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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 IV. Lydgate continued. His Fall of Princes, from Laurence  
Premierfait's French paraphrase of Boccace on the same subject. Nature,  
plan, and specimens of that poem. Its sublime attegorical ...

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## S E C T. IV.

**B**UT Lydgate's principal poems are the FALL OF PRINCES, the SIEGE OF THEBES, and the DESTRUCTION OF TROY. Of all these I shall speak distinctly.

About the year 1360, Boccacio wrote a Latin history in ten books, entitled DE CASIBUS VIRORUM ET FEMINARUM ILLUSTRUM. Like other chronicles of the times, it commences with Adam, and is brought down to the author's age. Its last grand event is John king of France taken prisoner by the English at the battle of Poitiers, in the year 1359<sup>a</sup>. This book of Boccacio was soon afterwards translated into French, by one of whom little more seems to be known, than that he was named Laurence; yet so paraphrastically, and with so many considerable additions, as almost to be rendered a new work<sup>b</sup>. Laurence's French

<sup>a</sup> Printed at Aushourg. And at Paris, 1544. fol. It is amazing, that Vossius should not know the number of books of which this work consisted, and that it was ever printed. De Hist. Lat. lib. iii. cap. ii. It was translated into Italian by Betussi, in Firenza, 1566. 8vo. 2 volum.

<sup>b</sup> In Lydgate's PROLOGUE, B. i. fol. i. 2 col. 1. edit. ut infr.

He that sumtime did his diligence  
The boke of Bochas in French to translate  
Out of Latin, he called was LAURENCE.

He says that Laurence (in his Prologue) declares, that he avails himself of the privilege of skillful artificers; who may *change and turne, by good discretion, shapes and forms, and newly them devise, make and unmake, &c.* And that old authors may be rendered more agreeable, by being clothed in new ornaments of language, and improved with new inventions. Ibid. a. col. 1. He adds, that it was Laurence's design, in

his translation into French, to *amende, correct, and declare, and not so spare things touched shortly.* Ibid. col. 2. Afterwards he calls him this *noble translatour.* Ibid. b. col. 1. In another place, where a panegyric on France is introduced, he says that this passage is not Boccacio's, but added,

By one LAURENCE, which was *translatour*  
Of this processe, to *commende* France;  
To prayle that lande was all his *pleasaunce.*

B. ix. ch. 28. fol. 31. a. col. 1. edit ut infr. Our author, in the Prologue above-cited, seems to speak as if there had been a previous translation of Boccacio's book into French. Ut supr. a. col. 1.

Thus LAURENCE from him envy excluded  
Though *soforne him translated* was this book.  
But I suspect he only means, that Boccacio's original work was nothing more than a collection or compilation from more ancient authors.

translation,

translation, of which there is a copy in the British Museum<sup>e</sup>, and which was printed at Lyons in the year 1483<sup>d</sup>, is the original of Lydgate's poem. This Laurence or Laurent, sometimes called Laurent de Premierfait, a village in the diocese of Troies, was an ecclesiastic, and a famous translator. He also translated into French Boccaccio's DECAMERON, at the request of Jane queen of Navarre: Cicero DE AMICITIA and DE SENECTUTE; and Aristotle's Oeconomics, dedicated to Louis de Bourbon, the king's uncle. These versions appeared in the year 1414 and 1416<sup>e</sup>. Caxton's TULLIUS OF OLD AGE, or DE SENECTUTE, printed in 1481, is translated from Laurence's French version. Caxton, in the postscript, calls him *Laurence de primo facto*.

Lydgate's poem consists of nine books, and is thus entitled in the earliest edition. "The TRAGEDIES gathered by Jhon BOCHAS of all such princes as fell from their estates through the mutability of fortune since the CREACION of ADAM until his time, &c. Translated into English by John Lidgate monke of Burye<sup>f</sup>." The best and most authentic manuscript of this piece is in the British Museum; probably written under the inspection of the author, and perhaps intended as a present to Humphrey duke of Gloucester, at whose gracious command the poem, as I have before hinted, was undertaken. It contains among

<sup>e</sup> MSS. Harl. See also *ibid.* MSS. Reg. 18 D. vii. And 16 G. v. And MSS. Bodl. F. 10. 2. [2465.] He is said to have translated this work in 1409. MSS. Reg. ut *supr.* 20 C. iv.

<sup>d</sup> In folio. Bayle says, that a French translation appeared at Paris, by Claudius Vitart, in 1578. 8vo. Diction. Boccaccio. Note g.

<sup>e</sup> He died in 1418. See Martene, *Ampl. Collect.* tom. ii. p. 1405. And *Mem. de Litt.* xvii. 759. 4to. Compare du Verdier, *Biblioth. Fr.* p. 72. And *Bibl. Rom.* ii. 291. It is extraordinary that the piece before us should not be mentioned by the

French antiquaries as one of Laurence's translations. Lydgate, in the Prologue above-cited, observes, that Laurence, who in *cunying did excel*, undertook this translation at the request of some eminent personages in France, who had the interest of *rbetorike* at heart. Ut *supr.* a. col. 2.

<sup>f</sup> Imprinted at London by John Wayland, without date, fol. He printed in the reign of Henry the eighth. There is a small piece by Lydgate, not connected with this, entitled *The Tragedy of princes that were LECHEROUS*. MSS. Ashmol. 59. ii.

numerous

numerous miniatures illustrating the several histories, portraits of Lydgate, and of another monk habited in black, perhaps an abbot of Bury, kneeling before a prince, who seems to be saint Edmund, seated on a throne under a canopy, and grasping an arrow<sup>a</sup>.

