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Edited by William Stubbs

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### The Historical Collections of Walter of Coventry

Little is known about Walter of Coventry (*fl.* 1293) beyond the fact that he was alive during the reign of Edward I and that this substantive historical compilation was prepared either by him or under his direction. Published in two volumes as part of the Rolls Series in 1872–3, it covers the kings of Britain from Brutus to Edward I, with its latest datable event being the Anglo-Scottish agreement of 1293. Although the overwhelming part of the Latin text is drawn directly from the accounts of Geoffrey of Monmouth, Marianus Scotus and Roger of Howden, *inter alia*, this is no mere transcript. William Stubbs (1825–1901), bishop of Oxford and perhaps the leading historian of his day, describes the abbreviations, reductions and omissions that reveal the independent judgement of the writer. In his preface, as editor, to Volume 1, Stubbs fully accounts for Walter's sources, and details what little can be surmised about the author.

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VOLUME 1

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RERUM BRITANNICARUM MEDII ÆVI  
SCRIPTORES,

OR

CHRONICLES AND MEMORIALS OF GREAT BRITAIN  
AND IRELAND

DURING

THE MIDDLE AGES.

28165.

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**THE CHRONICLES AND MEMORIALS**  
OF  
**GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND**  
DURING THE MIDDLE AGES.

PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHORITY OF HER MAJESTY'S TREASURY, UNDER  
THE DIRECTION OF THE MASTER OF THE ROLLS.

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ON the 26th of January 1857, the Master of the Rolls submitted to the Treasury a proposal for the publication of materials for the History of this Country from the Invasion of the Romans to the reign of Henry VIII.

The Master of the Rolls suggested that these materials should be selected for publication under competent editors without reference to periodical or chronological arrangement, without mutilation or abridgment, preference being given, in the first instance, to such materials as were most scarce and valuable.

He proposed that each chronicle or historical document to be edited should be treated in the same way as if the editor were engaged on an *Editio Princeps*; and for this purpose the most correct text should be formed from an accurate collation of the best MSS.

To render the work more generally useful, the Master of the Rolls suggested that the editor should give an account of the MSS. employed by him, of their age and their peculiarities; that he should add to the work a brief account of the life and times of the author, and any remarks necessary to explain the chronology; but no other note or comment was to be allowed, except what might be necessary to establish the correctness of the text.

The works to be published in octavo, separately, as they were finished ; the whole responsibility of the task resting upon the editors, who were to be chosen by the Master of the Rolls with the sanction of the Treasury.

The Lords of Her Majesty's Treasury, after a careful consideration of the subject, expressed their opinion in a Treasury Minute, dated February 9, 1857, that the plan recommended by the Master of the Rolls "was well calculated for the accomplishment of this important national object, in an effectual and satisfactory manner, within a reasonable time, and provided proper attention be paid to economy, in making the detailed arrangements, without unnecessary expense."

They expressed their approbation of the proposal that each Chronicle and historical document should be edited in such a manner as to represent with all possible correctness the text of each writer, derived from a collation of the best MSS., and that no notes should be added, except such as were illustrative of the various readings. They suggested, however, that the preface to each work should contain, in addition to the particulars proposed by the Master of the Rolls, a biographical account of the author, so far as authentic materials existed for that purpose, and an estimate of his historical credibility and value.

*Rolls House,  
December 1857.*

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WALTER OF COVENTRY.

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MEMORIALE FRATRIS WALTERI DE COVENTRIA.

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THE  
HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS  
OF  
WALTER OF COVENTRY.

EDITED,

*From the MS. in the Library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge,*

BY

WILLIAM STUBBS, M.A.,

REGIUS PROFESSOR OF MODERN HISTORY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.  
FELLOW OF ORIEL COLLEGE, AND SOMETIME LIBRARIAN  
TO THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

VOL. I.

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**P R E F A C E.**  
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## P R E F A C E.

