

**CAXTON'S BOOK OF
CURTESYE:
PRINTED AT WESTMINSTER
ABOUT 1477-8 A.D.**

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Caxton's Book of Curtesye: Printed at Westminster about 1477-8 A.D. by Frederick J. Furnivall

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FREDERICK J. FURNIVALL

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Caxton's
Book of Curtesye.

Early English Text Society.

Extra Series. No. 111.

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Caxton's
Book of Curtesye,

PRINTED AT WESTMINSTER ABOUT 1477-8 A.D.

AND NOW REPRINTED,

WITH TWO MS. COPIES OF THE SAME TREATISE, FROM
THE ORIEL MS. 79, AND THE BALLIOL MS. 354.

EDITED BY

FREDERICK J. FURNIVALL, M.A.

EDITOR OF 'THE BARNES BOOK, ETC.' ('MANNERS AND MERE IN OLDEN Tyme'),
ETC. ETC.

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PREFACE.

THOUGH no excuse can be needed for including in our Extra Series a reprint of a unique Caxton on a most interesting subject, yet this Book of Curtesye from Hill's MS. was at first intended for our original series, I having forgotten lately that Caxton had written to 'lytyl Iohn,' though some months back I had entered the old printer's book for my second collection of *Manners and Meals* tracts for the Society. After the copy of Hill—which Mr W. W. King kindly made for his fellow-members—had gone to press, Mr Hazlitt reminded me of the Caxton, and its first and last lines in Mr Blades's admirable book showed that Hill's text was the same as the printed one. I accordingly went to Cambridge to copy it, and there, before tea, Mr Skeat showed me the copy of *The Vision of Piers Plowman* which the Provost and Fellows of Oriel had been good enough to lend him for his edition of 'Text B.' Having enjoyed the vellum Vision, I turned to the paper leaves at its end, and what should they contain but an earlier and better version of the Caxton that I had just copied part of! I drank seven cups of tea, and eat five or six large slices of bread and butter, in honour of the event,² and Mr Skeat, with his never-

Browc!

¹ Mr Bradshaw was kind enough to copy the rest, and to read the whole of the proof with Caxton's original.

² I must be excused for not having found the poem before, as it is not in the Index to Mr Coxe's Catalogue. In the body of the work it is entered as "A father's advice to his son; with instructions for his behaviour as a king's or nobleman's page. ff. 88, 89, 78. Beg.

Kepeth clene and leseth not youre gera."

failing kindness, undertook to copy and edit the Oriel text for the Society. With three texts, therefore, in hand, I could not well stick them at the end of the Postscript to the *Babees Book, &c.*,¹ and as I wanted Caxton's name to this Book of Curtesaye to distinguish it from what has long been to me THE Book of Courtesy,—that from the Sloane MS. 1986, edited by Mr Halliwell for the Percy Society, and by me for our own E. E. T. S.—and as also Caxton's name is one 'to conjure withal,' I have, with our Committee's leave, made this little volume an Extra Series one, and called it Caxton's, though his text is not so good as that of the Oriel MS.

On this latter point Mr Skeat writes :

"The Oriel copy is evidently the best. Not only does it give better readings, but the lines, as a rule, run more smoothly ; and it has an extra stanza. This stanza, which is marked 54, occurs between stanzas 53 and 54 of the other copies, and is of some interest and importance. It shows that Lidgate's pupil, put in mind of Lidgate's style by the very mention of his name, introduces a ballad of three stanzas, in which every stanza has a burden after the Lidgate manner. The recurrence of this burden no doubt caused copyists to lose their place, and so the stanza came to be omitted in other copies. Its omission, however, spoils the ballad. Both it and the curious lines in Piers Ploughmans Crede,

For aungells and arcangolls · all þei whijt vsep
And alle aldermen · þat ben *ante tronum*,

i. e. all the elders before the throne, allude to Rev. iv. 10. This Crede passage has special reference to the *Carmelites* or *White Friars*.

"The first two leaves of the Oriel copy are misplaced inside out at the end ; but this is not the only misarrangement. The poem has evidently been copied into this MS. from an older copy having a leaf capable of containing *six stanzas at a time* ; which leaves were out of order. Hence the poem in the Oriel MS. is written in the following order, as now bound up, Stanzas 11 (l. 5)—18, 25—30, 37—42, 19—24, 49—54, 31—36, 43—48, 55—76, 8—11 (l. 4), 4 (l. 5)—7, 1—4 (l. 4)."

¹ The Treatises in *The Babees Book, &c.*, and the Index at the end, should be consulted for parallel and illustrative passages to those in Caxton's text.

As an instance of a word improved by the Oriel text, may be cited the '*brecheles feste*' of Caxton's and Hill's texts, l. 66, and l. 300,

ffor truste ye well ye shall you not excuse
ffrom *brecheles feste*, & I may you espye
Playenge at any game of rebawdrye.—*Hill*, l. 299—301.

Could it be 'profitless,' from A.-Sax. *bréc*, gain, profit; or 'breechless,' a feast of birch for the boy with his breeches off? The latter was evidently meant, but it was a forced construction. The Oriel *byrcheley* set matters right at once.

Another passage I cannot feel sure is set at rest by the Oriel text. Hill's and Caxton's texts, when describing the ill-mannered servant whose ways are to be avoided, say of him, as to his hair, that he is

Absolon with disheveled heres smale,
lyke to a prysoner of saynt Malowes,¹
a sonny busshe able to the galowes.—*Hill*, l. 462.

For the last line the Oriel MS. reads,

a sonny bush myght cause heyn to goo louse,

and Mr Skeat says,—“This is clearly the right reading, of which *galowes* is an unmeaning corruption. The poet is speaking of the *dirty* state of a bad and ill-behaved servant. He is as dirty as a man come out of St Malo's prison; a sunny bush would cause him to go and free himself from minute attendants. A 'sunny bush' probably means no more than a warm nook, inviting one to rest, or to such quiet pursuits as the one indicated. That this is really the reading is shown by the next stanza, wherein the poet apologizes for having spoken too bluntly; he ought to have spoken of such a chase by saying that he goes *a-hawking* or *a-hunting*. Such was the right euphemism required by 'norture.'”

If this is the meaning, we may compare with it the old poet's reproof to the proud man:

¹ An allusion to the strong castle built at St Malo's by Anne, Duchess of Bretagne.—Dyce.