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The History Of English Poetry

From The Close of the Eleventh To The Commencement of the Eighteenth
Century

Warton, Thomas

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Section XVII. Chaucer continued. General view of the Prologues to the
Canterbury Tales. The Prioress. The Wife of Bath. The Frankelein. The
Doctor of Physicke. State of medical erudition and ...

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S E C T. XVII.

BUT Chaucer's vein of humour, although conspicuous in the *CANTERBURY TALES*, is chiefly displayed in the Characters with which they are introduced. In these his knowledge of the world availed him in a peculiar degree, and enabled him to give such an accurate picture of ancient manners, as no cotemporary nation has transmitted to posterity. It is here that we view the pursuits and employments, the customs and diversions, of our ancestors, copied from the life, and represented with equal truth and spirit, by a judge of mankind, whose penetration qualified him to discern their foibles or discriminating peculiarities; and by an artist, who understood that proper selection of circumstances, and those predominant characteristics, which form a finished portrait. We are surpris'd to find, in so gross and ignorant an age, such talents for satire, and for observation on life; qualities which usually exert themselves at more civilis'd periods, when the improved state of society, by subtilising our speculations, and establishing uniform modes of behaviour, disposes mankind to study themselves, and renders deviations of conduct, and singularities of character, more immediately and necessarily the objects of censure and ridicule. These curious and valuable remains are specimens of Chaucer's native genius, unassisted and unalloyed. The figures are all British, and bear no suspicious signatures of classical, Italian, or French imitation. The characters of Theophrastus are not so lively, particular, and appropriated. A few traits from this celebrated part of our author, yet too little tasted and understood, may be sufficient to prove and illustrate what is here advanced.

The

The character of the PRIORESSE is chiefly distinguished by an excess of delicacy and decorum, and an affectation of courtly accomplishments. But we are informed, that she was educated at the school of Stratford at Bow near London, perhaps a fashionable seminary for breeding nuns.

There was also a nonne a Prioreffe
 That of her smiling was simble and coy;
 Her gretist othe was but by saint Eloye^b.
 And French she spake full fayre and fetisly,
 Aftir the schole of Stratford atte Bowe,
 For French of Paris was to her unknowe.
 At metè^c was she well ytaught withall;
 She let no morfell from her lippis fall,
 Ne wet her fingris in the saucè depe;
 Well couth she carry a morfel, and well kepe,
 That no dropè ne fell upon her brest;
 In curtesie was sett ful much her lest^d.
 Her ovirlippè wipid she so clene,
 That in her cup ther was no ferthing sene
 Of grecè, when she dronkin had hir draught,
 Full semily aftir hir mete she raught^e.---
 And painid hir to counterfetè chere
 Of court, and to ben stately of manere^f.

She has even the false pity and sentimentality of many modern ladies.

She was so charitable and so pitous,
 She wouldè wepe if that she saw a mous
 Caught in a trapp, if it were ded or bled.
 Of finalè houndis had she that she fed

^b *Seyntè Ley*, i. e. Saint Lewis. The same oath occurs in the *FREERE'S TALE*, v. 300, p. 88. Urr.
^c Dinner.

^d Pleasure. Desire.
^e Literally, *Stretched*.
^f Prol. v. 124.

With

With roſtid fleſh, or milk, or waſtell bred^e :
 But ſore wept ſhe if any of them were ded,
 Or if men ſmote them with a yardè^h ſmert :
 And all was conſcience and tendir hert^l.

The WIFE OF BATH is more amiable for her plain and uſeful qualifications. She is a reſpectable dame, and her chief pride conſiſts in being a conſpicuous and ſignificant character at church on a Sunday.

Of clothmaking^k ſhe haddè ſuch a haunt
 She paſſid them of Ipre and of Gaunt^l.
 In all the pariſh, wiſe ne was there none
 That to the offryng was bifore her gone ;
 And if ther did, certain ſo wroth was ſhe,
 That ſhe was outin of all charite.
 Her coverchefes^m were large and fine of ground,
 I durſt to ſwere that thei weyid three pound,
 That on a ſonday were upon hir hedde :
 Her hoſin werin of fine ſcarlett redde,
 Full ſtrait iſtreynid, and hir ſhoos ful newe :
 Bold was hir face, and fayr and redde hir hewe.
 She was a worthy woman all her live :
ⁿ Husbandes at the chirche dore had ſhe had five^o.

^e Bread of a finer fort.

^h Stick.

^l v. 143.

^k It is to be obſerved, that ſhe lived in the neighbourhood of Bath ; a country famous for clothing to this day.

^l See above, p. 177.

^m Head drefs.

ⁿ At the ſouthern entrance of Norwich cathedral, a representation of the ESPOU-
 SALS, or ſacrament of marriage, is carved in ſtone ; for here the hands of the couple were joined by the prieſt, and great part

of the ſervice performed. Here alſo the bride was endowed with what was called *Das ad oſtium eccleſie*. This ceremony is exhibited in a curious old picture engraved by Mr. Walpole, where king Henry the ſeventh is married to his queen, ſtanding at the facade or weſtern portal of a magnificent Gothic church. *Anecd. Paint. i. 31.* Compare Marten. *Rit. Eccl. Anecd. ii. p. 630.* And Hearne's *Antiquit. Glaſtonb. Append. p. 310.*

^o v. 449.