The work is not improperly styled a set of tragedies. It is not merely a narrative of men eminent for their rank and misfortunes. The plan is perfectly dramatic, and partly suggested by the pageants of the times. Every personage is supposed to appear before the poet, and to relate his respective sufferings: and the figures of these spectres are sometimes finely drawn. Hence a source is opened for moving compassion, and for a display of imagination. In some of the lives the author replies to the speaker, and a sort of dialogue is introduced for conducting the story. Brunchild, a queen of France, who murdered all her children, and was afterwards hewn in pieces, appears thus.

She came, arayed nothing like a quene,  
Her hair untressed, Bochas toke good hede;  
In al his booke he had afore not sene  
A more wofull creature indede,  
With weping eyne, to torne was al her wede:  
Rebuking Bochas cause he' had left behynde  
Her wretchednes for to put in mynde<sup>b</sup>.

Yet in some of these interesting interviews, our poet excites pity of another kind. When Adam appears, he familiarly accosts the author with the salutation of *Cofyn Bochas*<sup>c</sup>.

Nor does our dramatist deal only in real characters and historical personages. Boccacio standing penfive in his library, is alarmed at the sudden entrance of the gigantic and mon-

<sup>a</sup> MSS. Harl. 1766. fol. 5.  
<sup>b</sup> Lib. vii. f. xxi. a. col. 1.

<sup>c</sup> B. i. fol. i. a. col. 2. In the same style he calls Ixion Juno's secretary. B. i. ch. xii. fol. xxi. b. col. 2.

strous

stuous image of FORTUNE, whose agency has so powerful and universal an influence in human affairs, and especially in effecting those vicissitudes which are the subject of this work. There is a Gothic greatness in her figure, with some touches of the grotesque. An attribute of the early poetry of all nations, before ideas of selection have taken place. I must add, that it was Boethius's admired allegory on the CONSOLATION OF PHILOSOPHY, which introduced personification into the poetry of the middle ages.

Whyle Bochas penyfe stode in his lybrarye,  
Wyth chere oppressed, pale in hys vyfage,  
Somedeaie abashed, alone and solitarye ;  
To hym appeared a monstuous ymage,  
Parted in twayne of color and corage,  
Her ryght syde ful of sommer floures,  
The tother oppressed with winter stormy showres.

Bochas astonied, full fearfull to abrayde,  
When he beheld the wonderfull figure  
Of FORTUNE, thus to hymself he sayde.  
“ What may this meane? Is this a créature,  
“ Or a monstre transfourmed agayne nature,  
“ Whose brenning eyen spercle of their lyght,  
“ As do the sterres the frosty wynter nyght?”

And of her cherè ful god hede he toke ;  
Her face femyng cruel and terrible,  
And by disdaynè menacing of loke ;  
Her heare untrussd, harde, sharpe, and horyble,  
Frowarde of shape, lothsome, and odible :  
An hundred handes she had, of eche part<sup>k</sup> ;  
In fondrye wise her gyftes to departe<sup>l</sup>.

<sup>k</sup> On either side.

<sup>l</sup> Distribute.

Some

Some of her handès lyft up men alofte,  
 To hye estate of wordlye dignitè ;  
 Another handè griped ful unsofte,  
 Which caft another in grete adverfite,  
 Gave one richeffe, another povertè, &c.—

Her habyte was of manyfolde colours,  
 Watchet blewè of fayned stedfaftneffe,  
 Her gold allayd like fun in watry showres,  
 Meynt<sup>m</sup> with grene, for chaunge and doubleneffe.—

Her hundred hands, her burning eyes, and difheveled tresses, are sublimely conceived. After a long filence, with a stern countenance she addressès Bochas, who is greatly terrified at her horrible appearance; and having made a long harangue on the revolutions and changes which it is her busyness to produce among men of the most prosperous condition and the most elevated station, she calls up Caius Marius, and presents him to the poet.

Blacke was his wede, and his habyte also,  
 His heed unkempt, his lockès hore and gray,  
 His loke downe-caft in token of forowe and wo;  
 On his chekès the saltè teares lay,  
 Which bare recorde of his deadly affray.—

His robè stayned was with Romaine blode,  
 His sworde aye redy whet to do vengeance;  
 Lyke a tyraunt most furyoufe and wode<sup>n</sup>,  
 In slaughter and murdre fet at his plesaunce<sup>o</sup>.

She then teaches Bochas how to describe his life, and difappears.

<sup>m</sup> Mingled.

<sup>n</sup> Mad.

<sup>o</sup> Ibid. f. cxxxviii. b. col. 2.

These wordès faydè, Fortune made an ende,  
 She bete her wynges, and toke her to flyght,  
 I can not fè what waye she did wende ;  
 Save Bochas telleth, lyke an anghell bryght,  
 At her departing she shewed a great lyght<sup>p</sup>.

In another place, Dante, " of Florence the laureate poete, " demure of loke fullfilled with patience," appears to Bochas ; and commands him to write the tale of Gualter duke of Florence, whose days *for his tyranny, lechery, and covetyse, ended in mischefe*. Dante then vanishes, and only duke Gualter is left alone with the poet<sup>q</sup>. Petrarch is also introduced for the same purpose<sup>r</sup>.

