

**ON TWO MANUSCRIPTS
OF LYDGATE'S GUY OF
WARWICK; PP.177-220**

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On two manuscripts of Lydgate's Guy of Warwick; pp.177-220 by F. N. Robinson

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F. N. ROBINSON

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OF
LYDGATE'S GUY OF WARWICK

BY
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The Author

ON TWO MANUSCRIPTS OF LYDGATE'S GUY OF
WARWICK.

LYDGATE'S writings are not of a quality to invite enthusiastic study, but they are of great importance for the investigation of the age just after Chaucer. They are widely scattered in manuscripts and early prints, and up to this time only a few have been published in satisfactory editions. A great deal remains to be done in the preparation of texts, the establishment of chronology, and the study of sources. Some account, therefore, of two neglected manuscripts will not be useless as a contribution to Lydgate bibliography.

My first plan was to print the *Guy of Warwick* from a manuscript now in the Harvard University Library, with a description of the volume and some account of the information it furnishes about the poet. This work was delayed, and I learned in the meantime of another copy of the poem at Leyden, which I have since been able to look up. I can now add a collation of the Leyden text, and a list of the contents of the Leyden manuscript.

There are two reasons for republishing the *Guy*, already edited by Zupitza. In the first place, the Harvard text represents a different group of manuscripts; in the second place, it is the work of an important scribe, John Shirley, and contains an interesting chronological rubric.¹

The Leyden manuscript is principally interesting for the additional testimony it gives to support Lydgate's authorship of some

¹ Zupitza's edition has escaped the notice of at least one Lydgate scholar, as appears from the following statement in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, XXXIV, 314: "Guy of Warwick (unprinted), about 1420, from the lost Chronicle of Girardus Cornubiensis." Zupitza pointed out (*Sitzb. der kais. Akad. der Wiss.*, Phil.-hist. Kl., Wien, LXXIV, 647) that the chapter of the Chronicle which Lydgate used is preserved and printed in Hearn's *Chronicon Prioratus de Dunstable*. A better text is accessible in the *Liber Monasterii de Hyda*, ed. by Edward Edwards (Rolls Series), 1866. Of the date I shall have more to say farther on.

doubtful pieces, such as the *Stans Puer ad Mensam*. It contains two poems now assigned to Chaucer (the balades "This wrecched worldes transmutacioun" and "Fle fro the press and dwell with sothfastnesse"), but nearly everything else is traditionally ascribed to Lydgate. The relation between the Leyden manuscript and Lansdowne 699 in the British Museum¹ is striking, and suggests the possible existence of a kind of canon of Lydgate's shorter pieces. The *Guy of Warwick* corresponds closely to Zupitza's edition, and I have printed simply a list of variant readings.

My work is necessarily incomplete in many respects. I could not construct a critical text of the *Guy*, or make a classification of the manuscripts, without having access to the copies which have not been fully described. I have also made no attempt to give complete lists of manuscripts and editions of the pieces considered. With the imperfect published catalogues at my disposal, such a bibliography could not be made satisfactory. But I have tried to give a full and serviceable report of the two manuscripts which I have examined. The investigation of the texts will have to be carried to completion in the English libraries. I hope it will be possible before long to publish some of the other pieces in the Harvard manuscript.

I. *The Harvard Manuscript.*

The Harvard MS., since it has been in America, seems to have dropped out of the sight of European scholars. The only reference to it that I have seen is in Furnivall's edition of *Gyl of Brentford's Testament*, etc. (printed for private circulation, London, 1871). In the prefatory note to *A Balade or two by Chaucer* four of Shirley's MSS. are mentioned, — Harl. 7333; Add. MS. 16,165; Ashmole, 59; Trin. Coll. Camb. R. 3.20. "Mr. Bradshaw," the editor goes on to say, "had seen a fifth Shirley MS. — of Lydgate's Poems — that the late Mr. Lilly had on sale for £120; but as no English buyer would give that sum for it, it went to the United States."² There

¹ See p. 188, below.

² Professor Kittredge called my attention to this statement. Mr. Furnivall had printed the same list, with the exception of the Harvard MS., in the *Athenaeum*, Feb. 18, 1871. Professor Skeat (*Oxf. Chaucer*, I, 25) mentions other Shirley MSS.

can be no doubt that this is the Harvard MS., for a letter of Bradshaw's to Lilly has been inserted in the volume.¹ Mr. Lilly appar-

¹ The letter is of interest enough in itself, and as a scrap of Bradshaw's correspondence, to be printed in full.