The FRANKLEIN is a country gentleman, whose estate consisted in free land, and was not subject to feudal services or payments. He is ambitious of shewing his riches by the plenty of his table: but his hospitality, a virtue much more practicable among our ancestors than at present, often degenerates into luxurious excess. His impatience if his sauces were not sufficiently poignant, and every article of his dinner in due form and readiness, is touched with the hand of Pope or Boileau. He had been a president at the sessions, knight of the shire, a sheriff, and a coroner ^p.

An housholder, and that a gret, was he:
 Saint Julian he was in his countre ^q.
 His brede, his ale, was alway aftir one;
 A bettir viendid ^r men was no wher none.
 Withoutin bake mete never was his house
 Of fish and fleshe, and that so plenteouse,
 It snewid ^s in his house of mete and drink,
 And of all dainties that men couth of think.
 Aftir the sondrie seasons of the yere,
 So chaungid he his mete ^t, and his suppere.
 Many a fat partriche had he in mewe,
 And many a breme, and many a luce ^u, in stewe.
 Woe was his cooke, but that his saucis were
 Poinant and sharpe, and redy all his gere!
 His table dormaunt ^v in the halle alway,
 Stode redy coverid, all the longè day^x.

^p An office antiently executed by gentlemen of the greatest respect and property.

^q Simon the leper, at whose house our Saviour lodged in Bethany, is called, in the Legends, *Julian the good herbersaw*, and bishop of Bethpage. In the *TALE OF BERYN*, St. Julian is invoked to revenge a traveller who had been traiterously used in

his lodgings. See *Urr. Ch.* p. 599. v. 625.

^r Better vianded.

^s Snowed.

^t Dinner.

^u Pike.

^v Never removed.

^x v. 356.

The

The character of the Doctor of PHISICKE preserves to us the state of medical knowledge, and the course of medical erudition then in fashion. He treats his patients according to rules of astronomy: a science which the Arabians engrafted on medicine.

For he was groundid in astronemie:
He kept his pacients a full gret dele
In houris by his magike natural^y.

Petrarch leaves a legacy to his physician John de Dondi, of Padua, who was likewise a great astronomer, in the year 1370^z. It was a long time before the medical profession was purged from these superstitions. Hugo de Evesham, born in Worcestershire, one of the most famous physicians in Europe about the year 1280, educated in both the universities of England, and at others in France and Italy, was eminently skilled in mathematics and astronomy^a. Pierre d'Apono, a celebrated professor of medicine and astronomy at Padua, wrote commentaries on the problems of Aristotle, in the year 1310. Roger Bacon says, "astronomiæ pars melior medicina^b." In the statutes of New-College at Oxford, given in the year 1387, medicine and astronomy are mentioned as one and the same science. Charles the fifth king of France, who was governed entirely by astrologers, and who commanded all the Latin treatises which could be found relating to the stars, to be translated into French, established a college in the university of Paris for the study of medicine and astrology^c. There is a scarce and very curious book, entitled, "Nova medicinæ methodus curandi morbos ex mathematica scientia deprompta, nunc denuo

^y v. 416.

^z See Acad. Inscript. xx. 443.

^a Pitt. p. 370. Bale, iv. 50. xiii. 86.

^b Bacon, Op. Maj. edit. Jebb, p. 158.

See also p. 240. 247.

^c Montfaucon, Bibl. Manuscript. tom. ii. p. 791. b.

“ revifa, &c. Joanne Hasfurto Virdungo, medico et astrologo
 “ doctiffimo, auctore, Haganoæ excuf. 1518^a.” Hence magic
 made a part of medicine. In the MARCHAUNTS fecond tale,
 or HISTORY OF BERYN, falſely aſcribed to Chaucer, a chirur-
 gical operation of changing eyes is partly performed by the
 aſſiſtance of the occult ſciences.

-----The whole ſcience of all ſurgery,
 Was undyd, or the chaunge was made of both eye,
 With many ſotill enchantours, and eke nygrymauncers,
 That ſent wer for the nonis, maiſtris, and ſcoleris^c.

Leland mentions one William Glatifaunt, an aſtrologer and
 phyſician, a fellow of Merton college in Oxford, who wrote
 a medical tract, which, ſays he, “ neſcio quid MAGIÆ ſpira-
 “ bat^d.” I could add many other proofs^e.

The books which our phyſician ſtudied are then enumerated,

Well knew he the old Eſculapius,
 And Dioſcorides, and eke Rufus,
 Old Hippocrates, Haly, and Galen,
 Serapion, Rafis, and Avicen,
 Averrois, Damafcene, Conſtantine,
 Bernard, and Gattifden, and Gilbertin.

Rufus, a phyſician of Ephelus, wrote in Greek, about
 the time of Trajan. Some fragments of his works ſtill
 remain^b. Haly was a famous Arabic aſtronomer, and a
 commentator on Galen, in the eleventh century, which pro-
 duced ſo many famous Arabian phyſicians^f. John Serapion,
 of the ſame age and country, wrote on the practice of

^a In quarto.

^c v. 2989. Urr. Ch.

^d Lel. apud Tann. Bibl. p. 262. And
 Lel. Script. Brit. p. 400.

^e See Ames's Hiſt. Print. p. 147.

