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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 II. Boethius. Why, and how much, esteemed in the middle ages.
Translated by Johannes Capellanus, the only poet of the reign of king
Henry the fourth. Number of Harpers at the ...

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S E C T. II.

ONE of the reasons which rendered the classic authors of the lower empire more popular than those of a purer age, was because they were christians. Among these, no Roman writer appears to have been more studied and esteemed, from the beginning to the close of the barbarous centuries, than Boethius. Yet it is certain, that his allegorical personifications and his visionary philosophy, founded on the abstractions of the Platonic school, greatly concurred to make him a favourite^a. His CONSOLATION OF PHILOSOPHY was translated into the Saxon tongue by king Alfred, the father of learning and civility in the midst of a rude and intractable people; and illustrated with a commentary by Affer bishop of Saint David's, a prelate patronised by Alfred for his singular accomplishments in literature, about the year 890. Bishop Grosthead is said to have left annotations on this admired system of morality. There is a very ancient manuscript of it in the Laurentian library, with an inscription prefixed in Saxon characters^b. There are few of those distinguished ecclesiastics, whose erudition illuminated the thickest gloom of ignorance and superstition with uncommon lustre, but who either have cited this performance,

^a It is observable, that this SPIRIT OF PERSONIFICATION tinctures the writings of some of the christian fathers, about, or rather before, this period. Most of the agents in the SHEPHERD OF HERMAS are *ideal* beings. An ancient lady converses with Hermas, and tells him that she is the CHURCH OF GOD. Afterwards several virgins appear and discourse with him; and when he desires to be informed who they are, he is told by the SHEPHERD-ANGEL,

that they are FAITH, ABSTINENCE, PATIENCE, CHASTITY, CONCORD, &c. Saint Cyprian relates, that the church appeared in a vision, *in visione per noctem*, to Colerinus; and commanded him to assume the office of Reader, which he in humility had declined. Cyprian. Epist. xxxix. edit. Oxon. The church appearing as a woman they perhaps had from the scripture, REV. xii. 1. ESDRAS, &c.

^b Mabillon. Itin. Ital. p. 221.

or honoured it with a panegyric^c. It has had many imitators. Eccard, a learned French Benedictine, wrote in imitation of this CONSOLATION OF PHILOSOPHY, a work in verse and prose containing five books, entitled the CONSOLATION OF THE MONKS, about the year 1120^d. John Gerson also, a doctor and chancellor of the university of Paris, wrote the CONSOLATION OF THEOLOGY in four books, about the year 1420^e. It was the model of Chaucer's TESTAMENT OF LOVE. It was translated into French^f and English before the year 1350^g. Dante was an attentive reader of Boethius. In the PURGATORIO, Dante gives THEOLOGY the name of Beatrix his mistress, the daughter of Fulco Portinari, who very gravely moralises in that character. Being ambitious of following Virgil's steps in the descent of Eneas into hell, he introduces her, as a daughter of the empyreal heavens, bringing Virgil to guide him through that dark and dangerous region^h. Leland, who lived when true literature began to be restored, says that the writings of Boethius still continued to retain that high estimation, which they had acquired in the most early periods. I had almost forgot to observe, that the CONSOLATION was translated into Greek by Maximus Planudes, the most learned and ingenious of the Constantinopolitan monksⁱ.

^c He is much commended as a catholic and philosopher by Hincmarus archbishop of Rheims, about the year 880. De Prædestinat. contr. Godeschalch. tom. i. 211. ii. 62. edit. Sirmond. And by John of Salisbury, for his eloquence and argument. Policrat. vii. 15. And by many other writers of the same class.

^d See Trithem. cap. 387. de S. E. And Illustr. Benedictin. ii. 107.

^e Opp. tom. i. p. 130. edit. Dupin. I think there is a French CONSOLATIO THEOLOGICÆ by one Cerifier.

^f See Haym, p. 199.

^g Beside John of Meun's French version of Boethius, printed at Lyons 1483, with
Vol. II.

a translation of Virgil by Guillaume le Roy, there is one by De Cis, or Thri, an old French poet. Matt. Annal. Typogr. i. p. 171. Francisc. a Cruce, Bibl. Gallic. p. 216. 247. It was printed in Dutch at Ghent, apud Arend de Keyser, 1485. fol. In Spanish at Valladolid, 1598, fol. See supr. vol. i. p. 458. Polycarpus Leyserus, in that very scarce book DE POESI MÆDII ÆVI, [printed HALÆ, 1721, 8vo.] enumerates many curious old editions of Boethius, p. 95. 105.

^h See PURGAT. Cant. xxx.

ⁱ Montfauc. Bibl. Coiflin. p. 140. Of a Hebrew version, see Wolf. Bibl. Hebr. tom. i. p. 229. 1092. 243. 354. 369.