"King's College, Cambridge

"31st July 1866.

"Dear Mr. Lilly,

"I hope the book has reached you safely before this. I sent it off yesterday morning by fast train. I cannot thank you enough for allowing me the use of it to examine.

"I shall be sorry if the MS. goes really into private hands for it ought to be in the British Museum or in the Record Office. The Chronicle is the most interesting part — then the Guy of Warwick. The *Complaynt of Cryst* is common enough. We have two MS. copies here, & one printed by de Worde (somewhat altered). There is another (different) edⁿ., also by de Worde in the Grenville Library called the *Remorse of Conscience* (Part I, page 162.) It has been recently printed by the Early English Text Society from two copies at Lambeth, MSS. 306 and 853. Most of the copies however are imperfect. Yours wants *one* leaf at the beginning, and the leaf which now stands *first* should follow that which your binder has placed *second*.

"Of the *Three Kings of Coleyne* we have two or three MS. copies, besides one printed by de Worde.

"The *Government of Princes* I have not traced; I don't know whether it is the same as any ordinarily known treatise.

"Of the *Serpent of Division* by Lydgate we have an early printed copy.

"Of the *Guy of Warwick* there is a copy among the Laud MSS. in the Bodleian, & in the Brit. Museum MSS. Harl. 7333 (acc. to Ritson). Of the *Chronicle* there are heaps of MSS. everywhere.

"You will say why are those pieces which are commonest those which give this MS. its chief value. The reason is that few MSS. have anything like the full (I might almost say *gossiping*) rubrics which John Shirley the scribe of your MS. so much delighted in.

"It is of great importance to fix the date of a poem, particularly to get some landmarks in the poetical life of so voluminous a writer as Lydgate. Your rubric here tells you that it was written at the request of Margaret Countess of Shrewsbury &c. so that it cannot have been earlier than 1442. She was a daughter of the Earl of Warwick — and the books will tell you when she died, which gives a small compass for the possible date.

"The copy of the Chronicle shows that the *original* extended to the death of Edward III, that the reign of Rich. II was written in French in Paris, and translated into English by John Lydgate. The rubric on leaf clxxx verso is most interesting. I don't know that it is generally known that this part was written in Paris — the translation is certainly not ascribed to Lydgate in any other book I ever heard of.

ently sold the MS. to Mr. William Medicott of Longmeadow, Mass., and it was bought by the University Library at the Medicott sale, Sept. 2, 1878.¹

The volume is large quarto, rather closely clipped in binding, and contains 211 leaves. It is imperfect at both beginning and end, and lacks a leaf or more between fols. 43 and 44. Leaves 2 and 3 have been interchanged in binding. The whole is on paper; at the beginning is a parchment leaf covered with scrawls, and containing a few Latin verses.² The date cannot be far from 1450. Bradshaw seems to have regarded the whole MS. as the work of John Shirley, and his deliberate judgment in such a matter would be practically decisive. But two of the pieces (the *Gouvernaunce of Princes* and the *Serpent of Division*) seem to me to be in a different hand from the

"John Shirley is said by Stow to have died in 1456 at the age of 90. It is to him more than to any one else that we owe our knowledge of most of Chaucer's and Lydgate's smaller pieces. He is the only *circumstantial* copyist I know. There is one of his collections in the Bodleian (MS. Ashmole 59.2); one at least in the Harleian Colln. (I forget the number); another in the Brit. Museum MS. Addit. 16165; and one in Trinity College Library here. You will see something about him in Warton's *Hist. of Engl. Poetry*, vol. 2, page 389 (ed. 1840).

"I wish our Library had any funds for buying such things and then I should have no hesitation in asking them to buy it.

"Yours very much

"HENRY BRADSHAW."

¹ See *Catalogue of a Collection of Books formed by William G. Medicott of Longmeadow, Mass.*, Boston, 1878, p. 281.

² Floruit Arthuro sub rege, Britania quondam
Gallia sub Carolo, floruit illa suo,
Non minor his, ibat magnus godfridus in armis
Quo sese lactat Belgica terra vetus
Hector Alexander romanae gloria gentis
Iulius eximie nobilitate viri,
Et valida virtute pares dignissima turba
Quam vohat arguta fama canora tuba
Iosua dux Israell david Macabeus Iudas,
Quos Iudae tellus protulit alma viros
His domiti quondam reges pepere triumphos
Insignes et nunc fama perenna vohat.

(A list, it will be seen, of the Nine Worthies.)

