INTRODUCTION STER OF GAME," now for the first the oldest as well as the most important we make that has come down to us from the Mid

HE "MASTER OF GAME," now for the first time in print before the reader, is the oldest as well as the most important work on the chase in the English language that has come down to us from the Middle Ages.

Written between the years 1406 and 1413 by Edward III.'s grandson Edward, second Duke of York, our author's personality will be known to every reader of Shakespeare's Richard II., for he is no other than the plotting Duke of Aumarle, previously Earl of Rutland, while the student of history will recognise in him the gallant leader of England's vanguard at Agincourt, where he was one of the great nobles who purchased with their lives what was probably the most glorious victory ever vouchsafed to English arms. He tells us in his prologue, in which he dedicates his "litel symple book" to Henry, eldest son of his first cousin Henry IV. "kyng of Jngelond and of Fraunce," etc.,

that he is Master of Game at the latter's court.

The greater part of the Duke of York's book is a careful translation from what is indisputably the most famous hunting-book of all times, i.e., Count Gaston de Foix's Livre de Chasse, or, as author and book are often called, Gaston Phoebus, which was commenced, as this puissant prince and patron of Froissart informs us in his preface, on May 1, 1387. Of the thirty-six chapters in the "Master of Game" only five are original, but these, as well as the numerous interpolations made by the translator, are all of the first importance to the student of venery, for they emphasise the changes—as yet but very trifling ones—that had been introduced into Britain in the three hundred and two score years that had intervened since the conquest when the French language and French hunting customs became established on English soil. To enable the reader to see at a glance which parts of the "Master of Game" are original, these are printed in italics in the old English text. The latter is reproduced from the Cottonian MS. Vespasian B. XII., dating from about 1420, exactly as it stands, with the addition of stops, and the correction of obvious clerical mistakes or repetitions.

Side by side with the old text a modernised version is printed, for the quaint English of Chaucer's day, with its archaic contractions, puzzling orthography and long obsolete technical terms is not always as easy to read as those who only wish to get a general insight into the contents of the "Master of Game" might wish. It was a difficult question to decide to what extent this text should be modernised. If translated completely into twentieth-century English a great part of the charm and interest of the original would be lost. For this reason many of the old terms of venery and the construction of sentences have been retained where possible, so that the general reader will be able to appreciate the "feeling" of the old work without being unduly puzzled. In a few cases where, through the omission of words, the sense was left undetermined, it has been made clear after carefully consulting other English MSS. and the French parent

It seemed very desirable to elucidate the textual description of hunting by the reproduction of good contemporary illuminations, but unfortunately English art had not at that period reached the high state of perfection which French art had attained. As a matter of fact, only two of the English MSS. contain these pictorial aids, and they are, as the reader can see by a glance at the reproductions from the best—an Oxford MS.—of very inferior artistic merit. The French MSS., on the other hand, are in several cases exquisitely