GENERAL INTRODUCTION.

I. LIFE OF CHAUCER.

Geoffrey Chaucer 1 was the son of John Chaucer, 2 a London vintner. He was born probably a little after 1340, and if his father had the same wife and the same

1 An attempt has recently been made to derive the name Chaucer from Chauve-cire, i.e. Chaff-wax, the name of an official charged with making impressions from the large seals then in use. But Mr. R. E. G. Kirk writes: 'After considering all that has been written on the subject I think preference must be given to the view that it originally meant "shoemaker." It was the French form of the Latin "calcarius," a term used in early French records for a follower of St. Crispin. As this Latin form was not used in England, so far as we know, we may infer that the Chaucers came over from France, perhaps in the reign of Henry III., when the name is first met with; and they probably came with wines, for they traded here as vintners, having apparently abandoned their primitive occupation; yet some of these vintners, including Chaucer's immediate ancestors, took as their abode in Cordwainer Street, London, the settlement of the English shoemakers, or "cordubanarii" (Life Records of Chaucer. IV., by R. E. G. Kirk, 1900, p. vii). Thames Street, where the poet was probably born, was in the vintners' ward.

2 John Chaucer was himself the son of a Robert le Chaucer, who in 1310 was one of the collectors of Customs in the Port of London. In 1324 John Chaucer (his father being then dead, and his mother
house then as some years later, the poet’s mother was Agnes, daughter of John de Copton and heiress of his brother Hamo, and his birthplace was in Thames Street. John Chaucer at one period acted as deputy to the King’s Butler in the port of Southampton, and may have had influence at court. Our first certain information about the poet is a record of some clothes supplied to him while in the household of Elizabeth de Burgh, Countess of Ulster, in her own right, and wife of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, third son of Edward III. Fragments of her Household Accounts, accidentally preserved, show that in April, 1357, when the Countess was in London, a short cloak, a pair of red and black breeches, and shoes, were then provided for Geoffrey Chaucer at a cost of seven shillings.\(^1\) In December of the same year, when the Countess was at her house at Hatfield, in Yorkshire, two shillings and sixpence were paid to Geoffrey Chaucer “for necessaries for Christmas.” These sums are small compared to other similar payments recorded, and probably show that having married a Richard le Chaucer) was carried away by some kinsfolk who wished to marry him to a wife of their own choosing, apparently in order to secure the wardship of a small property near Ipswich to which he was entitled. For this they were fined heavily and from a petition which they subsequently presented to Parliament for the fine to be reduced, we learn that in 1328 John Chaucer was still unmarried. Geoffrey Chaucer, therefore, cannot have been born in that year as used formerly to be stated. The reasons for fixing his birth at a little before 1340 are (1) his own statement in the Scrope suit that he was “forty years old and more” in 1386, and (2) the probability that he was only a lad while in the service of the Countess of Ulster.

\(^1\)The purchasing power of money in Chaucer’s day is variously estimated as between ten and fifteen times what it was in 1913.
Chaucer did not hold any very high position in the Countess's household.

In 1386 the poet was a witness in a suit between Richard, Lord Scrope, and Sir Robert de Grosvenor, as to the right to a certain coat of arms. In his evidence he said that he had himself borne arms for twenty-seven years, i.e. since 1359, and that he had then, when before the town of "Retters" (Rethel, near Rheims), seen Henry le Scrope using the coat in question, until he himself was taken prisoner. From another document we learn that on 1st March, 1360, Edward III. contributed the then considerable sum of £16 to Chaucer's ransom, and it is probable that either before he went to the war, or soon after his release, the poet was taken into the King's Household, for in 1367 the King, in consideration of his past and future services, granted him a pension of twenty marks (£13 6s. 8d.) as a Yeoman of his Chamber. By 1369 Chaucer was one of the King's Esquires "of less degree."

On 17th July, 1368, Chaucer was sent abroad on an unknown mission recently discovered (Times Lit. Supp., 17th Sept., 1928) with two hackneys, a little ready money and ten pounds 'en eschaunge.' In 1369 he received an advance of £10 from the Keeper of the King's Wardrobe 'at the beginning of the war' with France, but this need not imply that he took any part in the campaign. In 1370 he was abroad on the King's service, though again we do not know where or on what employment. In November, 1372, he was joined in a commission with two citizens of Genoa, to treat with the Duke, citizens, and merchants of that place, for the choice of some port in England where Genoese merchants might settle and trade. For his expenses he was allowed an advance of 100 marks, and
further sums were paid him during his expedition and after his return to London, which took place on 23rd May, 1373. The accounts which he delivered show that he had both men and horses in his service.

On St. George's day, 1374, the King, then at Windsor, granted Chaucer a pitcher of wine daily. This the poet subsequently commuted for a pension of 20 marks. In May he leased from the Corporation of London the dwelling-house over the gate of Aldgate, and here he probably made his home for the next twelve years. In June he was appointed Controller of the Custom and Subsidy of Wool, Skins, and Hides in the Port of London, with the obligation to keep the accounts and records of his office with his own hand and to be continually present. In the same month he was granted by John of Gaunt a pension of £10, for services rendered by himself and his wife, Philippa. As we shall see, one of the services which Chaucer had rendered the Duke was that on the death of the Duchess in 1369 he had written a poem in her honour. What Philippa Chaucer had done, and who she was, and when Chaucer married her, are points still uncertain.¹

¹ This pension granted in 1374 to Philippa and her husband seems to have been only a renewal of one of the same amount which John of Gaunt had given to her in her own right two years previously. She is probably to be identified with the Philippa Chaucer who in 1366 was in the service of the Queen and received from Edward III. a small pension. Unless, which is very unlikely, she was a relation of the poet before her marriage, she must as early as this have been his wife, and there is some slight evidence for believing her to have been a daughter of Sir Payne Roet of Hainault. If so, she was sister to the Katharine Roet who, after the death of her husband, Sir Hugh Swynford, became the third wife of John of Gaunt, in whose family she had been governess, and this would help to account for
During these years Chaucer's prosperity was continually on the increase. In 1375 he was granted two wardships. The office of a guardian at that time had many profitable perquisites attached to it, and one of these wardships subsequently brought Chaucer over one hundred pounds. In 1376, again, the King made him a present of over seventy pounds, the value of some wool forfeited at the Customs for not paying duty. The records of other payments show that in this same year Chaucer was employed as one of the retinue of Sir John Burley on some secret mission; that in February, 1377, another secret mission took him to Flanders with Sir Thomas Percy; and that later in the same year he was employed in France, probably with the King's ambassadors who were then negotiating a peace. The accession of Richard II. in June, 1377, only increased Chaucer's prosperity. Early in the next year he probably took part in another mission to France, to negotiate Richard's marriage with a daughter of the French King, and in the following May, having appointed two friends, one of whom was John Gower the poet, as his agents during his absence, he started with Sir Edward Berkeley on a mission to Lombardy to negotiate with Bernabo Visconti, Lord of Milan (of whose tragic death he subsequently wrote), and the famous free lance, Sir John Hawkwood. Of what happened on the mission we know nothing, but Chaucer's accounts show that he started on May 28th and returned to London on September 19th, and that

the favours which Chaucer received on many occasions from John himself and subsequently from his son, Henry IV. According to another theory Philippa was herself a Swynford, and sister to Sir Hugh.
his total expenses were £80 13s. 4d. It is believed that with this expedition to Lombardy his career as a diplomatist came to an end. For the next six years he seems to have had little relief from the monotony of his duties as Controller of the Customs and Subsidies. In April, 1382, he was appointed Controller also of the Petty Customs of the Port of London, but this office he was allowed to exercise by deputy, and in February, 1385, the same privilege was permitted him in regard to his old Controllership, from which he had been allowed a month’s leave of absence at the end of the previous year. Chaucer had now reached the height of his prosperity, and his position as a man of substance is shown by his appointment in October, 1385, as one of the Justices of the Peace for Kent, and his sitting as a Knight of the Shire for the same county in the Parliament which met at Westminster in October, 1386. But his increased importance made him a mark for bad fortune as well as good. His patron, John of Gaunt, was now in Spain; the chief place in the Government fell to the Duke of Gloucester, and Chaucer soon felt the effect of this change. A commission was appointed to inquire into the state of the King’s revenue and expenses, and by December successors had been appointed to Chaucer in both his controllerships. His wife’s pension was paid for the last time on 18th June, 1387, and she probably died soon after. On 5th July Chaucer was granted protection (against being sued in his absence) for a year, to go to Calais in the retinue of his friend Sir W. Beauchamp, captain of the town. In May, 1388, he was driven to assign away both his own pensions from Edward III. But in May, 1389, Richard II. took the reins of government into his own
band, John of Gaunt returned to England, and Chaucer was appointed in the following July Clerk of the King’s Works at the Palace of Westminster, the Tower of London, and elsewhere, at a salary of two shillings a-day, and with power to appoint a deputy. In March, 1390, he was named with five others as a commissioner for the repair of the roadway on the banks of the Thames between Greenwich and Woolwich, and he was probably the Geoffrey Chaucer who, about this time, was appointed one of the foresters of North Petherton Park in Somersetshire, a post in the gift of the Earl of March, a grandson of the Prince Lionel and Countess Elizabeth, who had been the poet’s earliest patrons.

In September, 1390, Chaucer was robbed by two, or possibly three, different gangs of thieves. Of the money he then lost twenty pounds belonged to the King, and this was pardoned him, but the proceedings against the thieves dragged on through the early months of 1391, and must have caused Chaucer some annoyance. In June and July, 1391, he had a worse misfortune, being superseded in both his clerkships of the Works, and we have no knowledge of how he lived for the next three years. In 1394, perhaps as a result of a half pitiful, half humorous poem which he wrote to his friend Scogan, from some place on the Thames, to which his commissionship had taken him, he obtained from Richard II. a new pension of twenty pounds. In 1395-96 he may possibly have been in the service of the Earl of Derby, afterwards Henry IV., but he seems to have continued in needy circumstances; and in 1398 we hear of his being sued for a debt of fourteen pounds, and obtaining protection from his creditors. In October,
1398, Richard, in answer to a petition, in which the old poet asked it "for the sake of God, and as a work of charity," granted him a tun of wine yearly, and thus added one more to the marks of favour he had shown him. Henry IV., when he came to the throne, was not unmindful of Chaucer, and an additional pension of forty marks gave the poet the prospect of ending his days in peace. He now took a long lease of a house in the garden of St. Mary's Chapel, Westminster. His tenure of it, however, was but brief, for he died there on October 25th, 1400, and was buried in St. Benet's Chapel in the Abbey, where a monument erected to his memory in the 16th century still remains, the nucleus of the Poets' Corner which has since become so famous.

As we have noted, Chaucer's wife Philippa had died many years previously, and we know little for certain as to his children. In 1391 he had written a treatise on the Astrolabe (an instrument for ascertaining the position of the stars) for the use of a little son, Lewis, who was then ten years old, and it is probable that he was also the father of an Elizabeth Chaucer, for whose reception at the Abbey of Barking John of Gaunt paid a considerable sum in 1381, and also of a Thomas Chaucer, who in the next century appears as a man of wealth and importance. But we hear nothing more of Lewis Chaucer, while the connection of Thomas¹ and Elizabeth with the poet is still not absolutely proved.

Almost all the facts which we have been able to set forth relating to Chaucer's life have been derived

¹ Mr. Kirk thinks that Elizabeth Chaucer was the poet's sister, and revives an old theory of Speght's that Thomas Chaucer may have been only an adopted son.
from entries of payments made to him in Royal Accounts still extant, or from similar entries in the registers of the City of London. As to how far the references in these documents are exhaustive we have no means of telling. Of themselves they point to a life of considerable activity and varied interests. At the Court and on his foreign mission Chaucer would have become acquainted with princes and nobles, soldiers and diplomatists. On his campaigns he learnt the meaning of war, and may have seen the inside of a French prison. His daily work at the Customs would have brought him into contact with the shipmen and merchants of many nations. As Clerk of the King's Works, he had the superintendence of carpenters and other artizans. We have traces also of his friendship with several of the poets and writers of his own day, with the English Gower, with whom, however, he seems to have quarrelled in his old age, with the French Froissart and Sir Otres de Graunson, a small poet, from whom he translated some verses, and lastly with the great Italian Petrarch, whom, during his first expedition to Italy, he met at Padua, and there learnt from him the story of the patience of Griselda (see infra, p. xxv). Advantageous, however, as in these respects was the work by which he earned his living, it made great inroads on the time which he could give to his poetry. From 1370 to 1372 he may have had a short interval of leisure, but the diplomatic missions of the next seven years appear to have occupied all his energies. When they ceased in 1379 he betook himself again to poetry with enthusiasm, but a passage in his Hous of Fame shows that the strain of his double occupation told on him heavily. Here he imagines himself
to be thus addressed by the Eagle, the messenger of love:

    Wherfor, as I seyde, y-wys,  
    Jupiter considereth wel this;  
    And also, beau sir, other thynges;  
    That is, that thou hast no tydynges  
    Of Lovè folk, if they be glade,  
    Ne of nothyng elles that God made.  
    And noght only fro fer contree,  
    That ther no tydyng cometh to the.  
    But of thy verray neyghebores,  
    That dwellen almost at thy dores,  
    Thou herest neither that ne this;  
    For when thy labour doon al is,  
    And hast y-maad thy rekenynges,  
    In stede of reste and newe thynges  
    Thou gost hoom to thy hous anocn,  
    And, also domb as any stoon,  
    Thou sittest at another boke,  
    Til fully daswèd is thy looke;  
    And lyvest thus as an heremyte,  
    Although thynt abstynence is lyte.

