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The History Of English Poetry

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

Warton, Thomas

London, 1778

Section I. John Gower. His character and poems. His tomb. His Confessio Amantis. Its subject and plan. An unsuccessful imitation of the Roman de la Rose. Aristotle's Secretum Secretorum. Chronicles of ...

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T H E
H I S T O R Y
O F
E N G L I S H P O E T R Y.

S E C T. I.

IF Chaucer had not existed, the compositions of John Gower, the next poet in succession, would alone have been sufficient to rescue the reigns of Edward the third and Richard the second from the imputation of barbarism. His education was liberal and uncircumscribed, his course of reading extensive, and he tempered his severer studies with a knowledge of life. By a critical cultivation of his native language, he laboured to reform its irregularities, and to establish an English style^a. In these respects he resembled his friend and cotemporary Chaucer^b: but he participated no considerable portion of Chaucer's spirit, imagination, and

^a See *supr.* vol. i. pag. 342.

^b It is certain that they both lived and wrote together. But I have considered Chaucer first, among other reasons hereaf-

ter given, as Gower survived him. Chaucer died October 25, 1400, aged 72 years. Gower died, 1402.

elegance. His language is tolerably perspicuous, and his versification often harmonious: but his poetry is of a grave and sententious turn. He has much good sense, solid reflection, and useful observation. But he is serious and didactic on all occasions: he preserves the tone of the scholar and the moralist on the most lively topics. For this reason he seems to have been characterised by Chaucer with the appellation of the MORALL GOWER^c. But his talent is not confined to English verse only. He wrote also in Latin; and copied Ovid's elegiacs with some degree of purity, and with fewer false quantities and corrupt phrases, than any of our countrymen had yet exhibited since the twelfth century.

Gower's capital work, consisting of three parts, only the last of which properly furnishes matter for our present enquiry, is entitled SPECULUM MEDITANTIS, VOX CLAMANTIS, CONFESSIO AMANTIS. It was finished, at least the third part, in the year 1393^d. The SPECULUM MEDITANTIS, or the *Mirroure of Meditation*, is written in French rhymes, in ten books^e. This tract, which was never printed, displays the general nature of virtue and vice, enumerates the felicities of conjugal fidelity by examples selected from various authors, and describes the path which the reprobate ought to pursue for the recovery of the divine grace. The VOX CLAMANTIS, or the *Voice of one crying in the Wilderness*, which was also never printed, contains seven books of Latin elegiacs. This work is chiefly historical, and is little more than a metrical chronicle of the insurrection of the commons in the reign of king Richard the second. The best and most beautiful manuscript of it is in the library of All Souls college at Oxford; with a dedication in Latin verse, addressed by the author,

^c Troil. Crest. ad calc. pag. 333. edit. Urr. ut supr.

^d CONFESS. AMANT. Prol. fol. 1. a. col. 1. Imprinted at London, in Flete-strete, by Thomas Berthelette, the xii.

daie of March, ann. 1554. folio. This edition is here always cited.

^e Bibl. Bodl. MSS. Bodl. NE. F. 8. 9. And MSS. Fairf. 3.

when

when he was old and blind, to archbishop Arundel^f. The *CONFESSIO AMANTIS*, or the *Lover's Confession*, is an English poem, in eight books, first printed by Caxton, in the year 1483. It was written at the command of Richard the second; who meeting our poet Gower rowing on the Thames near London, invited him into the royal barge, and after much conversation requested him to *book some new thing*^g.

This tripartite work is represented by three volumes on Gower's curious tomb in the conventual church of Saint Mary Overee in Southwark, now remaining in its antient state; and this circumstance furnishes me with an obvious opportunity of adding an anecdote relating to our poet's munificence and piety, which ought not to be omitted. Although a poet, he largely contributed to rebuild that church in its present elegant form, and to render it a beautiful pattern of the lighter Gothic architecture: at the same time he founded, at his tomb, a perpetual chantry.

It is on the last of these pieces, the *CONFESSIO AMANTIS*, that Gower's character and reputation as a poet are almost entirely founded. This poem, which bears no immediate reference to the other two divisions, is a dialogue between a lover and his confessor, who is a priest of Venus, and, like the mystagogue in the *PICTURE* of Cebes, is called Genius. Here, as if it had been impossible for a lover not to be a good catholic, the ritual of religion is applied to the tender passion, and Ovid's *Art of Love* is blended with the breviary. In the course of the confession, every evil affection of the human heart, which may tend to impede the progress or counteract the success of love, is scientifically subdivided; and its fatal effects exemplified by a variety of apposite stories, extracted

^f MSS. Num. 26. It occurs more than once in the Bodleian library; and, I believe, often in private hands. There is a fine manuscript of it in the British Museum. It was written in the year 1397, as appears

by the following line, MSS. Bodl. 294.

Hos ego BIS DENO Ricardi regis in anno.
^g To THE READER, in Berthelette's edition. From the PROLOGUE. See *supr.* vol. i. p. 339. Notes.

from classics and chronicles. The poet often introduces or recapitulates his matter in a few couplets of Latin long and short verses. This was in imitation of Boethius.

This poem is strongly tinged with those pedantic affectations concerning the passion of love, which the French and Italian poets of the fourteenth century borrowed from the troubadours of Provence, and which I have above examined at large. But the writer's particular model appears more immediately to have been John of Meun's celebrated *ROMAUNT DE LA ROSE*. He has, however, seldom attempted to imitate the picturesque imageries, and expressive personifications, of that exquisite allegory. His most striking portraits, which yet are conceived with no powers of creation, nor delineated with any fertility of fancy, are *IDLENESS*, *AVARICE*, *MICHERIE* or Thieving, and *NEGLIGENCE*, the secretary of *SLOTH*^b. Instead of boldly cloathing these qualities with corporeal attributes, aptly and poetically imagined, he coldly yet sensibly describes their operations, and enumerates their properties. What Gower wanted in invention, he supplied from his common-place book; which appears to have been stored with an inexhaustible fund of instructive maxims, pleasant narrations, and philosophical definitions. It seems to have been his object to crowd all his erudition into this elaborate performance. Yet there is often some degree of contrivance and art in his manner of introducing and adapting subjects of a very distant nature, and which are totally foreign to his general design.

In the fourth book, our confessor turns chemist; and discoursing at large on the Hermetic science, develops its principles, and exposes its abuses, with great penetration^c. He delivers the doctrines concerning the vegetable, mineral,

^b Lib. iv. f. 62. a. col. 1. Lib. v. f. 94. a. col. 1. Lib. iv. f. 68. a. col. 1. Lib. v. f. 119. a. col. 2.

^c Lib. iv. f. 76. b. col. 2.

and

and animal stones, to which Falstaffe alludes in Shakespeare^k, with amazing accuracy and perspicuity^l; although this doctrine was adopted from systems then in vogue, as we shall see below. In another place he applies the Argonautic expedition in search of the golden fleece, which he relates at length, to the same visionary philosophy^m. Gower very probably conducted his associate Chaucer into these profound mysteries, which had been just opened to our countrymen by the books of Roger Baconⁿ.

In the seventh book, the whole circle of the Aristotelic philosophy is explained; which our lover is desirous to learn, supposing that the importance and variety of its speculations might conduce to sooth his anxieties by diverting and engaging his attention. Such a discussion was not very likely to afford him much consolation: especially, as hardly a single ornamental digression is admitted, to decorate a field naturally so destitute of flowers. Almost the only one is the following description of the chariot and crown of the sun; in which the Arabian ideas concerning precious stones are interwoven with Ovid's fictions and the classical mythology.

