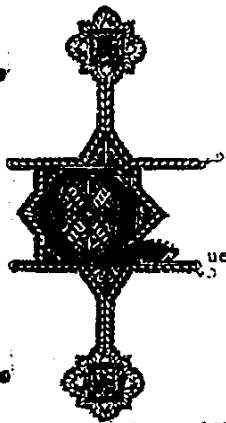


'The Property ... Woman'



Queen Guinevere,

wife of King

Arthur and mistress of Sir Lancelot, has charmed us in stories of the Round Table. Robin Hood and his Merry Men stole from the rich to give to the poor. But history doesn't tell us that from this point in time the phrase "the descent of woman" has acquired a more than genealogical significance.

The watershed for the female was the hunting - gathering era, which established the division of labor and the nuclear family. Up to that point, she had been no less free, no less self-re-

Chattel -- (see cattle) n. 1. an article of personal or movable property as distinguished from real property: furniture, automobile, livestock, farm equipment, or WIFE.

liant, no less inventive, no less vital a contributor to economic life than the male. No one could be a mere housewife in the days when no one had invented the house.

The medieval woman worked like a man, had the privileges of a man, and social status of a man. Life wasn't the rosy picture of Fox hunts, feasting, and an after dinner roll in the hay. Although the moral standard of the Puritans hadn't influenced their moral behavior, life styles were more or less set



by the landowner for his serfs. Women were not segregated from men as the keeper of the family, but were sent into the fields along with the men.

But once the male established himself as the head of the nuclear family occupying a base, he began to regard it as a mini-territory and recognized a special relationship with the children of his own particular woman, and, with the coming of agriculture, this relationship zoomed into focus.

She must never leave him now. He

made rules, much tighter ones than hunter-gatherers had made. It was the will of God, he said; and the other farmers agreed. He and the woman must be faithful to one another till death. It was tacitly understood, though, that he could put her away from him if she turned out to be barren or in any other way substandard. This relationship was sustained throughout most of history. Inasmuch as legally she could not leave him, nor own property

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