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# A HOUSEHOLD BOOK OF QUEEN ISABELLA OF ENGLAND, 1311-1312

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Isabella of France, the wife of Edward II of England, like all fourteenth century English queens, possessed a household of her own, a smaller edition of the king's household.<sup>1</sup> For audit at the exchequer, Isabella's wardrobe keeper and treasurer produced for each regnal year of the king, which ran from the 8th of July of one year to the 7th of July of the following year, a *comptus* or financial statement in the form of a book. Two of Isabella's household or account books for the reign of Edward II have survived, one for the fifth regnal year now in the British Museum<sup>2</sup> and one for the seventh, now in the Public Record Office. The authors of this paper are in the process of completing an edition, in Latin and in English, of the first of these books, the one dealt with below.

## STYLE AND LANGUAGE

The Household Book is the original ledger, written in the same hand throughout, with the exception of a few entries. The language used is the official Latin of the day, a well-honed instrument, universally understood, with a vocabulary and phrases ready to be drawn upon for the expression of any thought.

In its own way the style is very precise and succinct, while at the same time being winding and circumstantial, as is shown in this entry :

To Thomas de Westone, clerk of the queen's spicery, for money spent by him for the carriage of the coffers and equipment of the great wardrobe of the queen and of her chandelery, sometimes with four carts, sometimes with three, and sometimes with two carts, hired by him at various prices, and in various ways, according to the number of horses that were harnessed to them, for 69 days in the travels of the same queen to various places in different parts of England in the present year . . . £12. 18s. 6d.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hilda Johnstone has considered the household of the fourteenth century English queen in her chapters on that subject in T. F. Tout, *Chapters in the Administrative History of Mediaeval England* (Manchester, 6 vols., 1920-33, v. 231-288) and in *The English Government at Work, 1327-1336* (Mediaeval Academy of America, 3 vols., 1940-50, ed. J. F. Willard, etc., i. 250-299).

<sup>2</sup> Cotton MS, Nero C VIII, fols. 121-153 (hereafter called Household Book).

<sup>3</sup> E.A. 375/9.

<sup>4</sup> Household Book, fol. 137v.

This is the style of officialdom. The passage has a legalistic ring; it tries to be precise and clear; it gives all the pertinent details; it clarifies the whole transaction.

The style can be illustrated by further entries. One is concerned with money paid out to the king, Edward II, for a game of dice on Christmas Eve :

To the lord king, money given to him by the lord William de Boudon for a game of dice on Christmas Eve, at Westminster, 24th day of December . . . 100s. <sup>5</sup>

Another is one of the statements of wages given to the squires and other persons in the queen's service :

To Reginald de Belou, squire of the above-mentioned household, receiving 7½d. a day for his wages, from the 8th day of July at the beginning of the fifth year to the 7th day of July at the end of the same year, counting both, for 366 days because the year is a leap year, and he was not absent from court, by reckoning made with him in the queen's wardrobe, at York, 12th day of July, in the sixth year . . . £11. 8s. 9d. <sup>6</sup>

The last example, in particular, shows the style very clearly since it contains a formula repeated virtually unchanged for about fifty members of the queen's household. The remark that the pay covered 366 days "because the year is a leap year" is unforgettable, when repeated fifty times.

A few examples will prove that this style is not the product of a clumsy half-educated scribbler. It is the circumstantial and international style in which monetary accounts were kept at that time. It is to be found, for example, in the Vatican manuscript *Collectanea 227*.

In this manuscript we have the account rendered by Petrus Gervasii, a nuncio of the Apostolic See, for his collection of Peter's Pence in northern Europe. On 27th September, 1334, the nuncio had to pay 2½ gros of Tours to charter a boat. The following passage begins a winding story :

Item, on the 27th day of September, having heard of the death of Provost Skelmerus, whom I had excommunicated on account of 150 silver marks which he had received of the tithe money, I travelled again to Roskilde to prevent his burial until I had received security for the above-mentioned sum, and because the boats were busy catching herring, I paid for passage money 2½ gros of Tours. <sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Household Book, fol. 136v. William de Boudon was Isabella's wardrobe keeper. He is also called the queen's treasurer.

<sup>6</sup> Household Book, fol. 130r.

<sup>7</sup> *Diplomatarium Danicum II*, 11 (Copenhagen, 1950, ed. C. A. Christensen), III, p. 157.

