manors. Smaller hamlets of similar type became tributary to manors. Many of the lesser freeholders were

21 James Westfall Thompson, The Middle Ages, II, 707-708.
able to become petty lords, with serfs of their own. The rest were incorporated into manorial villages sometimes as "freemen"—not actually free, in our sense, but still exempt from some of the more onerous dues, fines, and disabilities of ordinary villeins (serfs). At the bottom of the scale were the cotters, who did not have even enough land to maintain a single ox for plowing, and thus had to work for the other classes, for the village agricultural enterprise as a whole, or for the lord. 22

Thus French society became stratified into the noble class which governed and fought and the ignoble class which worked. This feudalism spread very slowly into Germany, which never became feudalized to anything like the extent noted in France; Germany resisted the invasions of the Northmen which had destroyed central government and set up feudalism in France. Ninth century Germany still had a solidarity in government, of which France could not boast. 23 It was not until the thirteenth century that feudalism became the dominating force of the country.

Due to the futile attempts of the German "Emperors" really to govern Italy, and to accompanying civil wars in Germany itself, the royal power was greatly weakened. It finally collapsed in the middle of the thirteenth century. After the fall of Henry the Lion in 1181, the failure of the German medieval attempt to establish a limited federal monarchy was apparent. Feudal disintegration set in rapidly. Petty nobles, instead of dwelling among the freemen as leading citizens and neighbors, began in earnest a manorializing program, which dispossessed the freemen in many parts of Germany, and introduced a serfdom much like that of northern France. Wooden country houses gradually gave way to crude imitations of the French stone castle. Still, German feudal society did not take on

22 Ibid., p. 148.  
23 Ibid., p. 150.
the rigidity of the French. Primogeniture so essential to the systematic descent of fiefs intact, never became universal. Subfeudation, unlimited under French law, began late in Germany and did not progress very far. This is likewise true of the enrollment of public offices.24

Although the history of the beginning of feudalism in France and Germany is the same, yet the methods of development and the final outcome of feudalism in these two countries is quite different. Contrasting feudalism in these two countries, one historian points out these following essential differences and outcomes:

In France, ... the force during the Middle Age was centripetal or tending towards the centre, at least in the latter period in Germany, that force was always centrifugal, and all power of cohesion between the several parts became gradually destroyed. In France, as the feudal life ran its course, everything gradually tended to unity, monarchy, centralization; in Germany, the spirit of locality, separatism, decentralization, prevailed. France comes out of the Middle Ages into modern history, after a struggle of seven centuries, strong, united, intensely national; Germany, on the contrary, split up into hundreds of little principalities, with hardly closer relations to their Emperor than those of the great vassals of France to Hugh Capet when they elected him their king.25

Feudalism with its dependent and supporting manors was not finally established in England until after the Norman Conquest in 1066, when the Roman superstructure was removed.

24Ibid., p. 151.

The first effect of the Norman Conquest was a legal degradation of the vassals. The feudal system was more highly developed among the Normans, and the more definite conception of villeinage held by them was naturally carried over to England. The slaves entirely disappeared and the sochman fell to the position of the other tenants. The attitude of the Norman lords to the conquered population, especially since frequent rebellions served to keep up animosities, was not likely to improve the conditions of the servile class, except as their more advanced feudal institutions might have such an effect.  

By 1086, it has been estimated that there were about 9,250 manors in England. William the Conquerer seems to have been fully aware and impressed with the defects of the feudalism as had been developed on the continent, especially in France, where the lords with large fiefs had gained such power that they had become practically independent of the crown, and thereby reduced the power of the king. For this reason, William completely subjected the lords to himself.

The Conquerer, therefore, in conferring fiefs in England, provided not merely that the donees—his "tenants in capite", as they were called—should swear allegiance, yield military service to him, and hold their estates of him personally, as was the case elsewhere, but also that all the sub-tenants of these great feudatories should come under similar obligations to the king, as paramount lord to their own chiefs, and this was made an essential condition of the tenure of their estates by his followers. Not only this, but with the view of still

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26 J. Dorsey Forrest, The Development of Western Civilization, p. 145.

27 Ibid., p. 137.
further lessening that power of the great nobles which had been employed on the continent to embarrass and weaken the king's authority, he conferred on the same person fiefs and manors in widely distant parts of the country, so as to avoid the creation of duchies or lordships embracing a large adjacent territory to be held by the same person or family. In order more fully to render himself absolute master, he maintained the old Saxon plan of appointing sheriffs and of organizing courts for each county, thus reducing the local power and influence of the great landowners to harmless proportions. His object was further accomplished by abolishing the Saxon division of the country into great provinces with a great noble at the head of each. He substituted therefore the smaller division of counties. 28

Thus, the feudal land system, with dependent manors, first appeared in northern France and on the borders of Germany. From France, the Normans transferred it with significant changes to England.

Forms of village settlement and agrarian arrangements in the arable fields of the village were the fundamental support of the upper military class as well as the peasant. This feudal land system constitutes a necessary beginning for this study. The people who lived in these villages and thus constituted the agricultural classes will next be described with special emphasis on the relation of the lord to the working classes. The fourth chapter will be devoted to the agricultural production of these feudal lands. A fifth chapter will be concerned with the influence of outside agencies, the Church and the State, on agriculture.

Because agriculture was the chief source of livelihood of medieval people, land became more and more important and necessary for their subsistence. For these reasons, securing more land became more intensive as well as effective. Between the eleventh and the middle of the fourteenth century, the agrarian population of the west accomplished a great work in clearing, colonizing, and reclaiming new lands, which had either been laid in waste, in forests, or had been ravaged by water.

According to Boissonnade,

At the close of the Dark Ages, by reason of the recent invasions, the constant anarchy and warfare, the insufficiency and inertia of labour, and the predominance of a primitive form of economy, the greater part of the soil of the West was under forest, waste, or marsh. In Italy, save for the two Sicilies, and in Christian Spain, only a very small proportion of the land was under cultivation. Half or more of the territory of France, two-thirds of that of the Low Countries and Germany, and four-fifths of that of England was uncultivated.

This task of conquering the land was carried on with intense vigor by all during the Middle Ages and was encouraged to a great extent by the rulers of feudal and monarchical states.

At no period has the conquest of agricultural land been carried on with so much discipline and ardour. Lured on by the bait of freedom and property, thousands of pioneers responded to the appeal of monks, prelates, princes, lords, and communes and came to prepare the way for the work of plough and hoe, by burning away brushwood, thickets, and parasitic vegetation, clearing forests with the axe and up-rooting trunks with the pick, a process known as assarting. Germany, in particular was transformed, in its immense forests, through some of which an eleventh-century missionary could ride for five days on end in complete solitude, pioneers made clearings, (roden) and assarts (schwenden), established great farms all along the side of the roads, as in the northern plain and on the southern plateau, they established town and village settlements.  

The task of conquering the German soils by clearing the forests and draining the marshes and swamp was performed to the fullest extent and with exceptional thoroughness. The clearing of the forest was the principal work.

At first this was done only according to the needs of the community; the younger sons of the family especially, about to set up their own households, secured in this way as much land as they needed for themselves. Later, the great landholders entered upon this work systematically, appropriating large tracts of the king's land, often without leave or claiming their share of the allmende of the shire. Apparently, wild lands were looked upon as common property, and many a grant was encroached upon by the axe of the cultivator.  

As important as the clearing of woods in Germany was the draining of the swamps to protect the lands against floods from the sea and river. This work of draining the swamps,

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2Ibid., p. 229.

3Ernst Richard, History of German Civilization, p. 158.
of regulating the watercourses, of protecting the shores of the ocean and the banks is still going on. Richard explains the effect of this conquest for Germany:

By the end of the thirteenth century, this immense work had been accomplished; from the Vistula to the Scheldt in the north, from the Rhine to the Danube, from the Alps to the North and Baltic seas, the wilderness had been changed into fertile lands and rich pastures, occupied by the descendants of those Germans who at one time were confined to the small oblong between the Elbe and the Rhine, between the Main and the North Sea.

All over Europe forest clearings were making it possible for the people to push across the frontiers and found new villages. The woodlands of the Carolingians were still vast, and at the same time, much of England was in forest, but about the middle of the eleventh century this task of forest clearing was started. Neilson states that in this century:

... there began, especially in France, a great movement of "approvement" or "assarting", ...; the cutting of trees, and cultivation of the new soil thus made available, and the forming of new villages therein. The forests were cut and their edges pushed back so that the activities along their margins—hunting, tanning, charcoal-making for forges, mines, and soap, and the cutting of wood for common use, for fuel, for hedges, for houses,—may be said to have traveled inland. Thus the heart of the forest was more nearly approached, or avenues of open land were cut through it.

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4 Ibid., p. 163. 5 Ibid., p. 173.
4 & N. Neilson, Medieval Agrarian Economy, p. 25.
One of the incentives which lead to the cutting of these forests was the special terms and privileges offered by lords to colonists who were willing to establish new villages, and to extend their land by clearing the woodland.

Sometimes freedom from serfdom was extended to such settlers; sometimes economic burdens were lightened. It is clear that the bonds tying one to a lord would be loosened naturally when adventure was made into new and difficult conditions of living. To new towns or villages were offered the customs of some specially favored and well-known town already existing, and older villages sometimes demanded similar privileges. Thus, it is clear that approval was in the direction of greater freedom of status.

Also, during this period, an immense program was carried out for the defense of the land from the ravages of waters and for the conquest of river valleys and marshes.

In England the drainage of the fens on the North Sea was begun. In the Low Countries the sea had stolen a fifth or a sixth of its soil from the Netherlands, and between the eleventh and the thirteenth century, it had on no less than thirty-five occasions swept over the land, creating gulfs of the Zuider Zee, the Dollart, and the Rondt (Western Scheldt), destroying in a single invasion 3,000 square kilometers, and in a hundred years swallowing up more than 100,000 human beings. Now abbeys, princes, burgesses, and peasants formed themselves into associations for dyking and draining the land (wateringues), under the direction of dykemasters. At a cost of seven and a half milliards of francs, and in the course of five centuries, they built out of solid blocks transported from Scandinavia and Central Germany the strong "golden wall" which

\textsuperscript{[Ibid., p. 23.]}
braved the furious assaults of the sea, from maritime Flanders to Frisia, and in the shelter of which the fertile 'polders' were reclaimed. North of the Meuse alone 19,000 hectares of land were thus conquered.\textsuperscript{7}

One of the results of this program of clearing, colonizing, and reclaiming new lands was a notable rise in the value of the soil and of landed revenues. Boissonade states that, "The reclaimed lands increased enormously in value in a few centuries, enriching the owners who had been wise enough to bring them under cultivation and at the same time to retain possession of them."\textsuperscript{8} Naturally, these new lands gave impetus to a new agricultural revolution. The old system of arranging the land for cultivation was superseded by the feudal land system.

As the main concern of the medieval village was the raising of crops, the methods of agriculture employed become matters of primary importance. As has been stated in the preceding chapter, all agricultural activity centered around the manor or village; the manor was within itself an agricultural unit which strove to produce all products that were necessary for its inhabitants. Economic necessity, as well as the need for protection, forced the population to dwell together in the village; the group

\textsuperscript{7} Boissonade, \textit{Life and Work in the Middle Ages}, p. 227.

\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., p. 239.
had to pool its resources and gain a living from the soil through cooperative agriculture. Stephenson points out that: "The soil, on account of shallow working, was very heavy; the plow, being only a small iron blade fastened on a wooden frame, was light. Draft animals, because of poor breeding and under-nourishment, were small and scrawny. Merely to prepare a field for planting commonly required a team of eight oxen—all of which, together with a plow, the average peasant did not possess." For these reasons, each family was supposed to make a contribution toward the common fund, in either the form of materials, tools, or animals. And, it naturally followed that each was to have an equal portion of the harvest.

If a small proprietor, the lord might own only a few manors; but if a large and wealthy proprietor, he might possess many. The sum total of these constituted the domain. Most of these domains were not formed of contiguous and adjacent manors, but of manors often several, even many miles apart. Interspersed between his own would lie those of other lords, who were his neighbors.

The land in each domain or manor was divided into two parts of unequal extent, one belonging to the lord, and the other belonging to the peasants. The lord's domain,

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"demesne", was "...tilled by labour which the serfs were bound to provide, or by free labourers whom the bailiff paid out of moneys with which the serfs redeemed their services. 13" 14

Neilson in describing these demesnes states:

In some western countries it was usually a third of the cultivated land. Some of these demesnes were as large as 150 to 140 hectares and were ploughed by great teams of oxen. The lord cultivated them by means of corvees, free labour services, which his tenants, both roturiers and serfs, were bound to do for him. This reserved demesne might also include private vineyards, meadows, fishponds, and forests, but, as a rule, uncultivated lands, pastures, heaths, and woods, over which the lord usually possessed propriety rights, remained undivided, and the use thereof was allowed within certain limits to his subjects. 14

Seignobos gives us a picture of the arrangement of each manor with the two domains:

The smaller, ordinarily the land near the master's house, formed the reserve which the owner kept to exploit directly for his own profit; this was the master's land. What it produced belonged to the owner. There stood the master's house, where the owner lived, or at least his intendent. The rest of the land was distributed among a certain number of peasant families established on the domain. Most frequently they lived in cottages grouped around the master's house, thus forming a village. Each family from father to son, cultivated the same allotment of land, which ordinarily was made up of several small parcels scattered over the whole extent of the domain. The peasants kept the products of the field; but, in exchange, they owed dues and services to the owner and lived in dependence upon him. 15

14 Neilson, Medieval Agrarian Economy, p. 35.
15 Charles Seignobos, The Feudal Regime, p. 3.
The forest was also an integral and important part of the manor. Baldwin states that it "... was usually a monopoly of the lord, and wood for fuel, for the framework of pressed earth cottages, for wattles to fence the home gardens. It was also a feeding ground (pannage) for swine, and in the summer, a pasture for sheep and cattle." The village stood, without exception, near water. And, of course, the Church usually stood near the center.