    (Hous of Fume, ii. 132-152.)

In another poem he speaks again of his love of books,  
but also of his still greater love for the fresh flowers of spring, which alone could tear him from them.

    And as for me, though that I konne but lyte,  
    On bokès for to rede I me delyte,  
    And to hem yeve I feyth and ful credence,  
    And in myn herte have hem in reverence  
    So hertëly, that ther is gamè noon  
    That fro my bokès maketh me to goon,  
    But yt be seldom on the holy day,  
    Save, certeynly, when that the monethe of May  
    Is comen, and that I here the soules synge,  
    And that the flourës gynnen for to spryne, —  
    Farewel my boke, and my devocioun!

    (Legend of Good Women, 29-39.)
Yet a third passage shows Chaucer to us still with his bookish look about him, though it tells us too that he was somewhat more portly in his person than the typical student of old time.

When seyd was al this miracle, every man
As sobre was that wonder was to se,
Til that oure Hosté japeyn tho began,
And thanne at erst he looked upon me,
And seydé thus: 'What man arow?' quod he;
'Thou lookest as thou woldest fynde an hare;
For evere upon the ground I se thee stare.
Approché neer, and looke up murily.
Now war yow, sires, and lat this man have place;
He in the waast is shape as wel as I;
This were a popet in an arm t'enbrace
For any womman, smal and fair of face.
He semeth elvyssh by his contenaunce,
For unto no wight dooth he daliaunce.

(Canterbury Tales, Group B, 1881-94.)

Love for his master caused one of Chaucer's followers, Thomas Hoccleve, to have painted alongside of some verses in his honour in a poem of his own (the Governable of Princes) an authentic portrait which enables us to complete these verbal pictures. The miniature has been often reproduced, and has rendered familiar to us the appearance of the old poet in his sober dress and hood of black, relieved only by the red strings by which hang his pen-case and beads. The face is rather sad, but kindly; the grey eyes deep set and dreamy, the moustache and the small forked beard are almost white, and a fringe of white hair shows from under the hood. When Chaucer died he was probably somewhat over sixty, and this portrait must show him as Hoccleve knew him in the last years of his life.
II. CHAUCER'S POETRY.

The Romaunt of the Rose. When Chaucer first began to write, translations from the French were still popular, and he was only following the prevalent fashion when he set himself to translate the Roman de la Rose. This was a long allegorical poem, which had been begun as a love story about 1237 by Guillaume de Lorris, and was taken up and finished forty years after his death, by Jean Clopinel (or, as he is also called, Jean de Meung) in a spirit of bitter satire against women and the clergy. No other book has left so many traces on Chaucer’s writings, both as a source of stories and quotations, and in furnishing the mechanism and scenery (the May Morning, the Dream, and the like) of many of his poems. We know from his own statement (Legend of Good Women, 255/329) that he translated it in whole or part, but the only English translation which has come down to us is very incomplete, and is now thought to be made up of fragments of two or three different versions, the first of which is attributed to Chaucer by the best critics, while the authorship of the rest is unknown.

The Dethe of Blaunche the Duchesse, Pity, Complaint to his Lady, and A B C. John of Gaunt’s first wife, Blanche of Lancaster, died in November, 1369, and the first original poem of any length by Chaucer which has come down to us is that entitled The Dethe of Blaunche the Duchesse, which he wrote in her honour. In the prologue he feigns that in default of sleep, of which a sickness he has ‘suffred this eight yere’ has bereft him, he reads Ovid’s story of how King Ceyx
appeared after his death to his faithful wife Alcione, and then dreams of a May morning and a hunt, amid which he meets a knight, clothed all in black, lamenting under an oak. The knight tells him how he had loved and won the fairest of all ladies, ‘the goodê, fairê White,’ as he calls her, and dwells on her beauty and goodness. Now she is dead. The poet dreams that he stammers out a word of sympathy, and then amid the sound of the returning hunt he wakes, and the graceful poem comes to an end.

The suggestion of a hopeless love which had robbed him of health and happiness, made in the prologue to Blaunche, is continued in the beautiful little poem, the Complaint of the Death of Pity, in which Chaucer writes:

My payne is this, that what so I desire,  
That have I not, ne no thing lyk therto;  
And ever set Desire myn herte on fire.  
Eek on that other syde where-so I go;  
What maner thinge that may encrere my wo  
That have I redy, unsoght, everywhere,  
Me ne lakketh but my deth, and than my bere.

Joined on to the Pity in two manuscripts is another poem of 128 lines, notable as containing several metrical experiments, among them being the first example of Dante’s terza rima in the English language. This Complaint to his Lady, as it has been called, would seem, from its experimental character, to be purely playful, yet it follows the same line of thought; and to explain these allusions, it has been thought that we must take the eight years’ sickness mentioned in Blaunche to refer to a real unrequited love, which must have begun in 1361 or 1362, and have lasted after Chaucer’s marriage
with Philippa. But we must remember that a hopeless attachment was almost a necessary part of a poet's equipment in these days, and more especially in the case of a poet who was taking many hints from his French contemporaries it is best not to insist on personal explanations. With these fine poems we may mention the devotional verses to the B. Virgin, translated from the *Pelerinaige de la Vie humaine* of Guillaume de Deguileville, in which each stanza, as in the original, begins with a different letter of the alphabet in due succession, whence its name the A B C. When Chaucer wrote it he was already no mean poet, although the difficulties of translation as yet weighed heavily on him.

**Life of S. Cecilia and Stories of Griselda and Constance.** The poems we have looked at so far were all written according to the ideals of the French poetry of Chaucer's day. At what period he first essayed more definitely narrative verse we do not know. The Life of S. Cecilia, which, with the two poems next to be mentioned,

1 The form in which the pension of 1374 was granted to Chaucer and his wife has suggested a theory that they may not have been married till that year. See note to p. xiv.

2 The opening stanza may be quoted as a specimen:

Almyghty and al mercyable Queené,
   To whom that al this world fleeth for socour
To have relees of sinne, of sorwe, and teene!
   Glorious Virgine, of allé flourés flour,
To thee I flee confounded in errour.
   Help and releeve, thou mihti debonayre;
Have mercy on my perilous langour!
   Venquisshed me hath my cruel adversaire.

3 Translated from the Life of the Saint in the *Legena Aurea* or 'Golden Legend,' by Jacobus de Voragine, Archbishop of Genoa.
has come down to us as part of the Canterbury Tales, is immature enough to be the very earliest of his extant works. In the story of the patience of Griselda, which he learnt from Petrarch,¹ there is an immense advance. Griselda is a village maiden whom a Marquis marries for her goodness, and then tortures by pretending to kill her children and divorce herself, in order to see if she will ever rebel against him. Chaucer preserves all that is beautiful in the story, and at the same time conciliates the reader by exclaiming against the cruelty of the Marquis in making such an experiment. In the tale of Constance,² the daughter of an Emperor of Rome, who is twice sent to sea in a rudderless boat by the cruelty of a stepmother, he shows himself anxious to embellish his story as much as possible from his own resources. Not only from this, but from the increased mastery of language and rhythm, and some touches of humour, we see that he was feeling his way towards his real strength.

Twelve Tragedies and The Compleynt of Mars. Possibly from lack of better subjects that caught his fancy, Chaucer seems to have followed these early narrative poems with a series of short histories of twelve

¹ The statement,

I wol yow telle a tale which that I
Lerned at Padoue of a worthy clerk . . .
Fraunceys Petrek, the lauriat poete,

is put into the mouth of the Clerk of Oxford, one of the Canterbury Pilgrims, but that it refers to Chaucer himself cannot reasonably be doubted. Petrarch was at Padua in the winter of 1372-73, which Chaucer passed in Italy, and the Clerk’s Tale is translated from Petrarch’s Latin version of the story.

² Taken from the Anglo-French Chronicle of Nicholas Trivet, a Dominican Friar, who had died about 1334.
men and women who had fallen from their high estate. Taking his materials from the Bible and two books by Boccaccio, he wrote the 'tragedies' of Lucifer, Adam, Samson, Hercules, Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Zenobia, Nero, Holofernes, Antiochus, Alexander, and Julius Caesar, and then seems to have laid his manuscript aside until he needed a lugubrious tale with which to make his hunting Monk surprise the Canterbury Pilgrims.

One other poem may belong to this period, the Compleynt of Mars, founded on the old myth told by Ovid in his Metamorphoses of the love of the god Mars for the goddess Venus, and its discovery by Phoebus Apollo. This story Chaucer here works out, according to the astronomy of his day, of a conjunction of the planet Mars with the planet Venus in the sign of Taurus, or The Bull, one of the two astrological houses of Venus into which Phoebus or the Sun enters every April. Gossip said that the poem also had reference to an intrigue between the Lady Isabella of York and the Duke of Exeter, but the theory is superfluous, and the poem is humorous and ingenious enough to stand by itself.

Chaucer's 'Italian' Period. Since he only started on May 28th, 1378, and was home again on Sept. 19th, Chaucer's stay in Italy during his second diplomatic there (see p. xv) can only have lasted a few weeks. But he must have improved his knowledge of Italian, and it can hardly be doubted that it was from this visit that he brought back three books, the Divina Commedia of Dante and the Teseide and Filostrato of Boccaccio, the influence of which is predominant in the work of the next six years. With the first of these he had probably already a slight
acquaintance,¹ nor had he ever the hardihood to translate it, though he borrows passages, and is even thought to have imitated its framework. The *Teseide*, on the other hand, he seems to have taken up at once, beginning a poem on *Queen Anelida and fals Arcite*, which was to have told the loves of Arcyte and Palamon, but which he said aside after he had written some 350 lines.

*Troilus and Cressida*. With the *Filostrato* Chaucer was more immediately successful, for between 1380 and 1383 he transmuted it into his longest and very beautiful poem, *Troilus and Criseyde*. The story of this goes back to the Trojan War, and tells how Troilus, one of the younger sons of King Priam, was smitten with love for Cressida or Criseyde, the Greek maiden whom the priest Calchas had left behind at Troy when he himself was ransomed; how by the help of her uncle Sir Pandarus he won her affection, and how, lastly, when the fortune of war removed her from Troy, Criseyde proved faithless and gave herself to the Greek prince, Diomede. Written in the seven-line stanza over which he had obtained a complete mastery, Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* is full of human interest and pathos, vivid in colour and the sense of the beauty and fleetingness of life, and if he had written nothing else, by itself it would entitle him to be ranked among the greatest English poets. He takes the story as Boccaccio told it, and humanises and enriches it at every point.

¹ This seems to be proved by the experiment in Dante's *terza rima* in the *Complaint to his Lady* (p. xxiii), and perhaps by the reminiscence of the *Paradiso* (Cant. 33), in the Invocation to the B. Virgin prefixed in the Canterbury Tales, to the *Life of St. Cecilia*, though the latter may have been either a later addition or borrowed indirectly.
BOECE. While *Troilus* was in progress Chaucer seems to have taken up two other subjects. The first of these, which leaves its trace on the *Troilus* and on many of his later works, was a prose translation of the *De Consolatione Philosophiae* of Boethius, a Roman statesman and man of letters who was first imprisoned and afterwards murdered by order of Theodoric in A.D. 525. In the *De Consolatione*, written during his imprisonment, Boethius imagines himself visited by his mistress Philosophy, who, after listening to his complaints, reminds him how many sources of consolation still remain to him, and that true happiness is not to be found in riches or power, but in obedience to the Law of Love which governs all things. From these beginnings Philosophy raises her disciple to the idea of God Himself, as the Supreme Good, and then passes on to explain the existence of evil, the rewards of virtue and vice, and the reconciliation of man’s free will with God’s foreknowledge. Her arguments are diversified by a succession of short poems, in which they are illustrated, often by analogies drawn from the forces of nature. The frequent use which he makes of it in his subsequent poems shows that Chaucer was genuinely interested in the *De Consolatione*, but his attempt to translate it into English prose was not very successful, for he inverts his sentences and uses strange phrases till his English is often harder to understand than the Latin.

