APPENDIX.

FICTION AND FACT IN CHAUCER'S NARRATIVE.

Under this heading on pp. xli-xliv of the Introduction to this edition it has already been pointed out that Harry Bailly, the Host of the Tabard, whose name slips out in the talk between him and the Cook on the road (quoted on p. xliii), can hardly be dissociated from the Hennecus Baylly, who in 1376-77 and again in 1378-79 represented Southwark in Parliament. To the question there asked as to whether we are to believe that there was really a Mrs. Harry Bailly who incited her husband to use 'the grete clobbed staves' in beating his servants, or whether the M.P.'s wife was so notoriously amiable that the jest lay in the obvious inapplicability of the accusation, no answer has yet been suggested. But to the second question as to whether there was really a reeve named Oswald in the little town of Baldeswell in Norfolk (l. 620), who would sit quietly under aspersions that he had "privily astored" himself, it now seems that we should reply that there probably was such a reeve, but that it is doubtful whether the imputation ever came to his knowledge. In a very interesting book entitled New Light on Chaucer (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1926), Professor J. M. Manly has brought together a mass of facts which suggest that many of the characters described in the Prologue were drawn from life and that some of the imputations cast upon them may have been introduced to please Chaucer's friends. One of his friends was a Sir William de Beauchamp for whom he became a surety when de Beauchamp was appointed trustee for the Welsh estates of the infant son of John Hastings, second Earl of Pembroke, who had died on foreign service in 1375. In 1386 de Beauchamp

1 In the subsidy rolls for 1380-81 "Henri Bayliff, Ostyler" and Christian, his wife, were assessed at two shillings. In the talk on the road, the Host refers to her as "goodelief my wyf," and Professor Rickert has lately shown that 'Goodelief' was a Christian name fairly common in Kent. If it is to be taken as Mrs. Bailly's Christian name at the time the Prologue was written, we must assume that the Host had married again.
had to meet charges of mismanaging these Welsh estates, and in the following year he was relieved of his trusteeship, which was transferred to the Countess of Norfolk, the young earl's grandmother, who was already managing the Norfolk estates, in which (as noted on p. 91) Baldeswell lay. The suggestion is that for the amusement of de Beauchamp and his friends Chaucer introduced the sketch of Oswald the reeve of Baldeswell, in order to hint that a long series of depredations had been carried on under the eyes of the old Countess in whose favour de Beauchamp had been pressed to resign. The strong point in the argument lies in the fact that the second Earl of Pembroke went abroad within a few months of his coming of age on 12th September, 1368, and never returned to England, dying in 1375. "Here at once," says Professor Manly, is a curiously close agreement "with the lines (600 sq.) in which we are told that the Reeve

    by his covenant yaf the rekenyng
    Syn that his lord was twenty yeer of age."

Professor Manly is certainly justified in stressing this coincidence and also the probability that the lines as to the reeve's house

    His wonyng was ful faire upon an heeth,
    With grene trees y-shadwed was his place,

betoken that Chaucer, who had many Norfolk connections, had seen it.

While Professor Manly's suggestion as to the Reeve seems peculiarly attractive several of his other identifications cannot lightly be dismissed. One of the most probable of these is that of the Sergeant of the Lawe with Thomas Pynchbek, who became chief Baron of the Exchequer 24th April, 1388, and in the years immediately before this had served often as Justice of Assize, and had made notably large purchases of land. In the year 1387 there appears to have been only five sergeants at law who had not been already made judges, and Pynchbek not only seems to answer best to the points in Chaucer's sketch, but also may possibly be indicated in the line (326) 'ther koude no wight pytche at his writyng.'

Moreover he had annoyed the already mentioned Sir William de Beauchamp by telling him outspokenly that a claim which he thought he had to the Pembroke estates (the second Earl, before his own son was born, had conditionally bequeathed them to him) was of no validity. Also he was on the Duke of Gloucester's side in politics, and thus in opposition to the King. Hence the little malicious touches in Chaucer's portrait of the Sergeant would have amused his friends all the more if they identified it with Pynchbek.

Professor Manly seems to have made out a good case for
the interpretations which he puts upon Chaucer's sketches of
the Reeve and the Sergeant at Law. He goes on, with
abundant insistence on the speculative nature of his sugges-
tions, to bring forward bits of evidence for Chaucer having
drawn his Franklin from Sir John Bussy, Shakespeare's
Bushie, who with Bagot and Greene, was Richard II.'s evil
counsellor, and shared his downfall; and for the Shipman
being modelled on John Hawley, probably the owner of the
Mawdelyn and one of the boldest of the semi-piratical sea-
fighters who made Dartmouth famous in Richard's reign.