^f Conring. Script. Com. Sæc. i. cap. 4.
 p. 66. 67. The Arabians have translations

of him. Herbel. Bibl. Orient. p. 972. b.
 977. b.

^g Id. ibid. Sæc. xi. cap. 5. p. 114.
 Haly, called Abbas, was likewise an emi-
 nent phyſician of this period. He was
 called, “ Simia Galeni.” Id. ibid.

phyfic

physic^k. Avicen, the most eminent physician of the Arabian school, flourished in the same century^l. Rhafis, an Asiatic physician, practiced at Cordoua in Spain, where he died in the tenth century^m. Averroes, as the Asiatic schools decayed by the indolence of the Caliphs, was one of those philosophers who adorned the Moorish schools erected in Africa and Spain. He was a professor in the university of Morocco. He wrote a commentary on all Aristotle's works, and died about the year 1160. He was styled the most *Peripatic* of all the Arabian writers. He was born at Cordoua of an antient Arabic familyⁿ. John Damascene, secretary to one of the Caliphs, wrote in various sciences, before the Arabians had entered Europe, and had seen the Grecian philosophers^o. Constantinus Afer, a monk of Cassino in Italy was one of the Saracen physicians who brought medicine into Europe, and formed the Salernitan school, chiefly by translating various Arabian and Grecian medical books into Latin^p. He was born at Carthage: and learned grammar, logic, geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, and natural philosophy, of the Chaldees, Arabians, Persians, Saracens, Egyptians, and Indians, in the schools of Bagdat. Being thus completely accomplished in these sciences, after thirty-nine years study, he returned into Africa: where an attempt was formed against his life. Constantine, having fortunately discovered this design, privately took ship and came to Sa-

^k Id. *ibid.* p. 113, 114.

^l Id. *ibid.* See *Pard.* T. v. 2407. *Urr.* p. 136.

^m *Conring.* ut *supr.* *Sec.* x. cap. 4. p. 110. He wrote a large and famous work, called *Continens*. Rhafis and Almafor, (f. Al-bumafar, a great Arabian astrologer,) occur in the library of Peterborough Abby, *Matric. Libr. Monast. Burgi S. Petri.* *Gunton, Peterb.* p. 187. See *Hearne, Ben. Abb. Præf.* lix.

ⁿ *Conring.* ut *supr.* *Sec.* xii. cap. 2. p. 118. ^o *Vofs Hist. Gr. L.* iii. c. 24.

^p *Petr. Diacon. de Vir. illustr. Monast. Cassin. cap. xxiii.* See the *DISSERTATIONS*. He is again mentioned by our author in the *MARCHAUNT'S TALE*, v. 1326. p. 71. *Urr.*

And lectuaries had he there full fine,
Soche as the curid monk *Dan Constantine*
Hath written in his boke de Coitu.

The title of this book is, "DE COITU,
" quibus profit aut obfit, quibus medica-
" minibus et alimentis acuatur impedia-
" turve." *Inter Op. Basil.* 1536. fol.

Ierno.

lerno in Italy, where he lurked some time in disguise. But he was recognised by the Caliph's brother then at Salerno, who recommended him as a scholar universally skilled in the learning of all nations, to the notice of Robert duke of Normandy. Robert entertained him with the highest marks of respect: and Constantine, by the advice of his patron, retired to the monastery of Cassino, where being kindly received by the abbot Desiderius, he translated in that learned society the books above-mentioned, most of which he first imported into Europe. These versions are said to be still extant. He flourished about the year 1086⁹. Bernard, or Bernardus Gordonius, appears to have been Chaucer's contemporary. He was a professor of medicine at Montpelier, and wrote many treatises in that faculty¹. John Gatisden was a fellow of Merton college, where Chaucer was educated, about the year 1320¹. Pitts says, that he was professor of

⁹ See Leo Officinis, or P. Diac. Aucstar. ad Leon. Chron. Mon. Cassin. lib. iii. c. 35. p. 445. Scriptor. Italic. tom. iv. Murator. In his book DE INCANTATIONIBUS, one of his enquiries is, *An invenierim in libris GRÆCORUM hoc qualiter in INDORUM libris est invenire, &c.* Op. tom. i. ut supr.

¹ Petr. Lambec. Prodrom. Sæc. xiv. p. 274. edit. ut supr.

² It has been before observed, that at the introduction of philosophy into Europe by the Saracens, the clergy only studied and practiced the medical art. This fashion prevailed a long while afterwards. The Prior and Convent of S. Swithin's at Winchester granted to Thomas of Shaftesbury, clerk, a corrody, consisting of two dishes daily from the Prior's kitchen, bread, drink, robes, and a competent chamber in the monastery, for the term of his life. In consideration of all which concessions, the said Thomas paid them fifty marcs: and moreover is obliged, "*deservire nobis in Arte medicinæ.*" Dat. in dom. Capitul. Feb. 15. A. D. 1319." Registr. Priorat. S. Swithin. Winton. MS. supr. citat. The most learned and accurate Fabricius has a

separate article on THEOLOGI MEDICI. Bibl. Gr. xii. 739. seq. See also Gianon. Itor. Neapol. l. x. ch. xi. §. 491. In the romance of SIR GUY, a monk heals the knight's wounds. Signat. G. iiii.