THE HOUSE OF FAME: THE PARLEMENT OF FOULES.
The other subject which interrupted *Troilus* was Richard II’s wedding with Anne of Bohemia. The *Hous of Fame* describes in octosyllabic couplets a dream on a certain December 10. On December 12, 1380, an English embassy was appointed to treat for the marriage, and
Dr. Aage Brusendorff (*The Chaucer Tradition*, 1925, p. 163) suggests that the decision had been taken on the 10th and inspired Chaucer to write a poem on the lines of *Le Temple d’Honneur*, in which (in the same metre) Froissart had guardedly forecast an unidentified marriage. Chaucer’s dream begins in a temple of Venus, where are depicted the adventures of her favourite, Aeneas; next the dreamer is borne aloft from a sandy desert by a great golden eagle to the house of Fame which Jupiter, in compassion for his unrequited service of Venus, has willed that he be shewn that he may gain there some “tydinges of Loves folk.” After watching Fame’s capricious treatment of her suitors, he goes to the house of tidings and has just heard a great noise in the corner devoted to love and found “a man of greet auctoritee,” who was clearly to give him the important news, when the poem breaks off, apparently from the loss of its last leaf.

*The Parlement of Foules*, which can be assigned to about May 1382, is an allegory (in seven-line stanzas) of the year’s delay between the negotiations of December 1380 and Anne’s landing at Dover, December 18, 1381, for her marriage the next month. In the usual dream the birds appear on St. Valentine’s day before the goddess Nature to choose their mates. Nature holds in her hand a formel (or female) eagle, and three of her kind come to sue for her love. The other birds are bidden to decide which is the worthiest, but after they have said their say the formel asks for a respite to consider for herself, and the birds fly away singing their roundel:

Now welcome, somer, with thy sone soft,
Thou hast this wintres weders overshake
And driven a wey the longe nyghtes blake.
GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The structure of both these marriage poems is slight (the comparison of that of the *Hous of Fame* to Dante's *Divina Commedia* is quite untenable), but the details are worked out with charming humour and lightness of touch.

**Palamon and Arcite; The Legend of Good Women.** The next separate poem preserved after *Troilus* is that known as *The Legend of Good Women*, but ‘al the storye of Palamon and Arcyte’ is alluded to in the Prologue to the *Legend*, and there should be no difficulty in believing that Chaucer's version of the *Teseide*, now assigned to the Knight in the *Canterbury Tales*, was written immediately after *Troilus*, to which it is closely allied in tone, temper and colour.\(^1\) The tale of the two Theban knights who, in the prison in which Theseus has confined them, see his sister Emily walking in her garden, and contend for the honour of loving her till death ends their strife, is perhaps the best known of all Chaucer's works, and certainly one of the finest. In the *Legend of Good Women* he was less successful. The Prologue, in which the god of love upbraids Chaucer for treason and Queen Alcestis bids him write stories of faithful women as a penance, is delightful in both its two forms. The earliest of the legends of Cupid's saints, the stories of Cleopatra, Thisbe, and Dido are hardly less good, but

\(^1\) Its subsequent assignment to the Knight is paralleled by that of *S. Cecilia* to the 'second Nun, *Griselda* to the Clerk, and *Constance* to the Man of Law. On this theory it becomes Chaucer's first tale in decasyllabic couplets. Professor Skeat maintained that the *Palamon and Arcite* mentioned in the *Legend* was written in seven-line stanzas, some of which Chaucer used in other poems, while destroying the rest.
the theme Chaucer had chosen left little scope for variety, and when he had written nine of the nineteen tales he had planned, he turned aside to take up a happier task.

The Canterbury Tales. In the Legend of Good Women we see Chaucer endeavouring to find a thread by which to link together a succession of stories. The attempt was no new one. Several series of didactic stories connected by a thread of narrative were already in circulation. In the Conde Lucanor of the Infante Juan Manuel, written not later than 1342 (Chaucer may have heard of this Spanish collection through John of Gaunt), the convention of the moral lesson is said to be maintained, but the stories seem to be told for their own sake. Above all there was the Decamerone or Ten Days' Story Telling of Giovanni Boccaccio, in which ten lords and ladies are supposed to have fled from Florence during the plague of 1348 and beguiled their time with story telling in a fair garden. Chaucer is often said to have taken the idea of his Canterbury Tales from this last work, but no poem of his can be traced back directly to the Decamerone, since in the three or four cases in which he stumbled on a theme already handled in it the differences of treatment show clearly that he obtained his plot from a different source. If he had possessed the Decamerone it is impossible to believe that he would not have used it more largely, and as he cannot be proved to

e.g. The Seven Wise Masters of Rome, in which seven philosophers combat a wicked Empress who has brought false accusations against her step-son, the Empress and the Sages telling alternate stories, and the Disciplina Clericalis of Petrus Alfonsi, a book of instruction spoken by a dying Arab to his son and illustrated with tales.
have used it at all for his stories, it is at least doubtful whether he was acquainted with its frame-work. There is indeed no reason in the nature of things why the invention of such a frame-work should not have come to him as an entirely original idea. Even if he did not, as we would fain believe he did, himself go a pilgrimage when he was released in February, 1385, from the necessity of daily attendance at the Customs, his duties as a Justice of Peace for Kent, an office to which he was appointed in October of the same year, must have familiarised him with the sight of companies of pilgrims travelling along the road to Canterbury. We know from indignant Lollard criticisms that it was common for the pilgrims not only to shorten their way by the sounds of a bagpipe, even as Chaucer’s Miller is made to beguile his company, but to tell each other tales. What can be more natural than that, as Chaucer passed these merry parties on the road, the idea should have come to him, without any other suggestion, that he might link together his scattered stories and find a peg on which to hang fresh ones, by depicting a company of such English travellers and assigning to them such tales as would best suit their characters and professions or raise a laugh by their incongruity? However the idea came to him, this is what he did. The tales of S. Cecilia and Griselda were assigned to a nun and a pious clerk, that of the chivalrous cousins Palamon and Arcite, with all possible appropriateness, to a Knight, that of Constance, for no visible reason, to a Lawyer, the dreary ‘Falls of Princes,’ with new additions, to a hunting monk, in order to provoke the wrath of the company at his so disappointing their
reasonable expectations. What other stories Chaucer may have had by him when he planned his new cycle of tales we cannot say. The romance of Cambuscan may have been begun soon after that of Palamon and Arcyte was finished and the Squire added to the Pilgrims in order to narrate it, or the Squire may have been imagined first and the half-told tale inserted to suit him. Several of the stories have no particular appropriateness to their supposed narrators, e.g. those of Dorigen (Franklin’s), Appius and Virginia (Physician’s), and Apollo and the Crow (Manciple’s).¹ Save the Prioress’s Tale (connected definitely with her not only by its appropriateness, but by the ‘quod she’ in B r771) the only Tales which we can feel quite certain were written after the idea of the Canterbury Pilgrimage had taken shape are those of the ‘churls’—Miller, Reeve, Friar, Summoner, and Pardoner (this last much too good for its narrator, but yet linked to him by its subject), with the revelations and story of the Canon’s Yeoman and the learned simplicity of the Nun’s Priest’s tale of Chaunticleere and Pertelote. All these are connected with each other and with the Prologue and Talks by the Road by their richness, vigour, humour, and ease. With them the colloquial tone first enters into English poetry, and attains at once a perfection which has never been surpassed. Chaucer had wearied of the lives of saints, the stories of chivalrous adventure and the allegories of love, which formed the stock-in-trade of court-poets.

¹ The attributions of others are puzzling. The Wife of Bath could have been much better suited with the Shipman’s than with her own, and the Man of Law with Chaucer’s of Melibeus and his wife Prudence.
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To these stories, which had previously had no place in our literature because the doings of Carpenters, Millers, and the like did not appeal to fashionable audiences, he now turned with evident relish, and he exhibited in them, it must be confessed, the same easy tolerance of breaches of purity and decency which in the Prologue he shows to dishonesty. We could wish it were otherwise, but it is fair to Chaucer to remember that he had no skill in constructing original plots, and that the popular stories on which he had to draw were pervaded by the same characteristics.

Later Minor Poems. The Canterbury Tales were Chaucer’s last important work, and the composition of those specially written for the cycle certainly spread over several years. But Chaucer, though he was probably but little over sixty at the time of his death, seems to have felt old age press heavily on him, and it is quite possible that he did not continue his story telling up to the last. He wrote, however, a few short poems during his later years, and to these, together with one or two of an earlier date, we must now turn. The sportive balade ‘to Rosemounde’ belongs probably to the Troilus period, and the lines to Adam Scrivener reproaching him for mistakes made in copying the Troilus and the Boece

From the fact that one of its calculations is made for the date March 12, 1391 (1392, New style), it is reasonable to suppose that the prose Treatise on the Astrolabe, which Chaucer wrote for ‘litel Lowis’ his son, was compiled in that year. The treatise is interesting as probably the earliest attempt to give instruction on a scientific subject in English in-tead of Latin, and it is still useful in helping us to understand the numerous astrological references in Chaucer’s own works. Its literary value lies chiefly in its charming introduction.
are sufficiently dated by these references. Five other poems, *The Former Age, Fortune, Truth, Gentilesse, Lak of Stedfastnesse* are linked together by their obvious reminiscences of the poet's translation of the *De Consolatione*. The *Former Age* is a pleasant rhapsody on 'the good old times,' the Golden Age, when men were content with the fruits of the earth and had not yet learnt even the use of a plough. The other four poems are all cast in the form of balades, *i.e.* they consist of three stanzas, to which in some cases is added a fourth, called the Envoy, only two rhymes being used throughout. The *Fortune* contains three such balades, "Balades de visage sans Peinture" as they are called in some manuscripts, giving the accusation of the plaintiff against Fortune and her answer. The purport of the *Truth* (or "Balade de Bon Conseyl") is indicated in its beautiful first line, "Flee fro the prees, and dwelle with sothfastnesse." In the *Gentilesse* Chaucer recurs to a favourite theme, that nobility is proved by gentle actions, and that none who is not "trewe of his word, sobre, pitous and free," can rightly claim it, "Al were he mytre, croune, or diadem." The *Lak of Stedfastnesse* has usually been interpreted as a moral exhortation to King Richard to mend his ways, but it is doubtful if Chaucer would have cared to write in such a strain, and it seems better to interpret it as a commendation of the King's action in 1389, when he threw off the tutelage of his uncles and declared that he would rule for himself. The three balades which are usually called *The Compleynt of Venus* are freely translated from the French of a Savoyard poet, Sir Otes de Granson, and were probably written somewhere about 1393, possibly to please Isabella, Duchess of
York. The sportive Envoy to Scogan, who had broken the laws of love by “giving up” a too hard-hearted mistress, appears to have been written from the neighbourhood of Greenwich about 1393, and contains the request “myné thy frend ther it may fructifye,” which may have helped to procure for Chaucer his pension from Richard II. The Envoy to Bukton, with its half humorous, half bitter warnings against marriage, contains a reference to the expedition against the Frieslanders in 1396, and was therefore presumably written in that year. The Compleyt of Chaucer to his Purse, with its Envoy to Henry IV. as “Conquerour of Brutes Albion,” belongs to 1399, and despite its humour closes rather pitifully the long list of his poems.

Chaucer's Place in English Literature.—In estimating the work of any poet we have to consider it under two different aspects, in its relation to the time at which it was produced and in its positive results. Looked at from either of these points of view, Chaucer's achievements were very great. When he began to write, the ideals of the thirteenth century had lost their power. While the memory of Richard Coeur de Lion was fresh in men's minds the adventures of knights and their ladies formed a natural subject for poetry. By the reign of Richard II. they had lost any semblance of reality. Dead also was the fervour of mystical faith which gave to the Arthurian romances their unique atmosphere. The first and not the least of the achievements of Chaucer was that he gave English poetry new subjects, drawn partly from Italian literature, partly from Latin, partly from the popular tales of his day, partly, and this is the most important of all, from the English life which he saw
around him. That he, who was essentially a poet of the
Court, brought into English court poetry such a series of
descriptions as we have in the Prologue to the *Canter-
bury Tales*, is one of the most striking instances of
originality that the history of English literature can
offer us.