F

I can

I can assign only one poet to the reign of king Henry the fourth, and this a translator of Boethius^k. He is called Johannes Capellanus, or John the *Chaplain*, and he translated into English verse the treatise DE CONSOLATIONE PHILOSOPHIÆ in the year 1410. His name is John Walton. He was canon of Osene, and died subdean of York. It appears probable, that he was patronised by Thomas Chaundler, among other preferments, dean of the king's chapel and of Hereford cathedral, chancellor of Wells, and successively warden of Wykeham's two colleges at Winchester and Oxford; characterised by Antony Wood as an able critic in polite literature, and by Leland as a rare example of a doctor in theology who graced scholastic disputation with the flowers of a pure latinity^l. In the British Museum there is a correct manuscript on parchment of Walton's translation of Boethius: and the margin is filled throughout with the Latin text, written by Chaundler above-mentioned^m. There is another less elegant manuscript in the same collection. But at the end is this note; *Explicit liber Boecij de Consolatione Philosophiæ de Latino in Anglicum translatus A. D. 1410. per Capellanum Joannem*ⁿ. This is the beginning of the prologue, "In suffisaunce of cunnyng and witte." And of the translation, "Alas I wretch that whilom was in welth." I have seen a third copy in the library of Lincoln cathedral^o, and a fourth in Baliol college^p. This is the translation of Boethius printed in the monastery of Tavistoke, in the year 1525. "The BOKE of COMFORT, called in Latin *Boecius de Consolatione Philosophiæ*."

^k I am aware that Occleve's poem, called the *Letter of Cupid*, was written in this king's reign in the year 1402. "In the year of grace joyfull and joconde, a thousand fower hundred and seconde." Urry's Chaucer, p. 537. v. 475. But there are reasons for making Occleve, as I have done, something later. Nor is Gower's *Balade to Henry the fourth* a sufficient reason for placing him in that reign. *Ibid.* p.

540. The same may be said of Chaucer.

^l Wood, *Hist. Antiq. Univ. Oxon.* ii. p. 134. Leland, *Script. Brit.* CHAUNDLERUS.

^m MSS. Harl. 43. 1. And MSS. Coll. Trin. Oxon. 75.

ⁿ MSS. Harl. 44. chart. et pergam.

^o MSS. i. 53.

^p MSS. B. 5. He bequeathed his *Biblia*, and other books, to this library.

"Emprinted

“Emprented in the exempt monastery of Tavestock in Den-
 “shyre, by me Dan Thomas Rychard monke of the sayd
 “monastry. To the instant desyre of the right worshipfull
 “esqyre magister Robert Langdon. *Anno Domini*, MDXXV.
 “*Deo gracias.*” In octave rhyme^p. This translation was made
 at the request of Elisabeth Berkeley. I forbear to load these
 pages with specimens not original, and which appear to have
 contributed no degree of improvement to our poetry or our
 phraseology. Henry the fourth died in the year 1399.

The coronation of king Henry the fifth, was celebrated in
 Westminster-hall with a solemnity proportioned to the lustre
 of those great achievements which afterwards distinguished
 the annals of that victorious monarch. By way of preserving
 order, and to add to the splendor of the spectacle, many of
 the nobility were ranged along the sides of the tables on
 large war-horses, at this stately festival; which, says my
 chronicle, was a second feast of Ahasuerus^q. But I mention
 this ceremony, to introduce a circumstance very pertinent to
 our purpose; which is, that the number of harpers in the
 hall was innumerable^r, who undoubtedly accompanied their
 instruments with heroic rhymes. The king, however, was
 no great encourager of the popular minstrelsy, which seems
 at this time to have flourished in the highest degree of per-
 fection. When he entered the city of London in triumph
 after the battle of Agincourt, the gates and streets were
 hung with tapestry, representing the histories of ancient
 heroes; and children were placed in artificial turrets, singing
 verses^s. But Henry, disgusted at these secular vanities, com-
 manded by a formal edict, that for the future no songs

^p This is among Rawlinson's Codd. im-
 press. Bibl. Bodl. There is an English
 translation of Boethius by one George
 Colvil, or Coldewell, bred at Oxford,
 with the Latin, “according to the boke
 “of the translatour, which was a very old
 “printe.” Dedicated to queen Mary, and

printed by John Cawood, 1556. 4to. Re-
 printed 1566. 4to.

^q *Thomæ de Elmham Vit. et Gest.*
Henr. V. edit. Hearne, Oxon. 1727. cap.
 xii. p. 23. Compare *Lel. Coll. APPEND.*
 iii. 226. edit. 1770.

^r Elmham, ubi sup. p. 23.

^s Elmham, ubi sup. cap. xxxi. p. 72.

should be recited by the harpers, or others, in praise of the recent victory'. This prohibition had no other effect than that of displaying Henry's humility, perhaps its principal and real design. Among many others, a minstrel-piece soon appeared, evidently adapted to the harp, on the SEYGE of HARFLETT and the BATTALLYE of AGYNKOURTE. It was written about the year 1417. These are some of the most spirited lines.

Sent Jorge be fore our kyng they dyd se^o;
 They trompyd up full meryly,
 The grete battell to gederes zed^u;
 Our archorys^v they schot ful hartely,
 They made the Frenche men faste to blede,
 Her arrowys they went with full good spede.
 Oure enemyes with them they gan down throwe
 Thorow breste plats, habourgenys, and basnets^x.
 Eleven thousand was slayne on a rew^y.
 Denters of dethe men myzt well deme,
 So fercelly in ffelde theye gan fythe^z.
 The heve upon here helmyts schene^a;
 With axes and with swerdys bryzt.
 When oure arowys were at a flyzt^b
 Amon the Frenche men was a wel fory schere^c.
 Ther was to bryng of gold bokylyd^d fo bryzt
 That a man myzt holde a strong armoure.
 Owre gracyus kyng men myzt knowe
 That day fozt with hys owene hond,
 The erlys was dys comwityd up on a rowe^e,

^o "CANTUS de suo triumpho fieri, seu
 "per CITHARISTAS, vel alios quoscunque,
 "CANTARI, penitus prohibebat." Ibid.
 p. 72. And Hearne's Prefat. p. xxix. seq.
 §. viii. See also Hollingth. Chron. iii.
 p. 556. col. 1. 40.
^u "The French saw the standard of
 Saint George before our king."
^v This is Milton's "Together rush'd

both battles main."