The following golden couplet, concerning the prodigies which preceded the civil wars between Cesar and Pompey, indicate dawns of that poetical colouring of expreffion, and of that facility of verification, which mark the poetry of the present times.

Serpents and adders, scaled fylver-bryght,  
 Were over Rome sene flying al the nyght<sup>s</sup>.

These verses, in which the poet describes the reign of Saturn, have much harmony, strength, and dignity.

Fortitude then stode stedfast in his might,  
 Defended wydowes, cherishd chastity ;  
 Knyghtehood in prowes gave so clere a light,  
 Girte with his sworde of truthe and equity<sup>t</sup>.

Apollo, Diana, and Minerva, joining the Roman army, when Rome was besieged by Brennus, are poetically touched.

<sup>p</sup> Ibid. fol. cxxxix. a. col. 2.

<sup>q</sup> B. ix. fol. xxxiv. b. col. 1. 2. In another place Dante's three books on heaven, purgatory, and hell, are particularly commended. B. iv. Prol. fol. xciii. a. col. 1.

<sup>r</sup> B. viii. fol. 1. Prol. a. b. He mentions all Petrarch's works, Prol. B. iv. fol. 93. a. col. 1.

<sup>s</sup> B. vi. fol. 147. a. col. 1.

<sup>t</sup> B. vii. fol. 161. b. col. 1.

Appollo

Appollo first yshewed his presence,  
 Frefshe, yonge, and lusty, as any funnè shene,  
 Armd all with golde; and with great vyolence  
 Entred the feldè, as it was wel sene:  
 And Dianà came with her arowes kene:  
 And Mynervà in a bryght haberjoun;  
 Which in ther coming made a terrible foun<sup>a</sup>.

And the following lines are remarkable.

God hath a thousand handès to chastyse,  
 A thousand dartès of punicion,  
 A thousand bowès made in divers wyse,  
 A thousand arblasts bent in his dongeon<sup>b</sup>.

Lydgate, in this poem, quotes Seneca's tragedies<sup>c</sup> for the story of Oedipus, Tully, Virgil and his commentator Servius, Ovid, Livy, Lucan, Lactantius, Justin<sup>d</sup> or "prudent" Justinus an old croniclere, Josephus, Valerius Maximus, faint Jerom's chronicle, Boethius<sup>e</sup>, Plato on the immortality of the soul<sup>f</sup>, and Fulgentius the mythologist<sup>g</sup>. He mentions "noble Perfius," Prosper's epigrams, Vegetius's book on Tactics, which was highly esteemed, as its subject coincided with the chivalry of the times, and which had been just translated into French by John of Meun and Christina of Pifa, and into English by John Trevisa<sup>h</sup>, "the grene

<sup>a</sup> B. iv. ch. 22. fol. cxiii. a. col. 1.

<sup>b</sup> Tower. Castle. B. 1. ch. 3. fol. vi. a. col. 1.

<sup>c</sup> B. i. ch. 9. fol. xviii. a. col. 1.

<sup>d</sup> B. i. ch. 11. fol. xxi. b. col. 2. B. ii. ch. 6. fol. xiv. a. col. 1. B. iii. ch. 14. fol. lxxx. b. col. 1. Ibid. ch. 25. fol. lxxxix. a. col. 2. B. iv. ch. 11. fol. iii. b. col. 1. See *PROL.* B. i.

<sup>e</sup> B. ii. ch. 15. fol. li. a. col. 1. col. 2. Ibid. ch. 16. fol. 52. a. col. 2. Ibid. ch. 2. fol. xlii. a. col. 1. Ibid. ch. 30. fol.

lxii. b. col. 1. B. viii. ch. 24. fol. xliii. a. col. 2.

<sup>f</sup> B. iii. ch. 5. fol. lxxi. a. col. 1.

<sup>g</sup> B. ix. ch. 1. fol. xx. a. col. 1. From whom Boccaccio largely transcribes in his *GENEALOGIÆ DEORUM*, hereafter mentioned.

<sup>h</sup> MSS. Digb. Bibl. Bodl. 233. *Princip.* "In olde tyme it was the manere." Finished at the command of his patron Thomas lord Berkeley. See *supr.* vol. i. p. 343.

“ chaplet of Esop and Juvenal <sup>d</sup>,” Euripides “ in his tyme  
 “ a great tragician, becaufe he wrote many tragedies,” and  
 another called *Clarke Demosthenes*<sup>e</sup>. For a catalogue of  
 Tully’s works, he refers to the SPECULUM HISTORIALE<sup>f</sup>, or  
*Myrrour Hystoriall*, of Vyncentius Bellovacensis; and says, that  
 he wrote twelve books of Orations, and several *morall ditties*<sup>g</sup>.  
 Aristotle is introduced as teaching Alexander and Callif-  
 thenes philosophy<sup>h</sup>. With regard to Homer, he observes,  
 that “ Grete Omerus, in Isidore ye may see, founde amonge  
 “ Grekes the crafte of eloquence<sup>i</sup>.” By Isidore he means the  
 ORIGINES, or ETYMOLOGIES of Isidore Hispalensis, in twenty  
 books; a system of universal information, the encyclopede  
 of the dark ages, and printed in Italy before the year 1472<sup>k</sup>.  
 In another place, he censures the singular partiality of the  
 book called *Omere*, which places Achilles above Hector<sup>l</sup>.  
 Again, speaking of the Greek writers, he tells us, that Bo-  
 chas mentions a *scribeyn*, or scribe, who in a small scroll of  
 paper wrote the destruction of Troy, following Homer: a  
 history much esteemed among the Greeks, on account of its  
 brevity<sup>m</sup>. This was Dictys Cretensis, or Dares Phrygius.