THE reputation of Walter of Coventry as a writer of English history dates from the middle of the 16th century. The indefatigable Leland, on his journey of investigation into the antiquities of his country, between the years 1538 and 1544, discovered, unfortunately he does not tell us where, a large manuscript of historical collections, on one leaf of which was the inscription "Memoriale Fratris Walteri de Coventria." The book, he saw at once, was mainly a compilation from Geoffrey of Monmouth, Henry of Huntingdon, Marianus Scotus, and Roger of Hoveden: but he saw also that it contained a good deal of matter, especially on the events of the years 1170 to 1177, and 1201 to 1225, which was not derived from the authors he mentions, and which therefore he regarded as being most probably the work of the person whose name the manuscript bore.<sup>1</sup> On this account he inserted a notice of Walter of Coventry in his Commentaries on the writers of Britain. From Leland, in whose library he saw the book, Bale derived all that he knew of its writer. Archbishop Parker, in the *Antiquitates*, referred to Walter of Coventry as an original authority. The learned Richard James

The MS. of  
Walter of  
Coventry  
first men-  
tioned by  
Leland.

Then by  
Bale, Parker,  
and James.

<sup>1</sup> Not, however, without some misgivings; for he thus writes in the *Collectanea*: "Hactenus ex Hovedeno multa desumpsit Gualterus Coventrensis, nam Hovedenus deduxit annales usque ad

" A.D. 1201; sed a quibus desumpsit reliquam annalium partem, an ipse Gualterus sua autoritate usus scripserit, nondum cognitum habeo." *Coll.* iii. 323.

Known also to Pits, Stillingfleet, Gale, Wharton, and others.

All these regarded him as an independent writer.

History of the MS.

searched the volume through for passages illustrating the corruptions of the medieval church. Pits added to Bale a note on the whereabouts of the manuscript. Bishop Stillingfleet had a transcript made of the whole work, and Gale of the latter part of it, which Hearne also copied out with his own hand. Wharton and Hutton made copious extracts, and Kennett transcribed them into his note-books. Archbishop Wake,<sup>1</sup> Bishop Nicolson,<sup>2</sup> Wilkins,<sup>3</sup> Tanner,<sup>4</sup> Carte,<sup>5</sup> and many other writers of the last century on history,<sup>6</sup> literature, and church controversies appealed to Walter of Coventry, as an original, and apparently, as a contemporaneous authority.

Most if not all of the last-mentioned class knew the work only through transcripts. The earlier ones, with the exception perhaps of Pits, were acquainted with the original. This manuscript, since Leland discovered it, has had an uneventful history. The great antiquary seems to have possessed himself of it, and to have made his extracts from it at his leisure. It was in his library when Bale saw it,<sup>7</sup> between 1549, when the first edition of the *Centuriæ* was published, in which our author is not mentioned, and 1552, when Leland died.<sup>8</sup> It is next found in possession of Archbishop Parker, who must have acquired it before 1572, in which the "Antiqui-

<sup>1</sup> *State of the Church*, pp. 189, 194.

<sup>2</sup> *English Historical Library*, p. 61.

<sup>3</sup> *Concilia*, vol. i. 606.

<sup>4</sup> *Bibliotheca*, pp. 352, 353.

<sup>5</sup> *History of England*, i. 816, 836.

<sup>6</sup> Kennett, *Complete History*, i. 170. Stillingfleet, *Origines Britannicæ* (ed. 1685), p. 329. Tyrrell, *Hist. Engl.* vol. ii., catalogue of authorities.

<sup>7</sup> This I learn from Bale's own MS. collections now in the Bodleian,

MS. 3452, fo. 213. In this MS. he generally mentions the names of the persons in whose possession the books described were when he saw them; in this case the note is, "ex bibliotheca Joan. Lelandi." That he is not referring to Leland's own *Collectanea* is clear from the fact that he gives a much more accurate division of the volume than Leland had done.

<sup>8</sup> Leland's books were sold in 1556. Macray, *Annals of the Bodleian*, p. 318.