^v Archers.

^x Breast-plates, habergeons and helmets.

^y Row.

^z Fight.

^a "They struck upon their bright hel-
 mets."

^b Flying.

^c Much distress.

^d Buckled.

^e I believe it is "The carls he had
 "slain were all thrown together on a heap
 "or in a row."

That

That he had flayne understond.
 He there ^f schevyd oure other lordys of thys lond,
 Forsothe that was a ful fayre daye.
 Therefore all England maye this syng
 LAWS ^g DEO we may well saye.
 The Duke of Glocester, that nys no nay,
 That day full wordely ^h he wrozt,
 On every side he made goode waye,
 The Frenche men faste to grond they browzt.
 The erle of Hontynton sparyd nozt,
 The erle of Oxynforthe ⁱ layd on all foo ^k,
 The young erle of Devynschyre he ne rouzt,
 The Frenche men fast to grunde gan goo.
 Our Englysmen thei were ffoul seked do
 And ferce to fyzt as any lyone.
 Basnets bryzt they crasyd a to ^l,
 And bet the French banerys adoune;
 As thonder-strokys ther was a scownde ^m,
 Of axys and sperys ther they gan glyd.
 The lordys of Franyse ⁿ lost her renowne
 With gresfoly ^o wondys they gan abyde.
 The Frensche men, for all here pryde,
 They fell downe all at a flyzt:
Je me rende they cryde, on every fyde,
 Our Englysmen they understod nozt arizt ^p.
 Their pollaxis owt of her hondys they twizt,
 And layde ham along stryde ^q upon the grassse.
 They sparyd nother deuke, erlle, ne knyght ^r.

^f Shewed. ^g *Laus.* ^h Worthily.

ⁱ Oxford.

^k Also.

^l "They broke the bright helmets in two."

^m Sound.

ⁿ France.

^o Griefly.

^p "They did not rightly."

^q Strait.

^r Printed [from MSS. Cotton, VITELL.

D. XII. 11. fol. 214.] by Hearne, Elmhurst, ut *supr.* APPEND. p. 359. Num. vi. See p. 371. seq. There is *The BATTAYLE of EGYNOURTE*, Libr. impress. Bibl. Bodl. C. 39. 4to. Art. Selden. See OBSERVAT. on Spens. ii. 41. Doctor Percy has printed an ancient ballad on this subject. ANC. BALL. vol. ii. p. 24. edit. 1767. See Hearne's PREFAT. ut *supr.* p. xxx.

These

These verses are much less intelligible than some of Gower's and Chaucer's pieces, which were written fifty years before. In the mean time we must not mistake provincial for national barbarisms. Every piece now written is by no means a proof of the actual state of style. The improved dialect, which yet is the estimate of a language, was confined only to a few writers, who lived more in the world and in polite life: and it was long, before a general change in the public phraseology was effected. Nor must we expect among the minstrels, who were equally careless and illiterate, those refinements of diction, which mark the compositions of men who professedly studied to embellish the English idiom.

Thomas Occleve is the first poet that occurs in the reign of Henry the fifth. I place him about the year 1420. Occleve is a feeble writer, considered as a poet: and his chief merit seems to be, that his writings contributed to propagate and establish those improvements in our language which were now beginning to take place. He was educated in the municipal law^a, as were both Chaucer and Gower; and it reflects no small degree of honour on that very liberal profession, that its students were some of the first who attempted to polish and adorn the English tongue.

The titles of Occleve's pieces, very few of which have been ever printed, indicate a coldness of genius; and on the whole promise no gratification to those who seek for invention and fancy. Such as, *The tale of Jonathan and of a wicked woman*^b. *Fable of a certain emperess*^c. *A prologue of the nine lessons that is read over Allhalow-day*^d. *The most profitable and holdest craft that is to kunne*^e, *to lerne to dye*^f. *Consolation of*

^a He studied in *Chestres-inn* where *Somerfet-house* now stands. See Buck, *De tertia Angliæ Accademia*, cap. xxv.

^b Ubi. infr. Bibl. Bodl. MSS. From the *GESTA ROMANORUM*.

^c Bibl. Bodl. MSS. Seld. supr. 53. Digb. 185. Laud. K. 78. MSS. Reg. Brit. Mus. 17 D. vi. 2. This story seems to

be also taken from the *GESTA ROMANORUM*. Pr. "In the *ROMAN ACTYS* writyn."

^d Ubi supr. Bibl. Bodl. MSS.

^e Know.

^f MSS. Bodl. ut supr. And MSS. Reg. Brit. Mus. 17 D. vi. 3. 4. The best manuscript of Occleve.

ferred

ferred by an old man². *Pentastichon to the king*. *Mercy as defined by Saint Austin*. *Dialogue to a friend*³. *Dialogue between Occleef and a beggar*⁴. *The letter of Cupid*⁵. *Verses to an empty purse*⁶. But Occleve's most considerable poem is a piece called a translation of Egidius DE REGIMINE PRINCIPUM.