In the second place, with his new subjects he brought
new methods of handling them. We note at once his
introduction of two important new metres, the seven-line
stanza and the ten (or eleven)-syllabled couplet, both
admirable narrative metres, removed at once from the
monotony of the octosyllabic couplets and from the
excessive complication of such long stanzas as we find in
*Pearl*. We note more gradually, and can hardly over-
estimate, the extraordinary richness and ease, which, as
he grew in mastery of his art, he imported into his verse.
With him, as we have said, the conversational note first enters into English poetry. With the conversational note came also an inexhaustible humour, never boister-
ous or forced, but playing gently round its subject with a
quiet fun, which to this day sometimes defies the efforts of commentators to tell whether some seemingly serious sentence does not hide a jest. Again he turned his back resolutely on the prolixity of the romances, conveys the
effect of rapid action in a few vivid strokes, and fills his
pages with a series of pictures as bright and glittering as
the illuminations in a medieval manuscript. Thus no
English poet has obeyed more completely his own
precept 'the wordés moot be cosyn to the dede,' and he
comes before us as the first conscious artist in English
verse. His lyrical gift was infinitely less than that shown
not only by the great Elizabethans, and many of the
poets of the nineteenth century, but by some of his anonymous predecessors. The secular drama, in which he would surely have excelled, was not yet invented. The only department of poetry open to his pursuit was that of story-telling, and as a teller of stories, when we consider the sweetness of his early tales, the glittering colour and high chivalrous tone intermingled with comedy of the *Troilus* and *Palamon*, the vivid character-sketches of the *Prologue* and the humour of his latest tales, it is impossible to name any other English poet whose achievement can be matched against his. If we could take thirty per cent. of Goldsmith, fifty of Fielding, and twenty of Walter Scott, and vitalise this compound with the spirit of the fourteenth century, we should get perhaps fairly near to another Chaucer. But it would be a Chaucer whose right hand wrote in prose and only his left in verse, and our formula, though it may be useful in suggesting the writers to whom Chaucer is most akin, and how modern he really is, would still be defective, for the charm of his poetry remains personal and individual.

III. THE FRAMEWORK OF THE CANTERBURY TALES.

**Nature of the Pilgrimage.**—In addition to what has already been said of the *Canterbury Tales* in our general survey of Chaucer’s poetry, we must now consider briefly some points as to the nature of the framework he adopted, and the extent to which he was able to carry out his ambitious plan.

Thomas à Becket was murdered on Dec. 29, 1170, and canonised three years later. In 1220 the transfer of
his body to a gorgeous shrine attested and increased the veneration in which the saint was held. When Chaucer wrote, more than two centuries after Becket's death, the popularity of the pilgrimage to the scene of his martyrdom was still undiminished. Though with few claims to the position Becket had become, we may almost say, the national saint, and the pilgrimage to his shrine was made by all sorts of people from all sorts of motives. At the moment when they knelt at the shrine the pilgrims were doubtless filled with awe, but on the way there and back they treated their expedition very much as a holiday outing. The stock quotation on this point is from the account given by a Wycliffite priest, Thomas Thorpe, of his examination by Archbishop Arundel on a charge of heresy in 1407. Thorpe represents himself as saying:

"Wherefore, Syr, I have preched and taucht openlie, and so I purpose all my lyfe tyme to do with Goddes helpe, saying that such fonde people waste blamefully Goddes goods in ther veyne pilgrimagis ... Also, Syr, I know well that when diverse men and women will go thus often after their own willis, and finden out one pilgrimage, they will order with them before to have with them both men and women that can well syng countre songes, and some other pilgremys will have with them baggepipes; so that every time they come to rome, what with the noyse of their syngyng and with the sounde of their piping and with the jangeling of their Canterbury bellis, and with the barking out of doggis after them, that they make more noise than if the King came there away with all his clarious, and many other ministrellis. And if these men and women be a moneth in their pilgrimage many of them shall be an half year after greate jangelers, tale-tellers, and lyers."

So said Thorpe, not greatly exaggerating complaints of perfectly orthodox critics. Nor does the Archbishop altogether deny the charge:
"And the Archbishop said to me: 'Leude losell, thou seest not ferre ynough in this matter, for thou considerest not the great travel of pilgremys, therefore thou blamest the thyng that is praisable. I say to the that it is right well done that pilgremys have with them both singers and also pypers, that when one of them that goeth barsoote striketh his toe upon a stone and hurteth hym sore, and makyth hym to blede, it is well done that he or his felow begin then a songe. or else take out of his bosom a baggepipe for to drive away with suche myrthe the hurt of his felow. For with soche solace the travel and weerness of pilgremys is lightely and merily brought forth."

Whether or no the pilgrims did well to make them merry with tales and bagpipes, it is evident that tales and bagpipes were much in request among them, and that the merriment of Chaucer's company was quite in accordance with custom.

STAGES OF THE JOURNEY.—Canterbury is fifty-six miles from London on the high road to Dover. For use along this road horses, prominently marked to discourage thieving, could be hired at the rate of twelvepence from Southwark to Rochester, twelvepence thence to Canterbury, and sixpence from Canterbury to Dover. The time occupied by the journey (I quote from my 'Chaucer Primer') was probably no less than four days. This may seem excessive for a ride of only fifty-six miles; but many of the pilgrims were ill-mounted and inexpert riders (thus of the Shipman it is said 'he rode upon a rouncy as he coude'), even main-roads in the 14th century were often little better than quagmires, and this Canterbury road in particular is twice spoken of by the Host as 'the slough.' Travellers on urgent business, no doubt, rode considerable distances, as much as 40 miles in a day, but from 20 to 25 miles seems to have been considered a good day's journey. For a mixed company
of holiday-makers 46 miles in three days over fairly level roads, and ten miles for the last day's road over Blean Hill, would not have been abnormally slow progress. Moreover we have precedents to guide us. In 1358 the Queen-Mother Isabella went on a pilgrimage to Canterbury. She left London on June 7th, slept that night at Dartford, slept at Rochester on the 8th, at Ospringe (near Faversham) on the 9th, and reached Canterbury on the 10th, i.e. on the fourth day from starting. In 1360 John of France in his journey from London to Calais slept at Dartford July 1st, dined there next day, slept at Rochester July 2nd, dined at Sittingbourne and slept at Ospringe July 3rd, reaching Canterbury July 4th. The records of other 14th century journeys confirm the presumption that Dartford, Rochester, and Ospringe (where some trace of the old Pilgrims' House still exists) were the regular sleeping places on the road. If we imagine our pilgrims as having kept to them we shall get the simplest explanation of all the references to places and time in their conversations, and have the journey divided into fairly equal lengths.

**Fiction and Fact in Chaucer's Narrative.**—Chaucer tells us in the Prologue how, one April,

In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay  
Redy to wenden on my pilgrymage  
To Cauterbury with ful devout corage,  
At nyght were come into that hostelrye,  
Wel nyne-and twenty in a compaignye  
Of sondry folk, by aventure y-falle  
In felaweshipe, and pilgrimes were they alle,  
That toward Cauterbury wolden ryde.

Now, at the dissolution of the Monasteries 'a hostelry called the Tabard' was mentioned in the surrender of
the Southwark property of the Abbot of Hyde; in the time of Speght, who edited Chaucer's works in 1602, the inn was managed by a Master G. Preston, who had then newly refitted it for the convenience of travellers, and in the *Survey of London* by Stow (1588) it is mentioned as the most ancient of the many fair inns in Southwark. All this proves abundantly that in the 16th century, and probably in the 15th, there was a Tabard Inn in existence, but no one has yet answered the question I asked in my 'Eversley' edition of the *Canterbury Tales*, as long ago as 1894:—Was there or was there not a Tabard Inn at Southwark in Chaucer's day? The question, as I then pointed out, is of more than antiquarian interest. A real Tabard Inn must of necessity carry with it a real Harry Bailly as its host, and in that case what would Mrs. Harry Bailly have said to Chaucer's insinuations that she incited her husband to beat his rascals and generally to break the King's peace?

I hadde levere than a barel ale,
That goodé lief my wyf hadde herd this tale,
For she nys no thynge of swich pacience,
As was this Melibéus wyf Prudence.
By goddés bonés! whan I bete my knaves,
She bryngeth me forth the greté cobbled staves,
And crieth, 'Slee the doggés evérichoon,
And brek hem, bothé bak and every boon;
And if that any neighebore of myne
Wol nat in chirché to my wyf enclyne,
Or be so hardy to hire to trespase.
Whan she cometh home she rampeth in my face,
And crieth, 'Falsé coward! wrek thy wyf!
By corpus bonés! I wol have thy knyf,
And thou shalt have my distaf and go spynne!'

The good man fears that he may commit manslaughter some day at his wife's instigation (see the whole passage,
B. 3082-3113). Could Chaucer possibly have written thus of a real woman, 'byg in armes,' and with a husband to defend her? Was there really a reeve named Oswald in the little town of Baldeswell in Norfolk (Prologue, l. 620), who would sit quietly under imputations that he had 'privily astored' himself? It seems impossible, and yet why should Chaucer have dragged in the reference to Baldeswell, if it means nothing; and what are we to make of the fact that there was a real Henricus Baylly in Chaucer's day, who represented Southwark in the Parliament of 1378? It should, perhaps, be pointed out that mine host is only once given his name—it comes out when he is chaffing the Cook on his Jacks of Dover, and the Cook answers:

"Thou seist ful sooth," quod Roger, "by my fey!
But 'sooth pley quaad pley,' as the Flemyng seith;
And therefore, Herry Bailly, by thy feith
Be thou nat wrooth, er we departen heer,
Though that my tale be of an hostileer."

Chaucer is not likely to have revised this passage, or he would have gone on with the Cook's Tale, which immediately follows it. It is possible that he really had Harry Bailly in his mind when he drew the Host, but omitted his name intentionally in the Prologue, and let it fall from the Cook's mouth accidentally. If so, though we know there was a Harry Bailly, there may have been no Tabard. Or again, there may have been a Tabard, with a hostess so notoriously meek that the chaff about 'cobbled staves' could not touch her. The framework Chaucer devised for his stories is so original, so unique in English literature, that to our great loss it is impossible

1 A true jest is a bad jest.
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to be sure what facts may be mixed with its fictions. But for some new light on this see pp. 103–6.

Unfinished Condition of the Tales.—There are two points in the Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales* which do not agree with Chaucer’s language elsewhere. The first of these is the mention, in l. 164, of three priests as in attendance on the Prioress. In B. 3999 the Host is made to speak ‘unto the Nonnes preest anon,’ which clearly implies that there was only one such priest. Moreover, if there were three priests, the ‘wel nyne and twenty in a compaignye’ at the Tabard become (including Chaucer) 31, viz.:

- Knight, Squire, Yeoman, - - - - - 3
- Franklin, - - - - - - 1
- Prioress and her Chaplain, - - - - - 2
- Prioress’s Priests, - - - - - 3
- Clerk of Oxford, Poor Parson, - - - - 2
- Monk, Friar, Pardonor, and Summoner, - - - 4
- Merchant, Five Gildsmen and their Cook, Manciple,
  - - - - - 9
- Shipman, - - - - -
- Physician and Sergeant of Law, - - - - 2
- Miller, Reeve, Ploughman, - - - - 3
- Wife of Bath, - - - - - 1
- Chaucer, - - - - - 1

Thus it seems clear that ‘the preestes thre’ are incompatible with the rest of the scheme, and that there is here either some change of plan, or a mistake.

In like manner the Host is made to add to the perfectly straightforward decree

That ech of yow to shorté with your weye
In this viage shall tellé tales tweye—

the bald superfluous and confusing couplet:

To Cauterburyward, I mean it so,
And homward he shal tellen othere two,
saddling the pilgrims with four tales each, or a total of 116, in addition to the extra tale of the Canon's Yeoman. But in the Parson's Prologue the Host entreats him

\[ ne \ breke\ thou\ nat\ oure\ pley, \]
\[ For\ every\ man\ save\ thou\ hath\ told\ his\ tale, \]
clearly implying, what we should expect, that each pilgrim has to tell only two tales in all, one on the outward, the second on the homeward journey, giving fifty eight (besides chance ones) altogether. But so far from our having two (much less four) tales from each pilgrim, there are seven of them (the Yeoman, Ploughman, and five Gildsmen) from whom we have no tales at all, while those of the Squire and Cook are incomplete, and the Monk's Tragedies and Chaucer's Tales of Sir Thopas are interrupted. On the other hand we have a prose tale from Chaucer in addition to Sir Thopas, and an extra tale, not contemplated in the Prologue, told by a Yeoman, who, with a Canon, his master, overtakes the pilgrims when they have ridden some five miles from Ospringe. Thus we have twenty finished stories, two unfinished and two interrupted ones.

According to Chaucer's plan, between each story and its successor there should have been a conversational link or Talk on the Road. But at least eight of these links are missing, so that it is necessary to divide the tales into nine groups, the stories within which are linked together, while between one group and another there is a gap. The order of these nine groups is not given quite accurately in any single manuscript, but is sufficiently determined by the references to lines and places. As rearranged, the groups are lettered A-I, and references to
the *Canterbury Tales* are now always given by the letter of the group and number of the line.