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tates" were printed.<sup>1</sup> From Parker it passed to the library of Corpus Christi College, where it has been faithfully kept for very nearly three hundred years.

It is now in  
Corpus  
Christi Col-  
lege Library.

It is a very fine MS. of a small folio size, double columns, all written by the same hand,<sup>2</sup> rubricated throughout, and somewhat unevenly, in red and blue, in the same hand as the text, and in the penmanship of the end of the 13th or beginning of the 14th century. The volume consists of 165 folios, numbered by some error 175; each column of about 43 lines, sometimes 42, sometimes 46. It contains a few notes of the character of rubric in a 14th century hand, and a few more of the 15th, but none of any importance. In the 16th century it has received a little more annotation, generally referring either to questions of church controversy, or to the authorities from which the text is compiled. These, wherever they contain anything of interest, are given in the notes to this edition.<sup>3</sup> The volume, when in Leland's hands, struck him as imperfect; "Codex erat aliquot locis mancus, et annorum numerus male cohærebat."<sup>4</sup> He refers evidently to the abrupt transitions in the first part of the work, and to the suddenness of the conclusion. Otherwise there could be no reason to regard the MS. as incomplete, and we shall see, on analyzing the contents of it, that it was not so. The text of the present edition is taken, of course, from this as the original MS.; and I

Account of  
the MS.

<sup>1</sup> It is quoted in the *Antiquitates*, (ed. Drake), pp. 151 sq., 194 sq., 203 sq., very frequently as authority for the statements derived from Benedict; for which Leland also refers to Walter in the *De Scriptoriis*, p. 229.

<sup>2</sup> This is obvious at a glance; but if it required confirmation it has it in the occasional use throughout the whole book of Arabic numerals mixed with Roman ones for the

dates in the text. This is of unusual occurrence in English MSS. of so early a date.

<sup>3</sup> The most interesting is the note on the pulling down of the palace at York in 1562. Archbishop Thomas senior had built it, Archbishop Thomas junior, i. e. Yonge, demolished it. Vol. i. p. 23.

<sup>4</sup> *Collectanea*, vol. iii. 315 (ii. 270).

The MS.  
C. C. C. C.  
CLXXV.

take this opportunity of putting on record my sincere thanks to the Master and Fellows of Corpus for the use of it, and to the Rev. S. S. Lewis and the Rev. J. T. Lang for the facilities they have afforded me whenever I wanted to consult it. Its number in the Corpus Catalogue is CLXXV.<sup>1</sup>

Stilling-  
fleet's tran-  
script.

Of the transcripts above referred to the most important is the one made for Bishop Stillingfleet.<sup>2</sup> It contains the whole work, and is generally accurate. It passed with the rest of Stillingfleet's MSS. into the hands of the Earl of Oxford, and is now in the Harleian Collection in the British Museum, No. 689.

Gale's tran-  
script.

At the same time, and possibly by the same transcriber, was made the copy of the later portion of the compilation, A.D. 1201 to 1225, for Dean Gale. This volume is in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge, numbered O. X. 1. It has been collated by the venerable collector himself with the Cotton MS. Vitellius E. XIII,<sup>3</sup> from which, or a kindred source with which, it was originally derived; and it is enriched with other notes by Gale, which, as referring to MSS. now destroyed or incapable of being identified,<sup>4</sup> have considerable value, and are therefore reproduced in this edition. For the loan of this MS. I have to thank the Master and Fellows of Trinity.

Hearne's  
transcript.

Hearne's transcript was made by him from the Stillingfleet copy, which was lent him by Lord Oxford.<sup>5</sup> It

<sup>1</sup> *Vet. Cat.* I. ii. MSS. Angl. "1378—101." Nasmith, p. 256.