Coming back from his excursion to prevent the burial of Skelmerus until the latter's debts were paid, Gervasii had to pay guides 2½ gros of Tours, and he outlines what happened in exciting detail :

Item, on the 6th day of October I left the city of Roskilde in order to put my seal on the property of the said provost for whom nobody would give security, and I found some Germans carrying the possessions away, and despite the safe-conduct given me by Count John, the commander of the land of Zealand, they took me prisoner and led me as prisoner together with my party two miles to the castle of Havn, and even so I had to pay for the expenses of my guides 2½ gros of Tours.<sup>8</sup>

An example from a French source also shows the international character of the language and style of the queen's Household Book, and that it is the style required for the subject. An entry in the *Comptes du Trésor* for the year 1315 reads :

Martin d'Essart for his wages there from the 27th of February, 1315, to the 7th day of the June following thereafter, with the exception of 68 days during which he was conducting other business for the king and 12 days on his own business, for 20 days at 16s. a day. 16 pounds, by reckoning made with himself.<sup>9</sup>

This is very similar to entries concerning wages in the queen's Household Book, of which we might quote another example :

To Thomas Chetindon, squire of the above-mentioned household, receiving 7½d. a day for his wages, from the 8th day of July at the beginning of the fifth year to the 7th day of July at the end of the same year, counting both, for 366 days because the year is a leap year, with the exception of 92 days for which he was absent, by reckoning made with him in the queen's wardrobe, at York, 12th day of July, in the sixth year . . . £8. 11s. 3d.<sup>10</sup>

The language used is international in character but there were particular expressions which covered specific English institutions and offices. Very characteristic of this language is the use of words like *super, in, ad opus*, but this is a field which hardly has been studied.

While the Latin of the Household Book and other documents of the period was a precise and versatile means of expression, this Latin was no longer a living language. It had ceased to renew itself from inside; it was clearly an acquired language and innovations came from the vernacular of the writer.

The place names that appear in the Household Book show the play between Latin and English. While *Eboracum, Cestria, Cantuaria*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, III p. 158.

<sup>9</sup> *Rec. des Hist. de France, Docum. Financiers, Comptes du Trésor* (Paris, 1930, pub. par Fawtier), ii. 47, n° 784.

<sup>10</sup> Household Book, fol. 130r.

and *Wintonia* always appear in these forms because they were old and well-known settlements, English forms were used for newer settlements, although the writer of the book liked to give them in abbreviated form which, on the surface, imparted a respectable Latin appearance. However, the abbreviation was for one letter only, "e". Thus we have *Beth'*, *Windsor'*, *Sunnyngull'* and *Sumerset'* in some places, but in others these places are written out in full as *Bethe*, *Windsore*, etc. The scribe's method of writing presents an editor with problems in those cases where he had two forms from which to choose, the Latin and the vernacular. By *Dunelm'*, for example, he may mean either *Dunelme* or *Dunelmum*.

When the writer of the Household Book did not know a Latin word for something he wished to name, he fell back upon his native tongue. The environment of the queen's court was French and, to a certain extent, this is reflected in the words used. Some of these French derivatives are found in other texts, such as *cloera* for a nailbag or nailbox which is derived from the French *clo(u)* not the Latin *clauus*, or *copagium* for the cutting of wood, derived from the French *couper*. In a few cases, however, the writer is caught red-handed, using a French word without the slightest attempt to Latinize it. For example a piebald horse is called *bauzan* and a dun horse *doign*. *Doign* appears a few times within a period of five years in connection with the court and must be a French attempt to spell *dunne*. Another such word is *cardamon*, or *cardamonde*. This is used for the spice cardamon, for which there is a classical Latin form, *cardamomum*, used by Pliny, in medical literature, in Apicius, etc.

The writer in each of these cases was dealing with an object to name for which he knew no Latin word. *Cardamomum*, after all, was a very rare word. The writer's Latin having failed him, he had to fall back on his mother tongue, which seems to have been French.