**Summary of the Journey and Tale-Telling.**—
After these explanations the following synopsis of the incidents on the road and story-telling should be intelligible:

**Group A.**

*Prologue*, ending with the start from the Watering of St. Thomas, April 17th.

*Knight's Tale* of the contest of Palamon and Arcite for the love of Emily, the sister of Duke Theseus. [Written about 1384. From Boccaccio's *Teseide*.]

*Words between the Host and the Miller*, the Miller insisting on telling 'his cherles tale,' for which Chaucer apologises.

*Miller's Tale* of an Oxford carpenter persuaded by his wife and a clerk to sit all night in a tub, to be ready to row away when Noah's Flood came again. [Late work; source unknown.]

*Reeve's Prologue and Tale*, answering the Miller's ridicule of the old carpenter by a story of how two Cambridge clerks revenged themselves on a miller who had turned their horse loose in order that he might steal their corn while they caught it. [Late work; adaptation of old French fabliaux.] Before the tale begins, the Host remarks:

Sey forth thy tale, and taie nat the tyme,—
Lo, Depésford, and it is half-vey pryme.
Lo, Grenewych, ther many a shrews is inne,
It were al tyme thy talé to bigynne.

*Cook's Prologue and Unfinished Tale* of a disreputable London apprentice, 'Perkyn revelour.' In the Prologue, in answer to some chaff from the Host, he bids 'Herry Bailly' not to be wrath if, later on, he tells a tale of 'an hostileer.' In many MSS. there follows here the *Tale of Gamelyn*, a considerably earlier story, which Chaucer probably meant to rewrite and assign to his Yeoman. The rest of the Tales supposed to be told on the first day of the pilgrimage are altogether lacking, and were almost certainly never written.

* * * * * * *
[Tales of the Second Day.]

**Group B.**

*Words of the Host to the Company,* a little sermon on 'loss of time,' it being then 10 A.M. on April 18th. The Man of Law, in replying to a request for a tale, gives a list of Chaucer's stories to show that there is nothing left to tell of. He ends:

But nathelesse, I recché noght a bene,
Though I come after hym with hawé baké,
I speke in prose, and lat hym rymés make.

This may be held to cover the fact that the verse-tale he proceeds to tell is not his own, but an old one by Chaucer. It is more probable, however, as Dr. Furnivall has suggested, that the prose *Tale of Melibee* was originally intended to be assigned to the Lawyer, to whom its long arguments are well suited.

*Man of Law’s Tale,* professedly told him by a merchant, ‘goon is many a yere,’ of the Emperor's daughter Constance. [Written before 1378. Freely adapted from the Anglo-Norman Chronicle of Nicolas Trivet.]

*Talk on the Road.* The Parson reproves the Host for swearing, and is accused himself of being a ‘Loller.’ The Shipman, to prevent him ‘preaching,’ offers a tale himself.

*Shipman’s Tale* of how a merchant was deceived by his wife and a monk. [Late date; no original discovered.]

*Words of the Host and Prioress’s Tale* of the little chorister murdered by Jews for his devotion to the Blessed Virgin and of the miracle the Virgin wrought for him. [Other versions of the story exist both in French and English. Chaucer's was probably written about 1386.]

*The Merry Words of the Host to Chaucer,* quoted already (see p. xxi) followed by *Chaucer’s Tale of Sir Thopas,* written as a parody on the old romances of chivalry. In this the Host 'stinteth' him with the exclamation, 'Na more of this for Goddesdignitee. . . . Mine erés aken of thy drasty speche,' and he then tells in prose the *Tale of Melibee,* in praise of Arbitration instead of War. [Taken from Jean de Meung's version of the *Liber Consolationis et Consilii* of Albertano of Brescia, composed about 1238. Date of Chaucer's version uncertain.]
GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Merry Words of the Host to the Monk, in which he notes, 'Lo! Rouchéstre stant heer faste by,' followed by the Monk's Tale, 'De Casibus virorum illustrium,' or 'Falls of Princes.' [Taken from Boccaccio's work of this name and other sources. Early work revised, and with recent instances added.] In the middle of the tragedy of Crœsus 'the Knight stinteth the Monk of his tale,' and though the Host bids him 'sey somewhat of huntyng,' he refuses to make a second attempt.

The Nun's Priest's Tale of the Cock, Hen and Fox. [Late work, but bright and clean. Enlarged from a folk-tale used in the Roman de Renart, in a fable by Marie de France, etc.]

TALES OF THE THIRD DAY.

GROUP C.

Doctor of Physic's Tale of Appius and Virginia. [Late work. Taken from the version of Livy's story in the Roman de la Rose.]

Words of the Host to the Physician and Pardoner: Pardoner's Preamble, describing his methods of preaching and getting money. Pardoner's Tale of the three rioters who went in quest of Death, and found him in finding a hidden treasure. [An old story from the East, retold in Chaucer's latest style.]

GROUP D.

Prologue of the Wife of Bath, narrating her experiences of married life, followed by her Tale of the condemned knight saved by an old woman who teaches him the answer to a riddle, and, on his marrying her, becomes a beautiful girl. [Late work. No original traced] In the course of a quarrel between Friar and Summoner before the Tale begins, there is a reference to Sittingbourn as the next stopping place.

Friar's Tale of a summoner who was worse than the Devil, and how the Devil seized him. [Late work. Two analogues extant.]

Summoner's Tale of the insult offered by a sick man to a begging friar who pestered him for gifts. [Late work. No original traced.]

¹ The position of Group C. is by no means certain.
GROUP E.

*Clerk of Oxford’s Prologue,* in which he speaks of a tale ‘learned at Padowe of a worthy clerk . . . Fraunceys Petrak,’ followed by the Tale, Chaucer’s old rendering of Petrarch’s Latin story of the Patience of Grisilde, with some added stanzas.

*Merchant’s Prologue and Tale,* answering the Clerk’s with a story of how a young wife deceived her old husband. [Late work. Analogues in Latin and in Boccaccio.]

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TALES OF THE FOURTH DAY.

GROUP F.

*Squire’s Tale* of Cambuscan and his fair daughter Canacee, and the magic sword, mirror, and ring. [Left unfinished. Probably an attempt to combine several stories. Similar in style to the *Knight’s Tale.*] In l. 73 the Squire alludes to its being the hour of ‘prime.’

*Franklin’s Words to the Squire, and Franklin’s Tale* of the Truth of Dorigen and the generosity of a squire and astrologer.

GROUP G.

*Second Nun’s Prologue and Tale* of S. Cecilia. [One of Chaucer’s earliest poems, inserted without revision.]

*Canon’s Yeoman’s Prologue.* Before the Pilgrims have ridden quite five miles they are overtaken at Boughton-under-Blee by a Canon and his Yeoman. The Yeoman tells such stories of his master’s knavery in pretending to transmute silver into gold that the Canon rides away.

*Canon’s Yeoman’s Tale* of how another canon cheated a priest by similar pretences.

GROUP H.

*Manciple’s Prologue,* a talk by the road near ‘Bobbe-up-and-doun, under the Blee in Caunterbury way,’ during which the drunken Cook falls from his horse.

*Manciple’s Tale* of how Apollo punished a crow for revealing a woman’s untruth. [Late work. Story in Ovid.]
GENERAL INTRODUCTION

GROUP I.

Parson’s Prologue and Tale, a prose sermon on the Seven Deadly Sins and true Penitence. [Partly taken from the Somme de Vices et de Vertus of Frère Lorens, a 13th century writer.] Told after the stories of all the other Pilgrims (‘now lakketh us no tales mo than oon’), towards evening (‘now hasteth yow, the sonne wole adoun’), as the Pilgrims are nearing Canterbury.

IV. CHAUCER’S LANGUAGE.

The years in which Chaucer was growing up were a critical period for the English language. When the poet was about ten years old Ranulph Higden wrote in his Polychronicon the famous passage (Bk. 1. ch. lix.) in which he spoke of the corrupted state of English, of how boys construed their Latin into French, how French was the language of the nobility and of the country people who imitated them, and how the old Saxon speech, split up into three dialects, had with difficulty survived among a few rustic folk (in paucis adhuc agrestibus vix remansit). In 1385, the year in which Chaucer wrote his Legend of Good Women, John Trevisa in translating the Polychronicon noted the change that had come about: “for Johan Cornwal, a maystere of gramere, chayngede the lore in gramer-scole and construccion of Freynsch into Englysch, and Richard Pencrych lurnede that manere of techyng of hym and other men of Pencrych.” John of Cornwall seems to have been a contemporary of Higden;¹ Penkryssh to have been living at Oxford in 1367, so the change was taking place during Chaucer’s youth and

¹ He seems to have been master of a grammar school connected with Merton College, Oxford. See the article by Dr. W. H. Stevenson in the English Miscellany presented to Dr. Furnivall.
early manhood. Trevisa notes also that ‘gentilmen haveth now moche i-left for to teche here children trenshe.’ In 1362 Edward III., at the request of the London citizens, had allowed suits to be pleaded in the law courts in English instead of French. By the time Chaucer wrote the earliest of the Canterbury Tales the victory of English was already assured, and yet his contemporary Gower, as late as 1376 78, used French as a medium for his Mirour de l’Ommé, a poem of nearly 30,000 lines. Higden may have exaggerated the forlorn condition of English during the first half of the 14th century, but during that period French must have been the chief language of the nobility and all who came into contact with them, and for many years after 1350 it must have been an alternative language with which all educated Englishmen had to be acquainted. Moreover it is clear that the triumph of English, as the language of polite society, was effected not by men who could only talk English taking the place of men who could only talk French; but by men who had previously only talked French, at least among themselves, first taking up English as an alternative language, and then giving it the preference. The natural result was that they carried much of their vocabulary, much of their spelling, much of their pronunciation with them. Professor Skeat in his Notes on English Etymology (Clarendon Press, 1901) has given a rough list of some 3000 modern English words which occur in Anglo-French books and documents of the 13th and 14th centuries, often in the exact form

we now use. In the same book, and also in his edition of *Havelok* (Clarendon Press, 1902), he has shown how the spelling of English poems has been altered by their having been copied by scribes more familiar with French. Here then we have no conscious conflict in which each side fought for the purity of its own speech, but a continual give-and-take, and in this compromise no one man, not even Chaucer himself, could play a decisive part. Born in London, and mixing all his life with the Court, Chaucer wrote the ordinary dialect of educated Londoners, which was practically that of the East Midlands, and with few modifications has become, as it would no doubt have become in any case, though the popularity of his poems may have helped the process, the standard English of our own day. We should thus dismiss altogether the foolish talk of Chaucer having 'corrupted' English by adopting unnecessary French words, and on the other hand not attribute to him any undue share in the work of making the English language. Now that Gower's English poem, *Confessio Amantis*, has at last been edited by a thoroughly competent scholar (*The Complete Works of John Gower*, edited by G. C. Macaulay, Vols. 2 and 3, Clarendon Press, 1901), we can see that Gower's language, though it leans rather to Southern than to Midland forms, and has a greater admixture of Kentish, is substantially the same as Chaucer's, and that Gower is at least as careful as Chaucer, both in his grammar and his pronunciation. His popularity also, if we may test it by the number of copies of the *Confessio* which have been preserved (about 50 as compared with about 60 of the *Canterbury Tales*), and the praise of his successors, was
nearly as great. Whatever credit is due to Chaucer for moulding our language must therefore be given also to Gower. In fact, the methods of the two poets were the same. Both used the ordinary educated language of their day; both allowed themselves some little freedom in their rhyme words, but were generally precise in matters of pronunciation, and both, like all true poets, were conservative in their tendencies, retaining inflections which were being rapidly dropped in ordinary speech. Their moderation and their conservatism were not imitated by their successors. Lydgate, Stephen Hawes, and Skelton (when he tried to write finely) were not content with the ordinary English of their day, but tried to improve on it by ransacking their Latin vocabularies for ornate polysyllables, which they transferred straight into English. It was surely his abstinence from this folly, not any idea that he had passed judgment in the spirit of a philologist on the English of his own day, that won for Chaucer Spenser's praise of him as a "well of English undefiled."

The triumph of English over Anglo-French was greatly facilitated by the fact that both languages had for long been spoken by the same tongues. The French was the "Frenshh of Stratford-atte Bow"; the English had not yet undergone the changes of pronunciation which in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries separated it more and more widely from the "Frenshh of Parys." The young student will recover quite enough of Chaucer's pronunciation if he give the vowels the sounds they have in modern French poetry. To be prematurely careful about pronunciation may easily lead to neglect of more important matters, or to the crime of reading Chaucer's verse in an
affected and finicking manner. The following notes on his variations from modern practice are a little more detailed, but for full information the student should consult Dr. Liddell's Introduction to his Edition of the Prologue, or ten Brink's Chaucer's Sprach- und Verskunst, now accessible in Miss Bentinck Smith's excellent translation (The Language and Metre of Chaucer. By Bernhard ten Brink. Macmillan, 1901).