The lord or knight who held this land of the manor obtained it as a fief from the crown if he was a direct vassal of it. As has been stated in the preceding chapter, he was bound, by having done homage to the king, to furnish soldiers and protection to the crown in return for the grant of land.

The most important unit of feudal society was the fief, a tenement held by a knight in return for military service for the defense of the kingdom, or by the Church usually in return for spiritual service. Alodial land, land that is to say, lying outside feudal arrangements and corresponding with modern or Roman private properties, had become rare as early as the twelfth century. Every village was included in a fief which might be held of the king in chief, or be a part of larger fiefs held by a series of lords culminating in the king as lord of the kingdom. By this period, the growth of lordship had eliminated most variations and extended almost

Summerfield Baldwin, Business In the Middle Ages, p. 23.
universally the feudal principle that every foot of land was in someone's dominium or lordship; 17

The most customary arrangements of agriculture in western Europe were the so-called open field systems in which no enclosures were set up around individual holdings; temporary hedges were sometimes set up around the arable fields as a whole, but only for the protection from cattle. This open field system usually implied a two or three field system of rotation of crops. In discussing these two systems, Vinogradoff explains:

The main point about them was that the plan of the agricultural operations to be performed, the seasons for the commencement and the interruption of work, the choice of crops to be raised, the sequence in which the different shots and furlongs had to be used, the regulations as to fencing and drainage, etc., were not a matter of private concern and decision, but were to be devised and put in force by the community. Such was the general practice at the time when we can actually observe the working of rural arrangements by means of documents and descriptions, and there cannot be the slightest doubt that the same was the case at the time when the husbandry systems of old England were settled on the chequered boards which the maps of the country before the enclosures present to us with such abundance of detail. 18

The two field system was common in the south, in Mediterranean countries, and once spread into the north, for example into parts of Brittany and Alsace. The three-field

17 Neilson, Medieval Agricultural Economy, p. 34.
system, which probably developed from it, was found in the midlands and south of England, in northern and central France, in much of Germany, and in the great plains of northern Europe. 19

The two-field system, in which approximately half the arable was cultivated in alternate years, the other half lying fallow, was earlier than the three-field system in which two-thirds were cultivated each year, the third-field lying idle. The three-field system was obviously the more economical and productive, and the change from the two-field to the three-field was in the nature of an economic revolution. 20

In the three-field system, each field was under a regular rotation of tillage or fallow. This system owes its origin to primitive organization and was very common in the ninth and tenth centuries. 21

One year, the field would be ploughed in October with wheat or rye, reaped in August, and left in stubble. Next year it would be ploughed in March, and sown with barley, reaped in August as before. The third year it would lie fallow; it was ploughed up twice in June, and rested until the fourth year, when it would again be ploughed and sown in October. Under this custom (whether two or three or four fields), the individual had no choice of date or of crop; he must plough and reap with the rest, sow the same seed as they. 22

Before the Middle Ages, it had been a common practice of the people to clear new lands and cultivate them when

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19 Ibid., p. 21. 20 Ibid., p. 2.
21 Seignobos, The Feudal Regime, p. 5.
22 Coulton, The Medieval Village, p. 37.
the soil had become exhausted on the old land. During the Middle Ages this could no longer be done. Thus, the people met the difficulty by letting one field stand fallow one year, while the others were being cultivated. Experience had long proved that land continuously devoted to the raising of wheat, rye, barley, or oats, would in a short time become exhausted; the cause of this, of course, was the depletion of nitrogen which should have been replaced before another good harvest of grain could be secured. Today, this difficulty could be met by applying fertilizer or by planting nitrogen-producing crops, such as peas, beans, clover, or alfalfa.\textsuperscript{23} But in the Middle Ages, there was no knowledge of the scientific rotation of crops. Vegetables were grown only in separate plots, and hay was obtained from natural meadows. There were no manufactured nitrates to buy. Furthermore, manure was scarce, as there were few domesticated animals. For these reasons, the only known way to prevent complete soil exhaustion was that of allowing the land to lie fallow—hence, the two and three-field systems. Neilson explains:

At the basis of both forms of the open field system lay two principles. The first was the necessity for "repose" of the soil, for the alternate or periodic cultivation and resting of a given piece of land. In a society knowing little

\textsuperscript{23} Stephenson, \textit{Medieval History}, p. 265.
of fertilization or elaborate rotation of crops, such alternation was essential as a means of conserving the soil. Manure from the cattle of the village was important in agriculture, but insufficient in quantity and was demanded, moreover, especially and exclusively for the lord's land. And elementary rotation of crops was practiced in the three-field system by sowing in rotation one field every third year with winter wheat and barley, another with spring crops, wheat, oats, barley, and rye, and allowing the third to lie fallow. The second principle of the open field arrangements, as usually understood, was equality. It was desirable that peasants of the same station should have like holdings, and that holdings should be so dispersed in different parts of the fields that all might share alike in good and bad land. 24

However, this open field cultivation with its two and three-field system of rotation of crops was only partially successful. "The fallow was only scantily refertilized through the plowing under of weeds and through incidental manuring by animals put out to graze; yet the process was sufficient to maintain the agricultural routine for an indefinite period." 25

The most common measure of land into which the open field was divided is known as the strip. In discussion of these strips, Knight states:

The strips vary a good deal in length and width, and some even taper from one end to the other, or bend to conform to hillsides, marshes, or streams;

24 Neilson, Medieval Agrarian Economy, p. 8.
25 Stephenson, Medieval History, p. 266.
yet there is a striking uniformity as to size and shape. This standard size, followed wherever convenient, is about forty rods long by two or four rods wide. Forty rods is a furlong ( . . . ) traditionally supposed to be the distance which an ox team could pull a plow without stopping. The rod is forty rods long by one rod wide, and thus contains a quarter of an acre. 26

In England, the open field was divided into measures called shots, and each of these was subdivided into acre strips. The normal holding of the villein household is said to have been thirty acres. 27 However, Gras states that frequently the holding was only half this size. 28 Such a holding could yield only the barest necessities.

If the average net yield was eight bushels of wheat and ten of barley per acre, assuming that only the two grains were planted, there would be forty bushels of barley for beer. Such a yield would be obtained only in pretty good years. Along with these the peasant would have milk from his cow and eggs from his hens and geese. It is of little use to ask whether he could support his family on these products; he actually did get along. Of course, in this connection, we should not forget the gifts in food or money made by the lord for some of the services performed. 29

Strips were divided by "balks" of turf originally

26 Kelvin M. Knight, Economic History of Europe, P. 163.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.

Stephenson, Medieval History, P. 265.
created by plowing furrows up against each other from either direction. Wider balks separated groups of strips (shots, flats, furlongs) from each other. Wherever possible a cross strip was left at the end of a group of strips to turn on in plowing. This headland was of course plowed last.

For the sake of equality, the strips of a single village family did not lie side by side but were scattered over fields, an equal number of strips lying in each field. This was an awkward arrangement, since:

In plowing one man's strips which butted into those of other men at right angles, or other angles, the plow must be turned on some one else's land. Thus, a vastly complicated fabric of local custom grew up to regulate such questions as which man's land was to be plowed first. By ancient custom, holders of some strips would possess headland rights in other strips—that is, the right to plow first and to turn the plow on the other men's holdings.31

Although the peasant held a unit of fifteen to thirty acres, he did not necessarily hold the same strips year after year. It seems to have been a frequent practice to rotate the holdings. Gras states that, "Perhaps this was to insure greater evenness in the quality of land possessed by each peasant. Certainly the effect would be to rob the individual of any incentive to improve the

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31. H. Knight, Economic History of Europe, p. 163.
31. [p. 164.]
soil, assuming for the moment that improvement in an open-field system was possible.\textsuperscript{32}

It was customary to regard the strips in the open-fields as private property of the peasants only during that period of the year when the crops were growing and were being harvested. But after the harvest, each strip-owner had the right of turning his beast into the field. Everybody had to conform to the same rules and methods in regard to the rotation and cultivation of crops, and when these had been gathered, the strips relapsed into the state of an open field in common use.\textsuperscript{35}

Neilson states that "Enclosures might be maintained in convenient, but no man might enclose his own cattle; horses and cows of all fed together in the stubble."\textsuperscript{34}

Before the mowing season, the animals could be pastured on the fallow and on the common waste—such as marsh and rocky hillside.\textsuperscript{35} These two means alone, however, were insufficient for the large number of cattle needed for a medieval village. Other means for feeding cattle had to

\textsuperscript{32}Gras, History of Agriculture, p. 31.
\textsuperscript{33}Vinogradoff, The Growth of the Manor, p. 166.
\textsuperscript{34}Neilson, Medieval Agrarian Economy, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{35}Stephenson, Medieval History, p. 266.
be found. The wood, heath, and uncultivated land of most villages offered opportunities for this; also the great stretches of wasteland lying between villages, or within circles of villages, which were not yet divided. In this waste intervillar commoning took place; that is, the cattle of two or more villages could be pastured there.

Perhaps the best example of this is furnished by the fen country of England, in Lincolnshire and Norfolk, where circles of intercommuning villages, lying round bits of fen turned out their cattle "horn under horn", to feed in the more solid places. The cattle of each vill had their own peculiar branding, and "drifts" or drivings of the cattle to some particular place in the fen were held at intervals to see that none belonging to strangers were present. The right to turn on the waste an unlimited number of cattle during all the year, without pay, was restricted to those villages who held the ancient ténements within the vill—the land "always hided". . . . Cattle belonging to dwellers in villages outside the immediate circle of these intercommuning might also be pastured in the waste, if it were sufficiently extensive, but for these a payment was required, so much for the pasture of so many cattle, during all or part of the year.

Hay was a necessity for the winter subsistence and provision of the cattle. From February to early March until mowing time (about the first of July) the meadow land was fenced in; hedge was the commonest type of fence, though some old, rich communities used stone. Brush, hewn wood, and turf were also employed. Meadow land was valued

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36 Nellson, Medieval Agrarian Economy, p. 19.
37 Ibid., p. 44.
38 Knight, Economic History of Europe, p. 167.
highly and some parts of it were usually set aside for the lord's individual use. The rest was held in strips by the peasants until harvested; after that, it returned to a common stock for common use. In discussing the common use of this meadow, Vinogradoff states:

... we find that the usual manner of making use of village meadows was to put them under prohibition and enclosure until Lammas-day, and to distribute portions of them for the purpose of cutting the grass and making hay according to certain rules, either by lot or by rotation; every household taking its turn in regard to every particular strip. When the grass had been mowed the land became the undivided pasture of villagers. 30

The Middle Ages were long; and, for this reason, there were many changes made in the land systems. Although the open field system of agriculture was practically uniform throughout Europe, we find that there were variant forms of rural organization of lands. Of great interest and some importance, were the survivals in some parts of Europe of the once widespread system called by the Germans "Feldgraswirtschaft." Neilson explains:

This long title indicates the temporary cultivation, for one or two years, of a given area as a field of crops, and then the cessation of cultivation within it and its return to grass. After an interval of years it might be plowed with "ephemeral furrows" and then again allowed to lie idle. The so-called "burning and paring" of soil like this was used to improve the crop. Such a method was

obviously, the most extensive form of agriculture possible in a given place. It was useful only where there was more land than was needed, or where the soil was too poor for continuous cultivation of any kind.  

It was only in part of France, England, Germany, and other countries of western Europe that was cultivated by the two and three-field systems. In other parts Neilson states that "Sporadically in Germany, in the upper Rhine valley and Westphalia, evidence of a four and five-field arrangement has been found, and in other regions other customs of cultivating the fields and producing the necessary food for society prevailed."  

Even in regions where the so-called open-field system prevailed, there were some villages of a different sort with tenements of varying size and shape, as in parts of France and in Northern England. For example,  

...in the Danelaw, the northern and northeastern part of England, which had been invaded and settled by the Scandinavians, borates or ox lands of about twenty acres, the northern rude equivalent of the "virgate" or yardland of about thirty acres, are common enough, but are not necessarily of uniform shape. Typical peasant tenements are difficult to find in this region and the lord's land often lay in compact blocks, separated from the peasant's land or enclosed in the midst of it. Tenements of the lord and the more separate and compact tenements of villagers, often had their own special names.  

