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THE DELINEATION OF CHARACTER
IN
CHAUCER'S NARRATIVE POETRY

BY

PAULUS JOHN HERMAN LANGE
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THESIS

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I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY Paulus John Herman Lange
ENTITLED The Delineation of Character in Chaucer's Narrative Poetry
BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

[Signatures]
H. F. V. Jones In Charge of Thesis
Head of Department

Recommendation concurred in

Committee on Final Examination*

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

Within recent decades much has been written on Chaucer and his poetry. His life, his times, his sources, his methods of composition, his relations with the other poets of the age,—all these subjects have come in for their share of attention. Important as these matters are, one should nevertheless remember that they are not the end of Chaucerian scholarship. If added knowledge concerning the poet's life or any of the other subjects referred to sheds further light on his work, or reveals to us hitherto hidden beauties, then the labors of those scholars to whom we are indebted have been of inestimable value. If, however, it does not do this, or perhaps at the most only to a negligible degree, then their work has been profitless as far as we are concerned.

The purpose of this study is not to shed light on some baffling problem of Chaucerian scholarship, nor does it offer any new interpretation of facts already ascertained. Work of this nature is to be done by mature scholars, and not by neophytes who scarcely realize the difficulties confronting the scholar in this particular field of English literature. The essay does undertake, however, to present an independent treatment of Chaucer's delineation of character in all of his narrative poetry. And in so far as it accomplishes this purpose, it may be of service in stimulating a greater appreciation for certain heretofore rather neglected phases of his art.

Altho Chaucer wrote numerous lyrics and considerable prose, comparatively speaking, yet by far the major portion of his work consists of narrative poetry. In reading this, the casual reader will at once observe
the large number of individualized characters that pass before him. King and plowman, ecclesiast and thief, nun and prostitute, youth and age, beauty and ugliness,—these and many others come and go. In fact, so many and so varied are the different personalities that it almost appears as if his verse consisted of nothing else than the delineation of character.

It is entirely reasonable to assume that this power of Chaucer to delineate character was similar to the genius of all great writers in so far at least that it did not unfold overnight, but that it was a growth and a development. Like any other artist, Chaucer had to serve an apprenticeship before he became a master. His immature genius had to grope more or less blindly among the materials at hand before it could know which was suited to its purpose. Even then it was not certain; only too often what had at first appeared to be gold proved in the end to be little more than dross. Thus continuous experimentation was necessary. Writers of our own day who have the critical results of the centuries to fall back upon, pass thru a similar period of trial and error. With only alien Muses to learn from, we need not be surprised that it required years before Chaucer felt himself strong enough to assert fully his own poetic independence and to subordinate to his own genius the knowledge which he had learned from others.

If we study the narrative poetry of Chaucer in chronological order, I think it is possible to trace a gradual increase in power and variety of character delineation. The fact that the exact date of each of his works is not definitely known is negligible in this case. We do know the approximate year, and in a study of this nature that is all we need. We shall find that in his earlier work Chaucer kept very close to his models or sources. Like a child that has just entered a beautiful but strange garden with all
manner of flowers blossoming here and there, he desired to explore the fair
fields of Poesy, and yet, again like the child, he feared to roam far from
his guide. Thus it comes about that in the delineation of character, Chaucer
at first followed the conventions of his predecessors. He did not immediately
dare to walk abroad in the Garden of Humanity, selecting flowers for his
garland here and there, with no regard to the fancies or prejudices of others.
The earliest narrative work of Chaucer that has come down to us is the trans-
lation of a part of the Romance of the Rose. There was, of course, no
opportunity for independent work in that connection, but it showed in what
direction the poet's inclinations were directed. Later, he began to write
poems fashioned after French models, almost all of which contained single
lines or groups of lines translated with a greater or less degree of exact-
ness from the French.

It should be said here that at this time French poetry had become
pretty well stereotyped. The freshness, the originality, the daring of youth
had long passed away. As a result, the poetry of the day was governed
entirely by conventions. The only themes considered proper for poetic
treatment were those connected with courtly love. Common folk and everything
that pertained to them were scrupulously disregarded, for it was that the
heavenly Muse could not survive in such a mean and sordid atmosphere. Even
in the narrow field of Courtly Love, the range was narrow and the manner of
treatment predetermined. Certain stock comparisons were permissible; all
others were taboo. Specified sentiments were considered proper; such as
differed were ruled out. In describing the hero or the heroine, certain
characteristics of body, mind, and soul were absolutely essential. No matter
how widely the person under consideration differed from these requirements,
he or she was ruthlessly placed on the Procrustean bed of approved convention.
The dissatisfaction of Chaucer with this state of affairs can be traced even in his earlier work, but at that time he was unable of his own strength to free himself from the shackles that bound him. However, in the winter of 1372 to 1373 and again in 1378, Chaucer had occasion to visit Italy. There he became acquainted to a certain extent with the work of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio. At this time he must have felt like a person who, struggling for a long time thru a thicket of opposing briars and brambles, has reached the top of a high hill and sees spread out before him a prospect of undreamed beauty. From that time forth the shackles of French convention were loosed, and altho the early influence was never entirely lost, it thenceforth occupied a subordinate place in the poetical art of Chaucer.

However, even the comparative freedom of the Italians did not permanently satisfy the English poet. It is true that it gave him a wider range in the delineation of courtly characters, but Chaucer realized that the court represented only a very small portion of humanity. The Church had been extending its influence and increasing its power tremendously. Altho it had already passed its zenith as a political institution, it was still a factor to be reckoned with and a great many persons were in its service. The poetry of both France and Italy scarcely recognized its existence. The professions fared no better. And finally, there was the great mass of humanity that belonged to neither of these categories. They were the tradespeople, the artisans, the agricultural workers, and the laborers. Even tho the courtly poets had looked with disdain upon them, Chaucer realized full well that very often it was just among this class of folk that the Muse dwelt in all her pristine charm.

It is not strange, therefore, that Chaucer should after a time become as dissatisfied with the Italian poetry as he had been with the French.
It was at this point that he turned to his own genius. The Italian influence was subordinated in the same manner as the French. From that time forth Chaucer wrote primarily as an Englishman for Englishmen. He depicted the struggle of humanity about him and the times in which he lived as no other poet in the entire range of English literature has ever done. While the traces of both the French and the Italian influences can be seen all thru the warp and the woof of his later work, yet the finished fabric bears but slight resemblance to the original pattern.

The purpose of this study is, in brief, then, to trace the development of Chaucer's delineation of character in his narrative poetry from his earliest work thru to his latest. In order to avoid useless repetition, it has been considered best to make three more or less arbitrary divisions of characters. The first comprises such persons as quite obviously belong to the courtly classes. The second group is composed of persons in the service of the Church, of clerks, or students, and of various professional men. In the third class, finally, have been grouped all persons that for some reason or other did not appear qualified for either of the other two. It consists, however, largely of the bourgeoisie and the common folk.

Bearing these preliminary remarks in mind, we may now consider the first group, The Representatives of Chivalry.
CHAPTER II.

THE REPRESENTATIVES OF CHIVALRY.

Before the consideration of any portion of Chaucer's poetry is begun, it is well to take a brief review of the literary and social stage of his day. To say that every man is a product of his times and that the influences of his day are certain to manifest themselves in his writings is a truism, and yet it is one that we are only too prone to forget again and again. We are always inclined to isolate a great man, be he poet or statesman, reformer or soldier, from his surroundings, and to overlook the fact that he towers above his fellows only because he is borne on their shoulders.

Thus it was with Chaucer. He surpasses his predecessors and contemporaries largely because he could build upon the literary foundations that others had laid before him. He took tribute from distant climes as well as from near at home, and in the alembic of his genius he transformed the baser metal into gold. From the Orient, from Greece and Rome, from France, and from his own England he gathered the elements that combined to form a body of poetry second only to that of Shakespeare.

The first influence that came to bear on the developing poetical genius of Chaucer was from France. Here society was more highly developed than in England, and the interest in literature and art was correspondingly greater. In some respects refinement had reached a degree that augured ill for the future. This was especially true of the institution known as the Court of Love.

The system of Courtly Love began at an early period in the south of France and gradually advanced northward. "Gathered about several small courts, there existed as early as the eleventh century a brilliant society in which woman held the supreme place, and in which, under her influence,
vast importance was attached to social etiquette and decorum. Definite rules
governed the sexes in all their relations, and especially in matters of love.\textsuperscript{1}

This emphasis on "matters of love" is especially worthy of notice, for amours were the chief form of amusement at these courts. Even as a squire the future knight was expected to choose a "lady-love" whom he was to regard with an adoration "at once earnest, respectful, and the more meritorious if concealed."\textsuperscript{2} However, "nobility of rank was not a requisite in the troubadour lovers of Provence. Poetry seems to have been a common meeting ground for knight and burgher, prince and peasant."\textsuperscript{3} Perhaps it was largely due to this difference in education and social rank, perhaps more to the medieval propensity for order and conformity that there gradually developed a well-defined system of courtly love which finally crystallized in the \textit{De Arte Honeste Amandi} of Andreas Cappellanus.

A summary of the rules or statutes of love generally accepted in those days has been given by Neilson.\textsuperscript{4} These are twenty in number, and are classified under four headings as follows:

a. Laws of the kingdom of love.

b. Rules for chivalrous love.

c. Lovers' symptoms.

d. Precepts of seduction.

Along with the development of these rules, there gradually came into use a large number of stock phrases and conceits to describe the love pangs of the sighing lover and the beauty of the mistress. Love was that

\textsuperscript{1} Dodd, \textit{Courtly Love in Gower and Chaucer}, p.1.

\textsuperscript{2} Encyclopaedia Britannica, vol. XV, p. 854.

\textsuperscript{3} Dodd, \textit{Courtly Love in Gower and Chaucer}, p. 12.

\textsuperscript{4} The \textit{Origin and Sources of the Court of Love}, p. 168 ff.
of as a sickness that produced sleeplessness, trembling, and pallor. It furthermore caused the lover to become confused and to lose his speech when in the presence of his lady. Other beliefs in this connection were "the idea that love is caused by the beauty of the opposite sex; the conceit that thru the eye beauty enters the heart, inflicting a wound which only the lady can heal; and the fancy that, tho absent from the loved one, the lover leaves his heart with her." ¹

Then there were also certain conventional situations. A great many of the love poems are in the nature of a dream or vision. The dreamer finds himself in a garden or meadow, fresh with the flowers of spring, and in the presence of mythical or allegorical figures.

Furthermore, there was gradually created by common consent an ideal mistress. If Nature had not made the lady of the poet's choice in accordance with the approved model, the poet changed her accordingly. In Dodd we find the typical lady of courtly love described as follows: "Her perfection is pictured in her physical beauty, her character, and her influence upon others. Her physical beauty, when portrayed, accords with the medieval ideal. Her hair is blonde or golden; her eyes beautiful; her complexion fresh and clear; her mouth rosy and smiling; her flesh white, soft, and smooth; her body slender, well formed, and without blemish. In character she is distinguished for her courtesy, kindness, refinement, and good sense. In short all that makes a perfect woman, in soul or in manners, the poet's love possesses. Her influence on others is always ennobling. Her goodness affects all who come near her, making them better." ²

The typical lover was less sharply delineated physically, but

¹ Dodd, Courtly Love in Chaucer and Gower, p. 13.
² Ibid. p. 10.
certain other requirements were quite as absolute as any demanded of the lady. He must be unwavering in his affection, he must not "supplant" any other man; he should be willing to marry his mistress if circumstances required; and his love should inspire in him "nobility of character and moderation in all his conduct."  

It was under the influence of literature animated by such ideals as these that Chaucer produced his first work. That the narrow restrictions which this poetry placed upon him chafed his genius can readily be understood. Almost from the very first he struggled against it. How far he succeeded will be seen in the discussion of his early poems.

In 1372, about three years after writing the Book of the Duchess, Chaucer went on his first journey to Italy, and during his stay there he made the acquaintance of Italian literature. Within the century a triumvirate of geniuses such as few literatures can equal had given a tremendous stimulus to letters in that country. These were Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio. Each one of the three had been animated in his own way by the spirit of the Renaissance and had set in motion literary forces that are felt even in our own day.

Of the three masters mentioned, Boccaccio made the greatest impression upon Chaucer. Several reasons might be advanced for this, but undoubtedly the chief one is that the man Chaucer had more in common with the man Boccaccio than with either of the other two. Ker tells us 2 that Boccaccio is "equable and sanguine, takes the world lightly, is not inclined to make grievances for himself nor to remember them; at the same time a hard

1 Dodd, Courtly Love in Court and Chaucer, p. 9.
2 Ker, Essays on Medieval Literature, p. 54.
worker, yet not distressing himself about his work."

Unlike Petrarch, Boccaccio had torn himself loose to a large extent from the doctrine that "all poetry is allegory". He invented definite literary forms and founded literary schools. Among these may be mentioned types of the prose and the pastoral romance. In the Teseide he also made the first attempt to reproduce the classical epic poem in a modern language. Finally, Boccaccio "had a natural gift for story-telling, and for coherence in story-telling." And this was the one thing that we fell Chaucer's genius was striving to attain. The restrictions of form, spirit, and subject matter of the French Court of Love poetry were uncomfortable; as has already been said, they chafed him. Boccaccio showed him the way out.

It must not be supposed, however, that Chaucer became a mere imitator thru his study of Boccaccio. His genius was too great for that. He learned much from him in the way of construction, proportion, and exposition. But he himself developed that simplicity of style which adds force and dignity to mere narrative; he introduced the Comic Muse to modern literature; and he, finally, mastered that wonderful art of characterization which made him the fore-runner of the modern novelist. In all of these important respects, any one of which would have been sufficient to make him a force in English literature, he surpassed his master.

There is, however, another influence on the genius of Chaucer that must always be kept in mind when discussing the knightly characters in his narrative poetry. That is the status of chivalry in England during the

1 Ker, Essays on Medieval Literature, p. 61.
2 Ibid, p. 65.
3 The Filocolo and the Fiammette.
4 The Ameto.
5 Ker, Essays on Medieval Literature, p. 73.
fourteenth century.

Edward III, who reigned from 1327 to 1377, was "a consummate knight, and he possessed extraordinary vigour and energy of temperament. His court, described at length in Froissart's famous chronicle, was the most brilliant in Europe, and he was himself well fitted to be the head of the magnificent chivalry that obtained fame in the French wars."¹ This spirit of knighthood manifested itself abroad in magnificent victories and deeds of valor and at home in glorious tournaments and nobility of conduct. Many men of the day ordered their lives by the principles of knighthood. In the minds of such, chivalrous conduct and religion were closely associated, for even tho the days of the Crusades were past, its ideals were still a vital force in the spiritual life of humanity.

Chaucer's knowledge of and interest in both church and chivalry was stimulated and fostered largely by his almost continuous connection with the court in one capacity or other. The earliest positive knowledge that we have of him finds him already in the service of Lionel, Duke of Clarence and third son of Edward III. His father, too, was in attendance on the king, if not continuously, at least on various occasions during the future poet's infancy and childhood.

Bearing these various considerations in mind, it is possible to understand the gradual development of Chaucer's poetical genius. His attention would first be drawn to the French Court of Love poetry with its extreme artificiality of subject-matter and treatment, for that was the only kind popular among the aristocracy of England. After his journey to Italy, a new vision of literary freedom is opened to his mind. This shows itself in

¹ Encyclopaedia Britannica, vol. VIII, p. 995.
vastly improved structure and far greater delicacy of character delineation. Finally when his powers were mature, he was more and more influenced by the life which existed around him.

The narrative poems treating chiefly of knights and ladies which were written under the French influence are the partial translation of the Romance of the Rose, the Book of the Duchess, the Parliament of Fowls, and the Legend of Good Women.

Troilus and Criseyde, the Knight's Tale, and the Franklin's Tale, the sources of which are to be found in Boccaccio, illustrate the changes that were produced in Chaucer thru his acquaintance with Italian literature.

The descriptions of the Knight, the Squire, and the socially ambitious Franklin in the General Prologue, the tales of the Wife of Bath, the Squire, and the Nun's Priest, and the Rime of Sir Thomas show us the attitude which Chaucer took toward chivalry in his later years when the French and Italian influences had been fully assimilated.

For the purpose of our discussion, Chaucer's first work, the partial translation of the Romance of the Rose, may be dismissed with a word. Beyond the fact that it indicates an interest in this kind of literature, it is of no particular importance, for Chaucer made no attempt to modify the original version. It does serve a valuable purpose, however, as a standard of comparison. We can only fully appreciate the true greatness of Chaucer when we place his poetry, teeming with life, alongside the artificial conventions found in the Romance of the Rose.

The first original work of Chaucer that we have to consider is

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the Book of the Duchess. As far as the general structure and the material of
the poem is concerned, there is very little difference between it and the
conventional French poetry of the period. The setting, the Dreamer, the
story of Ceyx and Alcyone, the portrait of the Duchess, and the Black Knight
are all to be found in some guise or other in the poetry of the day.
Chaucer's genius is to be seen in the general plot, which is original, and
the life that he has infused into the Duchess Blanche. The estimates con-
cerning the Black Knight and the Dreamer vary greatly, but no one has any-
ting but praise for the personality of the heroine.

The description of Blanche has been traced to Guillaume de Machaut's
Remede de Fortune. We have the conventional golden hair, the rosy white
complexion, the ravishing perfection of form, and the absolute goodness of
heart,—in short, all the qualities that were considered essential to the
ideal heroine of the Court of Love. But there is an intangible difference.
Instead of the painted wax figure, we have a living, breathing personality
that makes a powerful appeal to us.

Lowell's remark concerning Blanche,—"one of the most beautiful
women that was ever drawn," is almost too well known to repeat, and yet
it is scarcely exaggerated praise. More recent that Lowell, but no less
complimentary is a comment by Schofield. "Chaucer's portrait of Blanche

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1 See in this connection p. 8 ff., Sypherd, Studies in Chaucer's
"House of Fame" and Dodd, Courtly Love in Chaucer and Gower. Dodd, especially,
goese into great detail and makes an elaborate comparison between the description
of Blanche and the typical mistress of medieval literature.
2 Kittredge, Guillaume de Machaut and the "Book of the Duchess",
3 Conversations on Some of the Old Poets, p. 98.
4 Chivalry in English Literature, p. 18.
is the first life-like picture in English literature of an actual English lady. In her he portrayed gladness, friendliness, sweetness, débonnaire, but no quality at odds with straightforward honesty and loyal wifely devotion."

Nothing gives us deeper insight into the character of Blanche nor illumines the somber figure of the Knight to a greater degree than the nature of the affection that existed between the two. There is nothing here that even approaches the artificial and socially dangerous liaisons of the French Court of Love and its erotic literature. Blanche is nothing if not a woman. She never was a coquette—her honesty and wifely devotion would not permit it. And yet withal she is not a sheltered hot house plant, but a strong personality, physically and mentally quite able to carry her share of the world's burdens. "It is faithful wedded love that the Book of the Duchess honors." ¹ And it is this faithful, pure, noble love that lived beyond the grave which gives both the Duchess and the Black Knight such a grip upon our heart strings.

Chaucer's next work of importance was the Parliament of Fowls. The objection may be made that such characters as appear in this poem are not human at all. This, of course, is obvious. We should remember, however, that the whole is generally accepted by scholars as an allegory wherein is described the wooing of Anne of Bohemia by Richard II and two German princes.² Proceeding on this assumption, the "formel egle" represents Lady Anne, the "tercel egle" or "the foul royal", Richard, and the two other eagles "of lower kinde", the earlier suitors for Anne's hand. These four are of royal estate. But in addition to these there are the peers of the realm who are

represented by the "foules of ravyne", chief of whom was "the royal egle . . .
. . that with his sharpe look perceth the sonne". 1

Altho this poem is of a later date than the Book of the Duchess, no single character is delineated with a subtlety equal to that of Blanche. The reasons are various. In the first place, the atmosphere is not nearly so favorable. It is always a meeting where

". . . of foules every kinde
That in this worlde han fethres and stature,
Men mighten in that place assembled finde." 2

Furthermore, the entire treatment is in accordance with the rules laid down by the medieval courts of love. The general structure of the poem is in accordance with the conventional requirements. The pleas of the suitors and the comments by the various classes represented likewise follow the fashion. While Chaucer was still very much under the influence of the French school, yet we feel at once that the author of the Parliament of Fowls is a much greater artist than the author of the Book of the Duchess. This is most noticeable in the parliament scene with its lengthy debate. It required no little insight to portray the attitude of the several varieties of fowls that were present and a rather delicate sense of dramatic values was necessary to carry thru successfully the entire plan.

The formal eagle is one of the more interesting characters. We are told that she is

". . . of shap the gentileste
That ever she [Nature] among hir werkes fonde,
The most benigne and the goodlieste;
In hir was every vertu at his reste,
So ferforth, that Nature hir-self had blisse
To loke on hir, and ofte hir bek to kisse." 3

The formal is thus like all mistresses of medieval literature, - the paragon

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1 The Parliament of Fowls, l. 331.
2 Ibid, l. 365 ff.
3 Ibid, l. 373 ff.
of her sex. Like a true medieval lady, she takes no part in the action, but contents herself to listen demurely to the pleas that are made and the discussion that arises around her person. She says never a word except at the very end, altho at times she blushes modestly

"Right as the freshe, rede rose newe
Ayen the somer-sonne coloured is." 1

The three suitors are likewise described in terms of the conventional love poetry. The "foul royal" is the especial favorite of the goddess, for she introduces him as

"The wyse and worthy, secre, trewe as stel,
The which I formed have, as ye may see,
In every part as hit best lyketh me." 2

He too is a true courtier. His many good qualities have not turned his head, for he pleads humbly "with hed enclyned and ful humble chere" as properly becomes a noble knight. His speech to the formel is fervent with chivalrous sentiment. He is his mistress' for all time, no matter what she may do. He begs her bounty, but if she fail to vouchsafe him this, he is content to die in her presence. If at any time he be found

"...unteewe
Disobeysaunt, or wilful negligent,
Avaultour, or in proces love a newe,
I prav to you this be my jugement,
That with these foules I be al to-rent,
That ilke day that ever she me finde
To her untrewe, or in my Gilte unkinde." 3

The tercel is in truth a royal lover!

The contrast in tone between the speeches of the first and second as well as the third tercel has been commented upon at some length

1 The Parliament of Fowles, l. 442 ff.
2 Ibid, l. 395 ff.
3 Ibid, l. 428 ff.
by Dodd. 1 It is really unnecessary for Chaucer to tell us that the second suitor is "of lower kinde," for we can feel the gulf that separates them in their very speeches. The second suitor's brusk "that shall not be" strikes the note to his entire speech. He claims the formel's love by virtue of his own devotion and is quite willing to be "hangen by the hals" if he should prove false, but there is wanting that perfect humility, smoothness of speech, refinement of manner, and noble consideration that is everywhere evident in the address of the first speaker.

A similar matter-of-fact tone pervades the wooing of the third tercel. He is not so presumptuous as the second; this, however, is to a large extent accounted for by his very short service. But his speech loses nothing of its effectiveness thereby; in fact one is tempted to believe that the wooing of the third tercel would in the majority of cases be more effective than that of the second.

The speeches are at length finished, much to the satisfaction of the impatient assembly, and Nature decides to let each class of fowls select some representative who shall deliver the opinion of his respective body. The "tercel et of the fauccon" speaks for the "foules of ravyne". His opinion, as might be expected, is in entire accordance with the courtly views regarding love. In the minds of the "foules of ravyne" there can be no question but that that suitor is most fit for the formel who is

"... the worthieste
Of knighthode, and longest hath used it,
Moste of estat, of blode the gentileste." 2

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1 Dodd, Courtly Love in Chaucer and Gower, p. 124 ff.
2 Parliament of Fowls, l. 549 ff.
He sums up his report with the trenchant implication that it is really unnecessary for the assembly to decide the question for the lady. She herself undoubtedly knows which of the three is the most desirable "for hit is light to know".

While the worm-eating birds, the water fowl, and those who feed on seeds, representing respectively the bourgeoisie, the mercantile classes, and the agricultural interests, do not belong to the knightly class, yet they serve in a negative way to enhance the fundamental difference between the standards of knighthood and the rest of the world. For this reason they may well be spoken of at this time.

The goose was selected as the spokesman for the water fowl. There is very little of sentiment in her opinion.

"'But she will love him, lat him love another.'" 1 is her advice. This counsel, so prosaic as to be almost painful, arouses the opposition of the other classes. Especially the turtle-dove, speaking for the other seed eating classes, holds that a lover should serve his lady as long as he lives.

"'Nay, god forbede a lover shulde chaunge Thogh that his lady evermore be straunge, Yet let him serve hir ever, til he be deed.'" 2

The duck considers such a notion to be ridiculous. Wherein lies the sense of loving when love is not returned? God knows, there are more than a pair of stars in the heavens.

Again the ire of the knightly classes is aroused!

"'Now fy, cherl!' quod the gentil tercelat, 'Out of the dunghil com that word ful right, That what love is, thou canst not see ne gesse.'" 3

'That what love is, thou canst not see ne gesse' sums up the entire

1 Parliament of Fowls, l. 567.  2 l. 582 ff.  3 l. 596 ff.
attitude of chivalry toward the populace. The common rabble never can hope to understand the full significance of love in the life of humankind. Culture and leisure are necessary to a true appreciation, and these the ruling classes alone possess.

But the storm of opposition aroused by the duck was mild in comparison to that provoked by the cuckoo, the speaker "for foul that eteth worm".

"'So I,' quod he, 'may have my make in pees,
I recche not how longe that ye stryve;
Lat ech of hem be soleyn al hir lyve.'"  

This utterly selfish attitude infuriates the merlin, who denounces the luckless cuckoo in no uncertain terms.

"'Thou modrer of the heysugge on the braunche,
That broghte thee forth, thou rewtheles glutoun!
Live thou soleyn, wormes corrupcioun!
For no fors is of lakke of thy nature;
Go, lewed be thou, while the world may doure!'" 2

The tale now draws rapidly to a close and there is little more to be said. Nature makes peace between the turbulent elements, and decides that the formel herself shall choose whom she wishes as a mate. The formel prays that a year of respite be granted in order that she may make her choice. Nature grants the request and thereupon, after a select chorus has sung a roundel to Nature, all the birds fly to their respective homes.

Taking everything into consideration, there can be no doubt that the Parliament of Fowls marks a distinct advance over Chaucer's previous work. The structure, in spite of its obvious faults, is superior to the Book of the Duchess. The characterization is more original and is marked by increased variety and power. More important than any of these, however, is the increased range in social sympathies. A French poet of Chaucer's

1 Parliament of Fowls, l. 605 ff.  2 l. 612 ff.
power would scarcely have ventured to portray geese and ducks as sitting in judgement over eagles. That would be to undermine the very foundations of society. But Chaucer was beginning to see the possibilities that mankind as a whole offered him in his favorite subject of character portrayal. This interest was undoubtedly stimulated by the increased importance that the lower classes were beginning to assume in the national life. The Good Parliament in 1376 was only one of many signs indicating the rising spirit of democracy. In the light of his later work, the Canterbury Tales, where he delineated impartially both the high and the low, the Parliament is of considerable interest.

A few years after completing the Parliament of Fowle, Chaucer began another work that, in so far at least as structure is concerned, also reminds us of the Canterbury Tales. This poem is the unfinished Legend of Good Women.

While we do not know certainly how or when Chaucer first conceived the Legend, there are two poems that might have suggested it. The first of these is the Heroïdes of Ovid. It is composed of a series of imaginary letters written by heroines of mythology and sent to their false lovers. The second, the De Claris Mulieribus of Boccaccio, describes the fortunes of various famous women. Either of these could very well have stimulated Chaucer to undertake a similar work.

The Legend presents a curious combination of two diametrically opposed forces battling for supremacy. As can be seen in the prologue, the old Court of Love conventions still retain a strong influence over Chaucer. In fact, we have evidence that the English court of the day amused itself "by dividing into two amorous orders - the Leaf and the Flower - and by discussing, no doubt with an abundance of allegorical
imagery, the comparative excellence of those two emblems or of the qualities they typified.  

While Chaucer wisely refrains from taking sides, he yet refers to both and states his own position.  At the same time the interest of the Queen and the other members of the court would be aroused.

Bearing these considerations in mind, we can easily understand the poet's choice of heroines for the legends. All of them are taken from the pages of classical literature. The dominant theme, constancy in love, is, as will be recalled, a key-stone in the statutes of the Court of Love. Naturally, the characterization would have to emphasize this quality in the personalities of the heroines.

