CAP. PRIMUM.—THE PROLOGE

To the honure and reuerence
of yow my ryght worshipfull
and dred lord H [enry] by the grace
of God eldest sone and heire
vnto the hie excellent and
criston prynce H [enry] þe iiij by þe
forsaid grace Kyng of Ingelond

and of Fraunce, Prynce of Wales, Duc of Gueyne of Lancastre and of Cornwale and Erle of Chestere, I yowre owyn in euery houmble wyse, am me auntred to make this litel symple book which I recomaund and submytte to yowre noble and wise correccioun, the which book shal ȝif it lyke to youre forsaide lordshipe be named and called MAYSTER OF GAME. And for þis cause, for þe matere þat þis book treteþ of bene in euery sesounn most durable, and to my thenkyng to euery gentils hert oftenest[1] *most disportful of alle games þat is to say huntyng for þough it be so that havkyng with gentil houndis haukes for þe heroun and the Reuere be noble and commendable ȝit lasteþ it seelden at the most not passyng, half þe yere, And though men founden from Maij to Lammas*[2] *game ynow to hawke at þere myght no wight fynde no haukes to hauke with*[3] *but as of huntyng þere nys no sesoun of al þe yere þat game ne may in euery good contre ryght wel be founde and eke houndes redy to enchace it. And sith þis book shal be alle of huntyng which is so noble a game and heke lastyng þorgh alle þe yere to dyuerse beestis afiir þat þe sesoun axeth in gladyng of man, me þenketh I may wel calle it MAYSTERE OF GAME. And þough it be soo my dere lord þat many on couthen bettere han medled hem of this matere and eke more konnyngly þan I, ȝit two þingges þer be þat principally han bolded and caused me this werk to make on hond. The first is trest of ȝoure noble correccion to the which as by fore is said I submitte þis litel and symple book, socoundly þat þough I vnworþi be I am Maister of this game wiþ þat noble prince your fadere oure aldere souereyne and liege lord forsaid. And for I ne wold þat his hunters ne yours þat now be or shuld come here afiir weren vnknowe in þe profitenesse of þis art for þi* (sic) *shall I leue this symple memorial ffor as Chaucer saiþ in this prologe of the xxv.*[4] *good wymmen. Be wryteng haue men of*

[1] Shirley MS. has "most honeste and moste desporteful."
[2] August 1.
[3] As the hawks would be mewing and unfit to fly.
[4] The Shirley MS. has "XV."

CHAP. I.—THE PROLOGUE

To the honour and reverence
of you my right worshipful
and dread Lord Henry by the grace
of God eldest son and heir
unto the high excellent and
Christian Prince Henry IV. by the
aforesaid grace King of England

and of France, Prince of Wales, Duke of Guienne of Lancaster and of Cornwall, and Earl of Chester. I your own in every humble wise have me ventured to make this little simple book which I recommend and submit to your noble and wise correction, which book if it pleaseth your aforesaid Lordship shall be named and called MASTER OF GAME, and for this cause: for the matter that this book treateth of being in every season of the year most durable, and to my thinking to every gentle heart oftenest[1] most disportful of all games, that is to say hunting. For though it be that hawking with gentle hounds and hawks for the heron and the river be noble and commendable, it lasteth seldom at the most more than half a year. For though men find from May unto Lammas[2] game enough to hawk at, no one will find hawks to hawk with.[3] But as of hunting there is no season of all the year, that game may not be found in every good country, also hounds ready to chase it. And since this book shall be all of hunting, which is so noble a game and lasting through all the year to divers beasts that grow according to the season for the gladdening of man, I think I may well call it MASTER OF GAME.

And though it be so my dear Lord, that many could better have meddled with this matter and also more ably than I, yet there be two things that have principally emboldened and caused me to take this work in hand. The first is trust of your noble correction, to which as before is said, I submit this little and simple book. The second is, that though I be unworthy, I am Master of this Game with that noble prince your Father our all dear sovereign and liege Lord aforesaid. And as I would not that his hunters nor yours that now be or that should come hereafter were unknown in the perfectness of this art, for these shall I leave this simple memorial, for as Chaucer saith in his prologue of "The 25[4] Good Women": "By writing