<sup>d</sup> Prol. B. iv. fol. 92. a. col. 2. 93. a. col. 1.

<sup>e</sup> B. ii. ch. 22. fol. 54. b. col. 2.

<sup>f</sup> See supr. vol. i. p.

<sup>g</sup> B. vi. ch. 15. fol. 151. b. col. 1.

<sup>h</sup> B. iv. ch. 9. fol. xcix. seq. This is from Aristotle’s SECRETUM SECRETORUM, which Lydgate, as I have mentioned above, translated. But he did not finish the translation: for about the middle of it we have this note. “ Here dyed this translator and notable poet John Lydgate, monk of Bury, and FOWLER bygan his prolog in this wyfe. *Where flour of knight-hood the bataille doth refuse.*” fol. 336. MSS. Laud. K. 53. The Prologue consists of ten stanzas: in which he compares himself to a dwarf entering the lists when the knight is foiled. But it is the *yong FOWLER*, in MSS. Laud. B. xxiv. In the Harleian copy of this piece I find the fol-

lowing note, at fol. 236. “ Here deyde “ the translatur a noble poete Dan John Lydgate, and his *folowere* began his “ prologe in this wyfe. Per Benedictum “ Burghe. *Where flour of, &c.*” MSS. Harl. 2251. 117. Where *Folowere* may be a corruption of *Folower*, or *Fowler*. But it must be observed, that there was a Benedict Burghe, coeval with Lydgate, and preferred to many dignities in the church, who translated into English verse, for the use of lord Bouchier son of the earl of Essex, CATONIS *moralia carmina*, altered and printed by Caxton, 1483. fol. More will be said of Burgh’s work in its proper place.

<sup>i</sup> B. ii. ch. 15. fol. 51. a. col. 2.

<sup>k</sup> See Gesner. Bibl. p. 468. And Matt. Annal. Typ. i. p. 100.

<sup>l</sup> B. iv. Prol. fol. 93. a. col. 1.

<sup>m</sup> B. ii. cap. 15. fol. 51. b. col. 1.

But

But for perpetuating the achievements of the knights of the round table, he supposes that a clerk was appointed, and that he compiled a register from the poursuivants and heralds who attended their tournaments; and that thence the histories of those invincible champions were framed, which, whether read or sung, have afforded so much delight<sup>a</sup>. For the stories of Constantine and Arthur he brings as his vouchers, the chronicle or romance called BRUT or BRUTUS, and Geoffrey of Monmouth<sup>o</sup>. He concludes the legend of Constantine by telling us, that an equestrian statue in brass is still to be seen at Constantinople of that emperor; in which he appears armed with a prodigious sword, menacing the Turks<sup>p</sup>. In describing the Pantheon at Rome, he gives us some circumstances highly romantic. He relates that this magnificent fane was full of gigantic idols, placed on lofty stages: these images were the gods of all the nations conquered by the Romans, and each turned his countenance to that province over which he presided. Every image held in his hand a bell framed by magic; and when any kingdom belonging to the Roman jurisdiction was meditating rebellion against the imperial city, the idol of that country gave, by some secret principle, a solemn warning of the distant treason by striking his bell, which never sounded on any other occasion<sup>q</sup>. Our author, following Boccacio who wrote the THESEID, supposes that Theseus founded the order of knight-hood at Athens<sup>r</sup>. He introduces, much in the manner of Boethius, a disputation between Fortune and Poverty; supposed to have been written by ANDALUS the *blake*, a doctor of astronomy at Naples, who was one of Bochas's preceptors.

<sup>a</sup> B. viii. ch. 25. fol. xv. a. col. 1. See supr. col. 1. p. 331. seq.

<sup>o</sup> B. viii. ch. 13. fol. 7. a. col. 2. fol. 14. b. col. 1. fol. 16. a. col. 2. See supr. vol. 1. p. 62.

<sup>p</sup> B. viii. ch. 13. fol. viii. b. col. 2. Boc-

cacio wrote the original Latin of this work long before the Turks took and sacked Constantinople, in 1453.

<sup>q</sup> B. viii. ch. 1. fol. xx. a. col. 1.

<sup>r</sup> B. i. c. 12. fol. xxii. a. col. 2.

At Naples whylom, as he dothe specifye,  
 In his youth when he 'to schole went,  
 There was a doctour of afronomye.—  
 And he was called *Andalus the blake*'.

Lydgate appears to have been far advanced in years when he finished this poem: for at the beginning of the eighth book he complains of his trembling joints, and declares that age, having benumbed his faculties, has deprived him "of all the subtylte of curious making in Englyshe to endyte." Our author, in the structure and modulation of his style, seems to have been ambitious of rivalling Chaucer: whose capital compositions he enumerates, and on whose poetry he bestows repeated encomiums.

I cannot quit this work without adding an observation relating to Boccaccio, its original author, which perhaps may deserve attention. It is highly probable that Boccaccio learned many anecdotes of Grecian history and Grecian fable, not to be found in any Greek writer now extant, from his preceptors Barlaam, Leontius, and others, who had lived at Constantinople while the Greek literature was yet flourishing. Some of these are perhaps scattered up and down in the composition before us, which contains a considerable part of the Grecian story; and especially in his treatise of the genealogies of the gods\*. Boccaccio himself calls his master Leontius an inexhaustible archive of Grecian tales and fables, although not equally conversant with those of

\* Boccaccio.