Of goldè glistrende^o, spoke and whele,
The Sonne his Carte^p hath, faire and wele;
In which he sit, and is croned
With bright stones environed:
Of which, if that I speke shall
There be^q tofore, inspeciall^r;
Set in the front of his corone,
Thre stones, which no persone

^k Falstaffe mentions a philosopher's orchemist's *two stones*. See P. Henr. iv. A& iii. Sc. 2. Our author abundantly confirms doctor Warburton's explication of this passage, which the rest of the commentators do not seem to have understood. See Ashm. Theatr.

Chemic. p. 484. edit. Lond. 1652. 4to.

^l Ibid. f. 77. a. col. 1.

^m Lib. v. f. 101. a. seq.

ⁿ See supr. vol. 1. p. 425.

^o Glistering.

^p Chariot.

^q Before.

^r Above all.

Hath

Hath upon erth: and the first is
 By name cleped Leucachatis;
 That other two cleped thus
 Astroites and Ceraunus,
 In his corone; and also byhynde,
 By olde bokes, as I fynd,---
 There ben of worthy stones three,
 Set eche of hem in his degree;
 Whereof a Cristelle is that one,
 Which that corone is sett upon:
 The second is an Adamant;
 The third is noble and avenant*,
 Which cleped is Idriades---
 And over this yet natheles',
 Upon the fidis of the werke,
 After the writyng of the clerke',
 There fitten five stones mo^v;
 The Smaragdine is one of tho^x,
 Jaspis, and Helitropius,
 And Vandides, and Jacinctus.
 Lo! thus the corone is beset,
 Whereof it shineth wel the bet'.
 And in such wise, his light to sprede,
 Sit, with his diademe on heade,
 The Sonne, shinende in his carte:
 And for to lead him swithe^z and smarte,
 After the bright daiès lawe,
 There ben ordained for to drawe
 Four hors his chare, and him withall,
 Whereoff the names tell I shall:
 Eritheus the first is hote*,
 The whiche is redde, and shineth hote;

* Beautiful. † Still farther. * The philosopher. ^v More. * Them.
 † Much better. ^z Swift. * Named.

The second Acteos the bright,
 Lampes the third courser hight,
 And Philogeus is the ferth^b,
 That bringen light unto this erth
 And gone so swift upon the heven, &c^c.

Our author closes this course of the Aristotelic philosophy with a system of politics^d: not taken from Aristotle's genuine treatise on that subject, but from the first chapter of a spurious compilation entitled, *SECRETUM SECRETORUM ARISTOTELIS*^e, addressed under the name of Aristotle to his pupil Alexander the Great, and printed at Bononia in the year 1516. A work, treated as genuine, and explained with a learned gloss, by Roger Bacon^f: and of the highest reputation in Gower's age, as it was transcribed, and illustrated with a commentary, for the use of king Edward the third, by his chaplain Walter de Millemete, prebendary of the collegiate church of Glaseny in Cornwall^g. Under this head, our author takes an opportunity of giving advice to a weak yet amiable prince, his patron king Richard the second, on a subject of the most difficult and delicate nature, with much freedom and dignity. It might also be proved, that Gower, through this detail of the sciences, copied in many other articles the *SECRETUM SECRETORUM*; which is a sort of an abridgement of the Aristotelic philosophy, filled with many Arabian innovations and absurdities, and enriched with an appendix concerning the choice of wines, phlebotomy, justice, public notaries, tournaments, and physiognomy, rather than from the Latin translations of Aristotle. It is evident, that he copied from this work the doctrine of the three chemical

^b Fourth. ^c Lib. vii. f. 145. b. col. 1. 2.

^d Lib. vii. f. 151. a.

^e See *supr.* vol. i. p. 132. Notes, x.

^f See Wood, *Hist. Antiquit. Univ. Oxon.* lib. i. p. 15. col. 1.

^g Tanner *Bibl.* p. 527. It is cited by Bradwardine, a famous English theologian, in his grand work *de CAUSA DEI*. He died 1349.

stones,

stones, mentioned above^b. That part of our author's astronomy, in which he speaks of the magician Nectabanus instructing Alexander the Great, when a youth, in the knowledge of the fifteen stars, and their respective plants and precious stones, appropriated to the operations of natural magic^c, seems to be borrowed from Callisthenes, the fabulous writer of the life of Alexander^k. Yet many wonderful inventions, which occur in this romance of Alexander, are also to be found in the *SECRETUM SECRETORUM*: particularly the fiction of Alexander's Stentorian horn, mentioned above, which was heard at the distance of sixty miles^l, and of which Kircher has given a curious representation in his *PHONURGIA*, copied from an antient picture of this gigantic instrument, belonging to a manuscript of the *SECRETUM SECRETORUM*, preserved in the Vatican library^m.

It is pretended by the mystic writers, that Aristotle in his old age reviewed his books, and digested his philosophy into one system or body, which he sent, in the form of an epistle, to Alexander. This is the supposititious tract of which I have been speaking; and it is thus described by Lydgate, who has translated a part of it.

Title of this boke *LAPIS PHILOSOPHORUM*,
Namyd also *DE REGIMINE PRINCIPUM*,
Of philosophres *SECRETUM SECRETORUM*.---

^b There is an Epistle under the name of Alexander the Great, *De Lapide Philosophorum*, among the *SCRIPTORES CHEMICI artis auriferæ*, Basil. 1593. tom. i. And edit. 1610. See below, *Note* ^k.

I have mentioned a Latin romance of Alexander's life, as printed by Frederick Corfellis, about 1468. *supr.* vol. i. p. 131. On examination, that impression is said to be finished Decemb. 17, 1468. Unluckily, the seventeenth day of December was a Sunday that year. A manifest proof that the name of Corfellis was forged.

^l Lib. vii. f. 148. a. seq.

^k Or from fictitious books attributed to Alexander the Great, *De septem Herbis septem Planetarum*, &c. See Fabric. *Bibl. Gr.* tom. ii. p. 206. See *supr.* vol. i. p. 129. And p. 223. Notes, f. Callisthenes is mentioned twice in this poem, Lib. vii. f. 139. b. col. 2. And vi. f. 139. b. col. 2. See a chapter of Callisthenes and Alexander, in Lydgate's *FALL OF PRINCES*, B. iv. ch. 1. seq. fol. 99. edit. ut *infr.*

^l See *supr.* vol. i. p. 132.

^m Pag. 140. See *SECRETUM SECRETORUM*, *Bibl. Bodl. MSS. Bodl. D. i. 5.* Cap. penult. lib. 5.

The

The which booke direct to the kyng
 Alysaundre, both in the werre and pees^a,
 Lyke^o his request and royall commanding,
 Fulle accomplishid by *Aristotiles*.
 Feeble of age. - - - - -

Then follows a rubric "How Aristotile declareth to kyng
 "Alysaundre of the stonys^p." It was early translated into
 French prose^q, and printed in English, "The SECRET OF
 "ARISTOTYLE, with the GOVERNALE OF PRINCES and every
 "maner of estate, with rules for helth of body and soul, very
 "gode to teche children to rede English, newly translated
 "out of French, and emprented by Robert and William
 "Copland, 1528^r." This work will occur again under
 Occleve and Lidgate. There is also another forgery conse-
 crated with the name of Aristotile, and often quoted by the
 astrologers, which Gower might have used: it is DE REGI-
 MINIBUS COELESTIBUS, which had been early translated from
 Arabic into Latin^s.

