

**LEGENDA AUREA - LÉGENDE DORÉE -  
GOLDEN LEGEND: A STUDY OF  
CAXTON'S GOLDEN LEGEND WITH  
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ITS RELATIONS  
TO THE EARLIER ENGLISH PROSE  
TRANSLATION. DISSERTATION**

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**PIERCE BUTLER**

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A STUDY OF CAXTON'S GOLDEN LEGEND WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE  
TO ITS RELATIONS TO THE EARLIER ENGLISH  
PROSE TRANSLATION

A DISSERTATION

PRESENTED TO THE BOARD OF UNIVERSITY STUDIES OF  
THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY FOR THE  
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

PIERCE BUTLER

FELLOW IN ENGLISH AT THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

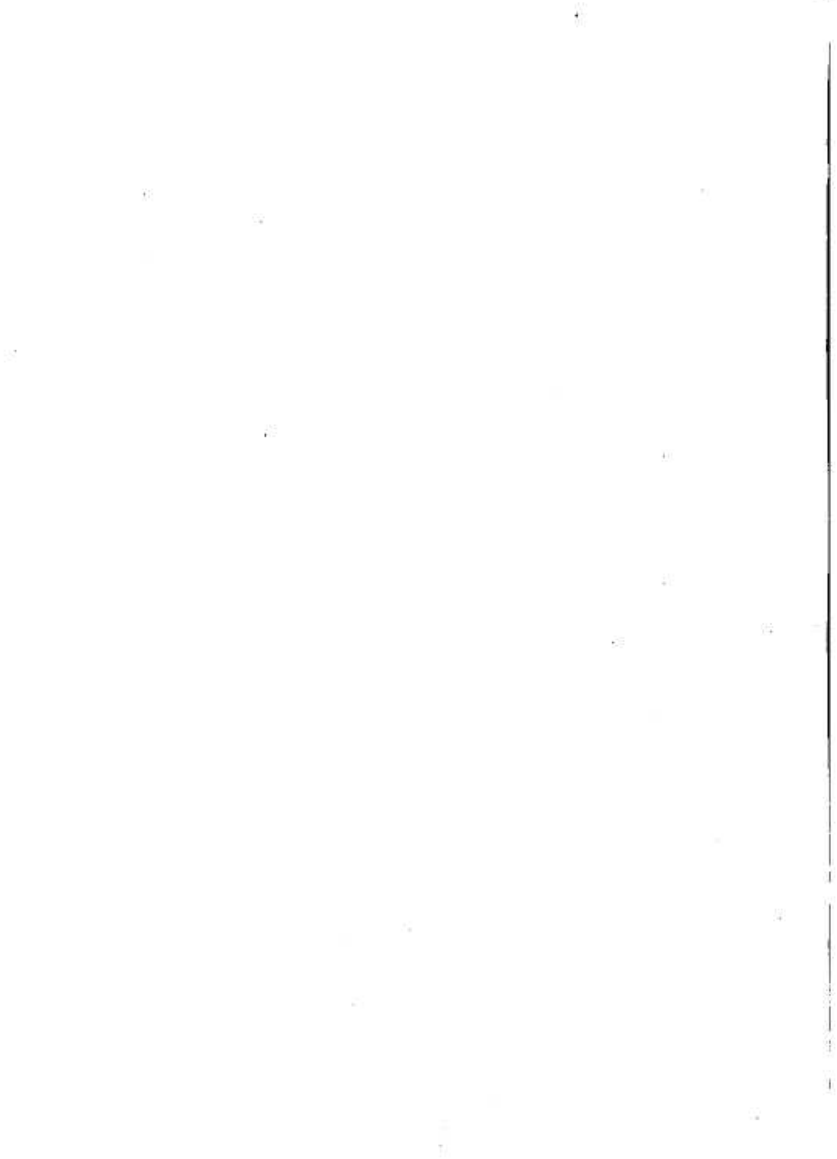
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- FURNIVALL: *Chaucer Society*, 1875, 2nd series, No. 10, p. 207: text of de Vignay's and Caxton's *Cecile.*

<sup>1</sup>I have not attempted to give anything like an exhaustive bibliography, for none could be considered at all adequate which ignored the special references for each of the legends given below, and a bibliography of *St. Patrick* alone would fill several pages. I here give, therefore, merely a brief list of the chief works consulted. The references in the text itself are generally explicit enough in themselves.