† B. iii. ch. 1. fol. lxx. a. col. 1. "He rede in scholes the moving of the heavens, &c." Boccaccio mentions with much regard *ANDALUS DE NIGRO* as one of his masters, in his *GENEAL. DEOR.* lib. xv. cap. vi. And says, that Andalus has extant many *Opuscula astrorum cælique motus ostendentia*. I think Leander, in his *ITALIA*, calls this Andalus, *Andalotius niger*,

*curiosus astrologus*. See Papyrius Mas. Elog. tom. ii. p. 195.

‡ B. vii. Prol. fol. i. b. col. 2. ad calc. He calls himself older than sixty years.

§ Prol. B. i. f. ii. a. col. 2. seq.

\* In fifteen books. First printed in 1481. fol. And in Italian by Betussi, Venet. 1553. In French at Paris, 1531. fol. In the interpretation of the fables he is very prolix and jejune.

the Latins'. He confesses that he took many things in his book of the genealogies of the gods from a vast work entitled COLLECTIVUM, now lost, written by his cotemporary Paulus Perusinus, the materials of which had in great measure been furnished by Barlaam<sup>2</sup>. We are informed also, that Perusinus made use of some of these fugitive Greek scholars, especially Barlaam, for collecting rare books in that language. Perusinus was librarian, about the year 1340, to Robert king of Jerusalem and Sicily: and was the most curious and inquisitive man of his age for searching after unknown or uncommon manuscripts, especially histories, and poetical compositions, and particularly such as were written in Greek. I will beg leave to cite the words of Boccacio, who records this anecdote. "Et, si usquam CURIOSISSIMUS fuit homo in perquirendis, jussu etiam principis, PEREGRINIS undecunque libris, HISTORIIS et POETICIS operibus, iste fuit. Et ob id, singulari amicitiā Barlaæ conjunctus, quæ a Latinis habere non poterat EO MEDIO INNUMERA exhausit a GRÆCIS." By these HISTORIÆ and POETICA OPERA, brought from Constantinople by Barlaam, undoubtedly works of entertainment, and perhaps chiefly of the romantic and fictitious species, I do not understand the classics. It is natural to suppose that Boccacio, both from his connections and his curiosity, was no stranger to these treasures: and that many of these pieces, thus imported into Italy by the dispersion of the Constantinopolitan exiles, are only known at present through the medium of his writings. It is certain that many oriental fictions found their way into Europe by means of this communication.

Lydgate's STORIE OF THEBES was first printed by William Thinne, at the end of his edition of Chaucer's works, in

<sup>1</sup> GENEAL. DEOR. lib. xv. cap. vi.

<sup>2</sup> "Quicquid apud Græcos inveniri potest, ADJUTORIO BARLAÆ arbitror collegisse." GENEAL. DEOR. lib. xv. cap. vi.

"potest, ADJUTORIO BARLAÆ arbitror

"GENEAL. DEOR. lib. xv. cap. vi.

1561. The author introduces it as an additional Canterbury tale. After a severe sickness, having a design to visit the shrine of Thomas a Beckett at Canterbury, he arrives in that city while Chaucer's pilgrims were assembled there for the same purpose; and by mere accident, not suspecting to find so numerous and respectable a company, goes to their inn. There is some humour in our monk's travelling figure<sup>b</sup>.

In a cope of black, and not of grene,  
On a palfray, slender, long, and lene,  
With rusty bridle, made not for the sale,  
My man toforne with a void male<sup>c</sup>.

He sees, standing in the hall of the inn, the convivial host of the tabard, full of his own importance; who without the least introduction or hesitation thus addresses our author, quite unprepared for such an abrupt salutation.

— — — Dan Pers,  
Dan Dominike, Dan Godfray, or Clement,  
Ye be welcome newly into Kent;  
Though your bridle have neither boss, ne bell<sup>d</sup>,  
Beseeching you that you will tell,  
First of your name, &c. — —  
That looke so pale, all devoid of blood,  
Upon your head a wonder thredbare hood<sup>e</sup>.—

Our host then invites him to supper, and promises that he shall have, made according to his own directions, a large pudding, a round *bagis*, a French *moile*, or a *phrase* of eggs: adding, that he looked extremely lean for a monk, and must certainly have been sick, or else belong to a poor monastery:

<sup>b</sup> Edit. 1687. fol. ad Calc. CHAUCER'S  
WORKS. pag. 623. col. 1. Prol.  
<sup>c</sup> Portmanteau.

<sup>d</sup> See supr. vol. i. p. 164. notes, h.  
<sup>e</sup> Ibid.

that

that some nut-brown ale after supper will be of service, and that a quantity of the seed of annis, cummin, or coriander, taken before going to bed, will remove flatulencies. But above all, says the host, chearful company will be your best physician. You shall not only sup with me and my companions this evening, but return with us to-morrow to London; yet on condition, that you will submit to one of the indispenfable rules of our society, which is to tell an entertaining story while we are travelling.

What, looke up, Monke! For by <sup>f</sup> cockes blood,  
 Thou shalt be mery, whofo that fay nay;  
 For to-morrowe, anone as it is day,  
 And that it ginne in the east to daw<sup>e</sup>,  
 Thou shalt be bound to a newe lawe,  
 At going out of Canterbury toun,  
 And lien aside thy professioun;  
 Thou shalt not chefe <sup>h</sup>, nor thyself withdrawe,  
 If any mirth be found in thy mawe,  
 Like the custome of this company;  
 For none so proude that dare me deny,  
 Knight, nor knave, chanon, priest, ne nonne,  
 To telle a tale plainely as they conne <sup>i</sup>,  
 When I assigne, and see time oportune;  
 And, for that we our purpose woll contune <sup>k</sup>,  
 We will homeward the same custome use <sup>l</sup>.