There was a monk beheld him well
That could of leech craft some dell.

In G. of Monmouth, who wrote in 1128, Eopa intending to poison Ambrosius, introduces himself as a physician. But in order to sustain this character with due propriety, he first shaves his head, and assumes the habit of a monk. lib. viii. c. 14. John Arundale, afterwards bishop of Chichester, was chaplain and first physician to Henry the sixth, in 1458. Wharton, Angl. sacr. i. 777. Faricius abbot of Abingdon, about 1110, was eminent for his skill in medicine; and a great cure performed by him is recorded in the register of the abbey. Hearne's Bened. Abb. Præf. xvii. King John, while sick at Newark, made use of William de Wodestoke, abbot of the neighbouring monastery of Croxton, as his physician. Bever, Chron. MSS. Harl. apud Hearne, Præf. ut supr. p. xlix. Many other instances may be added. The physicians of the university

physic in Oxford'. He was the most celebrated physician of his age in England; and his principal work is entitled, *ROSA MEDICA*, divided into five books, which was printed at Paris in the year 1492^o. Gilbertine, I suppose is Gilbertus Anglicus, who flourished in the thirteenth century, and wrote a popular compendium of the medical art^o. About the same time, not many years before Chaucer wrote, the works of the most famous Arabian authors, and among the rest those of Avicenne, Averroes, Serapion, and Rhafis, above-mentioned, were translated into Latin^o. These were our physician's library. But having mentioned his books, Chaucer could not forbear to add a stroke of satire so naturally introduced.

His studie was but litill in the bible^v.

The following anecdotes and observations may serve to throw general light on the learning of the authors who compose this curious library. The Aristotelic or Arabian philosophy continued to be communicated from Spain and Africa to the rest of Europe chiefly by means of the Jews: particularly to France and Italy, which were over-run with Jews about the tenth and eleventh centuries. About these periods, not only the courts of the Mahometan princes, but even that of the pope himself, were filled with Jews. Here they principally gained an establishment by the profession of

university of Paris were not allowed to marry till the year 1452. Menagian. p. 333. In the same university, antiently at the admission to the degree of doctor in physic, they took an oath that they were not married. MSS. Br. Twyne, 8. p. 249.

^o p. 414.
^u Tanner, Bibl. p. 312. Leland styles this work, "opus luculentum juxta ac eruditum." Script. Brit. p. 355.

^w Conring, ut supr. Sæc. xiii. cap. 4. p. 127. And Leland, Script. Brit. p. 291.

Who says, that Gilbert's *Practica et Compendium Medicinæ* was most carefully studied by many "ad quosdam properantes." He adds, that it was common, about this time, for foreign writers to assume the surname *Anglicus*, as a plausible recommendation.

^x Conring, ut supr. Sæc. xiii. cap. 4. p. 126. About the same time, the works of Galen and Hippocrates were first translated from Greek into Latin: but in a most barbarous style. Id. ibid. p. 127.

^y v. 440.

physic;

physic; an art then but imperfectly known and practiced in most parts of Europe. Being well versed in the Arabic tongue, from their commerce with Africa and Egypt, they had studied the Arabic translations of Galen and Hippocrates; which had become still more familiar to the great numbers of their brethren who resided in Spain. From this source also the Jews learned philosophy; and Hebrew versions made about this period from the Arabic, of Aristotle and the Greek physicians and mathematicians, are still extant in some libraries⁷. Here was a beneficial effect of the dispersion and vagabond condition of the Jews: I mean the diffusion of knowledge. One of the most eminent of these learned Jews was Moses Maimonides, a physician, philosopher, astrologer, and theologian, educated at Cordoua in Spain under Averroes. He died about the year 1208. Averroes being accused of heretical opinions, was sentenced to *live with the Jews in the street of the Jews* at Cordoua. Some of these learned Jews began to flourish in the Arabian schools in Spain, as early as the beginning of the ninth century. Many of the treatises of Averroes were translated by the Spanish Jews into Hebrew: and the Latin pieces of Averroes now extant were translated into Latin from these Hebrew versions. I have already mentioned the school or university of Cordoua. Leo Africanus speaks of "*Platea bibliothecariorum Cordouæ*." This, from what follows, appears to be a street of booksellers. It was in the time of Averroes, and about the year 1220. One of our Jew philosophers having fallen in love, turned poet, and his verses were publicly sold in this street⁸. My author says, that renouncing the dignity of the Jewish doctor, he took to writing verses⁹.

⁷ Euseb. Renandot. apud Fabric. Bibl. Gr. xii. 254.

⁸ Leo African. de Med. et Philosoph. Hebr. c. xxviii. xxix.

⁹ Leo ibid. "*Amore capitur, et digni-*

TATE DOCTORUM POSTHABITA cœpit edere carmina." See also Simon. in Suppl. ad Leon. Mutinens. de Ritib. Hebr. p. 104.

The

The **SOMPNOUR**, whose office it was to summon uncanonical offenders into the archdeacon's court, where they were very rigorously punished, is humourously drawn as counteracting his profession by his example: he is libidinous and voluptuous, and his rosy countenance belies his occupation. This is an indirect satire on the ecclesiastical proceedings of those times. His affectation of Latin terms, which he had picked up from the decrees and pleadings of the court, must have formed a character highly ridiculous.

