

**KYNGE JOHAN. A  
PLAY IN  
TWO PARTS**

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Kynge Johan. A Play in Two Parts by John Bale

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**JOHN BALE**

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PLAY IN  
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K Y N G E J O H A N .

A P L A Y

I N T W O P A R T S .

BY JOHN BALE.

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EDITED BY J. PAYNE COLLIER, ESQ. F.S.A.  
FROM THE MS. OF THE AUTHOR IN THE LIBRARY OF HIS  
GRACE THE DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE.



L O N D O N :

P R I N T E D F O R T H E C A M D E N S O C I E T Y

B Y J O H N B O W Y E R N I C H O L S A N D S O N , P A R L I A M E N T S T R E E T .

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## INTRODUCTION.

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THE following dramatic performance is from the original Manuscript in the Library of his Grace the Duke of Devonshire, a member of the Camden Society, who with characteristic liberality has permitted it to be printed.

About half of it, including all the later portion, is in the handwriting of John Bale, Bishop of Ossory, and the rest is throughout carefully corrected by him, with various passages of greater or of less length inserted, which, after the copy had been made by the scribe he employed, he thought it right to add, to render the production more complete. The name of Bale no where occurs; but there can be no doubt of his authorship, not only from a comparison with existing autographs, but from the fact, that in his *Scriptorum Illustrum majoris Brytanniæ, &c. Summarium*, p. 702, he enumerates *De Joanne Anglorum rege* as one of his twenty-two dramatic works *in idiomate materno*. The copy of the *Summarium, &c.* in the British Museum, which belonged to Bale, has many notes

in the same handwriting as the MS. from which the ensuing impression has been taken.

The drama is divided into two parts or plays, and in this respect it accords with the description given by Bale, in the work above cited, of his *De Joanne Anglorum rege*. It has only recently been recovered from among some old papers, probably once belonging to the Corporation of Ipswich, and its existence was not known when I published "The History of English Dramatic Poetry," &c. in 1831. From private hands it was transferred to the matchless dramatic collection of the Duke of Devonshire. Bale was a native of Suffolk; but in what way his "Kynge Johan" came into the possession of the municipal body of Ipswich it would be vain to inquire: possibly it was written for it; and we may reasonably conjecture that it was performed by the guilds or trades of the town, in the same manner as the guilds or trades of Chester, Coventry, York, and other places, at an earlier as well as at a later period, were in the habit of lending their assistance in the representation of Scriptural Dramas.

Bale especially points out, on p. 86, the charitable foundations which King John had established in some of the large towns of Suffolk:

"Great monymentes are in Yppeswych, Donwych, and Berye,  
Which noteth hym to be a man of notable mercye."

The date when "Kynge Johan" was originally written

cannot be clearly ascertained: perhaps before Bale was made an Irish prelate by Edward VI. in 1552; but this point may admit of dispute. From the conclusion, it would appear that Elizabeth was on the throne; but I apprehend that both the Epilogue (if we may so call it) and some other passages, were subsequent additions. The speech of Verity, on p. 84, in which John Leland is called upon to wake out of his slumber, was possibly one of these. It seems to have been inserted partly for the purpose of vindicating King John from the accusations of the "malicious clergy," and partly for the sake of giving time to the actors to prepare for the ensuing scene. The introduction of the name of Darvell Gathyron on p. 48, of course establishes that the line was written after 1538, but of that fact there could be no doubt. It is known that in many of our plays, from the earliest times to the closing of the theatres, it was not unusual to make changes and substitutions, either to increase the interest, to improve the story, or to adapt it to the circumstances of the time.

Bale was originally a Roman Catholic, became a Protestant, was abroad during the reign of Mary, returned to England after the accession of Elizabeth, and was made a Prebendary of Canterbury about 1560. He never returned to his see in Ireland, and probably, therefore, derived no revenue from it. He died in 1563.

The design of the two plays of "Kynge Johan" was to