<sup>2</sup> It was in the possession of his family when Wake used it in 1703. He mentions it amongst the authorities used for the *State of the Church*, "Historia Walteri Coventre inter MSS. Dom. Stillingfleet," pp. xv., xviii. Stillingfleet's MSS. were bought by Harley; Macray, *Annals of the Bodleian*, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Tyrrell as well as Gale was aware that the two MSS. contained

much the same matter, although he perhaps believed both to be the work of Walter of Coventry. *History of England*, vol. ii. Introd.

<sup>4</sup> See below, p. xxviii.

<sup>5</sup> MS. Diary, in the Bodleian, vol. 122, pp. 139, 140. He has in the Appendix to Leland's *Collectanea*, vi. 14, printed, from Walter of Coventry, King John's Assize of Wines, which he seems not to have known to have been in print in Hoveden.

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contains, besides the annals of the years 1201 to 1225, <sup>Hearne's transcript.</sup> the history of the archbishops of York, the prophecies of Merlin and the Sibyll, and the notes on the relations between the English and Scottish crowns, which form part of the "Miscellanea Historica," or "pars prior," prefixed to the *Memoriale* proper. It is now in the Bodleian, Rawlinson, B. 183.

The Library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, <sup>The MS. C. C. C. cx.</sup> contains another transcript of part of the work reaching to 1154, and contributing nothing to the illustration of the original or its external history. It is No. cx.,<sup>1</sup> and it has not been thought desirable to encumber the present edition with references to it. It was made in the 16th century.

The extracts from the original MS. made by Leland <sup>Extracts by Leland,</sup> will be found in his *Collectanea*, I. 349-363 (ed. I., 284-296), and II. 270-275 (ed. III., 315-323.)

The extracts by James are in the Bodleian, among his <sup>James,</sup> own MSS., vol. 17, pp. 18-35. He describes them as taken from the MS. in Bennet College Library.

The extracts made by Matthew Hutton are in the <sup>Hutton, Wharton, and Kennett.</sup> Harleian Collection, No. 6981; those by Wharton in the Lambeth Library, MS. 585, pp. 77 and 93. Bishop Kennett's copy of Hutton's extracts is in the Lansdowne MS. 964, pp. 129, sq.; his copy of Wharton's is in Lansdowne 963, pp. 1-12; and the same MS. contains his copy of Leland's notes, at pp. 91, sq.

Before attempting a survey of the character of the <sup>Preliminary questions.</sup> compilation, it may be as well to dispose of the preliminary questions touching the personal identity of Walter of Coventry, and the substantive character of his *Memo-*

<sup>1</sup> Nasmith, *Catalogue*, p. 117. Tanner seems to have confused this with the MS. 175: *Bibliotheca*, p. 353, note b. The volume consists chiefly of Winchester transcripts. From the date and character of the

penmanship, I think it probable that the copy of the portion of the *Memoriale* was made for Archbishop Parker, before he became possessed of the original.

Author  
otherwise  
unknown.

*riale*. The book may be very fairly deemed worthy of its name, in a different sense from that in which the writer intended; for it is through it, and through it alone, that we have any evidence of the identity or indeed of the existence of its author.

Leland's  
account of  
Walter of  
Coventry.

Leland does not appear to have been much startled at the discovery of a new and unknown writer. No previous bibliographer had hinted at the existence of either the man or the book. So having the book before him, proving its own existence and that of its writer, he proceeded to evolve a history and character for both. "Walter Conventuensis, alias Coventrensis," he says, "a man now dignified by age and much experience of affairs, wishing to make the fame of his name, by some significant memorial, not only illustrious but also most extensive or perpetual, applied his mind to writing. In which employment he took to himself such subject matter as he knew would be both to himself and to the world grateful, interesting, and useful. Accordingly with a high courage he attempted a history, and having begun it with the origin of the Britons, he brought it down, with even a higher courage, to his own time. He followed chiefly these English authors, Geoffrey Arthur of Monmouth, Hoveden, and Henry of Huntingdon, not however without adding much of a trustworthy character which is not found in those writers. Illustrious however as the man was, he wanted one thing; for although he nowhere is deficient either in honesty or in lucid order, in eloquence he was not unfrequently at default; but this was not so much the vice of the author as of his age. He lived in the reigns of John and Henry III."<sup>1</sup>

