ECONOMIC CONDITIONS ON RAMSEY MANORS.

The Chartulary documents would, then, date from this period. The distress described in the Ramsey Chronicle, the confusion of the monastic life, the desolation of agriculture and the resulting alienation of lands after the withdrawal of Geoffrey's men, makes an extension of the farms as a means of temporary relief a not improbable measure. There is, however, no direct evidence in support of the theory in the Chartulary.

The composition of the various farms is practically the same in the two sets of documents. The full or fortnightly farm included: (a) of bread, 12 quarters of ground wheat, valued at 20 s., to be used for the monks and their guests; 2000 loaves (vokepanni) for the servants, valued at 12 marcs; (b) of ale, 50 mittæ of barley, valued at 32 s.; 25 mittæ of malt at 24 s.; (c) miscellaneous, 24 mittæ of fodder, 10 lbs. of cheese, 10 lbs. of lard, 2 treise of beans, 2 treise of butter, bacon, honey, 10 fressings, 14 lambs, about 125 hens, 14 geese, 2200 eggs, 1000 herring. Nine manors delivered also five cartloads of hay each. A full farm included, besides the tribute in kind, £4 in money. The sum of the money equivalents of the articles of the farm, together with the £4, made the total value of the full farm approximately £17; the value of all the farms together was about £221. The amount of food received at Ramsey was increased by certain "presents" made from the manors. The firmarius who had the management of the farms paid, besides the farm, 5 s. less 1 d. in food each year, and also at the three festivals of Christmas, Easter, and S. Benedict "presented" fixed amounts of cheese, butter, eggs, wheat, malt, and barley, and a number of hens. Once in the year he provided also thirty-six men to work in the vineyard.

The hypothesis is perhaps slightly supported by the fact that the amounts of the farms in the Chartulary tables (iii. 160) are in every case written over erasures. New, smaller amounts may possibly have been substituted for the older ones.

The statute of Abbot Aldwin (1091-1102), confirmed by Reginald (1114-1133) (iii. 163), calls the manors held by the cellarer farm manors, and their full (plena) farm corresponds with the fortnightly farm described in the second set of documents (iii. 230). The number of manors contributing supplies is not given in Abbot Aldwin's statute. A curtailment in the amount from each manor is, however, more probable than a curtailment in the number of manors, and probably, therefore, the documents either date from the same period or show unchanging conditions. Early references to the farm system occur in the Chronicle, 40, 206.

A mittæ was usually between 4 and 5 rings (16 and 20 bushels).

Taken from Economic Conditions on the Manors of Ramsey Abbey—A dissertation
Nellie Neilson 1898. Publ Sherman & Co
Philadelphia from Norn's Museum.
The manors owing a full or fortnightly farm were Elton, Therfield, Burwell, Elsworth, and Warboys. Slepe and Houghton rendered each two weeks' farm, of which one week was a "lentfarm." Weston, Brington, and Bithorn together rendered a full fortnightly farm. Cranfield, Upwood, Gravele, Broughton, Ripton, and Halywell rendered each a full farm of one week, half, that is, the farm of two weeks. Wistowe, Cnapwell, Hemingford, and Elington rendered lent farms (*lentefirmæ*), due in Lent and differing from the ordinary farm of one week only in the fact that 40 s. in money was given instead of 5 lbs. of cheese and 5 lbs. of lard.

Every farm manor, whether it owed a farm of two weeks, of one week, or a lent farm, gave 16 d. to the poor from the eleemosynary or Maundeacre on Maundy Thursday.¹ The monks had for their own use the vineyards and orchards, the cow and pig yards on the island, the fisheries of Wells and all the meres, ponds and adjacent waters. Hechmundgrave, near Ramsey, and the island of Ramsey were assigned to the cellarer, refectory and kitchen of the monastery, and the arable of Hechmundgrave and Ramsey to the sustenance of the fowls and cattle of the monks.