But regardless of this attachment to the past, there is also present a spirit of independence and self-reliance. The prologue serves primarily as an introduction to the legends which are to follow, telling us why they are written and what their nature is to be. It is more clean-cut than are those of the Book of the Duchess and the Parliament of Fowls, and it thus achieves its end in a more direct and more effective manner. Again, the division of the poem into "legends" gives far greater opportunity for varied characterization than could well be done in the Parliament.

Compared with the Canterbury Tales, there is, of course, much to be desired. There was no possibility of one heroine influencing the other or drawing out her character. Furthermore, even under the most favorable circumstances the characterization was certain to be more or less incomplete, even distorted, for the purpose of the poem was not to depict various phases of life as we see it before us in the Canterbury Tales with its motley array


2 Version A, l. 71 ff.
of rich and poor, learned and ignorant, high and low, respected and despised, 
but to fashion

"... a glorious Legende
Of gode Wemen, maides and wyves,
That weren trewe in lovinge al hir lyves;
And telle of false men that him bitrayen
That al hir lyf ne doon nat but assayen
How many wemen they may doon a shame." 1

The general conception of the poem is too well known to require extended comment. Chaucer, after a hard day's work, goes out into the meadows where he falls asleep. During his slumbers he dreams that the Queen Alcestis, accompanied by the God of Love and nineteen ladies of classical literature, appears to him. The god is angry because in some of his poetry he has cast reflection upon womankind. Alcestis, however, intercedes and reminds the wrathful deity that Chaucer has also written poetry in which women are honored. The god is finally appeased thru the poet's promise to write the legends of the nineteen women who remained true in love and the men who deceived them.

The two prologues to this poem have given rise to much controversy, but there is little in these discussions that pertains to our purpose. The only two persons described at any length are the queen Alcestis and the God of Love. Beyond the wrath of the god and the kindliness of Alcestis, we are told very little, however, concerning their character, for it is their external appearance that is chiefly emphasized.

The legends, as has already been implied, were originally intended to be nineteen in number. Chaucer, for some reason or other, did not complete more than eight and a portion of the ninth. Since only their love affairs are to be described, their characterization naturally remains very incomplete. Chaucer has combined his sources with the prevalent court of love conventions so as to make rather interesting stories, but there is lacking in all the

1 Text A, l. 473 ff.
pulsating humanity that we find in *Troilus and Cressida* and to an even greater extent in the *Canterbury Tales*.

All the characters are very much alike in appearance and personality. The woman, invariably is "fair as is the rose in May", "the fairest creature that ever was y-formed", "fairest then is the brighte sonne", "wys and fair that fairer saw thee never man with yë", or "fairer on to sene than is the flour against the brighte sonne." When the author is silent concerning her beauty, he is certain to comment on her goodness. Her heart swells with compassion toward apparently ship-wrecked sailors, she is troubled about her absent husband, she cannot bear to see the innocent suffer, or she is like to a goddess "that of the shefe she sholde be the corn".

The lovers are also without exception men of very prepossessing qualities. They are all of fine appearance, of courtly bearing, and ingratiating manner. However, all of them for some reason or other either die or are untrue to the women whom they have misled. Antonius makes away with himself out of despair and Cleopatra follows him in death. Piramus believes Thisbe to have been killed by a lion and commits suicide. She, finding him dying, mingles her blood with his. Eneas tires of Dido and slips away secretly.

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1 W. G. Dodd in his *Courtly Love in Chaucer and Gower*, pp. 208-232, has made a very thoros study of the court of love element in the *Legend of Good Women*. This work is invaluable in this connection.

2 Cleopatra, l. 613.
3 Dido, l. 974.
4 Ibid, l. 1007.
5 Medea, l. 1599.
6 Phyllis, l. 2425 ff.
7 Hypsipyle, l. 1473.
8 Lucretia, l. 1719 ff.
9 Ariadne, l. 1977 ff.
10 Hypermnestra, l. 2579.
Jason likewise leaves Hypsipyle and their two children. Not being content with this,

"For, to desyren, through his appetyt,
To doon with gentil wommen his delyt,"  
he marries Medea and, after having two children by her, he also steals away

"And wedded yit the thridde wyt anon."  

The betrayer of Lucretia, Tarquinnius, is a lustful prince, and Theseus deserts Ariadne on an uninhabited isle because he prefers her sister. Philomela, in her innocence, is lured by her brother-in-law, Tereus, into a cave where she is betrayed and her tongue cut out. Phyllis, like Hypsipyle and Medea, was forsaken by the false Demaphon.

Dodd has commented upon this similarity of theme and treatment in a very illuminating manner. He believes that ". . . in handling the tales which make up the individual legends, Chaucer was following a definite plan. . . .
This plan demanded a similar treatment for each of the separate stories: a treatment in which the loyalty of woman would be exalted and the falsity of men would be decried. Anything in his sources which would in any way emphasize either of these features, the poet would be careful to utilize. With equal care he would avoid any details which would tend to lessen this impression of the woman's faithfulness and the man's disloyalty."  

Chaucer's aim, in short, was not to depict all phases of character in the Legend of Good Women. Only in so far as they represented examples of constancy in love were they of any importance. This naturally weakens the human interest in the individual character for we feel, consciously or uncon-
consciously, that there is something lacking, something incomplete, in their
delineation.

Chaucer undoubtedly had a very similar feeling. We can in fact
trace its gradual development in the poem itself. When once the idea of his
masterwork began to take definite form, - which we believe it did about this
time, - we can easily understand why the Legend was never completed.

In the first place all of the characters were taken from antiquity.
No person of Chaucer's temperament could be expected to find the past more
interesting than the present. Secondly, the structure of the poem did not
permit that freedom of action which is so characteristic of the Canterbury
Tales. Just as it was possible in the latter for additional pilgrims to join
the original party, so for some reason or other one or two might easily
enough have been separated. There was, for instance, nothing at all to prevent
a certain drunken Miller to break a leg in falling from his horse, and thus
being required to remain behind at the next inn. Incidents such as these
could never have taken place in the Legend of Good Women. Finally, the very
circumstance that the same characteristics in all the nineteen ladies should
be emphasized must have made the prospect of completing the series extremely
distasteful when one remembers that in the Canterbury Tales there was no
necessity for any two to be alike.

The Legend of Good Women completes the list of Chaucer's narrative
poems in which the French influence predominates. This, however, does not
indicate that at the writing of this poem the Italian influence was about to
make itself felt. As a matter of fact the Legend was written approximately
at the close of the Italian period. It had been preceded as far as we are
able to ascertain by the Troilus and Criseyde,\(^1\) what is now known as the
Knight's Tale, and the Clerk's Tale, of which the sources of the first two
are to be found in Boccaccio and that of the second in Petrarch. The Legend
\(^1\) Cf. I.A 265 and B 332, Legend of Good Women.
is, therefore, in one sense of the term an atavism. But this is rather apparent than real, for, as has already been indicated, there are in it several striking resemblances to the *Canterbury Tales."

The exact order of the *Troilus and Criseyde, the *Knight's Tale, and the *Clark's Tale cannot be definitely determined either from external or internal evidence. It is, moreover, of little real value for our discussion. The one used above is more convenient and as likely to be correct as any.

The difference between the *Troilus and Criseyde and Chaucer's earlier work is at first almost unbelievable. From the point of view of structure and psychological portrayal, it is beyond a doubt Chaucer's greatest work. So nearly perfect is it in these respects that the remark by Kittredge,—"it is the first novel, in the modern sense, that ever was written in the world and one of the best,"—has become almost a platitude.

A brief comparison with the *Book of the Duchess will bring out the difference. Here we have conventional setting, conventional treatment, conventional characterization. In the *Troilus we have the city of Troy besieged by the Greeks, a well knit plot, action most fascinating in spite of its slowness, and characterization of an extremely subtle and intricate nature.

It is especially this last mentioned quality of characterization which makes the *Troilus so eminently great. The story itself is very short. A single paragraph of medium length is sufficient to contain all the important facts. But the characters of *Troilus and *Criseyde, *Pandarus and *Diomed, are so skillfully drawn and the influence of one upon the other

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1 Kittredge, *Chaucer and His Poetry*, p. 109.
is so subtle that we forget all about the absence of a plot as such and
devote all our attention to fathoming the hopes and fears of the dramatic
persons in this wonderful psychological study. Even there we shall in all
probability not come to a definite conclusion after a single perusal. The
character of Criseyde, especially, is so baffling that we will return to the
poem again and again.

Two contrasted views of the character of Criseyde have been pre-

cented by eminent scholars. Albert S. Cook in an article entitled The
Character of Criseyde\(^1\) and R. K. Root, in his Poetry of Chaucer, agree in
believing Criseyde to have been a designing woman who was ruled primarily by
considerations of expediency. She regarded with the most favor whatever pro-
mised to further her own interests to the greatest extent. When within the
walls of Troy, the protection of Troilus was highly desirable. If, in
addition to the protection, she could have her amorous desires satisfied, so
much the better. When once away from Troilus and in the company of Diomede,
she rapidly forgot her Trojan lover and took up with the Grecian. This, in
brief, is the opinion of these two scholars.

However plausible the view of Professor Cook and Professor Root
may appear, it neglects,- or at least does not stress sufficiently,- certain
essential elements. In the first place we must remember that Criseyde has
already been married. It is hardly to be expected that she should display
the same attitude as an eighteen year old maiden to love and marriage. In
the second place, identifying the Criseyde of Chaucer with the Criseyde to
be found in the sources or variations of the poem is scarcely fair to

\(^1\) Publ. Mod. Lang. Assoc., v. 22 (O.S.), p. 531 ff.
Chaucer. His work in this particular instance is not a translation, but rather an interpretation of the personality of the heroine. Naturally, then, it would differ. While he undoubtedly drew his plot from Boccaccio, yet he has added, omitted, and modified until the result has become an original work that at least in this most important matter of characterization must be judged independently of the sources. However, let us consult the poem itself and see what conclusions we may draw.

As far as Crisseyde's general appearance is concerned, there is not much to be said beyond the statement that she is a typical medieval heroine:

"So aungellyk was hir natyf beautee,
That lyk a thing immortal semed she,
As doth an hevenish parfit creature,
That dow was sent in scorning of nature." 1

Again in Book V we are told that

"... of shap, of face, and eek of chere,
There mighte been no fairer creature." 2

She often wore her "sonnish" hair streaming down her back, tied only with a thread of gold. 3 Her complexion was rosy, and her slender but erect figure was a delight to the eye. 4

While we are not told so much about her character as about her physical appearance, yet the references are no less definite.

"She sobre was, eek simple, and wys with-al,
The best y-norished eek that mighte be,
And goodly of hir speche in general,
Charitable, estatliche, lusty, and free;
Ne never-mo ne lekkede hir pitee;
Tendre-korted, slydinge of corage." 5

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1 l.I, 102 ff. 4 l. III, 1247 ff.
2 l.V, 807 ff. 5 l. V, 820.
3 l.V, 809 ff.
Previous to this, almost at the very beginning, we have been told that

". . . . whyl she was dwellinges in that citee,
Kepte hir estat, and bothe of yonge and olde
Ful wel beloved, and wel men of hir tolde."  

Criseyde undoubtedly had her faults, but she can scarcely have been a designing woman. Her weakness was the weakness of body and soul that all flesh is heir to in a greater or less degree.

When first we meet her in her cloistered seclusion, there is nothing to indicate that she is dissatisfied with life or desirous to go out and dazzle the eyes of the warriors with her beauty. She appears perfectly content to remain among her maidens and find her delight in the simple pleasures of the home.

It is only when her uncle Pandarus comes to her and thru various subtle speeches arouses her interest in Troilus that she takes any notice of him. Even then it is not so much a matter of personal interest as a desire to save Troy. But there is one price that she will not pay even for this and that is her honor.

After a time, however, when she became better acquainted with Troilus, there gradually developed a love for the noble warrior. The soliloquy which she indulges in shortly after this may appear rather cold and calculating on the surface. But let us look the facts in the face. How many women similarly situated, would not consider the advantages and disadvantages in very much the same way? Are not most romantic marriages found in story books rather than in real life? And as has been said before, Criseyde is not an eighteen year old maiden in the midst of her first attachment, but a mature

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1. l. I, 129 ff.  
2. l. II, 701 ff.
woman who has been married and who is in no little danger of life.  

And yet it is not all calculation. A good deal of sentiment enters into her thought:-

"'Shal I nat loven, in cas if that me lest?  
And though that I myn herte sette at reste  
Upon this knight, that is the worthiaste,  
And kepe alwey myn honour and my name,  
By alle right, it may do me no shame.'"

But even as she knows the joys of loving and of being loved, she also knows the ruth thereof:

"'May I nought wel in other folk aspye  
Hir dредful løye, hir constreynt, and hir peyne?  
Ther loveth noon, that she nath why to pleyne.'"

The fury of slanderous tongues, the faithlessness of men, the duties to the beloved, - these and many more considerations would bid her pause. For the time being, she cannot decide between the two courses; spent with the mental struggle, she goes to her maids in the garden.

Here she walked to and fro,-

"'Til at the laste Antigone the shene  
Can on a Troian song to singe clere,'" in praise of love. Crisseyde listens with rapt attention, for it almost appears as if the song were intended for her. To Antigone the fullness of life consists in loving and being loved:

"'And thanked be ye, lord, for that I love!  
This is the righte lyf that I am inne,  
To flemen alle manere vyce and sinne:  
This doth me so vertu for to entende,  
That day be day I in my wil amende.'"

Those that speak ill of love are either envious churls or they know not

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1 1. I, 85 ff.  
2 1. II, 758 ff.  
3 1. II, 775 ff.  
4 1. II, 824 ff.  
5 1. II, 850 ff.
what they say. Antigone cares not what others may think or do,-

"But I with al myn herte and al my might,
As I have seyd, wol love, un-to my laste." 1

When Criseyde asks who the author of the song may be and learns

""... the goodlieste mayde
Of greet estat in al the town of Troye,"" 2

her own problem is almost solved. No longer does the balance oscillate
equally from one side to the other. Even tho there still is an element of
doubt in her mind, the end can be clearly foreseen. Between the strategy
of Pandarus and her growing love for Troilus, she was bound to succumb:-

"Considered alle things as they stode,
No wonder is, sin she dide al for gode." 3

Convincing proof that she was not utterly lost in sin is seen in
her reply to Pandarus, when he inquires after her welfare the morning
following the night with Troilus. Had she been otherwise than inherently
good, she would not have answered as she did, nor would she have "wex for
shame al reed." It is rather difficult to imagine a brazen woman blushing
under such circumstances. She would rather have considered it a huge joke
and complimented the old uncle tremendously on his ingenuity.

Taking everything into consideration we are certainly justified
in believing that at this point of the narrative Criseyde is a good woman
and that her love for Troilus is sincere. That her conduct has not been
what it should have been in all respects, every one will admit. This
laxity, however, is rather seeming than real, for the standards of conduct
both in Chaucer's time and in that of the tale were far different from ours.

1. II, 869 ff. 2. II, 880 ff. 3. III, 923 ff.
Had the story come to some kind of a close with the end of the third book, all would have been well with the character of Criseyde. Nobody would have seriously questioned the inherent goodness of her life. However, during an exchange of prisoners, she is demanded by the Grecians. The grief at the inevitable parting is no less on the part of Criseyde than of Troilus. The latter falls into a swoon; the former into an agony of misery. Root remarks that the love of Criseyde for Troilus is not the love of Juliet for Romeo. Omitting for the sake of argument, all considerations of age and circumstance, this would not necessarily indicate that Criseyde was a less genuine character nor that her attachment was more sincere. Not all persons are capable of the love that possessed Juliet. The magnitude of Criseyde's grief cannot be denied. Furthermore, this grief was a genuine display of emotion. The full force of her sorrow overwhelmed her only after her friends had departed.

Bearing all these circumstances in mind, one wonders whether Root has really estimated her affection for Troilus correctly. That she should be only "very fond" of the Trojan knight seems hardly in keeping with the evidence. Making full allowance for medieval conventions, we might still say that the extremity of Criseyde's sorrow indicates that instead of being merely "fond" of Troilus, she passionately loved him.

How then, if Criseyde really cared for Troilus to the extent that we are forced to believe she did, are we to explain her fickleness? The problem is certainly no easy one, and it must be confessed that there is much in the fifth book that gives support to Root's contention. However, when one considers the evidence of all five books as a whole, it appears to

1 l. IV, 732 ff.  
2 The Poetry of Chaucer, p. 114.
me that the case against Criseyde remains very weak.

I think, moreover, that there is much of an extenuating nature even in the fifth book. In the first place we do not know

"... how longe it was betwene,
That she for-sook him for this Diomede." 1

Chaucer does not tell us, for he frankly confesses that

"There is non auctor telleth it, I wene." 2

Time, to some natures, is a wondrous solvent of love and, on the other hand, propinquity is the world's greatest match-maker. Altho her father was near, yet a powerful friend like Diomede was not to be despised. Finally, he was an importunate visitor whose brazen nature had no consideration for the feelings of others. 3 It is quite possible that in a moment of weakness she should have given Diomede the brooch which she had received from Troilus. Or he may even have taken it without her consent. The sorrow she experienced when she "falsed" Troilus indicates pretty well that she herself was not at all satisfied with the step that she had taken. That her conscience is pricking her shows in itself that she is not totally depraved. She is weak, and knows her weakness only too well.

It would appear that even Chaucer hesitated to condemn her. He refers us again and yet again to the "auctor" of the "stories". He, like many another writer, fell in love with his own creation. He cannot palliate all she did, - if she did all the stories indicated, - but

"... she so sory was for hir untrouthe,
Y-wis, I wolde excuse hir yet for routhe." 4

Whatever our ultimate opinion of Criseyde's character may be, we must concede that she is one of the great characters not only of Chaucer

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1 l. V, 1086 ff. 3 l. V, 1010 ff.
2 l. V, 1088. 4 l. V, 1098 ff.
but of all English literature. Her personality is not inspiring, but
neither is that of Becky Sharp. As in the case of Becky Sharp, however, it
is Criseyde's essential humanness that appeals to us. In this respect there
is a marked difference between her and Blanche. There is something so
spiritual about the Duchess that she seems almost angelic. Neither does
Criseyde stand aside from the main action, as does, for instance, the formal
eagle in the *Parliament of Fowls*. As one of the principal actors, it is
necessary for her to engage in the struggle and strife that is waged around
her. That she should go under is tragic beyond a doubt; yet our sympathy
goes out to her. We feel that the mistakes of Criseyde may warn us, but
the goodness of Blanche can scarcely inspire us, for there is lacking the
element of temptation overcome.

In a word, then, it is the humanness of Criseyde that makes
her one of the outstanding creations of English literature. Before Chaucer's
Italian training it would have been impossible for him to create her. As
it is, the traces of the French Court of Love influence can be traced on
nearly every page of the *Troilus*. As far as exterior appearance is concerned,
Criseyde might have just walked out from the pages of Guillaume de Machault.
Walked? Scarcely, for the heroines of Machault and his school were only
painted wax figures, standing gracefully on one side or else reclining on a
flower-strewn couch with bewitching smiles around their rosy lips, and
receiving pretty little nothings from their adoring admirers. But in the
*Troilus and Criseyde* the wax figure has come to life, a human soul has
taken possession, and the first great personality in English literature has
been created.

The character of Troilus is much more easily fathomed than that
of Criseyde. In the latter the conflicting elements are so subtly inter-
twined that it becomes almost impossible to unravel them. But the make-up of Troilus is less intricate. He appears as an idealist; he dies as one. Had he possessed but a portion of Pandarus' good sense, he would have been a wiser man; had Pandarus, on the other hand, been but slightly influenced by the idealism of Troilus, he would never have sunk to the despicable depths that he has in the eyes of mankind.

Like that of Criseyde, the personal appearance of Troilus is strictly in accord with the conventional ideas. He

". . . wel waxen was in highte, And complet formed by proportion So wel, that kinde it not amende mighte; Yong, freshe, strong, and hardy as lyoun; Trewes as steel in eche condicion; On of the beste entched creature, That is, or shal, whyl that the world may dure." 1

The first impression that this young Apollo made on Criseyde was distinctly favorable.

"To telle in short, hir lyked al y-fere His persone, his array, his look, his chere, His goodly manere and his gentillesse." 2

The most outstanding characteristic of Troilus is undoubtedly his impracticalness. When anything pertaining to arms is concerned, Troilus is second only to Hector, than whom there is no better knight in the Trojan camp. 3 But when it comes to any other matter, especially such as pertains to the heart, Troilus is a child. In many respects there is a rather striking resemblance between Troilus and Benedict of Shakespeare's Much Ado About Nothing. This is especially noticeable in the high disdain for lovers and their "lewede observaunces" which Troilus professes at the beginning of the story.

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1 l. V, 827 ff.  
2 l. II, 1266 ff.  
3 l. II, 176 ff.
"O verrey foles! nyce and blinde be ye."

But even while he is thus pitying the common rabble, his own doom is approaching in the person of Criseyde. From that time on his fate is sealed. He is both ashamed and proud of his infatuation. He avoids the company of his fellow soldiers, composes a song to his beloved, and suffers the greatest physical and mental anguish.

It is at this time that another trait comes to the surface which is quite as portentous for his future happiness as the one already mentioned. That is his timidity. He hesitates to woo Criseyde for fear that he may lose her entirely. To this fault in his character quite as much as to his impracticalness must be ascribed his absolute surrender to the machinations of Pandarus. When the latter has once discovered his secret, Troilus is no longer a volitional being, - he is under the complete control of another.

There should be mentioned also the Platonic nature of Troilus' affection. The manner in which Pandarus broke down the barriers in this respect was not due to any desire or will on the part of Troilus. Had it depended on him, who knows whether he would ever have aroused sufficient courage to woo Criseyde.

It is, however, the departure of Criseyde and the events connected therewith that bring out the true greatness of Troilus. When Pandarus suggests that

"'This town is ful of ladies al aboute; And, to my doom, fairer than swiche twelve As ever she was, shal I finde in som route, Ye, oon or two, with-outen any doute. For- thy be glad, myn owene dere brother, If she be lost, we shul recover another.'"

1 1. I, 202. 2 1. IV, 401.
The reply to such a diabolical suggestion is in keeping with the previous impressions that we have received of Troilus. He answers

"'This lechecraft, or heeld thus to be,
Were wel sitting, if that I were a feend,
To trysen hir that trewe is unto me!
I pray god, lat this consayl never y-thee;
But do me rather sterve anon-right here
Er I thus do as thou me woldest lere.'" 1

Many a man, having once let down the bars of virtue, would only too readily avail himself of the proffered remedy. We can overlook much in Troilus since we know that he kept faith even after he realized that his love was no longer true to him.

It is unnecessary to review in detail the mental anguish that Troilus passed thru during the days and weeks following the departure of Criseyde. They were inevitable to a person of his peculiar type. His death, after fighting the Greeks with relentless energy, comes like a holy sacrifice. The closing stanzas, in which Chaucer, following a passage in the Teseide, describes the spirit of the noble warrior ascending heavenward

"Up to the holownesse of the seventh spere" 2

is like the pronunciation of a benediction.

The character of Pandarus has created almost as much discussion as that of Criseyde. From our point of view Pandarus may readily appear as one of the most despicable characters in all literature, a moral degenerate, whose name, like that of Iago, should be a synonym for all that is abominable in human conduct. From another angle, he may quite as well appear to be a senile, sentimental, old dotard, who, in trying to inveigle his niece into an intrigue, is, in reality, having the wool pulled over his own eyes.

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1 l. IV, 437 ff.  
2 l. V, 1809.
Again, as in the case of Criseyde, a half-way position appears the most tenable. Pandarus is not without fault; neither is he totally depraved. His chief fault is expediency. If another one of Thackeray's creations may be introduced for the purpose of comparison, it might be said that Pandarus is the prototype of Major Pendennis. Pandarus is very fond of Troilus. His opinion of women is rather derogatory. He justly believes that a union between the two would be advantageous. So he proceeds to assume the office of a match-maker. That he employs means which we in our day cannot approve is in itself nothing against Pandarus. The morals of the ancients, especially among the aristocracy, were very much like those in our own day, - open to considerable criticism. Besides, Chaucer is not attempting to delineate a paragon of virtue, who is to go down in literature as an inspiration to future generations. He is, however, portraying an individual with both the excellencies and failings that flesh is heir to.

In spite of his obvious faults, Pandarus is not so utterly lost in sin as some critics would have us believe. The most convincing evidence of this is to be found in the conversation that he has with Troilus after the first meeting with Criseyde:-

"But god, that al wot, take I to witnesse,  
That never I this for coveityse wroughte,  
But only for to abregge that distresse,  
For which wel nygh thou drydest, as me thoughte.  
But gode brother, do now as thee oughte,  
For goddes love, and keep hir out of blame,  
Sin thou art wys, and save alwey hir name."  

He impresses upon Troilus that the good name of his niece is thus far unsullied. Therefore, it behooves him to be doubly careful. Pandarus also recognized his own danger. If any harm should come to Criseyde in this

\[\text{\footnotesize 1. III, 260 ff.}\]
affair and it should be discovered that Pandarus had in the beginning been largely responsible,-

"'Why, al the world up-on it wolde crye,
And seye, that I the worste trecherye
Dide in this cas, that ever was bigonne.'"  

As he brings out very clearly, his only purpose is to help his friend, a friend whom he considers to be worthy in every respect of the affection of his niece.

Pandarus is also a man of extreme practicality and good sense. This is shown on innumerable occasions. When Troilus is about to go mad over the loss of Criseyde, Pandarus offers him advice that the stricken youth might well have accepted. He tells him plainly that there have been other men who have loved their mistresses quite as well as he professes to, and yet have lived thru the agony of separation:

"What nede is thee to maken al this care?
Sin day by day thou mayst thy selven see
That from his love, or elles from his wyf,
A man not twinnen of necessitee,
Ye, though he love hir as his owene lyf;
Yet wil he with him self thus maken stryf.

So sholdestow endure and late sylde
The tyme, and founde to ben glad and light.'"  

This common-sense philosophy of life also comes out in an interesting manner in his observations on dreams and their interpretations:

"'A straw for alle swevenes signifiaunce:
God help me so, I counte hen not a bene,
There woot ne man aught what swevenes mene.'"  

After this disparaging comment, he goes on to show how the explanations of dreams by any two persons are never alike, and yet people persist in lending their ears to "swich ordure!"

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1 l. III, 277 ff.  
2 l. V, 336 ff.  
3 l. V, 362 ff.
We need not attempt to palliate the offences of Pandarus.
The suggestion to Troilus already referred to that he take up with a new mistress cannot be condoned, even if we do give him the benefit of the doubt and suppose that he himself did not intend it to be taken at its face value. At the same time, we may remember that such a suggestion would not be unusual from a man of his type. Instead of heaping epithets on his head, it is far more profitable to discover the lesson that can be learned from him. He did everything that was in his power to bring about a desired end, namely, the happiness of his friend. Yet failure of the most complete kind was the result. Troilus is far unhappier at the end than he was in the beginning; he has lost the respect and the faith of his niece; and he himself is broken down by the faithlessness of Criseyde and the anguish of Troilus. In the end we are moved rather to pity than to censure. Whatever mistakes he may have committed, were paid with a tremendous price.

The most readily fathomed of the four major characters is Diomede. All that we hear of him shows him to be a man of action, great virility, aggressiveness, and with more than the usual amount of conceit. We soon learn that his ideals are not of the highest, for he has scarcely laid his hand on the bridles of Criseyde's steed when he begins to woo her. But he does so merely to pass the time away; his heart is in no wise kindled, even tho he realizes that she is a beautiful woman. If, as he suspects, she have a lover in Troy, the play will be all the more interesting. So he proceeds to tell her about his own station in life, his ancestry, the impending destruction of Troy, his own desire to serve her, and many more things, - all, of course, with the sole purpose of winning her affections in the shortest possible time. His declaration that
"Thus seyde I never er now to woman born;
For god myn herte as wisly glade so,
I lovede never woman here-biforn
As paramours, he never shal no no."

may be put down as pure moonshine. Men are not in the habit of making
avowals of this kind on such short notice. The probabilities are that he
had recited the same speech to a similar audience many times before the
hapless Crisye de crossed his path.

There is, in short, no spiritual depth whatever to the life of
Diomede. He is concerned solely with the material affairs. He is, in all
probability, governed largely by expediency. Get all that can be gotten
out of life and get it in the easiest way possible, sums up his philosophy
of life as far as we are able to ascertain.

Before leaving the Troilus and Crisye de, it is well to recall
briefly its relation both to Chaucer's earlier and later work.

