

**THREE FIFTEENTH-CENTURY  
CHRONICLES, WITH HISTORICAL  
MEMORANDA BY JOHN STOWE, THE  
ANTIQUARY, AND CONTEMPORARY  
NOTES OF OCCURANCES WRITTEN BY  
HIM IN THE REIGN OF QUEEN ELIZABETH**

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Three Fifteenth-Century Chronicles, With Historical Memoranda by John Stowe, the Antiquary, and Contemporary Notes of Occurances Written by Him in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth by John Stowe & James Gairdner

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EDITED BY JAMES GAIRDNER.

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## PREFACE.

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SOME years ago, while engaged on my edition of the *Paston Letters*, I was anxious to examine as far as possible every original source of information for the reigns of Henry VI. and Edward IV.; and, having found some unedited matter relating to those reigns in two MSS. in the Lambeth Library, I recommended them to the Council of the Camden Society for publication. My proposal was at once agreed to; but in the meantime, a more interesting MS. having presented itself relating to the same period, the work was kept back to make way for *The Historical Collections of a Citizen of London*, which appeared in 1876. I have, however, steadily kept in view the fulfilment of my original promise to the Society; and the result is that I have been led to do somewhat more than I originally contemplated. For it will be seen that the present volume, besides containing contributions from the two Lambeth MSS. above referred to, includes an unpublished chronicle of the same period, from a MS. in the College of Arms. Moreover, I had scarcely begun to examine the work seriously, when I found that it was quite impossible to omit the bulk of John Stowe's Memoranda in the Lambeth MS. 306; and, although they extend to a much later period, these also have been inserted.

But I must now speak of this MS. more particularly, as it furnishes the greater part of the materials of this work.

MS. 306 in the Lambeth Library is a stout folio volume in an ancient ornamental binding, now very much worm-eaten. The

back has been renewed; but the two wooden boards covered with stamped leather preserve their original appearance. The clasps, however, which once held them together, are gone, the brass nails alone remaining in the one cover, and part of the ornamental fittings on which they clasped still existing in the other. The design on each cover consists of lozenge-shaped compartments filled with foliated ornaments and a framework parallel with the edges, in which the Beaufort portcullis, a branch of oak with acorns, a crowned lion and a dragon, are discernible. It is quite evidently a Tudor binding.

The contents of the volumes are various in character. The handwritings are partly of the fifteenth and partly of the sixteenth century. The short Chronicle printed in this volume stands at the beginning. It was probably penned in the reign of Edward IV. not long after the date to which it comes down. Marginal notes, however, have been added to the text in a hand of Henry VIII.'s time, and the text itself is occasionally corrected with additions and insertions in the same hand. Where these corrections are important they will be found noted in footnotes in this volume. The same writing also can be traced in a number of other articles throughout the volume, chiefly of the nature of medical receipts, and in some notes on the inside of the cover, which refer to the dates of events as late as the middle of the reign of Henry VIII. It must have been during the time of this penman that the MS. was bound; for several of his marginal notes in the chronicle are mutilated, owing to the edges of the paper having been cut by the binder; yet it is clear that he wrote the memoranda inside the cover after the book was bound.

The Short Chronicle, though it looks like one, is really three short chronicles written or transcribed consecutively by the same pen. The first is a very brief abridgment of the well-known

Chronicle of the Brute, beginning the history of Albion with the fabled Albina, and ending in the first year of Henry IV. This composition, it is almost needless to say, is absolutely destitute of historical value; but as "the Brute" itself has never yet been edited, and is consequently inaccessible to all but students of black letter and readers of mediæval MSS., this epitome of what was once the most popular history of England may not be without interest. One point which may strike the reader as curious, and which might even be worth a little investigation, if any one could afford to spend some time in the comparison of various MSS., is the considerable addition here made, through transcribers' errors and otherwise, to the list of mythical kings in Geoffrey of Monmouth. Thus we have "Gynder" instead of "Guiderus," "Grandobodian" instead of "Gorbonian," "Hesydere" for "Elidurus," "Higamus" for "Vigenius," and a number of other *aliases* which are certainly quite as legitimate names as their prototypes for utterly unreal personages. The most curious transformation perhaps is that of Aurelius Ambrosius into Aurylambos.

Immediately following the abridged "Brute" we have a copy of Lydgate's verses on the Kings of England, showing some slight variations from the text printed in the "Collections of a London Citizen."

After which comes one of the regular city chronicles, beginning with the keepers and bailiffs of London in the time of Richard I., and a register of mayors and sheriffs from the first institution of the mayoralty in the time of King John. It is in this composition, and of course in the latter part of it only, that the real historical value of the work consists; for down to the reign of Henry V. the record of each mayor's year is a very bald one, and contains nothing that is not found elsewhere. The catalogue of civic officers itself however may possibly be of some slight value; for