The assignment of manors to the convent as farm manors was arbitrary,² and any discrepancy in the various lists may be explained by a change in assignment. The classification of the other manors is more obscure. They were assigned to the chamber of the abbot³ and the barony,⁴ and might belong to both.⁵ The assignment to the chamber of the abbot was arbitrary,⁶ but in no case, probably, did a manor belonging to the barony owe a farm. The manors belonging to the chamber included, in the main, those that did not belong to the convent, and, like those assigned to the convent, were subject to change. Their functions were: to defend the church in pleas arising in lay or ecclesiastical courts, to supply the convent with bread and ale, and to cover any deficit in the farms.⁷

Occasional assignments were made to other departments of the abbey also.⁸ Rents were received by the almoner and pittancer, the

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¹ i. 233: "Ad mandatum pauperum in Cæna Domini sexdecim denarios de acra eleemosine." i. 458, . . . "Camerarius Rameseæ percipit duas acras frumenti, nuncupatas Maunde acras, in meliori loco et blado purissimo." . . . . . . . See also iii. 164.
² ii. 218, 232, 235, 240.
³ iii. 169.
⁴ i. 267.
⁵ iii. 169; i. 267. For example, Hemingford, Broughton, Chatteris, Ringsted.
⁶ ii. 219, 222, 223; iii. 291.
⁷ iii. 170.
⁸ Ramsey Chronicle, 301.
rents and church of Warboys belonging to the almoner alone.\(^1\) Other important obedientarii of the abbey, not connected with the farm system, were a prior, with full power in the abbot’s absence, a sub-prior, two monks, the abbot’s chaplains, witnesses, coadjutors, and advisors in all matters, and a monk who kept the seal of the abbey. External affairs were managed by two monks and the seneschal of the house who referred any doubtful matter to the abbot. Within the abbey one monk under the cellarer had charge of the bread, ale and wine; another of the bake-house and brewery, the hay and candles. All the money belonging to the chamber was given to three treasurers, to be reserved by them for the use of the monastery and to make good any deficit in the returns of the convent. To these treasurers the farmers, who paid a lump sum to the abbot as a composition for the proceeds of a manor, were accustomed to pay at certain times, being warned “to make no waste in wood or demesne, and to oppress no one unjustly whereby the chamberlain or almoner should receive an injury.”\(^2\) No manor belonging to the convent or chamber could be put at farm without the common consent of the convent, nor could any customary land be made free or any land alienated.

The judicial powers and special franchises of the abbot and the farms represent the external organization of the Ramsey fief, the relation of the manors as a whole to the abbot. Another connexion between the abbot and his men, more important for the study of economic conditions, existed within each manor in the work done by villagers on the lord’s demesne and the payments made to the abbot’s representative in the manor. The discussion of this phase of Ramsey manorial life will form the second part of this paper.

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CHAPTER II.

Economic Conditions in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries.

The special value of the study of economic conditions within the Ramsey manors lies first in the fact that the Chartulary extents, the chief sources of information, cover a large number of manors, and

\(^1\) ii. 204.

\(^2\) These firmarii should not be confused with the firmarii who managed the farms.
Hemingford and King’s Ripton one day so lost went to the lord, that is to say, was paid later; the next day went to the villata and was not paid.¹ In Houghton when Friday was a feast day the abbot could call for the ploughing on one of the preceding work days of that week, Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday, but in this case the ploughing counted both for itself and for the work that would otherwise have been performed on the substituted day.² During the important festival seasons ploughing was almost always omitted entirely, at Christmas sometimes for fifteen days, sometimes for eight only, at Easter for a week and occasionally longer, and at Pentecost for a week.³ In Halywell the conditions were very stringent; ploughing omitted at Christmas was made up in the following week.⁴ If bad weather interfered, the loss was sometimes to the lord, sometimes to the villata. Ploughing omitted in Therfield between Michaelmas and Christmas on account of rain or frost was not paid later, and between Christmas and Michaelmas a villein did not plough at all for the lord unless he ploughed for himself.⁵ In Warboys before Christmas he repaid all ploughings prevented by bad weather, unless it were by ice; after Christmas he repaid all delayed ploughings.⁶ In Broughton, when omitted for bad weather

From the extent of Shitlingdon it is evident that in the thirteenth century and before, the lord sometimes hired outside labour to help plough his land. "There is no one in the vill," the extent states, "nor ever has been, who, to defend his land, goes or should go to the ploughs of the abbot. Nevertheless, if any virgater or other man of the lord abbot should wish, on account of poverty, to drive or keep the lord's ploughs, he shall receive wages as though he were a hired outsider."n