A study of the vocabulary of Isabella's Household Book adds to our knowledge of Latin as it was used in fourteenth century England. If we consider R. E. Latham's *Revised Medieval World-List*<sup>11</sup> as the standard dictionary of English medieval Latin, the Household Book can contribute as many one hundred new items. In the Household Book we find words given in the Word-list as being in use at a different date than that of the Household Book; we find new forms or new meanings of words given in the Word-list; we find words whose use removes doubts or reserves expressed in the Word-list;

<sup>11</sup> *Revised Medieval Latin Word List From British and Irish Sources* (London, British Academy, 1965).

we find words that are not in the Word-list. Some additional words are *tapetum pedale* for a carpet, *marca computatoria* for a counting table (in the form of an exchequer), and *bastarda carecta* for a certain type of cart, known in old French but unrecorded in England. Totally new words include *iudasia*, the triangular candelabrum of the Maundy Thursday *missa tenebrarum* and *calendracio*, which means mangling, rather than pressing. The Household Book contains as well a very interesting use of the word *perhendinacio* with the meaning of travel, a development with many ancestors and a long history.

#### THE HISTORICAL INTEREST OF THE HOUSEHOLD BÖÖK

Isabella's Household Book contains much of interest for the historian. Professor Hilda Johnstone used it from the administrative point of view<sup>12</sup> and Miss Agnes Strickland consulted it for her not very accurate life of the queen.<sup>13</sup> But no one seems to have used the manuscript in an attempt to cast what light may be found in it upon the politics and happenings of the year it covers.

The fifth regnal year of Edward II was one of important political events. These include the baronial Ordinances of September, 1311, restricting the powers of the king; the issue of the second so-called set of "Ordinances" at the end of November; the forced exile of Peter Gaveston, the Earl of Cornwall and hated royal favourite; and Gaveston's unauthorized return to the king before Christmas. In 1312 the regnal year saw the withdrawal of the king and Gaveston to the north; the rapid building up of tensions that resulted in the flight of Edward and his favourite on 4th May from Newcastle to Tynemouth before the forces of the Ordainers led by Thomas, Earl of Lancaster; the surrender of Gaveston after a brief siege of Scarborough castle where he had been left for safety by the king who retired himself to York; and the execution of the favourite on 19th June, 1312, by Lancaster and his two leading accomplices, the Earls of Hereford and Arundel.

Isabella had some interest in the Ordinances. On 26th December, 1311, she paid twenty-seven shillings to four royal chancery clerks for "transcribing the Ordinances made by the earls and barons of England," along with "extents of the queen's lands, writs and various other memoranda of the wardrobe of the queen herself."<sup>14</sup> One of her ladies-in-waiting, and presumably a second, was directly affected

<sup>12</sup> See footnote 1, page 1.

<sup>13</sup> Agnes Strickland, *Lives of the Queens of England* (London, 6 vols., 1864-66), i. 326-376.

<sup>14</sup> Household Book, fol. 136v.

by the Ordinances. Isabella de Vescy, as well as her brother, Henry de Beaumont, was singled out by name in the Ordinances to leave court.<sup>15</sup> Presumably Alice, Countess of Buchan,<sup>16</sup> the wife of Henry de Beaumont, who was also a lady-in-waiting, shared the fate of her husband and sister-in-law.

Both the lady Isabella and the Countess of Buchan are listed on two occasions in the Household Book as members of the queen's household.<sup>17</sup> Neither, however, appears to have been present with the queen at court during the regnal year. Isabella de Vescy indeed was living in Yorkshire, but she was still in the favour of the queen, who wrote to her in October, 1311, and again in January, 1312; in the latter month the queen sent to her a gift of venison and cheese.<sup>18</sup>

Professor Conway Davies felt that, "Beaumont and his sister were associated with the queen rather than with the king, and the opposition to them would have been made against anyone holding a position at court bringing them into contact with the king and hence liable to exert an influence over him."<sup>19</sup> The usually well-informed author of the *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, however, seems to associate Beaumont definitely with the king.<sup>20</sup> The retention of Beaumont's wife and sister in their official capacities in Isabella's household, and the signs of the queen's friendship for the latter, hardly supports the opinion of Professor Conway Davies or any suggestion that Isabella sympathized with the Ordinances or the Ordainers. In view of the queen's overthrow of her husband in 1326, it is tempting to look for early signs of trouble between Isabella and Edward. However, Professor May McKisack, in noting the official position of Isabella de Vescy in the queen's household, wisely considers this to be "a fact which throws some doubt on the chroniclers' hints of a rift already threatening between Isabella and her husband."<sup>21</sup>

The only lady-in-waiting who seems to have spent any time with the queen during the regnal year was Eleanor le Despenser, the niece of Edward II and the wife of Hugh le Despenser, the

<sup>15</sup> *Rot. Parl.*, I, 281-286, clauses 22-23. Isabella de Vescy was the daughter of Louis de Brienne, viscount of Beaumont in France and a relative of the queen. Her husband, a northern baron, John de Vescy, died 1288/89.