Considered in a general view, the CONFESSIO AMANTIS
 may be pronounced to be no unpleasing miscellany of those
 shorter tales which delighted the readers of the middle age.
 Most of these are now forgotten, together with the volumi-
 nous chronicles in which they were recorded. The book
 which appears to have accommodated our author with the
 largest quantity of materials in this article, was probably a
 chronicle entitled PANTHEON, OR MEMORIÆ SECLORUM,

^a Peace. ^o According to.

^p MSS. Bibl. Bodl. Laud. B. 24. K. 53. Part of this manuscript is printed by Ashmole, THEATR. CHEMIC. ut supr. p. 397. See Julius Bartolocc. tom. i. Bibl. Rabbinic. p. 475. And Joann. a Lent, Theol. Judaic. p. 6.

^q Mém. de Litt. tom. xvii. p. 737. 4-to.

^r Oétavo. A work called Aristotle's POLITIQUES, OR DISCOURSES OF GOVERNMENT, from the French of Louis le Roy,

printed by Adam Islip, in folio, in the year 1527, and dedicated to sir Robert Sidney, is Aristotle's genuine work. In Gresham college library there is "Alexandri M. Epistolæ ad preceptorem Aristotelem, Anglice factæ." MSS. 52. But I believ it Occleve's or Lydgate's poem on the subject, hereafter mentioned.

^s Hotting. Bibl. Orient. p. 255. See Pic. Mirandulan. contra Astrolog. lib. i. p. 284.

C

compiled

compiled in Latin, partly in prose and partly in verse, by Godfrey of Viterbo, a chaplain and notary to three German emperours, who died in the year 1190¹. It commences, according to the established practice of the historians of this age, with the creation of the world, and is brought down to the year 1186. It was first printed at Basil, in the year 1569². The learned Muratori has not scrupled to insert the five last sections of this universal history in the seventh tome of his writers on Italy³. The subject of this work, to use the laborious compiler's own expressions, is the whole Old and New Testament; and all the emperours and kings, which have existed from the beginning of the world to his own times: of whom the origin, end, names, and achievements, are commemorated⁴. The authors which our chronicler professes to have consulted for the gentile story, are only Josephus, Dion Cassius, Strabo, Orosius, Hegefippus⁵, Suetonius, Solinus, and Julius Africanus: among which, not one of the purer Roman historians occurs. Gower also seems to have used another chronicle written by the same Godfrey, never printed, called SPECULUM REGUM, or the MIRROR OF KINGS, which is almost as multifarious as the last; containing a genealogy of all the potentates, Trojan and German, from Noah's flood to the reign of the emperour Henry the sixth, according to the chronicles of the venerable Bede, Eusebius, and Ambrosius⁶. There are besides, two ancient

¹ See sup. vol. i. p. 351. Notes, h. And Jacob. Quetif. i. p. 740.

² In folio. Again, among Scriptor. de Reb. Germanicis, by Pistorius. Francof. fol. 1584. And Hanov. 1613. Lastly in a new edit. of Pistorius's collection by Struvius, Ratibon. 1726. fol. There is a chronicle, I believe sometimes confounded with Godfrey's PANTHEON, called the PANTALEONE, from the creation to the year 1162, about which time it was compiled by the Benedictine monks of Saint

Pantaleon at Cologne, printed by Eccard, with a German translation, in the first volume of SCRIPTORES MEDIÆVÆ, p. 683. 945. It was continued to the year 1237, by Godfridus, a Pantaleonist monk. This continuation, which has considerable merit as a history, is extant in Freherus, Ref. Germanicar. tom. i. edit. Struvian. p. 335.

³ P. 346. ⁴ In proem.

⁵ See sup. vol. i. p. 217.

⁶ See Lambect. ii. p. 274.

collectors

collectors of marvellous and delectable occurrences to which our author is indebted, Cassiodorus and Isidorus. These are mentioned as two of the chronicles which Caxton used in compiling his *CRONICLES OF ENGLAND*^a. Cassiodorus^b wrote, at the command of the Gothic king Theodoric, a work named *CHRONICON BREVE*, commencing with our first parents, and deduced to the year 519, chiefly deduced from Eusebius's ecclesiastic history, the chronicles of Prosper and Jerom, and Aurelius Victor's Origin of the Roman nation^c. An Italian translation by Lodovico Dolce was printed in 1561^d. Isidorus, called Hispalensis, cited by Davie and Chaucer^e, in the seventh century, framed from the same author a *CRONICON*, from Adam to the time of the emperor Heraclius, first printed in the year 1477, and translated into Italian under the title of *CRONICA D' ISIDORO*, so soon after as the year 1480^f.

These comprehensive systems of all sacred and profane events, which in the middle ages multiplied to an excessive degree, superseded the use of the classics and other established authors, whose materials they gave in a commodious abridgement, and in whose place, by selecting those stories only which suited the taste of the times, they substituted a more agreeable kind of reading: nor was it by these means only, that they greatly contributed to retard the acquisition of those orna-

^a Bale, apud Lewis's *CAXTON*, p. xvii. post. pref. And in the prologue to the *FRUCTUS TEMPORUM*, printed at St. Alban's in 1483, one of the authors is "Cassiodorus of the acts of emperours and bisshoppys."

^b See *CONFES. AMANT.* lib. viii. f. 156. b. col. 1. And our author to king Henry, Urry's Ch. p. 522. v. 330.

^c It has often been printed: See *OPERA Cassiodori*, duobus tomis, Rothomag. 1679. fol.

^d *Compendio di Sesto Ruffo, con la CRONICA DI CASSIODORO, de Fatti de Romani, &c.* In Venezia, per il Giolto, 1561. 4-to.

^e See *supr.* vol. i. p. 250, Notes, u.

^f Stampata nel Friuli. It is sometimes called *Chronica DE SEX MUNDI ETATIBUS, IMAGO MUNDI*, and *ABBREVIATIO TEMPORUM*. It was continued by Isidorus Pacensis from 610 to 754. This continuation was printed in 1634, fol. Pampelou. Under the title "Epitome Imperatorum vel Arabum Ephemeridos una cum Hispaniae Chronico."

Isidore has likewise left a history or chronicle of the Goths, copied also by our author, from the year 176, to the death of king Sisebut in the year 628. It was early printed. See it in Grotius's *COLLECTIO RERUM GOTHICARUM*, pag. 707. Amst. 1655. 8-vo.

ments of style, and other arts of composition, which an attention to the genuine models would have afforded, but by being written without any ideas of elegance, and in the most barbarous phraseology. Yet productive as they were of these and other inconvenient consequences, they were not without their use in the rude periods of literature. By gradually weaning the minds of readers from monkish legends, they introduced a relish for real and rational history; and kindling an ardour of inquiring into the transactions of past ages, at length awakened a curiosity to obtain a more accurate and authentic knowledge of important events by searching the original authors. Nor are they to be entirely neglected in modern and more polished ages. For, besides that they contain curious pictures of the credulity and ignorance of our ancestors, they frequently preserve facts transcribed from books which have not descended to posterity. It is extremely probable, that the plan on which they are all constructed, that of deducing a perpetual history from the creation to the writer's age, was partly taken from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and partly from the Bible.

In the mean time there are three histories of a less general nature, which Gower seems more immediately to have followed in some of his tales. These are Colonna's Romance of Troy, the Romance of Sir Lancelot, and the *GESTA ROMANORUM*.

From Colonna's Romance, which he calls *The Tale of Troie*, *The Boke of Troie*^a, and sometimes *The Cronike*^b, he has taken

^a Of Palamedes and Nauplius, "The boke of Troie wobofo rede." Lib. ii. fol. 52. b. col. 2. The story of Jason and Medea, "whereof the tale in speciall is in the boke of Troie writte." Lib. v. fol. 101. a. col. 2. Of the Syrens seen by Ulysses, "which in the tale of Troie I finde." Lib. i. f. 10. b. col. 1. Of the eloquence of Ulysses, "As in the boke of Troie is funde." Lib. vii. f. 150. a. col. 1. &c. &c. See supr. vol. 1. p. 127.