40 Neilson, Medieval Agrarian Economy, p. 84.  
41 Ibid., p. 19.  
42 Ibid., p. 20.
In some countries of Europe during the Middle Ages, a very ancient system was found—that of enclosed fields. In these fields the yield of the soil depended upon the manure which resulted from the feeding of cattle within the field. The most characteristic kind of enclosures was live hedges. This system of enclosed fields was prevalent in parts of the west of France, in much of Brittany, in Maine, parts of Poitou, Perche, the Cotentin and Basque country.46

Thus, the feudal lands, which were more extensive than they had ever been before, were organized in such a way that they were refertilized to a certain extent each year and were distributed equally among the peasants, the lord holding his own separate reserve, however. This system was called the open-field system, which usually implied the customary two or three-field system of rotation of crops. These systems, we found, varied throughout the different countries of Europe during the Middle Ages. Again, it is apparent that the cooperation of the peasants and lord was a fundamental principle and law during these ages. Each was dependent upon the other. Only by cooperation could these people use the land to the best advantage and obtain the few necessary agricultural products.
CHAPTER III

AGRICULTURAL CLASSES DURING THE MIDDLE AGES

Economic welfare determined largely the classes of people during the Middle Ages. The weak, who had no land and who could not defend themselves, necessarily sought from the strong a livelihood as well as protection. Only by securing land from the lords and in return paying dues and military services to the lord could the poorer people realize the barest subsistence.

There was abundant class consciousness during the Middle Ages. Every man knew to which of the three categories of society he belonged; whether of the clergy, the nobility, or the peasants; and he acted accordingly. Few peasants ever had hopes of being anything but peasants; they regarded the noblemen as being of another sphere and did not dream of ever becoming a member of it.1 They only wished to work for the noblemen in order that they might secure the few necessities of their life. They, together with the freemen and the lords, composed the village or the manor of the Middle Ages.

1William Stearne Davis, Life on a Medieval Barony, p. 253.
The manor was the village or any part of the village...
whose inhabitants were held as one lordship, and who were regarded from the point of view of lordship; who yet retained also a certain identity of their own as a village group, or part thereof, self-supporting, living under customary rules not obliterated by the imposition of lordship. Primarily, the manor existed as an estate rendering to the lord rents and services and suit of court, as an estate in which the lord's will was enforced through his court and yet in which this same court recognized also the "custom of the manor" as enforceable.  

The villages were usually small, ranging roughly from fifty to five hundred inhabitants; "The people are few, and their ideas and words are few; the average peasant has probably never known by sight more than two or three hundred men in his whole life; his vocabulary is almost certainly confined to something even less than six hundred words . . . ."  

The nobility, of course, constituted the ruling power. As has been stated before, they were virtually petty tyrants in their relations with the peasants, because they exercised almost complete power in the absence of a strong central government, by virtue of their great domains. "The property of the nobility sometimes took the form of great domains, but more often, in the case of fiefs belonging to

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the second rank of nobles, who were far more numerous, it took the form of medium or small properties.\footnote{Mollison, Medieval Agrarian Economy, p. 28.}

The lord was the supreme head of the village, and his castle or manor-house was usually situated in its center. In describing the castle as an institution, Thompson points out:

In order to protect the countryside and enforce their police power the great feudatories erected castles and garrisoned them with their own retainers, and so overawed their predatory or rebellious vassals. For the castle was primarily intended as a means to repel invasion to preserve peace. The castles of the vassals were made subsidiary to those of the suzerain, and all together were woven, so to speak, into a network of 'chateaux' spread over the fiefs of the great nobles and the fiefs of their vassals as well. They were like the police stations in every ward or police district of a large city, except that they were formidable edifices almost incapable of being taken by seige and spread over a whole province, or even over adjacent provinces. Contrary to what romantic novelists relate, the noble did not invariably dwell in his castle. It was the capitol of his fief, in which was centered the executive, judicial and fiscal organs of his administration, where he held court, audited the accounts of tax collectors, formally received political visitors, preserved his archives, etc. He had private quarters within the castle, but was not habitually resident there. Frequently he dwelt in one or another of his manor houses. He had his own household and court officials, chancellor, constable, seneschal, butler.

The most important parts of the richly furnished castle were the donjon and keep. Munro explains:

\footnote{James Westfall Thompson, The Middle Ages, II, p. 707.}

The former was the ordinary dwelling place of the knight and his family; the latter formed a place of refuge if the rest of the castle should be captured. The keep had no windows or doors on the first floor and was entered by a movable ladder. In the lower story the treasuries were stored and dangerous prisoners were confined. 6

The lord of the castle was principally employed in managing his estate, in ruling and directing his subjects, in hunting, and in fighting. If his fief were large, the direction and management required a large amount of his time. Fighting, above all else, was the occupation of the knight in the tenth and eleventh centuries. "The kings were usually engaged in struggles against rebellious barons; private wars between nobles were incessant. The countries, especially France, were devastated by these wars and the common people were reduced to the greatest extremities; cannibalism was not infrequent in France about the year 1000." 7

The peasantry formed the lowest and the most numerous element in the population. It has already been shown that through necessity, the entire feudal class was supported directly or indirectly by the peasants. The great burden of the labor of an estate fell on this class.

The life of the peasant, generally speaking, was exceedingly hard compared with our modern sanitary means.

6 Dana Carleton Munro, A History of the Middle Ages, p. 139.
7 Ibid, p. 139.
conveniences, and justices. A glance into the house will reveal the uncomfortable conditions in which he lived:

The peasantry lived in wattled cottages with thatched roofs and earthen floors and without windows. The furniture was scant and of the crudest sort. The bed was a box with a mattress filled with straw or dry leaves. A table made of planks set on wooden horses; a couple of three-legged stools, a chest, an iron pot, and some pieces of earthenware completed the furniture. No artificial light was used. Candles were for churches and the lord's manor-house. The danger of fire was too great even for a flaming pine knot. Moreover, the peasant had nothing to do after dark; he could neither read nor write; he went to bed with the sun and was up with the sun. The cottages were without chimneys, the smoke from a small fire smoldering on the mud floor in the center escaping through a hole in bad weather, so that the floor was often damp and slippery. In summer, cooking was done out-of-doors in a crude fire-place, with pot hanging over the fire from a cross-bar or a tripod. The peasant house-wife had no oven; baking for the whole village was done in the lord's oven, which was a local monopoly.

The number of animals usually found on a peasant's holding necessarily varied from estate to estate. Neilson states that "In general, he had a cow, or more than one, a number of pigs, a plow and cart horse, perhaps an ox, a goat, sheep, chickens, and geese."

Other possessions of the peasant were as limited as the number of cattle he possessed. Davis lists the tools to be found in the home of a prosperous peasant:

If the goodman tells us about his establishment we shall find that, in addition to various stools

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6 James Westfall Thompson, The Middle Ages, II, 723.
7 S.M. Neilson, Medieval Agrarian Economy, p. 62.
and torches, he owns a ladder, a mortar and pestle for braying corn, a mallet, some crudely shaped nails, a gimlet, a very imperfect saw, fishing lines, hooks, and a basket. He is fortunate enough also to own a plow, and, in addition, a scythe, an iron spade, a mattock, a pair of large shears, a handy knife, and a sharpening stone.10

Ordinarily, each day was only another day of labor for the peasant. Only on holidays, which were fairly numerous, was he able to spend the time as he wished. One writer points out:

The peasants need every kind of public and private holiday. On ordinary days, toil begins at gray dawn and usually continues until dusk. There are no eight-hour laws; even the "nooning" is short, although sometimes there is time taken out in hot weather for a siesta during the afternoon. The women labor in the fields as do the men. Children begin weeding, digging, and carrying when very little. Their help is so important that many peasants look on large families as assets of so much unpaid labor, rather than as liabilities which they must clothe and feed until the children reach maturity.11

The peasantry was composed, for the most part, of serfs; yet there were certain gradations in this class, as there was in the class of the nobility. Free villeins were at the top. Below the serfs was the slave. Slavery proper died out during the Middle Ages. (Coulton explains that this de-
day of slavery was due,

...partly for philanthropic and partly for economic reasons, for slavery is almost as uneconomic, if we look at society in general, as it is unjust. At the Norman Conquest, Comesday Book shows on one manor a drop from 82 slaves to 25 in twenty years. Before

10William Stearne Davis, Life on a Medieval Barony, pp. 262-263.
11Ibid., p. 264.
1324, the slave proper had become non-existent in England, though he might still be found in other countries; e.g. in Italy slavery not only outlasted the Middle Ages but was a very flourishing institution in the later sixteenth century. 12

As has been remarked previously, free villeinage was the highest form of social status. The free villeins owed nothing to the lord; they were dependent upon him only in so far as he was their landlord and only in so far as they lived upon his land. Their holding, of course, was a part of his domain. But they cultivated it for their own profit, on the condition of paying either a fixed amount or a certain part of the produce. "In distinction from the renter or farmer of our day their condition was fixed forever; the landlord could not take back their lands nor increase their rent. On the condition that they paid the old charges they were free to dispose of their holding, to bequeath it as they would, to transfer it, even (at least in France) to parcel it out." 13

Boissonade points out:

The distinctive characteristics of free villeinage were, on the one hand, the recognition of a man's personal liberty, and, on the other, the contractual nature of his tenure. In principle he was a freeman like the noble, but in practice his liberty was apt to be remarkably attenuated. If some villeins, like the juniores of Castille, preserved the right to change their domicile, the majority were unable to leave their holdings without the permission of the lord. They had none of those political rights which

12 Coulton, The Medieval Village, p. 10.

distinguished and elevated the noble class. It was only quite exceptionally that a few among them were called to the possession of fiefs or admitted to knighthood. The opinion of the upper classes would admit no point of contact between the tenant, even when free, and the noble landowner; free and serf were regarded with the same disdain. In practice the free villein was almost as closely tied down as was the serf to the social rank in which Fate had placed him.  

Nevertheless the free villein's land was a degree higher than that of the serf because the former enjoyed the benefit of a contract. Some lands, as in Germany, were even granted with full rights of property but without the obligation of military service.  

The tenancies of these free villeins were of diverse sizes and variety. "One freeman would be a fairly large tenant, with ordinary cultivators dependent upon him. He might even have enclosed fields like the lord. Another would hold merely a virgate or a fraction thereof, live in the village, and be scarcely distinguishable from the unfree population." The important fact about them was that their fixed rents were another source of revenue for the lord. The free peasants who cultivated these lands did not owe guard-service for them, but were required to pay for them a part of the revenue, usually called cens. In other words, they were exempt from the servile conditions of

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15 Ibid.  
tenure, by which term is meant ". . . the man was not free who had to get his lord's consent in order to give his daughter in marriage, or to sell an ox or a horse; but there were many exceptions to this . . . ."\(^{17}\) However, as Boisonnade points out:

They were not landowners in the strict sense of the term, but for the most part they enjoyed the perpetual usufruct of the land; they had, in medieval terminology, property in use, in default of full or direct property. In certain countries—for instance, in Alsace—the peasant benefitted by improvements, which were held to belong to him. In France the comtangent shared the soil which had been planted with landowner. Originally the villein held his land only by an inalienable life tenure, but contracts and customs soon transformed this peasant holding into a partimonial possession like the fief. The villein was the true owner of the land, despite the service with which it was burdened. The majority of the free villeins of the past were able to hand on their holding to their children, like a real inheritance, by simply paying a succession due, called in France a double cen\(^{18}\). This due was payable when the heirs entered upon possession. The land of the free villein could also be alienated, on the payment of other taxes.\(^{19}\)

There were some very highly privileged tenants to be found among the ranks of villeinage. "They paid more moderate rents, among which were numbered payments in wax for church lights, . . . , they performed a limited number of field works; they had only to pay light taxes on marriage, and they were not only free from the exactions of lay lords, but better protected against war and dearth."\(^{19}\) But the

\(^{17}\) Ibid., p. 172.
\(^{19}\) Ibid., p. 135.
majority of the free villeins, despite their rank of the provisions of contract, possessed neither the right to bear arms for their own defense, nor as a rule, the possibility of changing their living quarters. (Furthermore,

They were shut out of political society and consequently had no real guarantee against oppression. The lord had not "full enjoyment" over them as was recognized by the Pierre de Fontaines in the thirteenth century; but the sole guarantee which the villein possessed against an abuse of seigniorial power lay in the conscience of his lord. Between lord and villein there was no judge save God. To exact arbitrary payments from a free peasant was only a moral fault, a "larceny" committed at the peril of the lord's soul. But of what avail was such a restriction against the suggestion of selfishness or of cupidity? There was no remedy against arbitrary power. Hence it befell that, in spite of custom, the free villein was often subjected to labour services, payments in kind, monopolies, dues, the whole conglomeraeation of extortions which the age knew as exactions, maltases, evil customs, and to a multitude of abuses which time at length consecrated. . . . 20)

Even though the villein's freedom was only a sort of semi-servitude, his condition was, nevertheless, much better than that of the serf. It was serfdom which was the dominant social institution during the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries. 21. Everywhere the ranks of the serf were recruited in the same ways.--

. . . either by birth, by mixed marriages between free and servile persons, by the mere fact of dwelling upon servile soil, or as the result of a feudal war and the captivity resulting from it, or of a judicial sentence of condemnation. It even happened that men presented serfs, or offered up their children as serfs, to churches and convents. Better still, a man would sometimes

\[\text{Ibid.} \quad 21 \text{Ibid., p. 136.}\]
offer himself, a rope round his neck and a penny on his head; . . . . Force, misery, piety—all increased the number of serfs, and before the twelfth century multitudes of people were often unable to obtain at home, a scrap of land, and their daily bread, save by accepting or begging for the condition of servitude, even when they had not been born into it. 22