Compared with his earlier poetry, the much greater length of the
Troilus will undoubtedly first attract our notice. This is an indication
of the poet's increased confidence in his own powers. We are impressed,
secondly, with its faultlessness of structure. Considered as a whole, the
Troilus is by far Chaucer's greatest work. But, one may object, may not
this structure have been taken over bodily from Boccaccio? Comparing it
with Boccaccio's Filostrato, we find that the Troilus is half again as long.
We find, furthermore, that the characters of Pandarus and Crisye de have
been altered radically and that the dramatic emphasis has been shifted from
the first half well into the second half.

1. V, 155 ff.

2 Courthope in his History of English Poetry, v.I, p.264, in speak-
ing of the Troilus and Crisye de, remarks as follows: "From the portion
of the Roman de la Rose which was the production of Guillaume de Lorris he (Chau-
cer) took that element in his poem which reflects the spirit of the Courts of
Love; the work of John de Meung, full of the spirit of democratic revol and
iconoclasm, inspired the conception of Pandarus; Boccaccio, on the other hand,
inubed with the rising genius of the Renaissance, showed him how to animate
with human interest and modern feeling the stories of the ancient world."
Of even more importance than the structure is the characterization. Boccaccio's point of view is thoroughly sentimental and his characters are delineated accordingly. Pandarus is a young gallant of loose morals; Criseyde a beautiful but inconstant woman. In Chaucer's version we find the conventions of the French Court of Love both in the descriptions of Criseyde and the love longing of Troilus. There is, however, a distinct advance in the psychological delineation. The characters are no longer mere figureheads or case-hardened types. They have become living, breathing personalities with individual hopes and fears.

We see, then, that the acquaintance with Italian literature freed Chaucer from the shackles of medieval convention. Heretofore he had "submitted with patient eagerness to the precepts of his teachers." Good as these teachers were, their range was nevertheless extremely limited and their vision dimmed. The Italians gave him greater freedom and a broader vision, and they taught him, too, the possibilities of structure.

Only one important element found in the Canterbury Tales is absent in the Troilus. This is the interest in the rank and file of humanity. All the important figures in the Troilus are persons of superior birth or station. There is not one character who comes from the masses. We can readily enough understand that while Chaucer may have found great pleasure in treating several such themes, any considerable number of the same nature would be highly distasteful. He had the vision, he knew that he possessed the ability, what he now required was the opportunity. That came in the conception of the Canterbury Tales.

1 G. L. Kittredge, Chaucer and His Poetry, p. 150.

2 In this connection consult Kissner, Chaucer in seinen Beziehungen zur Italienischen Literatur, pp. 79-81.
The Canterbury Tales forms one of the great masterpieces not only of English literature, but of all literatures. On it rests the fame of Chaucer. While the Troilus alone would have secured him a position among the great English poets; nevertheless, it is the Canterbury Tales that places him next to Shakespeare. It is also on the Tales to a very large extent that his fame as a delineator of character rests. As we shall see presently, by far the greater portion of this study will concern itself with that work.

Altho we are prone to consider the Canterbury Tales as a single coherent structure, this must not be accepted in an absolute sense. The various narratives which now comprise the Canterbury Tales were not all originally written with that purpose in view. We know positively that several existed in a form but slightly different from their present state several years before the Canterbury Tales as such were begun.

An example of such a tale is that of the Knight, the first in the series. It is highly probable that this narrative was written about the same time as the Troilus and Crysaeve. More important, however, than the date of composition is the fact that it, like the Troilus, is based on a work of Boccaccio. This is a circumstance of some interest, for it indicates that Chaucer was more than passingly interested in the Italian poet. This was due, undoubtedly, to the superiority of technique, more varied treatment, and greater range of subject-matter than he had hitherto met with in his French masters.

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In the Legend of Good Women we are told that Chaucer has made a book concerning "the love of Palamon and Arcyte." (1. A 408 and B 420 respectively) As to the probable date of this poem, Root writes as follows in his Poetry of Chaucer, p. 167: "Since the Legend is probably to be assigned to the year 1385 or 1386, the original Palamon and Arcite must have been written before that date; and, from its general community of theme and manner with Troilus and Crysaeve, we shall be ready to assume that the two works were undertaken at about the same time, i.e. circa 1380-82."
It is also interesting to note the different manner in which Chaucer treated his two Italian sources. In creating the *Troilus*, he enlarged the *Filostrato* by half and changed it materially with regard to dramatic emphasis and characterization. In the *Knight's Tale* he followed a different plan. Instead of elaborating the *Teseide*, he took over only the barest outline and discarded everything that was not vitally related to the main theme. In its completed form, Chaucer's poem is only a little more than one-fifth the length of the *Teseide*. Furthermore, he changed the entire spirit and structure of the poem by transforming it from an epic into a romance.

This spirit of romance had an important influence on the characterization. As can be gathered from the most cursory perusal, the psychological interest is comparatively insignificant. Chaucer undoubtedly realized that the limitations placed upon the story by the general plan of the *Canterbury Tales* would not permit the development of character in any way comparable to that in the *Troilus*. He therefore wisely made the most of the other elements. The castle and the garden, the lists and the combat are of much more importance than any person in the story. Such characterization as we have is of an idealistic nature. The French influence is obviously present, but as in the *Troilus* it has been modified.

The structure of the *Knight's Tale* is very good. In its way it is fully equal to the *Troilus*. There are no superfluous elements, and the action goes steadily forward. Indeed, as far as action is concerned, it is superior, but, as has already been indicated, this element in the narrative art of the story is accomplished at the expense of characterization.

The most realistic character in the tale is undoubtedly Theseus.
"Of Athenes he was lord and governour,  
And in his thyne swich a conquerour,  
That gretter was ther noon under the sonne.  
Ful many a riche contree had he wonne;  
... with his wisdom and his chivalrye."  

Compassion is one of his dominant qualities. "With herte pitous" he raises the grief-stricken women out of the dust  

"And hem comforteth in ful good entente."  

And tho at first "for ire" he might "quock and sterte," it was only for a short time until  

"... aslaked was his mood  
For pitee renmeth sone in gentil herte."  

A saving sense of humor was also a great factor in mollifying his anger.

After he had considered the battle between Palamon and Arcite for a little while, the humor of the situation dawned upon him, and after that his anger had passed away. He could not resist the pleading of women, and he was quick to consider his own faults. The unnecessary shedding of blood was criminal in his eyes; so he took measures to prevent it as much as possible in the battle between Palamon and Arcite. And finally it is Theseus who unites the two lovers, thus bringing about the happy conclusion that we have instinctively been expecting from the very beginning.

If the characterization of Theseus left much to be desired, that of Palamon and Arcite leaves even more. But, then, we should not expect to find deep psychological analysis in a romance, for that is the nature of the Knight's Tale. In spite of this evident omission, however, enough is told us so that we can form a clear mental picture of the two brothers, who, separated in love, are united by death.

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1 1. A 861.  
2 1. A 958.  
3 1. A 1760.  
4 1. A 1785.  
5 1. A 1770.  
6 1. A 1813.  
7 1. A 2537.
When first we meet them, there is nothing to distinguish one from the other. Both are accoutered "in oon armes,"—

"Nat fully quike, ne fully dede they were." 1

They are both sent to the same prison where they pine thru the weary years. At some time they have vowed perpetual brotherhood. Apparently there is not the slightest friction until one morning Palamon happens to see Emelye, the sister-in-law of Theseus, walking in the garden. Immediately his heart is inflamed. Arcite notices his brother's agitation, follows him to the window, and is likewise affected. From that moment on the two are enemies and the differences between their characters reveal themselves. Palamon is the dreamer, introspective, impulsive, more of a lover, less of a warrior. Arcite, altho he too suffered from unrequited love to such an extent that

"So much sorwe had never creature
That is, or shal, whyl that the world may dure." 2

yet found ways and means to be near his beloved. But the most striking contrast is to be observed in the circumstance that Palamon prays to Venus while Arcite addresses his petition to Mars. To Palamon the victory in the coming struggle is immaterial; what he desires is Emelye. Arcite, on the other hand, cares not so much about Emelye as about the victory. Gaining the victory will also win Emelye. Practically, there is no difference in the two prayers but the difference in mind indicated thereby is important.

With respect to courage there is nothing to choose.

". . . no tygre in the vale of Galgophye,
Whan that hir whelpe is stole, whan it is lyte,
So cruel on the hunte, as is Arcite.
. . . . . .
He in Belmarye ther nis so fel leoun,
That hunted is, or for his hunger wood,
He of his praye desireth so the blood
As Palamon to sleen his fo Arcite.
The Ielous strokes on hir helmes byte;
Out renneth blood on bothe his sydes rede." 3

So alike are both in qualities of courtesy and bravery that Emelye in her prayer to Diana indicates no choice, - either is equally welcome.  

The impulsiveness of Palamon is indicated in his speech to Arcite when the latter declares his love for Emelye. It is more clearly seen when he tells Theseus the circumstances of the duel in which they have been surprised. Arcite, on the other hand, never rises to such heights of emotion. There is always something that savors of coldness and calculation in his speech. Notice, for instance, his reply to Palamon's reproaches:

"'... . . . . thou wistest not yet now
Whether she be a woman or goddess:
Thyn is affection of holiness,
And myne is love, as to a creature.'"

Emelye is a typically courtly lady. She

""... . . . . . . fairer was to sene
Than is the lillie upon his stalke green,
And fresher than the May with floures newe -
For with the rose colour stroof hir hewe
I noot which was the fairer of hem two."

A dozen lines further on we are told that

"Y-clothed was she fresh, for to devyse:
Hir yelow heer was broyded in a tresse
Behinde hir bak, a yerde long, I gesse."

It is only from her prayer to Diana that we discover anything relative to her attitude towards life.

"'Chaste goddessse, wel wostow that I
Desire to been a mayden al my lyf.'"

She desires to remain free, "to walken in the wodes wilde", and never to know "companye of man". However,

"'... . . . if my destinee be shapen so,
That I shal nedes have oon of hem two,
I putte me in thy proteccion.'"
We see another phase of her character in the favor with which she looked upon the victor after the battle,

"For women, as to spoken in communne,
They folwen al the favour of fortune."  

When once she realized that Arcite was destined to be her husband, she was perfectly willing to accept her fate. Her grief, therefore, when he died was great and lasting.

"By processe and by lengthe of certeyn yeres," however,

"Al stinted is the moorning and the teres,"  

and Theseus, as has already been pointed out, unites Emelye and Palamon.

The story closes with those idealistic lines:

"And Emelye him loveth so tindrely,
And he hir serveth al-so gentilly,
That never was ther no word hem betwene
Of Ielousye, or any other tone."  

Thus closes the tale of the Knight, a richly embroidered and brocaded tapestry, to which we can return again and again with no fear of becoming satiated.

Compared with the Troilus, the Knight's Tale falls far short in the matter of character delineation. Even Theseus when placed beside any one of the major characters must suffer by the comparison. As Ker remarks, "the art of Chaucer in the Knight's Tale is perfect in its own kind, but that kind is not the greatest." There is wonderful description and "the atmosphere of the story is replete with realism," but "the story and the melody of the poem are more than the personages."  


5 Ker, Essays on Medieval Literature, p. 91.
   Cf. also Cummings, H.H., The Indebtedness of Chaucer's Works to the Italian Works of Boccaccio, pp. 143-146.
7 Ker, Essays on Medieval Literature, p. 89.
The *Troylus* and the *Knight's Tale* represent two different phases of the period of Italian influence. In the former we have a kind of modern realism that shows itself primarily in the delineation of character; in the latter the romantic elements are emphasized. Neither of them represent the highest art that Chaucer was to attain, but both are harbingers of the future. Both lack that interest in the affairs of every-day life and in the lives of the masses which is so characteristic of Chaucer's later work. A step nearer in this direction is made in the *Franklin's Tale*, which will now be considered.

The source of the *Franklin's Tale* is also probably to be sought in Boccaccio. Whatever doubt there may be in the minds of individuals, the majority of scholars are inclined to believe that it is derived primarily from the *Filocolo* with possible suggestions from the *Decamerone*.\(^1\)

Even during the first hasty reading of the tale, one will notice a marked difference between it and the previous writings of Chaucer. The setting is not in far-away Troy or Greece, but in Brittany. The time of the action is the fourteenth century, and not in ancient history. The characters are in keeping with the action. The structure is equal to that of the *Knight's Tale*, the characterization is much superior, and the story is interrupted by only one lengthy digression.

More noticeable than any considerations of structure is the tone that pervades the entire tale. There is a loftiness of sentiment, an adherence to moral law, a sense of honor, and a loyalty that stands out in marked contrast to much that is told us not only in those tales of Chaucer which we have already considered; but in others that we have yet to discuss.

\(^1\) For a summary of the various views on this vexed problem, see Cummings, H.M., *The Indebtedness of Chaucer's Works to the Italian Works of Boccaccio*, Chap. X, p. 181 ff.
As in several others of Chaucer's tales we have in the Franklin's Tale another version of the "eternal triangle." This version differs, however, in several important respects from any previous one. We do not have, as in the case of Palamon and Arcite, two love-sick swains both madly infatuated with the same woman. Neither do we have a young married woman, untrue to her husband, who takes up with another man, as is illustrated in the tales of the Miller and the Merchant. Here we have a man and a woman, both of noble family, happily married, and perfectly content in their own happiness. For some years, however, a young squire has been infatuated with the wife, but has never had the courage to confess his love. During the temporary absence of the husband, he declares his passion. The subsequent events form the chief interest of the Franklin's Tale.

The heroine, Dorigen, is not only one of the fairest of her sex, but she came from so noble birth that Arviragus wooed her long and faithfully, he mustered sufficient courage to ask her hand in marriage. Unlike most lovers, however, his attentions to her did not cease at the altar, but

"Of his free wil he swoor hir as a knight
That never in al his lyf he, day ne night,
Ne sholde up-on him take no maistrye
Agayn hir wil, ne kythe hir Ialousye,
But hir obey, and folwe hir wil in al
As any lovere to his lady shal."  

Dorigen did not abuse the privileges that she in this manner received. In reply

"She seyde, sire, sith of your gentillesse
Ye profre me to have so large a reyne
Ne wolde never god bitwixe us twyne,
As in my gilt, were outher werre or stryf.
Sir, I wol be your humble trewe wyf,
Have heer my trouthe, til that wyn herte breste." 2

Beyond a few general remarks, we are told very little concerning

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1 l. p. 745 ff.  
2 l. p. 754 ff.
Dorigen's personal appearance, but we do hear a great deal about her love for her husband. When Arviragus was forced to go overseas, the grief of Dorigen knew no bounds. The eternal feminine asserted itself especially in her unreasonable concern for her husband's safety. All the efforts of her ladies to turn her thoughts on other subjects, met with ill success.

That her heart was entirely in the possession of her husband is clearly seen when the squire Aurelius first approaches her. Instead of dallying with him, she flatly refuses him with the words,

"'By thilke god that yaf me soule and lyf,
Ne shall I never been untrewe wyf
In word ne werk, as fer as I have wit.'"

But when she saw the pain on the squire's face, she said, "in play,"

"'Loke what day that, endelong Britayne,
Ye remoeve alle the rokkes, stoon by stoon,
Than wol I love yow best of any man.'"

When Aurelius, not yet quite sure whether or not she is in earnest, sorrowfully asks, "'Is ther non other grace in yow?'" she replies,

"'No, by that lord,' quod she, 'that maked me!
For wel I wooth that it shal never bityde.'"

Furthermore, in parting she gives him this friendly admonition:

"'Lat swiche folies out of your herte slyde.
What deynyte sholde a man han in his lyf
For to go love another mannes wyf.'"

She can appreciate the emotional state of the squire; at the same time she is not insensitive to the moral turpitude that it involves. Her love for her husband is so great that she is not even tempted. Therefore, she is in a position to view the whole situation in an objective manner.

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1. F 993 ff.
2. F 992 ff.
3. F 1000 ff.
In view of these considerations, we see how groundless any criticism of Dorigen must be. Aurelius, even tho he was of lower a station in life than Dorigen, appears to have been an old friend. Moreover, it was not an unusual circumstance for a squire to be in love with his queen. In order to cause the love-stricken Aurelius as little additional pain as possible, she has denied his request in an indirect but no less positive manner.

Time passes, and Dorigen has entirely forgotten about the matter. But Aurelius still pines in secret. He is not a vicious man in the sense that Damian of the Merchant's Tale was, but he was unable to stifle the love that he felt for Dorigen, even tho she was another man's wife. Under certain conditions, she would grant him her favor, and if it was at all possible, he intended to meet those conditions.

Finally, his brother tells him of a magician at Orleans who may be able to assist him. So he travels thither. Before he reaches the gates of the city, he meets a man claiming to possess magical powers who promises

"To removen all the rokkes of Briteyne, And eek from Uerounde to the mouth of Sayne."

for the consideration of a thousand pounds. The offer is accepted by Aurelius. Together they journey to Brittany, and before long the magician has performed his part of the agreement.

When Dorigen is informed of the removal of the rocks, she is almost driven to despair. Her husband is absent at the time, but upon his return a few days later she tells him of her position. In spite of the pain that he suffers, he commands her to keep her promise, for

"'Trouthe is the hyeste thing that man may kepe.'"

Such nobility shall not go unrewarded. When Aurelius hears of

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1 Cf. l. F 969 ff.  
2 l. F 1221 ff.  
3 l. F 1479.
Arviragus' high sense of honor from the lips of Dorigen, his own conscience began to trouble him. Finally, he releases her with these words,

"'I have wel lever ever to suffre wo
   Than I departe the love bitwix yow two.'" 1

This scene is most dramatic. Before he leaves her, he speaks of her as

"... the treweste and the beste wyf
   That ever yet I knew in al my lyf." 2

Dorigen thanks him on her bended knees and thereupon hurries homeward to her husband. The last lines devoted to them leave them quite as happy as Palamon and Emelia at the close of the Knight's Tale:

"Arviragus and Dorigen his wyf
In sovereyn blisse leden forth hir lyf.
Never eft ne was ther angre hem bitwene;
He cherisseth hir as though she were a queene;
And she was to him trewe for evermore" 3

As has already been said, in spite of his weakness, Aurelius is not an evil character. He has released Dorigen, but he is bound to pay the magician the promised fee. It is a pleasure to discover that he holds his own word in quite as high estimation as did Arviragus that of Dorigen. Even tho he must sell his inheritance and walk a beggar the rest of his days, yet

"'My trouthe wol I kepe, I wol not lye.'" 4

But the spirit of "gentillesse" is sometimes found in unexpected places. When Aurelius comes to his creditor to make the necessary arrangements, the latter, after having heard the whole story, replies with these

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1 1. F 1531 ff.
2 1. F 1539 ff.
3 1. F 1551 ff.
4 1. F 1570.
"... leve brother,
Everich of yow did gentilly til other.
Thou art a squyer; and he is a knight;
But gode forbede, for his blisful night,
But if a clerk coude doon as gentil dede
As wel as any of yow, it is no drede!"

Therupon the clerk releases Aurelius of his thousand pounds,
just as the latter has released Dorigen of her promise.

"And took his hors, and forth he gooth his way."

In the emphasis that is placed on mental and spiritual struggle,
the Franklin's Tale resembles the Troilus; it differs from it in the superior
emphasis that is placed on spiritual values. We feel that the happiness of
neither Arviragus nor Dorigen is the chief consideration in the story. It
is far more important that truth and honor shall prevail. A promise has
been given and that promise must be kept, no matter how painful the keeping
of it may be. We are to realize, furthermore, that "gentillesse" brings its
own reward. Be true to others, and others will be true to you.

Chaucer has thus advanced another step in his art. The con-
ventions of the French Court of Love had been subordinated before this time
in order that they might not restrain the delineation of character. Now we
see that characterization is employed to focus our attention upon a single
dominant virtue. Instead of treating the theme in a purely descriptive
manner, Chaucer has been enabled to bring out the dramatic possibilities.
In this particular instance it is loyalty to the spoken word, a loyalty which
brings its serious and almost tragic complications. In the narratives of the
Man-of-Law and the Clerk, as we shall see later, the poet has followed a

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1. F 1607 ff. 2. F 1620.
similar procedure. In the former it is unswerving faith in God despite the
greatest adversity. In the latter we have a moral idealism that prompts a
wife to remain true to her husband under any and all circumstances. As in
the later works of Shakespeare, Chaucer employs characterization to bring out
the eternal values of life.

When Chaucer began the Canterbury Tales his apprenticeship was a
thing of the past. He was no longer in any sense a mere courtly poet,
following chiefly French models, nor was he under the influence of the great
Italian masters. His art was truly English, dedicated to the high purpose
of picturing the life of his times as it was revealing itself everywhere
about him.

This does not mean that he turned his back on either chivalry or
French literature. Far from it, for the ideals of chivalry were still a
powerful factor in English life and Chaucer was still reading and using the
French poets. The times, however, were changing. Even before the death of
Edward III in 1377 a radical change was taking place. The Good Parliament
in 1376, even tho its immediate results were not great, indicated nevertheless
that in the future the common people were becoming more and more important.
The ideals of chivalry were modified, and instead of being the sole possession
of a single class, they gradually trickled downward thru the masses.
"Gentillesse" became the ideal that more and more individuals strove to
attain.

It is evident to all who have studied Chaucer's work that his
interest in character delineation increased from year to year. And with
this there naturally grew the desire to find some form of poetic expression
that would permit more elaborate characterization than anything that he had
thus far found. Much of his earlier poetry is but a series of experiments
with this aim in mind. We can see how each effort in this direction marks an advance in one way or the other. Sometimes it would appear as if he were making little or no progress, but this is always more apparent than real. It is unnecessary to consider in our discussion all these various steps. Suffice it to say that the Canterbury Tales mark the culmination of this conscious striving.

In the General Prologue to the Tales, Chaucer introduces us to a representative body of English men and women of the fourteenth century. Most of these we can visualize clearly. We are told much concerning their appearance, their habits, and their attitude towards life. But in the General Prologue no opportunity is given them to reveal themselves. In the prologues to the several tales, we sometimes get more objective information, but very frequently the pilgrims are permitted to express their own attitude toward life or especially toward their fellow travelers. Finally, in the tales themselves they reveal their innermost thoughts. The subject of their story shows us pretty clearly the ruling passion in their lives. The treatment accorded the theme completes this revelation of self.

We learn in the General Prologue that but two of the thirty pilgrims are representatives of chivalry. These are the Knight and his son, the squire. This circumstance may be accepted as pretty good evidence that in the latter years of Chaucer's life the institution of chivalry, as such, was rapidly disappearing. There is, however, another pilgrim, the Franklin, whose sympathies with the ideals of chivalry, indicated in the tale which has just been considered, serves to demonstrate another phase of the social life of the time. It proves that those ideals of conduct which were really worth while were not perishing with the institution but were becoming an integral part of the new order of things.
The Knight of the General Prologue is undoubtedly the most impressive figure in the entire procession. We cannot imagine that he said much at any time, except when he told his tale. Twice during the course of the journey he asserts his personality against refractory members of the party, and both times his wishes are acceded to. The first of these instances is where the Monk has started on his series of dismal biographies and apparently threatens to continue indefinitely. The entire company is being bored almost beyond endurance, yet no one ventures to express his disapproval until the Knight breaks out with his well remembered

"'Ho! ... good sir, no-more of this,  
That ye han seyd is righ y-nough, y-wis,  
And mochel mores; for litel heaviness  
Is righ y-nough to mochel folk, I gesse!"  

The second occasion is even more serious. The Host, Harry Lailly, is usually very good natured; but once, when the Pardonner approached him with his relics, he lost his temper at the impudence of the man, and one can only guess how the incident would have ended had not the Knight smoothed over the quarrel. It is largely because of such and other incidents that Kittredge's remark, "the ruler of the company is actually the Knight,"\(^1\) is justified. His age, his experience, and his station in life all tend to make of him a kind of social balance wheel for the party.

There is something peculiarly winning about this old soldier who has participated "at mortal batailles . . . fiftene" and taken part in nearly every important military expedition and campaign that had been conducted during his life time. His strenuous life with much of it spent in the sordid

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\(^1\) Kittredge, Chaucer and his Poetry, p. 163.
surroundings of field and camp had not, however, shattered the ideals of youth when first

"... . . . . . . . . . he loved chivalrye,
    Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisye."  

After all the intervening years - Professor Manley estimates his age to be between sixty and sixty-five - it can still be said of him that

"... . . . . . . . . . he was wys,
    And of his part as meke as is a mayde.
    He never yet no vileinyene sayde
    In al his lyf, un-to no maner wight
    He was a verray parfit gentil knight." 

That the Knight's meekness and perfection was no sham is plainly indicated by the promptness with which he undertakes the pilgrimage to Canterbury. He does not even take a rest in London, during which he could have provided himself with new clothes, but starts out at once in his

"... . . . . . . . . . . gipoun
    Al bismatered with his habergeoun." 

The tale of the Knight is in keeping with the general impression that we get in the Prologue. The figure of Theseus must have been especially attractive to the old warrior. The prominent position that the tournament occupies in the story indicates his love for the more romantic phases of chivalry. He is, in short, an embodiment of all that was best in knighthood.

In connection with the Knight of the Prologue, it is well to remember Arveragus of the Franklin's Tale. He, too, is a man who delights in military life. We are told that he went to England

"To seke in armes worship and honour
    For al his lust he sette in swich labour." 

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1 l. A 45.
2 Transactions of the American Philological Association, p. 102, Vol. XXXVIII.
3 l. A 68.
4 l. A 75 ff.  
5 l. F 811 ff.
and he returns

"... with hele and greet honour,
As he that was of chivalrye the flour."  

It is unnecessary to refer again to the love he bore his wife or to his exalted sense of honor. But it is well to remember that these two knights whom Chaucer has presented in the Canterbury Tales are both men of the highest type.

Before leaving the Knight to consider his son, the Squire, a brief comparison between the two should be made. Just as the Knight represents the old school of chivalry that sought glory and fame in fighting the battles of the Church against Turk and infidel, so his son typifies the later, more modern spirit, which sought honor in serving the nation. The Knight had done but little for England; his battles had been for a spiritual kingdom. The young Squire, on the other hand, had seen his service in what we now call the Hundred Years War. The rising spirit of nationalism is in evidence here.

Another characteristic of the Squire is the pleasure which he finds in the society of women. This is not to be ascribed solely to his youth, but is due quite as much to the greater refinement of the English Court. In brief, then, we have before us in the persons of the Knight and the Squire the old chivalry and the new chivalry, the one emphasizing primarily the medieval crusading spirit, the other, the growing spirit of nationalism and loyalty to womanhood.

In many respects the young Squire appeals to us more than any one of the other pilgrims. His appearance, his cheerfulness, and his accomplish-

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1 l. F 1087 ff.

ments mark him as a gentleman to the manner born. He is but twenty years of age, yet he has already taken part in several military expeditions.

"In Flaundres, In Artoys, and Picardye." 1

He conducted himself so gallantly that he stands very well in his lady's graces. This is really no wonder, for not only is he a warrior of no mean ability, but he can both write and sing songs,

"Iuste and eek daunce, and wel purtreye and wryte." 2

In addition to these characteristics of physical courage and knightly accomplishments, he is a man of considerable physical beauty. Of medium height, extreme nimbleness of action, and great strength, it is nothing very remarkable that he can ride skillfully and take an active part in the tournament. Furthermore, he is unusually fastidious in his person and dress. His hair is beautifully curled "as they were leyd in presse", and his "gounne, with sleves longe and wyde"

"Embrouded was . . . as it were a mede
Al ful of freshe floures, whyte and rede." 3

No wonder; then, that

"Singinge he was, or floytinge, al the day." 4

The youthful squire did not, however, like many another in his condition would have done, become proud and haughty, but

"Curteys he was, lowly, and servisable
And curf biform his fader at the table." 5

In spite of his amorous nature, which quite probably is somewhat exaggerated, this young squire promises to become a worthy successor to his father, who, as we remember, was "a verry parfit gentil knight."

Before proceeding, a few words should be said concerning Aurelius,

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1. A 86
2. A 90.
3. A 89.
4. A 91.
5. A 99.
the squire of the *Franklin's Tale*. Just as there is a marked resemblance between the Knight of the *General Prologue* and Arveragus, so a similar striking resemblance is to be noticed here. Like the young squire, Aurelius also is "fresh and joly of array." He furthermore

"... singeth, daunceth, passinge any man
That is, or was, sith that the world bigan."  

As we remember, the Squire of the Prologue "coude songes make and wel endyte."\(^1\)

Aurelius likewise composes

"... manye layes,
Songes, compleintes, roundels, virlayes."  