(b) Miscellaneous Works. The greater part of the remainder of the villein's week work was spent in miscellaneous services directly or indirectly connected with agriculture. Beginning at Michaelmas when the harvest was stored, the year's work was generally divided into two great periods, from Michaelmas to the Gules, that is, the first of August, the beginning of harvest, and from the first of August to Michaelmas again. Minor divisions were often made in each period. On many manors week work was counted from Michaelmas to weeding, from weeding to haying, from haying to harvest; occasionally from Michaelmas to Christmas was a separate period. In harvest time the feast of the Nativity of the Virgin (September 8) sometimes marked a division. The lines of division were drawn according to the number of days of work a week required from the villein in each period.

The number of days of work a week, not counting the Friday ploughing, required between Michaelmas and the Gules of August on some of the important manors, was as follows:—In Stukeley, Barton, Girton, Whiston, Elton, two days, Monday and Wednesday; in Warboys, Abbot's Ripton, Upwood, and Houghton, three days, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday; in Cranfield, Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday.

In Burwell, Hemingford and King's Ripton the villein worked only one day a week besides ploughing. In S. Ives and Shitlingdon the system was more complicated. In S. Ives a villein worked
watch the night before a work day he was excused from work the next day. Some manors owed another service at the fair. The Hemingford villein collected in the wood of S. Ives, on a day in Passion Week chosen by himself, a bundle of rods or thorns, which he carried to S. Ives to help enclose the fair. In Wistowe the villein collected rods on Maundy Thursday and on the morrow of Easter, to make hurdles and a wall. The length of the hurdle made by each villein was nine or eleven feet; the wall was required to extend between two stall posts. The gathering of rods, thorns and reeds at other times in the year for the use of the curia was an important part of villein labour. Such material, gathered in the woods and marshes and often removed in a boat, was used for enclosures, sheepfolds, and for fences round the curia or in the fields to keep the cattle off the arable. In Houghton a virgater paid a bundle of rods and a bundle of thorns whenever demanded; with the thorns he made enclosures at any time when necessary, with the rods he made enclosures from Hokeday to Michaelmas. The washing and shearing of the sheep in early summer was usually done by the lord’s own servants or by hired labour. When performed by the villeins it was regarded as a favour on their part, though, probably, a favour that could not well be refused. The Holywell villein sent one man to shear ex gratia; the Warboys villein in the twelfth century received 4 d. for shearing. On Norfolk manors, where sheep farming was most extensive, guarding the lord’s fold was as important a duty as guarding the lord’s plough. When the Ringsted villein guarded

1 i. 290: . . . . "quotiens etiam vigilaverit in feria vel alio tempore ad latrones custodiendos, quietus ab opere fuerit, in crastino illius noctis." See also i. 301.

2 i. 290, 301, 347, 359. Compare i. 366: "In nundinis Sancti Ivonis claudent villatae de Houghtone et de Wythone medium parietem in ordine franc’ contra Leycestriam, et facient cleyas ad aperturas seldarum de Leycestria versus aquilonem; et colligent virgas ad idem, ubi provisum fuerit a ballivo abbatis. Ita siclicet quod virgas colligere debent ad diem proprium, et claudere ad diem firmarii."

3 i. 312; i. 416.

4 i. 367: "Quelibet etiam virgata colliget unum fescicum de spinis, et idem faciet sepem vel clausuram singulis temporibus anni, cum necessae fuerit. Et coliget, similiter, unum fescicum de virgis singulis temporibus anni. Sed non faciet sepem vel clausuram de virgis, nisi ab Hokeday usque ad festum S. Michaelis."

5 i. 302: "Et si dominus voluerit, super tempore tensionis bidentium ut singuli eorum mittent aliquem de suis ex gratia ad bidentes lavandos et tendendos."

6 iii. 256: "Et lavat ovces abbatis, et pondet, et habet quatuor denarios, cum sociis suis." Compare the Washyngpens of the Wistowe Rolls.
of days in the thirteenth than in the twelfth century. In the boons the change is still more evident; in the twelfth century there were, with the exception of an occasional præces and a few small special ploughings or reapings, no boons; in the thirteenth century there was a fully developed system of boons and a further addition of love boons. The differences in week-work and boons in the two countries may be most concisely expressed in the table on page 51.