^b In the story of the Theban chief Capaneus, "This knight as the CRONIKE seine." Lib. 1. f. 18. b. col. 2. Of Achilles and Teucer, "In a CRONIQUE I fynde thus." Lib. iii. fol. 62. a. col. 1. Of Peleus and Phocus, "As the CRONIQUE seithe." Lib. iii. f. 61. b. col. 1. Of Ulysses and Penelope, "In a CRONIQUE I finde writte." Lib. iv. f. 63. b. col. 2. He mentions also the CRONIQUE for tales of other nations. "In the CRONIQUE" as

all that relates to the Trojan and Grecian story, or, in Milton's language, THE TALE OF TROY DIVINE. This piece was first printed at Cologne in the year 1477¹. At Colonia an Italian translation appeared in the same year, and one at Venice in 1481. It was translated into Italian so early as 1324, by Philipp Ceffi a Florentine². By some writers it is called the British as well as the Trojan story³; and there are manuscripts in which it is entitled the history of Medea and Jason⁴. In most of the Italian translations it is called LA STORIA DELLA GUERRA DI TROJA. This history is repeatedly called the TROIE BOKE by Lydgate, who translated it into English verse⁵.

As to the romance of sir Lancelot, our author, among others on the subject, refers to a volume of which he was the hero: perhaps that of Robert Borron, altered soon afterwards by Godefroy de Leigny, under the title of le ROMAN DE LA CHARETTE, and printed with additions at Paris by Antony Verard, in the year 1494.

¹ "as I finde, Cham was he which first the letters fonde, and wrote in Hebrew with his honde, of naturall philosophie." Lib. iv. fol. 76. a. col. 1. For Darius's four questions, Lib. vii. fol. 151. b. col. 1. For Perillus's brazen bull. f. &c. &c. See below.

² In quarto. HISTORIA TROJANA, a Guidone de Columna Messanenfi Judice edita 1287. Impressa per Arnoldum Tberburnem Colonia commorantem, 1477. Die penult. Nov. I am mistaken in what I have said, supr. vol. i. p. 126. There is another edition at Oxford by Rood, 1480, 4-to. Two at Strasburgh 1486, and 1489. fol. Ames calls him Columella. Hist. Print. p. 204.

³ See Haym's Bibl. Italian. p. 35. edit. Venez. 1741. 4-to. I am not sure whether Haym's Italian translation in the year 1477 is not the Latin of that year. They are both in quarto, and by Arnolde Terbone. A

Florence edition of the translation in 1610, quarto, is said to be most scarce.

⁴ Sandius and Hallerwood, in their Supplement to Vossius's Latin Historians, suppose Colonna's Trojan and British chronicle the same. In Theodoric Engelhufen's CHRONICA CHRONICORUM, compiled about the year 1420, where the author speaks of Troy, he cites Colonna de Bello Trojano. In the Preface he mentions Colonna's CHRONICA BRITANNORUM. See Engelhufen's first edition, Helmst. 1671, 4-to. Or rather, Scriptor. Brunsvic. Leibnitii, tom. p. 977. See also Fabyan and other historians.

⁵ See supr. vol. i. p. 138. Notes. It will occur again under Lydgate.

⁶ Tragedies of Bochas, B. i. ch. xvi. How the translatoure wrote a booke of the siege of Troy, called TROYE BOKE. And ib. St. 7. 17. 20. edit. Wayland. fol. xxx. b. xxxi. a. And in Lydg. DESTR. of Troy.

For

For if thou wilt the *bokes réde*
 Of LAUNCELOT and other mo,
 Then might thou seen how it was tho
 Of armes, for this wolde atteine
 To love, which, withouten peine
 Maie not be gette of idlenefs:
 And that I take to witneffe
 An *old Cronike* in speciall
 The which in to memoriall
 Is write for his *loves sake*,
 How that a Knight shall undertake*.

He alludes to a story about fir Tristram, which he supposes to be universally known, related in this romance.

In everie mans mouth it is
 How Tristram was of love dronke
 With Bele Ifolde, whan this dronke
 The drinke which Bragweine him betoke,
 Er that kyng Marke, &c*.

And again, in the assembly of lovers.

Ther was Tristram which was beloved
 With Bele Ifolde, and Lancelot
 Stood with Gonnor³, and Galahot
 With his lady⁴. - - - -

The oldest edition of the GESTA ROMANORUM, a manuscript of which I have seen in almost Saxon characters, I believe to be this. *Incipiunt Hystorie NOTABILES, collecte ex GESTIS ROMANORUM, et quibusdam aliis libris cum applicationibus eorundem**.

* Lib. iv. f. 74. a. col. 2.

† Lib. vi. f. 130. b. col. 2.

‡ Gencura, Arthur's queen.

§ Lib. viii. f. 188. a. col. 1.

¶ *Princip.* "Pompeius regnavit dives,
 " &c. *Fin.*" "Quidam vero princeps

" nomine Cleonicus, &c. Karissimi, iste
 " princeps est xps, &c. Oscula blandientis,
 " &c." It is in folio, in double columns,
 without initials, pages, signatures, or catch-
 words. ANGLIE is mentioned in chapters,
 155. 161.

It is without date or place, but supposed by the critics in typographical antiquities to have been printed before or about the year 1473. Then followed a second edition at Louvain by John de Westfalia, with this title: *Ex GESTIS ROMANORUM HISTORIE NOTABILES de viciis virtutibusque tractantes cum applicationibus moralisatis et mysticis*. At the end this colophon appears: *GESTA ROMANORUM cum quibusdam aliis historiis eisdem annexis ad moralitates dilucide reducta hic finem habent. Quæ diligenter, correctis aliorum viciis, impressit Joannes de Westfalia, alma in Univers. Louvaniensi*¹. This edition has twenty-nine chapters more than there are in the former: and the first of these additional chapters is the story of Antiochus, related in our author. It is probably of the year 1473. Another followed soon afterwards, by *GESTIS ROMANORUM HISTORIE NOTABILES moralizatae per Girardum Lieu. Goudæ, 1480*². The next³ is at Louvain, *GESTA ROMANORUM, cum applicationibus moralisatis ac mysticis*.---At the end.---*Ex GESTIS ROMANORUM cum pluribus applicatis HISTORIIS de virtutibus et vitiis mystice ad intellectum transumptis recollectorii finis. Anno nostræ salutis 1494. In die sancti Adriani martyris*⁴.

It was one of my reasons for giving these titles and colophons so much at large, that the reader might more fully comprehend the nature and design of a performance which operated so powerfully on the present state of our poetry. Servius says that the *Eneis* was sometimes called *GESTA POPULI ROMANI*⁵. Ammianus Marcellinus, who wrote about the year 450, mentions a work called the *GESTORUM VOLUMEN*, which according to custom, was solemnly recited to

¹ *Princip.* "De DILECTIONE, cap. i. "Pompeius regnavit dives valde, &c.— "MORALIZATIO. De MISERICORDIA, "cap. ii." De ADULTERIO, in cap. clxxxi. It is in quarto, with signatures to Kk. The initials are written in red ink. Mr. Farmer of Cambridge has this edition.

² In quarto.

³ But I think there is another Goudæ, 1489. fol.

⁴ In quarto. Again, Paris. 1499, quarto. Hagen. 1508. fol. Paris. 1521. octav. And undoubtedly others. It appeared in Dutch so early as the year 1484. fol.