- BLADES:** *Life and Typography of Wm. Caxton*, London, 1861-63. Cf. also the smaller revised ed. of 1882. Both are mines of information; references in the text are usually to the larger ed.; see also the indices.
- MURATORI:** *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*—ed. Ludovicus Ant. Muratorius, Mediolani, 1726. Contains the *Chronicon Januense* of Voragine, vol. ix.
- TOURON:** *Histoire des Dominicains*, Paris, 1743. For Voragine see vol. i, p. 503 seq.; this is the fullest account except that by Echard.
- ECHARD:** *Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum*, Paris, 1719 seq., Echard and Quéatif, quite invaluable for information about Voragine and his contemporaries.  
*Histoire Littéraire de la France*, Paris, 1733-1881, vol. xiv, p. 218; vol. xviii, 471-2; vol. xxv, 27, 29-30—on Belet and de Vignay.
- WARTON:** *Hist. of Eng. Poetry*, ed. Hazlitt, London, 1871, i, 246 f.; 294; iii, 104-5; and see Index.
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# LEGENDA AUREA—LÉGENDE DORÉE— GOLDEN LEGEND.

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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

The purpose of this study is, in the main, to show the sources and the method of composition of Caxton's *Golden Legende*, and this portion of the work is to be as careful and elaborate as circumstances will permit. But the many fascinating subsidiary questions connected with the *Legenda Aurea* could not be passed by in silence; and to these I shall devote some attention. Many of them, moreover, are so intimately associated with the main problem, and have been so imperfectly treated by the few who have noticed them at all, that I must believe my present method to be fully vindicated by these conditions. I have observed the following divisions in this study.

Chapter I. *Voragine, and the Latin versions*: A. *Voragine's Life and Works*; B. *Date of the Legenda Aurea*. C. *Its character and scope*; D. *Literary History*; E. *The standard editions*. Chapter II. *French Versions*: A. *The so-called translation by Jean Belet*; B. *Jean de Vignay's translation and its revisions*. Chapter III. *English Prose Versions*: A. *The 15th century version, in MS.*; B. *Caxton's Golden Legende, his method of Composition and sources*. Chapter IV. *The "Etymologies" in Voragine, Vignay, and Caxton*.

## CHAPTER I.—VORAGINE, AND THE LATIN VERSIONS.

A. The essential facts in the life of Jacobus de Voragine have been so frequently given that I shall here rehearse them only in the briefest manner.

Jacobus a Voragine, or de Varagine (as he seems to style himself), was born at Varaggio, a small town on the Gulf of Genoa,

not far from Savona. We know nothing of his parentage or early life; indeed, we do not even know the date of his birth. He was probably born about A. D. 1230, as he speaks of a solar eclipse occurring while he was still a child, in 1239 (*Chronicon Januense*, XII, cap. 4). From the same authority (*Ibid.*, cap. v), we learn that he was still a mere youth when he entered the Dominican Order, in 1244. Under the Dominicans he soon distinguished himself by his zeal for study and by his exemplary conduct. Later on he won some reputation as a professor of theology in various houses of his order; but his talent for preaching—especially cherished by the "Fratres Praedicatorum"—was what drew special attention to him. In 1267 he became Provincial of his order in Lombardy, and held this office for eighteen years, when he became Definitor. In 1288, as he tells us with pardonable pride (*Chron.* XII, cap. 6), he was empowered by Pope Nicholas IV (through the Emperor Henry IV) to absolve the Genoese from the papal censures which they had incurred by aiding the Sicilians in their revolt against Charles II of Naples.

About this time the Archbishop of Genoa died, and the chapter chose Jacobus a Voragine to succeed him. But the humble Dominican declined the honor, to the great regret of his fellow-citizens, and the Pope appointed Obezson, ex-patriarch of Antioch. He died in 1292, and the chapter again chose Jacobus for their Archbishop, unanimously; the Senate of Genoa voted its approval of the choice; the people rejoiced at it; and finally the reluctant monk yielded to the public will and became Archbishop of Genoa.

He fully appreciated the importance of his new duties, saw how his influence might be strong for peace in his diocese, then distracted by the violent factions of the Guelfs and Ghibellines, and exerted himself to quell these unfortunate troubles. It is one of the few things he tells us about himself, that he actually succeeded in patching up a peace between the warring factions. But the echoes of the *Te Deum*, chanted to celebrate the peace for which he had worked three years, were hardly gone before the conflict broke out again, and the streets of Genoa became again veritable fields of battle. It is said that the Archbishop once averted a conflict by throwing himself between the combatants at the risk of his life. In short, he was a model Archbishop, and a truer and