<sup>16</sup> The daughter of Alexander Comyn, sheriff of Aberdeen and niece and heiress of John Comyn, earl of Buchan (d. 1308).

<sup>17</sup> Household Book, fols. 141r, 143v.

<sup>18</sup> Household Book, fols. 138r, 148r, 148v.

<sup>19</sup> J. C. Davies, *The Baronial Opposition to Edward II* (Cambridge, 1918), p. 370.

<sup>20</sup> *Vita Edwardi Secundi* (London, 1957, tr. N. Denholm-Young), pp. 30, 57.

<sup>21</sup> M. McKisack, *The Fourteenth Century* (Oxford, 1959), pp. 13-14, n. 4

younger.<sup>22</sup> Several entries testify to Eleanor's continuous presence with the queen. The most interesting of these records that her husband took away her pack-horses and "other means of carriage," making it necessary for her chamberlain, John de Berkhamstead, to find horses and carts "for the carriage of the equipment of the said lady staying in the company of the lady queen, and going with her to various places on her travels throughout England." One is happy to note that the queen, at various times, compensated John for these expenses.<sup>23</sup>

From time to time the queen was in touch with leading members of the Ordainers. In January, 1312, she sent a gift to Humphrey de Bohun, Earl of Hereford, of wild boar meat, and a similar gift to the Earl of Lancaster.<sup>24</sup> From York, in March of 1312, she sent letters to prominent members of the nobility, including the Earls of Gloucester, Hereford, Lancaster and Warenne.<sup>25</sup> It is possible that these gifts and letters were attempts on the part of Isabella to soothe the rising temper of the nobility since it is generally considered that she played the role of peace-maker in the early years of the reign.

The Household Book, either under "Messengers" or "Necessities", sheds some light on the relationship between the queen and the king during this period. The regularity of the correspondence when the two were apart, a gift of lampreys from Isabella to her husband, suggest that the two were on good terms.<sup>26</sup>

The chronicler Trokelowe asserts that the queen complained of the avarice of Gaveston which impoverished the king and herself.<sup>27</sup> The household book does suggest that both the queen and the king were short of money, but this stringency may not have been the direct fault of the favourite. Professor Tout, in his *Chapters*, writes that "the ordainers, though unable to reform the household, were able to wreck its activity by cutting off supplies from the exchequer. The effect of the financial pressure may well have been to precipitate the fall of Gaveston and the humiliation of the king."<sup>28</sup>

<sup>22</sup> The daughter of Gilbert de Clare, Earl of Gloucester and Hereford (d. 1295), and a sister of Gilbert, Earl of Gloucester, killed at Bannockburn in 1314. The remaining ladies-in-waiting were Ida de Clinton and Margaret de Abrenthy. Ida de Clinton, the daughter of William de Odingsells, married John de Clinton (d. 1310). I have been unable to identify Margaret de Abrenthy.

<sup>23</sup> Household Book, fol. 137v.

<sup>24</sup> Household Book, fols. 138v, 148v.

<sup>25</sup> Household Book, fol. 138v.

<sup>26</sup> Household Book, fols. 138v, 139r, 148v, 149r.

<sup>27</sup> Trokelowe, *Annales*, p. 68.

<sup>28</sup> Tout, *op. cit.*, ii. 235.