This is a sort of paraphrase of the first part of Aristotle's epistle to Alexander abovementioned, entitled SECRETUM SECRETORUM, of Egidius, and of Jacobus de Casulis, whom he calls *Jacob de Cassolis*. Egidius, a native of Rome, a pupil of Thomas Aquinas, eminent among the schoolmen by the name of *Doctor Fundatissimus*, and an archbishop, flourished about the year 1280. He wrote a Latin tract in three books DE REGIMINE PRINCIPUM, or the ART OF GOVERNMENT, for the use of Philip le Hardi, son of Louis king of France, a work highly esteemed in the middle ages, and translated early into Hebrew, French⁷, and Italian. In those days ecclesiastics and schoolmen presumed to dictate to kings, and to give rules for administering states, drawn from the narrow circle of speculation, and conceived amid the pedantries of a cloister. It was probably recommended to Occleve's notice, by having been translated into English by John Trevisa, a celebrated translator about the year 1390⁸. The original was printed at Rome in 1482, and at Venice 1498, and,

² MSS. Digb. 185. More [Cant.] 427.

³ MSS. Seld. ut supr.

⁴ MSS. Harl. 4826. 6.

⁵ MSS. Digb. 181. MSS. Arch. Bodl. Seld. B. 24. It is printed in Chaucer's Works, Urr. p. 534. Bale [MS. Glynne] mentions one or two more pieces, particularly *De Theseo Atheniensi*, lib. i. Pr. "Tum esset, ut veteres historiae tradunt." This is the beginning of Chaucer's KNIGHT'S TALE. And there are other pieces in the libraries.

⁶ This, and the *Pentastichon ad Regem*, are in MSS. Fairf. xvi. Bibl. Bodl. And in the editions of Chaucer. But the former

appears to be Chaucer's, from the twenty additional stanzas not printed in Urry's Chaucer, pag. 549. MSS. Harl. 2251. 133. fol. 298.

⁷ Wolf. Biblioth. Hebr. tom. iii. p. 1206. It was translated into French by Henry de Gand, at the command of Philip king of France. Mem. de Lit. tom. xvii. p. 733. 4to.

⁸ Bibl. Bodl. MSS. Digb. 233. *Princip.* "To his special, [etc.] politick sentence "that is." In this manuscript there is an elegant picture of a monk, or ecclesiastic, presenting a book to a king. See supr. vol. i. p. 343. Notes, g.

I think,

I think, again at the same place in 1598^b. The Italian translation was printed at Seville, in folio, 1494, "Tran-
"sladar de Latin en romance don Bernardo Obispo de Osma :
"impresso por Meynardo Ungut Alemano et Stanislao Polono
"Companeros." The printed copies of the Latin are very
rare, but the manuscripts innumerable. A third part of the
third book, which treats of *De Re Militari Veterum*, was
printed by Hahnus in 1722^c. One of Egidius's books, a
commentary on Aristotle DE ANIMA, is dedicated to our
Edward the first^k.

Jacobus de Casulis, or of Casali in Italy, another of the
writers copied in this performance by our poet Occleve, a
French Dominican friar, about the year 1290, wrote in four
parts a Latin treatise on chess, or, as it is entitled in some
manuscripts, *De moribus hominum et de officiis nobilium super
LUDO LATRUNCULORUM sive SCACCORUM*. In a parchment
manuscript of the Harleian library, neatly illuminated, it is
thus entitled, *LIBER MORALIS DE LUDO SCACCORUM, ad ho-
norem et solacium Nobilium et maxime ludencium, per fratrem
JACOBUM DE CASSULIS ordinis fratrum Prædicatorum*. At the
conclusion, this work appears to be a translation^l. Pits
carelessly gives it to Robert Holcot, a celebrated English the-
ologist, perhaps for no other reason than because Holcot was
likewise a Dominican. It was printed at Milan in 1479. I
believe it was as great a favourite as Egidius on GOVERN-
MENT, for it was translated into French by John Ferron,
and John Du Vignay, a monk hospitalar of Saint James du

^b All in folio. Those of 1482, and
1598, are in the Bodleian library. In All-
Souls college library at Oxford, there is a
manuscript *TABULA IN ÆGIDIUM DE
REGIMINE PRINCIPUM*, by one Thomas
Abyndon. MSS. G. i. 5.

^c In the first tome of *Collectio Monumen-
torum veter. et recent. ineditorum*. E. Cod.
MS. in Biblioth. Obrechtina. The curious

reader may see a full account of Ægidius
de REGIMINE PRINCIPUM in Morlier,
Essais de Littérature, tom. i. p. 198. seq.
And of the Venetian edition in 1498, in
Theophilus Sincerus *De Libris Rariorib.*
tom. i. p. 82. seq.

^k Cave, p. 755. edit. 1688.

^l MSS. Harl. 1275. 1. 4to. membran.

Haut-pag,

Haut-pag^m, under the patronage of Jeanne dutchefs of Bour-
gogne, Caxton's patroness, about the year 1360, with the
title of LE JEU DES ECHECS *moralisé*, or *Le traite des Nobles
et de gens du peuple selon le JEU DES ECHECS*. This was after-
wards translated by Caxton, in 1474, who did not know
that the French was a translation from the Latin, and called
the GAME OF THE CHESS. It was also translated into Ger-
man, both prose and verse, by Conrade von Almenhusenⁿ.
Bale absurdly supposes that Occleve made a separate and
regular translation of this work^o.

Occleve's poem was never printed. This is a part of the
Prologue.