And when that he well dronkin had the wine,
Then would he speke no word but Latine.

A few schole termis couth he two or thre,

That he had lernid out of some decre.

No wonder is, he herd it all the day:

And ye well knowin eke, how that a jay

Can clepe wult as well as can the pope:

But whofo couth in other things him grope^a,

Then had he spent al his philosophie,

A *questio quid juris*^c would he crie^d.

He is with great propriety made the friend and companion of the **PARDONERE**, or dispenser of indulgences, who is just arrived from the pope, "brimful of pardons come from Rome al hote:" and who carries in his wallet, among other holy curiosities, the virgin Mary's veil, and part of the sail of Saint Peter's ship^e.

The **MONKE** is represented as more attentive to horses and hounds than to the rigorous and obsolete ordinances of Saint Benedict. Such are his ideas of secular pomp and pleasure, that he is even qualified to be an abbot^f.

^a Examine.

^b Read "Aye, questio, &c."

^c v. 639.

^d v. 670. seq.

^e There is great humour in the circumstances which qualify our monk to be an abbot. Some time in the thirteenth cen-

tury, the prior and convent of Saint Swithin's at Winchester, appear to have recommended one of their brethren to the convent of Hyde as a proper person to be preferred to the abbacy of that convent, then vacant. These are his merits. "Est enim contrater
" Ille noster in glosanda sacra pagina bene
M m m " callens

An outrider that lovid venery^f,
 A manly mon, to ben an abbot able :
 Many a dainty horfe he had in stable.----
 This ilke^h monke let old thingis to pacc,
 And heldin afir the new world to trace.
 He gave not of the text a pullid henⁱ
 That faith, that hunters be not holy men^k.

He is ambitious of appearing a conspicuous and stately figure on horseback. A circumstance represented with great elegance.

And when he rode, men might his bridle here
 Gingiling in a whistling wind, as clere
 And eke as loud, as doth the chapel bell^l.

The gallantry of his riding-dress, and his genial aspect, is painted in lively colours.

I see his sleeves purfilid^m at the hande,
 With grysⁿ, and that the finist in the lande.
 And to sustene his hode undir his chin
 He had of gold wrought a ful curious pin,
 A love-knot in the greter end ther was.
 His hed was bald, and shone as any glas,
 And eke his face as he had been anoint :
 He was a lorde ful fat, and in gode point.

^f callens, in scriptura [transcribing] peritus, in capitalibus literis appingendis
^g bonus artifex, in regula S. Benedicti instructissimus, psallendi doctissimus, &c.
 MS. Registr. ut supr. quat. . . These were the ostensible qualities of the master of a capital monastery. But Chaucer, in the verses before us, seems to have told the real truth, and to have given the real character as it actually existed in life. I believe, that our industrious confrere, with all his knowledge of glossing, writing, illuminating, chanting, and Benedict's rules, would in

fact have been less likely to succeed to a vacant abbey, than one of the genial complexion and popular accomplishments here inimitably described.

^h Hunting.

ⁱ Same.

^j "He did not care a straw for the text,"

"&c."

^k v. 176. seq.

^l See supr. p. 164.

^m Fringed.

ⁿ Fur.

His

His eyin stepe, and rolling in his hed,
 That stemith as a furneis of led.
 His bootes souple, his hors in great estate,
 Now certainly he was a fayr prelate!
 He was not pale as a forpynid ghoft;
 A fat swan lovde he best of any roft.
 His palfry was as brown as is the berry^o.

The FRERE, or friar, is equally fond of diversion and good living; but the poverty of his establishment obliges him to travel about the country, and to practice various artifices to provide money for his convent, under the sacred character of a confessor^p.

A frere there was, a wanton and a merry;
 A limitour^q, and a ful solempne man:
 In all the orders four^r is none that can
 So much of daliaunce, and of faire langage.---
 Ful swetely herde he their confessioun:
 Ful plesant was his absolutioun.
 His tippit was aye farfid ful of knives
 And pinnis for to givin to faire wives.
 And certainly he had a merry note:
 Wele couthe he sing and playin on a rote^s.

^o v. 193.

^p A friar that had a particular grant for begging or hearing confessions within certain limits. See *supr.* p. 288. seq.

^q Of mendicants.

^r In Urry's Glossary this expression, *on a Rote*, is explained, *by Rote*. But a rote is a musical instrument. Lydgate, MSS. Fairfax, Bibl. Bodl. 16.

For ther was Rotys of Almayne,
 And eke of Arragon and Spayne.

Again, in the same manuscript,
 Harpys, fitheles, and eke *rotys*,
 Wel acording to ther notys.

Where *fitheles* is *fiddles*, as in the Prol. Cl. Oxenf. v. 590. So in the *Roman d'Alexandre*, MSS. Bibl. Bodl. ut *supr.* fol. i. b. col. 2.

Rote, harpe, viole, et gigne, et siphonie.

I cannot help mentioning in this place, a pleasant mistake of bishop Morgan, in his translation of the New Testament into Welch, printed 1567. He translates the *VIALS* of *wraith*, in the Revelations, by *Crythan* i. e. *Crouds* or *Fiddles*, Rev. v. 8. The greek is *φιδαν*. Now it is probable that the bishop translated only from the English, where he found *VIALS*, which he took for *VIALS*.