⁵ Ad *Æneid.* vi. 752.

the

the emperor². Here perhaps we may perceive the ground-work of the title.

In this mixture of moralifation and narrative, the *GESTA ROMANORUM* somewhat resembles the plan of Gower's poem. In the rubric of the story of Julius and the poor knight, our author alludes to this book in the expression, *Hic secundum GESTA, &c.*³ When he speaks of the emperours of Rome paying reverence to a virgin, he says he found this custom mentioned, "Of Rome among the *GESTES* olde⁴." Yet he adds, that the *GESTES* took it from Valerius Maximus. The story of Tarquin and his son Arrous is ushered in with this line, "So as these olde *GESTES* feyne⁵." The tale of Antiochus, as I have hinted, is in the *GESTA ROMANORUM*; although for some parts of it Gower was perhaps indebted to Godfrey's *PANTHEON* abovementioned⁶. The foundation of Shakespeare's story of the three casketts in the *MERCHANT OF VENICE*, is to be found in this favourite collection: this is likewise in our author, yet in a different form, who cites a *Cronike*⁷ for his authority. I make no apology for giving the passage somewhat at large, as the source of this elegant little

² "Imperatori de more recitatum," Hist. xxix. i. In the title of the *Saint Albans Chronicle*, printed 1483, *Titus Livius de Gestis Romanorum* is recited.

³ Lib. viii. f. 153. a. col. 1. And in other rubrics. In the rubric there is also *Gesta Alexandri*, lib. iii. f. 61. a. col. 1. And in the story of Sardanapalus, "These olde *Gestes* tellen us," lib. iii. 167. a. col. 1.

⁴ Lib. v. f. 118. a. col. 2.

⁵ Lib. vii. f. 169. a. col. 1.

⁶ See supr. vol. i. p. 150. Notes, h.

⁷ He refers to a *Cronike* for other stories, as the story of Lucius king of Rome, and the king's fool. "In a *Cronike* it telleth us," Lib. vii. f. 165. a. col. 2. Of the translation of the Roman empire to the Lombards. "This

"made an emperor anon, whose name, the *Chronicle* telleth was Othes." Prol. fol. 3. b. col. 2. Of Constantine's leprosy. "For in *Cronike* thus I rede." Lib. iii. f. 46. b. col. 2. For which he also cites "the *bokes of Latine*," ib. f. 45. a. col. 1. In the story of Caius Fabricius, "In a *Cronique* I fynde thus." Lib. vii. f. 157. a. col. 2. Of the soothsayer and the emperor of Rome. "As in *Cronike* it is witholde."—"Which the *Chronike* hath authorized." Lib. vii. f. 154. b. col. 1. f. 155. b. col. 2. Of the emperor's son who serves the Soldan of Persia. "There was as the *Cronique* seith, an emperor, &c." Lib. ii. f. 41. b. col. 2. For the story of Carmidoteirus consul of Rome, he refers to these olde *bokes*. Lib. vii. f. 157. b. col. 2. &c. &c.

apologue,

apologue, which seems to be of eastern invention, has lately so much employed the searches of the commentators on Shakespeare, and that the circumstances of the story, as it is told by Gower, may be compared with those with which it appears in other books.

The poet is speaking of a king whose officers and courtiers complained, that after a long attendance, they had not received adequate rewards, and preferments due to their services. The king, who was no stranger to their complaints, artfully contrives a scheme to prove whether this defect proceeded from his own want of generosity, or their want of discernment.

Anone he lette two cofres^f make,
 Of one semblance, of one make,
 So lyche^g, that no life thilke throwe
 That one maie fro that other knowe:
 Thei were into his chambre brought,
 But no man wote why they be brought,
 And netheles the kynge hath bede,
 That thei be sette in privie stede,
 As he that was of wisdome fligh,
 Whan he therto his tyme sigh^h,
 All privilycheⁱ, that none it wiste,
 His own hondes that one chift^k
 Of *fine golde* and of *fine perie*^l,
 (The which oute of his tresurie
 Was take) anone he filde full;
 That other cofre of *strawe* and *mulle*^m,
 With *stones mened*, he filde also:
 Thus be thei full both tho.

^f Coffers. Chests.

^g Like.

^h Saw.

ⁱ Privily. ^k Chest.

^l Gems.

^m Rubbish.

D

The

The king assembles his courtiers, and shewing them the two chests, acquaints them, that one of these is filled with gold and jewels; that they should chuse which of the two they liked best, and that the contents should instantly be distributed among them all. A knight by common consent is appointed to chuse for them, who fixes upon the chest filled with straw and stones.

This kynge then in the same stede^a,
 Anone that other cofre undede,
 Whereas thei sawen grete richesse
 Wile more than thei couthen gesse.
 "Lo, saith the kynge, now maie ye see
 "That there is no default in mee:
 "Forthy^o, myself I will acquite,
 "And beareth your own wite
 "Of that fortune hath you refused^p."

It must be confessed, that there is a much greater and a more beautiful variety of incidents in this story as it is related in the *GESTA ROMANORUM*, which Shakespeare has followed, than in Gower: and was it not demonstrable, that this compilation preceded our author's age by some centuries, one would be tempted to conclude, that Gower's story was the original fable in its simple unimproved state. Whatever was the case, it is almost certain that one story produced the other.

A translation into English of the *GESTA ROMANORUM* was printed by Wynkyn de Worde, without date. In the year 1577, one Richard Robinson published *A Record of ancient Hystories*, in Latin *GESTA ROMANORUM*, *perused, corrected, and*

^a Place.

^o Therefore.

^p Lib. v. f. 86. a. col. 1. seq. The story which follows is somewhat similar,

in which the emperor Frederick places before two beggars two pasties, one filled with capons, the other with florins, *ibid.* b. col. 2.

bettered

bettered, by R. Robinson, London, 1577⁹. Of this translation there were six impressions before the year 1601'. The later editions, both Latin and English, differ considerably from a manuscript belonging to the British Museum', which contains not only the story of the CASKETTS in Shakespeare's MERCHANT OF VENICE, but that of the JEW'S BOND in the same play'. I cannot exactly ascertain the age of this piece, which has many fictitious and fabulous facts intermixed with true history; nor have I been able to discover the name of its compiler.

It appears to me to have been formed on the model of Valerius Maximus, the favourite classic of the monks. It is quoted and commended as a true history, among many histo-

⁹ In twelves. See among the Royal Manuscripts, Brit. Mus. "Richard Robinson's Eupolemia, Archippus and Panoplia: being an account of his Patrons and Benefactions, &c. 1603." See fol. 5. MSS. Reg. 18 A. lxvi. This R. Robinson, I believe, published *Part of the harmony of king David's harp*. A translation of the first twenty one psalms, for J. Wolfe, 1582. 4-to. A translation of Leland's ASSERTIO ARTHURI, for the same, 1582. 4to. *The ancient order societie, &c. of prince Arthure, and his knightly armory of the round table*, in verse, for the same, 1583, 4to.

¹ There is an edition, in black letter, so late as 1689.