Our monk, unable to withstand this profusion of kindness and festivity, accepts the host's invitation, and sups with the pilgrims. The next morning, as they are all riding from Canterbury to Ospringe, the host reminds his friend DAN JOHN of what he had mentioned in the evening, and without farther ceremony calls for a story. Lydgate obeys

<sup>f</sup> God's. <sup>e</sup> Dawn. <sup>h</sup> Chuse. <sup>i</sup> Can, or Know. <sup>k</sup> Continue. <sup>l</sup> Pag, 622. col, 2, seq.  
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his commands, and recites the tragical destruction of the city of Thebes<sup>m</sup>. As the story is very long, a pause is made in descending a very steep hill near the *Thrope*<sup>n</sup> of Broughton on the Blee; when our author, who was not furnished with that accommodation for knowing the time of the day, which modern improvements in science have given to the traveller, discovers by an accurate examination of his calendar, I suppose some sort of graduated scale, in which the sun's horary progress along the equator was marked, that it is nine in the morning<sup>o</sup>.

It has been said, but without any authority or probability, that Chaucer first wrote this story in a Latin narrative, which Lydgate afterwards translated into English verse. Our author's originals are Guido Colonna, Statius, and Seneca the tragedian<sup>p</sup>. Nicholas Trevet, an Englishman, a Dominican friar of London, who flourished about the year 1330, has left a commentary on Seneca's tragedies<sup>q</sup>: and he was so favorite a poet as to have been illustrated by Thomas Aquinas<sup>r</sup>. He was printed at Venice so early as the year 1482. Lydgate in this poem often refers to *myne auctor*, who, I suppose, is either Statius, or Colonna<sup>s</sup>. He sometimes cites Boccaccio's Latin tracts: particularly the *GENEALOGIÆ DEORUM*, a work which at the restoration of learning greatly contributed to familiarise the classical stories, *DE CASIBUS VIRORUM ILLUSTRIVM*, the ground-work of the *FALL OF PRINCES* just mentioned, and *DE CLARIS MULIERIBUS*, in which pope Joan is one of the heroines<sup>t</sup>. From the first, he has taken the story of Amphion building the

<sup>m</sup> Ibid.

<sup>n</sup> Or *Thorpe*. Properly a lodge in a forest.

A hamlet. It occurs again pag. 651. col. 1.

Bren townes, *thropes*, and villages.

And in the *TROY-BOKE*, he mentions

“provinces, borowes, vyllages, and *thropes*.”

B. ii. c. x.

<sup>o</sup> Pag. 630. col. 2.

<sup>p</sup> See. pag. 630. col. 1.

<sup>q</sup> MSS. Bodl. NE. F. 8. 6. Leland saw this Commentary in the library of the Cistercian abbey of Buckfast-Lees in Devonshire. Coll. iii. p. 257.

<sup>r</sup> Some say, Thomas Anglicus.

<sup>s</sup> Pag. 623. col. 2. 630. col. 1. 632.

col. 2. 635. col. 2. 647. col. 2. 654. col.

1. 659. col. 1. See *supr.* vol. i. p. 126.

<sup>t</sup> First printed, Ulm. 1473. fol.

walls<sup>\*</sup>

walls of Thebes by the help of Mercury's harp, and the interpretation of that fable, together with the "fictions about Lycurgus king of Thrace". From the second, as I recollect, the accoutrements of Polymites<sup>2</sup>: and from the third, part of the tale of Isophile<sup>3</sup>. He also characterises Boccacio for a talent, by which he is not now so generally known, for his poetry; and styles him, "among poetes in "Itaile stalled". But Boccacio's THESEID was yet in vogue. He says, that when Oedipus was married, none of the Muses were present, as they were at the wedding of SAPIENCE with ELOQUENCE, described by that poet *whilom so sage, Matrician inamed de Capella*. This is Marcianus Mineus Felix de Capella, who lived about the year 470, and whose Latin profaico-metrical work, *de Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, in two books, an introduction to his seven books, or system, of the SEVEN SCIENCES, I have mentioned before<sup>4</sup>: a writer highly extolled by Scotus Erigena<sup>5</sup>, Peter of Blois<sup>6</sup>, John of Salisbury, and other early authors in corrupt Latinity<sup>7</sup>; and of such eminent estimation in the dark centuries, as to be taught in the seminaries of philological education as a classic<sup>8</sup>. Among the royal manuscripts in the British museum, a manuscript occurs written about the eleventh century, which is a commentary on these nine books of Capella,

<sup>1</sup> Lydgate says, that this was the same Lycurgus who came as an ally with Palamon to Athens against his brother Arcite, drawn by four white bulls, and crowned with a wreath of gold. Pag. 650. col. 2. See KN. TALE, Urry's Ch. p. 17. v. 2131. seq. col. 1. Our author expressly refers to Chaucer's KNIGHT'S TALE about Theseus, and with some address, "As ye have before heard it related in "passing through Deptford, &c." pag. 568. col. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Pag. 623. col. 2. 624. col. 1. 651. col. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Pag. 634. col. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Pag. 648. col. 1. seq.