M m m 2

Of

Of yedding * he bare utterly the price.
 Ther n'as no man no where so vertuouse ;
 He was the best beggare in all his house †.
 Somewhat he lipfid for his wantonnesie,
 To make his English swete upon his tonge ;
 And in his harping, when that he had songe,
 His eyis twinkelid in his hede aright
 As donn the starris in a frostie night ‡.

With these unhallowed and untrue fons of the church is contrasted the PARSON, or parish-priest: in describing whose sanctity, simplicity, sincerity, patience, industry, courage, and conscientious impartiality, Chaucer shews his good sense and good heart. Dryden imitated this character of the GOOD PARSON, and is said to have applied it to bishop Ken.

The character of the SQUIRE teaches us the education and requisite accomplishments of young gentlemen in the gallant reign of Edward the third. But it is to be remembered, that our squire is the son of a knight, who has performed feats of chivalry in every part of the world; which the poet thus enumerates with great dignity and simplicity.

At Aliffandre' he was when it was won,
 Full oft timis had he the bourd begon †,
 Abovin allè naciouns in Pruce ‡.
 In Lettow † had he riddin and in Luce ‡ :

* Yelding, i. e. dalliance.

† Convent.

‡ v. 208.

† See this phrase explained above, p. 172. I will here add a similar expression from Gower, Conf. Amant. lib. viii. fol. 177, b. edit. Berthel. 1554.

---Bad his marshall of his hall
 To setten him in such degre,

That he upon him myght se.
 The kyng was soone fette and served :
 And he which had his prife deserved,
 After the kyngis own worde,
 Was made *begyn* a myddle *borde*.

That is, " he was seated in the middle of
 " the table, a place of distinction and dig-
 " nity."

* Prussia. † Lithuania. ‡ Livonia.

No cristen man fo oft of his degree
 In Granada, and in the fege had he be
 Of Algezir^a, and ridd in Belmary^b.
 At Leyis^c was he, and at Sataly^d,
 When they were won: and in the gretè fea:
 At many a noble army had he be:
 At mortal battailes had he ben fiftene,
 And foughtin for our faith at Tramifene^e.
 In lystis thrys, and alway slein his fo.
 This ilkè worthy Knight had ben also
 Sometimis with the lord of Palathy^f:
 Ayens^g another hethen in Turkey.
 And evirmore he had a fovreane prize,
 And thoug that he was worthy he was wife^h.

The poet in some of these lines implies, that after the Christians were driven out of Palestine, the English knights of his days joined the knights of Livonia and Prussia, and attacked the pagans of Lithuania, and its adjacent territories. Lithuania was not converted to christianity till towards the close of the fourteenth century. Prussian targets are mentioned, as we have before seen, in the KNIGHT'S TALE. Thomas duke of Gloucester, youngest son of king Edward the third, and Henry earl of Derby, afterwards king Henry the fourth, travelled into Prussia: and in conjunction with

^a A city of Spain. Perhaps Gibraltar.

^b Speght supposes it to be that country in Barbary which is called Benamarin. It is mentioned again in the KNIGHT'S TALE, v. 2632. p. 20. Urr.

Ne in *Balmariè* ther is no lion,
 That huntid is, &c.

By which at least we may conjecture it to be some country in Africa. Perhaps a corruption for Barbarie.

^c Some suppose it to be Lavissa, a city on the continent, near Rhodes. Others Lybissa, a city of Bithynia.

^d A city in Anatolia, called Atalia. Many of these places are mentioned in the history of the crusades.

^e "In the holy war at Thraffimene, a city in Barbary.

^f Palathia, a city in Anatolia. See Froissart, iii. 40.

^g Against.

^h v. 51.

the

the grand Masters and Knights of Prussia and Livonia, fought the infidels of Lithuania. Lord Derby was greatly instrumental in taking Vilna, the capital of that county, in the year 1390^h. Here is a seeming compliment to some of these expeditions. This invincible and accomplished champion afterwards tells the heroic tale of PALAMON and ARCITE. His son the SQUIER, a youth of twenty years, is thus delineated.

And he had been sometime in chivauchie
 In Flandris, in Artois, and Picardie:
 And born him wele, as of so littill space,
 In hope to standin in his ladies grace.
 Embroudid was he as it were a mede
 All ful of fresh flouris both white and rede.
 Singing he was and floityng al the day,
 He was as fresh as in the month of May.
 Schort was his gown with slevis long and wide,
 Wel couth he fit an hors, and faire yride.
 And songis couth he make, and wel endite,
 Just, and eke daunce, and wel portraie, and write^k.

To this young man the poet, with great observance of decorum gives the tale of Cambuscan, the next in knightly dignity to that of Palamon and Arcite. He is attended by a yeoman, whose figure revives the ideas of the forest laws.

And he was clad in cote and hode of grene:
 A shaft of pecocke arrows bright and kene^l.

^h See Hakluyt's Voyages, i. 122. seq. edit. 1598. See also Hakluyt's account of the conquest of Prussia by the Dutch Knights Hospitalaries of Jerusalem, *ibid*.

^l Chivalry, riding, exercises of horsemanship, Compl. Mar. Ven. v. 144. Ciclinius riding in his *chivauchie* From Venus. ———

^k v. 85.