There were many degrees of servitude, but the great mass of them were under similar obligations, and their conditions were the same. They differed from the slaves in that they had a legal personality, which was recognized by custom or by law. As soon as the serfs were established upon a holding, they could possess a home and some movables; yet they had in no degree the free disposal of their persons. "They were as much a part of the demesne as were the live-stock. They were considered as essential element of farming capital as economic securities. The loss of a family of serfs was a prejudicial to a lord as the loss of a number of his cattle—perhaps more prejudicial." 23 In other words, the serf was born, sold, and exchanged with the land upon which he lived. Thus, the serfs were forbidden to leave the land they cultivated. If they did, they ran the risk of being captured, fined, and brought to their land by virtue of the right of the lord of 'suite' or 'pares'. 24 Other limitations and restrictions placed upon the serf by the lord were the following:

\(^22\) Ibid., p. 137.  \(^23\) Ibid., p. 138.  \(^24\) Ibid.
He could not appear or give evidence in a court of justice, more especially in causes which concerned freemen. He was shut out of the ranks of the clergy. In England, he was not admitted to serve on the jury or in assizes. Only a small number of serfs were able to obtain permission to leave the domain, while continuing to pay personal dues and payments, or else abandoning their servile holding, together with a part of the possessions which they had been able to amass. Another not less serious restriction upon the liberty of the serf was the prohibition against contracting marriage outside the demesne, for fear that the children of such a marriage would escape the ownership of the lord. The serf could not contract a union of this kind without the permission of an indemnity... Finally, no serf had the right of property. 25

The serf found himself continually exploited on all sides and for all things by the lord. In return for the land worked by the serf, payments and services, which were not uniform throughout Europe, had to be made to the lord by the serf. Some payments were usually considered rude tests of servile status. (For example, the most common of these were known as 'formariage', 'heriot', and the 'mainmorte'. Neilson explains these payments:

The most common of these was the serf's payment to the lord on the marriage of his daughter to some one outside of the manor. This payment was called 'formariage' in France, 'merchet' in England. A 'heriot' or payment to the lord of the best chattel made on the death of a serf was usual in England and Germany, and occurred also in France but less commonly. A mortuary of the second best chattel was often paid to the priest. More important in France was the custom of 'mainmorte'. When a serf died and left children in the "nest", the lord took nothing from the tenement; but if he left no children at home, the lord took all the tenement. In

25 Ibid.
England the widow usually held the tenant for a time, at least before the son or sons entered. 26

Another test of servile status in some countries was a capitation fee, known as 'chevage'.

The most characteristic of the agricultural services rendered by the serfs for the lord was the week work, known in France as 'coree', a labor service. Week work was the assigning to the lord's land of the labor of certain days in the week. "Thus throughout the winter months, two or three days would be generally sufficient, but during the spring and summer, four, five, or even six might be required. Service lasted usually from sunrise to sunset; but may have been shortened somewhat in the later centuries." 27 At the busiest seasons of the year when the week work was not sufficient, additional work was called for by the lord in the form of boon services; gratitude shown by the lord by his feeding the workers:

At the "great boon" o. autumn in England, the 'metebedripe', he gave them meat, soup, ale, cheese, and bread; at the second, the 'waterbedripe', fish and water instead of meat and ale; while at the third, if there were one, the 'hungerbedripe', no food was given. Gradually, with the growth of the lord's power the voluntary character of the boons, if it ever really existed in fact, was lost and the villagers were required to give extra days of labor called "love boons" to pay for the food. 28

In all cases, the most important boons were of two kinds, those required at certain periods in the year to

26 Neilson, Medieval Agrarian Economy, p. 40.
27 Ibid., p. 45. 28 Ibid., p. 46.
complete the ploughing of the demesne, and those required at harvest time to reap and gather in the crops. In discussing the boon ploughings, Neilson points out:

The boon ploughings are mentioned in the customaries not as merely incidental services to occur only if the week-work chance to be insufficient, but as necessary and fixed aids to the ploughing of the demesne. It is usually stated that the demesne of the abbot required for its cultivation its own ploughs, the customary ploughings of the villate (i.e., the weekly ploughing) and boon-ploughings. The number of such boons varied on different manors, being left in some cases to the will of the lord. As a rule, however, the tenant ploughed a certain number of acres or rodes, or it may be during a certain number of days, three times a year. The first of these special ploughings fell in early winter, . . ., the second in early spring, . . ., and the third in summer, . . . In one instance the periods of the ploughings are more accurately defined; a villein was to plough about the time of the feast of Saint Martin (November 11), about mid-Lent and about the time of the feast of Saint John Baptist (June 24 or perhaps August 2). The ploughings were called lovebones.\(^{29}\)

The harvest usually began about the first of August and lasted into September. During this time all the crops on the demesne were to be cut, stacked, carried to the manor-house and stored in the grange. To meet the pressure of work as far as might be, it was the custom on many manors largely to increase the week work and thus require harvest boons. Neilson explains:

Where during the rest of the year the villein had worked perhaps three days in the week, during the harvest he worked five days or, it may be, every day but Sunday. Not only the number of days increased, but also the number of men he furnished.

to work on those days. If during the rest of the year he had worked alone or furnished a man to work in his place, during harvest he furnished two or more men. On one manor he worked every day in the week with one man, or every other day with two men. In many cases reaping was substituted for his weekly ploughing. In the face of this large amount of work for the lord, it is difficult to see how a villain's own harvesting was accomplished. 30

These services, of course, varied in the different countries; yet, in all, the serfs were obliged to give some kind of labor services to the lord. In England, the specific duties of a bond tenant during the thirteenth century are described in detail by Neilson:

He plows and harrows two acres at the winter sowing, and this is valued at 6 d., besides the regular week work that falls at the time. He also plows an acre at the spring plowing, and the three plowings excuse him from five days' work. From Michaelmas to the Gules of August, August 1, he works by hand four days a week and each day is worth a halfpenny. On a fifth day he carries loads, but since the lord does not need so much carting as this would furnish, he is grouped with four others to render the service needed one in five weeks, and so has to render only twelve cartings a year, and all are valued at three shillings. He cuts the lord's meadow for four days or more if necessary, a service valued at twopence a day, and finds a man to toss the hay for a day. He carts hay for three days in addition to his regular work, he washes and sheers sheep, and makes marl. From August first to Michaelmas he works at the lord's harvest five days a week with one man. He also makes four bedripes or boon reaping with four men and carries the crops for two days or as needed. He gives 'auxilium', a money aid to his lord, according to his land and animals. If he brews and sells his beer he gives a portion to the lord. He pays pannage for the pasture of his pigs. He cannot sell an ox or a horse without permission, and if he sells at all, he pays a penny for the horse to the lord, and a halfpenny for the ox. 31

30 Ibid., p. 217.
31 Neilson, Medieval Agrarian Economy, p. 48.
In addition to these agricultural services, there were certain payments that had to be made to the lord usually in money. These, of course, varied from country to country and from estate to estate. One of the most common of these payments was hidage, a small fixed annual tax for the rent of land. Another common land tax, the most common name for which was 'champart', was a tax of so many sheaves of grain, so many bushels of vegetables, so many chickens, geese, ducks, eggs. Another tax, which generally became constant in the twelfth century was the 'taille', a direct tax levied on the serf's land or his moveables. Coulton points out that 'It was less a right than a custom. Just because the taille was of variable and not a constant nature, the lord might levy it arbitrarily, and if enforced to the limit, it was the very negation of the serf's right to possess movable property, for the lord might take it all.' In some countries and on some estates, payments had to be made for the permission to take wood, underwood, turf, or rushes from the wood and waste. Furthermore, the clergy as well as the lord exploited the serf by demanding tithes from him.

In addition to these services and payments, there were certain banalites imposed upon the serf by the lord.

32 Thompson, The Middle Ages, II, 729.
33 Coulton, Medieval Village, p. 53.
34 Neilson, Medieval Agrarian Economy, p. 51.
These were fiscal exactions arising from certain monopolies of the lord. Coulton enumerates these banalities:

Every serf on the manor was required to bring his grain to the lord's mill to be ground; his flour, usually rye and not wheat, to the lord's oven to be based; his grapes to the lord's winepress; his barley to the lord's brewhouse, his cows to the lord's bull to be bred. There were other banalities also which arose from the lord's "justice"—that is to say, the fines levied in the lord's court for trivial offenses, like petty crimes of violence, or petty property contentions between his serfs. 35

What rendered these monopolies so odious was not so much the fixed tariff or the prohibition of one's doing his own work as the compulsion of carrying the products long distances over abominable roads to the lord's storehouse, waiting two or three days before the work could be done, and then enduring all sorts of tricks from the millers or bakers. 36

Thus, it becomes apparent that the heavy dues and services enforced upon the serf by the lord, left the serf with little time for his own land and with a scarcity of money and produce. Economic conditions rather than personal determined the lord's relations with the serf. In fact, the lord looked upon the serf only as a source of income. "In time of peace, the taxes and forced labor squeezed out of him yield that which presently turns into destriers or battle-horses, silvered hauberks, furs, hawks,

35 Coulton, The Medieval Village, p. 58.
36 Ibid.
fair dames' luxuries, dowries, and tourneys. In time of
war he exists to be pillaged and massacred, in order to
impovery his master by ruining the latter's revenues."
Furthermore, the lord was continually demanding personal
exactions from the peasant at any time. (Davis describes
some of the lord's abuses of the peasants in the St. Aliquis
region of France:

... nowhere are the peasants exempt from one evil
which they must meet with dumb resignation—the
seigneurial hunts. Conan and his guests never
hesitate at going with horses or hawks or hounds
straight across plowed and seeded fields or even
over standing grain. This is the lord's absolute
right, and protest is impossible. The hunters, too,
are entitled, if far from home, to stop at the peas-
ants' huts and demand food and fodder, perhaps for
a large party. If payment is made, it is come from
the deprecation of the wild game, if the fields are
close to the hunting preserves. Peasants cannot
harm any deer nibbling the young sprouts. They can
only scare them away—and the cunning creatures soon
grow daring. A wild boar can root up a dozen little
farm plots before the baron can find leisure to chase
him down."

Justice for the serf was severely abused during the
Middle Ages; it was treated as a regular and sometimes a
principal source of income for the lord. (Peasants were
justiciable of the lord who had received or usurped judicial
rights over them. Therefore, all differences between
serf and lord were settled in the manor court, where the
latter was too often in fact, though not in theory, both

37 Davis, Life on a Medieval Barony, p. 257.
38 Ibid., p. 272.
39 Neilson, Medieval Agrarian Economy, p. 66.
party and judge. All tenants were bound to go to the lord's court, on pain of fine or penalty. In Germany, the lord had sometimes strong remedies for a refusal of the serf to appear in court: "At Haslach in Alsace, in 1339, if any juror refused to attend at the lord's court, then hath the lord power to break into his house ... and to take all that is therein save only the plough and the bed; and the juror himself shall be dragged out of the house under the threshold, and tied across a horse and brought to judgment". Failure in plowing, failure of paying rents and services, trespasses by pigs and cattle, questions of land adjustment among tenants were completely manorial cases in nature and were settled, usually in the lord's favor in the manorial court. However, in England, where social order was stronger during the Middle Ages, there was less abuse of the serf's justice, as he had the right of giving his voice in court within the limits of the customs of that particular manor.

There were many peasant revolts which originated the lord's abuses of and heavy exactions from the peasants. However, in the later Middle Ages, the peasant's position certainly did improve for a number of reasons. Coulton says:

\[40\] Coulton, The Medieval Village, p. 13.
\[41\] Ibid., p. 68.
\[42\] Neilson, Medieval Agrarian Economy, p. 73.
\[43\] Coulton, The Medieval Village, p. 74.
The influence of Christianity must be counted, acting very slowly and fitfully, but with gradual power of a principle to which everybody pays lip-homage, and which, therefore, exerts some real power when other temptations are silent. Something was done by flat rebellion; more by the natural dogged resistance of oppressed folk, and by flight from the oppressor. Most influential of all, I think, were economic causes, resting on the fortunate truth that, in the long run, it pays better to have a few willing and capable workmen than a great many slaves.44

Unintelligent and brutal as was agrarian economy during the first years of the Middle Ages, nevertheless, it did succeed in securing for the peasants some of the elementary necessities of existence. Even though the lord did destroy or cramp the initiative and hinder the activity of his peasants by burdening him with taxes, services, and restrictions, and by subjecting him to monopolies, it did enable the majority of the people, who were landless, to live, poor and uncomfortable as it might be.45 Boissonnade points out:

In a society in which human life was dependent almost exclusively upon the enjoyment of land, the only thing which made it possible for millions of men to live at all was the occupation of parcels of that soil, which was the monopoly of the feudal classes. Bound to the land which enabled him to live, the villein was no longer what the slave had been—a stray, a rootless being, a piece of furniture tossed about from estate to estate. He had his home, his cottage, his family. There was plenty of land, and every cultivator could be sure of obtaining a part of it, on a grant of free or servile tenure. If he could not own the landed capital, the villein was at least certain, by dint of his labour, of participating in the income therefrom. On the other hand, the master's interests coincided with that of the peasant in securing for him, if not possession, at any rate the definite enjoyment of the land.45

44 Ibid., p. 125.
45 Boissonnade, Live and Work in Medieval Europe, p. 142.
CHAPTER IV

PRODUCTION OF FOOD AND ANIMALS DURING THE MIDDLE AGES

As has been remarked in a preceding chapter, the village was in reality an independent agricultural and economic unit. Its people strove to produce as nearly as possible all products that were necessary for a subsistence, because inter-commerce among villages was difficult. Thus, self-sufficiency had to be the aim of the people in each village. However, as one historian points out:

Self-sufficiency was probably rarely complete anywhere, and was tempered as quickly as possible when the roads were open. No village was so situated that it could produce everything it needed. Iron or steel for the blacksmith or armorer must be brought in from iron-producing regions. Salt was needed for curing or pickling meat, tar was the best-known treatment for sheep scab, spices were welcome if one could afford them, and certain areas, especially Paris, were famed for the quality of their millstones. Good knives could not be made locally, the scribe at the manor house needed parchment and ink, while hemp for ropes and flax for linen were not grown everywhere. The gentry up at the hall had some tastes that called for the purchase of cloth, saddles, spices, cosmetics, and perhaps soap, while the commonalty found much to desire when the peddler opened his pack, with strange things from afar.¹

Cunningham states that in the thirteenth century England, wine and rich clothing were the two luxuries which had to be purchased. He also points out:

¹Herbert Heaton, Economic History of Europe, p. 113.
Besides silks and finer articles of dress, cloth was bought in considerable quantities for the liveries of the household. Hence a certain amount of money was needed in order to keep the establishment going; and the produce of the pasture was, even at this early period, the source to which the landowner could look for an article to sell so as to provide himself with money.  

