

**THE BOKE OF SAINT ALBANS:
CONTAINING TREATISES ON
HAWKING, HUNTING, AND
COTE ARMOUR**

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The Boke of Saint Albans: Containing Treatises on Hawking, Hunting, and Cote Armour by
Dame Juliana Berners & William Blades

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DAME JULIANA BERNERS & WILLIAM BLADES

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The

Boke of Saint Albans

BY
DAME JULIANA BERNERS

CONTAINING
TREATISES ON HAWKING, HUNTING,
AND COTE ARMOUR:

PRINTED AT SAINT ALBANS BY THE SCHOOLMASTER-PRINTER IN 1486

REPRODUCED IN FACSIMILE

With an Introduction by

WILLIAM BLADES

AUTHOR OF "THE LIFE AND TYPOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM CAXTON"

LONDON
ELLIOT STOCK, 62 PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

1899

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Alvin C. White

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"Hapness I am, therefore I me delight
To hunt and hawke, to nourish up and fede
The greyhounds to the course, the hawke to th' sight,
And to bestyre a good and lusty stede."

From SIR THOMAS MORE'S POEMS.

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33-102



Introduction.



SEVERAL independent printing presses were established in England before the close of the fifteenth century; and from them issued numerous books which are invaluable to all students of antiquity from the light they throw upon the social habits and literary progress of our nation. Of these it may safely be said that not one exceeds in interest that work of an unknown typographer, which is here presented in facsimile, and which, from the town in which it was compiled, as well as printed, is known to all bibliographers as "The Book of St. Albans." This work has always been a favourite, partly because our feelings are appealed to in favour of the writer who for centuries has taken rank as England's earliest poetess, and is still, in all our Biographical Dictionaries, reckoned among "noble authors;" and partly because we love mysteries, and a mystery has always enthroned the nameless printer. The subjects, too, so curiously alliterative—Hawking, Hunting, and Heraldry, have an enticing and antique flavour about them, being just those with which, at that period, every man claiming to be "gentle" was expected to be familiar; while ignorance of their laws and language was to confess himself a "churl."

As to the language and orthography of the book, it is a never-failing source of interest, being quite different from any other printed work of the fifteenth century, except the St. Albans' Chronicle from the same press. Among bibliographers it ranks as "*rarisimus*," the known copies being so few that they might probably be counted on the fingers of one hand.

Looking at the book, then, all round, it will be a convenient plan to consider these subjects separately, and to treat the volume in its four aspects of Authorship, Typography and Bibliography, Subject-matter, and Philology.





CHAPTER I.

Authorship.

HISTORIANS and Biographers, together with Librarians and Bookfellers, have a natural antipathy to anonymous books; and, wherever they can, are willing to accept the smallest amount of evidence as proof of paternity. It saves much trouble and avoids numerous errors in cataloguing, when a recognised name can be associated with an anonymous work. From this tendency a bad habit has arisen of attributing to particular writers books concerning which the evidence of authorship is doubtful, if not altogether untrustworthy.

In this very book we have a striking instance of such erroneous attribution. The three treatises, of which the book is made up, are quite distinct, and to a portion only of one of these is there any author's name attached. Yet that name, "Dam Julyans Barnes," altered by degrees to "Dame Juliana Berners," is now universally received as the name of the authoress of the whole volume. With even less show of reason she is credited with the authorship of a "Treatise on Fishing" for which there is not the shadow of evidence, that treatise having been added ten years later by Wynken de Worde, who, when reprinting the Book of St. Albans, thought that the subject of Fishing would complete the work as a Gentleman's Vade Mecum.

There are really four distinct tracts in the Book of St. Albans, although the two last being on Heraldry are generally counted as one.

The first is on Hawking; to this no name of the author is attached, but it has a prologue which no one acquainted with the other writings of the printer can doubt to be his. Of this we shall have more to say anon.

The second treatise is on Hunting; it is specially associated with the name of Dame Juliana Berners, and will require a more extended elucidation than the others.

Here the evidence of authorship is as good as for most pieces of fifteenth-century production—a period at which literary rights did not exist, and when the scribe, if at all acquainted with the subject upon which the book he was copying treated, did not scruple to interpolate his own ideas, and that without any egotistical vanity, but merely from a feeling that all books being written for the good of men, and not from vanity in the author, it was a duty to improve them where possible. But as improvement mostly meant the addition of something on the same subject taken from another manuscript, we have the constant occurrence of one MS. being a compilation of two or three others, and yet appearing under the name of the last compiler.

In this treatise on Hunting we have the express statement at the end of the twenty-fourth page—"Explicit Dam Julyans Barnes." This might certainly apply to the transcription only, but, when taken with Wynken de Worde's version, the probability is, that the lady compiled as well as wrote it. In the reprint by Wynken de Worde, only ten years later than the original, he varies the colophon thus:—"¶ Explicit dame Julyans Bernes doctrine in her booke of huntynge," the whole reprint ending "Enprynted at westmestre by Wynkyn the Worde the yere of thyncarnacōn of our lorde. M. CCCC. lxxxvij." So that he, a contemporary, evidently believed her to be the authoress. Later authorities attributed the whole book to her pen, but as they were in possession of no more evidence than we now are, and probably not so much, we should attach no weight to such statements, which were founded simply on a vivid imagination.

But what is known of the lady who is admitted to have compiled the twenty-four pages on Hunting? Who was Dame Julians Barnes? Here, unless a sentimental and inventive sympathy be employed to throw an artificial light upon the darkness, we are in total ignorance. A biography of her has certainly been written, and all our Dictionaries and Encyclopædias devote a page or two to her history, which, in 1810, under Haslewood's nurture, attained its full development. Even so far back as 1549, or nearly a century after her supposed death, the learned Bale, who wrote an account of all our English celebrities, allows his gallantry to bedeck her memory with garments fine. "Fœmina illustris!" he exclaims, "corporis et animi dotibus abundans ac forma elegantia spectabilis" (An illustrious lady! abundantly gifted, both in body and mind, and charming in the elegance of her mien). Considering that the name of the lady is the whole of the text upon which Bale had to build, this is by no means a bad specimen of imaginative biography, and became a good foundation for future commentators. The story, however, fared rather badly at first; for Holinshed, in 1577, while echoing Bale very exactly, is made, by a curious error of the printer, who mistook the letters *rn* for *m*, to call the authoress Julyan Bemes; while Baker in his Chronicles, too careless even to refer to the original text, adds another blunder to the story, and, thinking that Julyan must be a man's name, dubs the authoress "a gentleman of excellent gifts, who wrote certain treatises of Hawking and Hunting."

Chauncy, in 1700 (History of Hertfordshire), restored her sex to the lady, and then set to work upon making a family history for her. His first discovery was that, being a "Dame," she was of noble blood. Finding also that the family name of Lord Berners was, in olden time, spelt occasionally Barnes, he soon supplied a father for our authoress, in the person of Sir James Berners. And so the game of making history went on merrily up to the time of Joseph Haslewood, who, in 1810, reprinted Wynken de Worde's