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THE DESIGN ON THE COVER

Is taken from a Seal of Edward, second Duke of York, figuring in the work of Francis Sandford, Lancaster Herald of Arms, published 1677.

THE AUTHORSHIP OF "THE MASTER OF GAME"

It is curious enough, considering the precise information to the contrary so easily accessible on the shelves of the British Museum, that, with a single exception,[1] all English writers who have dealt with this the oldest and most important hunting book in the English language, have attributed it persistently to a wrong man and a wrong period. This has been going on for more than a century; for it was the learned, but by no means always accurate, Joseph Strutt who first thrust upon the world, in his often quoted "Sports and Pastimes of the English People," certain misleading blunders concerning our work and its author. Blaine, coming next, adding thereto, was followed little more than a decade later by "Cecil," author of an equally much quoted book, "Records of the Chase." In it, when speaking of the "Master of Game," he says that he has "no doubt that it is the production of Edmund de Langley," thus ascribing it to the father instead of to the son. Following "Cecil's" untrustworthy lead, Jesse, Lord Wilton, Vero Shaw, Dalziel, Wynn, the author of the chapter on old hunting in the Badminton Library volume on Hunting, Hedley Peek, and many other writers copied blindly these mistakes.

As it is necessary to deal with these errors in another place,[2] we will proceed to give an account of the author of the "Master of Game," premising, as a guide to the reader, a brief recapitulation of the most important facts bearing upon this subject.

In the Prologue of our book (p. 3) the Duke of York tells us that he holds the position of Master of Game to King Henry IV., who was his first cousin, and he dedicates his book to the King's eldest son, Henry of Monmouth, who had been created Prince of Wales, Duke of Cornwall and Earl of Chester at Henry IV.'s first Parliament on October 6, 1399 (Wylie, i. 17).

The almost contemporary copy of the "Master of Game" known as the Shirley MS., so called because it was copied by the hand of the well-known scribe of that name (Add. MS. 16, 165), preserved in the British Museum since 1846, informs us in definite words that the "Master of Game" was written by Edward, Duke of York, who died at the battle of Agincourt. Now although Henry IV. reigned from 1399 until 1413, our author, the second of the York Dukes, succeeded to the dukedom of York only in 1402, at the death of his father, so that the time within which the book could have been written is narrowed down to 1402–1413. Even if we did not know, as we do from other sources, that Edward was made Master of Game only in 1406, we might surmise that he could not have occupied that post much sooner, for he was in Aquitaine, acting as Governor, when his father died, and when he did return to England he was almost immediately sent to command the English forces against the Welsh. In February 1405 he became involved in his sister's plot at Windsor against the King's life. He lay in prison in Pevensey Castle as a consequence for some time, and though it is by no means unlikely that he occupied his leisure in the dreary walls of his prison by translating "Gaston Phoebus," it was only after he had been made Master of Game by his much-forgiving royal cousin in the following year, that the work was dedicated to Prince Hal, who in 1406 was twenty years of age.

The latter circumstance bears out what other records show in a more positive form, viz., that

[1] Thomas Wright in *Reliquiae Antiquae*, i. 149:

[2] See Appendix: "Errors in English Literature on Ancient Sport."