

**GUALTERI MAPES. DE  
NUGIS CURIALIUM  
DISTINCTIONES QUINQUE**

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Gualteri Mapes. De nugis curialium distinctiones quinque by Thomas Wright

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## P R E F A C E.

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THE work which is now for the first time printed is the most authentic of all those which have been attributed to Walter Mapes, and certainly the most important. It is the book in which this remarkable man seems to have amused himself with putting down his own sentiments on the passing events of the day, along with the popular gossip of the courtiers with whom he mixed. It contains almost the only authentic details we have relating to the life of its author, besides a great mass of historical anecdotes which are entirely new to us. In fact, the whole book is one mass of contemporary anecdote, romance, and popular legend, interesting equally by its curiosity and by its novelty.

In my *Biographia Britannica Literaria* (the Anglo-Norman Period), I have given a summary of the information with which Mapes in this treatise furnishes us relating to himself, and I need do little more than repeat here what I said on that occasion. The correct form of his name appears to have been Map,\* but as the Latinised form Mapes has obtained a very extensive degree of popularity, I have thought it was perhaps better to retain it. He was a native of the borders of Wales, probably of Gloucestershire or Hereford-

\* He gives himself this name in the last chapter of his treatise *De Negis Curialium*, and it is so spelt in all the most authentic documents.

shire;\* and his parents, he tells us, had rendered important services to King Henry both before and after his accession to the throne.† Mapes studied in the University of Paris, where, as he informs us, he was witness to many of the tumults between the scholars and the townsmen;‡ and he tells us in another part of his work that he had attended the school of Girard la Pucelle,§ which was probably in or soon after 1160, when that eminent teacher is said to have commenced lecturing there. Soon after this he appears to have been at the court and in the favour of the English king. He was familiar in the household of Thomas Becket, and repeats conversations he had with that remarkable man, before he was made archbishop of Canterbury,|| which event occurred in 1162. In 1173 Walter Mapes presided at the assize at Gloucester as one of the judges ambulant,¶ and he can hardly then have been less than thirty years of age. In the same year he was with the court at Limoges, and had the care of providing for Peter archbishop of Tarentaise;\*\* and he appears to have accompanied the king during his war against his sons.†† The next event of his life of which he gives us any notice was a mission to

\* He terms himself a *Marebor* (*qui marebor sum Walensibus*. De Nug. Cur. Distinc. ii. c. 23), and calls the Welshmen his countrymen (*compatriotie nostri*, Distinc. ii. c. 20). He tells so many Herefordshire legends in this book, that we may be led to suppose him of that county. He calls England *mater nostra*, Distinc. iv. c. 1.

† De Nug. Cur. Distinc. v. c. 6.

‡ De Nug. Cur. Distinc. v. c. 5.

§ De Nug. Cur. Distinc. ii. c. 7. *Vidi Parisius Luennam Hungarum in schola magistri Girardi Puelles*.

|| De Nug. Cur. ii. c. 23.

¶ Madox, Hist. Excheq. vol. i. p. 704, from the Mag. Rot. 19 Hen. II. Giraldus Cambrensis informs us that Mapes frequently acted with the judges *itinerant*.

\*\* De Nug. Curial. Distinc. ii. c. 3.

†† De Nug. Cur. Distinc. iv. c. 1.

the court of Louis le Jeune, king of France, with whom he lived a short time on intimate terms; and soon after this he was sent by the English king to attend the council which had been called by pope Alexander III. at Rome, and in his way was hospitably entertained at the court of Henry the Liberal, count of Champagne.\* At this council Mapes was held in so much consideration that he was deputed to examine and argue with those deputies of the then rising sect of the Waldenses, who had been sent to Rome to obtain the papal authority for preaching and reading the Scriptures in the vernacular tongue.† This council was probably the Lateran council held in the year 1179. His information relating to the unfortunate Waldenses is not the least interesting chapter in the book.

Walter Mapes informs us that he was the personal enemy of the king's illegitimate son Geoffrey, afterwards archbishop of York, but that his own great influence with his sovereign shielded him from his resentment; Mapes had resisted several of Geoffrey's acts of extortion and injustice, and had answered his threats with cutting sneers. When Geoffrey was elected to the see of Lincoln, about the year 1176, Mapes was appointed to succeed him as canon of St. Paul's,‡ and with this appointment he also held that of precentor of Lincoln.§ He likewise held many other smaller ecclesiastical preferments, among which was the parsonage of Westbury in Gloucestershire. ||

\* De Nug. Cur. Distinc. v. c. 5.

† The account of his interview with the Waldenses is given in this book De Nug. Cur. Distinc. i. c. 31.

‡ De Nug. Cur. Distinc. v. c. 6.

§ In a charter of Ralph de Diceto, given in Tanner, Mapes is described as *Lincolniensis ecclesie precentor et noster concanonicus*.

|| Giraldus Cambrensis, *Spec. Eccles.* in the Appendix to the Introduction to the Latin Poems commonly attributed to Walter Mapes, pp. xxxi. and xxxiv.