Aristotle, most famous philosofreⁿ,
His epistles to Alifaunder sent^p;
Whos sentence is wel bet then golde in cofre,
And more holsom, grounded in trewe entent,
Fore all that evér the Epistle ment
To sette us this worthi conqueroure,
In rewle howe to susteyne his honoure,
The tender love, and the fervent good chere,
That the worthi clerke aye to this king bere,
Thrusting fore his welth durable to be,
Unto his hert slah and fate sovere,
That bi writing his counsel gaf he clere

^m Who also translated the GOLDEN
LEGEND of James de Voragine, and the
SPECULUM HISTORIALE of Vincent of
Beauvais. Vie de Petr. tom. iii. p. 548.
And Mem. Lit. xvii. 742. 746. 747. edit.
4to.

ⁿ See Jacob. Quetif. tom. i. p. 471. ii.
p. 818. Lambec. tom. ii. Bibl. Vindob.
p. 848. One Simeon Ailward, an En-
glishman, about the year 1456, wrote a
Latin poem *De Ludo Scaccorum*. Pitf.
APPEND. p. 909. Princip. "Ludus scac-
corum datur hic correctio morum."

^o Bale in OCCLEVE.

^p The learned doctor Gerard Langbaine,
author of the *Lives of the Dramatick Poets*,
speaking of the REGIMINE PRINCIPUM
by Occleve, says that it is "collected out
" of Aristotle, Alexander, and Egidius
" on the same, and Jacobus de Cassolis
" (a fryar preacher) his book of chiefs,
" viz. that part where he speaks of the
" king's draught, &c." Bibl. Bodl. MSS.
Langb. Cod. xv. pag. 102.

^q See supr. p. 9.

Unto his lord to hope him from mischaunce,
 As witnesseth his Boke of Governauce¹,
 Of which, and of Giles his REGIMENT²
 Of prince's plotmele, think I to translete, &c.
 My dere mayster, god his soul quite³,
 And fader Chaucer fayne would have me taught,
 But I was dule⁴, and learned lyte or naught.
 Alas my worthie maister honorable,
 This londis verray trefour and richeffe,
 Deth by thy deth hathe harme irreparable
 Unto us done: his vengeable duresse⁵
 Dispoiled hath this lond of the sweetnesse
 Of rhetoryke, for unto Tullius
 Was never man so like amongest us.
 Alas! who was here⁶ in phylosophy
 To Aristotle in owre tonge but thou?
 The steppis of Virgile in poesie
 Thou suedest⁷ eke: men knowe well inowe
 That combre-world⁸ that thou, my mayster, slowe⁹:
 Wold I slaine were! Deth was too hastise
 To renne on thee, and reve thee of thy life:
 She might have tarried her vengeaunce awhile
 To that some man had egal to thee be:
 Nay, let that be: she knew well that this isle
 May never man forth bryng like unto thee,
 And her of offis nedis do mote she;
 God bade her so, I trust for all the best,
 O mayster, mayster, god thy soule rest!

¹ Aristotle's SECRETUM SECRETORUM.

² Egidius de REGIMINE PRINCIPUM.

³ Aquitt. Save.

⁴ Dull.

⁵ Cruelty.

⁶ There.

⁷ Followedst.

⁸ He calls death the *encumbrance* of the world. The expression seems to be taken from Chaucer, where Troilus says of himself, "I *combre-world*, that maie of no-thing serve." Tr. Cress. p. 307. v. 279. Urr. edit.

⁹ Slew.

In another part of the Prologue we have these pathetic lines, which seem to flow warm from the heart, to the memory of the immortal Chaucer, who I believe was rather Occleve's model than his master, or perhaps the patron and encourager of his studies.

But weleawaye, so is myne hertè wo
 That the honour of English tonge is dede,
 Of which I wont was han counfel and rede!
 O mayster dere, and fadir reverent,
 My mayster Chaucer, floure of eloquence,
 Mirroure of fructuous entendement,
 O univèrsal fadir in science,
 Alas that thou thine excellent prudence
 In thy bed mortel mighest not bequethe,
 What eyed ' Deth? Alas why would he sle' the!
 O Deth that didist nought harm fingulere
 In slaughtre of him, but all the lond it smertith:
 But nathelesse yit hastowe ' no powere
 His name to sle. His hie vertue astertith
 Unflayn from thee, which aye us lifely hertith
 With boke of his ornatè enditing,
 That is to all this lond enlumyning°.

Occleve seems to have written some of these verses immediately on Chaucer's death, and to have introduced them long afterwards into this Prologue.

It is in one of the royal manuscripts of this poem in the British Museum that Occleve has left a drawing of Chaucer':

° Ailed.

° Haft thou.

° MSS. Rawlinf. 647. fol. This poem has at the end "Explicit Egidius de Regimine Principum" in MSS. Laud. K. 78. Bibl. Bodl. See also *ibid.* MSS. Selden. Supr. 53. Digb. 185. MSS. Ashmol. 40. MSS. Reg. 17 D. vi. 1. 17 D. xviii.

MSS. Harl. 4826. 7. and 4866. In some of these a sort of dialogue is prefixed between a father and a son. Occleve, in the Prologue cited in the text, mentions *Jacobus de Cassolis* [Cafulis] as one of his authors.