² MSS. Harl. 2270. 1. See *ibid.* cap. xcix. for this story. Tit. "*Liber Aestheticus cui titulus Gesta Romanorum, cum Reductio-nibus sive Moralitatibus eorundem.*" There is an English translation, *ibid.* MSS. Harl. 7333. This has the Jew's bond and the Casketts. In the same library there is a large collection of legendary tales in different hands, written on parchment, 8-vo. MSS. Harl. 2316. One of these is, "De vera amicitia, et de Passione Christi: Narratio a Petro Alphonso." 18. fol. 8. b. The history of the two friends here related, is told more at large in the GESTA

ROMANORUM, where the friends are two knights. Peter Alphonso lived about 1110. This tale, I think, is Lydgate's *fabula duorum mercatorum*, MSS. Harl. 2251. 33. fol. 56. "In Egipt whilom, &c." See also 2255. 17. fol. 72. Manuscripts of these GESTA occur thrice in the Bodleian library. MSS. Bodl. B. 3. 10. *Ibid.* super O. 1. Art. 17. And Hyper. Bodl. (Cod. Grav.) B. 55. 3. viz. *Narrationes breves e GESTIS ROMANORUM et aliorum*. But this last seems rather a defloration. In Hereford cathedral, 73. In Worcester cathedral, 80. In (late) Burcough's (rector of Totnes) MSS. Cod. 82. 1. In (late) Sir Symonds D'Ewes's MSS. Cod. 150. 2. In Trinity college Dublin, G. 326. At Oxford, Saint John's college twice, C. 31. 2. G. 41. Magdalen college, twice, Cod. Lat. 13. 60. Lincoln college Libr. Theol. 60. See what is said of *Gesta*, *supr.* vol. i. p. 74. Among the manuscript books written by Lopus de Castellione, a Florentine civilian, and a great translator from Greek into Latin, about the year 1350, Balufius mentions *De Origine Urbis Romæ, et de Gestis Romanorum*. What this piece is I cannot ascertain. Apud Fabric. *Bibl. Med. Inf. Latinitat.* iv. 722. Compare de *Gestis Imperatorum Liber*, MSS. Harl. 5259. i.

⁴ Ch. xlviij.

rians of credit, such as Josephus, Orosius, Bede, and Eusebius, by Herman Korner, a dominican friar of Lubec, who wrote a *CHRONICA NOVELLA*, or history of the world, in the year 1435¹.

In speaking of our author's sources, I must not omit a book translated by the unfortunate Antony Widville, first earl of Rivers, chiefly with a view of proving its early popularity. It is the *Diſtes or Sayings of Philoſophes*, which lord Rivers translated from the French of William de Thignonville, provost of the city of Paris about the year 1408, entitled *Les diſtes moraux des philoſophes, les diſtes des ſages et les ſecrets d' Ariſtote*². The English translation was printed by Caxton, in the year 1477. Gower refers to this tract, which first existed in Latin, more than once; and it is most probable, that he consulted the Latin original³.

It is pleasant to observe the strange mistakes which Gower, a man of great learning, and the most general scholar of his age, has committed in this poem, concerning books which he never saw, his violent anachronisms, and misrepresentations of the most common facts and characters. He mentions the Greek poet Menander, as one of the first historians, or "first enditours of the olde cronike," together with Esdras, Solinus, Josephus, Claudius Salpicius, Termegis, Pandulfe, Frigidilles, Ephiloquorus, and Pandas. It is extraordinary that Moses should not here be mentioned, in preference to Esdras. Solinus is ranked so high, because he recorded nothing but wonders⁴; and Josephus, on account of his subject, had long been placed almost on a level with the bible.

¹ See Eccard's Corp. Histor. tom. ii. p. 432.—1343. Lips. 1723. fol.

² See Mem. de Litt. xvii. 754. 4to.

³ Among these other "tales wise of phylloſophers in this wise I rede, &c." Lib. vii. f. 143. a. col. 1. f. 142. b. col. 2. &c. See Walpole's Cat. royal and noble authors.

There is another translation, done in 1450, dedicated to sir John Fastolfe, knight,

by his son in law Stevyn Scrope Squyer. MSS. Harl. 2265. William de Thignonville is here said to have translated this book into French for the use of king Charles the sixth.

⁴ Our author has a story from Solinus concerning a monstrous bird, lib. iii. f. 62. b. col. 2. See supr. vol. i. p. 102. Notes, o.

He

He is seated on the first pillar in Chaucer's HOUSE OF FAME. His Jewish history, translated into Latin by Rufinus in the fourth century, had given rise to many old poems and romances^y: and his MACCABAICS, or history of the seven Maccabees martyred with their father Eleazar under the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes, a separate work, translated also by Rufinus, produced the JUDAS MACCABEE of Belleperche in the year 1240, and at length enrolled the Maccabees among the most illustrious heroes of romance^z. On this account too, perhaps Esdras is here so respectably remembered. I suppose Sulpicius is Sulpicius Severus, a petty annalist of the fifth century. Termegis is probably Trismegistus, the mystic philosopher, certainly not an historian, at least not an ancient one. Pandulf seems to be Pandulph of Pisa, who wrote lives of the popes, and died in the year 1198^a. Frigidilles is perhaps Fregedaire, a Burgundian, who flourished about the year 641, and wrote a chronicon from Adam to his own times; often printed, and containing the best account of the Franks after Gregory of Tours^b. Our author, who has partly suffered from ignorant transcribers and printers, by Ephiloquorus undoubtedly intended Eutropius. In the next paragraph indeed, he mentions Herodotus:

^y See *supr.* vol. i. p. 217. 311. There is JOSEPHUS *de la BATAILLE JUDAÏQUE traduit de Latin en François*, printed by Verard at Paris, 1480. fol. I think it is a poem. All Josephus's works were printed in the old Latin translation, at Verona 1480. fol. And frequently soon afterwards. They were translated into French, German, Spanish, and Italian, and printed, between the years 1492 and 1554. See the COLLANA GRECA, in Haym's Bibliothec. p. 6. 7. A French translation was made in 1460, or 1463. Cod. Reg. Paris. 7015.

^z See *supr.* vol. i. p. 417. In the British Museum there is "Maccabeorum et Josephi Historiarum Epitome, metrice." 10 A. viii. 5. MSS. Reg. See MSS. Harl. 5713.

^a See the story, in our author, of pope

Boniface supplanting Celestine. "In a "CRONYKE of tyme ago." Lib. ii. f. 42. a. col. 2.

^b See Ruinart. *Dissertat. de Fredegario ejusque Operibus.* tom. ii. Hist. Franc. p. 443. There is also Fridegodus, a monk of Dover, who wrote the lives of some fainted bishops about the year 960. And a Frigeridus, known only by a reference which Gregory of Tours makes to the *twelfth book of his History*, concerning the times preceding Valentinian the third, and the capture of Rome by Totila. Gregor. Turonens. Hist. Francor. lib. ii. cap. 8. 9. If this last be the writer in the text, a manuscript of Frigeridus's History might have existed in Gower's age, which is now lost.

yet

yet not as an early historian, but as the first writer of a system of the metrical art, "of metre, of ryme, and of cadence^c." We smile, when Hector in Shakespeare quotes Aristotle: but Gower gravely informs his reader, that Ulysses was a *clerke*, accomplished with a knowledge of all the sciences, a great rhetorician and magician: that he learned rhetoric of Tully, magic of Zoroaster, astronomy of Ptolomy, philosophy of Plato, divination of the prophet Daniel, proverbial instruction of Solomon, botany of Macer, and medicine of Hippocrates^d. And in the seventh book, Aristotle, or the *philosophre*, is introduced reciting to his scholar Alexander the great, a disputation between a Jew and a Pagan, who meet between Cairo and Babylon, concerning their respective religions: the end of the story is to shew the cunning, cruelty, and ingratitude of the Jew, which are at last deservedly punished^e. But I believe Gower's apology must be, that he took this narrative from some christian legend, which was feigned, for a religious purpose, at the expence of all probability and propriety.