It is hardly necessary to say that this is Leland's way

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<sup>1</sup> Leland, *Scriptores*, p. 250. He quotes from him the passage occurring in Benedict about Roger Hoveden, p. 229.

of stating that he knew nothing at all of Walter of Coventry. But he was an honest man, and only noted what he thought might fairly be inferred from the character of the work. It is a memorial, a man who wishes to memorialize himself is likely to have a character, "a fame," which he regards as worth preserving, and years and experience are the necessary conditions of such fame. The book speaks for itself, it is trustworthy, it is orderly, it is not eloquent; it ends in the reign of Henry III.: and the man accordingly is known by his works. Leland had taken pains to analyze the work; he knew that from 1002 to 1154 it was taken from Marianus and Henry of Huntingdon, and from 1181 to 1201 from Roger of Hoveden; but he did not know that the other portions were equally borrowed.<sup>1</sup> He did not know of the chronicle which we know under the name of Benedict of Peterborough, but supposed that Walter of Coventry wrote the history from 1171 to 1177; he did not know of the existence of other chronicles containing the years 1201 to 1225, but he saw that they were written by a contemporary, and believed that contemporary to be Walter of Coventry. It is, however, somewhat strange that he had overlooked the character of the handwriting, and the notes of matters of much later date than 1225 which occur in the earlier pages.

Leland drew his picture of Walter of Coventry from an honest though superficial examination of his book. Not so Bishop Bale. Now the "homo jam gravis annis et multa rerum experientia" is deemed worthy of a biographical article. "Walter of Coventry, a man worthy of immortal memory, born and educated in the same celebrated city in the county of Warwick, derived his

Leland's account a mere inference from the character of the work.

Bale's account of Walter of Coventry.

<sup>1</sup> "Deduxit vero annales suos ab anno mcci. ad annum mcccxxv., quem inchoat, sic ut Hovedeni Annalibus quos defloravit res gestas viginti quatuor annorum superaddat. Ex his conjectura ducor Gualterum Coventriensem tempore Henrici tertii floruisse." *Coll.* iii. 323.

Bale's  
account.

“ origin from honest citizens there. He spent on literature very sedulous labour, at Oxford, where was the most grateful emporium of the best disciplines.” He then proceeds to give word for word Leland’s account of Walter, and to describe the work, which he does with sufficient accuracy to prove that he had seen it, as indeed we know he had done, in Leland’s library. He adds, “ and certain other things he published, that owing to his honourable and Christian studies, his name might live for ever among posterity. He lived composing and writing various matters, during the reigns of John and Henry III. his son.”<sup>1</sup>

Also  
grounded  
on inference  
only.

It is true that Bale might plead with Leland that he stated no more than might be fairly inferred from the book. Walter of Coventry must have been born, and have had parents, and those parents must have been well to do, or they could not, and persons of character or they would not, have educated him. Coventry is in Warwickshire, and a man who bore the name might reasonably be supposed to have been born there. Oxford is nearer to Coventry than Cambridge is, and as Walter was a man of education, he was no doubt a university man, and if a university man, a clerk of Oxford; there could be no question but that Oxford was an emporium of the best disciplines, and the work shows that Walter was industrious; if he was industrious in writing the book, he must have been industrious whilst pursuing his studies at Oxford. It is true that on the same principle Bale might have given us the names of the chancellor and proctors of the period, and told us how the invariable assiduity of the student saved him from becoming involved in the disturbances of the day, and so accounted for the silence of all records about him, and necessitated the composition of a history of England to keep his name in remembrance. He refrains however from doing this, and simply follows Leland in fixing the date.

<sup>1</sup> Bale, *Scriptores* (ed. 1559), p. 264.