With regard to moral stamina we learn more about Aurelius than we do about the Squire. The former has overcome an evil passion that for years has been gnawing at his heart. He has, moreover, resolved to pay his just debt, no matter what sacrifices he may have to make. While we are convinced that in a moral crisis, the young Squire would come out victorious, we have no proof as yet.

The Franklin of the *General Prologue* is another important representative of chivalry. While he does not, strictly speaking, belong to the nobility, he is but one degree removed from it. In but few instances is the incompleteness of the description in the *General Prologue* better illustrated than in his case. If one were to base his estimation of the worthy land holder exclusively on the *General Prologue*, it would not only be false, but it would lack nearly all the elements that give him his peculiar charm. Our first impression is that of a typical self-made man, who has acquired considerable property; who finds his chief pleasures in the material things of life; who keeps an open house quite as much to impress his friends and

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\(^1\) 1. F 929 ff.

\(^2\) 2. A 95.

\(^3\) 3. F 947 ff.
neighbors with his own prosperity as out of any real feeling of hospitality; and who has been elected or appointed to several public offices not so much because of any exceptional ability, but because of the influence which he exerts thru his wealth. On the whole we would be strongly inclined to think that self-satisfaction mingled with a touch of arrogance would be his dominant characteristic.

But when we overhear the conversation between him and the Squire, we immediately become aware of another phase of his character. The rather extravagant tale of the young Squire has pleased him mightily. He is, however, even more delighted with the personality of the narrator. Many another man of his type,—judging again only from the General Prologue,—would have found more pleasure in the coarse ribaldry of the Reve, while the personality of the Squire would have been painfully effeminate. The Franklin, however, appreciates "gentillesse," and desires nothing more than to educate his own son as a gentleman. That young scapegrace prefers, however,

"... to pleye at dees, and to despende,
And lese al that he hath ... ...
And he hath lever talken with a page
Than to commune with any gentil wight
Ther he mighte lerne gentillesse aright."

The father's dissatisfaction is accordingly great.

That the Franklin's success in life has not gone to his head is clearly brot out in the prologue to his tale. His material success, and the consequent contact with better educated persons, has made him realize his own deficiencies only the more keenly. In spite of the fact that he never slept

"... on the mount of Pernaso,
Me lerned Marcus Tullius Cithero,"

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1. F 690 ff.  
2. F 721 ff.
and therefore asks to be excused for his "rude speche", he nevertheless relates, as we already know, a very creditable tale. It is quite evident that not all of his leisure time has been spent in eating and drinking, but that many an hour has been devoted to reading. In the tale itself there is no spirit of selfish materialism. On the contrary, we find a higher sense of moral values than is to be found perhaps in any other of the Canterbury Tales.

In addition to the tales of the Knight and the Franklin, there are the tales of the Wife of Bath, the Squire, and the Nun's Priest and the Rime of Sir Thopas that bear upon various phases of chivalry.

Before taking up the individual tales, a few general observations may be in place. It should be noticed that, as far as we know, all four were written after 1387. We may therefore expect to find more original treatment in these than in the previous work of Chaucer. The sources are, secondly, less definite than heretofore. Either the originals have been lost, or, which is the more probable, Chaucer exercised his own ingenuity, took portions from several different writers, and combined them so thoroughly that we cannot now recognize the component parts. This is probably true to a great or less extent of all four. Thirdly, it is scarcely necessary to mention that the French Court of Love influences are no longer obviously present. Fourthly, all of these tales are very romantic in spirit. This is another indication that when Chaucer wrote, chivalry was no longer the living, vital institution that it had been in previous centuries. Already the glamour of the past was casting a golden light about it. Finally, because of this romantic atmosphere, characterization is much less sharply defined than might otherwise be the case. The matter is more important than the characters. With these preliminary remarks, the individual

1 The fourth and the fifth points do not apply so obviously to the Nun's Priest Tale and the Rime of Sir Thopas as to the other two.
tales may now be taken up.

The tale of the Wife of Bath is extremely romantic in tone, and the characterization is consequently rather vague. The two principal characters are a young knight and an ugly old hag, who in reality is a beautiful young woman in an enchanted state.

The Knight is "a lusty bachelor" of such a passionate nature that he outraged a defenceless maid. For this act he was condemned to die,

"But that the quene and othre ladies mo
So longe preyeden the king of grace,
Til he his lyf him graunted in the place,
And yaf him to the quene al at hir wille,
To chese, whether she wolde him save or spille."  

The queen promised to grant the culprit his life if he would tell her within "a twelf-month and a day" what "wommen most desyren". The poor Knight goes forth, but meets with no success. There are all sorts of opinions as to what women value most. Riches, honor, pleasure, fine clothes, sensual gratification, flattery, a reputation for wisdom and holiness or for constancy and secrecy, - all these, in short, are mentioned but none appears to be the highest good.

Finally, when the year is almost up and he is journeying homeward in despair,

"... on the grene he saugh sittinge a wyf;
A fouler wight ther may no man devyse,"

who promises to give him the desired information if

"'The nexte thing that I requere thee,
Thou shalt it do, if it lye in thy might.'"

He agrees.

When he appears before the queen and her court, he replies to the

1 l. D 895.  2 l. D 998 ff.  3 l. D 1010 ff.
question,

"What thing that worldly wommen loven best,"

"Wommen desyrren to have sovereynte 
As wel over hir housband as hir love, 
And for to been in maistrie him above."

All the assembled ladies agree that the answer is correct, and they therefore grant him his life. At this point "the olde wyf" rises up and claims the Knight as her husband. At first he absolutely refuses to entertain the idea. Eventually, however, he marries her, but declines to receive her as his wife because she is

"... so loothly, and so old also, 
And ther-to come of so lowe a kinde."

This introduces the well-known discourse on "gentillesse", which is in reality the theme of the tale. As in the Franklin's Tale Chaucer is again the ethical philosopher, altho in this case he has scarcely taught the lesson so effectively nor so artistically.

The old hag admits that her ancestors were "rude", yet since

"... gentillesse cometh fro god allone; 
Then cometh our very gentillesse of grace, 
It was no-thing biquethe us with our place."

This is undeniably a direct slap in the face to those who insist that "gentillesse" is dependent on a long line of ancestors. After some further discussion, the old hag advances her own definition of "gentillesse". In her mind

"... he is gentil, that doth gentil dedes."

In other words, all persons, no matter what their condition in life may attain to "gentillesse", if they will do "gentil dedes." We have been told once more that conduct, not blood, is the one thing required.

1. D 1034. 
2. D 1038 ff. 
3. D 1100 ff. 
4. D 1162 ff. 
5. D 1170.
Finally, if the Knight would only consider that since his wife is ugly, the danger of her leaving him or becoming untrue is reduced to a minimum, he would be glad. As a last resort she gives him his choice between accepting her as she is and resting secure in her love, or having her young and beautiful, and taking his chances on her steadfastness. This is putting the situation up to him with a vengeance. In his own inimitable way, Chaucer tells us that thereupon

"This Knight avyseth him and sore syketh, but atte taste he sayde in this manere, 'My lady and my love, and wyf so dere, I put me in your wyse governance; I do no fors the whether of the two; For as you lyketh, it suffiseth me.' 'Thanne have I gete of yow maistrye,' quod she, 'Sin I may cheve, and governe as me lest?' 'Ye, certes, wyf,' quod he, 'I holde it best.'"

This concession on the part of the husband is the charm required to restore the old hag to her pristine youth and beauty. Even as we are told that Emily and Dorigen respected the wishes of their husbands, so also did this lady obey her spouse

"...in everything
That mighte doon him plesance or lyking.
And thus they live, un-to hir lyves ende,
In parfit loye."

Even tho,- as we shall see later,- this submissive attitude is scarcely in keeping with the character of the Wife of Bath, yet perhaps even she in the depths of her heart considered it to be the ideal state when the husband was considerate of the rights and privileges of his wife.

As has already been indicated, the characterization in this story is slight. Of the knight's personal appearance we learn nothing at all. The

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1. D 1228 ff.

2. D 1255 ff.
lady is an ugly old hag who becomes

"... as fair to see,
As any lady, emperyce, or quene,
That is bi-twixe tho est and the west."

The emphasis placed on the theme of gentillesse owes much of its effectiveness to the personality of the narrator as we have learned to know her in the prologue to her tale. In spite of its didactic tone, this is one of the more interesting stories in the collection. As a whole its greatest importance in this discussion is that it illustrates in much the same way as the Franklin's Tale the ability that Chaucer had acquired to make all elements of poetic art subordinate to a single theme.

Far different in subject-matter, yet even more romantic in tone than the Wife-of-Bath's Tale is the Squire's Tale. Just as the Knight's Tale was very much in keeping with the personality of the narrator, so is that of the Squire. Magic and mystery, both from the Orient, are its two essential constituents. It aims to teach no lesson; it purposes not to describe mighty deeds of arms or the deadly struggle of opposing armies; it aspires not to delineate some moral giant who shall stand head and shoulders over the rest of mankind. Its sole object is to entertain.

And when we give the situation a moment's thought, what more could the young Squire hope to do? His experience of life was too limited to tell the pilgrims "som doctrine" such as the Tale of Helibius or to air his own views as the Wife of Bath had done. In the course of his travels and reading, however, he certainly had come across many a story that would interest almost anyone. The marriage discussion that had been going on in one form or other-

1 l. D. 1245 ff.
almost without interruption for some time must have been getting rather tiresome. Furthermore, compared with such authorities as the Wife of Bath he was even worse than a callow youth.

So our young friend proceeds to tell the story of Cambiskan, Canace, the brass horse, the magic ring, and the wonderful mirror. We can imagine how after the weary discussions that had preceded, the pilgrims one and all pricked up their ears. As we naturally expect, the characterization is very slight. Young men of twenty are not in the habit of analyzing character. What little we have is therefore very general and conventional. The noble Cambiskan was

"So excellent a lord in all thing
Him lakked noght that longeth to a king."

The qualities that are ascribed to him are almost identical with those that Chaucer attributes to the Squire. He is

"Yong, fresh, and strong, in armes desirous
As any bachelor of al his hous."

Furthermore

"A fair persone he was and fortunat,
And kepte alwey so wel royal estat,
That there was nowher swich another man."

The characterization of the daughter, Canacee, is quite as conventional.

"... to telle yow al hir beautee,
It lyth not in my tonge, nin my conning;
I dar not undertake so heigh a thing.
Lyn English eek is insufficient."

Farther on, in the second part, she is described as "fresshe". She arises in the morning

"As rody and bright as dooth the yonge sonne."
However, beyond such slight suggestions as these, we are told nothing. Her compassion for the bleeding falcon adds but little more to the meager information. In short, she scarcely becomes more than a name in any part of the story.

Since the tale was never finished, it is difficult to say just what Chaucer intended to make of it. Taking everything into consideration, the conjecture of Root may come pretty close to the facts. He surmises that Chaucer himself did not know how to continue and therefore left it in an unfinished state. It does demonstrate, however, that Chaucer's genius was of a most versatile nature, and that no matter what he had to work with, he could fashion it into a work of art.

This ability is again demonstrated in a most happy manner in the Nun's Priest Tale and the Rime of Sir Thomas. These two narratives are undoubtedly the most unique tales in the entire Canterbury series. In both Chaucer treats chivalry in a way utterly different from his usual manner. Both of them are works of art and belong to the very best that the poet ever wrote.

To go into the technique of either and point out all of those minor qualities which when combined produce real greatness would require many pages. The story of Chanticleer and Pertelote is familiar to all who are acquainted with Chaucer. The main elements were undoubtedly derived from the numberless animal stories in circulation during the middle ages. Much as we would like to know the exact source, it is not essential for our purpose. Of more importance are the various changes and additions which we are reasonably sure were introduced by Chaucer.

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1 The Poetry of Chaucer, p. 267 ff.
The atmosphere is extremely romantic. The personalities of Chanticleer and Pertelote dominate the story, and in their delineation the highest art is seen in the combination of characteristics common to both man and fowl. Something similar had been attempted by Chaucer in the *Parliament of Fowls*, but with nowhere near the degree of success that he has achieved in this instance.

Because of this hybrid personality, there is nothing inconsistent in having the inhabitants of the barn-yard discourse with a learned air upon philosophical and ethical problems. But there is something wonderfully incongruous about the whole, and it is largely because of this incongruity that our interest is kept on the alert. We do not wish to lose a single word of this most unusual discussion.

Quite as incongruous are the classical references and the conventions of the French courtly poetry that have been taken over in the description. Chanticleer's comb is redder than coral. The next line,

"And batailed, as it were a castel-wal,"

enhances the delicate satire. The comparison reminds one of Sir Thopas.

Quite as felicitous is the line in which we are told that the "nayles" of Chanticleer are "whyttar than the lilie flour". Of Pertelote we learn that

"Curteys she was, discreet, and debonnaire,  
And compaignable . . . ."

Her ideal of a husband is entirely in keeping with her own qualities of mind and heart.

"We alle desyren, if it mighte be,  
To han housbondes hardy, wyse, and free,  
And secre, ne no nigard, ne no fool,  
Ne him that is agast of every tool,  
Ne noon avauntour, by that god above!"

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1. B 4050.  
2. B 4061 ff.  
The extreme politeness with which each behaves toward the other should also be observed. There is no sign of any concealed animosity. It is simply an indication of the quiet dignity and the mutual consideration which should mark the relations of any well-bred husband and wife.

Of especial interest is the character of Chanticleer. What a curious combination of superstition and common sense, pedantry and sly humor, credulousness and shrewdness, he is! He struts around in his harem as if he owned the world. He discourses learnedly on dreams, citing authorities sacred and profane, quotes Latin, and is withal a perfect husband. The simplest child could not have been duped more readily than he, and yet, when in immediate danger of his life, his wits are superior to those of Reynard.

In order to depict characters like Chanticleer and Pertelote, Chaucer must have had a rather intimate acquaintance with feathered life. Perhaps in no other poem has he shown so keen an appreciation for Nature as here. He may not have been interested in the great out-of-doors in the same way that we moderns are, but that he had a keen eye for some phases of Nature is clearly shown in the tale before us.

The structure of the Nun's Priest Tale is unusually good. As has been already pointed out, the lengthy discussions are not an artistic defect. Rather, they serve a valuable purpose in creating the proper atmosphere. Dramatic in itself, yet made more so by the contrast with what immediately precedes, is the hue and cry raised by the rape of Chanticleer. This extremely dramatic scene together with the discomfiture of the fox fittingly closes one of the most charming of Chaucer's tales.

There could scarcely be a greater contrast between any two tales than there is between that of the Nun's Priest and the Rime of Sir Thomas.
Yet, upon closer examination, it will be found that the underlying theme is the same. The difference lies in the point of view. In the *Nun's Priest Tale* Chaucer is quite evidently giving us a kindly satire on "gentillesse" as it expresses itself in certain classes of society who have a smattering of learning and some wealth, but no real culture. In their simplicity these people do not realize how ridiculous they appear, and yet Chaucer would have us realize that in spite of their ineptitude they are not without their redeeming virtues.

In the *Rime of Sir Thomas* we see another phase of chivalry differing very much from that treated in the *Nun's Priest Tale*. For a hundred and fifty years or more before Chaucer's time the metrical romance had flourished in England. These tales in verse, especially during later years, were of a most extravagant nature. Characterization was distorted, the most preposterous deeds were ascribed to the heroes; the setting was purely imaginary. However, in spite of these unrealities, their popularity did not wane.

Chaucer with his high ideals of chivalry and "gentillesse" had undoubtedly winced many a time at these preposterous fabrications not alone because of the abominable technique, but also because of the obvious distortion of fact. He undoubtedly realized full well that when the sublime approaches the ridiculous, it does not require much to make the descent complete.

As the poet *par excellence*, who among the pilgrims was more qualified to satirize the metrical romances than Geoffrey Chaucer? And where would his purpose be more readily understood than in the present company? So he begins by describing to us the person who

"Al of a Knught was fair and gent
In bataille and in tourneyment."

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When we are told, however, that

"Whyt was his face as payndemayn,
    His lippes red as rose;
    His rode is lyk scarlet in grayn,
    And I yow telle in good certayn,
    He hadde a senely nose,"

we feel instinctively that whatever object the narrator may have in mind he does not, at least, intend Sir Thopas to be taken seriously.

Chaucer, however, caricatures not only the subject-matter, but the technique as well. In order to do this, he employs a combination of the various verse forms that were commonly used in metrical romances. These add very much to the realism of the tale.

But to continue with the description of Sir Thopas and his wondrous deeds. In addition to the qualities already cited, we are told that

"His heer, his berd was lyk saffroun,
    That to his girdel roughte adoun."

His dress is entirely in keeping with his fine appearance, for his shoes are of cordovan leather, his breeches were imported from Bruges, and his robe was tailored from very costly fabric. All in all, he looks for all the world as if he had just ridden out of a band-box.

Such a knightly Beau Brummel would not dare to endanger his toilet by any strenuous activities. But like a real knight he must nevertheless go in search of adventure, so one fine day Sir Thopas

"... priketh thurgh a fair forest,
    There-inne is many a wilde best,
    Ye, bothe bukke and hare."

The forest, moreover, is in keeping with the knight and the animals that dwell therein. Instead of impassable jungles or a limitless expanse of towering, forbidding trees that would cause the stoutest heart

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1 l. B 1915 ff.
3 l. B 1920 ff.
4 l. B 1944 ff.
to quake,

"Ther springen herbes grete and sneale," of licorice, turmeric, clove, and nutmeg. Finally, to make the scene complete, even the sparrow-hawk and the popinjay sing sweetly in this most delightful place.

After some time, the all-pervading tranquillity apparently becomes too much for even Sir Thopas, so he stops and prepares to enjoy a short rest. However, he has scarcely settled himself, when love-longing makes his so uncomfortable that he needs must up and away. Since no mortal woman is worthy to be the mate of such a marvel as he, he decides to woo an elf-queen.

After riding for some time "over style and stoon", he finds himself in "the contree of Fairy so wilde" that "neither wyf ne child" dares molest him. Soon a great giant, "a perilous man of dede," comes up to him and orders him to depart. After promising to engage the giant on the following day, Sir Thopas complies with great alacrity and hies himself back to town.

Here he orders the minstrels and story-tellers to relate romances full of royalty, ecclesiastical dignitaries, "and eek of love-lykinge." At the same time he partakes freely of sweet wine, spiced mead, and fine gingerbread. Having thus fortified himself, he exchanges his rich riding costume for a suit of armor and weapons quite as magnificent, mounts a dapple-gray steed, and in an easy amble departs from thence. At this point the first fit closes.

We can imagine that some members of the audience are already at this point becoming weary of the sing-song tale that is getting nowhere. However, when Chaucer enquires shortly before the end whether they desire

1 l. B 1950.
"any more of it", no one voices an objection. So he continues.

Altho the narrator promises to tell

"Of bataille and chivalry
And of Ladyes love-drury",

there appears to be small prospect of our ever hearing it. We are given
further details of how Sir Thopas rides forth, and of the hardships which
he suddenly is capable of enduring. No longer does he enter a house, but
sleeps out in the open with only his helm as a pillow. He has, moreover,
suddenly lost all taste for wine and mead, and drinks water from the well.
This, however, becomes too much for our host. His nerves have reached the
limit of endurance, and he breaks out with the well-known exclamation: "No
more of this, for goddes dignitee!" With this remark the Rime of Sir Thomas
comes to an abrupt close.

As an extravaganza the Rime of Sir Thomas is a master-work. Sir
Thopas represents the flower of chivalry as depicted in the metrical
romances. As such he has all the characteristics that were associated with
such a person. Handsome of figure, richly dressed, courageous of heart, he
won the affections of every maid. He, however, tho not unaffected by their
soft glances, nevertheless will have nothing to do with them. From this
point on, even the dullest can understand that Chaucer is not serious.

The structure of the Rime of Sir Thomas is, in keeping with the
fashion in metrical romances, very diffuse. In order to make a realistic
imitation, this could not be avoided. French conventions regarding appearance
and the pangs of love are also very much in evidence. This is due to the
extraordinary influence that the French romances exerted over the English
with regard both to form and to treatment.

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1 l. B 2034 ff.
It is strange how any one could ever have imagined that in the 
Rime of Sir Thopas Chaucer was satirizing the institution of chivalry. Only 
by considering this poem without reference to the other tales could such a 
belief arise. It should always be kept in mind that the highest type of 
manhood which Chaucer depicts is to be found among his knightly characters. 
The Knight of the General Prologue, as has been indicated before, represents 
the old school of Crusaders, fighting the battles of Christ against the Turk 
and Heathen. Arveragus, tho not a soldier of the Cross, is yet a great 
warrior, who is willing to make one of the greatest sacrifices that can be 
asked of a man in order that the word of his wife may not be broken. In 
spite of his youth, the Squire of the General Prologue is a most promising 
young man with all the accomplishments that the most cultivated knight in 
France might possess. Even when we consider his amorous nature, he is not 
the lustful, sensuous character found in so many of the other tales. Even 
Aurelius of the Franklin's Tale is a man of genuine character. He is weak, 
but he conquers his passion. How different he is from the Damian of the 
Merchant's Tale! Yes, and how different are all of them from the vast major-
ity of the pilgrims!

When we bear all of these considerations in mind, it is indeed 
difficult to understand just on what basis we are going to found such a con-
tention as has been alluded to. Chaucer is making sport of the views that 
some people have of chivalry, but not of the institution as such. He never 
flouted the good and the noble, even tho he did take immense delight in 
ridiculing pretence and sham.

Sir Thopas marks the last of the characters representative of 
Chivalry. Before continuing with the representatives of the Church and the 
Professions, it may be well to sum up briefly the results of our discussion.
At the opening of the chapter was given a brief summary of the literary and social forces of the fourteenth century and the effect that these exerted on Chaucer. In this century, especially during the reign of Edward III, the spirit of Chivalry was at its zenith in England. As a result the English Court became more refined and took a much greater interest in literature than had hitherto been the case. It is almost needless to say that the literature cultivated was almost exclusively French. Chaucer, by reason of his connection with the Court and his natural inclinations, naturally took a great interest both in Chivalry and in the literature popular with the Court. Thus it was almost a matter of course that his first literary work should have been a translation of the most important French poem of the time, namely, the *Romance of the Rose*. It was also quite natural that his earlier narrative works, such as the *Book of the Duchess*, the *Parliament of Fowls*, and the *Legend of Good Women*, should be more or less closely patterned after French models.

Thus it came about that Chaucer learned the first principles of his art from French literature with its conventional ideals of Chivalry and Courtly Love. At the same time, as was pointed out, Chaucer did not find this atmosphere of convention and stereotyped phraseology entirely congenial. As a result, he was not, even in the very beginning, a blind imitator. Early in his poetic career, he attempted to make room for genuine personality and dramatic action. It was shown, for instance, in the *Book of the Duchess* how the portrait of Blanche had been individualized. In the *Parliament of Fowls* we found portions of the action highly dramatic, skilful dialogue, and representatives of the lower classes concealed under the thin disguise of birds. In other words, certain important characteristics of the
Canterbury Tales are already foreshadowed in the Parliament. In the Legend of Good Women other resemblances to the Canterbury series were pointed out.

After this the effect of Chaucer's acquaintance with Italian literature was considered. We saw how Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio taught him the possibilities of structure, dramatic values, and characterization. The poetry which Chaucer wrote during this period and which is treated in this chapter comprises the Troilus and Criseyde and the Knight's Tale. The Franklin's Tale, altho not belonging here in point of time, is nevertheless discussed in connection with the two mentioned for reasons which are indicated. While these three poems illustrate primarily the Italian influence, yet the early French training is not absent.

The Troilus and Criseyde was seen to be one of Chaucer's greatest poems with regard to characterization and structure. While he was indebted to Boccaccio for much of the latter, yet in the delineation of character he far surpassed his master. Two of the characters, Criseyde and Pandarus, belong to the great personalites of English literature. So subtly are both delineated that no conclusive opinion concerning the character of either has thus far been formed. The Knight's Tale, on the other hand, illustrates Chaucer's treatment of a romantic theme when the plot would not permit elaborate treatment of the dramatic personae. The Franklin's Tale marks another step in the poet's art. Here he has employed characterization to give dramatic force to a single dominant theme.

Finally, after a kind of transition period, Chaucer began the Canterbury Tales. In this last and greatest work there are definite traces of both French and Italian influence. In fact, all thru his poetic career, Chaucer was studying and learning from both. But in the Canterbury Tales he is no longer controlled by his sources. Rather he controls then,
and employs the material as a master workman employs granite and steel. This latter stage, in so far as it applies to characters illustrating some phase of chivalry, is represented by the Wife of Bath's Tale, the Squire's Tale, the Nun's Priest Tale, and the Rime of Sir Thomas.

In the first, a very romantic narrative, the subject of "gentillesse" is discoursed upon. The Squire's Tale is also of an extremely imaginative nature. Its sole purpose, however, is to furnish entertainment. The Rime of Sir Thomas and the story of Chanticleer and Pertelote illustrate Chaucer's ability to satirize in the most delicate manner certain ludicrous phases of Chivalry and its related theme, "gentillesse."

Great as had been the work of Chaucer in the delineation of knightly characters, his genius was by no means limited to the narrow confines of class. That he could rise above the conventions in the treatment of chivalry has just been shown. In the following chapters we shall see that, if anything, he was even more successful in presenting to us ecclesiastical, professional, and common folk.
CHAPTER III.
THE CHURCH AND THE PROFESSIONS.

When we pass over from the representatives of Knighthood and Chivalry to the other characters delineated in Chaucer's narrative poetry, we immediately become conscious of a great change. The world of romance is gone, and we find ourselves in a decidedly matter-of-fact atmosphere where the realities of every-day life are very much in the foreground.

The reason is not far to seek. All of the narrative poetry that Chaucer wrote before The Canterbury Tales was influenced to a very great extent by his earlier training. That had not been at all favorable to the treatment even of the aristocracy of the day, to say nothing of mankind in general. When, in 1369, the poet desired to eulogize the Duchess Blanche, he employed the conventional vision device. A dozen years later, when he celebrated the courtship of Anne of Bohemia, he presents her and her royal suitors to us in the guise of eagles. That his interest in the common people was increasing, however, may be seen from the attention that he gives to "the foules smale".

By 1387 Chaucer had served his apprenticeship. Not only had he attained to greater freedom in verse form than any poet before his time, but he had likewise thrown off the shackles of conventionality in the choice of themes. As has already been shown, this does not mean that he broke completely with the past. He still cherished a great love for chivalry, even tho' that institution had fallen on evil days. But he had learned to appreciate also the poetry that is to be found even in the lowliest walks of life. He therefore no longer confined himself to the delineation of knights and ladies, but introduced monks and clerks, cooks and a plowman into his poetry. What pleases us even more, is that he leaves them as they are. They are not
dressed in their Sunday clothes nor instructed to be particularly careful of their speech before they appear on the stage. The good and the noble are not suddenly transfigured nor, on the other hand, do the inherently weak become children of darkness. It is to be observed, however, that nobility of soul is always approved and viciousness of heart is never made attractive. Even tho' the poet does not tell us so in so many words, we know that the "poore Persoun" sleeps peacefully; we also know quite as well that the merry Wife of Bath sometimes lies awake during the small and silent hours of the night, not quite content with the past and fearful of the future.

In discussing the delineation of character in those portions of The Canterbury Tales that we have not considered thus far, a method of approach somewhat different from that pursued in the previous section appears advisable. It will be remembered that there the representatives of chivalry were classified into three groups according to the influence which had most strongly affected Chaucer in the particular instance. However, from now on the source of the tale is in itself not of any importance as an indication of the kind of treatment a certain character will probably receive. Chaucer is influenced to a less degree by the particular source which he is employing, whereas, the cumulative effect of all his previous training becomes increasingly evident.

In discussing therefore both the representatives of the Church and the professions in this group as well as the other folk in the third section, the following considerations will be borne in mind as much as possible: (a) the degree of emphasis placed upon characterization; (b) the differences between the characterization of Chaucer and that of his sources when they are known; (c) the way in which various characters serve as foils to each other; and (d) to what extent the individual characters are depicted
as realistic or idealized. It will, of course, not always be possible to
discuss these considerations in the order named nor in connection with each
individual character, but they will serve to indicate the general trend of the
argument.

Under the representatives of the Church there are three that can
advantageously be grouped together. These are the friars, the summoner, and
the Pardoner. During the entire course of the pilgrimage, they come into
closer contact with each other than do most of the other participants of
the journey.