^l Comp. Gul. Waynflete, episc. Winton. an. 1471. (*supr. citat.*) Among the stores of the bishop's castle of Farnham. "*Arcus cum chordis*. Et red. comp. de xxiv. "*arcubus cum xxiv. chordis de remanentia*. "*---Sagittæ magnæ*. Et de cxliv. sagittis "*magnis barbatis cum pennis pavonum*." In

Undir his belt he bare ful thriftily :
 Wel couth he drefs his tackle yomanly :
 His arrows droupid not with featheris low ;
 And in his hand he bare a mighty bow.
 Upon his arm he bare a gay bracer ^m,
 And by his fide a sword and bokeler.---
 A Christopher ⁿ on his brest of silver shene :
 A horn he bare, the baudrick was of grene ^o,

The character of the REEVE, an officer of much greater trust and authority during the feudal constitution than at present, is happily pictured. His attention to the care and custody of the manors, the produce of which was then kept in hand for furnishing his lord's table, perpetually employs his time, preys upon his thoughts, and makes him lean and choleric. He is the terror of bailiffs and hinds : and is remarkable for his circumspection, vigilance, and subtlety. He is never in arrears, and no auditor is able to over-reach or detect him in his accounts : yet he makes more commodious purchases for himself than for his master, without forfeiting the good will or bounty of the latter. Amidst these strokes of satire, Chaucer's genius for descriptive painting breaks forth in this simple and beautiful description of the REEVE'S rural habitation.

In a *Computus* of bishop Gervays, episc. Winton. an. 1266. (supr. citat.) among the stores of the bishop's castle of Taunton, one of the heads or styles is, *Cauda pavonum*, which I suppose were used for feathering arrows. In the articles of *Arms*, which are part of the episcopal stores of the said castle, I find enumerated one thousand four hundred and twenty-one great arrows for cross bows, remaining over and above three hundred and seventy-one delivered to the bishop's vassals *tempore guerre*. Under the same title occur cross-bows made of horn. Ar-

rows with feathers of the peacock occur in Lydgate's *Chronicle of Troy*, B. iii. cap. 22. sign. O iii. edit. 1555. fol.

—Many good archers
 Of Boeme, which with their arrows kene,
 And with fethirs of peccoche frethe and
 shene, &c.

^m Armour for the arms.
ⁿ A saint who presided over the weather.
 The patron of field sports.
^o v. 103.

His

His winning ^p was ful fayre upon a heth,
With grene trees yshadowed was his place ^q.

In the CLERKE OF OXENFORDE our author glances at the inattention paid to literature, and the unprofitableness of philosophy. He is emaciated with study, clad in a threadbare cloak, and rides a steed lean as a rake.

For he had gotten him no benefice,
Ne was so worldly for to have office:
For him had lever ^r han at his bedshed
Twentie bokis, yclad in with black or red,
Of Aristotle and his philosophie,
Then robis rich, fithell ^s; or gay fautrie:
But albe that he was a philosopher,
Yet had he but little gold in his coffer ^t.

His unwearied attention to logic had tintured his conversation with much pedantic formality, and taught him to speak on all subjects in a precise and sententious style. Yet his conversation was instructive: and he was no less willing to submit than to communicate his opinion to others.

Sowning in moral virtue was his speche,
And gladly would he learn, and gladly teche ^u.

The perpetual importance of the SERJEANT OF LAWE, who by habit or by affectation has the faculty of appearing busy when he has nothing to do, is sketched with the spirit and conciseness of Horace.

^p Dwelling.

^q v. 608.

^r Rather.

^s Fiddle. See *supr.* p. 147.

^t v. 293. Or it may be explained, "Yet he could not find the philosopher's stone."
^u v. 300.

No where so busy'a man as he ther n'as,
And yet he semid busier than he was *.

There is some humour in making our lawyer introduce the language of his pleadings into common conversation. He addresses the hoste,

Hoste, quoth he, *de pardeux jeo assent* *.

The affectation of talking French was indeed general, but it is here appropriated and in character.

Among the rest, the character of the Hoste, or master of the Tabarde inn where the pilgrims are assembled, is conspicuous. He has much good sense, and discovers great talents for managing and regulating a large company; and to him we are indebted for the happy proposal of obliging every pilgrim to tell a story during their journey to Canterbury. His interpositions between the tales are very useful and enlivening; and he is something like the chorus on the Grecian stage. He is of great service in encouraging each person to begin his part, in conducting the scheme with spirit, in making proper observations on the merit or tendency of the se-

* v. 323. He is said to have "often yben at the *parvise*." v. 312. It is not my design to enter into the disputes concerning the meaning or etymology of *parvise*: from which *parvisia*, the name for the public schools in Oxford, is derived. But I will observe, that *parvis* is mentioned as a court or portico before the church of Notre Dame at Paris, in John de Meun's part of the Roman de la Rose, v. 12529.

A Paris n'eust hommes ne femme
Au *parvis* devant Nostre Dame.

The passage is thus translated by Chaucer Rom. R. v. 7157.

Ther n'as no wight in all Paris
Before our Ladie at *Parvis*.