## PREFACE.

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But it was not for Pits to tread abjectly or even accurately in the steps of the great accuser Bale. To a certain extent he must follow, but he has something to develope and something to add. "Walter of Coventry" was an English monk of the order of S. Benedict in the monastery of Coventry. He was born of honest parents in the county and town of Warwick; and having been by the care of his friends consecrated as it were to God and to the Muses, having been diligently educated in piety and literary disciplines, he turned out a remarkably erudite man. At Oxford he sedulously learned the liberal arts, philosophy also and theology. Having passed through the ordinary course of studies in the schools he devoted himself to reading and writing histories; and he would in his own right have had a claim to be numbered among the greatest of such writers, were it not that his style is commonly too uncultivated to attract or delight the reader. John Leland, although he nowhere has professed and formal encomium on him, very often praises him by the way, especially in his histories, and commends him to others, chiefly because in writing his annals, *et sincera fides et lucidus ordo placebat.* He adds the sketch of the work from Bale, and mentions that the MS. is at Cambridge in Bennet College; whilst "dicta quædam, librum unum" he says may be found in the public library of the same university.<sup>1</sup>

Additions  
by Pits to  
Bale's ac-  
count of  
Walter of  
Coventry.

Here, it will be observed, Pits having misunderstood the words of Bale, makes Warwick instead of Coventry the native place of Walter; he also assumes that he was a Benedictine, and, forgetting that no monk would take to himself by way of surname the name of his own monastery, inasmuch as it would be common to all his fellows, and anything but a distinctive appellation, fixes him in the Benedictine priory of Coventry. The rest

His mis-  
taken in-  
ferences.

<sup>1</sup> Pits, *De Illustribus Angliæ Scriptoribus* (Paris, 1619), ad annum 1217.

Pits's information unimportant.

of the eulogium is important only as showing how the language of religious literature had altered since the time of Bale. Probably no Roman Catholic, certainly no Englishman, would have then spoken of consecrating himself "to God and to the Muses."

Statements of the later bibliographers; Voss, Nicolson, Wood, Smith.

The later bibliographers, without accepting the conclusions evolved by these three writers, have generally admitted their account of the date at least of Walter of Coventry. Voss reechoes the words of Pits.<sup>1</sup> Archbishop Nicolson accepts the same statements with but a slight misgiving.<sup>2</sup> Antony Wood recognizes him as an Oxford man on the evidence of Bale.<sup>3</sup> It is however probable that both Gale and Smith, the maker of the Cottonian catalogue, guessed more truly; for they, as we shall see, ascribed to him another book of Annals ending in 1296, which they would scarcely have done if they had believed that he wrote in 1225. Their suspicion,

Corrected by Oudinus,

if it were no more than a suspicion, is turned into a direct statement by Oudinus.<sup>4</sup> That learned and most acute investigator, on the authority of the title of the Cotton MS. Vitellius D. v., which contained a history of England from Cadwallader to Edward I., ending in the year 1296, and supposed to be written by Walter of Coventry; without any hesitation fixed the year 1290 as the period at which Walter flourished. The statement of Oudinus was repeated by Fabricius.<sup>5</sup> Bishop Tanner does not notice the inference that Oudinus had drawn; either he had not seen it, or knowing the title of the Cotton MS. to be modern he doubted the premisses from which it was drawn. He does not venture to decide, but seems to lean to the older theory. He has however

and Fabricius.

Tanner's statement.

<sup>1</sup> Vossius, *Historici Latini*, p. 470.

<sup>2</sup> *English Historical Library*, p. 61.

<sup>3</sup> Wood, *Historia et Antiquitates, Univ. Ozon.*, ad ann. 1206, p. 59.

<sup>4</sup> Oudinus, *Comment. de Scripto-*

*ribus* (Leipzig, 1722), vol. iii. p. 610.