The drying up of revenues may be illustrated by Isabella's apparent failure while at York with the king to obtain through her wardrobe keeper, William de Boudon, "from the treasurer and chamberlains of the king's exchequer [at Westminster] a certain release of money owed to the same queen from money which she lent to the said king in parts of Ponthieu for the marriage of Mary, daughter of the lady Blanche of Brittany." William de Boudon was absent from court on this mission, which he combined with furthering other concerns of the queen, for forty-one days in the months of February, March and May, but the receipts of the queen's household contain no entry to show that he met with success.<sup>29</sup> During the regnal year the queen loaned her husband money to meet the expenses of his household.<sup>30</sup>

In face of the chronicle and record evidence it would be hard to dispute the allegation that the queen regarded Gaveston with considerable annoyance and dislike. The one direct reference to the controversial favourite contained in the Household Book suggests that the queen attempted to assist him at least on one occasion. On 29th October, 1311, after Gaveston had been exiled by the Ordainers but had not yet left for the continent, one of Isabella's messengers was paid "for carrying the letters of the queen to the receiver of Ponthieu [Isabella's own county] for the business of the earl of Cornwall."<sup>31</sup> Gaveston's wife, Margaret, the daughter of the Earl of Gloucester and niece of the king, received a New Year's gift from Isabella.<sup>32</sup> The countess was then staying at Wallingford, perhaps awaiting the birth of a child.<sup>33</sup>

Professor Tout states that, "There is no doubt of his [i.e. Gaveston's] joining Edward at Windsor before Christmas."<sup>34</sup> The Household Book reveals that the king spent Christmas Eve with Isabella at Westminster; Isabella's wardrobe keeper and treasurer paid the money lost on that day by the king gambling.<sup>35</sup> There is no mention

<sup>29</sup> Household Book, fol. 139r.

<sup>30</sup> Household Book, fol. 150v, *Debentur in garderoba regis domine Isabelle regine Anglie consorti ipsius regis pro totidem denariis per ipsam reginam de denariis suis propriis in garderoba regis predicta mutuatis super expensis hospicii ipsius regis anno regni sui .v<sup>to</sup>. per comptum factum cum domino Willelmo de Boudonia custode garderoba dicte regine apud Westmonasterium .vii<sup>o</sup>. die maii anno regni regis eiusdem .vi<sup>to</sup>.* This entry was added at the bottom of the folio in a hand other than that of the writer of the Household Book.

<sup>31</sup> Household Book, fol. 148r.

<sup>32</sup> Household Book, fol. 138v.

<sup>33</sup> Bridlington, *Gesta Edwardi*, pp. 41-42.

<sup>34</sup> Tout, *op. cit.*, ii. 195-6, n.2. The queen was at Westminster throughout the months of November and December (Household Book, fol. 125r).

<sup>35</sup> Household Book, fol. 136v.

of Gaveston but one wonders if Edward was dicing with Gaveston. The king was at Windsor at the end of the year; Isabella sent William de Boudon from London to Windsor with "certain precious objects for his [i.e. Edward's] New Year's gift on the Feast of the Circumcision of the Lord [1st January, 1312]." <sup>36</sup>

Gaveston and the king departed for the north early in January. The queen was at Windsor on 4th January, 1312, <sup>37</sup> perhaps to bid her husband good-bye. She was at Westminster in the first week of February, <sup>38</sup> presumably preparing to go north herself. She was at Newport Pagnell on 7th February and at Northampton on the following day, from which place she sent a letter to her husband. <sup>39</sup> She was at York at least by 24th February. <sup>40</sup> It was about this time that the first child of the royal couple, the future Edward III, was conceived, indicating, one would think, that husband and wife were on reasonable terms.

There are not many indications in the Household Book as to how Isabella occupied herself at York, although her gifts of cloths of gold to the church of the Friars Minor in that city (8th March, 1312) and to the abbey of St. Mary (14th April, 1312) show the activities of conventional piety. <sup>41</sup> Also, as we have seen, it was in March that the queen wrote letters to many of the prominent members of the nobility.

With the political situation critical, about the beginning of April the king and Gaveston went from York to Newcastle <sup>42</sup> leaving the queen, for the time being, at York. On 15th April Isabella's chariot was being made ready for travel. Members of her household were still active on the two following days: her tailor obtained an advance of money for his office and her chandler for lighting. <sup>43</sup> The queen,

<sup>36</sup> Household Book, fol. 139r.

<sup>37</sup> Household Book, fols. 124v, 125r, 126v.

<sup>38</sup> Household Book, fol. 125r.

<sup>39</sup> Household Book, fol. 122v, 138v.

<sup>40</sup> Household Book, fol. 122v. It is possible to trace the queen's journey: Leicester (11th February); Nottingham (13th February); Blyth (16th February); Doncaster (17th February); Pontefract (18th February); Sherbourn (19th February); Thorpe (21st February). She went by the Ouse river from Thorpe to York.