<sup>5</sup> Pag. 651. col. 1.

<sup>6</sup> See supr. vol. 1. p. 391.

<sup>7</sup> De Divis. Natur. lib. iii. p. 147. 148.

<sup>8</sup> Epist. 101.

<sup>9</sup> See Alcuin. De Sept. Artib. p. 1256. Honorius Augustodunus, de Philosophia Mundi, lib. ii. cap. 5. And the book of Thomas Cantipratanus attributed to Boethius, De Disciplina Scholarium. Compare Barth. ad Claudian. p. 32.

<sup>10</sup> Barth. ad Briton. p. 110. "Medii ævi scholas tenuit, adolescentibus prælectus, &c." See Willibaldus, Epist. 147. tom. ii. Vet. Monum. Marten. p. 334.

compiled by Duncant an Irish bishop<sup>f</sup>, and given to his scholars in the monastery of faint Remigius<sup>g</sup>. They were early translated into Latin leonine rhymes, and are often imitated by Saxo Grammaticus<sup>h</sup>. Gregory of Tours has the vanity to hope, that no readers will think his Latinity barbarous: not even those, who have refined their taste, and enriched their understanding with a complete knowledge of every species of literature, by studying attentively this treatise of Marcianus<sup>i</sup>. Alexander Necham, a learned abbot of Cirencester, and a voluminous Latin writer about the year 1210, wrote annotations on Marcianus, which are yet preserved<sup>k</sup>. He was first printed in the year 1499, and other editions appeared soon afterwards. This piece of Marcianus, dictated by the ideal philosophy of Plato, is supposed to have led the way to Boethius's celebrated CONSOLATION OF PHILOSOPHY<sup>m</sup>.

The marriage of SAPIENCE and ELOQUENCE, or Mercury and Philology, as described by Marcianus, at which Clio and Calliope with all their sisters assisted, and from which DISCORD and SEDITION, the great enemies of literature, were excluded, is artfully introduced, and beautifully contrasted with that of Oedipus and Jocasta, which was celebrated by an assemblage of the most hideous beings.

<sup>f</sup> Leland says he saw this work in the library of Worcester abbey. Coll. iii. p. 268.

<sup>g</sup> MSS. Reg. 15 A. xxxiii. *Liber olim S. Remig. Studio Gifardi scriptus.* Labb. Bibl. Nov. Manusc. p. 66. In imitation of the first part of this work, a Frenchman, Jo. Boræus, wrote *NUPTIÆ JURISCONSULTI ET PHILOGIÆ*, Paris. 1651. 4to.

<sup>h</sup> Stephan. in Prolegomen. c. xix. And in the Notes, passim. He is adduced by Fulgentius.

<sup>i</sup> Hist. Fr. lib. x. ad calc. A manuscript of Marcianus, more than seven hun-

dred years old, is mentioned by Bernard a Pez. Thesaur. Anecd. tom. iii. p. 620. But by some writers of the early ages he is censured as obscure. Galfredus Canonicus, who flourished about 1170, declares, "Non petimus nos, aut lascivire cum Sidonio, aut vernare cum Hortensio, aut involvere cum Marciano." Apud Marten. ubi supr. tom. i. p. 506. He will occur again.

<sup>k</sup> Bibl. Bodl. MSS. Digb. 221. And in other places. As did Scotus Erigena, Labb. Bibl. Nov. Manusc. p. 45. And others of that period.

<sup>m</sup> See Mabillon. Itin. Ital. p. 221.

Ne was there none of the Muses nine,—  
 By one accorde to maken melody:  
 For there fung not by heavenly harmony,  
 Neyther Clio nor Caliope,  
 None of the sistren in number thrise thre,  
 As they did, when PHILOLAIE<sup>a</sup>  
 Ascended up highe above the skie,  
 To be wedded, this lady virtuous,  
 Unto her lord the god Mercurius.—  
 But at this weddinge, plainly for to telle,  
 Was CERBERUS, chiefe porter of hell;  
 And HEREBUS, fader to Hatred,  
 Was there present with his holle kindred,  
 His WIFE also<sup>b</sup> with her browes blacke,  
 And her daughters, sorow for to make,  
 Hideously chered, and uylie for to see,  
 MEGERA, and THESIPHONEE,  
 ALECTO eke: with LABOUR, and ENVIE,  
 DREDE, FRAUDE, and false TRETCHERIE,  
 TRESON, POVERT, INDIGENCE, and NEDE,  
 And cruell DEATH in his rent wede<sup>c</sup>:  
 WRETCHEDNESSE, COMPLAINT, and eke RAGE,  
 FEAR full pale, DRONKENESSE, croked AGE:  
 Cruell MARS, and many a tigre wood<sup>d</sup>,  
 Brenning<sup>e</sup> IRE, and UNKINDE BLOOD,  
 FRATERNALL HATE depe sett in the roote,  
 Sauf only death that there was no boote<sup>f</sup>:  
 ASSURED OTHES at fine untrew<sup>g</sup>,  
 All these folkes were at weddyng new;  
 To make the town defolate and bare,  
 As the story after shall declare<sup>h</sup>.

<sup>a</sup> PHILOLOGIA.

<sup>b</sup> NIGHT.

<sup>c</sup> Garment.

<sup>d</sup> The attendants on Mars.

<sup>e</sup> Burning.

<sup>f</sup> "Death was the only refuge, or remedy."

<sup>g</sup> "Oaths which proved false in the end."