The friars whom we have to consider are two in number. The one,
Hubert, is traveling with the pilgrims; the other, John, is the hero in the
not very edifying tale of the Summoner. The characterization of both in a
way resembles that of the Duchess Blanche. We feel that the delineation
is not so much individual as typical, and yet, there is a very personal note
present. It is another instance of Chaucer's peculiar power to make an
individual serve as the portrait of a type without losing his individuality.

Hubert is a man of no mean personal appearance. He is inclined to
be corpulent, but is, none the less, of great physical strength. His neck
is white "as the flour-de-lys," his eyes twinkle, and he lisps somewhat

"... for his wantownesse,
To make his English sweete up-on his tongue".  1

He is, moreover, a man with a pleasing personality who can readily
make friends:

"Ful wel biloved and familiar was he
With frunkeleyms over-al in his contree
And eek with worthy wommen of the toun."  2

The reasons for this are various. Courtesy, the ability to sing and to play

1 1. A 264 ff.     2 1. A 215.
musical instruments, and discreet flattery will get any handsome man a long way with "frankeleyns over-al in his contree," "worthy wommen of the toun", or "hostiler and tappestere."

The one outstanding trait, however, in his character is his hypocrisy. He purports to be a friar; as such he is supposed to have turned his back on the world and the snares of the flesh, but instead we find him to be both sensual and desirous of material gain. The betrayal of young women, the granting of absolution for a monetary consideration, and the oppression of the poor are some of his prominent faults.

Friar John of the Summoner's tale is of the same type as Friar Hubert. We are told nothing at all concerning his personal appearance; however, what we read between the lines would indicate that the two differ but little in this respect. Their manner and general attitude to life is almost identical. Friar John's speech is "curteisly and softe." In his conduct toward women he is likewise free and easy. When the wife of Thomas enters the room, Friar John, by way of greeting,

"... aryseth up ful curteisly,
And hir embraceth in his armes narwe,
And kiste hir swete,and chirketh as a sparwe
With his lippes." 2

Like Friar Hubert, Friar John also evidently cultivated the friendship of the more influential people with considerable assiduity. This is indicated, first, by his visit on Thomas. He must have been quite well to do, for here the friar

"... was wont to be Refreshed more than in an hundred places." 3

His visit to the "man of great honour," following his experience with Thomas,

1 That this is the meaning of ll. 211-215 is generally conceded.
2 l. D 1802 ff.
3 l. D 1766 ff.
strengthens this supposition.

As in the case of Hubert, however, hypocrisy of the crassest kind is his greatest failing. By virtue of his profession, he, "ubiquitous and intrusive as a bluebottle fly," pried into the affairs of every household, begging for gifts. The givers' names were written on an ivory tablet by his assistant.

"Ascauntes that he wolde for hem preye." 1

However, as soon as they had left the place behind them,

"He planed away the names everichon." 2

John's assertion that he has labored "ful sore" praying for the soul of Thomas may be put down as a lie of the first water. In the same category may be placed that other remark to his hostess concerning her deceased child:

"I dar wel seyn that, er that half an hour
After his deeth, I sough him born to blisse
In myn avisioun, so god me wisse." 3

Of the same class are the numerous references to the ascetic life that he and his fellows lead.

"We live," he says, "in povert and in abstinence,
And burel folk in richesse and dispence
Of mete und drinke, and in hir foul deleyt
We hav this worldes lust al in despyt." 4

Apparently, however, the dying man had put up with the hollow hypocrisy of the pious scamp only too long. He could not kick him out of the house, but he could shame him. This he did so successfully that in spite of the long-winded sermon on the sinfulness "of anger and yre" which he had just delivered, the worthy friar becomes so aroused that

"He looked as it were a wilde boor;
He grinte with his teeth, so was he wrooth," 5

1. D 1745.
2. D 1758.
3. D 1856 ff.
4. D 1873 ff.
5. D 2160.
and dashed wildly from the house.

No definite source for the Summoner's tale has thus far been discovered. The germ may very easily have been derived from an old French story done into verse by one Jake de Lasiw. This poem is, however, only half as long as Chaucer's version. The details differ and the characterization is very slight. Instead of emphasizing one character, more than half a dozen persons play a more or less important role. The lengthy sermon on the sinfulness of wrath and the closing scene in which the squire obtains a new gown thru the solution of the problem raised by the gift of Thomas are probably both original contributions by Chaucer.

Whatever objections may be made to the vulgarity of the story, the clever delineation of character cannot be denied. As Root has observed, "the real literary value of the Summoner's Tale lies . . . in the masterful portrait of the dissembling friar."¹ In its way it is quite as much a masterpiece as the characterization of the Wife of Bath. Everything has the appearance of absolute reality. There is nothing even remotely improbable about the whole from the beginning to the close.

But are Friars Hubert and John, as Chaucer depicts them, representative? We are forced to believe that they are. Contemporary evidence in the writings of Gower and Wycliffe and of a somewhat later date in those of St. Catherine of Siena and Gascoigne, tends to show the almost complete absence of either honor or morality among the friars. Contemporary documents of both Church and State substantiate the writings of the persons mentioned. Ignorance, idleness, greediness, and the most flagrant immorality were common among the entire personnel of the Church. Gower complained that the monks were frequently unchaste, nuns were sometimes debauched even by their

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¹ The Poetry of Chaucer, p. 251.
own official visitors, and friars seriously menaced the purity of family life. Chaucer himself alludes to this condition in the *Wife of Bath's Tale*. The Wife remarks that the danger from elves, incubi, and similar beings has vanished. Instead, however, there are great numbers

"Of limitours and other holy freres,
That serchen every lond and every streem,
As thikke as motes in the sonne-boem."  

"Wommen may go saufly up and doun,
In every bush, or under every tree;
There is noon other incubus but he (the friar),
And he wol doon hem but dishonour."  

A pretty state of affairs indeed! It is quite probable that, in view of the general corruption among the friars, Chaucer intentionally passed over the individual characteristics of Hubert and John rather lightly, so that his readers would not lose sight of the profession he desired to score.

Quite as corrupt as the friars were the summoners of the fourteenth century. These were officers "employed to summon delinquents to appear in ecclesiastical courts." These courts determined all causes matrimonial and testamentary. They were also charged with disciplinary powers for punishment of adultery, fornication, perjury, and other vices which did not come under the common law. It can be readily understood that where supervision was lax, grave abuses in the way of blackmail and the like could very readily creep in. That these abuses existed during Chaucer's time is quite evident from his attitude toward the profession.

The Summoner of the *General Prologue* is undoubtedly the most

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1 See Coulton, C. C., *Chaucer and His England*, Chapters XI and XXIII for further treatment.
2 1. D 866 ff.  
3 1. D 878 ff.
5 Ibid, slightly changed.
repulsive member of the company. It is noteworthy that Chaucer emphasizes particularly the man's personal appearance and lets us read his character in an indirect way. The hideous condition of his complexion was due to his wine-bibbing propensities or to a syphilitic affection of the skin.

"As hoot he was, and lecherous, as a sparwe" 1 would indicate that his lustful nature was more obvious than that of the friar. His fondness for highly seasoned foods and strong wine is in entire accord with his sensual nature. A certain strain of humor is introduced by his tendency to quote Latin when under the influence of liquor. In spite of his lechery and general odiousness of person, the old sinner had certain redeeming traits. One of these was his great liberality with his friends:

"And if he fond o-wher a good fellow, He wolde techen him to have non awe, In swich cas, of the erchedeknes curs."

Perhaps the most tragic part of the whole picture is the remark that

"In daunger hadde he at his own gyse The yonge girles of the diocys, And knew hir conseil, and was al hir reed." 3

We wonder just what the effect of his rule over the children of the parish may have been.

It is not at all surprising that there should have arisen a quarrel between the Summoner and Friar Hubert. The difference in temperament between them was too great not to result in some show of ill will, even if the professional rivalry had been entirely discounted.

The summoner of the Friar's Tale has many points in common with the Summoner of the Prologue. We are, however, told little or nothing concerning his personal appearance. His immorality is quite as flagrant as that

of the former. His chief source of income is that of blackmailing:

"Ful privily a finche eek coude he pulle." 1

In order to carry on this business the more successfully,

"He hadde eek wenches in his retene," 2

who inveigled men of both high and low station into compromising situations.

Thereafter the woman in the particular case

"... telde it in his ere;
And he wolde fecche a feyned mandement,
And somme hem to the chapitre bothe twa,
And pile the man, and lete the wenche go." 3

To have limited his infamous practices to men would have been bad enough, but this Summoner must go even further and blackmail a poverty-stricken widow, 4 even tho he himself confesses

"'And yet, god woot, of hir I knowe no vyce.'" 5

If there is any difference between the two summoners, the one in the Tale is the viler of the two. He may be less lecherous, but he is infinitely more selfish. His villany is of a more intellectual nature. The comparatively slight amazement which he displays when he discovers the identity of his fellow traveler and the keen interest that he displays in the lower regions, clearly indicates this.

Altho Chaucer has not emphasized the moral lesson in the Friar's Tale, his meaning is quite clear. Only those who deliberately choose evil are children of darkness. Not until the desire for the good and the noble has completely perished is all hope for final redemption gone.

No direct source for this tale has been discovered. As in various

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1 l. A 652.  
2 l. D. 1355.  
3 l. D 1358 ff.  
4 Cf. ll. Dl375-1379 and 1571-1634.  
5 l. D 1578.  
6 Cf., however, pp. 103-106, Originals and Analogues, Chaucer Society Publications.
others of the Canterbury tales, in all probability portions of several fabliaux or folk stories have been combined and re-worked by Chaucer.

The most prominent characteristic of the Friar's Tale is its realism. This is largely due to the detail with which the poet describes the different pictures. Three of these are especially outstanding. They are the figure of the yeoman, the mired carter, and the scene between the summoner and old Habely. Certainly the most dramatic scene is where the old woman cries

"The devil . . . so feche him ere he deye,  
And panne and al, but he wol him repente!"

Without being told in advance, we know instinctively what the answer of the summoner will be. We can also picture in our minds eye how the old woman heaved a sigh of relief and mentally exclaimed, "Good riddance," when the pair departed.

If the summoner of the Tale is more odious than the one of the Prologue, the reason is not far to seek. The Friars and Summoners, by reason of the conflicting nature of their professions, were sworn enemies. Naturally each would narrate the worst he knew of the other. Yet, in spite of this, there is no great difference between the two summoners. Lecherousness and wine-bibbing appear to have been the characteristics of the one; love of money, the chief failing of the other. Neither of them is a model to set up before others. We have it on good authority both that the love of money is the root of all evil and that neither whore-mongers nor wine-bibbers shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

That the summoners, like the friars, have been delineated in accordance with the facts seems to be the consensus of opinion. Like the friars they were, with but few exceptions, rotten to the core. The picture is shocking, even revolting, but that he was able to describe conditions with

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1 l. A 669 ff.
such realism indicates as nothing else can how great a command Chaucer had attained over his art.

As we learn in the General Prologue, the Summoner was accompanied on the pilgrimage by

"... a gentil Pardoner
Of Rouncival, his freend and his compere,
That straight was comen fro the court of Rome."  

The pardoners were another class of ecclesiastical agents who had become very corrupted during the fourteenth century. In many respects they were worse than either the friars or the summoners. Because of their office and the lax supervision over them, it was a very easy matter for them to get large sums of money from the populace. A goodly portion of this remained in their own pockets. The evil was increased by the large number of fraudulent pardoners that infested the country. A counterfeit license, resplendent with flashing seals and brilliantly colored ribbons, could be procured very easily, and the impression that such a document made on a people credulous to the extreme is scarcely conceivable to us in this enlightened age. Add to this a glib tongue, shameless impudence, and a sanctimonious air, and the result is almost inevitable.

The figure of the Pardoner in the General Prologue is anything but impressive. His flaxen hair, hanging in thin strands over his shoulders, his fluty voice, his glaring eyes, and beardless face cannot have made him an attractive person. His bag of relics served the same purpose as the Summoner's.

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1. A 669 ff.
2. For a most interesting and authoritative discussion of the pardoners, consult Jusserand's *English Wayfaring Life in the Middle Ages*, pp. 309-333.
3. See an article by W.C. Curry, entitled *The Secret of Chaucer's Pardoner*, in the *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, vol XVIII, p. 593 ff., in which a very ingenious theory proposes to show that the Pardoner is in reality a *eunuchus ex nativitate*. Of especial interest is the material on the medieval physiognomies.
wenches,- both were a source of considerable revenues to their respective pro-
prieters. One wonders just what the Church's conception of "noble" was in the
fourteenth century that it should be applied to such a person.

The General Prologue throws much light on the appearance of the Par-
doner, but we get a much deeper insight into his character thru the remarks
which he makes in the prologue to his tale. In a monologue, one hundred and
thirty-five lines in length, he tells us about himself in a most frank and
imitable manner. However brazenly he may have lied to his dupes, there is
nothing but self-revelation in these opening remarks. Whether the ale has
loosened his tongue, or whether the atmosphere of the journey has made him
more garrulous, we do not know, but we do get a profound insight not only into
his own methods, but into that of pardoners in general.

Unlike the friars whose acquaintance we have made, the Pardoner does
not for a moment pretend to be virtuous, or even respectable. He frankly con-
fesses that his

"... entente is not but for to winne,
And no-thing for correction of sinne." 1

A few lines further on he remarks that

"... tho my-self be gilty in that sinne,
Yet can I maken other folk to twinne
From avaryce, and sore to repent." 2

Of the same nature is this remark:

"For though myself be a ful vicious man,
A moral tale yet I yow tells can." 3

The insight which the pardonner had into the psychology of the people
as illustrated by his methods is truly remarkable. When he first arrives at a

1 l. C 403 ff. 2 l. C 429 ff. 3 l. C 460 ff.
strange place, the first thing he does is to create an impression and forestall all interruption from local clerks. This he does by telling the populace where he is from, and exhibiting his credentials with the papal seals thereon. Then he displays to the open-mouthed multitude

"'Bulls of popes and of cardinales
Of patriarkes and bishoppes,'" 1

sprinkling his discourse liberally all the while with a quantity of Latin words and phrases. To further impress the people, he shows his bottles, or glass containers,

"'Y-crammed ful of cloutes and of bones.'" 2

Of especial interest is

"'. . . . . a sholder-boon
Which that was of an holy Jewes shepe.'" 3

This bone possessed marvelous curative properties. When it had been washed in a well, the water therefrom would immediately become a panacea for all ailments of domestic animals. Not only that, but if the husbandman would drink a draft from it at certain intervals, his cattle and his property as well would show a marked increase. Most marvelous of all, however, is the power it possesses to cure jealousy. The pardonner also has a magic mitten which is most potent to increase the yield of grain. All of these devices to get money out of the credulous served the pardonner well.

His sermon gives further proof of his thoro acquaintance with mob psychology. This first brot out in his remark concerning "olde stories,"

"'For lewed peple loven tales olde;
Swich thinges can they wel reporte and holde.'" 4

His text is one and the same at all times. Radix malorum est cupiditas; the love of money is the root of all evil, is his only theme. To bring this

1 l. C 342 ff.
2 l. C 347.
3 l. C 350 ff.
4 l. C 437 ff.
text home to his audiences, he has made the major portion of his sermon consist of a tale of three robbers. The introduction, however, is composed of a welter of scripture passages and thread-bare platitudes on the evils of disobedience, drunkenness, gluttony, gambling, cursing, and perjury. All this is to create the proper setting and to produce an appropriate atmosphere for the "big show". The story itself is very simple, but the Pardoner handles it so skillfully that it becomes one of the most impressive in the entire Canterbury Tales. The three thieves meeting with the old man, the finding of the gold, the drawing of the cuts, and the two plots, resulting in the death of all three,—all of these incidents, each one thrilling in itself, related in the most dramatic manner, of necessity held the simple audience spell-bound by holding the dangers of avariciousness before the simple people, he persuades them to give liberally on the spur of the moment. This is just what the Pardoner desired and undoubtedly explains why that particular text made such a powerful appeal to him.

In spite of his wonderful abilities, the Pardoner is thoroughly and inherently selfish and vicious. This is nowhere brot out more forcibly than in the closing lines of his prefatory speech. He says,—

"'I wol have money, walle, chese, and whete, 
Al were it yeven of the povrest page. 
Or of the povrest widwe in a village, 
Al sholde hir children sterve for famyne. 
Nay! I wol drinke licour of the vyne, 
And have a Ioly wenche in every towne.'"

Something must also be said concerning the accuracy with which Chaucer has delineated the Pardoner. As in the case of the friars and the summoners, we are forced to believe that the poet was correct also in this

1 l. C 443 ff.
instance. Official correspondence of Pope Boniface IX and of Richard de Bury, Bishop of Durham, together with that of many other sources, proves only too convincingly that most pardoners were, if anything, worse than Chaucer has painted the one who participated in the Canterbury pilgrimage.

Corrupt as were the official pardoners, and such a one was Chaucer's, the imposters were even worse. A quotation from Jusserand is so illuminating that it deserves to be quoted in this connection. He remarks that these imposters "released their clients from all possible vows, remitted all penances for money. The more prohibitions, obstacles, or penances were imposed, the more their affairs prospered; they passed their lives in undoing what the real clergy did, and that without any profit to any one but themselves." 2

Before continuing with the other characters in this section, it may be well to point out the striking difference in treatment between the three representatives of the church that we have just discussed and the courtly characters in the preceding section. It will be noticed immediately that whereas a spirit of idealism and romanticism prevailed in the former, we have here the crassest realism.

That Chaucer paid any attention at all to these characters and to those which follow is primarily due to the increased interest which he took

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1 The statements made by Dr. Jusserand in his article, Chaucer's Pardoner and the Pope's Pardoners, Chaucer Society Publications, p. 423 ff, and English Wayfaring Life in the Middle Ages, p. 309 ff, have never been seriously questioned. Professor Curry in the Journal of English and Germanic Philology, vol. XVIII, p. 595 ff, gives a rather unique interpretation of the Pardoner, but does not deny the historical accuracy of the character. Coulton, in Chaucer and his England, concurs in the opinion of Jusserand.

2 English Wayfaring Life in the Middle Ages, p. 321.
in the life about him as his art developed. But to take such an interest in life and to incorporate it in writing are not necessarily identical. In later years Chaucer's own circumstances demanded that he concern himself more and more with the political and social conditions about him. Not only were his personal fortunes seriously affected by the political changes, but the entire nation, as has been indicated from time to time, was passing thru a period of intense unrest.

Next to the political changes that were taking place, those in the church were of chief importance. No one who did not deliberately shut his eyes to the facts could deny that the corruption in both the high and low places of the church was pregnant with the most serious danger. Altho we can not think of Chaucer as a narrow-minded, bigoted Churchman, yet we do know that he thot very highly of the fundamental values of life.

Altho Chaucer had not attempted to delineate the ecclesiastical types of character previous to the composition of the _Canterbury Tales_, he had nevertheless passed thru a period of long apprenticeship and the dormant faculties which had been developing more and more thru the various stimuli that they had been subjected to, had now reached their maturity. That he may have received some aid from other sources, such as the fabliaus and the tales that were in circulation among the common folk, does not detract from the greatness of his genius. The delineation of character was the goal after which Chaucer strove, and any means toward that goal was eagerly accepted, even tho at times the practice may not have been quite in accordance with present-day standards.
Bearing these considerations in mind, the discussion of the other ecclesiastical characters may be taken up. The first of these are the monks. Like the friars, they too had lost much of their one-time reputation for holiness and charity. As in the case of the friars and the summoners, we meet the first monk among the pilgrims, whilst the second is the chief character in one of the tales,—in this instance, the Shipman's.

There is a certain external resemblance between the Monk and Friar Hubert of the General Prologue. The figures of neither are in accordance with the ascetic life; on the contrary, both of them seem to have well developed proclivities for an abundance of meat and drink. The Monk, however, is not so convivial a nature as is Hubert. His hobby is the chase. We are told that

"Ful many a deyntee hors hadde he in stable.

Grehoundes he hadde, as swiute as fowel in flightes;
Of pricking and of hunting for the hare
Was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare."  

Naturally, with such desires, he was only too prone to take his rule easily. Neither was he inclined to put any more time than was necessary on study or manual labor. His tastes, too, were inclined to be luxurious. His clothes were costly, and he was not averse to the wearing of a gold pin, even tho,—which was rather out of keeping for a monk,—

"A love-knotte in the gretter ende ther was."  

In addition to good clothes, he also appreciated good food:

"A fat swan loved he best of any roost."

In the prologue to the Monk's Tale we learn further details concerning his personal appearance. Especially noticeable is the Host's

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1. A 168 ff.  
2. A 197.  
3. A 206.
remark,-

"I vow to god, thou hast a ful fair skin." 1

This immediately recalls to mind the comment on Friar Hubert in the General Prologue,-

"His nekke whyt was as the flour-de-lys." 2

All of Bailey's conversation bears out the impression which we have received in the Prologue that the Monk is a man of superb physique.

The insipidness of his stories would indicate, however, that his intellectual attainments were not very high. No doubt he took a certain interest in biography, but we can readily enough imagine that it was only for the purpose of garnishing his discourse when preaching or when talking with some superior.

This is indicated by the moralizing tone that pervades the entire series. The story of De Hugelino, Comite de Pize, is of more than usual interest, for the reason that it is one of the few places in Chaucer where children are introduced. The characterization is, however, very unsatisfactory. No children of the age indicated would speak with such seriousness. This circumstance is, however, not an artistic defect; on the contrary, it is further proof of Chaucer's genius. It is only another delicate touch in the characterization of the Monk. Since, in all probability, he has little or nothing to do with children, how can he be qualified to describe them?

A comment by Ward on the character of the Monk is not without interest. He says that the Monk "is the prototype of the 'sporting parson' whose practice has always seemed somewhat more lax than his preaching or profession, but for whom the Englishman has an amused toleration, if not actually a sneaking affection." 3

1. B 3122 ff.
2. 1. A 238.
Daun John, the monk of the Shipman’s Tale, is on the whole a more corrupt character than the Monk of the Prologue. The latter with all his faults does not appear to have been an evil man. The remarks that the Host makes do not refer particularly to the Monk, but to the profession as a whole. Daun John seems to have been without any sense of honor whatsoever. He and his friend, the Merchant,

"Were bothe y-born in o village." 1

He furthermore

"Acquainted was so with the gode man,  
Sith that hir firste knoweliche bigan,  
That in his hous as famulier was he  
As it possible is any freend to be." 2

Their friendship was of so intimate a nature that

"... ech of hem gan other for tassure  
Of bretherhede, whyle that hir lyf may dure." 3

Regardless of these facts, however, he does not hesitate to seduce the wife of his friend. Having done that, he is not content, but leaves her in an extremely awkward position, from which she extricates herself only thru her own ingenuity.

The Shipman's Tale is less repulsive than either the Reve’s or the Miller’s where the same situation is treated, but it is essentially more immoral. "Gross betrayal of confidence meets with no reprobation, and the moral that no woman, be she never so 'companionable' and 'reverent' can be trusted, has for its corollary that adultery is a very amusing and profitable game provided that it is not found out." 4

The source for this tale is unknown. Boccaccio treats a similar theme, but the probabilities are that Chaucer used a French fabliau now lost." 5

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1. B 1225.  
2. B 1219 ff.  

4 Snell, The Age of Chaucer, p. 220.  
5 Root, The Poetry of Chaucer, p. 188.
When first written, the tale was evidently intended for some female pilgrim, perhaps the Wife of Bath, and when Chaucer gave it to the Shipman, he failed to make the necessary changes. There is nothing in the tale that makes it especially expressive of the Shipman, unless it be the contempt for the fidelity of women, a contempt which is only too evident throughout the entire action.

The structure of the Shipman's Tale is very good. In this respect it shows a marked advance in power not only over Chaucer's earliest writings but even after he had made the acquaintance of the Italians. There is a spirit of realism present that forces itself upon the attention of even the dullest reader.

What little we know of the personality of the Nun's Priest is to be found in the epilogue to his tale. In personal appearance, especially with regard to figure and virility, he must have been very similar to the monks and the friars. Noteworthy is the floridness of his appearance:

"He negdeth not his colour for to dyen
With brasil, ne with greyn of Portingale."

The merry tale of Chanticleer and Pertelote would indicate that on the whole neither study nor labor troubled his soul to any extent.

Markedly different from these representatives of the Church is the "povre Persoun of the towh." He does not make a great display of his learning, nor in loud-mouthed fashion vaunt his works of righteousness. In every respect he is the exact opposite of the friars, pardoners, and monks whose acquaintance

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1 Cf. l. B 1202 ff.

2 "The chief merit of the story (Shipman's Tale) lies in its splendid realism, one of the marks that distinguish Chaucer's latest style from the vague romanticism of Boccaccio, who, it should be noted, has treated the same motive in the Decameron." Snell, The Art of Chaucer, p. 220.

3 l. B 4648 ff.
we have hitherto made, for

"Rich he was in holy thought and work."

The thought of his brethren was honey-combed with sensuality and their "werk" consisted largely in providing themselves with luxurious food and fine raiment. Now different from the summoners and the monks does the Parson appear in these lines:

"Ful looth were him to curseen for his tythes,
But rather wole he yeveii, out of doute,
Un-to his povre parisshens aboute
Of his offering and eek of his substance."

Even tho' his parish was large and the houses "fer a-sonder", yet he visited them all, high or low, rich or poor. In summer's heat and in winter's cold, in health and in disease, he never failed them. Like the old Doctor in Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush, the welfare of his people was always uppermost in his mind.

"This noble ensample to his sheep he yaf,
That first he wroghte, and afterward he taughte."

How differently the Church of the fourteenth century might have fared if all her officials from the Pope downward had followed the example of this humble parson! But the clergy of the day could not realize that

"... if a preest be foul, on whom we truste,
No wonder is a lawed man to ruste."

And because the Parson's religion was genuine, charity and compassion and mercy were outstanding characteristics of his faith.

"And though he holy were, and vertuous,
He was to sinfull man nat despitous.
To drawen folk to heven by fairnesse
By good ensample, was his business."

1 1. A 479.
2 1. A 489 ff.
3 1. A 496 ff.
4 1. A 502 ff.
5 1. A 515 ff.
Humbleness was also one of his virtues,

"He wayted after no pompe and reverence,
He made him a spyped conscience,
but Cristes lore, and his apostles twelve,
He taughte, and first he folwed it him-selfe."

Again may it be said, had the Church held itself to the teaching of Christ and his apostles, not only would the Christi-inty of the fourteenth century have been in better repute, but even that of to-day would be subject to less criticism.

Neither the prologue to the Parson's Tale, nor the tale itself throws further light upon the character of the Parson. There is, moreover, as far as this discussion is concerned, no necessity to go into either the mooted question of the Parson's religious belief,—whether he was a Catholic or a Lollard,—or the equally puzzling problems of the sources and authorship of the tale as such. That the poet should have introduced such an extremely moral tale at the very end of his work is not in itself anything unusual. We know that Chaucer was an inveterate moralizer and who knows but that he may have considered the Parson's Tale a very creditable work?

Among the pilgrims that were in the immediate service of the Church, there were also two nuns, a Prioress and her chaplain. The latter is no more than mentioned in the General Prologue, but the former is described at great length.

The prioress, Madame Eglantine, is among the most charming of Chaucer's characters. She proves that even among the higher servants of the Church there were a few whose lives were not reeking with corruption. Her quiet dignity of manner, her accomplishments, her tenderness of heart, and her aristocratic appearance,—all of these qualities place her in marked contrast to the majority of the other pilgrims.

1 l. A 525 ff.
The characterization of Madame Eglantine is unusually interesting in connection with our discussion. Skeat, in his notes to the Canterbury Tales has pointed out that Tyrwhitt had already mentioned the fact that the portion of the Prioress' description referring to her table manners is taken almost verbatim from the Romance of the Rose. The portrait is also very much influenced by conventional ideas. A well proportioned nose, gray eyes, a small mouth, soft and red, a white and broad forehead, a rosy complexion, and a slender stature were conventional qualities of beauty that any mistress was required to possess. But we must remember that these were conventions of the Court of Love. The startling departure that Chaucer makes is to use these conventions in describing a woman who is supposed to have forsworn all earthly love. Quite as noteworthy is the brooch with the crowned A and the inscription, Amor vincit omnia. This phrase was used in connection with heavenly love long before Chaucer's time, but the use that he makes of it here is remarkable.¹

Wherever Chaucer may have drawn the various elements which enter into the delineation of the Prioress, he has succeeded to an extraordinary degree in combining the whole into a single personality of unusual charm. Even Harry Bailey, who as a rule pays scant attention to either the appearance or the rank of his charges, addresses her with the utmost consideration. We are told that when he asked her to tell her tale,-

"... he sayde,
As curteisly as it had been a mayde,
'My lady Prioressse, by your leve,
So that I wiste I sholde yow nat greve,
I wolde demon that ye telen sholde
A tale next, if so were that ye wolde,
Now wol ye vouche-sauf, my lady dere?'"²

Even as the personality of the Prioress is one of the most attractive

¹ Cf. in this connection Lowes, John Livingston, Convention and Revolt in Poetry, pp. 60-67.
² 1. B. 1634 ff.
among the pilgrims, so likewise her story is one of the most affecting. The piety of the little clergeon in all its child-likeness and simplicity will haunt our minds long after the tales of the Miller and the Reve have passed away.