LONG VOWELS.

ä (aa), as in father, not as in place.
ě (ee), when close, nearly as å in tale; when open, nearly as a in mare.
I (Y), as in machine, not as in fine.
ő (oo), when close, as oa in boat; when open, as oa in broad.
ů only occurs in French words and there keeps the French sound.

SHORT VOWELS.

The inflectional e-final, when sounded, must be pronounced lightly, like the a in China in rapid talk. Otherwise ĕ, as well as I and ĕ, is sounded as at present: ĕ as in met, I as in fin; ő both as in not and as in monk.

ů in words of English origin has its modern sound, as in full; but keeps its French sound in words from the French.

ä differs from the other short vowels in never having its modern sound, as in cat or than. It has the usual Continental sound of short a, as in the German Mann.

DIPHTHONGS.

ai (ay), ei (ey), have the present Cockney pronunciation of ai, nearly as i in fine.
au (aw), as ou in house, not as au in haul.
eu (ew), not very different from at present, but modified by the e having the value rather of modern ai than ee.
oi (oy), as at present.
ou (ow), where now pronounced as in found, must be given the sound of oo in fool; elsewhere nearly as ow in know.
CONSONANTS.

With very slight exceptions these were sounded as at present. 
Gh when fully pronounced had the sound of the Scotch ch in loch, 
but under French influence was rapidly becoming silent. 
Gu was probably pronounced as u. Initial h was neglected, as at present 
in many words of French origin and often in he, him, his, her, here, 
hem, and hath, hadde, and have. The syllables ci, si, ti have their 
full value, and must never be pronounced sh.

In addition to differences of pronunciation and the 
presence of words which have now become obsolete, 
Chaucer's language differs from the English of our own 
day mainly in preserving and sounding a final -e, -en, 
and -n which have since been lost, and an -es which has 
since been weakened to simple -s. These endings in 
-e, -en, -n, -es are themselves in the case of native English 
words mostly weakened forms of earlier terminations; in 
the case of nouns of French origin the e-final represents 
a termination still sounded in French verse, though 
slurred in the less formal pronunciation of prose.

SUBSTANTIVES.

I. In a number of Middle-English substantives the nominative 
ends in a fully sounded e-final.

(a) In many words of French origin: service (122),
grece (135), signe (226), visage (628).

(b) In many words of English origin with a monosyllabic stem:

(i.) Representing older terminations in a, e, and u: e.g. coppe, 
cup (O.E. cuppa); sonne (O.E. sunna); herte, heart (O.E. 
heorte); sone, son (O.E. sunu).

(ii.) From a tendency to add to all feminine substantives, by 
false analogy, the termination -e, even when they possessed 
nothing answering to it in Old English: e.g. bote, remedy 
(O.E. böt); rote, root (O.E. rõt); meede, reward (O.E. 
méd).

2 Numbers without other references refer to lines in the Prologue (Group A.).
In regard to this e-final in nominatives, Chaucer's practice is not uniform. Not only does he sound it in some words and omit it from others of the same class, but in words in which he generally sounds it he occasionally leaves it silent.

II. Inflections.

(a) The Genitive singular is normally formed in -es, -s: shires, cristes, loides, mannes, Goddes. Traces are also found of the old feminine genitive in -an, which has become so weakened that it only avails to keep out the masculine termination -s: his lady grace (88), oure lady veyl (695), so perhaps chirche in chirche-doore (460, cp. halle-doore, Squire's Tale, I. 80). Elsewhere we find sonne, heuene, widwe used as genitives. But, as a rule, feminine nouns follow the analogy of the masculine and form their genitives in -es, -s.

The words fader (781) and brother sometimes, more especially in proverbial phrases, form their genitives without inflection.

(b) The dative singular, as a rule, does not differ from the nominative in sound, though to nominatives which end in a consonant a silent -e is often added by the scribes when the word follows the prepositions at, by, for, in, of, on, to. Feminine nouns whose nominatives end in -e are sometimes said to be in the dative case when they follow these prepositions, but as the form would be the same in any case, the statement is hardly warranted. Other so-called dative forms occur at the pause in the verse, where an additional lightly sounded syllable is often found, e.g.

With bowe in honde | right as an hunteresse (A. 2347).

And of these, again, we must say that Chaucer may have consciously written them as datives, and intended the datival -e to be sounded, or he may not. In the same way, when we find the datival -e in a word rhyming with another in which Chaucer's pronunciation of the e-final is not constant (e.g. yere rhyming with preyere in A. 1203-4, preyere being a dissyllable in A. 2421), the uncertainty which attaches to the pronunciation of the rhyme-word must attach also to that of the dative. When allowance is made for these doubtful instances, * occurrence of the fully sounded datival -e in Chaucer becomes rare. One instance in the Prologue is toune in 566, where the ou -e must be sounded to rhyme with the infinitive sowne in the soundous line.
(c) Plurals in -es. Monosyllabic substantives mostly form their plurals in -es fully sounded: e.g. shoures (1), lokkes (81), songes (98), lippes (128), handes (186), bootes (203, 273), bookes (294), wordes (313), termes (323), doomes (323), stremes (402), drogges (426), legges (591). Some monosyllables ending in -s make no change in the plural, e.g. caas (323). Substantives of two or more syllables occasionally add a fully sounded -es in the plural (e.g. vigilies, 377; nosethirles, 357; reliques, 701; rekenynges, 760). More often the e is silent, or dropped altogether: e.g. yeddynge (237), lasars (245), daungers (402), achatours (568), batailles (61), husbondes (460), stywardes (579), francelcyns (216), tavernes (240), bargaynes (282), parisheus (482), pilgrimes (26), lovedayes (258), remedys (475).

(d) Plurals in -en. A few substantives form plurals in -en, a weakened form of the earlier -an: e.g. eyen or yen (152), assheu (A. 1302, F. 255), been (F. 204). In doughtren (Troylus iv. 22), sustren (Troylus iii. 733), as in the still current children and brethren, the termination is due to false analogy, the O.E. forms having been dothru, sweost u, cildru, broðru.

(e) Plurals without inflection. A few nouns follow some Old English neuters of the vowel-declension which had no inflection in the nominative plural: e.g. yeer (twenty yeer of age, 82), hors (his hors were goode, 74 Ellesmere text, cp. 598), sheep, neet, swyn (597-98).

ADJECTIVES.

I. Adjectives possessing a fully-sounded e-final independent of inflection. These follow Old English forms ending in -e: e.g. cleane (504, O.E. cleane), trewe (531, O.E. trêwe), or are of French origin, as nyce (398, O. Fr. nice), solempne (209, O. Fr. solémne), straunge (464, O. Fr. estrange).

II. Definite use with e-final in singular. After the definite article (the yonge sonne, 7), a possessive pronoun (his halfe cours, 8), a demonstrative pronoun (this ilké monk, 175); before proper names¹ (fairé, yongé fresche Venus, A. 2386); also before, not after,

¹This use was first pointed out by Zupitza. I owe my knowledge of it to Dr. Liddell's Introduction, op cit., § 115. The use is clearly only a permissive one, but it perhaps justifies us, as Dr. Liddell thinks, in reading swaint, for swint, in l. 150, and wherever necessary, though the uninflected form occurs quite commonly before proper names. Mr. A. J. Ellis and Dr. Skeat, on the other hand, have contended that swant can be pronounced as a disyllable, swint.
a substantive in the vocative (cp. falsé traitour, A. 1580, with By mercy, lady bright, A. 2231).

III. Indefinite use, without e-final in singular. Of grea-reverence (312), a whit cote and a blew hood weréd he (564). Adjective used predicatively are thus uninflected. Whit wes his heda (332), Boold was hir face (458).

IV. Plurals. These are formed in e-final, for both definite and indefinite use, e.g. the tendrè croppe (7), smalè foweles (9), fernè halwes (14). Plural adjectives used predicatively are as a rule inflected, but not invariably; cp. his nosèthirlès blakè were and wyde (557) and ful longè were his legges and ful lene (591), with Nat fully quik ne fully deed they were (A. 1015) and Of which this ladys were nothing glad (E. 375).

V. Genitive plural in -er (O.E.-ra). This survives in aller, of all, used after possessives (hir aller cappe, 586), oure aller coste (799), oure aller cok (823), or in compounds, as in alderfirst, first of all (F. 550).

VI. Comparatives and Superlatives. These are formed as a rule as in the present day. But final consonants in the positive are doubled in the comparative and superlative (gret, gretter, grettest), and the vowel change which survives in elder and eldest as compared with old, is found also in stronger (B. 2410) strongest (Troilus i. 243) from strong, and lenger (Legend 450) from long. (See also under Adverbs.) Good has as its comparative bet (Hous of Fame 108) as well as better and bettre, and bad has badder (F. 226) as well as wers (A. 3872).

ADVERBS.

I. In -e. The Old English adverbial suffix in -e is still common in Chaucer, e.g. fàirè (94), soorè (148), lâtè (690), fàstè (719), largè (734).

II. In -ly. The modern adverbial suffix -ly is at least equally common, e.g. sikerly (137), verrailly (368), shortily (715), gladly (803).

III. In -ely. In a few cases an -e remains, or is inserted before the -ly, e.g. swetely (221), trewely (481), boldely (F. 581).

IV. In -es. Ones, twies, thries; hennes, thennes, whennes; unnethes (scarcely, also unneth); agynes, amonges, amyldes, medes.

V. Comparatives and Superlatives. The uninflected form of
the adjective is as a rule used for these. Note that fer (far) makes both ferre (Hous of Fame 600) and ferrer (835); long both leng (A. 3872) and lenger (B. 374). The addition of -ly to the comparative stem in murie rly (714) is exceptional.

PRONOUNS.

The forms Ich and Ik (in dialect) are occasionally used for I, and thee is frequently written the. Her appears as hir or hire, and in the accusative and dative occasionally as here. It frequently keeps its aspirate (hit) and the genitive form is his. In the plural them is uniformly hem (cp. our colloquial ‘em) and their usually here, but also her and hir.

The demonstrative that has its plural tho; the plural of this is these or thise, and is occasionally a dissyllable. Which is used for all genders, and is inflected when adjectival. It is also used as an interrogative as in l. 40 (and whiche they were, i.e. of what sort, Lat. quales).

Note that man, and its weakened form men, are used indefinitely for one (cp. French un, German Mann), e.g. For swich lawe as man geveth another wight (B. 43), and Or if men smoot it with a yerde smerte (149).

VERBS.

I. Present Tense.

The forms used by Chaucer for this tense differ from our modern use in the following points:

(a) The 1st sing. is formed with a final -e, which is often, but not always fully sounded.
F. 451. For as I tromé thise been causes two.
B. 94. But nathelesse, I recche noght a bene.
But: G. 753 I blowe the fyr till that myn herte feynte.
G. 874 I warne yow wel it is to seeken ever.

(b) The 3rd sing. is formed by the termination -eth -th, now only used in poetry.

II. So priketh hem Nature in hir corages.

796 sqq. And which of yow that bereth hym beste of alle,
That is to seyn that telleth in this caas
Tales of best sentence, etc.
(c) The 3rd singular of certain verbs is sometimes contracted.
F. 291. *The steward byt (biddeth) the spices for to hyre.*
F. 61. *And halt (holdeth) his feast so solempne and so ryche.*
Troil. iii. 1374. *That blameth love and holt (holdeth) of a despyt*
F. 512. *Right as a serpent hit (hideth) hym under florues.*
F. 77. *While that this kyng sit (sitteth) thus in his nobleye.*
B. 1704. *Seint Nicholas stant (standeth) ever in my presenc.*

(d) The plural of all persons is formed in -en, -n, or the weakened form -e.
G. 672. *For ever we lakken our conclusioun.*
G. 673. *To mochel folk we doon illusioun.*
G. 674. *And borge gold, be it a pound or two.*
769. *Ye goon to Caunterbury—God you speide.*
771. *Ye shapen yow to takyn and to playe.*
9. *And smale fowles maken melodye.*
F. 261. *Thus jangle they, and demen and devyse.*

(e) The old Southern plural in -eth is occasionally used, sometimes by attraction; in other cases it may be due to the scribe and not to Chaucer himself.
F. 514 sqq. *Right so this god of love, this ypocrite*  
*Dooth so his ceremonycs and obeisaunces*  
*And kepeth in semblant alle his observaunces*  
*That sowneth into gentilesse of love.*

Here the use of *sowneth* instead of *soumen* is probably due to the previous occurrence of *dooth* and *kepyth*. In A. 1185, *And over his heed ther shyneth two figures, skyneth* is the reading of the Harleian MS. Others read *skynen*.