The most marked increase shown by the table is clearly the universal appearance of the heavy obligation of precariae;¹ but the increase in week work, though less striking, is very appreciable. From Michaelmas to August week work increased in Hemingford, Upwood and Warboys by one day a week, in Shillingdon by one day every third week, in S. Ives by one day till Pentecost, after Pentecost by two days a week. Harvest work increased by one day in Broughton, by two days in Brancaster, Warboys and Barton, and slightly in Wistowe and Holywell. A corresponding increase occurred in the work of cottars and crofters.

The evidence gained from a comparison of the Ramsey extents is then distinctly in favour of an appreciable and steady depression in the condition of the villeins; it is against Mr. Seebohm’s theory that precariae were “the necessary corollary to the limitation of week work.” As the number of days on which a villein worked for his lord became fixed by custom, the lord, in Mr. Seebohm’s theory, demanded special services to fill up the gaps left by the decreasing week work. The week work and precariae thus stood to one another in inverse ratio, the one decreasing as the other increased. On Ramsey manors, however, not only did the week work not decrease between the middle of the twelfth and the middle of the thirteenth century; it even increased, along with the appearance and development of the boons. The obligations of the Ramsey villein in the thirteenth century seem to have been in every way heavier than in the twelfth century, and the fact already stated that the amount of land ad opus was probably somewhat greater, certainly not less, in the thirteenth than in the twelfth century points in the same direction of a depressed peasantry.

It is true that the account rolls of Wistowe show, in the fifteenth

¹ Before the thirteenth century extents the following references to præces occur: iii. 243, 278, 300, 301, 308, 312, 314. An early lovebone is mentioned in a Hemingford extent of the end of the twelfth century. iii. 243: . . . “Et crastina die erit ad luvebone” . . .
Another important group of customary payments was made to the abbot in commutation of old labour services, or of payments made in kind.

Fishsilver occurs also as fissilver, phisshe silver,\textsuperscript{1} haringsilver,\textsuperscript{2} money \textit{ad alloc}\textsuperscript{3} and \textit{ad piscem} or \textit{ad pisces emendos},\textsuperscript{4} and in the Hundred Rolls as fissilver.\textsuperscript{5} The amount of the payment was usually a fraction of a penny.\textsuperscript{6} Sometimes the total amount due from the villata is given in the extents.\textsuperscript{7} Sometimes a number of virgates are grouped together as a unit, five hides in Elton giving 4 \textit{d}. at Easter.\textsuperscript{8} In Wistowe a rotatory system prevailed; a virgater paid in each turn 2 \textit{d}. a turn falling sometimes once in two years, sometimes once in three.\textsuperscript{9} The payment was usually made in Lent, and was, perhaps, a commutation for fish once given to the abbot at that season. Occasionally, however, fishsilver was paid at Easter,\textsuperscript{10} and once at Christmas.\textsuperscript{11}