The Prioress tells her tale without the least attempt after effect, and yet there is a dramatic power about the whole that is scarcely surpassed in any of Chaucer's work.

Altho we are told that the story took place in a great city in Asia, no one is deceived thereby. The school is quite evidently English and is attended by English boys and girls. Among the scholars there

"... was a widwes sone,
A litel clergeon, seven year of age."  

In his simplicity he had quickly learned to worship the Virgin Mary and to repeat his Ave Maria when he passed her image. While studying his little primer, he overheard the other pupils singing the antiphone Alma redemptoris mater. So fascinated was he by the song that

"... as he dorete, he drough him nor ard ner
And herkned ay the worded and the note,
Til he the firste vers coude al by rote."  

But he knew never a word of what he said, so he asked of his fellow

"Texpounden him this song in his langage."  

When he discovered that it had been written in honor of the Virgin he remarked

"Now certes, I wol do my diligence
To conn it al, er Cristemasse is went;
Though that I for my prymer shal be shent,
And shal be boten thryes in an houre,
I wol it conne, our lady for to honoure."  

Before long he had learned it so well that he could sing it correctly, and

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1 See an article by Carleton F. Brown in *Modern Philology*, v. 3, pp. 467-491 on clergeons and the schools of the period.
2 l. B 1692 ff.
3 l. B 1710 ff.
4 l. B 1716.
5 l. B 1729 ff.
twice a day he sang it on the street. His way took him thru a Jewish quarter, and the Jews became so incensed at his singing that they resolved to make away with the boy. The agony of the mother was heartrending when her son failed to return. Finally, after a prolonged search the body was found by reason of the song, Alma redemptoris, which it had begun to sing. Even when the body was placed on the bier, it continued with its song. At last the abbot conjured it, and then he discovered that the Virgin had placed a magic grain on the child's tongue which gave it the power to sing, even tho its head was severed to the "nekke-boon". When this was done, the Virgin had said to the child,-

"My litel child, now wol I fesche thee
When that the greyn is fro thy tongue y-take;
Be nat agast, I wol thee nat forsake!"

Thereupon the abbot removed the grain, and the body "yaf up the goost ful softly."

Little need be said concerning the source of this tale. Three analogues are given in the volume of analogues and originals published by the Chaucer Society. None of these, however, is similar enough to be counted as a source. Moreover, one of them is of too recent a date. In addition to these, many other versions are in existence, some dating far back to the beginning of the Medieval Age.

Much more important than the sources is the treatment. As Root has indicated, the changes that Chaucer has made are fundamental. In the other versions the most emphasis is laid on "the miraculous power of the Blessed Virgin and the black malignancy of the cursed Jews," while the little clergeon is merely a part of the machinery. In Chaucer's version, however, all this changed. The personality of the child becomes the tale. Around him all

2. The Poetry of Chaucer, p. 197.
the other elements center. While we do not forget his tragic death and the
miracle, yet these do not impress us nearly so much as his devotion to his work
and his admiration for the Virgin. It is to be noted, finally, how well Chauc-
ner has succeeded in delineating this child of seven as compared with the three-
year-old son of De Mugelino, Comite de Piza, in the Monk's Tale. The contrast
is scarcely believable. After making a comparison, one is quite willing to
accept the supposition that at least a part of the Monk's tale was written
before the major portion of the Canterbury series.

What little we know of the Second Nun has already been referred to in
connection with the Prioress. There is no prologue to her tale which would
throw further light upon her personality, nor is there anything in the tale as
such. In fact, internal evidence proves quite conclusively that the tale now
known as the Second Nun's Tale was not originally written for the Second Nun at
all. Moreover, in the Legend of Good Women reference is made to a Lyc of seynt
Cecyle. Since the Second Nun's Tale is the only extant poem of Chaucer that
could be so entitled, it is very probable that it was originally a separate work
and later incorporated in the Canterbury Tales.

The source of this tale is not definitely known. Various Latin ver-
sions of the life of St. Cecelia together with several French and English trans-
lations have come down to us, but none of these appear to have been Chaucer's
original. However, we are justified in believing that our poet's Life is more
in the nature of a translation than anything else. So conclusive is the evi-
dence to this effect, that Professor Koelbing's comment appears to be entirely

1 ll. G 62 and 78. 2 ll. 416 and 426 respectively.
justified. He remarks that in the *Second Nun's Tale* "Chaucers eigenthum sind ausser der geschmackvollen versification, die den stoffe praechtig angepasst erscheint, nur einzelne worte or halbe zeilen, deren er fuer die bildung der verse bedurfte."¹

There is, therefore, little need to go into detail concerning the character of St. Cecelia. That she interested Chaucer, there can be no doubt. Otherwise he would scarcely have taken the time to translate the tale. It is only another indication of Chaucer's increasing interest both in character portrayal and the technique of verse as opposed to the conventional poetry of the day.

Not as a rule quite so closely connected with the Church as the friars, summoners, pardoners, monks, and nuns whom we have just considered, and yet more so than the professional classes of the day, were the students, or clerks. Only one is found among the pilgrims, but during the course of the journey we are told of several others. None of these later ones, however, can in any way be compared with the Clerk of Oxenford either in scholarship or in nobility of character. It would have been far better for the reputation of the fourteenth century scholar if Chaucer had not introduced such characters as hende Nicholas and his rival, Absolon, of the Miller's tale and the two worthies, Aleyn and John, of the Reve's tale. The Wife of Bath's fifth husband, it will be remembered, was a former clerk of Oxenford. If one may judge from his general behaviour, he had also profited by the instruction which he had received in his academic days. That the clerks as a whole should be as corrupt or even more so than the clergy need surprise no one. With examples on every hand and ample opportunity, idleness and licentiousness was bound to creep in among the

The clerk who makes the pilgrimage is, however, one of Chaucer's most lovable characters. He reminds one of no one so much as of the "povre Persoun of the town." Both are more concerned about the welfare of the mind and the spirit than about worldly pleasure or material advancement. As a result neither the mount nor the attire of the clerk are of the best. Even when on rare occasions he does get a small sum in his hands, he promptly spends it for books,-

"For him lever have at his beddes heed
Twenty bokes, clad in blak or reed,
Of Aristotle and his philosophye,
Then robes riche, or fithele, or gay sautrye." 2

He was, nevertheless, not unappreciative of gifts, for when somebody helped him, he

"... bisily gan for the soules preye
Of hem that yaf him wher-with to scoleye." 3

We are not to imagine, however, that our clerk was a begging student who made it a practice to solicit alms and then by way of remuneration said prayers for his benefactors. 4 While it is not impossible that he did so, yet the probabilities are that such assistance as he received was given without any importunity on his part.

A further characteristic is his gentleness of spirit. Neither the Miller's tale nor that of the Reve with their despicable clerks is sufficient to arouse him. Nor does he hasten to refute the Wife of Bath's disparaging allusion to his order, but he waits patiently until the floor shall be his.

The clarity of his mind is indicated by his speech, which is always

1. For further interesting information as to the university life of the fourteenth century, see Coulton, G.C., Chaucer and His England, p. 299 ff.
4. See an article by Jones, H.S.V., Publ. Mod. Lang. Assoc., v.27, pp. 106-115, for further particulars on this subject.
terse, well phrased, and to the point. Neither is there any tone of levity or licentiousness to be observed therein. This in itself is a stronger rebuke to the Miller and the Reeve than anything which he might have said in direct refutation. The trend of his whole life is summed up in the line,

"And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche." 1

This desire to both learn and teach manifests itself in a striking manner in the tale which he tells. It is not necessary here to review the story of Griselda,- that will be done in the following chapter,- but a word should be said concerning the circumstances under which the tale is told. As has been said, the Wife of Bath's fifth husband was a one time clerk of Oxenford. In spite of her love for him, the Wife has had some serious criticism to offer. Furthermore in her elucidation on the proper connubial relations of husband and wife, she stepped on the toes of the Clerk on several occasions with scant regard to his feelings. But he rode along

"... as coy and stille as dooth a mayde
Were newe spoused, sittynge at the board," 2

biding his time.

The opportunity to settle the score comes the next morning when the Host asks him to tell a story. To go into detail and show how skillfully and completely the Clerk vindicates his own kind and at the same time refutes the Wife of Bath's blustering harangue would require too much space. 3 Suffice it to say that he proves himself a worthy match for the Wife, for he trounces her so neatly that she is left utterly breathless. However much she may have learned in the School of Life, she had not sat at the feet of Aristotle.

1 L. A 303 ff.  
2 l. E 2 ff.  
3 Those who care to do so are referred to pp.189-190 and 193-200 of The Poetry of Chaucer by C.L. Kittredge. In speaking of the conclusion of The Clerk's Tale, he remarks:"His mock encomium is not only a masterpiece of sustained and scathing irony; it is a marvellous specimen of technical skill in metre, in fiction, and in vigorous and concentrated satire. None but the Clerk, a trained rhetorician, could have composed it. None but the Clerk, a master of logic and a practical disputant, could have turned upon his opponent so adroitly." p. 189 ff.
Clerk Nicholas of the Miller's Tale is of an entirely different type from our friend of the General Prologue. He is in much better circumstances, for not only does he occupy a chamber all by himself, but he has therein a great many books "grave and smale" together with an astrolabe and a "sautrye" (a kind of harp). Instead, however, of busying himself with the lore of Aristotle, he spends his time either in singing or in secret amours with his landlord's wife. To make himself the more attractive, he perfumes both himself and his room "with herbes swote." Altho Chaucer does not mention it, we may be sure that his clothes are of fine quality. A man with his inclinations would scarcely spend money on books at the expense of his wardrobe.

More important than his outward appearance is the ingenious manner in which he pulls the wool over the eyes of his landlord, the Carpenter. In this little episode, he plays off his knowledge of astrology against the credulity of the Carpenter with the greatest success. In truth

"'A clerke had litherly biset his whyle,
   But-if he coud a Carpenter bigyle.'"

If he always gained his end as readily as in this particular instance, certainly no one could accuse him of having "litherly biset his whyle." That he should have fared so ill with Absolon served him right, yet that was not due to any fault in the original scheme.

Absolon, however unsuccessful he may be in his wooing of Alisoun, is nevertheless an interesting personality, for Chaucer has described him to us in considerable detail. As far as dress is concerned he appears to have been the Beau Drummond of the town:-

"Y-clad he was ful smal and proprely,
   Al in a kirtel of a light wachet;
   Ful faire and thikke been the poynetes set.
   And ther-up-on he hadde a gay surplys
   As whyt as is the bloome up-on the rye."

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1 l. A 3299 ff.
2 l. A 3320 ff.
Furthermore, his hose were red, while fancy figures resembling the windows of Saint Paul's Cathedral were cut in the uppers of his shoes. His complexion was rosy, and his curly hair, of a bright red color, was apparently not very amenable to brush and comb, even tho' we are told that

"Ful streight and even lay his Ioly shode."

His chief accomplishment was dancing:

"In twenty manere coude he trippe and daunce
After the scole of Oxenforde tho,
And with his legges casten to and fro."

He could also sing, however, and play the guitar and the rebeck. Small wonder that our parish clerk should consider himself to be somewhat of a "lady-killer".

The fair Alisoun appears to have enthralled him completely, for even tho' she was married, he did not hesitate at all to serenade her under her own window even when her husband was at home or to send her all manner of presents. In addition, he engaged go-betweens and played "Herodes on a scaffold bye."

But it was all to no avail:

"She loveth so this hende Nicholas,
That Absolon may blowe the bukkes horn;
He no hadde for his labour but a scorn."

The remainder of the narrative gives us but little more in the way of characterization. In spite of the fact that Alisoun ignored him, Absolon did not cease his attentions to her. One night, when he thought her husband away, he went again to her home and knocked at her chamber window. It happened to be the night that Nicholas was with her, and in order to get rid of him as quickly as possible, Alisoun played an extremely coarse but practical joke on him. Vowing revenge, he departs. Shortly after, he returns, but instead of Alisoun, Nicholas becomes the victim.

Taking everything into consideration, the delineation of Absolon is fully equal to that of the other characters in the narrative. While the dis-

1. A 3316. 2. A 3328 ff. 3. A 3386.
comfiture of Nicholas was entirely a matter of accident as far as Absolon was concerned, it nevertheless satisfies the demand that some sort of punishment be meted out to him.

Altho we cannot condone the immorality of the Miller's Tale, we must admit that the structure is admirable. From every point of view the technique is almost faultless. The characterization is unusually good, while the action moves along without the slightest hitch. Considered from a purely technical point of view, there is a far cry between this tale and such a poem as the Book of the Duchess, or even some of the other Canterbury tales. One wishes that Chaucer had attempted to work some of his dramatic talent into such extremely moralizing things as the Tale of Milieus or the Parson's little homily on the seven deadly sins.

The two clerks, Aleyn and John, of the Brave's Tale were evidently not so well provided with this world's goods. They could not afford to lodge in separate chambers, but had to live in the "Soler-halle at Canterbregge." Of any but the most necessary books and instruments and of fine clothing, they undoubtedly knew little. But in spite of these handicaps, they managed to get a good deal of joy out of life, for we are told that

"Testif they were, and lusty for to playe." 1

Now it chanced that a miller by name of Simkin ground the flour required for the Hall in which the two clerks lodged. He stole so shamelessly that the warden of the Hall became aroused, but to no effect,-

"For ther-of sette the miller nat a tare." 2

Finally the two clerks, "for thir mirthe and revelrye", requested the warden

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1 l. A 4004.  
2 l. A 4000.
that they might take the wheat to the mill.-

"And hardily, they dorste leye mir nekke,
The miller shold not steale hem half a pekke
Of corn by sleighte, ne by force hem reve;
And at the laste the wardeyn yaf hem leve."  1

When they arrived at the mill, Simkin soon discovered their purpose. In order to get them out of sight, he slyly loosed their horse, whereupon the animal ran away into the fen. Then Aleyn and John noticed their loss, they immediately set out in search for their property. During their absence, Simkin removes a goodly portion of the flour and his daughter bakes a cake out of it. When the clerks return from their quest, tired and hungry, it is too late for them to go back to their Hall. Simkin, however, is a good fellow. He provides food and lodging for the night. Before the night is over, they take ample revenge. Not only do they get all of their flour (even tho a part of it is in the form of a cake), but Simkin, in addition to receiving a sound beating,

". . . hath y-lost the grinding of the whete,
And payed for the soper every-deel
Of Aleyn and of Iohn."  2

The characterization of the clerks in the Reves Tale is not elaborate. The personality of Simkin, the miller, is the outstanding figure in this story. Nevertheless, we can get a pretty clear-cut idea concerning the kind of men the "yonge povre clerkes two" may have been. From an ethical point of view, there is little to choose between them and Nicholas. If anything, however, the latter is the worst. His seduction of Alisoun was part of a pre-conceived and well considered plan. In this respect he in a way reminds us of Don John, the monk in the Shippen's Tale. It is true that his act is not quite so despicable, but it certainly comes very close thereto. The two clerks, Aleyn and John, acted, however, on the spur of the moment. Nevertheless, the agility which they displayed in its execution, after once the idea had suggested itself, would

1 l. A 4009 ff.  2 l. A 4314 ff.
indicate pretty strongly that they had had previous experience in similar affairs.

Like the tale immediately before it, that of the Reve is also noteworthy for the perfection of its technique. It would appear as if the minds of both narrators had been stimulated to an unusual degree by their vocational jealousies. The vulgar element in the Reve's tale is less prominent, but the sensuality is on a par with that of its predecessor. As has already been indicated, the characterization, especially with regard to the clerks, is not so good as in the Miller's Tale. There are, however, a number of scenes that in point of vividness and dramatic action surpass anything in the former. These are particularly where the clerks find their horse gone, where they return from the search,

"Wery and weet, as beste is in reyn,"

and where the free-for-all fight takes place. In the former tale we feel unconsciously that the ingenuity of Nicholas is so superior to that of the other two men that he will come out ahead. In fact, so convinced are we of this, that the success of Absolon's trick comes almost as a kind of disappointment. In the Reve's Tale, the advantage shifts back and forth so rapidly among the clerks and Simkin,—who is no dullard by any means,—that we are kept on edge until the very end.

Little need be said about the sources of these two tales. The exact originals of neither are known. We do know, however, that the Miller's is a combination of two originally distinct tales. It is probably true that the superior characterization in this tale is largely due to this circumstance. Boccaccio has a tale resembling that of the Reve in his Decameron. Two French fabliaux more similar to Chaucer's version than that found in Boccaccio are

1. A 4107.
contained in the Chaucer Society's volume of originals and analogues.

Another clerk, somewhat different from any whose acquaintance we have thus far made, is the Wife of Bath's fifth husband. Altho he had left "scole" when the Wife first met him, his personality nevertheless has sufficient in common with the other clerks of Chaucer that he may properly be considered in this connection.

While nothing is told us of his personal appearance, certain traits stand out very distinctly. His temperament must have been essentially sensual, or he never would have appealed so strongly to the Wife. This is borne out by the intrigue which he had with her before her fourth husband had passed away. Altho this particular clerk, Jankin by name, had left his college halls, he had by no means lost interest in his books. One, especially, he loved so well that

"Every night and day was his custom,
When he had leyster and vacacioun
From other worldly occupacion,
To reden on this book of wikked wyves.
He knew of hem mo legends and lyves
Than been of gode wyves in the Bible."  

According to the catalogue of names which the good Wife rehearses, the ancient tome must have been rather ponderous, for it appears to have contained full details concerning every unfaithful woman recorded in history. The descriptions themselves might have been tolerated, but in addition to these her husband

"... knew of mo proverbes
Than in this world ther grownen gras or herbes "

concerning the unfaithfulness of women. With these he was in the habit of seasoning his discourse until the sharer of his joys and sorrows was almost beside herself with rage. Once it did become more than she could endure. First she tore three pages out of the book and then she gave the clerk such a slap on the cheek

"That in our fyr he fil bakward adoun."
In all probability she did not anticipate the consequences, for the astonished husband picked himself up in a hurry and thereupon floored his spouse with a single blow. She lay stunned, and the clerk, thinking that he had fatally injured her, made peace on any terms. There were two. In the first place, the accursed book should be destroyed; in the second, the Wife should henceforth

"... ban the governance of house and land,
And of his tonge and of his hond also."  

We know no more of this clerk, save that thereafter, according to his wife, the two lived in peace and happiness. Whatever his scholarly accomplishments may have been, he must have been a marvel in the understanding that he had of the Wife. Of few men could she have said

"That thogh he hadde me bet on every boon
He coude winne agayn my love anoon."

Even the Wife of Bath appears to have been no exception to the rule that there is a Jack for every Jill.

Those who hold that Chaucer was interested primarily in types rather than individuals will have some difficulty in holding their position in the case of the clerks. There is little danger that anyone would confuse the one with the other. Of the five described in the tales, there is not one who resembles the Clerk of the Prologue in any essential manner. The former, without exception, have a well defined trait of sensuality in their characters. It is most evident in Nicholas and least in Jankin. But even in the latter, it can be detected without difficulty. With the exception of astrology, Nicholas cares little or nothing about study. Concerning the inclinations of John and Aleyn in this respect, we cannot say with certainty, but in all probability they did not lose any sleep over their books. Jankin was more studiously inclined, and we may safely assume that he was interested in other subjects besides that of unfaithful women. However amusing a theme it may have been to torment his

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1 l. D 814 ff.
2 l. D 511 ff.
spouse, it nevertheless must have tired him for continuous private reading.

With the exception of the Clerk in the Prologue, not a one appears to have taken his work seriously. Certainly Nicholas was only a dabbler, and John and Aleyn cannot have been much better. Just why Jankin should have given up a life of study, we do not know. The loss to the world was perhaps not very great, however.

There are but few classes of society that Chaucer has described in such detail as that of the clerks. Whether this interest was due to some early university experience of his own or to some other reason, we do not know. What is pertinent to our discussion, however, is the fact that he could portray equally well both the good and the evil in the characters of these clerks. And, what is even more important, therewithal they remained essentially human, essentially individual, essentially personal. The characterization of the clerks illustrates better than anything else to what an extent Chaucer had sloughed off the purely conventional elements in his art and to how great a degree his inherent genius had developed so that, unhampered by the fetters of convention, it would mirror life as it daily revealed itself before his eyes. 1

A class occupying a position half-way between the Church and the professions as such is represented by the Canons of the pilgrimage. While the canons were in theory connected with the Church, the two with whom we become acquainted had in reality long severed their relationship. In the monasteries they had evidently learned what science they could. After that they had taken up alchemy, and depended upon it for a livelihood. Needless to say, their practices were only too frequently of an extremely questionable nature. While

1 Especially interesting in connection with the tales of the Miller and the Reve is a statement made by W.M. Hart in the Publ. Mod. Lang. Assoc., v. 23, p.30. He observes that "Chaucer's chief addition to fabliau technique seems to have been in the way of character-drawing, and it is probably true that the fabliau can furnish no example of a person so vivid, so complex, so highly individualized as Simkin."
the interest that both had in alchemy may have been perfectly legitimate in the beginning, it had soon degenerated into a means whereby the gullible might be separated from their money.

The first canon says but very little; neither is his appearance described to any length. The Host, however, remarks to the Yeoman concerning the clothing of his master:

"His oversloppe his nat warthe a myte;  
...  
It is al baudy and to-tore also.  
Why is thy lord so sluttish, I thee preye?"  

And when the Host inquires after their residence, the Yeoman replies:

"'In the suburbes of a toun,  
Lurking in hermes and in lanes blinde,  
Wher-as thise robbours and thise theves by kinde  
Holden hir privee fereful residence,  
As they that day nat shewen hir presence;  
So faren we, if I shal seye the sothe.'"

That the canon's conscience was not entirely easy is indicated by his slinking and suspicious attitude. When he discovers that the Yeoman will tell the secrets of his craft,

"He fledde awey for verrey sorwe and shame."  

In the Canon Yeoman's Tale we are told of another alchemist, who in all probability has very much in common with the former master of the Yeoman, even tho he tells us distinctly that

"It was another chanoun, and nat he."

There is no individual in the entire range of Chaucer's poetry that is described in such caustic terms as this second canon. This is due very largely to the experiences that the Yeoman has had with the tribe. However, those who hold that Chaucer himself was at one time deceived by an alchemist

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1 L. G 633 ff.  
2 L. G 657 ff.  
3 L. G 702.  
4 L. G 1090.
have some ground for their assertion in the mordant tone that pervades this tale.

The Yeoman begins his tale as such in this manner:

"There is a chanoun of religioun
    Amonges us, wolde infecte al a toun,
    Though it as greet were as was Minivee,
    Rome, Alicheandre, Troye, and othere three."  

So numerous are his tricks and wiles that even tho a man lived to be a thousand years old, it would not suffice to set them down. So seductive is his speech that he would mislead any man, no matter how wise, unless he were a fiend himself.

"'And yet men ryde and goon ful many a nyle
    Him for to seke and have his aqueytaunce,
    Noght knowinge of his false governaunce.'"  

Had he lived in our day, what a wonderful salesman he would make for a wild-cat oil company!

What follows after the introductory paragraphs is devoted to a description of the fraud that this canon perpetrated upon a gullible priest. It is unnecessary to go into detail, for the story merely servest to illustrate what the Yeoman has already told us. The hatred of the narrator, however, breaks out again and again in such remarks as

"For he was ever false in thoght and dede"  

and

"He seemed freendly to hem that knowe him noght
    But he was feendly bothe in herte and thoght."  

He is also referred to as the "rote of cursednesse," and a "cursed heyne."

These appellations remind us of the mother-in-law of Constance in the Man-of-

Law's Tale.

The tale of the Canon Yeoman belongs to the best that Chaucer wrote.

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1 l. C 975 ff.  2 l. C 987 ff.  3 l. C 1275.  4 l. C 1302 ff.
The characterization is subjective to a marked degree, dialogue forms an important element, the action is vivid and continuous, and the moral tone, while not elevating, is much superior to that of the Miller's and the Reeve's tales.

In view of the emphasis that has been placed on the Church, it may appear rather strange that there should be only one lawyer and one physician among the Pilgrims. Upon a moment's consideration, however, it will not seem so extraordinary. In the fourteenth century the individuals who really had need for legal counsel were comparatively few. All minor difficulties and a good many of the more serious ones were adjusted by the Church. The summoners, who, it will be remembered, were discussed in the earlier part of this chapter, were officials of the ecclesiastical courts. A similar condition existed with regard to the physicians. It is only within the last century that physicians, and especially surgeons, have become so numerous. Before that time people relied largely upon house-hold remedies. Surgical operations were rare, and hospitals could be found only in the larger cities. In Chaucer's time, conditions in this respect were even worse.

We got to know but very little concerning the Man-of-Law's personal appearance, since Chaucer devotes only two lines to this purpose. We do, however, receive a thorough insight into his professional life. In the very first line, he is referred to as "war and wys." Almost all that follows is merely an elucidation of this remark.

The lawyer is experienced in legal matters, for often had he "been at the parvys," and

"Iustyce he was ful often in assyse
By patente and pleyn commisson." 1

He had also taken care that his professional skill had brought him material

1 1. A 314 ff.
gain,-

"For his science, and his for high renoun
Of fees and robes hadde he manyoon."  1

His ability as a conveyancer was generally conceded by all:

"So greet a purchaser was no-where noon.
Al was fee simple to him in effect,
His purchasing mighte nat been infect."  2

Furthermore, he was well versed in the law, both past and present. All the cases and judgements from the time of King William down to his own day he had at his fingers' tips. He was quite as familiar with the statutes then on the books, for he knew them all by heart. Since he possessed all this knowledge, we are quite ready to believe that

"There to he coude endyte, and make a thing,
There coude no wight pinche at his writyng."  3

In the introduction to the Man-of-Law's Tale we have an opportunity to hear the man himself. When the Host asks him to tell a tale, he does not hesitate.

"Biheste is dette, and I wol holde fayn
Al my biheste. I can no better seyn.
For swich lawe as man yeveth another wight,
He sholde him-selfen usen it by right."  4

There is quite evidently no attempt here to avoid just debts or to get special privileges. This lawyer uses his abilities only for legitimate purposes.

Somewhat of a surprise is his evident familiarity with the writings of Chaucer. While we have felt all along that the Man-of-Law was a first-rate person, we are convinced of it now. Even tho' he seems to consider Chaucer's meters and rhymes to be nothing extraordinary, he is willing to admit that they are better than any that he is able to make. After a somewhat lengthy introduction, however, he tells the story of Constance.

The discussion of this tale properly belongs in the next section;

1  l. A 316 ff.  2  l. A 318 ff.  3  l. A 325 ff.  4  l. A 41 ff.
it will, therefore, be considered there at length. Be it sufficient to say here that it is entirely in keeping with the character of the Man-of-Law as modified by the introduction to his prologue. On the strength of the description given in the General Prologue, we would certainly be justified in expecting some clever narrative of legal procedure, in which perhaps the Man-of-Law had prevented some grave injustice being done under the semblance of law and equity. This instance is a good example of how necessary it is to consider not simply the General Prologue but the Canterbury Tales as a whole in order to form a correct estimate of any one character.

Quite as interesting as the Man-of-Law is the Doctor of Physic. He too is one of the foremost men in his profession. Chaucer's remark that "In al this world he was ther noon his lyk," may be taken with a grain of salt. However, we are justified in believing that he was very much superior to the rank and file of his profession, not only of his own day but, in some respects, even of our time. He did not limit himself in a narrow-minded fashion to any one school of medicine. On the contrary, he studied all, ancient and modern, approved and otherwise. He even dabbled in astrology, and who can tell, but that perchance he picked up a suggestion here and there that was of value?

As in the case of the Man-of-Law, Chaucer tells us very little about the personal appearance or the habits of the Doctor. He is, we know, frugal in his diet and moderate in his expenditures. He does, however, manage to dress well. Rather curious is the observation that "His studie was but litel on the Bible."

Even in Chaucer's time physicians do not appear to have enjoyed a reputation for orthodoxy. The tale of the martyred Virginia which the Doctor tells throws 1 1. A 412.