The only classic Roman writers which our author cites are Virgil, Ovid, Horace, and Tully. Among the Italian poets, one is surpris'd he should not quote Petrarch: he mentions Dante only, who in the rubric is called "a certain poet of Italy named Dante," *quidam poeta Italiae qui DANTE vocabatur*^f. He appears to have been well acquainted with the Homelies of pope Gregory the great^g, which were translated into Italian, and printed at Milan, so early as the year 1479. I can hardly decypher, and must therefore be excused from transcribing, the names of all the renowned authors which our author has quoted in alchemy, astrology, magic, palmistry, geomancy, and other branches of the occult philo-

^c Lib. vi. f. 76. b. col. 1.

^d Lib. vi. f. 135. a. col. 1.

^e Lib. vii. f. 156. b. col. 2.

^f Lib. vii. f. 154. b. col. 1.

^g Prolog. f. 2. b. col. 1. Lib. v. f. 93. a. col. 1. 2. f. 94. a. col. 1.

fophy.

lophy. Among the astrological writers, he mentions Noah, Abraham, and Moses. But he is not sure that Abraham was an author, having never seen any of that patriarch's works: and he prefers Trismegistus to Moses^b. Cabalistical tracts were however extant, not only under the names of Abraham, Noah, and Moses, but of Adam, Abel, and Enoch^c. He mentions, with particular regard, Ptolomy's *ALMAGEST*; the grand source of all the superstitious notions propagated by the Arabian philosophers concerning the science of divination by the stars^k. These infatuations seem to have completed their triumph over human credulity in Gower's age, who probably was an ingenious adept in the false and frivolous speculations of this admired species of study.

Gower, amidst his graver literature, appears to have been a great reader of romances. The lover, in speaking of the gratification which his passion receives from the sense of hearing, says, that to hear his lady speak is more delicious, than to feast on all the dainties that could be compounded by a cook of Lombardy. They are not so restorative

As bin the wordes of hir mouth;
For as the wyndes of the South
Ben most of all debonaire,
So when hir lust^l to speak faire,
The vertue of her goodly speche
Is verily myne hartes leche^m.

These are elegant verses. To hear her sing is paradise.
Then he adds,

^b Lib. vii. f. 134. b. col. 1. vii. f. 149. b. col. 1.

^c See *supr.* vol. i. p. 425. p. 393. Notes, h. And Morhof. *Polyhist.* tom. ii. p. 455. seq. edit. 1747.

^k Mabillon mentions, in a manuscript of the *ALMAGEST* written before the

year 1240, a drawing of Ptolomy, holding a mirror, not an optical tube, in his hand, and contemplating the stars. *Itin. Germanic.* p. 49.

^l She chuses.

^m Physician.

Full

THE HISTORY OF

Full oft tyme it falleth fo,
 My ereⁿ with a good pitance
 Is fed of *redynge of romance*
 Of IDOYNE and AMADAS,
 That whilom were in my cas;
 And eke of *other, many a score*,
 That loved long ere I was bore^o:
 For when I of her^p loves rede,
 Myn ere with the tale I fede;
 And with the lust of her hystoire,
 Sometime I draw into memoire,
 Howe sorrowe may not ever last,
 And so hope comith in at last^q.

The romance of IDOYNE and AMADAS is recited as a favourite history among others, in the prologue to a collection of legends called CURSOR MUNDI, translated from the French^r. I have already observed our poet's references to SIR LANCELOT'S romance.

Our author's account of the progress of the Latin language is extremely curious. He supposes that it was invented by the old Tuscan prophets Carmens; that it was reduced to method, to composition, pronunciation, and prosody, by the grammarians Aristarchus, Donatus, and Didymus: adorned with the flowers of eloquence and rhetoric by Tully: then enriched by translations from the Chaldee, Arabic, and Greek languages, more especially by the version of the Hebrew bible into Latin by saint Jerom, in the fourth century: and that at length, after the labours of many celebrated writers, it received its final consummation in Ovid, the poet of lovers. At the mention of Ovid's name, the poet, with the dexterity and address of a true master of

ⁿ Ear.
^o Born.
^p Their.

^q Lib. vi. f. 133. a. col. 2.

^r See *supr.* vol. 1. p. 123. Notes, t.

transition,

transition, seizes the critical moment of bringing back the dialogue to its proper argument".

The CONFESSIO AMANTIS was most probably written after Chaucer's TROILUS AND CRESSIDA. At the close of the poem, we are presented with an assemblage of the most illustrious lovers'. Together with the renowned heroes and heroines of love, mentioned either in romantic or classical history, we have David and Bathsheba, Sampson and Dalila, and Solomon with all his concubines. Virgil, also, Socrates, Plato, and Ovid, are enumerated as lovers. Nor must we be surprised to find Aristotle honoured with a place in this gallant groupe: for whom, says the poet, the queen of Greece made such a syllogism as destroyed all his logic. But, among the rest, Troilus and Cressida are introduced; seemingly with an intention of paying a compliment to Chaucer's poem on their story, which had been submitted to Gower's correction". Although this famous pair had been also recently celebrated in Boccaccio's FILOSTRATO'. And in another place, speaking of his absolute devotion to his lady's will, he declares himself ready to acquiesce in her choice, whatsoever she shall command: whether, if when tired of dancing and caroling, she should chuse to play at chess, or read TROILUS AND CRESSIDA. This is certainly Chaucer's poem.

That when her list on nights wake
In chambre, as to carol and daunce,
Methinke I maie me more avaunce,
If I may gone upon hir honde,
Than if I wyne a kynges londe.
For whan I maie her hand beclip",
With such gladnes I daunce and skip,

" Lib. iv. f. 77. b. col. 2.

" Lib. viii. f. 158. a. col. 2.

" Chaucer's Tr. Cress. Urr. edit. p. 333.

" See supr. vol. i. p. 385.

" Clasp.

E.

Methinketh.

Methinketh I touch not the floore;
 The roe which renneth on the moore
 Is than nought so light as I----
 And whan it falleth other gate^a,
 So that hir liketh not to daunce,
 But on the dyes to cast a chaunce,
 Or aske of love some demaunde;
 Or els that her list commaunde
 To rede and here of TROILUS^y.

That this poem was written after Chaucer's FLOURE AND LEAFE, may be partly collected from the following passage, which appears to be an imitation of Chaucer, and is no bad specimen of Gower's most poetical manner. Rosiphele, a beautiful princess, but setting love at defiance, the daughter of Herupus king of Armenia, is taught obedience to the laws of Cupid by seeing a vision of Ladies.

Whan come was the moneth of Maie,
 She wolde walke upon a daie,
 And that was er the son arift^z,
 Of women but a fewe it wift^a;
 And forth she went prively,
 Unto a parke was faste by,
 All softe walkende on the gras,
 Tyll she came there^b the launde was
 Through which ran a great rivere,
 It thought her fayre; and said, here
 I will abide under the shawe;
 And bad hir women to withdrawe:
 And ther she stood alone stille
 To thinke what was in her wille.

^x Gaiety, or way.
^y Lib. iv. f. 78. b. col. 1.
^z Arose.

^a "But a few of her women knew of this."
^b There *where*.