<sup>h</sup> Pag. 629. col. 1.

The

The bare conception of the attendance of this allegorical groupe on these incestuous espousals, is highly poetical : and although some of the personifications are not presented with the addition of any picturesque attributes, yet others are marked with the powerful pencil of Chaucer.

This poem is the THEBAID of a troubadour. The old classical tale of Thebes is here clothed with feudal manners, enlarged with new fictions of the Gothic species, and furnished with the descriptions, circumstances, and machineries, appropriated to a romance of chivalry. The Sphinx is a terrible dragon, placed by a necromancer to guard a mountain, and to murder all travellers passing by\*. Tydeus being wounded sees a castle on a rock, whose high towers and crested pinnacles of polished stone glitter by the light of the moon : he gains admittance, is laid in a sumptuous bed of cloth of gold, and healed of his wounds by a king's daughter\*. Tydeus and Polymite tilt at midnight for a lodging, before the gate of the palace of king Adraftus ; who is awakened with the din of the strokes of their weapons, which shake all the palace, and descends into the court with a long train by torch-light : he orders the two combatants to be disarmed, and clothed in rich mantles studded with pearls ; and they are conducted to repose by *many a stair* to a stately tower, after being served with a refection of hypocras from golden goblets. The next day they are both espoused to the king's two daughters, and entertained with tournaments, feasting, revels, and masques†. Afterwards Tydeus, having a message to deliver to Eteocles king of Thebes, enters the hall of the royal palace, completely armed and on horseback, in the midst of a magnificent festival‡. This palace, like a Norman fortress, or feudal castle, is

\* Pag. 627. col. 2.

\* Pag. 640. col. 2. seq.

† Pag. 633. col. 1. seq. Concerning the dresses, perhaps in the masques, we have

this line. pag. 635. col. 2.

And the DEVISE of many a SOLEIN WEDE.

\* Pag. 637. col. 2.

guarded

guarded with barbicans, portcullisses, chains, and fosses<sup>a</sup>. Adrastus wishes to close his old age in the repose of rural diversions, of hawking and hunting<sup>b</sup>.

The situation of Polymite, benighted in a solitary wilderness, is thus forcibly described.

Holding his way, of hertè nothing light,  
 Mate<sup>c</sup> and weary, till it draweth to night:  
 And al the day beholding envirown,  
 He neither sawe ne castle, towre, ne town;  
 The which thing greveth him full sore,  
 And sodenly the see began to rore,  
 Winde and tempèst hidioufly to arise,  
 The rain down beten in ful grisly wise;  
 That many à beast thereof was adrad,  
 And nigh for ferè gan to waxè mad,  
 As it seemed by the full wofull sownes  
 Of tigrès, beres, of bores, and of liounes;  
 Which to refute, and himself for to save,  
 Evrich in haste draweth to his cave.  
 But Polymitè in this tempest huge  
 Alas the while findeth no refuge.  
 Ne, him to shrowde, saw no where no succour,  
 Till it was passed almost midnight hour<sup>d</sup>.

When Oedipus consults concerning his kindred the oracle of Apollo, whose image stood on a golden chariot with four wheels *burned bright and shewn*, animated with a fiend, the manner in which he receives his answer is touched with spirit and imagination.

And when Edipus by great devotion  
 Finished had fully his orison,  
 The fiend anon, within invisible,  
 With a voice dredefull and horrible,

<sup>a</sup> Pag. 644. col. 2.    <sup>b</sup> Pag. 635. col. 1.    <sup>c</sup> *Afraid, Fatigued.*    <sup>d</sup> P. 631. col. 2.

Bade him in hafte take his voyage  
Towrds Thebes, &c.<sup>e</sup>. — — —

In this poem, exclusive of that general one already mentioned, there are some curious mixtures of manners, and of classics and scripture. The nativity of Oedipus at his birth is calculated by the most learned astronomers and physicians<sup>f</sup>. Eteocles defends the walls of Thebes with great guns<sup>g</sup>. And the priest<sup>h</sup> Amphiorax, or Amphiaraus, is styled a bishop<sup>i</sup>, whose wife is also mentioned. At a council held at Thebes, concerning the right of succession to the throne, Esdras and Solomon are cited: and the history of Nehemiah rebuilding the walls of Jerufalem is introduced<sup>k</sup>. The moral intended by this calamitous tale consists in shewing the pernicious effects of war: the diabolical nature of which our author still further illustrates by observing, that discord received its origin in hell, and that the first battle ever fought was that of Lucifer and his legion of rebel angels<sup>l</sup>. But that the argument may have the fullest confirmation, Saint Luke is then quoted to prove, that avarice, ambition, and envy, are the primary sources of contention; and that Christ came into the world to destroy these malignant principles, and to propagate universal charity.

At the close of the poem, the mediation of the holy virgin is invoked, to procure peace in this life, and salvation in the next. Yet it should be remembered, that this piece is written by a monk, and addressed to pilgrims<sup>m</sup>.

<sup>e</sup> Pag. 626. col. 2.

<sup>f</sup> Pag. 625. col. 1.

<sup>g</sup> Pag. 644. col. 2. Great and small,  
and some as large as *tonnes*.

<sup>h</sup> As in Chaucer.

<sup>i</sup> Pag. 645. col. 1.

<sup>k</sup> Pag. 636. col. 1.

<sup>l</sup> Pag. 660. col. 1.

<sup>m</sup> Lydgate was near fifty when this poem was written. pag. 622. col. 2.