' MSS. Reg. 17 D. vi. 1.

according to which, Chaucer's portraiture was made on his monument, in the chapel of Saint Blase in Westminster-abbey, by the benefaction of Nicholas Brigham, in the year 1556^e. And from this drawing, in 1598, John Speed procured the print of Chaucer prefixed to Speght's edition of his works; which has been since copied in a most finished engraving by Vertue^b. Yet it must be remembered, that the same drawing occurs in an Harleian manuscript written about Occleve's age^c, and in another of the Cottonian department^d. Occleve himself mentions this drawing in his *CONSOLATIO SERVILIS*. It exactly resembles the curious picture on board of our venerable bard, preserved in the Bodleian gallery at Oxford. I have a very old picture of Chaucer on board, much like Occleve's, formerly kept in Chaucer's house, a quadrangular stone-mansion, at Woodstock in Oxfordshire; which commanded a prospect of the ancient magnificent royal palace, and of many beautiful scenes in the adjacent park: and whose last remains, chiefly consisting of what was called Chaucer's bed-chamber, with an old carved oaken roof, evidently original, were demolished about fifteen years ago. Among the ruins, they found an ancient gold coin of the city of Florence^e. Before the grand rebellion, there was in the windows of the church of Woodstock, an escucheon in painted glass of the arms of sir Payne Rouet, a knight of Henault, whose daughter Chaucer married.

Occleve, in this poem, and in others, often celebrates Humphrey duke of Gloucester^m; who at the dawn of science

^a He was of Caverham in Oxfordshire. Educated at Hart-Hall in Oxford, and studied the law. He died at Westminster, 1559.

^b In Urry's edit. 1721. fol.

^c MSS. Harl. 4866. The drawing is at fol. 91.

^d MSS. Cotton. OTH. A. 18.

^e I think a FLOREIN, antiently common

in England. Chaucer, *PARDON. TALE*, v. 2290. p. 135. col. 2. "For that the "FLORAINS ben so faire and bright." Edward the third, in 1344, altered it from a lower value to 6*s.* and 8*d.* The particular piece I have mentioned seems about that value.

^m As he does John of Gaunt.

was

was a singular promoter of literature, and, however unqualified for political intrigues, the common patron of the scholars of the times. A sketch of his character in that view, is therefore too closely connected with our subject to be censured as an unnecessary digression. About the year 1440, he gave to the university of Oxford a library containing six hundred volumes, only one hundred and twenty of which were valued at more than one thousand pounds. These books are called *Novi Tractatus*, or New Treatises, in the university-register^a, and said to be *admirandi apparatus*^b. They were the most splendid and costly copies that could be procured, finely written on vellum, and elegantly embellished with miniatures and illuminations. Among the rest was a translation into French of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*^c. Only a single specimen of these valuable volumes was suffered to remain: it is a beautiful manuscript in folio of Valerius Maximus, enriched with the most elegant decorations, and written in Duke Humphrey's age, evidently with a design of being placed in this sumptuous collection. All the rest of the books, which, like this, being highly ornamented, looked like missals, and conveyed ideas of popish superstition, were destroyed or removed by the pious visitors of the university in the reign of Edward the sixth, whose zeal was equalled only by their ignorance, or perhaps by their avarice. A great number of classics, in this grand work of reformation, were condemned as antichristian^d. In the library of Oriel college at Oxford, we find a manuscript *Commentary on Genesis*, written by John Capgrave, a monk of saint Austin's monastery at Canterbury, a learned theologian of the fourteenth century. It is the author's autograph, and the work is dedicated to Humphrey duke of Gloucester. In the superb

^a Reg. F. fol. 52. 53. b. Epist. 142.

^b Ibid. fol. 57. b. 60. a. Epist. 148.

^c Leland. coll. iii. p. 58. edit. 1770.

^d Some however had been before stolen or mutilated. Leland, coll. iii. p. 58. edit. 1770.

initial

initial letter of the dedicatory epistle is a curious illumination of the author Capgrave, humbly presenting his book to his patron the duke, who is seated, and covered with a sort of hat. At the end is this entry, in the hand-writing of duke Humphrey. "*C' est livre est a moy Humfrey duc de Gloucestre du don de frere Jehan Capgrave, quy le me fist presenter a mon manoyr de Penberst le jour . . . de l'an. MCCCXXXVIII*"^r. This is one of the books which Humphrey gave to his new library at Oxford, destroyed or dispersed by the active reformers of the young Edward^s. John Whethamstede, a learned abbot of saint Alban's, and a lover of scholars, but accused by his monks for neglecting their affairs, while he was too deeply engaged in studious employments and in procuring transcripts of useful books^s, notwithstanding his unwearied assiduity in beautifying and enriching their monastery^s, was in high favour with this munificent prince^s. The duke was fond of visiting this monastery, and employed

^r Cod. MSS. 32.

^s He gave also Capgrave *SUPER EXODUM ET REGUM LIBROS*. Registr. Univ. Oxon. F. fol. 67. b.