(a) In the Present Subjunctive, the singular is formed throughout with -e, the plural in -e or en.

II. Preterit.

(a) Strong verbs. The preterit is formed by vowel change only.  
The 1st and 3rd singular consist of the stem only; the 2nd singular is usually like the 1st and 3rd, but sometimes retains the Old English inflection in -e, sometimes has the weak termination in -est. In Old English the plural stem differed from the singular; in Middle English it is much more frequently the same. When it differs from the singular stem it mostly takes that of the past participle.
Examples: Sing. Bar  
   Bar (bare, barest)  rod (rode, rodest)  
   Bar (105)  rod  

Instances of strong preterits in the Prologue are sleep (98, 397, but Chaucer also uses slepte), heeng (358), henge, pl. (677), yaf (424), bigan (44).

(b) Weak verbs. In these the preterit is formed by the terminations -ede, -ed, -de, or -te, to which (except the second) n may be added in the plural. The termination -ede is often retained in manuscripts where the rhythm shows that it must be shortened to -ed, or -de.

Examples: Sing., lakkédé (756), lovédé (97), payédé (539), weréd (75), wyped (133), sayédé (70), kepéd (442).
   Plur. weyédén (454), preyédén (811), droupéd (107).

(ii.) A dozen weak verbs, survivals of about twice that number in Old English, owing to vowel-change having taken place in their present tense seem to have irregular preterits.

(a) original short stems: tellen, tolde; sellen, solde; byen, boughte; abyen, aboughte; strecchen, straughte (streighte).

(b) original long stems: rechen, raughte (136); techen, taughte (528); sechen, soughde; werchen, wroghte; thenken (think), thoughte; thinken (seem), thoughte (785); brengen, broughte.

III. Imperative Present. In the singular strong verbs have no inflection. Thus comen makes com (Com hider love to me, 672); weak verbs may also remain uninflected, but in some cases take a final -e.

In the plural (which includes polite requests to a single person), both strong and weak verbs may take a final -eth, but may also remain uninflected.

788. Lordynge quod he now herkneth for the beste.

789. But taak it nought i pray yow in desdeyn.

So we have Hoold up yoon hand (783), Tel me anon (808), but also Smyteth of myn heed (782), Draweth cut (835), Ne studieth nat (841).

IV. Infinitives end in -en, -n, or -e, e.g. swynken (186), ridé (182), payé (806), and the gerundial infinitives to goon (12), to seken (13), to ryse (33).
V. Past Participles in strong verbs end in -en -e, as holpen (18), riden (47), foughten (62), dronken (135), undergroue (156); in weak verbs in -ed, -d, as perced (2), bathed (3). To both strong and weak forms the prefix y- is frequently added, as in y-bore (578), y-come (77), y-drawe (396), y-knowe (423); y-cleped (457), y-leyd (457), y-wraght (196).

V. CHAUCER’S VERSIFICATION.

Most English students before coming to Chaucer have read some French poetry, and for these the study of a few lines of Racine may form a useful introduction to Chaucer’s versification. The following lines are taken from Iphigénie en Aulide, and are written in the usual French Alexandrines, with twelve syllables to each verse:

Jamais jour n’a paru si mortel à la Grèce.
Déjà de tout le camp la discordé maîtresse
Avait sur tous les yeux mis son bandeau fatal,
Et donné du combat le funesté signal.
De ce spectacle affreux votre fille alarmée!
Voyait pour elle Achille, et contre elle l’armée
Miais, quoique seul pour elle, Achillé furieux
Épouvantait l’armée, et partageait les dieux.
Déjà de traits en l’air s’élevait un nuage;
Déjà coulait le sang, prémicés du carnage:
Entre les deux partis Calchas s’est avancé,
L’œil farouche, l’air sombre, et le poul hérissé,
Terrible, et plein du dieu qui l’agitait sans doute:
‘Vous, Achille, a-t-il dit, et vous Grecs, qu’on m’écoute.
Le dieu qui maintenant vous parlé par ma voix
M’expliqué son oracle, et m’instruit de son choix.
Un autre sang d’Hélène, une autre Iphigénie
Sur ce bord immolé y doit laisser sa vie.
Thésée avec Hélène unis secrètement
Fit succéder l’hymen à son enlèvement.’

Now, in these twenty lines, unless we sound the e-final in discorde (2), funeste (4), elle before l’armée (6), Achille
(7), etc., the whole rhythm of the verse disappears. An uneducated Frenchman, if set to read this passage, would quickly turn the long sweeping lines into an undignified jog-trot, and there is abundant evidence that in less than a hundred years after Chaucer's death, his decasyllabics were read with so clipped and hurried a pronunciation, that they took the form of a line with four beats. It is quite easy to read them so now, if we have the necessary brutality:

Whan that Ap | rill with | his shour | es swoot’
The droght | of March | hath perc’d | to the root’
And bath’d | ev’ry veyn | in swich | licour
Of which vir | tu is | engendr’d | the flour.

In the late manuscripts and early printed editions of Chaucer, thousands of lines are so mangled that the only metre which can be got out of them as they stand, is this jog-trot. At the end of the 15th century not a little verse was written obviously to be read like this. Finally, there is some reason to believe that this jog-trot was thought to be peculiarly suited to the Canterbury Tales, because the pilgrims rode on horseback. Thus it came to pass that later poets in praising Chaucer's humour and other obvious gifts so frequently apologized for, or regretted the 'rudeness' of his verse. So far, however, from being rude, it is in its straightforward simplicity (we must not claim for Chaucer the subtle music we find in Shakespeare and Shelley) as melodious as any English verse that has ever been written, if only it be read, as the pilgrims really rode, at a walking pace, and not at a trot or a gallop. In this edition (except at the end of lines), an e-final which has to be sounded is marked by an unobtrusive dot, so as to remove any doubt as to its value. As
in our extract from Racine, so in Chaucer, the e-final is elided before a word beginning with a vowel. In the same position in the words the and ne the elision of the vowel is so complete that they are often run into the following word, whence such forms as thestaat, tharray (716), narette (725), and we find to similarly compounded with a following infinitive in teniite, tamenden, though there does not happen to be an example of this in the Prologue. Again the liquid syllables el and er, and the nasal en, before a following vowel may be so lightly pronounced as not to affect the scansion. Occasionally also -le at the end of a word of French origin is practically silent. When these explanations have been given, Chaucer's verse requires no rules for its pronunciation beyond those which apply to all freely written English verse, save as to two points, relating respectively to the beginning and end of his lines.

(i.) At the beginning of lines the evidence of the manuscripts is too strong for us to deny the existence of a certain number of cases in which in Chaucer's own phrase, the first foot 'fails in a syllable.' The effect of this is sometimes good as throwing a strong accent where it heightens the effect of the line, e.g.

For hym was levere have at his beddes heed
Twen ty bookes clad in blak or reed.

At other times the word seems inadequate to the stress imposed on it, and variety is obtained at too great a cost, e.g.

He rood upon a rouncy as he kouthe
In a gowne of faldyng to the knee.

1 (Though som vers faille in a sillage, Hous of Fame, l. 1098, Bk. iii. l. 8.)
(ii.) At the end of a majority of lines there is an extra syllable. In most cases this extra syllable is only an e-final, and we are tempted to think that in this position it may be slurred. It is clear, however, that it was strongly pronounced, for in the Prologue (671 sq.) we have *Rome* riming with *to me*, and in F. 675 sq., *yowthe* riming with *allow thee*. Moreover, while in the body of his lines Chaucer seldom treats the termination -ie, -ye, in substantives of French origin as a fully sounded dissyllable, at the end of lines he is careful not to rime it with the adverbial -ly, thus showing that in this position there was no doubt as to its dissyllabic value.

Save in these two respects the rules for Chaucer's decasyllabic couplets are those of ordinary English verse. His favourite place for the pause or caesura is after the second accented syllable, but it may come two syllables earlier than this, or three later, as witness the following lines all close together:

194. With grys, | and that the *syneste* of a lond
162. And after | *Amor vincit omnia*
165. A Monk there was | a fair for the maistrie
163. Another Nonné | with hir haddé she
164. That was hire Chapéleyne, | and Preestès thre
186. Or swynken with his handés | and labour.

Wherever the pause comes it brings a little license with it; an e-final need not be elided before a following vowel if the pause separates them, an extra syllable may be inserted,¹ a syllable may, very occasionally, be dropped.

¹ In l. 829 Prof. Liddell reads: *Ye woot youre foreward and it youre recomie*, and says that the insertion of *I* before *it* by the Harleian MS. makes an Alexandrine. But *Ye woot | youre fore | ward | And I | it you | recontre* would raise no difficulty in Shakespeare, and there is no reason why it should in Chaucer.
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In the same way Chaucer, like other poets, sometimes begins with an accented syllable followed by an unaccented one, instead of the more usual order, as in

Táles of best sentence and moost solas
or
Gýnglen in a whistlynge wynd als cleere,
when contrasted with the more normal
A mány man to been an abbot able.

Lastly, as regards his rimes, even a superficial reader will soon note their unusual carefulness and exactness, and this is carried out in regard to different sounds of the same letter, as is explained in the treatises of ten Brink, Dr. Skeat, and Dr. Liddell. While thus careful to secure exact rimes, Chaucer made occasional use of the privilege recognized in French verse\(^1\) by which the same sound, often in precisely the same spelling, may be repeated to form a rime, provided that it bears a different meaning. Thus in ll. 17, 18 he rimes *seke* (seek) with *seeke* (sick).

VI. THE TEXT OF THE CANTERBURY TALES.

The *Canterbury Tales* have come down to us in some sixty different manuscripts, of which, however, many are imperfect. Eight manuscripts have been printed, but three of these (the Corpus, Petworth, and Lansdowne) are of little use. The manuscripts here used are those called, from their present or former owners, the Ellesmere, Cambridge (Cambridge University Library, M.S. Gg. 4), Hengwrt, and Harleian (British Museum,

\(^1\) As in Racine, *Andromaque* ii. 1. 3-4. :
Pyld à bientôt conduire ici ses pas ;
Mais, si je m’en croyais, je ne le verrais pas
THE TEXT OF THE CANTERBURY TALES

Harleian MS. 7334). Of these the Ellesmere is the best spelt and most carefully edited, and as such has been adopted as the basis of the text of all recent editions. The Cambridge and Hengwrt MSS. are both useful in correcting blunders of the Ellesmere scribe, and also, more especially the latter, offer some interesting alternative readings. The Harleian, not in other respects a very good manuscript, offers a large number of alternative readings, and the value of these is much disputed. We know that Chaucer’s contemporaries, Langland and Gower, continually revised their poems, and at every revision introduced small changes. We know that Chaucer himself revised his Troilus and Cressida in this way, and that he entirely re-wrote much of the prologue to the Legend of Good Women. Owing to the fact that the Canterbury Tales were never completed it is possible that not many copies of them were made during Chaucer’s life, and the fewer the copies the less is the likelihood of his having introduced changes into the text while superintending the making of new copies. If he introduced no changes into the text, then there can be no such thing as an alternative reading. In every case only one reading can be right, and the rest are merely blunders or guesses of scribes. I understand this to be the theory of Dr. Liddell and of the German scholars, who construct diagrams to show the pedigree of the extant manuscripts through various hypothetical stages of descent. My own belief is that Chaucer did introduce changes into the text, and that it is impossible for us now to distinguish in all cases between changes which may have been made by a clever scribe and those which may be the second thoughts of the poet himself.
I, therefore, feel free occasionally to introduce into the text what appears to be a better reading on the authority of the Harleian MS. only (H.), though as a rule I think it is only when the Harleian is supported by the Hengwrt (Hn.) or Cambridge MS. that the Ellesmere text should be altered.

The following list gives the chief changes from the Ellesmere text of the Prologue in the present edition:

40. weren, E. C. Hn. were.
68. was (1), E. C. Hn. were.
74. was, E. weren, C. Hn. were.
84. greet of, E. C. Hn. of greet.
92. is, E. in.
140. been, E. C. to be vn.
179. cloysterles, E. C. Hn. recelees.
188. his swynk, E. his owene swynk.
215. Ful, E. And.
217. E. C. om. eek.
287. As leene, E. And leene (H. Al-so leene).
324. sall, E. y-sall.
342. nowher, E. Hn. never.
359. a countour, E. C. Hn. countour.
364. greet, E. C. Hn. a gret.
396. y-drew (C. only), E. H.Hn. drwe.
485. y-preved, E. C. Hn. preved.
509. chaunterie, E.C.Hn. chauntrie.
512. dwelte ... kepte, E. dwelleth ... kerpest.
516. E. C. Hn. He was nat to synful man despitous.
534. him gamed, E. he gamed.
550. nolde, E. ne wolde.
559. wyde, E. C. Hn. greet.
594. on him wynne, E. of him wynne.
607. y-shadwed, E. Hn. shadwed.
612. and yet, E. yet.
613. lerned hadde, E. C. hadde lerned.
660. him drede (so Corp. and Lansd.), E. C. Hn. om. him, H. to drede.
752. han, E. C. Hn. om.
754. is, E. Hn. was.
764. ne saugh, E. C. Hn. saugh nat, saugh nat.
782. But, E. But if.
— Smythe of myn heed, E. C. Hn. I wol giv ye myn heed.
803. myself, E. Hn. myself.
— gladly, E. C. Hn. goodly.