<sup>5</sup> *Bibliotheca Latina Med. et inf.*, s. v. Gualterus (ed. Florence, 1858, vol. iii., p. 107).

misgivings of his own; the inscription in the Corpus MS. seemed to him to be of later date than the text, and he insinuates that the book was more probably the gift of Walter than his work.<sup>1</sup> This doubt was answered but falteringly by Nasmith the author of the Corpus catalogue; it was for others to decide, he says, the date of the inscription, to him it did not appear much more modern than the rest of the writing; and he appeals to a title written on the fly leaf at the end of the volume in a hand of the fifteenth century, as proving the antiquity of the other.<sup>2</sup> He does not however seem to be very certain about it, nor to have perceived that the whole volume is the work of one penman.

Tanner's doubts answered by Nasmith.

So completely was the tide of literary opinion turned. Oudinus had deliberately unsettled the date. Tanner had struck at the very existence, speaking literarily, of Walter of Coventry. In this state the question has remained, for those inquirers who have since seen and judged the MS. for themselves seem not to have considered the authorship of so mere a compilation to be worth discussing, and those who have not seen it have followed the statement of the early bibliographers.

Result of the questions of Oudinus and Tanner.

On the occasion however of the publication of a complete edition of the work, it is necessary to say what can be said to clear up the matter. And this shall be put as briefly as possible. It must be premised then

<sup>1</sup> *Bibliotheca*, p. 353. "Scripta autem ad imum paginæ manu diversa et recentiori innuunt hoc potius donum fuisse Gualteri quam scriptum."

<sup>2</sup> *Catalogue*, p. 257. "Titulus hic neotericus ex inscriptione ad imum hujus paginæ desumptus videtur, quæ ita se habet, *Memoriale fratris Walteri de Coventr*, et quæ manu diversa et recentiori

"scripta, ut placuit cl. Tannero, innuit hoc potius donum fuisse Gualteri quam scriptum. De hac controversia aliorum sit judicium: inscriptio ipsa reliquo codici haud multo recentior mihi videtur; et opus hoc Waltero olim fuisse ad scriptum probat titulus deformi manu (seculo xv. si conjecturis uti liceat) in folio rejectitio ad finem codicis exaratus."

The whole MS. is the work of one scribe, and the title is contemporaneous.

that the whole volume is in one handwriting;<sup>1</sup> or, if not actually the work of one scribe, it is written with such uniformity as to prove it to have proceeded at one impulse from one scriptorium. The title in question, which Tanner thought, and Nasmith did not think, more recent than the text, is, there can I think be no reasonable doubt, of the same date. As the date of a holograph MS. cannot be earlier than the latest year mentioned in it, and as that latest year is 1293,<sup>2</sup> Walter of Coventry cannot be supposed to have flourished very much earlier. The character of the penmanship is of that date, and it may be confidently asserted that this is the date of the author.

Written soon after the year 1293.

The word *Memoriale* signifies not a keepsake, but a collection of things to be remembered.

But was Walter of Coventry the author? Tanner thought not; he interpreted the word "*Memoriale*" in the modern sense in which Leland had done before him: if the book were merely a memorial in the sense of a keepsake, the purpose would have been answered as well by the gift of a purchased volume as by the composition of a laborious work. In giving however this meaning to the word *Memoriale* I believe that Tanner was wrong. The medieval use of the word is not for a keepsake by which the remembrance of the giver may be kept alive in other men, but for a collection of facts or forms which the writer wishes his own memory and theirs for whom he writes to be kept freshly and permanently reminded. The *Memoriale presbyterorum* is intended to keep priests mindful of their duties. Henry of Eastry, prior of Canterbury, wrote a *Memoriale* which he himself defines as a register; "*registrum sive memoriale.*"<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I may state here that so far from being predisposed to regard the writing as that of one person, I should have welcomed any safe grounds for discarding the first portion of the volume. I have no doubt that it is so; or that the title is of the same date.

<sup>2</sup> See vol. i. p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Tanner, *Bibliotheca*, p. 394. The *memoralis libellus* of Suetonius and the *memoralis* of the Pandects have the same sense in a measure, that of a memorandum book.