^t Supr. vol. i. See DISSERTAT. i. Signat. F. 2. We are told in this abbot's *GESTA*, that soon after his intallment he built a library for his abbey, a design which had long employed his contemplation. He covered it with lead; and expended on the bare walls, besides desks, glazing, and embattelling, or, to use the expressions of my chronologer, *educta vitriacione, creffacione, positione descorum*, upwards of one hundred and twenty pounds. Apud Hearne's *OTTERBOURNE*, vol. i. Præfat. Append. p. cxxiii. ed. Oxon. 1732. He founded also a library for all the students of his monastery at Oxford. Ibid. p. cxiii. And to each of these students he allowed an annual pension, at his own expence, of thirteen shillings and four-pence. Ibid. p. cxviii. See also p. cxxix. A grand transcript of the *Postilla* of Nicholas de Lyra on the bible

was begun during his abbacy, and at his command, with the most splendid ornaments and hand-writing. The monk who records this important anecdote, lived soon after him, and speaks of this great undertaking, then unfinished, as if it was some magnificent public edifice. "God grant, says he, that this work in our days may receive a "happy consummation!" Ibid. p. cxvi.

^u Among other things, he expended forty pounds in adorning the roof and walls of the virgin Mary's chapel with pictures. *GEST.* ut supr. p. cx. He gave to the choir of the church an organ; than which, says my chronicler, there was not one to be found in any monastery in England, more beautiful in appearance, more pleasing for its harmony, or more curious in its construction. It cost upwards of fifty pounds. Ibid. p. cxxviii. His new buildings were innumerable: and the *MASTER OF THE WORKS* was of his institution, with an ample salary. Ibid. p. cxiii.

^x Leland, *Script. Brit.* p. 437.

abbot

abbot Whethamstede to collect valuable books for him⁷. Some of Whethamstede's tracts, manuscript copies of which often occur in our libraries, are dedicated to the duke⁸: who presented many of them, particularly a fine copy of Whethamstede's *GRANARIUM*⁹, an immense work, which Leland calls *ingens volumen*, to the new library¹⁰. The copy of Valerius Maximus, which I mentioned before, has a curious table or index made by Whethamstede¹¹. Many other abbots paid their court to the duke by sending him presents of books, whose margins were adorned with the most exquisite paintings¹². Gilbert Kymer, physician to king Henry the sixth, among other ecclesiastic promotions, dean of Salisbury, and chancellor of the university of Oxford¹³, inscribed to duke Humphrey his famous medical system *Diætarium de sanitatis custodia*, in the year 1424¹⁴. I do not mean to anticipate when I remark, that Lydgate, a poet mentioned hereafter, translated Boccaccio's book de *CASIBUS VIRORUM ILLUSTRIORUM* at the recommendation and command, and under the protection and superintendence, of duke Humphrey: whose condescension in conversing with learned ecclesiastics, and diligence in study, the translator displays at large, and in the strongest expressions of panegyric. He compares the duke to Julius Cæsar, who amidst the weightiest cares of state, was not ashamed to enter the rhetorical school of

⁷ Leland, *ibid.* 442. 432. See also Hollinsh. Chron. f. 488. b. And f. 1234. 1235. 1080. 868. 662. Weever *FUN. MON.* p. 562. 574. Whethamstede erected in his life-time the beautiful tabernacle or shrine of stone, now remaining, over the tomb of duke Humphrey in saint Alban's abbey church. Hearne's *OTTERB.* ut *supr.* p. cxxi. seq. See also *ibid.* p. cxix. cxvi.

⁸ See Whethamstede, *De viris illustribus*, Brit. Mus. MSS. Cotton. *TIBER.* D. vi. i. *OTTERB.* B. iv. And Hearne, *Pref. Pet. Langtoft.* p. xix. seq.

⁹ *Registr. Univ. Oxon.* F. f. 68.

¹⁰ Leland, *ubi modo infr.*

¹¹ MSS. Bodl. NE. vii. ii.

¹² "Multos codices, pulcherrime pictos, ab abbatibus dono accepit." The Duke wrote in the frontispieces of his books, *MOUN BIEN MONDAIN.* Leland. *Coll.* iii. p. 58. edit. ut *supr.*

¹³ By the recommendatory letters of duke Humphrey. *Registr. Univ. Oxon.* F. fol. 75. *Epist.* 180.

¹⁴ See Hearne's *Append. ad Libr. Nigr. Scaccar.* p. 550. And *Prefat.* p. 34.

Cicero.

Cicero at Rome^f. Nor was his patronage confined only to English scholars. His favour was solicited by the most celebrated writers of France and Italy, many of whom he bountifully rewarded^h. Leonard Aretine, one of the first restorers of the Greek tongue in Italy, which he learned of Emanuel Chrysoloras, and of polite literature in general, dedicates to this universal patron his elegant Latin translation of Aristotle's POLITICS. The copy presented to the duke by the translator, most elegantly illuminated, is now in the Bodleian library at Oxfordⁱ. To the same noble encourager of learning, Petrus Candidus, the friend of Laurentius Valla, and secretary to the great Cosmo duke of Milan, inscribed by the advice of the archbishop of Milan, a Latin version of Plato's REPUBLIC^k. An illuminated manuscript of this translation is in the British museum, perhaps the copy presented, with two epistles prefixed, from the duke to Petrus Candidus^l. Petrus de Monte, another learned Italian, of Venice, in the dedication of his treatise DE VIRTUTUM ET VITIORUM DIFFERENTIA to the duke of Gloucester, mentions

^f PROL. Sign. A. ii. A. iii. edit. Wayland, ut supr. He adds,

And hath joye with clarkes to commune,
And no man is more expert in langage,
Stable in study.—
His courage never dothe appall
To study in bokes of antiquitie.—
He studieth ever to have intelligence,
Readyng of bokes.—
And with support of his magnificence,
Under the wings of his protection,—
I shall proceed in this translation.—
Lowly submittyng, every houre and space,
My rude langage to my lordes grace.