2 1. A 433.

3 The Physician's Tale will be discussed at length in the following chapter.
no further light upon the character of the narrator. To make matters worse, the prologue is also absent.

Before beginning the next chapter, which will treat of the bourgeois and the common folk, it may be well to sum up briefly the discussion of the ecclesiastical and the professional characters.

Nearly all of the characters in this chapter were delineated by Chaucer when he was at the height of his powers. In the second chapter it was shown how Chaucer's art had developed with regard to the portrayal of courtly characters. It was also pointed out that although in the *Parliament of Fowls* he had made an effort to bring the lower classes into his work, he had disguised the attempt. We saw, in a word, that at no time before the inception of the *Canterbury Tales* had Chaucer made any real progress in the delineation of any but chivalrous characters. The French and the Italian influences were still too strong. It was only when he finally subordinated these that he ventured to introduce the other classes of society.

When this was finally done, it is not surprising that the Church and the professions should occupy a prominent place. The tremendous influence of the Church and the exceedingly large number of persons connected with it in one capacity or another are facts familiar to all students of that period. Quite as well known is the corruption that was gnawing at the very vitals of the Church and threatening it with destruction. Blackmail and bribery, licentiousness and extravagance of the most flagrant nature were common among nearly all the representatives of the Church. Undoubtedly these conditions formed a common theme of conversation and occupied much of the thought of all thinking people. At any rate, we know that no class has been treated to such length by Chaucer.

The representatives of the Church most prominent in the public eye, the friars, the pardoners, and the summoners, have been delineated for us from
three different angles: Chaucer gives us his opinion about them, other members of the party present their views, and they also, as a rule, tell us about themselves. We are reminded, in a way, of Browning's *Ring and the Book*. As in that work, so also here we have sharply defined characterization and wonderful dramatic power. It is almost impossible to describe adequately the marvelous difference between this portion of the *Canterbury Tales* and Chaucer's earliest work.

But in the delineation of ecclesiastical characters, the poet has by no means confined himself to the vicious and the corrupt. In addition to the monks, who are considered at some length, there are also presented to us such individuals as the almost over-refined Madame Eglantine, the Second Nun with her exalted narrative of St. Cecilia, and the self-sacrificing Parson. These do much to off-set the gloomy picture that the friars, the pardoners, and the summoners have left in our minds.

Another class of society somewhat less closely connected with the Church than those hitherto alluded to are the clerks, or students. These Chaucer has described in great detail and with surprising vividness. The same observation that was made concerning the poet's method in connection with the corrupt ecclesiastical officials also holds in this instance. Here also Chaucer has permitted us to get the views of various persons representing the different classes of society. Chaucer himself tells us what he thinks of a certain clerk; the Miller, the Reeve, and the Wife of Bath speak of others; finally, a clerk is permitted to speak for himself. Again, we may see the progress that Chaucer has made since writing the *Book of the Duchess*.

More closely related to the ecclesiastical folk and the students than to any other class are the professions. To these Chaucer has not paid nearly so much attention as we would at first blush expect. This, however, is to be explained by the circumstance that in the fourteenth century the professions
were not nearly so important and consequently not so well represented as in our own day.

The first whom we considered under the professions as such were the canons. Altho nominally connected with the Church, they had long since ceased to have any relationship with it in practice. Both have turned to alchemy and are as adept as the pardoners in working on the credulity of the masses. We made the acquaintance, furthermore, of the Man-of-Law and the Physician, and we found that both of these were delineated in considerable detail and with much skill.

To conclude: Altho it was becoming very evident toward the close of the second chapter that Chaucer had nearly ceased to hold himself to the conventional standards in the delineation of chivalrous characters, yet the contrast was not striking enough to bring out the magnitude of that change. It is only when we consider the characterization of persons almost entirely ignored in his models that we are enabled to appreciate adequately the completeness of his liberation from the conventional standards.

In the following chapter we shall consider such representatives of the bourgeoisie and the common folk which Chaucer has introduced in his work. In the discussion of these characters we shall be able to understand more completely the all-embracing genius of Chaucer than the arbitrary limitations of this and the foregoing chapter have permitted.
CHAPTER IV.

THE BOURGEOISIE AND OTHER FOLK.

Thus far there have been considered in this discussion the courtly characters together with those of the Church and the professions. In connection with the former it was pointed out that the development of Chaucer's power of character delineation was illustrated better in that relation than anywhere else. The reason, as will be remembered, was this: Chaucer had begun as a translator and frank imitator of the French courtly poetry, which at this period was under the exclusive dominance of the Court of Love conventions. Later, when he became acquainted with Italian poetry, the theme of his work remained very much the same, even tho the atmosphere, technique, and general treatment began to differ widely from the earlier French models. Finally, in the _Canterbury Tales_ it was shown how Chaucer's genius, which all this time had been groping about for untrammelled self-expression, rose above the poetic conventions of the day and treated the courtly themes in its own individual fashion. Traces of the French and Italian influence are present everywhere even in his last work, but they have been subordinated to the poet's dominant genius. In his earlier work, the conventions had mastered the poet; in the later work, the poet became master of the conventions.

Until the writing of the _Canterbury Tales_, Chaucer's poetry had paid but scant attention to any class of people other than those that moved in courtly circles. As we saw, however, there were indications that this narrowness of scope did not appear to satisfy him. In the _Parliament of Foules_, for instance, he had devoted considerable attention to "the foules of lower kinde." Several other attempts at more extensive characterization, such as the _Legend of Good Women_ and what is now known as the _Knight's Tale_ had been begun and later abandoned before completion. Quite evidently, a really satisfactory
form had not yet suggested itself to the poet. This came only with the
Canterbury Tales. Here for the first time,— excepting always, of course,
the Parliament of Fowls,— we find depicted classes of society other than that
of chivalry.

Among these other classes the Church would naturally come in for a
good share of attention. It influenced the entire warp and woof of the
political and social fabric of the day. It is not surprising, therefore, to
find that a considerable portion of the Canterbury Tales in some manner or
other concerns itself with ecclesiastical matters. The professions as such
had not yet become so influential in the fourteenth century as they have in
our own day. As a result, not so much attention is given to them as we might
expect at first sight.

It was pointed out, furthermore, that while many of the characters
were in a measure types, they were individualized types. While they serve as
representatives of their office or profession, they do not thereby lose their
individuality.

To however great extent the medieval Church may have dominated the
social and economic life of the fourteenth century, it was no longer the power
that it had been in the centuries immediately preceding. The desire for ease
and influence had corrupted its officials, and its once fair name had become
a synonym not only for the crassest selfishness, but even for immorality of
the most flagrant nature. A radical reform within a comparatively short time
was inevitable. Not the least of the factors in bringing this reform about was
the disenthrallment of the middle and the lower classes. This liberation
was largely due to the changing economic conditions of the day. It is needless
for the purpose of this discussion to go into detail concerning these changes,—
the fact that they took place is sufficient.
As a result we are not surprised that among the courtly, ecclesiastical, and professional characters of the Canterbury Tales we should find a goodly admixture of folk representing the other classes of society. In these are included representatives of the landowners, the tradespeople, and the serving class.

The first of these whom we shall consider is the wealthy Franklin. He is the social climber of the party. As he has discovered on various occasions when he was justice of sessions or the representative of his shire in Parliament, he himself has neither the birth nor the breeding to take his place among the gentle folk; but he fain would have his graceless son "lerne gentillese kight." His disappointment in this regard is both very keen and very human.

Chaucer has described his appearance to us in very vivid terms. His snowy beard, "whyt . . as is the dayesye," his florid complexion, and his costly raiment, make him indeed an imposing figure.

As his highly colored complexion would indicate, the Franklin enjoys sitting down to a well spread table. In fact, so much attention does he pay to his larder that

"It snewed in his house of mete and drinke,
Of all the dayntees that men coude thinke
After the sundry sesons of the yeer."

Furthermore, his liberality was so great in this respect that a permanent table, a very recent innovation in furniture,

"Stood redy covered al the longe day"

for any guests that might happen in. Because of this unusual custom, he was regarded as the patron saint of hospitality in his county.

We should not imagine, however, that the Franklin's aspirations were of an entirely material nature. With all his fondness for the good things

1. A 345 ff.
2. A 354.
of this life, he nevertheless had a true appreciation for the finer and more elusive values. His admiration for the young Squire is as whole-hearted as is his grief for the failings of his own son. Reference has already been made to the Franklin's realization of his own deficiencies. This is especially noticeable in the prologue to his tale. There he asks the company to excuse him for his "rude speche,"-

"I lerned never rhetoryk certeyn;  
Thing that I speke, it mout be bare and pleyn.  
I sleep never on the mount of Pernaso,  
He lerned Marcus Tullius Cithero."  

And further on he tells us in all simplicity,-

"Colours of rhetoryk ben me to queynte;  
My spirit feleth nought of swich natere."  

Humility is, therefore, one of the worthy man's prominent characteristics. Even tho' he had acquired great wealth and considerable influence without education or social polish, his success has not made him blind to the value of these qualities. The personality of the man is, in short, very pleasing, and we are quite ready to agree with Root that "we should be glad enough to receive an invitation to spend a week-end with the 'worthy vavasour'." Not only would we be royally entertained, but our stay would be extremely pleasant in every other respect. We cannot imagine the Franklin as

"Sournge alway thencrees of his wining."

The tale of Arviragus and Dorigen which the Franklin tells has already been discussed at length in Chapter II, p. ff. As was there trot out, "the idea of faithfulness in keeping a promise, no matter what - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -  
1 l. F 719 ff.  
2 l. F 726 ff.  
3 The Poetry of Chaucer, p. 271.  
4 A comment by G.L. Kittredge, p. 461, v. 9, Modern Philology, may be of interest in this connection. He remarks that "Chaucer's Franklin is an individual, not a mere type-specimen. He is rich, ambitious socially, and profoundly interested in the matter of gentillesse for personal and family reasons."  
5 l. A 275.
sorrow it occasions, is fundamental in the Franklin’s Tale.¹ In this respect the Franklin’s Tale forms one of a group in the Canterbury series in which the individual tale illustrates a single dominant virtue. Strange to say, in all of them, a woman is the principal character. Besides that of Dorigen, one other tale of this kind has already been discussed. This was the tale of Saint Cecilia.² It illustrates, as will be remembered, unaltering devotion to a life of chastity.

There remain three other tales of a similar nature that may be taken up at this time. However, before discussing them in detail, certain differences between them and such tales as those of the Miller, the Reve, and the Merchant should be pointed out. These differences serve to illustrate better than anything else could, certain phases of Chaucer’s art in connection with character delineation that thus far have not been adequately brought out.

From a technical point of view these tales as a group are inferior to many others in the Canterbury series. Neither is the character delineation as a whole of such uniform excellence. This is due to the circumstance that the one character has been emphasized at the expense of the others. Furthermore, the emphasized character is not a well rounded personality. In order to bring out forcibly the dominant trait in her life, all other qualities had to be shoved as far as possible into the background. And finally, as has already been pointed out, in reading this group one gets the impression that a certain virtue is being illustrated thru one main character.

One should not imagine, however, that Chaucer consciously tried to write a "moral thing." Far from it. The reason is rather to be sought in the literary tendencies of the day. To a certain extent poetry with a well developed

² Above, p. 105.
didactic element was the accepted convention. In so far then as Chaucer followed this convention, he was in accord with the prevailing tendencies. Chaucer, as a child of his time, was ever prone to think and write "in terms intelligible to men always 'conscious of moral preferences' and deeply versed in Gower, Langland, Wyclif, and later in Lydgate."\(^1\)

Keeping these preliminary considerations in mind, we may now take up the first of the remaining tales in this group. The first which we shall consider is the Man-of-Law's Tale. From a structural point of view this narrative is not great.\(^2\) There are a great many episodes, but they do not form a coherent whole. Were it not for the wonderful personality of the heroine, there would be no tale, since the connecting link between the various events would be lost.

Before we consider the personality of Constance, a few words may be said concerning the other characters. The Sultan of Syria is left very vague. He was, we are told, of "benigne curteisye" and a ruler much interested in the welfare of his people. But at his birth, the stars had written in the heavens

"That he for love shulde han his death, alani!"\(^3\)

And thus it came to pass. His love for Constance caused him to accept Christianity. This act of apostasy so incensed his mother that she resolved to slay both her son and all those who had renounced their former religion. This was accordingly done. Constance, however, was put in a boat and set adrift. The


\(^2\) "The Man-of-Law's Tale with all the grace of Chaucer's style has also the characteristic unwieldiness of the common medieval romance." Ker, *Studies in Medieval Literature*, p. 97.

\(^3\) l. B 193.
old sultaness, that "wol of vyces", "rote of iniquitee", and "cursed crone", ruled all the country.

After drifting for "yeres and dayes", Constance was cast upon the shore of Northumberland, where Alla ruled as king. Next to Constance he is the next important personage in the tale. He is described to us as "ful wys", with a "gentil herte", so "fulfild of pitee"

"That from his yen ran the water doun".  

That his was a truly Christian nature was indicated by his attitude when he received the news of the monster born to him by Constance. When aroused, however, he could become relentlessly severe, as is proved by the execution of his mother, the "olde Donegild", a character nearly as despicable as "the cursed wikked sowdonesse." This punitive act, however, weighed upon the king's mind, and he decided to make a pilgrimage to Rome. The complete understanding with his wife was bound to follow. His death shortly after their return to England completes his life. In the delineation of Alla, it is noticeable that not a line is devoted to his personal appearance.

And now we come to Constance, the portrayal of which Root considered "a greater artistic triumph than to create a Criseyda", altho as Meyer has pointed out, to most of us this would appear extravagant praise. She is undoubtedly a most winning character in her nobleness, trust in God, and love for her child - far surpassing Criseyde in all these - yet Criseyde certainly impresses us as the greater artistic creation.

Be that as it may, Constance yet remains one of Chaucer's greatest creations of womanhood. What could fill us with a profounder respect for her

1 l. B 661.

2 The Poetry of Chaucer, p. 187.

personality than the following description:

"In hir is heigh beautee, with-oute pryde,
Youthe, with-oute grenchede or follye;
To alle hir werkes vertu is hir gyde,
Humbleness hath slayn in hir al tyrannye.
She is mirour of alle curteisye;
Hir herte is verray chamber of holinesse,
Hir hand, ministre of fredom for almesse."

Whatever follows in her life is merely an illustration in one way or another of a quality here enumerated. In spite of the circumstance that she was "faste d up so softe", she was ready to go to Syria. Her belief that

"Wommen are born to thraldom and penance,
And to ben under mannys governance;"

would have been worthy of that paragon of wifely obedience, Criselda.

Her goodness was evident to all with whom she came in contact. When she was accused of murdering Alla's first wife, the populace refused to believe the charge,-

". . . . . they can not gesse
That she hath doon so greet a wikkednesse."

The scene wherein she bids farewell to the land of her husband, after having been forced to leave thru the machinations of her mother-in-law, is one of the most poignant in the entire tale. Especially affecting is the stanza where she consoles her infant son:

"Hir litel child lay weeping in hir arm,
And kneel, pitously to him she seyde,
'Pees, litel sore, I wol do thee non harm.'
With that hir kerchef of hir heed she breyde,
And over his litel yen she it leyde;
And in hir arm she lulleth it ful faste,
And in to heven hir yen up she caste."

As the last line in the stanza just quoted indicates, Constance was a woman of great piety. Her Christian belief is shown again and again during the course of the narrative. When she is leaving for Syria she prays that

Christ who

"... starf for our redempcicun,
So yeve me grace, his hestes to fulfille." 1

When she is compelled to depart from her husband's country, "she taketh in
good entente the will of Crist," 2 while her prayer for mercy and protection is
addressed to the Virgin Mary. The close of her life is like the peaceful
calm of twilight that sometimes comes after a tempestuous day of wind and rain,
thunder and lightning. After a year in England, where they lived in peace
and quiet, her husband died, and she returns to Rome to the household of her
father:

"In vertu and in holy almes-deede
They liven alle, and never a-sonder wende;
Til death departed hem, this lyf they lede." 3

Whatever criticism may be made with regard to the structure of
this tale, it must be admitted that the personality of Constance has been
very effectively portrayed. 4 While the extreme emphasis which has been placed
on her faith in God, has been done at the expense of her personality as a
whole, nevertheless, the human appeal which she makes is far greater than
that of St. Cecilia, and in just so far Chaucer has made a distinct advance
in his art.

It is interesting to note that the Man-of-Law's Tale, as well as
that of the Second Nun, is ascribed to a comparatively early period in
Chaucer's literary career. It is generally believed that both were writ en
about ten years, perhaps more, before the Canterbury Tales as such were begun.
This would readily account for their tone and structural deficiencies compared
with the later work of Chaucer. While the probable source of the Second Nun's

4 "Die Erzaehlung ... verherrlicht ... die weibliche Unschuld,
der von Hass, Verleumdung, roher Lust wiederholt nachgestellt wird, die aber
durch hoehere Macht aus allen Gefahren und Prufungen gerettet wird." ten
Tale was a Latin work, something that Chaucer may have run across rather early in his career, the Man-of-Law's Tale is taken from the Anglo-Norman Chronicle, a work produced by Nicholas Trivet, an Englishman, who wrote during the first third of the fourteenth century. The alterations and changes which Chaucer made have been pointed out by Root. He remarks that "Chaucer has very considerably condensed the story, has added many original passages of a reflective or lyrical character, and has altered some of the minor details." While these matters are comparatively insignificant in themselves, yet all of them are in the direction of improved technique and more individualized characterization.

As Constance has illustrated the consistent devotion to God in spite of affliction sufficient to shake the faith of even the strongest believer, so Griselda of the Clerk's Tale demonstrates unswerving faithfulness to a husband who submits his wife to tests that in their severity are almost diabolical.

The story of this "flour of wyfly pacience" is almost too well known to be repeated and yet it may be well to do so. Her beauty is passed over briefly with the comment already quoted. We feel instinctively that the poet considers purely physical qualities to be of much less importance in this tale than mental and moral characteristics. He, therefore sketches rapidly over the former.

Her ideals are very high in every respect. Because the excessive use of wine would arouse the evil in her,

"We lotter of the welle than of the tonne
She drank." 2

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1 The Poetry of Chaucer, pp. 182 and 183. Of especial interest is the first footnote on p. 183.

2 l. E 214 ff.
She was always at work managing the household and caring for her aged father. Of considerable import as an indication of her future fidelity to her husband is the "greet reverence and charitee" with which she "fostred hir olde, povre fader."

"And ay she kepte hir fadres lyf on-lofte
With everich obeisaunce and diligence
That child nay doon to fadres reverence." 1

It is no wonder that the Marquis Walter should look with favor upon the beautiful and virtuous maid in spite of her poverty. Her answer when he asks her to be his wife is likewise typical:

"'But as ye wol your-self, right so wol I.
And beere I swere that never willingly
In werk me thought I nil you disobeye!'" 2

That such a person should meet with immediate favor among the people is scarcely to be marvelled. Likewise it does not appear particularly strange that during her husband's absence she should soon become a mediator among quarreling factions.

But the great tests of her life were yet to be met. It is needless to go into detail concerning these. Suffice it to say that each one increases in severity over the other, - if such a thing is possible. First her daughter is snatched from her bosom; then the son, the prospective heir, is likewise taken away. Yet this is not sufficient, - she too is forced to leave and return in rags to her father's lowly cot. One would think that the limit had been reached at this point, but the Marquis has yet a more cruel trial. Like a common charwoman or chambermaid she is to come to the palace where once she was mistress and order everything for the reception of the new wife.

One would think that the limit of human endurance would have been

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1 1. E 229. 2 1. E 360 ff.
reached long before this. When she leaves she only says,

"! . . . . . . . it shall not be
That I yow yaf myn herte in hool entente!"

And when he requests her to prepare the place for the reception of the bride, she reaffirms her love:

"'Ne shall the gost with-in myn herte stente
To love yow best with al my trewe entente.'"

Once only are we permitted to glance into her soul and get a glimpse of the exquisite agony that she has suffered during all of these twelve weary years. That is where she prays the Marquis that he may deal less harshly with the new wife than he has with her. And even this is not in a spirit of complaint, but rather out of compassion for the "tendre mayden;"

"'For she is fostred in hir norishinge
More tendrely, and, to my supposing,
She coude not adversitee endure
As coude a povre fostred creature.'"

Chaucer, however, has pity upon our feelings and permits the story to close as we desire that it should. Any other ending would have aroused in us a spirit of revolt that could in no wise be mollified.

A few words must be said concerning the Marquis Walter. In many respects he is a very noble man. His ancestry is of the best; he is

"... ful of honour and of curteisy,
Discreet y-nogh his contree for to gye."

On the other hand he had several grave faults. One of these is his excessive interest in present pleasure; the other is his carelessness concerning the succession to the marquisate. In his choice of a bride, - a matter of great importance to the state, - he follows his own sweet will without apparently consulting any person. Likewise in trying his wife, he appears to be guided only by his own capriciousness. We cannot help but feel, taking everything

1 l. E 859 ff. 2 l. E 972 ff. 3 l. E 1040 ff. 4 l. E 74 ff.
into consideration, that the Marquis is not worthy of Griselde, no matter how lowly her ancestry may have been. His philosophy of life is purely selfish, he never thinks of the feelings of his wife; Griselda, on the other hand, never considers herself. Even in the one instance where her utterance most nearly approaches a complaint, it is fundamentally a plea for the bride. One doubts very much whether she ever really thought of herself.

Altho composed at a later date than either the Second Nun's Tale or that of the Man-of-Law, that of the Clerk may have been written before the Canterbury series. Chaucer derived it from a Latin version of Petrarch, who in turn had taken it from Boccaccio. The tale is therefore in reality a translation and in this respect resembles the Second Nun's Tale. However, the tale as such possesses infinitely more human interest. It therefore indicates a further step in Chaucer's ability to portray genuine personality.

The envoy, with which the tale closes, is, it should be observed, Chaucer's own addition. This not only causes the tale to fit in with the series, but is, as was pointed out in a previous section, a master stroke of literary art.

The Physician's Tale is very good with regard to character delineation. Altho the objective descriptions of the minor characters are very meager, the subjective delineation is unusually complete. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that this tale was written at a much later date. Even tho there may have been no particular reason for putting it in the mouth of the Physician, the superiority in treatment is quite evident.

Beyond a descriptive adjective here and there, we learn but very little concerning the personal appearance of the maid's father, Virginius, the

2 Legouis, Geoffrey Chaucer, p. 187.
3 Above, p. 109.
judge, Apius, or the hireling, Claudius.

Virginius is a "worthy knight", "fulfild of honour." His resolve to kill his daughter rather than submit her to the passion of the lecherous judge, shows him to have been a Roman father of the old school. Apius proved himself in both word and act to have been a depraved character of the very worst kind. The high office which he held made his conduct all the more heinous. He realized full well that he could accomplish his foul purpose neither by force nor in a legitimate manner, so he decided to resort to trickery. By means of a bribe, he secured a false witness. Thus he was in a fair way to attain his end. Little is said about the false witness, Claudius. Apius knew that he was both "subtil" and "bold". It is therefore quite probable that he had made use of him on previous occasions.

There is a slight resemblance in general appearance and moral strength between Virginia and Griselde of the Clerk's Tale. The former is so superior to most women in both goodness and beauty that

"Fair was the mayde in excellert beautee
Above every wight that man may see." 1

Of Griselde we are told that

"... for to speke of vertuous beautee,
Then was she oon the faireste under somne." 2

Of especial interest is the abstinence of both from wine and their reason therefore. In the case of Virginia

"Bacus hadde of hir mouth right no maistrye;
For wyn and youthe coon Venus encrece,
As men in fyr wol casten oile or grece." 3

The parallel passage in the Clerk's tale concerning Griselde runs thus:

"No likerous lust was thurgh hir herte y-ronne;
Vel ofter of the welle than of the tonne
She drank, and for she wolde vertu plese." 4

1 l. C 7. 2 l. E 211 ff. 3 l. e 50 ff. 4 l. E 213 ff.
Virginia's extreme youth and her horrible death make her in many respects a more tragic figure than her counterpart. However, it is often-times much more difficult to live one's belief than it is to die for it, especially when we must suffer because of it far into maturity after many of the ideals of early manhood and womanhood have vanished into thin air. So good was she that

"... in her living maydens mighten rede,
As in a book, every good word or deede,
That longeth to a mayden vertuous." 1

The announcement of the judge's decision easily marks the most dramatic scene in the narrative. The overwhelming grief of the father and the first panic-stricken fear of the child when she cried out "O mercy, dere fader... is there no grace? is ther no remedy?" burns itself into the memory for all time. The plea of Virginia that she, like the daughter of Jephthah, be granted a little time to lament her death reveals unconsciously the human frailty of the maid. So much the sublimer, however, become her last words where she commands her father,-

"Loth with your child your wil, a goddes name!" 2

The Physician's Tale, as Skeat has pointed out, 3 is not taken from Titus Livius, as the opening line of the story would indicate, but is really drawn from the Romance of the Rose, ll. 5613-32, "which contains all the particulars which he introduces, except such as are of his own invention."

Skeat quotes the portion of the Romance that is referred to; Root translates it and quotes it in The Poetry of Chaucer, p. 221 ff.

The results of a comparison between the two versions proves very interesting. In the first place Chaucer has included practically everything that is to be found in the Romance. In the second place, he has added several

1 l. C 107 ff. 2 l. C 250.
passages. These are the description of Virginia, the little homily to those charged with the rearing of daughters and the final scene between Virginia and her father where she chooses death in preference to a life of shame.

This tale illustrates in a striking manner the power that Chaucer had attained at this time. Thru the skillful introduction of characterization and the dramatic development of the crisis, he has transformed a comparatively ordinary story into a work of art. "Portrait painting" has given way to psychological delineation; a series of loosely connected episodes is replaced by a coherent structure. But the tale is not flawless. Because of Chaucer's moralizing proclivities, he had to insert a little preachment on the rearing of girls. There is no particular reason for its introduction; on the contrary, it appears to be a serious artistic defect. We wonder why his sense of the eternal fitness of things did not come to his rescue not only here, but in numberless similar instances.

Farther on in this chapter we shall have occasion to consider a group of women that with one exception are in almost every respect the exact opposite of these which we have just been discussing. Whereas these appear to be as nearly faultless as it seems possible to be in this world, those are inherently sensual. As we shall see, however, they are no more types than these. Each is highly individualized, and while the ruling passion may be the same, it yet expresses itself in an individual manner. However, before turning our attention to them, there are several other pilgrims who should be considered at this point.

Quite different from the Franklin in almost every respect is the Merchant of the General Prologue. He too is wealthy, but those qualities which are so admirable in the landowner are utterly absent in him. Even tho the Franklin may have been ambitious, he was nevertheless a person who had
retained the good-will of his community. The Merchant, however, is conceited, pompous, and boastful of his own success. One feels instinctively that he would be a disagreeable person to be associated with. While we can not say with certainty, the probabilities are that the fault for his marital unhappiness lies quite as much with himself as with his wife.

The wealth that the merchant class had acquired during the fourteenth century is indicated in the rich apparel of this pilgrim. His suit was "mottelee," his hat, a beaver imported from Flanders, and his boots were of fine soft leather, well made, and of a perfect fit. His beard was forked, which, as Skeat tells us, was the fashion among the bourgeoisie in the time of Edward III. He rode his horse with an air of importance, and when he delivered an opinion, it was done in a manner that suffered no contradiction. He had well defined opinions concerning the policy of the government with regard to questions affecting his business. This was especially true of the freedom of the sea

"Bitwexe Middelburgh and Orewelle."  

One of his chief sources of income was the varying rate of exchange. This required considerable knowledge of financial conditions, for the rate appears to have fluctuated quite as much in those days, as within recent years. Finally, like many other traders before and since, he was a master at the art of dissimulation, for no one could suspect from his conversation whether or not he was in debt:--

"This worthy man ful wel his wit bisette;  
Ther wist no wight that he was in dette,  
So estatly was he of his gouernaunce,  
With his bargaynes, and with his chevisance."  

However, with all his wealth, this merchant was unhappy. He has been married only two months, but during that short space, he has discovered that

2 l. A 277.  
3 l. A 279 ff.
even tho a man may live in bachelorhood all his life, he could not have so much misery as he has had during his short marital experience. "I trowe," he remarks,

"!: ...he that all his lyve  
Wyflees hath been, though that men wolde him ryve  
Un-to the herte, ne coude in no manere  
Tellen so muchel sorwe, as I nowhere  
Coude tellen of my wyves cursednesse!"

