

HISTORICAL SOURCES

First, the King's commissioners assembled the superior and his subjects in the chapter house to announce to the community and its dependants its impending doom. They called for and defaced the convent seal, the symbol of corporate existence, without which no business could be transacted. They then desecrated the church; took possession of the best plate and vestments into the King's use; measured the lead upon the roof and calculated its value when melted; counted the bells; and appraised the good and chattels of the community. After this appraisal, workmen moved straight in to strip the roofs and pull down the gutters and drainpipes. They melted the lead into pigs and fadders; threw down the bells and broke them with sledgehammers, packing the metal into barrels for evaluation. This was followed by the collection and sale of the furniture with the window frames, shutter and doors, by public auction or private tender.

Extract from *The Catholic Encyclopaedia*, vol. 10, Catenian Edition, 1911.

This account is a reminder that, unlike the castle, the priory did not become obsolete and fade away, it was deliberately destroyed and the life of the inhabitants brought to an abrupt end.

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When thou comeste be-fore a lorde
In halle, yn bower, or at the borde,
Hoode or kappe thou of tho,
Ere thou come hym alle vn-to,
Twyse or thryse with-owten dowte
To that lorde thou most lowte,
With thy ryzth kne lette hit be do,
Thy worship thou myst saue so.

Holde of thy cap and thy hoode also
Tylle thou be byden hit on to do;
Alle the whyle thou spekest with hym,
Fayr and louely holde up thy chynn,
So aftur the nurture of the book
In his face louely thy loke.

When you come before a lord take of your cap or hood, and fall on your right knee twice or thrice.

Keep your cap off until you are told to put it on. Hold up your chin and look in the lord's face.

Extract from *The Booke of Nurture* by John Russell, c1450, ed. F J Furnivall, Early English Text Society, 1868. The original text has been kept to give a sense of Early English rhyme and rhythm. The translation points towards a feudal system in which social status was hugely important.

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Chapter 33

WHETHER MONKS OUGHT TO HAVE ANYTHING OF THEIR OWN

The vice of personal ownership must by all means be cut out in the monastery by the very root, so that no one may presume to give or receive anything without the command of the Abbot; nor to have anything whatever as his own, neither a book, nor a writing tablet, nor a pen, nor anything else whatsoever, since monks are allowed to have neither their bodies nor their wills in their own power.

Chapter 48

OF THE DAILY WORK

Idleness is the enemy of the soul; and therefore the brethren ought to be employed in manual labour at certain times, at others, in devout reading. [...] they go out in the morning from the first till about the fourth hour, to do the necessary work, but that from the fourth till about the sixth hour they devote to reading. After the sixth hour, however, when they have risen from table, let them rest in their beds in complete silence.

Extracts from *The Holy Rule of Saint Benedict*, translated by Rev. Boniface Verheyen, 1949 edition. The Cluniac monks at Castle Acre Priory swore an oath of obedience, vowing never to break these strict Benedictine rules.