Farming at best was poor. For example, only eight or nine bushels of grain could be obtained from land which now produces about four times that amount.  

Heaton states that:

A recent study of the yield of eight English church manors from 1200-1450 shows that from 2.5 bushels of seed per acre, a yield of 9.4 bushels, or nearly fourfold, was reaped. This yield is about one-third that of English wheat farming today and suggests that "a three-fold increase in productivity of seed seems to measure broadly the difference between medieval and modern farming (Beveridge)."

These low yields were due in part to the few crude implements used to cultivate the crops. "The plow, though in later cultivation lighter plows might be employed, normally required eight oxen to break the land. A sickle was used to cut grain and a short scythe was used to cut grass." The furrows turned by the heavy plow usually had to be broken by hand, harrows were tree branches or trunks, seed was scattered broadcast, and harvesting required many hands.

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4Heaton, Economic History of Europe, p. 106.

5Jennings, A History of the Economic and Social Progress of European Peoples, p. 93.

6Heaton, Economic History of Europe, p. 106.
Heaton points out that "In 1380 the harvest on one English manor farm of 250 acres occupied 275 people for two days, i. e., 2.2 man days per acre." 7

While the plow ox remained the central figure of farming during the Middle Ages, the horse slowly came into wider and more effective use for plowing and carting. Heaton explains: "Better methods of harnessing had been developed by A. D. 1000, and the collar had been padded and moved down the horse's neck to rest on its shoulders. Horse power at last could be effectively used." 8

There was little variety of food crops during the Middle Ages; this, of course, is another sign of its agricultural backwardness. Yet, despite all handicaps, the people strove to make the most of all sources of natural wealth in order to fulfill the growing needs of consumption.

One of the most common and important sources of food supply was fish. Before the Middle Ages, this production had been limited to fisheries along the sea coasts and the rivers; but early in the Middle Ages, monks and great lords developed the increased production of fish in the interior by means of reservoirs and stew-ponds. Boissonnade points out the wide extent that fishing was pursued in Europe during the Middle Ages:

Deep-sea fisheries rose and developed rapidly, to the profit of the Netherland sailors, the Flemings.

7Ibid. 8Ibid.
and the English in the Baltic and the Northern seas; they fished for cod, stock-fish, mackerel, and most important of all, herring, that essential food of the lower classes, while in the Channel and the Atlantic, Norman, Breton, Basque, and Galician fishermen pursued the whale, the salmon, the sardine, the lamprey and the dolphin. On the coasts of Picardy, Bas-Poitou, and Aunis the cultivation of oyster-beds and mussels was organized. In the Western Mediterranean men fished for tunny fish and brought up coral and sponge. 9

In spite of the extensive program of forest clearing carried on, the produce of the chase, reserved especially for the upper classes, counted for a great deal in the general food supply. Careful regulations were made to protect these reservations. Provisions were made for the maintenance of woodland and coppice, the planting of trees and their felling at long intervals, and limiting the abuse of common rights of pannage and pasture. 10 Boissonnade states that "Germany, France, the eastern districts of the Low Countries, and Southern Italy were the parts of the West in which the wealth of the forest was best preserved. 11

A great impetus was given to cattle-farming. For the most part, "Animals were small, food animals generally being killed in the fall salted down for winter because of the difficulty of carrying them over the cold weather." 12 The first experiments in the crossing and acclimatization of cattle were not made until the latter part of the Middle

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9 Prosper Boissonnade, Life and Work in Medieval Europe, p. 231.
10 Ibid., p. 232. 11 Ibid. 12 Ibid.
Ages, the conditions varying from country to country. The pig was found everywhere, and goats were often kept; common poultry was very abundant and was increased by the acclimatization of the guinea fowl or Indian fowl in the thirteenth century. Sheep-farming was carried on extensively in Germany, France, and England. Likewise, the larger live-stock, particularly on the big estates, played a more considerable part than they had done in the past. Boissonnade states:

In Germany, the Low Countries, the Boulogne country, Normandy, and Lombardy, battle-horses (destriers) were reared; England, Gascony, the Netherlands, and Flanders enriched themselves by the improvement of their Frisian and Flemish cows. England and Ireland, like the Argentine and the United States to-day, drew a good revenue from the export of bacon, ham, lard and tallow, which they got from their numerous herds of cattle, and so also did Roussillon and Northern Spain. France and Upper Italy possessed fine breeds for draught and for meat; their cheeses and butters were already much sought after.

Bees, common in all countries, rendered great services to the people for the honey took the place of sugar, and the wax served for lighting purposes.

The raising of foodstuffs, of course, varied from country to country. Generally speaking, the three-field rotation was the high water mark and basis of agricultural production. As has been pointed out in a preceding chapter, under this system, each field gave a crop of wheat or rye—the food crop; then a crop of oats, barley, peas—the porridge.

13Ibid.  14Ibid.  15Ibid., p. 232.
drink, and fodder crops; then it lay fallow for a year. The variations, conditions, and improvements made in the production of food and animals in England, Germany, and France will have to be discussed separately as there were marked differences. Each country gained eminence for its agricultural products during this time. Boissonnade states that France

... became the "fairest kingdom of the world after the kingdom of heaven," which Froissart described before 1345—"rich and hardy, with great abundance of rich and powerful folk, having great possessions." England, civilized by the Normans, was held in the thirteenth century to be a happy isle, fertile with all the fruits of the earth. But the greatest triumph of colonization was the transformation of the Low Countries and Germany, wild and half-barbarous regions in the tenth century, into opulent lands which could rival the foremost agricultural centres of Christendom.16

One of England's chief sources of income during the Middle Ages was gained from sheep-raising. This brought about a decided change in the conventional manorial arrangements.17 Cheyney states:

... the inducements to sheep-raising were numerous. There was a steady demand at good prices for wool, both for export, as of old, and for the manufactures within England, which was now increasing. Sheep-raising required fewer hands and therefore high wages were less an obstacle, and it gave opportunity for the investment of capital and comparative freedom from the restriction of local custom. Therefore, instead of raising sheep

16Ibid., p. 236.

simply as a part of ordinary farming, lords of manors, 
free-holders, farming tenants began here and there to 
raise sheep for wool as their principal or sole produc-
tion.18

The latter part of the Middle Ages England became one 
of Europe's minor granaries. In earlier centuries there 
had been some exportation of grain, but only in the years of 
abundant harvesting. As in some other countries, England 
tried to encourage agriculture by corn laws. In order to 
cheapen food when the price rose after the Black Death, 
Edward III tried to keep corn and grain at home.19 He pro-
hibited the exportation of corn to any foreign ports but 
Calais and to Gascony; if the production was diminished, it 
was desirable to secure the whole harvest for the use of 
English subjects.20 Edward III's policy did not long con-
tinue, however. In 1394, Richard II promoted the exporta-
tion of corn to make arable land more valuable.21 Cunning-
ham explains this action taken by Richard II:

If the prosperity of agriculture was to be assured, 
it was necessary that the farmer should have a good 
market for the corn, and so at the request of the 
Commons the king "granted license to all his liege 
people of the realm of England to ship and carry corn 
out of the said realm to what parts that pleased them 
except to his enemies." The king's council did

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18 Ibid.
21 Jennings, A History of the Economic and Social Progress of European Peoples, p. 278.
appear to have interfered frequently and to have rendered this law a dead letter, but this statute, as confirmed and amended under Henry VI, may be certainly taken as an attempt to keep up the price of corn and so to encourage the farmer to carry on and to improve tillage. 22

In 1436 exportation of grain was allowed only if the price fell to six shillings eight pence or less; and in 1438, this policy was carried still further when importation was forbidden if the price fell to that figure. 23 The policy of imposing protective duties on grain really began.

Cheynoy states:

The raising of wheat was encouraged by prohibiting its importation and paying a bounty of about eight pence a bushel for its exportation so long as the prevailing price was less than six shillings a bushel. When it was between six shillings eight pence a bushel its importation was forbidden, but there was no bounty paid for exportation. Between the last price and ten shillings a bushel it could be imported by paying a duty of a shilling a bushel. Above the last price it could be imported free. 24

Certain new plants were introduced into England during the Middle Ages. The hop crossed the North Sea. 25 Under horticultural experimentation, it was found that many fruit trees, natives of more favorable climates, could, with artificial aid, grow in English soil. 26 Also, the potato,

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25 Georges Francois and G. de Keller, Life and Work in Modern Europe, p. 105.

26 Ibid.
first introduced into Lancashire, soon spread all over the country. It was not long until England began exporting her surplus products. In a discussion of English sea trade during the Middle Ages, Heaton states:

Thousands of pigs were turned into forests, then slaughtered and with the aid of Cheshire salt became ham or bacon. Grain and wool were produced, timber and minerals were exploited. A flourishing sea trade grew up in the export of salt, bacon, metals, and timber, and the import of Irish grain and Gascon wine.28

During the latter part of the Middle Ages in England, there were some improvements made in agricultural machinery. "Plattes was the first to mention the drill; a hundred years later Tull recommended deep ploughing and harrowing... Gradually wooden ploughshares fell into disuse."29

One of the greatest advancements made in English agriculture was the experimentation done in refertilizing and enriching the soil. Renard and Weulersse explain:

Not only did liming and marling receive great attention, but experiments were made with all sorts of mineral manures, with the ashes of heath, bracken broom, stubble and pitcoal; everything was tried to promote the natural fecundity of the soil, old rags and scraps of cloth, and malt dust. But animal manure still remained the chief fertilizer. Plattes urged the farmer to maure his land freely. It was not enough

27Ibid.

28Heaton, Economic History of Europe, p. 126.

29Renard and Weulersse, Life and Work in Modern Europe, p. 105.
to pasture a flock of sheep on it from time to time, but it must be covered with rich farm manure from the stables and pig-sties. The development of the new fodder crops, whether hay or roots, served to furnish abundant supplies of food for the beasts in the stables.30

Germany constituted one of the greatest agricultural centers during the Middle Ages. In a discussion of the Slavs of Germany and their fertile lands, Thompson quotes the following from a proclamation issued in 1106:

They are an abominable people, but their land is very rich in flesh, honey, grain, birds, and abounding in all products of the fertility of the earth, when cultivated, so that none can be compared unto it. So they say who know. Wherefore, 0 Saxons, Franks, Lotharingians, men of Flanders most famous—here you can save your souls, and if it please you, acquire the best of land to live in.31

Another historian, in discussing the fertility and the reclamation of German soils and the progress made in German agriculture, quotes:

Aeneas Sylvius, writing in 1458 says: "We proclaim it aloud, Germany has never been richer or more prosperous than to-day. She takes the lead of all other nations in wealth and power. One can say truly that God has favoured this land above all others. On all sides are seen cultivated farms, cornfields and vineyards and gardens. Everywhere are great buildings, walled cities and well-to-do farmers." Jacob Wimpeling, the famous humanist, declared fifty years later that "Germany was never more prosperous than to-day, and she owes it chiefly to the untiring industry and energy of her people, artisans as well as merchants. The peasants too are rich and prosperous."32

30Ibid.
31James Westfall Thompson, Feudal Germany, p. 497.
32Jacob Salwyn Schapiro, Social Reform and the Reformation, p. 22.
The raising of grain became the most important feature of farming in Germany. Oats were used for porridge, bread, malt, and feed for livestock; rye was also used for baking bread, while wheat was preferred for the finer kinds of pastry on the manorial table. Barley gradually superseded oats in the brewing of beer, and millet was cultivated to a certain extent.

Other products raised in Germany during the Middle Ages are enumerated by Richard:

... on the manorial farm, beans, peas, and other vegetables, especially cabbage, are carefully and successfully raised; hemp and some dyeing plants, especially wood, were common; flax was frequent in the western parts of the country. The word garden begins to be used in connection with vegetables. We find cabbage gardens, turnip gardens, and hop gardens. Hops are used first by the monastery in the beginning of the ninth century as a preservative for beer, and thereby make the latter an article of commerce.