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Frontmatter

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## PREFACE.

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Henry Spenser, well known as the crusading bishop of Norwich, had his collections embodied in a volume bearing the same title.<sup>1</sup> The word then so far from forbidding, rather countenances the claim to authorship, and on the analogy of the two works last mentioned must be interpreted to mean, not the gift, but the Historical Collections or historical memoranda of the writer.

Next it may be asked, is the work as it exists in this MS. of such a character as would entitle it to be regarded as a substantive work, and give its writer a title to the name of author. To such a question the answer is briefly this: the title to the name of author is of the very slenderest character, but it is a real one. There are not, I think I may safely say, a hundred words in the book, of which Walter can claim to be the original composer; but it is not a mere transcript; it is a collection of matters which do not appear anywhere else in the same connexion and relation. And even in the more important portion of the work, which includes forty-nine fiftieths of the whole, and is taken entirely from an earlier compilation, there is a sufficient number of omissions, abbreviations, and condensations to show that the writer exercised his independent judgment as to the necessary retrenchments. And further still, it is not admissible to suppose that Walter of Coventry copied his MS. from a retrenched or abridged transcript of the earlier compilation, for there are here and there, in erasures and the like, evident traces that the person who wrote the MS. abridged as he went on:<sup>2</sup> this will be illustrated in the notes. So far I think it may be said to be demonstrable that the work is a substantive one, that it was

<sup>1</sup> MS. Cotton, Claudius E. vii. Wharton, *Ang. Sac.* i. 420.

<sup>2</sup> See especially vol. i. p. 338, note <sup>1</sup>, where it is clear the transcriber was also abridging. He has copied down to a place where a do-

cument occurred which he intended to omit, and having written *in hac forma*, before he saw where he was, pulled up suddenly, and underscored the words for erasure. See also vol. i., p. 446, note 7.

Other books with the like title.

The MS. is not a mere transcript of earlier ones;

but the title to authorship rests on the condensations, omissions, and abbreviations from an earlier compilation.

Walter of  
Coventry's  
date settled.

written by or under the direction of Walter of Coventry, and that it was written, and Walter of Coventry lived, between 1293 and the end of the reign of Edward the First; the latter limit being an inference from the fact that the writer was unable to give the number of years during which Edward reigned,<sup>1</sup> while he mentions nothing later than 1293.<sup>2</sup>

All specula-  
tions about,  
him rest on  
the title of  
the MS.

Of course any speculation as to the life and character of so shadowy a being must wear the garb of conjecture. Walter may, as Leland says, have been born at Coventry; it is very probable that he was. Taking vows in any religious house outside of Coventry itself, he would naturally adopt as a surname the name of his birthplace. But the statement of Pits that he was a Benedictine of Coventry is quite inadmissible. A Benedictine he may very well have been, although the title *Frater*, on which the inference depends, might as well mean that he was a friar. But a monk of Coventry would not have called himself by the name of his monastery.<sup>3</sup> If he were a monk he was a brother of some house in which it was a distinction to be called "de Coventria." What little there is of local indication in the book, and it is very little, points to York rather than to Coventry, possibly to the city, but almost certainly to the diocese of York.

Local indica-  
tions of a  
York origin.

<sup>1</sup> Vol. i. p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. i. p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> A monk like Florence of Worcester or William of Malmesbury, writing an original work for publication, might term himself *monachus Wigornensis*, or *monachus Malmesbiriensis*, or, when he became famous, by the local name only. Not so a monk compiling a work like the present. However, *de Coventria* is plainly intended for a surname; if any reference to the monastery had been intended, the word would have

been *Coventrensis*, and that with *monachus* almost certainly expressed; for *Walterus Coventrensis* would mean the bishop of Coventry, Walter de Langton, who was consecrated in 1296. Incidentally this point is illustrated by the fact that our author omits the papal letter of 1197, which reinstates the monks in Coventry; it is found in the compilation he was using, and would hardly have been omitted had he been a monk of that house.