She

She fighe ° the fwete floures sprynge,
 She herde glad fowles fynge;
 She figh beaftes in her kynde,
 The buck, the doo, the hert, the hynde,
 The males go with the femele:
 And fo began there a quarele^d
 Betwene love and her owne herte
 Fro whiche she couthe not avertere.
 And as she cast hir eie aboute,
 She figh, clad in one fuit, a route
 Of ladies where thei comen ride
 Alonge under the wooddè fide;
 On fayre ° ambulende hors thei fet,
 That were al whyte, fayre, and gret;
 And everichone ride on fide^e.
 The fadels were of fuch a pride,
 So riche fighe she never none;
 With perles and golde fo wel begone,
 In kirtels and in copes riche
 Thei were clothed all aliche^f,
 Departed even of white and blewe,
 With all lufte^h that she knewe
 Thei wer embroudred over all:
 Herⁱ bodies weren longe and fmall,
 The beautee of hir fayre face,
 There mai none erthly thing deface:
 Corownes on their heades thei bare,
 As eche of hem a quene were.
 That all the golde of Crefus hall
 The leaft coronall of all
 Might not have boughte, after the worth,
 Thus comen thei ridend forthe.

^c Saw. ^d Dispute. ^e Ambling. ^f A mark of high rank. ^g Alike.
^h Lifts. Colours. ⁱ Their.

The kynges doughter, whiche this figh,
 For pure abafshe drewe hir adrigh,
 And helde hir clofe undir the bough.

At length ſhe fees riding in the rear of this ſplendid troop, on a horſe lean, galled, and lame, a beautiful lady in a tattered garment, her ſaddle mean and much worn, but her bridle richly ſtudded with gold and jewels: and round her waift were more than an hundred halters. The princeſs asks the meaning of this ſtrange proceſſion; and is answered by the lady on the lean horſe, that theſe are ſpectres of ladies, who, when living, were obedient and faithful votaries of love. “As to myſelf, ſhe adds, I am now receiving my
 “annual penance for being a rebel to love.”

For I whilom no love had;
 My horſe is now feble and badde,
 And al to torn is myn araie;
 And everie year this freſhe Maie
 Theſe luſtie ladies ride aboute,
 And I muſt nedes ſew^k her route,
 In this manner as ye nowe ſee,
 And truſſe her hallters forth with mee,
 And am but her horſe knave^l.

The princeſs then asks her, why ſhe wore the rich bridle, ſo inconſiſtent with the reſt of her furniture, her dreſs, and horſe? The lady answers, that it was a badge and reward for having loved a knight faithfully for the laſt fortnight of her life.

“Now have ye herde all mine anſwere;
 “To god, madam, I you betake,
 “And warneth all, for my ſake,

^k Follow.

^l Their groom.

“Of

“ Of love, that thei be not idell,
 “ And bid hem thinke of my bridell.”
 And with that worde, all sodenly
 She passeth, as it were a skie^m,
 All clean out of the ladies fightⁿ.

My readers will easily conjecture the change which this spectacle must naturally produce in the obdurate heart of the princess of Armenia. There is a farther proof that the FLOURE AND LEAFE preceded the CONFESSIO AMANTIS. In the eighth book, our author's lovers are crowned with the Flower and Leaf.

Myn eie I caste all aboutes,
 To knowe amonge hem who was who:
 I figh where lustie YOUTH tho,
 As he which was a capitayne
 Before all others on the playne,
 Stode with his route wel begon:
 Her heades kempt, and thereupon
 Garlondes not of *one* colour,
 Some of the *lese*, some of the *floure*,
 And some of grete perles were:
 The new guife of Beme^o was there, &c^p.

I believe on the whole, that Chaucer had published most of his poems before this piece of Gower appeared. Chaucer had not however at this time written his TESTAMENT OF LOVE: for Gower, in a sort of Epilogue to the CONFESSIO AMANTIS, is addressed by Venus, who commands him to greet Chaucer as her favourite poet and disciple, as one who had employed his youth in composing songs and ditties to her honour. She adds at the close,

^m A shadow, *Συα*, *umbra*.

ⁿ Lib. iv. f. 70. seq.

^o Boeme. Bohemia.

^p Lib. viii. f. 188. a. col. 1. See supr. vol. i. p. 466.

For thy,

THE HISTORY OF

For thy, now in his *daies olde*,
 Thou shalt hym tell this message,
 That he upon his *later age*
 To sette *an ende* of all his werke
 As he, which is myne owne clerke,
 Do make his TESTAMENT OF LOVE,
 As thou hast done thy SHRIFTE above:
 So that my court it maie recorde^a.

Chaucer at this time was sixty-five years of age. The Court of Love, one of the pedantries of French gallantry, occurs often. In an address to Venus, "Madame, I am a man of thyne, that in thy COURTE hath served long." The lover observes, that for want of patience, a man ought "amonge the women alle, in LOVES COURTE, by judgement the name beare of paciant". The confessor declares, that many persons are condemned for disclosing secrets, "In LOVES COURTE, as it is said, that lette their tonges gone untide." By *Thy SHRIFTE*, the author means his own poem now before us, the Lover's CONFESSIO.

There are also many manifest evidences which lead us to conclude, that this poem preceded Chaucer's CANTERBURY'S TALES, undoubtedly some of that poet's latest compositions, and probably not begun till after the year 1382. The MAN OF LAWES TALE is circumstantially borrowed from Gower's CONSTANTIA^b: and Chaucer, in that TALE, apparently censures Gower, for his manner of relating the stories of Canace and Apollonius in the third and eighth books of the CONFESSIO AMANTIS^c. The WIFE OF BATHES TALE is founded

^a Lib. viii. f. 190. b. col. 1.

^b Lib. i. f. 8. b. col. 1.

^c Lib. iii. f. 51. a. col. 1.

^d Lib. iii. f. 52. a. col. 1. See *supr.* vol. i. p. 460. In the same strain, we have Cupid's *parlement*. Lib. viii. f. 187. b. col. 2.

^e Conf. Amant. Lib. ii. f. 30. b. col. 2. See particularly, *ibid.* f. 35. b. col. 2. a. col. 1. And compare Ch. MAN OF L. T. v. 5505. "Some men wold fayn, &c." That is, GOWER.

^f See Chaucer, *ibid.* v. 4500. And Conf. Amant. Lib. iii. f. 48. a. col. 1. *seq.*

on Gower's Florent, a knight of Rome, who delivers the king of Sicily's daughter from the incantations of her step-mother*. Although the *GESTA ROMANORUM* might have furnished both poets with this narrative. Chaucer, however, among other great improvements, has judiciously departed from the fable, in converting Sicily into the more popular court of king Arthur.

Perhaps, in estimating Gower's merit, I have pushed the notion too far, that because he shews so much learning he had no great share of natural abilities. But it should be considered, that when books began to grow fashionable, and the reputation of learning conferred the highest honour, poets became ambitious of being thought scholars; and sacrificed their native powers of invention to the ostentation of displaying an extensive course of reading, and to the pride of profound erudition. On this account, the minstrels of these times, who were totally uneducated, and poured forth spontaneous rhymes in obedience to the workings of nature, often exhibit more genuine strokes of passion and imagination, than the professed poets. Chaucer is an exception to this observation: whose original feelings were too strong to be suppressed by books, and whose learning was overbalanced by genius.

This affectation of appearing learned, which yet was natural at the revival of literature, in our old poets, even in those who were altogether destitute of talents, has lost to posterity many a curious picture of manners, and many a romantic image. Some of our antient bards, however, aimed at no other merit, than that of being able to versify; and attempted nothing more, than to cloath in rhyme those sentiments, which would have appeared with equal propriety in prose.

seq. Lib. viii. f. 175. a. col. 2. seq. I have just discovered, that the favourite story of Apollonius, having appeared in antient Greek, Latin, Saxon, barbarous Greek, and old French, was at length translated

from French into English, and printed in the black letter, by Wynkyn de Worde, A. D. 1510. 4to. "Kynge Appolyn of Thyre." [See *supr.* vol i. p. 350.] A copy is in my possession. * Lib. i. f. 15. b. col. 2.