The Germans cultivated the grapevine extensively. Thompson states that "The spread of the southern Slavs must have been powerfully influenced by the lure of the orchards and vineyards of the balmy southland." Monks gave special attention to the vineyards and tried to improve the taste of the wine by adding herbs, and spread the cultivation of

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33 Ernest Richard, History of German Civilization, p. 161.
34 Ibid.
35 Thompson, Feudal Germany, p. 453.
the vineyard over the eastern part of Germany. Wine became one of the chief exports. By 1157, the Hanseatic League, a confederation of merchants who hailed from a hundred towns scattered between the Rhine and Reval, had a hall in London and was selling wine there. Heaton states that by the fourteenth century:

German merchants now advanced with greater ease "on a bread front along the whole line of primitive northern Europe, seeking to exploit the wealth of its agriculture, forestry, mining, and fisheries, in exchange for whatever the Hanseatic towns themselves had to offer, either as producers or as middlemen of more abundant and less primitive goods, from wine and beer to the finished products of the textile and metal crafts." (Brinkmann)

Fruit raising was not popular except in the Rhine Valley, where huge orchards were grown. Grafting was a common practice.

In the orchards, tree gardens, as the German word is, we find several varieties of apples. The orchards were often connected with vegetable gardens and soon became a regular place of recreation, the ornamental garden, 'Ziergarten', where in the summer almost the whole life of the family, including meal time, was spent. Here again the monasteries take the lead, bringing from the south the rose, the lily, and other flowers, also medicinal herbs. To the products of the orchard they add the apricot and the pear; they are the first to raise lettuce and other plants for salads; they introduce the eating of

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36 Richard, History of German Civilization, p. 162.
37 Heaton, Economic History of Europe, p. 151.
38 Ibid., p. 153.
mushrooms and other fungi, and teach an improved method of making butter. 39

Cattle breeding in Germany was left only to the larger landholders. Horses were not only needed for the knights but also for carrying burdens. Oxen were used chiefly for carting purposes. Sheep raising was common, the skins being worn as cloaks. A great variety of fowl were kept; among them were the crane. 40 Other food sources are enumerated by Richard:

Bees had become more important than in primitive times, not only on account of the honey, which was used, as before in place of sugar and the brewing of mead, but for the wax, the demand for which had grown extraordinarily to supply the many candles used in the churches, while in the household, if at all, tallow candles were used.

The manufacture of cheese was also very extensive. Lakes, rivers, and brooks still abounded in fish, which were caught with the hook and net; the great number of fast-days made them a very important article of food; and hatcheries in ponds, especially connected with the monasteries, are mentioned at a very early period. 41

The German Cistercian monks were especially instrumental in utilizing the dense forests. Instead of the destructive way of making clearings without reference to the value of the soil underneath, the Cistercians studied both the timber and the soil. Thompson points out:

They knew, or discovered, that where hardwoods grow, there good land was to be found. They never

39 Richard, History of German Civilization, p. 162.
40 Ibid., p. 163. 41 Ibid.
wholly denuded the forest but left patches of standing timber. Moreover, they studied plant life for food purposes: seed germination, grafting of fruit trees, and mayhap even cross-fertilization. We know that in 1237 Doberan had a glass-roofed house for purposes of plant experimentation.42

In France farming remained very primitive for the most part; and progress was very slow, except in the most fertile regions. See points out:

The farm buildings were poorly arranged, and the implements were unsatisfactory and quite primitive. Intensive cultivation was practically unknown almost everywhere. The system of fallow land was used universally except in Flanders, Alsace, and a part of Normandy. Even in Picardy the land lay idle one year in three. In Brittany it was left idle every other year, sometimes for two years out of three, and certain "cold" lands were cultivated only every seven or eight years, or even every twenty years. The artificial meadow was hardly used.43

One of the chief causes for the backwardness of agriculture was, of course, the primitive implements used to cultivate the lands. The soil needed a far more thorough plowing than it was actually given. In discussing the farm implements of France, Renard and Wwulersse point out:

The old wooden ploughs with a long pole, hitched to a pair of oxen were still in use. The poorest of peasants traced their furrows with a simple implement of curved wood, which was not even furnished with an iron point or blade . . . . The harrow and the roller had begun to be used, and toward the end of the Middle Ages clod crushers were introduced in Languedoc.

42Thompson, Feudal Germany, p. 569.

43Henri See, Economic and Social Conditions of France During the Eighteenth Century, p. 30.
The sowing machine, which was an economy both of seed and labour, had scarcely begun to be used. Only the sickle was used in reaping the harvest, for the use of the scythe, which made it possible to cut the stubble level with the ground, was forbidden, and it was used only in meadows. Corn was threshed entirely with flails, and winnowing-fans were very rare. Usually the grain was put into an osier basket and shaken in the wind. 44

Another hindrance to French agriculture during the Middle Ages was the elementary use made of manure. The practice of penning the herds was almost unknown, and manure was scarce because the herds were usually allowed to wander about the country. Only the most elementary use was made of mineral manures. If a farmer wished to produce a crop from the same field two successive years, he burned the stubble on the field after the first harvest. The use of cinders was known in some of the provinces of France during the Middle Ages; but for a long time the farmers used chiefly marl and lime. 45

Another hindrance to the development of agriculture in France during the Middle Ages was the inefficient means of transportation. The development of agriculture naturally depended upon commerce or the growth of markets. But the upkeep of natural waterways in France during the Middle Ages was very unsatisfactory. 46

44 Renard and Weulersse, Life and Work in Modern Europe, p. 226.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
France's two greatest staples were grain and wine. Corn was produced in sufficient quantities to allow its exportation. For wine, there were good markets at home and abroad. Batiffol states:

Except in Brittany, Normandy and Picardy, which were cider-drinking provinces, wine was produced throughout the country. The vintages of Argenteuil and Suresnes, though they did not rise much above mediocrity, were known to the Parisians. The wines, however, that were most appreciated were the white wines of Anjou, of Graves at Bordeaux, of Gaillac and of Rabastens; red of Burgundy, quantities of which were sent to Paris; and muscatel from Frontignan, which was a special favourite. The export of wine to England and Germany was a great source of revenue. . . . 47

The normal tenant of France enjoyed the perpetual possession of a house in the village, to which was generally attached a small kitchen garden, in which he grew chiefly the vegetables which have always been cultivated: cabbages, roots, and beans. 48 The beetroot brought from Italy to Provence, became common in kitchen gardens during the latter part of the Middle Ages.

It is easily seen from this study that in England, Germany, and France during the Middle Ages, farming was, for the most part, very primitive. Only by many days of difficult


manual labor was the peasant able to produce the barest necessities. The food supply in these countries was very monotonous the greater part of the time, new crops not being introduced until the close of the Middle Ages. Just as the increase and improvement of food crops was slow in these countries, so also was the progress and improvement in the breeding of cattle, little improvement being made until the latter years of the Middle Ages.
CHAPTER V

INFLUENCE OF THE CHURCH ON AGRICULTURE

One of the most important, as well as one of the most effective influences wielded upon agriculture during the Middle Ages was that of the Church. The huge estates of the monasteries were arranged according to the feudal land system; that is, they were divided into the demesne, the commons, the strips just as those of the lay lords' were; and they were models for agricultural development. These domains of the monastery became centers of attraction by reason of the superior agricultural methods employed there and the favorable condition of the peasantry. When the worldly prospects were small or in the day of civil war or invasions, the peasants were often easily persuaded to lose themselves in better conditions within the seclusion of the monastery. The ornate services, allegiance to the distant Pope, the immense hold of the priests on the laity, the large territorial possessions of ecclesiastical bodies, impressed the people with the Church. Also, the monasteries were richer than other places of refuge; ... . . . the medieval monasteries were among the most important

1Edwin Benson, Life in a Medieval City, p. 54.
agricultural, industrial, commercial, and financial centers. 2

The Church became feudalized in the universal feudalization of law, government, and society. Bishops enfeoffed their lands; and while they were vassals of the kings or the great dukes, they were also suzerains of vassals. Thompson states:

The penetration into the sanctuary resulted in the feudalization of church offices, of church property, even of the altar, for, since the support of every church incumbent in an age of agricultural economy was derived from landed endowments of the office, inevitably both the office and the holder thereof became feudalized more or less, both in idea and in function. 3

Hannah points out that "Inevitably the abbots found themselves compelled to take their part in the feudal system. They were impelled to take their share in county activities as local magnats, just like other landowners. They had their own manorial courts; they sat in shiremott." 4

To give actuality to this feudalization of the Church, Thompson quotes the following from Mr. Henry Osborn Taylor's book, The Medieval Mind:

Through the Middle Ages, Church dignities everywhere were secularized through the vast

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2 Harry Elmer Barnes, An Economic History of the Western World, p. 117.
3 James Westfall Thompson, The Middle Ages, I, 412.
possessions, and corresponding responsibilities, attaching them. The clerical situation varied in different lands, yet with a like result. The Italian clergy were secularized through participation in civic and papal business, the German through their estates and principalities. In France, clerical secularization was most typically medieval, because there the functions and the fortunes of the higher clergy were most inextricably involved in feudalism. Monasteries and bishoprics were as feudal fiefs; abbots as well as bishops commonly held lands from an overlord, and were themselves lords of their sub-vassals who held lands from them. To the former they owed rent, or aid, or service; to the latter they owed protection. In either case they might have to go or send their men to war. They also managed and guarded their own lands like feudal nobles.

When the estates of a monastery, for example, lay in different places, the abbot might exercise authority over them through a local potentate, and might also have such a protector for the home abbey.5

During the eleventh century, there was a tremendous revival of the monastic system throughout Europe. The continent became dotted with monasteries. "The theological literature of the day was full of illustrations of the Church as the lord, the soul, and the sun."6 Cutts accounts for this revival:

The greatest work of the Normans was the revival of the monastic system, and the filling of the country with noble and wealthy monasteries. The ascetic spirit had been revived in Italy and France by Odo of Cluny, and St. Bernard of Clairvaux, and others, who had founded new orders of the Benedictine rulers. The Norman nobles

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5 Thompson, The Middle Ages, I, 412.
6 Alexander Clarence Flick, The Decline of the Medieval Church, I, 6.
brought this new enthusiasm with them; and just as in the early Saxon period, every thane thought it incumbent upon him to build a parish church on his estate, so now it became almost a fashion for every great noble to found a monastery upon his lordship. The nobles, while thinking first of the glory of God, and the spiritual advantage of the prayers of a holy community for the founder, his family and descendants, were conscious also of the dignity which a monastery reflected upon the family which founded and patronized it, and not insensible to the temporal advantages of the establishment of a centre of civilization and religion in the midst of their dependents. 7

In England, William the Conqueror led the way in the monastic revival by his foundation of a great Benedictine abbey on the field of his victory at Hastings, to which was given the name of Battle Abbey. 8 Under William and his two successors, all the leading religious houses were introduced into England and influenced the English people.

William of Warrene built a priory at Lewes (1077), into which he introduced the new Cluniac Order. The canons regular of St. Augustine were introduced into England at Colchester in 1100; the Cistercians at Waverly in Surrey, in 1123; the Carthusians at Witham in Somerset in 1130; and by the end of the twelfth century religious houses of various orders had been founded in every part of the country. We have seen that at the end of the Saxon period there were only about fifty religious houses in England; under William and his two successors upwards of three hundred new ones were founded. 9

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8Ibid.

9Ibid.
Thus, in the life of the peasant, the Church played a great part, not only in its capacity as a spiritual guide, but also as an economic factor. While in a sense outside feudal society, the Church depended upon agriculture for its sustenance, "... first, as it was carried on in its own estates, secondly, as producing the tithes or tenths of the fruits of the soils from the estates of others." 10 The Church itself had huge estates, the monasteries being great landowners. Lipsom estimates that:

The actual area of monastic property cannot easily be determined, though its income has been estimated at a hundred thousand pounds. Nine-tenths of this rural landed revenue was drawn from the rents of tenants—copyholders, freeholders, leaseholders and tenants-at-will. The rest was derived from land retained by the monks in their own hands as a home farm. The extent of monastic demesne was thus very considerable, and implies that on the eve of the dissolution, a great quantity of land was immediately controlled and farmed by ecclesiastical owners. 11

In discussing the immense property of the Church in Europe, Boissonnade gives further light:

In England certain bishops had fiefs which furnished as many as sixty knights to the army, and a large part of the soil of England and Ireland was owned by Anglo-Norman Church. In Germany a full half of the soil was in the hands of the Church. "The bishops own everything there", said a King of France in the twelfth century. The Rhineland in particular was nothing more or less

10 Nellie Neilson, Medieval Agrarian Economy, p. 84.
than "a street of priests", as the famous saying went. In the Low Countries the bishoprics and the twenty-seven Benedictine abbeys stood in the front rank of landed proprietors. In France certain abbeys owned over 100,000 hectares of land, and bishops, such as the Bishop of Langres, held a whole county. In the whole of the West the proportion of the soil which passed into the hands of the Church seems to have been between a third and a half of the whole.\(^\text{12}\)

The abbey, therefore, was no longer a colony of self-supporting ascetics; it was a great social and economic center, the owner of vast estates, the civilizer of conquered territories, and the scene of a many sided and cultural activity. In discussing the estates of German abbots, Dawson states that "In the eighth century, Fulda alone owned 15,000 plough lands; Lorsch somewhat later possessed 911 estates in the Rhineland. At Corbie, in addition to the 300 monks, there was a whole population of craftsmen and dependents grouped around the abbey."\(^\text{13}\) In other words, the abbey became, during the Middle Ages, a miniature city. Besides the Church, the living houses, and the farm buildings proper, there could also be found watermills, wine cellars and presses, baking houses, shops for craftsmen, like smiths, tanners, saddlers, and even buildings for the manufacture of glass.\(^\text{14}\)

Not only was the religious house an economic and social

\(^{12}\)Prosper Boissonnade, Life and Work in Medieval Europe, p. 123.