Brewingsilver is called also maltsilver,\textsuperscript{12} and a "toll for barley for making the ale of St. Mary."\textsuperscript{13} In the Hundred Rolls maltsilver\textsuperscript{14} and mitesilver\textsuperscript{15} occur. In Warboys certain lands called "malt lands" were held by a labour service tenure, but gave as fixed rents (\textit{redditus assisa}) 15 \textit{d}. for malt.\textsuperscript{16} The amount of the payment varied, but did not exceed a few pence.\textsuperscript{17} Maltsilver may have been a commutation on some manors of the malt delivered by the villein at Ramsey.\textsuperscript{18}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[1] i. 52. \item[2] i. 298, 322, and elsewhere. \item[3] iii. 248, and elsewhere. \item[4] iii. 254, 259, 271, 272. \item[5] Rot. Hund. ii. 603 (\textit{bis}), 626. \item[6] iii. 250, 254; ii. 31; i. 287, 298, and elsewhere. \item[7] iii. 248, 278; i. 371. \item[8] iii. 259; i. 487. \item[9] i. 356: \ldots \ldots "in quolibet turno ad fyssilver in Quadragesima dat duos denarios. Qui turnus accidit, aliquando semel in duobus annis, et aliquando in tribus." \item[10] i. 487. \item[11] i. 299. \item[12] i. 46: "De maltsilver dat decem denarios, vel faciet duas mittas grutii, vel bracei." \item[13] i. 489: \ldots \ldots "molendinarius colligit ova de qualibet domo ad voluntatem dantis et ad opus domini, per sic quod sint quieti de theoloneo braysie ad cervisiam Beate Mariae faciendam." \item[14] Rot. Hund. ii. 600 (\textit{bis}) 603. \item[15] Rot. Hund. ii. 601, 657. \item[16] Rot. Hund. ii. 602. \item[17] Rot. Hund. ii. 600, 657; R. C. i. 302, 335, 474, and elsewhere. \item[18] i. 345: \ldots \ldots "faciet unam mittam et dimidiam braceii, quam recipiet ad domum suam, bene mundatum; et illam carriabit apud Ramesiam; de cujus defectu, si in ipso fuerit inventus, braciatorii de suo proprio satisfaciet." See also i. 322, 335.\end{footnotes}
probably the same payment that was made by the greater tenants in place of watch and ward, and should therefore be included among the royal payments.\textsuperscript{1} Professor Vinogradoff, however, finds a difference. The customary wardsilver he considers a payment on the villein’s cattle.\textsuperscript{2} Wardsilver had certainly some connexion with cattle, but probably only in the method of its assessment. A villein was rated to wardsilver according to the number of animals he owned. In Hemingford the virgater or crofter who at Martinmas had cattle to the value of 30 d. gave a half penny for wardsilver.\textsuperscript{3} There was, however, a distinct payment on oxen, \textit{pro bove}, in Warboys and Wistowe,\textsuperscript{4} and a payment called \textit{busagium} on each cow in Hulme.\textsuperscript{5} Wardpenny may have been sometimes a commutation of the duty of watching at S. Ives in fair time.

\textbf{Pannage}, the payment for keeping pigs and for license to feed them on the mast of the manor woods, was practically universal. The villein paid for his pigs according to their age. In Warboys a pig of one year and over cost 2 d. pannage, a pig of a half year and over 1 d., and a pig of a quarter year and over a half penny.\textsuperscript{6} The amount of the pannage sometimes depended upon the time of year at which the pig was killed or sold.\textsuperscript{7} If the nuts were plentiful in the wood the villein sometimes kept his pigs at home, but paid his pannage as before.\textsuperscript{8}

Other payments were made by the villein to the abbot’s courts.

The curious payment called \textit{fulstingpound} is found on the manors of Cranfield, Burwell, Shitlingdon, Barton, Elton,\textsuperscript{9} and probably Therfield. By the payment of an annual sum, fulstingpound,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{1} See Rot. Hund. ii. 680, where wardsilver is paid to the bailiff of Touylsland Hundred from Hemingford Abbot’s.
  \item \textsuperscript{2} Villainage in England, 291.
  \item \textsuperscript{3} i. 390. Compare i. 354, 365, and elsewhere.
  \item \textsuperscript{4} iii. 292: “Pro quolibet bove de carruca, sive vacca lac prebente, tres obolos per annum, excepto primo anno, quo non dat nisi obolum pro bove sive juvenca.” Cf. iii. 269, 315.
  \item \textsuperscript{5} i. 402: . . . “si habuerint vaccas dant ad busagium, unum denarium.” . .
  \item \textsuperscript{6} i. 309: “Dat pannagium pro porco super annum duas denarios, pro porco dimidii anni unum denarium. Et pro porco unius quarterii obolum ; et licet porcos suos domi retinuerit in anno quo copia glandis fuerit, nihilominus pro eis dabit pannagium.”
  \item \textsuperscript{7} ii. 37: “Si ipsum (porcum) occiderit, vel vendiderit, inter Gulam Augusti et Purificacionem, (dabit) unum obolum die Sancti Martini pro pannagio. Si post Purificacionem nihil dabit.” Cf. ii. 43.
  \item \textsuperscript{8} See above, i. 309, and compare i. 345, 356.
  \item \textsuperscript{9} Rot. Hund. ii. 607.
\end{itemize}
removed from 40 acres. In King's Ripton, after the removal of the hay all the meadows were put in defense until the grain in the adjacent fields was ripe. The abbot's demesne might be sown in the meadow, the stubble being afterwards used as pasture by the lord and acremen.