<sup>41</sup> Household Book, fol. 152r.

<sup>42</sup> Sir James Ramsay, *Genesis of Lancaster* (Oxford, 2 vols., 1913), i. 44, writes that the king "retired to Newcastle (11th April). There he was left in peace for three weeks." *C.P.R.*, 1307-13, p. 454, shows that Edward was at York on 5th April and at Newcastle on 12th April. The Household Book, fol. 149r, however, records payments to messengers for delivering letters of the queen to the king, payments being made at York on 1st April and 4th April, which may imply that Edward left York in March. At Newcastle Gaveston became ill. Miss Strickland, *op. cit.*, i. 333, n.2, records an entry from Edward II's household book which gives this information.

<sup>43</sup> Household Book, fols. 123r, 129r, 134r.

however, was at Thirsk on 19th April.<sup>44</sup> Some of her equipment followed later. John Curters, her yeoman of the spicery, remained at York for lack of transport for his office but eventually he came "with the aforesaid equipment to the queen at Tynemouth."<sup>45</sup>

The queen moved from York to Thirsk, from Thirsk to Darlington,<sup>46</sup> and from Darlington to Newcastle where Edward was staying with Gaveston. On 22nd April the porter of Isabella's larder received some of his wages at Newcastle.<sup>47</sup> On the following day, her saucer, John de Marthe, was paid for bringing the equipment of the saucery from York to Newcastle, a journey given as one of four days.<sup>48</sup> At Newcastle the queen discovered that she had left something important behind at York and sent John de Nauntele "from Newcastle-on-Tyne to look for certain secret things pertaining to the chamber of the said queen in the same place."<sup>49</sup>

Isabella did not stay long at Newcastle. She went on to Tynemouth. Why, we are not told. On 26th April she gave a cloth of gold to the priory church in that place.<sup>50</sup> On that day John du Char, one of her grooms, made a perhaps welcome appearance with her bathtubs, which he had brought from York.<sup>51</sup>

On 4th May the king and Gaveston, still at Newcastle, were surprised by the news that the Earl of Lancaster, the chief of the Ordainers, was approaching that town with a large force to seize the favourite. Abandoning their equipment, the king and Gaveston escaped down the Tyne river to Tynemouth.<sup>52</sup>

The chronicler Trokelowe says that, in Tynemouth, to save his favourite, the king proposed to flee with Gaveston by sea; neither the tears of his pregnant wife, who begged that he remain with her, nor the terrors of the sea, changed his resolve.<sup>53</sup> Lancaster, however, sent the desolate lady secret messengers who told her that he bore

<sup>44</sup> Household Book, fols. 124v, 125v, 127r (19th-20th April).

<sup>45</sup> Household Book, fol. 138r.

<sup>46</sup> Household Book, fols. 125v, 129r (20th-21st April).

<sup>47</sup> Household Book, fol. 125v.

<sup>48</sup> Household Book, fol. 126v.

<sup>49</sup> Household Book, fol. 139r.

<sup>50</sup> Household Book, fol. 152v.

<sup>51</sup> Household Book, fol. 127v.

<sup>52</sup> The simplest account of this incident is in *Vita Edwardi Secundi* (London, 1957, tr. N. Denholm-Young, p. 23) but the author does not say that the king and Gaveston fled to Tynemouth.

<sup>53</sup> Trokelowe, *op. cit.*, p. 75. Walsingham (*Historia Anglicana*, i. 131) also gives us this incident but, since he was not contemporary and drew most of his material for this period from Trokelowe, he cannot be considered an independent source.

her no personal ill-will but that he would not rest until he had rid the king of the presence of Gaveston.<sup>54</sup>

This sad little episode has appeared in various forms in the works of modern writers. Miss Agnes Strickland, the only biographer of queen Isabella, writes :

Isabella accompanied her lord and his favourite to York, and shared their flight to Newcastle [both statements being incorrect], where, not considering Gaveston or himself safe from the victorious barons, who had entered York in triumph, Edward, in spite of all her tears and passionate entreaties to the contrary, abandoned her, and took shipping with Gaveston for Scarborough. The forsaken queen, on the advance of the confederate barons, retired to Tynemouth . . . While the queen remained disconsolate at Tynemouth, Lancaster, who got possession of Newcastle, sent a deputation to his royal niece, "with assurances of her safety", explaining "that their sole object was to secure the person of the favourite."<sup>55</sup>