He further contends that the Merchant, the Doctor of Physic
and the Pardoner, also the wife of Bath, whose Christian name
is revealed in her Tale as Alisun,¹ must have been sketched
from real persons, though they cannot at present be identified,
even hypothetically. As regards the Prioress, Madame
Eglentyn, he would like to identify her with a nun, Madam
Argentyn, of the Priory of St. Leonard's at Stratford-atte-
Bowe, to whom Elizabeth of Hainault, sister of Edward III.'s
Queen Philippa, who died at the Priory in 1375, bequeathed
a Psalter; and he takes it almost for granted that the Prioress
belonged to this priory and that her priest was the parish
priest of Stratford (the presentation resting with the convent),
the successor of the Geoffrey to whom Elizabeth of Hainault
bequeathed three and a half yards of blanket, making him
also one of her executors. As already noted, Professor Manly
emphasizes the speculative character of his identifications, and
this of the Prioress is certainly speculative, since all that
Chaucer tells us is that her French was that of Stratford-atte-
Bowe (which Professor Manly suggests means the Flemish
French spoken by Elizabeth of Hainault), and there is no
need to believe that this means anything more than that it
was at the Stratford convent that she had been educated.

Whether, however, any particular identification is correct
or not is a matter of merely antiquarian interest; the im-
portance of Professor Manly's suggestions lies in the fact that
if, in addition to that of Harry Bailly, even only one or two
of the characters can be shown to have been written so as to
be recognized by Chaucer's friends as real persons whom they
liked or disliked, the probability is that many others were
sketched in the same way, and the Prologue becomes rather

¹ In connection with the wife, Professor Manly makes the pretty point that
the statement that she came 'from byside Bath,' which sounds vague, "is in
reality extraordinarily accurate," if it relates to the parish of St. Michael without
the North Gate, sometimes called justa Bathom, which in Chaucer's time had
already grown up outside the wall of the city. He notes also (following Alton
and Holland in The King's Customs), that the praise of her skill as superior to
that of the Flemish weavers may be sarcastic, since in Richard II.'s reign it was
ordered that all west-country cloth should be sold open, as merchants who had
bought it in bales had been in danger of their lives when they sold it abroad, the
bales being found deceptive.
more of a satire, though (at least ostensibly) a very genial one, and rather less of a comedy of manners.

In considering this 'new light' on the Prologue, it must be remembered that there is no evidence that until after Chaucer's death the *Canterbury Tales* were accessible to any but Chaucer's patrons and friends. It is possible that copies of his *Troilus and Criseyde* and his translation of Boethius' *De Consolatione philosophiae* might have been obtained by would-be purchasers from Adam, the scrivener of whose mistakes he complained; but the ambitious scheme of the *Canterbury Tales* was never completed, and Chaucer was probably content with reading or lending sections of them, as they were written, within the circle in which he moved. Hence he could say what he liked about Oswald the Reeve, or other of the pilgrims, without any likelihood of trouble. It may be noted, finally, that this view is strongly reinforced by Professor Manly's contention that the Chaucer's family and he himself were wealthier than has generally been thought, and that Chaucer himself was regularly trained for a life at Court and in the King's service at the Inner Temple. The evidence (hitherto treated very contemptuously) for this is a statement by Thomas Spoght, the editor of the 1598 edition of Chaucer's works, that Chaucer must have been of the Inner Temple, "for that, manye yeres since, Master Buckley did see a recorde in the same house, where Geffrye Chaucer was fined 2s. for beatynge a Franciscan Fryer in fleetestrete," this Master Buckley himself having been in charge of the Inner Temple records and so a credible witness. Now, according to Sir John Fortescue in his *De laudibus legum Angliae* (Chap. xlix), the Inns of Court were "a sort of academy" for the sons of men of good estate who could there learn not only law, but something of history, music and dancing, and other accomplishments likely to be useful for a career at Court, at a cost (in Fortescue's day, something less than half a century after Chaucer's) of not less than £28 a year. Like his contemporary Froissart, Chaucer was probably quite ready to offer the King and Queen copies of his poems and glad of any 'rewards' which he received for them, but (though he was sometimes out of employment) he had his regular profession as an office-holder under the Crown, and we must not think of him as a professional poet dependent for his living on finding a market for his poems.