The word is supposed to be contracted from

Paradise. This perhaps signified an ambulatory. Many of our old religious houses had a place called Paradise. In the year 1300, children were taught to read and sing in the *Parvis* of St. Martin's church at Norwich. Blomf. Norf. ii. 748. Our Serjeant is afterwards said to have received many *yses and robes*, v. 319. The serjeants and all the officers of the superior courts of law, antiently received winter and summer robes from the king's wardrobe. He is likewise said to cite cases and decisions, "that from the time of king William were full," v. 326. For this line see the very learned and ingenious Mr. Barrington's Observations on the antient Statutes.

* v. 309.

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veral

veral stories, in settling disputes which must naturally arise in the course of such an entertainment, and in connecting all the narratives into one continued system. His love of good cheer, experience in marshalling guests, address, authoritative deportment, and facetious disposition, are thus expressively displayed by Chaucer.

Grete chere our Hostè made us everichone,

And to the suppere set he us anone;

And servid us with vitales of the best:

Strong was his wine, and wele to drink us left⁷.

A femely man our Hostè was withal

To bene a marshall in a lordis hal.

A largè man was he, with eyin stepe,

A fayrer burgeis is there none in Chepe⁸.

Bold of his speche, and wise, and well ytaught,

And of manhodè lakid him right nought.

And eke therto he was a merry man, &c⁹.

Chaucer's scheme of the CANTERBURY TALES was evidently left unfinished. It was intended by our author, that every pilgrim should likewise tell a Tale on their return from Canterbury^b. A poet who lived soon after the CANTERBURY TALES made their appearance, seems to have designed a sup-

⁷ "We liked."

⁸ Cheapside.

⁹ Prol. v. 749.

^b Or rather, two on their way thither, and two on their return. Only Chaucer himself tells two tales. The poet says, that there were twenty-nine pilgrims in company: but in the CHARACTERS he describes more. Among the TALES which remain, there are none of the Prioresse's Chaplains, the Haberdastler, Carpynter, Webbe, Dyer, Tapicer, and Hoste. The Chanon Yeman has a TALE, but no CHARACTER. The Plowman's Tale is certainly supposititious. See *supr.* p. 306. And

Obf. Spens. ii. 217. It is omitted in the best manuscript of the CANTERBURY TALES, MSS. Harl. 1758. fol. membran. These TALES were supposed to be *spoken*, not *written*. But we have in the Plowman's, "For my WRITING me allow." v. 3309. Urr. And in other places. "For my WRITING if I have blame." — "Of my WRITING have me excus'd." etc. See a NOTE at the beginning of the CANT. TALES, MSS. Laud. K. 50. Bibl. Bodl. written by John Barcham. But the discussion of these points properly belongs to an editor of Chaucer.

plement

plement to this deficiency, and with this view to have written a Tale called the *MARCHAUNT'S SECOND TALE*, or the *HISTORY OF BERYN*. It was first printed by Urry, who supposed it to be Chaucer's. In the Prologue which is of considerable length, there is some humour and contrivance: in which the author, happily enough, continues to characterise the pilgrims, by imagining what each did, and how each behaved, when they all arrived at Canterbury. After dinner was ordered at their inn, they all proceed to the cathedral. At entering the church one of the monks sprinkles them with holy water. The Knight with the better sort of the company goes in great order to the shrine of Thomas a Beckett. The Miller and his companions run staring about the church: they pretend to blazon the arms painted in the glass windows, and enter into a dispute in heraldry: but the Hoste of the Tabarde reproves them for their improper behaviour and impertinent discourse, and directs them to the martyr's shrine. When all had finished their devotions, they return to the inn. In the way thither they purchase toys for which that city was famous, called *Canterbury brooches*: and here much facetiousness passes betwixt the Frere and the Sompnour, in which the latter vows revenge on the former, for telling a Tale so palpably levelled at his profession, and protests he will retaliate on their return by a more severe story. When dinner is ended, the Hoste of the Tabarde thanks all the company in form for their several Tales. The party then separate till supper-time by agreement. The Knight goes to survey the walls and bulwarks of the city, and explains to his son the Squier the nature and strength of them. Mention is here made of great guns. The Wife of Bath is too weary to walk far; she proposes to the Prioreffe to divert themselves in the garden, which abounds with herbs proper for making salves. Others wander about the streets. The Pardoner has a low adventure, which ends

^c Urry, Chauc. p. 595.

much to his disgrace. The next morning they proceed on their return to Southwark: and our genial master of the Tabarde, just as they leave Canterbury, by way of putting the company into good humour, begins a panegyric on the morning and the month of April, some lines of which I shall quote, as a specimen of our author's abilities in poetical description^c.

Lo! how the feson of the yere, and Averell^d flourish,
Doith^e the busshis burgyn^f out blossomes and flouris.
Lo! the prymerofsys of the yere, how fresh they bene to
fene,
And many othir flourish among the grassis grene.
Lo! how they springe and sprede, and of divers hue,
Beholdith and feith, both white, red, and blue.
That lusty bin and comfortabyll for mannis sight,
For I say for myself it makith my hert to light^g.

On casting lots, it falls to the Marchaunt to tell the first tale, which then follows. I cannot allow that this Prologue and Tale were written by Chaucer. Yet I believe them to be nearly coeval.

^c There is a good description of a magical palace, v. 1973—2076. ^d April. ^e Make.
^f Shoot. ^g v. 690.

S E C T.