\(^{13}\)Christopher Dawson, The Making of Europe, p. 231.

\(^{14}\)Boissonnade, Life and Work in Medieval Europe, p. 160.
center, but it was also the chief intellectual center. Haskins points out:

In the earlier Middle Ages the chief centres of intellectual life were the various monasteries, set like scattered islands of knowledge in a sea of ignorance and barbarism, and the spread of knowledge was chiefly from one such center to another. Much of this intercourse was naturally local, but much of it was at long distance, by routes which we do not yet fully understand. 15

Thus, it is easily seen that insistence can hardly be too great on the tremendous and wide-spread influence of the Church in the Middle Ages and that the grip of the ecclesiastical class upon landed property and upon most of the fruits of labor is thus a characteristic of the feudal regime. In the first place, the Church was able to become a dominant factor and to play a large part in the seizure of landed property and of the wealth represented thereby. "By usurping royal domains and sovereign rights, still more by gifts due to the piety of the faithful and by acquisitions due to the clearance of waste lands, it acquired the greater part of the land of Western Europe, and was well able to turn it to the most profitable use." 16 In order for the monastery to perform the most effective service in the society in which it was


16 Boissonade, Life and Work in Medieval Europe, p. 123.
situated, its program consisted not only in a creation or
retreat for holy men, but also in genuine labors of its
lands. For these reasons, gifts of land, according to
medieval theology, were good works especially remarked by
God and sure to be taken into account on the day of reck-
oning. 17

In the year, 1196, for instance, Matilda,
described as the daughter of the departed
Ugolinus and derelict of Guidaldonius, and the
first private donor of whom there is record,
presents the monks with a farmland, because
"whoever shall contribute to sacred and venerable
places shall receive a hundred-fold and have
eternal life", on which exordium she adds, with
simple-hearted readiness to lay bare every fold
of her heart, that she hopes by means of her
gift to save her soul and that of her relatives,
doubtless the departed Ugolinus and Guidaldonius
aforesaid. 18

The monastery was well able to devote much time and
expense to improve agricultural machinery methods, be-
cause of the many sources of income. These sources have
been classified as follows:

Temporalities, comprising: (1) rents from
lands and houses, (2) perquisites of courts,
fairs, mills, woods, and other manorial per-
quises, (3) issues of the manor, i.e., sale of
farm produce, (4) miscellaneous payments from
boarders, gifts, etc.; and Spiritualities, com-
prising (5) tithes from appropriated benefices,
alms, mortuaries, etc. 19

17 Ferdinand Schevill, "San Galgano: a Cistercian
Abbey of the Middle Ages", American Historical Review,
XIV (October, 1908), 25.
18 Ibid.
19 Eileen Power, Medieval English Nunneries, p. 100.
Only those revenues which were derived from the lands and agricultural products are the concern in this chapter; therefore, only these will be discussed in detail.

The rents from the lands and houses were one of the foremost sources of revenue. A house which possessed several manors besides its home farm would either lease them to tenants, or put in bailiffs, who were responsible for working the estates and handing over to the monastery the profits of their agriculture. Thus, besides the profits arising from the demesne land, the monastery derived a much more considerable income from the rents of all tenants who held their land at a money rent. However, rents were also payable through services or produce. Gasquet states:

At the great monastery of the West Country the tenure of the land was of all kinds, from the estates held under the obligation of so many knights' fees, to the poor cottier with an acre or two. Some of the tenants had to find part of their rent in service, part in kind, part in payment. Thus, one had to find thirty salmon, "each as thick as a man's fist at the tail", for the use of the monastery; some had to find thousands of eels from Sedge Moor; others, again, so many measures of honey.

A cottier with five acres of arable land paid 4 d. less one farthing for rent, and five hens as "kirkset" if he were married. From Michaelmas to Midsummer he was bound to do three days' labour a week of farm work on the monastic lands, such as toiling on the fallows, winnowing corn, hedging, ditching, and fencing. During the rest of the year, that is, in the harvest time, he had to do five days' work on the farm, and be
called upon to lend a hand in any kind of occupation, except loading and carting.\textsuperscript{20}

Besides the rents from land and houses, the position of a religious community as a lord of a manor gave it the right to various other financial payments. Of these, the most important were the perquisites of the manorial courts. In speaking of the monasteries, Coulton states that "... all possessed their manorial courts, at which tenants paid their heriots in money or in kind as a death-duty to the lord, or their fines on entering upon land, and at which justice was done and offenders amerced (or fined as we shall now call it)."\textsuperscript{21} Furthermore, the monopoly of the lord's mill was as strictly enforced by the monks as by layfolk.\textsuperscript{22} And the monopoly of use was as strictly enforced as that of ownership. "On the Durham manors, a fine of 20 s.--and, in some cases, confiscation of the horses and the load also--was decreed against all who had their corn ground elsewhere."\textsuperscript{23} Brewing was another of the monastic lord's monopolies; his fines derived from breaches of the assize of ale amounted here, as on other manors to

\textsuperscript{20}Abbot Gasquet, \textit{English Monastic Life}, pp. 196-197.
\textsuperscript{21}Power, \textit{Medieval English Munuries}, p. 104.
\textsuperscript{22}G. G. Coulton, \textit{The Medieval Village}, p. 84.
\textsuperscript{23}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 85.
as regular an income as any excise system ever pro-
duced. 24

The third great class of receipts that came to the
religious houses in their capacities as landowners, was
the revenue that came from the sale of produce. Power
gives an example of the surplus products sold by an English
nunnery:

An analysis of the produce of the home farm
Catesby (1414-15) shows that the chief crops grown
were wheat and barley. Of these a certain propor-
tion was kept for seed to sow the new crops; almost
all the rest of the wheat was paid in food allowances
to the servants and 1 qr. 3 bushels in alms "to
friars of the four orders and other poor"; most of
the barley was malted, except 6 qrs. delivered to
the swineherd to feed hogs; and what remained was
stored in the granaries of the convent. Carts and
peas were also grown and part of the crop used for
seed, part for food-allocation to the servants and
oatmeal for the nuns. The prioress also kept a
most meticulous account of the livestock on her
farm. All were numbered and classified, cart-
horses, brood-mares, colts, foals, oxen, bulls,
cows, stirs (three-year old), two-year old yearlings,
calves, sheep, wethers, hogerells, lambs, hogs, boars,
sows, hils, hogsters, and pigs. 25

The most important source of revenue of the Church was
the tithe, a tax of a tenth of the income or produce of the
peasants. These tithes were incumbent on all and derived
from all the products of the village. "The greater tithes
were of corn and sometimes wool; the lesser tithes were of
fruit, butter, cheese, poultry, lambs, calves, fish,

24 Ibid.

venison, underwood, the proceeds of the mill, and practically all other sources from which revenue could be derived.26 Thus, it is easily seen that the Church depended heavily upon the lands and agricultural products for its revenue.

Much of the labor on the vast estates of the Church was composed of serfs and slaves. Little or no protest appeared against slavery, the large monasteries often owning many of them. Jennings points out:

The Church even imposed restrictions on the freeing of slaves and created slavery where Roman law had not created it. Bishops could not free church slaves unless they paid for them out of their own money and ex-slaves who had become priests were at times reduced to slavery again. Conspiracy and treason were declared punishable by slavery. Women of Spain were condemned to slavery for immorality, and women of the lower classes were made slaves for the desertion of their husbands. Charlemagne's laws gave soothsayers and diviners to the Church as slaves. Church officials at times even mutilated slaves or starved them to death. The Church, too, allowed concubinage; for example, if of a married couple in slavery one obtained freedom and the other could not, the one who had been freed could form another marriage alliance.27

The Church not only upheld slavery; it supported serfdom. However, most authorities agree that serfdom on the royal and ecclesiastical estates was regularly milder and less arbitrary than elsewhere. Maerton states that "Setting

26 Neilson, Medieval Agrarian Economy, p. 87.

27 Walter W. Jennings, A History of the Economic and Social Progress of European Peoples, p. 120.
aside the motives of religion, honor, and a sense of abstract justice, which undoubtedly, had their share in this distinction, we find it explained by the advantage which came to any authority intelligent and steady enough in its policy to see the value of keeping a large and contented body of laborers on its land. However, Jennings gives evidence that the serfs on the church manors were often subject to inhumane treatment. He states:

Examples of general enfranchisement are lay, not clerical. In fact, the emancipation of serfs, like that of the slaves, was prohibited by canon law unless compensation was given. Maitland and Folloch even insist that the "secular lord was more humane than the soulless corporation", "because he was more human, because he was careless, because he wanted ready money, because he would die." The harsh treatment of the serfs by the chapter of Notre Dame de Paris in the days of St. Louis led Queen Blanche to voice a humble protest. When the inhuman monks replied that "they might starve their serfs as they pleased", the queen forced open the gates of the abbey and liberated the serfs. Additional proof of the cruel treatment often given to the serfs on church land appears in the frequent peasant insurrections of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, insurrections invariably provoked by excessive ecclesiastical, not lay, exactions.

The medieval monk, who made transcripts of ancient writings, worked the land, begged food for the poor, built roads, chanted psalms and performed other labors has been judged by Coulton to have been a slightly better landlord than the layman.

28 Ephraim Emerton, Medieval Europe, p. 514.
29 Jennings, A History of the Economic and Social Progress of European Peoples, p. 120.
30 Brother Cajetan, "They Call Me a Monk", American Mercury, XXIX (May, 1933) 26.
His conservatism inclined him to the harder side, since his whole economic position was fundamentally capitalist; but his religion and his tradition of social amenity, which even at the worst kept him on a higher moral plane than the average lay lord, weighed rather more heavily in the milder scale. In the same rough and tentative way in which I reckon the modern and medieval labourers’ lives to differ by about ten per cent, I should reckon the monastic landlord to have been four or five per cent better than his brother, the layman.31

Coulton also states in his Scottish Abbeys and Social Life that:

As landlords, the monks were kindlier, on the whole, than the lairds. The extravagant claims often made for them on this score will not bear examination; but for Europe in general, I have ventured to suggest that it was perhaps about five per cent better than on a lay estate; and, for Scotland, I should be disposed to put the difference at rather a higher figure. Certainly servitude disappeared much earlier from Scotland than from England, although in both countries the monks are found among those who cling longest to this lordship over the person of the tiller of the soil.32

The monks as landlords were as a rule more foresighted than the average layman. They were among the foremost to direct clearings of forests and drain marshes.

In 1218, for instance, the founder of Indhaffray enclosed a large tract of marsh and gave it to the monks. About the same time, the abbot of Holyrood is recorded to have drained the marsh adjacent to his abbey. In Teviotdale, a great deal of the land first given must have been forest and moor. Again, the papal privileges given to certain Orders like the Cistercians, must have given a great impetus; the popes granted them

31 Coulton, The Medieval Village, p. 142.
Freedom from tithe for all 'essarts', or clearings made by them or by their men. 33

Richard states that the greatest work in the clearing of land in Germany was performed by the monasteries, which almost without exception, were established in uncultivated districts. 34 Irish monks are said to have taken the lead in the draining of swamps against floods. 35 This colonizing movement pushed the German frontier across the Elbe.

The monks held the colonization of agricultural lands to be a work of piety, which, of course, increased the influence as well as the fortune of their Church. The French monastic orders were especially instrumental in this work. "The 2,000 Cluniac priories, the 3,200 Cistercian abbeys, the countless monasteries of Carthusians, Premonstratensians, and Trappists were rallying points for the thousands of pioneers who cleared, reclaimed, and drained the soil of the West." 36 Normandy, Flanders, and areas in the southeast of France were cleared, land was won back from the sea, and the Morais de Dol, which had been turned from fertile land into coastal swamp about 700 A. D. was reclaimed in the twelfth century by the monks by building a dike over twenty miles long. 37

33 Ibid., p. 123.
34 Ernst Richard, History of German Civilization, p. 158.
35 Ibid., p. 163.
36 Boissonnade, Life and Work in Medieval Europe, p. 227.
37 Herbert Heaton, Economic History of Europe, p. 124.
In England, the breaking of new ground went on round the fringe of the midland area. The enterprising abbot of the local monastery was the one who set an example which the lay lords and peasants quickly followed. "Forests were cleared, marshes were drained, the inroad of high tides was checked, and pits were dug to obtain marl for fertilize."38

Thus, the monasteries were the earliest big force working on the frontier. When Charlemagne devastated the Franco-Spanish marches in his campaign against the Saracens, he handed much of the captured land to the Benedictine abbeys. "At each spot the monks might spend four to six hours every morning draining, felling, and tilling, while settlers came to live around the abbey, attracted by the security and market that it afforded."39 What the Benedictines began, the Cistercians carried on.