The woods of the manor afforded pasture for the cattle, pannage for the pigs, and green and dry wood, turf and rods for cutting. In S. Ives there were two woods; one was the abbot's several, and in it no one could cut or pasture without permission; in the other all the men of S. Ives, Waldhirst, Wodehirst, Holywell, and Nidingworth had common. The Bishop of Ely had common there, also, in return for certain privileges of the abbot's men in Ely land. In Warboys none could take wood except at a fitting time to mend their ploughs. Of three woods in Upwood two were reserved from Michaelmas to Martinmas for the abbot alone, because during that time the nuts were most plentiful.

Besides meadows and woods many manors had strips of fen in which the cattle of the vill were pastured, and from which estovers and reeds were taken. Some meadows in the fen were surrounded with water and were reached by boat; to other meadows, used as pasture land, the cattle were driven along paths. The boundaries in the fens were very uncertain, and hence the pasture rights were the cause of many disputes. The many difficulties arising from the frequent intercommoning of Ramsey and neighbouring monasteries seem to point back to a time when the fen was held as common land, and the cattle of all the men of the region fed there "horn under horn."

In the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries rights

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1 i. 96: . . . "quadranginta acrarum, silicet Fenstokking, sed post blada asportata homines abbatis habent communam." . . .

2 i. 321: "Post falcationem etiam, et fenum asportatum, omnia prata apud Ryptone erunt in defensione, si dominus voluerit, quosque blada dictis pratis adjacentia fuerint de campis amota, ita quod nullus pascet in eis cum averiiis."

3 i. 332.

4 Ibid.

5 i. 283: "In alio bosco communicant omnes cum averiiis suis pascendis, de Sancto Ivone, Waldhyst, Wodehyst, Haliwelle, Nidingworths, dominus Elyensis Episcopus, et omnes sui tenentes de soca de Somersham." Cf. also Rot. Hund. i. 301: . . . "ubi omnes tenentes de soca soles vant communire cum averiiis suis."

6 i. 307.

7 i. 342.

8 i. 308, 332, 354.

9 i. 430: "Prata in marisco, silicet Crowelode . . . et cingitur dictum pratum undique aquis."

10 i. 164: . . . "et ut pastura eis esset omnibus communis, id est, cornu sub cornu."
of common were being differentiated and boundaries established, and innumerable disputes resulted. On the east, Ramsey quarrelled with Ely over Weremere near Benwickmere and Crowelodemore, so that in 1284 a perambulation of the bounds between Huntingdonshire and Cambridgeshire was made. Not until ten years later was an agreement reached, according to which the abbot and his tenants of Warboys, Upwood, Ravele, Wistowe, Broughton, and Bury were to common with horses, oxen, and cows in Weremere, while the bishop and his tenants of Somersham were to common in Crowelodemore. The abbot and his men secured a passage through the bishop’s marsh to Hollode, but in return the abbot’s lode between Nidingworth and the Great Bank, near Earith, was not to be too deep for the bishop’s cattle to pass to the pasture in Holywell. Fishing in the lode was to be common to all. In the north, Ramsey and Thorney quarrelled constantly over the marsh of King’s Delph, the first division of the marsh being made in the eleventh century, the last in 1253. Ramsey had other disputes with the Bardolphs in the northeast, and with Peterborough, Walton and S.awtrey in the west and northwest.

CHAPTER III.
THE ADMINISTRATION OF WISTOWE.

It has been already suggested that there are distinct limitations upon the value of extents as evidence for the exact economic conditions upon the manors at any given time. The extents were, in the main, written statements, made at long intervals, of the relation of the villagers to the lord. They served as a general guide for the definition of services, to limit the lord in a tendency to demand more than was customary and the villagers in a desire to give less. In them the will of the lord could play an important part by offering alternatives and equivalents of labour, and they could take no account of interruptions in the routine of manorial life arising from unusual and transitory circumstances. Neither could they give any information of permanent value concerning the output of the manor,

1 i. 201–218. 2 i. 197. 3 iii. 38.