See also fol. xxxviii. b. col. 2. Lydgate has an epitaph on the duke, MSS. Ashmol. 59. 2. MSS. Harl. 2251. 6. fol. 7. There is a curious letter of Lydgate, in which he sends for a supply of money to the duke, while he was translating BOETHIUS. "Lit-

terra dom. Joh. Lydgate missa ad ducem
" Gloucestrie in tempore translationis Boethii,
" pro oportunitate pecunie." MSS. ibid. 5.
fol. 6. See also ibid. 131. fol. 279. b. of
the duke's marriage.

^h Leland, Script. p. 442.

ⁱ See MSS. Bodl. D. i. 8. 10. And Leland, Script. p. 443.

^k Leland, Script. p. 442. And Mus. Ashmol. 789. f. 54. 56. Where are also two of the duke's epistles to Petrus Candidus.

^l P. Candidi Decembris, Duci Mediolani a secretis, Translatio POLITICÆ Platonis,— ad Humfredum Gloucestrie Ducem, &c. Cui præfiguntur duæ Epistolæ Ducis Gloucestris ad P. Candidum. Most elegantly written. Membran. ad fin. " Cest livre est
" a moy Humfrey Duc de Gloucestre du don
" P. Candidus secretaire du duc de Mylan." Catal. MSS. Angl. tom. ii. pag. 212. Num. 6858. [See MSS. Harl. 1705. fol.]

the

the latter's ardent attachment to books of all kinds, and the singular avidity with which he pursued every species of literature^m. A tract, entitled *COMPARATIO STUDIORUM ET REI MILITARIS*, written by Lopus de Castellione, a Florentine civilian, and a great translator into Latin of the Greek classics, is also inscribed to the duke, at the desire of Zeno archbishop of Bayeux. I must not forget, that our illustrious duke invited into England the learned Italian, Tito Livio of Foro-Juli, whom he naturalised, and constituted his poet and oratorⁿ. Humphrey also retained learned foreigners in his service, for the purpose of transcribing, and of translating from Greek into Latin. One of these was Antonio de Beccaria, a Veronese, a translator into Latin prose of the Greek poem of Dionysius Afer *DE SITU ORBIS*^o: whom the duke employed to translate into Latin six tracts of Athanasius. This translation, inscribed to the duke, is now among the royal manuscripts in the British Museum, and at the end, in his own hand-writing, is the following insertion: "C'est livre est a moi Homphrey Duc le Gloucestre: le quel je fis translater de Grec en Latin par un de mes secretaires Antoyne de Beccara, nè de Verone^p."

An astronomical tract, entitled by Leland *TABULÆ DIRECTIONUM*, is falsely supposed to have been written by duke Humphrey^q. But it was compiled at the duke's instance, and according to tables which himself had constructed, called by the anonymous author in his preface, *Tabulas illustrissimi principis et nobilissimi domini mei Humfredi, &c.*^r. In the library of Gresham college, however, there is a scheme of calculations in

^m MSS. Nowic. MORE. 257. Bibl. publ. Cantabrig.

ⁿ Author of the *Vita Henrici quinti*, printed by Hearne, Oxon. 1716. And of other pieces. See Hollinsh. iii. 585.

^o Printed at Venice 1477. Ibid. 1498. Paris. 1501. Basil. 1534. 4to.

^p MSS. Reg. 5 F. 4to. ii. In the same library is a fine folio manuscript of "Chro-

Vol. II.

" nique des Roys de France jusques a la mort de S. Loys, l'an. 1270." At the end is written with the duke of Gloucester's hand, "C'est livre est a moy Homfrey duc de Gloucestre du don des executeurs le Sr de Faunhore." 16 G. vi.

^q See Hollingsh. Chron. sub. ann. 1461. f. 662. col. 2.

^r MSS. More, 820.

H

astronomy,

astronomy, which bear his name'. Astronomy was then a favourite science: nor is to be doubted, that he was intimately acquainted with the politer branches of knowledge, which now began to acquire estimation, and which his liberal and judicious attention greatly contributed to restore.

I close this section with an apology for Chaucer, Gower, and Occleve; who are supposed, by the severer etymologists, to have corrupted the purity of the English language, by affecting to introduce so many foreign words and phrases. But if we attend only to the politics of the times, we shall find these poets, as also some of their successors, much less blameable in this respect, than the critics imagine. Our wars with France, which began in the reign of Edward the third, were of long continuance. The principal nobility of England, at this period, resided in France, with their families, for many years. John king of France kept his court in England; to which, exclusive of these French lords who were his fellow-prisoners, or necessary attendants, the chief nobles of his kingdom must have occasionally resorted. Edward the black prince made an expedition into Spain. John of Gaunt duke of Lancaster, and his brother the duke of York, were matched with the daughters of Don Pedro king of Castile. All these circumstances must have concurred to produce a perceptible change in the language of the court. It is rational therefore, and it is equitable to suppose, that instead of coining new words, they only complied with the common and fashionable modes of speech. Would Chaucer's poems have been the delight of those courts in which he lived, had they been filled with unintelligible pedantries? The cotemporaries of these poets never complained of their obscurity. But whether defensible on these principles or not, they much improved the vernacular style by the use of this exotic phraseology. It was thus that our primitive diction was enlarged and enriched. The English language owes its copiousness, elegance, and harmony, to these innovations.

* MSS. Gresh. 66. See MSS. Astimol. 856.