What was the effect of this colonizing movement by the various religious orders on agriculture? Not only did the monks increase enormously the amount of cultivated land, but also, as Heatn points out:

They drained, irrigated, studied the relation between the soil and the kind of trees that grew on it, and experimented in seed selection, grafting vines, and horse breeding. They taught the tenants how to farm, and attracted settlers by offers of cheap land. They dug minerals, produced salt, built mills, fostered the production of linen or woolen cloth, and traded widely.40

38 ibid., p. 125. 39 ibid., p. 124. 40 ibid.
In England, thousands of pigs were turned into the forests, then slaughtered, and with the aid of Cheshire salt became ham or bacon; grain and wool were produced, timber and minerals were exploited; and a flourishing sea trade grew up in the export of salt, bacon, metals, and lumber, and the export of Irish grain and Gascon wine.\textsuperscript{41} Jennings states:

Of the Cistercians in Yorkshire, England, someone has said: "They turned the wasteland into good land; they planted the trees; they improved the streams; they made corn grow where thistles had sprung unchecked; they filled the meadows with cattle and stocked the uplands with sheep. "Better farmers than other orders, the Cistercians raised various grains, but hay and fodder for their cattle, bred cattle, horses, and sheep, and in the Rhine and Neckar Valleys attained considerable success in grape culture and wine-making.\textsuperscript{42}

By the thirteenth century German control reached as far east as the lower Vistula; cattle ranches and lumber camps had been supplemented by farms, vineyards, and thousands of villages.\textsuperscript{43}

The preeminence of the monks in medieval agriculture has been long recognized by historians. Barnes states that there were three main reasons for this preeminence.

In the first place, the monks carried over many of the ancient Roman methods of agriculture, which were often far superior to those known by the

\textsuperscript{41}Ibid., p. 126.

\textsuperscript{42}Jennings, \textit{A History of the Economic and Social Progress of European Peoples}, p. 122.

\textsuperscript{43}Heaton, \textit{Economic History of Europe}, p. 127.
Western barbarians. Therefore, in agricultural technique, the monks were the best framers in the Christendom during the medieval period. In the second place, the monks were professionally committed to systematic industry. This insured efficient and ample labor. In the third place, monastic landholdings were much freer from the ravages of warfare than were secular possessions. While the neighboring feudal lands might have their crops destroyed by marauding enemies, the farms of the monasteries usually enjoyed peace and immunity from the destruction of their crops and flocks.44

In agricultural technique, the monks transmitted to their own holdings Roman methods in raising crops, breeding cattle, and cultivating fruit, especially grapes.45 Cutts points out:

Long after they had ceased to be the pioneers leading the way in reducing the wastelands under cultivation, the monks continued to set an example to the lay gentry and landowners in enterprising scientific agriculture and horticulture; and in the refinement of domestic economy they were ages ahead of the rest of the community; they utilized streams for water power, for irrigation, and for sanitation; sought out pure water for domestic use, and brought it long distances by conduits.46

The monks often stipulated that the tenant should plant trees, especially fruit trees. Furthermore, the frequent communication between monasteries encouraged the circulation of seeds and grafts. Coulton notes that "... it is

44 Barnes, An Economic History of the Western World, pp. 117-118.

45 Ibid.

46 Cutts, Parish Priests and Their People in the Middle Ages in England, p. 368.
demonstrable, I believe that one of the best continental apples of today, the Reinette Grise, passed from a Cistercian abbey in medieval Burgundy to many parts of Germany and even to Poland.\(^47\)

Not only did the Church make improvements in agricultural methods and crops, but they also taught the various higher forms of industry. There were found in the monastery "... all kinds of workmen, both smiths and carpenters, sculptors and goldsmiths, painters and masons, vinedressers and plowmen, with skilled numbers in the various branches of industry."\(^48\) Boissonnade explains:

The ecclesiastical domains were centres in which agricultural science was developed, forestry and scientific breeding improved, model farms created, new crops tried, and agricultural production regenerated and stimulated. It was on the lands of the Church and in towns in which episcopal authority ruled, that there appeared the professional division of labour, the first perfected industrial technique, the first schools of arts and crafts; and there, too, the working classes first organized themselves. Above all, the monasteries, during this period of three centuries, taught to one generation after another the various higher forms of industry, the production of luxury fabrics, tapestry, embroidery, enamel work, goldsmiths' work, porcelain, glass work, architecture, sculpture, and painting.\(^49\)

\(^{47}\) Coulter, Scottish Abbeys and Social Life, p. 123.

\(^{48}\) James Westfall Thompson, Social and Economic History of the Middle Ages, II, 609.

\(^{49}\) Boissonnade, Life and Work in Medieval Europe, p. 157.
The monks themselves often took pride in doing the manual labor of the fields, just as they did in directing the work or in living holy lives. It was the general belief that all monks must hoe and till like other people.\textsuperscript{50} Never was such work regarded as derogatory. For example, the following quotation shows that the manual labor by the monks was idealized.

\begin{quote}
I see them in the garden with hoes, in the meadows with forks or rakes, in the fields with scythes, in the forest with axes. To judge from their outward appearance, their tools, their bad and disordered clothes, they appear a race of fools, without speech or sense. But a true thought in my mind tells me that their life in Christ is hidden in the heavens... I knew them proud and puffed up; I see them walking humbly under the mercy of God.\textsuperscript{51}
\end{quote}

However, this manual labor by the monks was a common practice only in the early days of the Middle Ages. \textquoteleft\textquoteleft Where-as in the early days the monks had carried on most of the work with their own hands, by the heighth of the Middle Ages, they were employing serfs and agricultural laborers extensively.\textquoteright\textsuperscript{52} In the early days the Benedictine monks did much labor on their own lands. \textquoteleft\textquoteleft St. Benedict expressly told his followers that they were to look upon themselves

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{50}Coulton, \textit{The Medieval Village}, p. 355.
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\textsuperscript{52}Barnes, \textit{An Economic History of the Western World}, p. 118.
\end{flushleft}
'as true monks when they have to live by the labour of their hands'. Later, however, the monks of the Benedictine rule became too tired, rich, or feudal and left the manual labor of the fields in the hands of their slaves and serfs. The Cistercian order, founded in 1902, preached the gospel of manual labor with intense fervor. Its rule forbade it to receive gifts of villages, serfs, or mills, lest these tempt it to live on the labor of others. Its members must do their own work, whether it be farming, herding, manufacturing, building, or domestic service. But gradually these tasks were delegated to lay brothers, who did the work, supervised that of hired laborers, or served as stewards managing estates tilled by serfs or free tenants.

When manual labor was the fashion for monks, the afternoon was usually occupied in the many and various labors of the fields. "This was necessary for health and exercise, and it was insisted upon in all monastic codes, not so much as an end in itself, as a means to avoid idleness, and to strengthen the constitution of individuals by regular and systematic corporal exercises." In certain order, the work of the fields was performed with a certain amount of ceremonial usage. Gasquet explains the typical ceremony.

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54 Heaton, Economic History of Europe, p. 94.
The prior, for example, rang the bell, or struck the tabula to call the brethren together, distributed the necessary tools amongst them, and then led the way to the place where they were to dig, or weed, or plant, etc. In the Cluniac houses, the abbot went with the community. When they were assembled at the door of the cloister he was to be informed, and he then came into their midst saying . . . . . "Let us go to our manual labour". Upon this, the youngest leading the way, the monks went in procession to where they had to work, saying the 'Miserere' or other psalms. Arrived at the place, they stood round the abbot till the psalm was ended, then the abbot said the 'Deus in adjutorium'—"O God, come to my aid", etc., with the "Our Father" and the versicle of Prime to obtain God's blessing on the labors of the day: "Look down, O Lord, upon Thy servants and upon Thy works, and guide Thou Thy sons. To which the community replied, "And may the glory of the Lord our God be upon us, and may He guide us in the works of our hands and direct us in our manual labour." Then, bowing to the abbot and to each other, they began the task allotted them.56

Thus, it is apparent that the Church influenced tremendously agricultural methods and products, as well as cattle farming during the Middle Ages. They were better able to improve agricultural methods and products and cattle raising than the lay lords, because the monasteries were more richly endowed with lands and money. Also, warfare was prohibited on the monasteries; and the lands, therefore, were not ravaged by intruding armies, which left the lands completely barren. The monks were the leaders who reclaimed land, drained marshes, and cleared forests, thus increasing the amount of cultivated land. Naturally, they wished to make their religious houses as rich and self-sufficient as

56 Ibid., p. 149.
possible. For these reasons, the monks were forever improving crops, methods of producing them, the breeding of cattle, and instructing their tenants in scientific farming. To make the most of their land, they exploited to a great extent the labor of serfs and slaves. To obtain the best results from these laborers, they were kinder and more humane to them, as they realized that contented workers could do better and more effective work. Yet, the monks themselves also took part in the manual labor in the fields and gardens of their demesnes.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

Agriculture was, by necessity, the dominant work of life in the Middle Ages. Rude and backward though it may have been, as we see it, yet, it was the source of livelihood of the people because in that world of the Middle Ages, communication and commerce were almost an impossibility and therefore practically non-existent. For these reasons, it was necessary for the people to cooperate in order to obtain as nearly as possible those products which were necessary for subsistence. The village came into existence as the only apparent answer to this problem.

The village was in reality a miniature world. It had its lord, who exercised many royal powers in the absence of a strong central government and who owned the land. At the center of the village was the lord's castle, which was obviously the most comfortable building. Around it were grouped the huts of the villeins. And the village, of course, had its Church which exerted its influence upon the people socially and spiritually. Also, mills, ovens, and other monopolies of the lord were necessary establishments in the village in order to make usable the products raised on the surrounding land. The large number of
scattered acres which made up the demesne farm were cultivated in the interests of the lord of the manor. Small groups of scattered strips were held by free holders or villein tenants who furnished most of the labor on the demesne farm. Little patches of ground were held by mere laborers whose living was mainly gained by hired service on the land of the lord or of more prosperous tenants. Yet all could properly claim the right to use the common pasture for their sheep and cattle, and the woods for their swine. All these together made up an agricultural system which secured a revenue for the lord, provided food and the raw material for primitive manufacturers for the inhabitants of the village, and furnished a very small surplus which could be sold. Thus, the dual nature of the manor or village becomes apparent. On the one hand, the lord furnished the peasants with lands and protection; in return, some furnished him military services, while others contributed rents and labor. Only by working together could these things be obtained. During that day, one man did not have the necessary tools, lands, and cattle to produce these things. Therefore, the manor was the only institution by which protection and a few products, which were the sustenance of all, could be attained.

The manor was profitable to the lord in many ways. He received rents in money and kind. These included the rents of assize from free and villein land tenants, rent from the
tenant of the mill, and frequently from other sources. Then came the profits derived from the cultivation of the demesne land. In this, the lord, of the manor was simply a large farmer, except that he had a supply of labor bound to remain at hand and to give service without wages almost equal his needs. Finally, there were the profits of the manor courts. As has been seen, these consisted of a great variety of fees, fines, amerclaments, and collections made by the steward or other officials. Such varied payments and profits combined to make up the total value of the manor to the landowner.

It is true that life on the medieval manor was hard. The greater part of the population was subject to the burdens of servitude, and all, both free and serf, shared in the arduous labor, coarseness and lack of variety of food, unsanitary surroundings, and liability to the rigor of winter and the attacks of pestilence. Manual labor was hard and long, and the returns for it were low. Yet, a livelihood was obtained, coarse and rude as it might be. Also, the inhabitants of the manor were bound to one another, and were almost completely separated from the outside world. The common pasture, the intermingled strips of the holdings in the open fields, the necessary cooperation of their daily labor on the land, the close contiguity of their dwellings, their universal membership in the same parish church, their common attendance and action in the manor courts, all combined to make the vill an organization of singular and intimate unity.
Agricultural production did not see many improvements until the later years of the Middle Ages. The yield was always low, and the variety of crops small. Yet, especially under the influence and instigation of the Church, there was some progress made in the machinery, breeding of cattle, and the kinds of crops produced. Many new crops, such as fodder crops, hops, turnips, fruits were introduced into the various countries of Europe. Scientific farming was carried on by a select few. It was also during the feudal regime that the extensive program of clearing the lands, reclaiming them from the ravages of sea and floods, and draining marshes, was carried on most effectively by the various religious houses. Through this program, the amount of arable land was tremendously increased.

Though there were many disadvantages to the village arrangement of agricultural production, it was the only arrangement suitable for the age, as it was the only means by which food and protection could be secured for all. It allowed those measures of economic protection, led to the maintenance of certain standards of tillage, and gave thrift an opportunity to find reward. Yet, the self-centered life, economically, judicially, and ecclesiastically so nearly independent of other bodies, put obstacles in the way of change. It prohibited any intercourse beyond the
manor, and opposed the growth of a common national life. Small proprietors encountered difficulty in finding land, the scattered holdings involved waste of time and effort, the lack of fences provoked trespassing and quarreling, and custom prevented to a great extent experimentation and change. However, this manorial arrangement was found to be the best and most effective means of agriculture until about 1500. After this time, there was a gradual decline. The decay of feudalism and the rise of towns promoted this decline. With its decay, services were commuted for money rents, and servile status thus died out. And enclosures came rapidly; the manor was no longer suitable for the changed world.
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