Professor Tout says that Isabella, "left behind at Tynemouth, fell into her uncle Lancaster's power";<sup>56</sup> Professor McKisack accepts the story of the messengers from Lancaster to the queen, but is naturally vague as to when the incident occurred;<sup>57</sup> Sir James Ramsay, having the queen flee from Newcastle to Tynemouth with the king and Gaveston, somewhat improves upon Trokelowe when he states that the king "took ship for Scarborough, with Peter, leaving the queen, who was expecting her confinement, behind him."<sup>58</sup> Since Isabella's child was not to be born until the following November, we may dismiss this last embroidery.

Did Edward, in fact, abandon his queen at Tynemouth? Did she receive secret messengers from the Earl of Lancaster? The Household Books provides no definite answer to either of these questions, but Isabella's somewhat precipitous departure from Tynemouth hardly suggests that she had no fear for her own safety.

Equipment of her various household offices was left at South Shields, next to Tynemouth, in the charge of four members of her household, until carriage could be found for it. Nicholas, her doorkeeper, was later sent from York, where Isabella fled, to county Durham to find this carriage, a mission in which he was successful. The equipment eventually arrived at York. The four men who guarded it at South Shields were paid for thirteen days, both for

<sup>54</sup> Trokelowe, *op. cit.*, pp. 75-76.

<sup>55</sup> Strickland, *op. cit.*, i. 332-333.

<sup>56</sup> Tout, *The Political History of England, 1216-1377* (New York, 1905), p. 250.

<sup>57</sup> McKisack, *op. cit.*, p. 25. She implies, however, that the incident took place before the king fled from Newcastle.

<sup>58</sup> Ramsay, *op. cit.*, i. 44.

staying with the equipment and for bringing it to the queen.<sup>59</sup> Andrew de la Marche, the page of Alice de la Legrave, the king's old nurse and a damsel of the queen's household, arranged for the carriage of the equipment of the queen's damsels "from Tynemouth to York in the month of May."<sup>60</sup>

The king, after leaving Gaveston at Scarborough castle, went to York. He was there on 16th May.<sup>61</sup> So, apparently, was the queen. On that day her controller, John de Fleet, received money for the expenses of her household in that place.<sup>62</sup> Fleet had come from Tynemouth to York with the equipment of the queen's great wardrobe. On 17th May the expenses of the horses of the carts of the great wardrobe were paid at York.<sup>63</sup> The household of the queen is fully functioning: one must presume that she came to York with John de Fleet.

It seems most unlikely that the king, had he wished, was unable to find room for his wife in the ship that took himself and Gaveston to Scarborough castle. It seems also unlikely that he would abandon his wife, whose capture by the Ordainers, even if he did not care particularly for her, would be an affront to his dignity. What does seem likely is that she would be safer if she made her way to York not in the company of the king or of Gaveston. Moreover, it is possible that a sea-voyage for a three-months pregnant woman was not conducive either to her health or to the safety of the heir-to-be that all medieval monarchs sought so ardently.

We do not know the whereabouts of the king from his departure from Tynemouth for Scarborough castle until his appearance at York. We may assume, but we cannot be sure, that the queen went with John de Fleet from Tynemouth to York. We are sure that both king and queen fled from Tynemouth to York, the king indirectly, the queen probably directly. The fact that they both seem to have arrived at York at approximately the same time suggests planning, not chance. Trokelowe and his copiers alone give the story of the abandonment of Isabella by her husband. What evidence the Household Book contributes suggests, at least to this writer, that Trokelowe exaggerated to emphasize Edward's devotion to Gaveston and that the king had at least some concern for the safety of his wife and his hoped-for heir.

<sup>59</sup> Household Book, fol. 138r.

<sup>60</sup> Household Book, fol. 123r.

<sup>61</sup> Ramsay, *op. cit.*, i. 45. *C.P.R.*, 1307-1313, p. 460 gives a writ *de intendendo* issued by the king that day at York.

<sup>62</sup> Household Book, fol. 123r.

<sup>63</sup> Household Book, fol. 128v, Fleet with the carts of the great wardrobe was at Darlington on 11th May and at Ripon on the following day, as he moved southward from Tynemouth to York.