On the other hand, the Ellesmere reading has been maintained in the following doubtful cases:
VII. CHAUCER'S ASTROLOGY.

Astrological allusions are very frequent in the Canterbury Tales and often of importance for the mechanism of the stories. They are explained, with as few technicalities as possible, as they occur, but the following brief sketch of the astrology of Chaucer’s day is inserted here for reference. The editor is indebted for it to Mr. Henry Jenner, F.S.A.

§ 1. The ancients believed the earth to be the centre of the Universe, and that the Seven Planets or wandering stars (which included the Sun and Moon) moved round the earth, not only in their daily motion of rising and setting, but also in their apparent motion among the fixed stars along the Zodiac.

The Zodiac (which is still used to express the apparent position of the Planets) is an imaginary band traced on the face of the Heavens, crossing the Equator diagonally, going as far north as the Tropic of Cancer, and as far south as that of Capricorn. The Ecliptic, or annual path of the Sun, is a line passing along the middle of the Zodiac, while the paths of the other Planets pass along it at a greater or less distance from that of the Sun according to their latitude. The Zodiac is divided into twelve parts of 30 degrees each, called Signs, which are named after the constellations, or groupings, of fixed stars which occur in them. The names of the Signs are:

60. arme, H. arwe, C. arwe.
77. y-come, H. C. Hn. comen.
161. ther was first write, H. was first i-written, Hn. was first written.
175. leet olde thinges pace, H. leet forby hem pace.
206. is a, H. any.
212. maad ful many a, H. i-made many a fair.
257. as it were right a whelp, H. and pleye[n] as a whelp.
340. was he, H. C. Hn. he was.
415. a ful greet deel, H. won-durly veel.
481. trewely, H. gladly.
548. have ake, H. here away.
663. at his owene gise, H. at his owne assise.
714. the murercyly, H. fulmericly.
746. short, H. thyne.
749. And, H. C. Hn. He.
799. oure, H. youre (a reading which should have been adopted in the text).
854. the cut, H. thou cut.
Aries (the Ram), Taurus (the Bull), Gemini (the Twins), Cancer (the Crab), Leo (the Lion), Virgo (the Virgin), Libra (the Scales or Balance), Scorpio (the Scorpion), Sagittarius (the Archer), Capricornus (the Goat), Aquarius (the Water-bearer), and Pisces (the Fishes).

§ 2. The Sun passes through the whole Zodiac in 365 days and a little less than six hours. It began in Chaucer's time with the first degree of Aries on March 12th, which was then counted as the Vernal Equinox (or time when the day and night were of equal length). That day ought to have been called the 21st, as it is now, but owing to a miscalculation, which was not corrected until 1582, an error of eight days had gradually crept in. The Sun remains in each sign about a month.

The other Planets pass through the Zodiac in periods varying from a lunar month in the case of the Moon to twenty-nine years in the case of Saturn, then the most distant Planet known.

§ 3. By the motion of the Earth on its axis, which gives the appearance of a daily motion of the whole Heavens round the Earth, each degree of every sign of the Zodiac must needs rise and set once in every twenty-four hours; but the ancients also divided the Heavens into twelve "Houses," each one of which was a twelfth part, measured by Oblique Ascension ¹ of an imaginary circle, which began with the eastern horizon, and passed by way of the Nadir (or middle point below the Earth), the western horizon, and the zenith (or mid-heaven above the Earth) to the eastern horizon again. The Houses remained fixed, while the Zodiac moved round the Earth, so that all the Zodiac moved through all the Houses in succession.

§ 4. It was believed by astrologers that the positions of the Signs of the Zodiac and of the Planets with regard to the Signs, to one another, and to the Houses, exercised such influence upon the affairs of the world and of individuals that it was possible to prophesy future events by means of them, and more especially to foretell the destinies of any person by observing the conditions of the Heavens at the moment of his birth. The influences were worked out with great detail, but the general principles are fairly simple.

The Planets.—The Sun, the Moon, Jupiter, and Venus were the Benefics, and their effect if they were in a strong position was good.

Mars and Saturn were the Malefics, and their effect was generally evil, varying in strength according to their position.

¹ The Right Ascension of a Planet is its distance from the first point of Aries measured along the Ecliptic. The Oblique Ascension is the Right Ascension plus or minus (according to whether it has south or north Declination, i.e. distance from the Equator) its Ascensional Difference, which is the angle it forms at its rising with that part of the Equator which is rising at the same time.
Mercury, the remaining Planet, was neutral, his influence varying for good or evil according to position.

§ 5. The Planets were strong according to position in (a) the Houses, and (b) the Signs. In the Houses they were, generally speaking, strong if they were angular, i.e. in the 1st, 4th, 7th or 10th House, or near the eastern or western horizon, the Zenith or the Nadir, but the planets in any House would strongly influence the particular affairs of life to which that House was dedicated. In the Signs they were strong if they were in their "essential dignities." These are five in number: House, Exaltation, Triplicity, Terms, and Faces. Of these the House was the strongest, the Face the weakest, but a planet might be weaker still by being in his Detriment or his Fall. If a planet should be both angular and in his own House, his influence would be strong indeed, and it might be strengthened or weakened by other planets being placed at certain distances (known as "aspects") from him.

§ 6. Each sign had its ruling planet, of which it was the House. The Exaltation of a planet was a particular degree of some sign, and the signs were divided into four Triplicities, those of Fire, Earth, Air, and Water, each of which groups of signs was governed by certain planets in a lesser degree. The Terms were certain degrees of Signs similar to Exaltations, but weaker, and the Faces were third parts of Signs, whose effect was very slight. Except the Sun and Moon, which had the same House for both day and night, each planet had two Houses, a diurnal and a nocturnal. They are divided thus:

The Sun, Leo; the Moon, Cancer; Mercury, Gemini and Virgo; Venus, Libra and Taurus; Mars, Aries and Scorpio; Jupiter, Sagittarius and Pisces; Saturn, Aquarius and Capricorn. The planets were said to be Lords of their respective Houses.

The Exaltation of the Sun is in Aries, 19°; the Moon, Taurus 3°; Mercury, Virgo 15°; Venus, Pisces 27°; Mars, Capricorn 28°; Jupiter, Cancer 15°; Saturn, Libra 21°.

The Fiery Triplicity of Aries, Leo and Sagittarius dignifies the Sun by day and Jupiter by night. The Earthy Triplicity of Taurus, Virgo and Capricorn dignifies Venus by day and the Moon by night. The Aerial Triplicity of Gemini, Libra and Aquarius dignifies Saturn by day and Mercury by night. The Watery Triplicity of Cancer, Scorpio and Pisces dignifies Mars by both day and night.

The Terms and Faces of the various planets are numerous, but astrologically of little importance. The Detriment of a planet is the sign of the Zodiac exactly opposed to its House. Its Fall is that exactly opposite to its Exaltation.

§ 7. Though the Planets may be roughly divided into Benefics and Malefics, and though the Sun and the Moon may be said to produce good effects and Saturn general bad ones, Jupiter
especially rules public employment, success in life, etc.; Mars, the evils of war and fire; Venus, the affairs of love and the heart; and Mercury, art, literature, etc., in good effects, and perverted skill, thieving and swindling in bad.

§ 8. The Signs of the Zodiac were supposed to aid the description of personal appearance, and to govern diseases of various parts of the body, certain of which were assigned to each, varying with signs. Their qualities are partly indicated by their names, and partly by the characteristics of the planets which rule them, but were modified in practice by the planets which happened to be present in them.

§ 9. The Twelve Houses were held to govern certain affairs of life, and the Signs and Planets found in them produced their effects on such affairs. The First governed personal appearance, qualities, and disposition; the Second, estate and fortune; the Third, kindred; the Fourth, parents; the Fifth, children; the Sixth, servants and cattle; the Seventh, marriage; the Eighth, inheritances; the Ninth, journeys; the Tenth, honours and preferments; the Eleventh, friends and friendships; the Twelfth, enemies and misfortunes. Of these Houses the First, called the Ascendant, because the Signs and Planets in it are just in the act of rising, is the most important, and next to it in power is the Tenth House, whose Sign and Planets are just approaching the Mid-heaven or Zenith.

§ 10. There were four principal applications of astrology:

1. Genethliacal Astrology, or the calculation of the future of any person from the position of the heavens at his birth. Usually called "casting nativities."

2. Mundane Astrology, or the calculation of the fortunes of nations from the position of the heavens at certain periods.

3. Meteorological Astrology, or the foretelling of the weather by the position of the planets at periods of the Sun and the Moon.

4. Horary Astrology, or the solution of miscellaneous questions by the position of the heavens at the time that the question was asked, or the business, illness, or whatever it may be, began. Medical Astrology was a branch of Horary.

Of these Genethliacal and Horary are the most important, for Mundane Astrology was worked on lines very similar to Genethliacal, and Meteorological Astrology requires but little explaining.

Nativities were calculated by erecting a figure or scheme of the heavens at the moment of birth, and from this the general fortunes, appearance, etc., of the "native" were foretold. The exact date at which any event might be expected, and its nature, were determined by the calculation of "directions," that is to say, by measuring the space between the position of a planet at birth and a position (to which it must be tending) in which it would form an
"aspect" with some other planet, or with some angle, such as the ascendant, as it was in the original figure. Taking a degree of this "arc of direction," as it was called, to represent a year of life, the exact date of important events might be fixed. The principal aspects were:

1. The Conjunction (good or bad according to the planets forming it), signified two planets in or close to the same degree of the same Sign.
2. The Sextile (good), forming an angle of 60\(^\circ\) or two Houses.
3. The Square (bad), forming a right angle (90\(^\circ\)), or three Houses.
4. The Trine (good), forming an angle of 120\(^\circ\), or four Houses.
5. The Sesquiquadrate (bad), forming an angle of 135\(^\circ\).
6. The Opposition (bad), at a distance of 180\(^\circ\), or six Houses.

The aspect might be calculated in Zodiac, or by means of Right Ascension, or in Mundo, by Oblique Ascension, and the proportional parts of the Houses.

Horary Astrology dealt chiefly with the effects attributed to the Twelve Houses. A figure was erected representing the position of the heavens at the time of application, at the time of the beginning any business of which it was required to determine the result, or of that of some illness, the treatment of which was to be decided. Frequently some planet, usually the lord of the Ascendant in the figure, was taken as the "significator" of the "querent," and some other as the significator of the "quesited," or person concerning whom information is required, and the positions, aspects, and signs of these planets were carefully considered, as was also the House which affected the class of matters under consideration. There were almost endless varieties of this form of enquiry into the future.

§ 11. The Hours of the Planets, to which Chaucer alludes in the Knight's Tale, were not of much account in what may be termed Scientific Astrology. The first hour (sunrise) of the first day of the week was assigned to the Sun, that of the second day to the Moon, and so on through the week, each day beginning with the hour of its name-planet. It will be seen that if one begins with the first hour of Saturday, assigning that to Saturn, and continues to assign an hour to each planet in their supposed order of proximity to the earth, viz., Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sun, Venus, Mercury, Moon, throughout the week, the first planetary hour of each twenty-four will be that of the name-planet of the day. This is probably the origin of the Latin names of the days of the week, of which the English are only translations based upon early notions of comparative mythology.

§ 12. To each planet a metal was assigned. To Saturn, a dull blue planet, lead was given; to Jupiter, a bright but also bluish
planet, tin; to the red planet Mars, iron; to the Sun, gold; to Venus, the star of the Cyprian goddess, cyprium or copper; to the nimble Mercury, quicksilver; to the Moon, silver; and to this day quicksilver is called mercury, and nitrate of silver, lunar caustic. In maps of Cornwall and other mining districts the symbols of planets are used to mark the presence of mines of their respective metals: ☉ (Venus) for copper, ☉ (Jupiter) for tin, ☉ (Saturn) for lead, and ☉ (Mars) for iron.

Another noticeable survival of astrological ideas is to be found in the words saturnine, jovial, martial, venereal, mercurial, and lunatic.