The Host invites him,-

"Sin ye so much knoen of that art," to tell the company a portion of his knowledge.

"'Gladly,' quod he, 'but of myn owene sore,  
For sory herte, I telle may na-more.'"

The Merchant, therefore, proceeds to tell the not very delectable story of January and May. In spite of the unsavory ending, which, incidentally, appears to be the only portion that Chaucer took over from some other source, it teaches its lesson with sledge-hammer force. The situation, an old man wedded to a young wife, is old as history itself. Almost everybody is acquainted with a similar case either in real life or in fiction. Several novelists have made use of the same situation within recent years, but one

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1 l. E 1234 ff. 2 l. E 1241. 3 l. E 1242 ff.

4 Kittredge points out (in Modern Philology, v.9, p.451) that the Merchant had no thot of telling a tale at this time. But he is suffering a kind of emotional crisis. The discussion of marriage is again in full swing. To quote: "The tale is the perfect expression of the Merchant's angry disgust at his own evil fate and at his folly in bringing that fate upon himself. He speaks in a frenzy of hatred and contempt. The hatred is for women; the contempt for himself and all other fools who will not take warning by example."


can hardly say that they have succeeded any better than Chaucer.

The old burnt-out January belongs to the more despicable of Chaucer's characters,-

"... sixty year a wyfless man was he,
And folwed ay his bodily delyt
On women, ther-as was his appotyt." 1

By and by, "when that he was passed sixty year," for some reason or other,-

"Were it for holinessse or for dotage,
I can not seye.-" 2

he decides to take unto himself a wife. It is quite true, he tells us, that

"Non other lyf... is worth a bene;
For wedlok is so ey and so cleene,
That in this world it is a paradys," 3

but we have an instinctive feeling that the sensual old hypocrite does not mean a word of what he says.

But we can pass over this matter. After a lengthy soliloquy on love and marriage he decides to marry a young woman of the town, named May. Altho she is but of low degree, her beauty is of "greet renoun". 4 However, what undoubtedly appealed more to the old roué than anything else was that

"Quere Ester laked never with swich an y8
On Assuer, so make a look hath she". 5

January evidently hoped to marry some unsophisticated damsel who is in her innocence would never suspect her husband's pre-marital lapses. 6 The old man is indeed wondrous circumspect and wise,- in his own conceit.

Whatever intentions January may have had to make of marriage a "ful gret sacrenent" 7 and "live in chastitee ful holy," they quickly went by the

1 l. E 1250 ff.  2 l. E 1253 ff.  3 l. E 1262 ff.  4 l. E 1624 ff.  5 l. E 1744 ff.  6 Cf. in this connection l. E 1415 ff.  7 l. E 1319.
board when the ceremony had been performed. To cite all the passages indicating the ingrained lechery of the husband would require too much space. Such connubial ideals as the young wife may have had before her marriage could only be shattered completely under the grim realities of her marital existence.

Any attempt to palliate her intrigue can under no circumstances be condoned, and yet we can in a way understand her point of view. The sanctity of the marriage bond had been violated from the very beginning by the lust of the husband. Even in her comparative inexperience she must have felt that she existed only for the gratification of her husband's passion. Under such circumstances the complete collapse of her moral nature was inevitable. There can have been nothing particularly attractive at any time about her old husband with the "slakke skin aboute his nekke", whereas the "gentil squyer", Damian, of whom January himself says that he is

". . . . wys, discreet, and as secre
As any man I woot of his degree,"

must have been a far more pleasing character. Add to this the circumstance that the entire affair had to be carried on with the utmost secrecy, and the development of the whole is perfectly in accord with our anticipations.

There is little need to say much more about Damian. He is a low character with no individual traits. His mind is obsessed with his dastardly designs. That he possesses no sense of honor is unqualifiedly indicated by his intrigue with May. "Ful many a day" he has served his master, but that does not seem to trouble him at all. Perchance he knows his master too well, and, knowing him as he does, his ethics will permit him to lead the young wife astray. But we need not concern ourselves longer with him; he is not of nearly so much importance in the tale as either of the other two characters.

1 Typical are the following: 11. E 1750 ff., 1950 ff., and 2051 ff.
2 l. E 1909 ff.
It is interesting to note, as Legouis has pointed out, how Chaucer manages to arouse some sympathy in the reader for even the duped January. Altho we feel that the old villain deserves almost anything that comes to him, at the same time, May is so utterly disregardful of her obligations and so brazen in her attitude when she is discovered that we find ourselves pitying the poor deluded husband before we are aware of it. Instead of returning good for evil, she has repayed her husband in his own coin, and is therefore no better than he. It is a touch that only a poet like Chaucer could have given.

There is no need to discuss at any length the immorality of the Merchant's Tale. Those who take offence will have to pass it by; those, however, who are willing to face certain facts of life, no matter how disagreeable, can learn something even from this revolting tale.

The Merchant's Tale, as the reference to the Wife of Bath's Tale indicates, was written at the height of Chaucer's power. As has already been said, the sources of the tale as a whole are not known, whereas the pear-tree episode occurs in several different versions. Since this is not an integral part of the story, it has no particular bearing upon our study. The important element is, of course, the characterization of January and May. The delineation is largely indirect. The almost complete absence of the customary conventions is noticeable. The severe and prolonged love sickness of Damian is the one element which reminds us of the French Court of Love conceits.

The introduction of Pluto and Proserpine is an original touch which adds very much to the effectiveness of the story. Since it foreshadows the crisis, it aids materially in bringing out in clear-cut relief the opposing personalities. The jealous January, the false wife, and the burning Damian are all sharply delineated for the final act.

1 Geoffrey Chaucer, p. 190.
The setting of the tale is quite evidently in England. This is, of course, largely due to the fact that there was no classical source present to pre-determine time and place. The action is somewhat marred by the rather lengthy discussions that have been introduced.

In addition to the Merchant of the General Prologue, we are told of another in the Shipman's Tale. As we should expect, the delineation is of a decidedly indirect nature. While the appearance of the Merchant in the Prologue is described in considerable detail, we are told nothing at all about the chapman in this respect. We know that he has been successful in his business, for he has acquired sufficient wealth to live in a fine house. His business acumen is brought out by the success of his voyage to Bruges in which he engages during the course of the narrative. The profits of this single undertaking were

"A thousand francs above all his costage." 1

His friendship for the false monk indicates that even tho' he was much occupied with his business, he nevertheless found enjoyment in the company of men outside of his own walk in life.

On the whole, however, he is the typical man of business, who is interested primarily in his own affairs. The description of him sitting at his table, poring over his accounts, is extremely realistic. That at times he was inclined to neglect his wife is clearly brought out in the conversation between her and the monk. Evidently, like many another man of wealth, he considered his duty done when he had supplied her with money and advice. As a result there was lacking between them that closer bond of sympathy which in all probability would have prevented the affair between his wife and the unscrupulous Churchman.

1. B 1562.
Even when he realizes that his wife has in some manner deceived him, he is worried primarily about the effect that it may have upon his business relations. He asks her specifically to tell him in the future

"If any dettour hath in syn absence
Y-payed thee; lest, thurgh thy negligence
I righte him axe a thing that he hath payed." 1

When he sees that this admonition has no effect, he knows no other way than to repeat it in somewhat different words. She is to be less generous with her funds,-

"Keep bet our good, this yeve I thee in charge." 2

The characterization of this Merchant, deficient as it may be, is nevertheless of value in throwing further light on the Merchant of the Prologue. It should be remembered that as far as the Shipman's Tale is concerned, the Merchant is really not so important as Dain John or the wife. When we bear this in mind, we see that Chaucer has in reality paid considerable attention to him.

More astute than the Merchant of the Prologue is the Manciple.

Chaucer nowhere tells us anything about his personal appearance. His business was the buying of provisions for the lawyers in the Temple, and no matter whether he paid cash or bought on credit, he always took care to come out ahead. Altho he had had but little formal education, he was more than a match for his employers, of whom there were

"... mo than thryes ten,
That were of lawe expert and curious." 3

Even tho among these thirty odd men, there were above a dozen who were qualified to take charge of the rents of any lord in England, no matter how difficult

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the position, "yet this maunciple sette his aller cappe." We are prone to ask with Chaucer,—

"Now is that nat of God a ful fair grace,
That swich a lewed mannes wit shal pace
The wisdom of a heep of lerned men?"

His pleasantry with the Cook indicates that he knew that class of people well, and that his opinion of it was not very flattering.

The tale which the Manciple relates is in keeping with his business and general lack of culture. A touch of the strange and a dash of immorality topped off with a didactic speech describes the whole. At first one is somewhat surprised to hear the references to Solomon, Plato, and Seneca, but it must be remembered that the Manciple could easily pick up many wise saws from the lawyers in the Temple during his more or less constant intercourse with them. All that was required was a good memory, and men of his type are very often provided with that faculty.

There is, in short, nothing remarkable about the tale of the Manciple, and we may safely assume that that is just what Chaucer intended it to be.

Among the pilgrims there is a group of trades-people which Chaucer has not individualized at all. On the contrary, it is quite evident that he intended to describe them as a class. These are the Haberdasher, the Carpenter, the Weaver, the Fyer, and the Tapister. All of them are

"... clothed in a liverye.
Of a solemnne and greet fraternitee."

Their wealth is indicated by the newness and the richness of their clothing and equipment. Chaucer notes especially that the sheathes of their knives are capped with silver rather than with brass. This would indicate that this group was not composed of ordinary mechanics, for they were not permitted to wear anything thus ornamented. Each had sufficient income to be an alderman.

1 l. A 573 ff.  2 l. A 363 ff.
Their wives could also bask themselves in the affluence of their husbands.

"It is ful fair to been y-clopt 'ma dame',
And goon to vigilyès al bifoire,
And have a mantel royalliche y-bore." 1

Beyond this brief mention, we hear no more concerning this group. Undoubtedly, had the Canterbury Tales been completed, we would have learned more about them both in their stories and in the prologues.

A character who is quite as shrewd as the Manciple and infinitely more interesting is the Host. In some respects he is Chaucer's greatest character. On him is dependent to a large degree the success of the entire pilgrimage device. Had the Host been a weak, unresourceful man with but slight experience in the ways of the world, the Canterbury Tales would have fallen flat. Morsbach has pointed out that Chaucer evidently realized the importance of the Host, for he proceeded to prepare the proper setting with the utmost deliberation.

Unlike the other important pilgrims in the General Prologue, Chaucer tells us but very little concerning the personal appearance of the Host. He is described as a well built man of pleasant appearance,-

"Bold of his speche, and wys, and wel y-taught,
And of his manhod lackede right naught.
Ek therto he was right a mery man." 3

His formal education was certainly very limited, but he possessed an unusually keen intellect, a quick eye, and ample self-confidence. A circumstance that makes the Host all the more interesting is that he is not entirely a "figment of the poet's brain, but a substantial burgher of the later fourteenth century."4 He was, furthermore, the bailiff of Southwark, and "sat in

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1 I. A 376 ff.
2 Englische Studien, v. 42, p. 50 ff.
3 I. A 755 ff.
4 Francis Watt, Canterbury Pilgrims and their Ways, p. 66.
two Parliaments, that of Edward III in 1376, and that of Richard II in 1378, as M. P. for Southwark.¹ He was therefore a person who could, if necessity required, approach any man without hesitation. Both his political and his business experience had brought him in contact with all sorts and conditions of men, and the knowledge which he had thus acquired he wisely employed in furthering his own legitimate ends. Even tho' he could become exceeding caustic in his remarks, yet he generally phrased it in such a manner that no one could take offence.

Harry Bailey is, then, a Host far above the average in every respect, and it is largely for this reason that he is so successful in his self-assumed office of guide and counsellor to the party. He is able to appreciate all the different feelings that are likely to be engendered in such a varied company under the prevailing conditions better than any other person possibly could.²

His general attitude to the pilgrims is extremely democratic. However frank and familiar he may get at times, he nevertheless is able to respect genuine worth. Only in the case of the Parson does he make an exception. His attitude toward the poor preacher is evidently one of open contempt. This, however, can be readily understood. But in the case of the Prioress, his bearing is one of profound respect; the Knight is addressed with a quiet dignity; and the Clerk is chaffed on his studious appearance and his reticent manner. Other members of the party are treated with veiled but none the less evident contempt. His attitude toward the Church is one either of frank sus-

¹ Francis Watt, Canterbury Pilgrims and their Ways, p. 66.

² H. Simon, in his essay entitled Chaucer, a Mystifite, Chaucer Soc. Publ., v. 13, pp. 227-292, is surely mistaken when he regards the Host as an "unlicked cub of an inn-keeper who had clumsily trodden on the corns of all the other tale-tellers and even now could not quite renounce his innate coarseness (p. 230)." The Host did not possess the refinement of the Knight, but his conduct surely does not justify the comparison made by Simon. To judge him on the basis of his attitude toward the Parson alone is scarcely permissible.
picion or open hostility. He trusts none of her representatives. Even the
harmless Parson suffers under this aversion. He does not hesitate to tell
the Nun's Priest what he thinks about the morals of monks in general. The
boundless impertinence of the Pardoner so enrages him that for once he loses
his temper. His attitude toward the lower classes is one of frank yet not
disagreeable superiority. His business has made him dictatorial; at the same
time he has learned that there are occasions when a discreet man chooses a
strategic retreat. Such an instance is the episode where the drunken Miller
insists on telling his "noble tale." Rather than create a disturbance spiced
with all manner of lewd and profane remarks, the Host permits the Miller to
continue.

In this particular instance the course of the narratives has passed
out of his control; in the majority of cases, however, he determines who shall
entertain the company, and, as a rule, he makes some suggestion as to the
nature of the story.

In this latter capacity he sometimes shows surprising literary taste.
Altho we do wish that he had not relished tales like the Shipman's quite as
much as he did, yet we can understand his point of view. Besides we can
forgive him his fault in this regard when we remember how emphatically he tells
the Monk that his dismal series "is not worth a boterflye." While to us with
our cultivated sense of literary values the *Rime of Sir Thomas* is not nearly
so disagreeable as it was to the Host, we can understand how to his matter-of-
fact mind it may have seemed little better than "rym dogerel."

In spite of his obvious weaknesses, the Host has a high sense of
honor or justice. So affected is he by the injustice done to Virginia in the
*Physician's Tale*, that he cries out
"... by nayes and by blood!  
This was a false cherl and a false Justyce!  
As shameful death as herte may devyse  
Come to these Tyges and his advocats!"

He continues in a similar vein for fifteen lines or more, until his excitement gives him a stitch in the heart when he must perform quiet himself.

As a rule, however, he takes life pretty deliberately. He remains even-tempered,—with the one exception referred to,—throughout the course of the journey, and on the whole he also keeps his enthusiasm well under control. He has learned to conceal a strongly developed strain of sarcasm under the guise of humor,—

"A man may seye ful sooth in game and play."

It is quite probable that his self control in this respect is not a little due to the shrewishness of his wife. Strange to say, she does not appear on the scene at all, but from what the Host tells us, together with what we can fill in between the lines, she must have been a regular Amazon. Her temper is pretty well indicated by the Host's remarks in the Monk's prologue. She is big-armed and loud-mouthed,—

"... when I bete my knaves,  
She bringh me forth the grete clubbed staves,  
And cryeth, "slee the dogges overichoone,  
And brek hem, bothe bak and every boone."

When her husband does not avenge some fancied insult, she vents around and laments

"... that ever I was shape  
To wedde a milksope or a coward ape."

However, we are inclined to think that Harry Bailey has somewhat exaggerated the disposition of his spouse. Apparently he has lost no flesh and his sense of humor does not appear to be impaired. With all her faults, he knows,—and is glad,—that she is "trevy as any steel" to him. Even tho she be a "labbing shrew" and has "an hempt of vyces no," he would not exchange her for a sister.

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1 l. 238 ff.  
2 l. A 4354.  
3 l. 3087 ff.  
4 l. B 3099 ff.
of the day in the Merchant's Tale under any consideration.

Of all the characters in the Canterbury Tales, there is no one more sustained than that of Harry Bailey. He is furthermore one of the most human. With all his faults, he is generous and sympathetic, and whenever we hear his jovial voice, we prick our ears. Even tho' he may be a little coarse at times, he is never uninteresting.

He is, also, Chaucer's most original character. There is no pattern for him in the previous literature of the time. Indeed, even if there had been, he could not have been the Host of the pilgrimage. Harry Bailey is preeminently the child of his age, reflecting the ideas of a man who had a wide and varied acquaintance with the world, and who looked at it thru neither roseate nor murky glasses. He is different from Chaucer, but after Chaucer's own heart, for he is full of good humor, mirth, and jollity. When we wish to see Chaucer's powers of character delineation at their best, we instinctively think of the Host. As several critics have pointed out, 1 he has become the model for a long line of Hosts in English literature, but no one of them can make us forget "Master Harry Bailey, the jovial guide of the Canterbury pilgrims."

A character equal to the Host in point of interest and by many considered to be Chaucer's greatest creation is the Wife of Bath. We are introduced to her in the General Prologue. Even as the wives of the "fair burgeys" insisted upon their right "to goon to vigilys before," so was there no one in the Wife's parish

"That to the offering before hir sholde goon." 2

and when by chance some one did get ahead of her.

"... so wrooth was she,
That she was out of al charitee." 3


2 1. A 450.

3 1. A 451 ff.
This tendency to put herself in the foreground in the church is indicative of her entire personality. Her apparel is of the kind to excite comment. The kerchiefs which she wore on her head of a Sunday weighed ten pounds or more. On the pilgrimage, however, she wore a hat

"As brood as is a bokeler or a targe," which no doubt she carried in the approved "merry widow" fashion. Her hose were of bright scarlet, and we may rest assured that she displayed a goodly portion as she rode along. Her shoes were new and fitted out with a pair of sharp spurs. The poet makes especial mention of the fact that she was "y-wimpled well," a circumstance that may have surprised him quite as much as it does us, for we should imagine that décolleté would have been more to her liking. A foot-mantel, or overskirt, completed her costume.

Everything would indicate this blonde Wife to have been a woman of large figure, while her vitality is indicated by her florid complexion. The boldness of her demeanour is expressed in her face, an expression made even more noticeable by her widely separated teeth.

The past life of the Wife had certainly been anything but monotonous. Husbands she had had five,

"Without other companye in youthe."

Whether she went traveling during her periods of mourning to forget her sorrow, or in company with her husbands, we do not know, but at some time or other she had managed to visit Jerusalem three times, and

"At Rome she hadde been, and at Boloigne, In Galice at Seint Iane, and at Colgone."

There is no doubt in our minds that

"She coude suche of wandring by the weye,"

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and what she did not remember, or had not seen, a lively imagination undoubtedly supplied.

Much as Chaucer has told us about the Wife in the General Prologue, it is but little compared with what she herself tells us. Thanks to "the ceaseless clatter of an indomitable tongue," we get to know her views, direct or implied, on almost every conceivable subject. As one might imagine, however, Marriage and the related subject, Who should be Head of the Family, are the principal themes. But the longer she talks, the less able are we to fathom her character, and when she passes off the stage, we are completely mystified. We do not like her,—who could like such "a pest, such a combination of conjugal despotism, sensuality, garrulity, and peevishness,"—yet there is a kind of fascination about her that is almost impossible to resist.

Next to a tongue loose on both ends, her most obvious trait is sensuality of the most pronounced kind. She married her first husband when she was twelve years of age, since then she has had four more, and at the time of the pilgrimage she is advertising to the best of her ability thru word and manner for the sixth. She envies Solomon with his seven hundred wives,—

"!... wolde god, it levoful were to me
To be refreshed half so ofte as he!"

During the conversation she proves that celibacy is in reality contrary to both Scripture and Nature, but she does it only to excuse her own sensuality, which she instinctively feels is in need of palliation. Her life, in so far at least as we are able to see, has been nothing less than a form of prostitution. Ideals concerning the sanctity of the home or the holiness of motherhood appear never to have entered her polluted mind.

Quite as definite are the Wife's views as to who should rule the family. She has made up her mind that no man whom she marries is going to lay

1 l. D 37 ff.
down the law to her. In this respect she is the original "Maggie", wife of
the well-known "Jiggs". If she cannot dominate by fair means, then she needs
must resort to foul, but dominate she will. The first three husbands appear
to have been easily managed, for they were old and evidently bore the Wife
some affection. The other two, however, were of a different mettle. The one
was a "revelour", the other a clerk from Oxenford, and neither of them seems
to have been a simpleton. However, she managed to break both eventually. The
fourth husband had a paramour, so she "made him of the same wode a croce," or,
as she expresses it in other words,

"... in his owene grece I made him frye
For anger, and for verrey Ialousye." 1

So well did she succeed that she is content to wish him a happier life in the
world to come,-

"'By god, in erthe was I his purgatorie,
For which I hope his soule be in glorie.'" 2

The Clerk of Oxenford was somewhat different. Perhaps he knew women better.
At least she says of him

"'That thogh he hadde me bet on every boon,
He coude winne agayn my love anon.'" 3

It would appear that in so far as she was capable of any tenderer
feelings, she bore them toward the Clerk, since she tells us that she married
him "for love and no riches." But, - and this is quite as we should expect,-
she did not care about his qualities of mind and heart; Far more attractive
than these was the shapeliness of his calves and feet:-

"'As help me god, whan that I saugh him go
After the bere (that of her fourth husband), me thoughte
he had a paire
Of legges and of feet so clean and faire,
That al myn herte I yaf un-to his hold.'" 4

Be that as it may, she loved him sufficiently well that after their marriage she gave to him,

"... al the land and fee
That ever was me yeven ther-bifore."

Later on she had reason to repent this transfer "ful sore," because

"He molde suffre nothing of my list.
By god, he smoot me ones on the list,
That of the strook myn cre wex al deel."

For some time after that the life of neither appears to have been very, happy. The Wife was stubborn as a lioness,

"And of my tongue a verry Iangleresse,
And walke I wolde, as I had doen before,
From hous to hous."

Her husband, on the other hand, nagged her without respite and read to her endlessly from an old tone concerning the inherent depravity of women, interlarding his sermons with classical illustrations as he went along.

The eventual outcome of this state of affairs has already been discussed in connection with her husband, the Clerk, in the preceding section; it is therefore needless further to consider it here. Suffice it to say that the Wife eventually had her way.

Put in spite of her success in life,—for she surely has been successful judged according to her own standard,—she is not happy. Her insatiable craving for excitement is shown primarily in the inordinate desire for travel already referred to. We feel instinctively that under her ceaseless garrulity there is concealed an aching heart. She talks in order that she need not think, for her mind is a hell of ever increasing intensity. Early in life she chose fleshly love as the summa bonum of her existence, and now, when time has ravaged her of her beauty and dulled the keenness of her senses, she exclaims

"'Alas! alas! that ever love were sinne!'"

1. 630 ff. 2. 635 ff. 3. 630 ff. 4. Cf. p. 115 above. 5. 614.
At that point where the pathway of life should become increasingly delightful thru the love of husband and children and the affections of friends, she can see before her nothing but a hard and rocky road, winding tortuously thru briars and brambles, and distantly losing itself in a blasted waste of hopeless despair and unmourned death.

Even tho she will do her utmost while life lasts to be "right merry," it will be but sorry cheer to her wretched soul. The oftener the prologue of the Wife of Bath's Tale is re-read, the more will one become impressed with the "undertone of melancholy" running thru the entire narrative. Had Chaucer consciously attempted to preach a sermon on the text, "The wages of sin is death," it could not have been more powerful than this. There is no one that will be led to follow the footsteps of the Wife by her recital, but there are many that will pity her as she passes by in the Canterbury pilgrimage.

Before passing on, a few words should be said concerning Chaucer's sources; for the Wife is by no means so original a character as the Host. La Vieille, a character appearing in both parts of the Romance of the Rose, seems to have been the most important. The extended discussion on celibacy was in all probability taken directly from a work of St. Jerome, which included a lengthy extract from some writing of Theophrastus no longer extant. Finally, he appears to have been influenced also by a Latin Epistola included among the works of Jerome, but of a later date. It is needless to say, of course, that

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1 For a complete discussion of this question see W. E. Mead, The Prologue of the Wife of Bath's Tale, Publ. Mod. Lang. Assoc. v. 16, pp. 388-404. Of especial interest in connection with this discussion is a remark of Mead on the shrew as a character in literature: "The further fact remains that in Chaucer's verse we find one of the earliest attempts in an English poem to utilize the shrew for literary purposes - other early references to shrews are merely incidental - and certainly the very earliest attempt to depict such a type as the Wife of Bath (p.395)." In this respect the Wife resembles Harry Bailey (Cf. p. above).
the Wife makes the writings of the Saint serve just the opposite purpose to that for which they were intended.

However much Chaucer may be indebted to his sources, he has nevertheless transformed them to such an extent that the Wife of Bath has become an entirely new creation. La Vieille is at the best but a type, whereas the Wife is a living, breathing personality. By placing the views of the Saint in her mouth, the character of these also immediately assume a different aspect. To fashion such a highly individualized personality out of old material is obviously quite as great a task as it would have been to create her out of his own genius.

That Chaucer was himself well pleased with the Wife may be gathered from the circumstance that he mentions her no less than three times in his later work. Critics on the whole are inclined to support him in his attitude, even tho' all must agree that the very nature of the Wife of Bath's personality must forever exclude her from ranking with the greatest creations of genius.

With the Wife of Bath, the discussion of the women pilgrims is completed. However, there yet remain scattered here and there throughout the tales seven women who have not thus far been individually considered. Three of these, - Alison of the Miller's Tale, the wife of the Chaplman in the Shipman's Tale, and May of the Merchant's Tale, - are rather clearly delineated and they have already been referred to in the course of this study. At this point such traits as have hitherto been omitted will be added and the whole summed up. The second group is composed of the wife and the daughter of Simkin (Reve's Tale), the wife of Phebus (Hanciple's Tale), and the wife of Thomas (Summoner's Tale). All four of these are emphasized much less than the three of the first group. The wives of Phebus and Thomas, especially, are but little more than shadows flitting across the action for a moment and then vanishing from sight. For the sake of completeness, however, it may be well to consider all of them.
It is noticeable that with the exception of the wife of Thomas, all of these women are adulteresses. The first three, together with the wife of Fhebus, sin deliberately. The wife and the daughter of Simkin are the victims of circumstance, altho both appear to have been rather willing victims.

Alison, the young wife of the Carpenter in the Miller's Tale, is described at great length. As far as figure and dress are concerned, Chaucer has portrayed no woman that is more attractive. She is eighteen years of age, tall and slender, with narrow, arched brows, tantalizing eyes, and rosy cheeks, and therewithal active as a "Ioly colt." Her dress, furthermore, is of the finest quality. Nothing but silk and the best of wool will do for her. Not only is the material costly, but it is fashioned with many gores and pleats and richly embroidered with silk of a contrasting color. She also wears a purse of leather decorated with silk tassels and numerous metal beads and buttons. All in all, we can scarcely blame hende Nicholas for becoming infatuated with her.

Of her character there is little to say. Her disapproving attitude when Nicholas makes his first advances are only for the purpose of increasing his desire. This is obvious enough, in the light of future developments. She is in full accord with the plans to deceive her husband, and plays her own part of child-like innocence to perfection. The inherent vulgarity of her nature, hitherto not so evident, is clearly indicated in the prank which she plays on Absolon and the delight which she takes in its successful issue. By the time that we come to the end of the narrative, we have entirely forgotten her beauty, and turn away nauseated with the coarseness of her character.

For this discussion, the delineation of Alison is of great interest, for it demonstrates one way in which Chaucer in his later work broke loose from the conventional characterizations current in the French courtly poetry of his day. He, like the French poets, has also inserted a catalogue of
Alison's charms. But what a difference! Instead of the conventional standards of comparison, eyes gray as glass, skin white as the fleur de lis, lips red as roses, and so forth down the weary list, we have such contrasts as "the slimmest of the weasel, the softness of the wool of a wether, the shrilling of the swallow's song, the blackness of the sloe, the fragrance of apples, and the fairness of the pear tree in the spring. The correct and courtly formulas have gone playing truant in the fields! . . . The hackneyed convention has become vivid as a branch of hawthorn leaves, and racy of good English soil."  

Whereas the delineation of Alison has been largely objective, that of the Chaplain's wife in the Shipman's Tale is entirely subjective, for we are told nothing at all about her personal appearance. She is of an entirely different type from Alison. Whereas the latter's moral laxity appears to have been due primarily to her youth and an exuberance of animal spirits, the latter has no such excuse. With her it is wholly a matter of cold calculation. She is discontented with her husband because, in the first place, he is so absorbed in his business that he neglects her; and, secondly, because he is niggardly in supplying her with money in order that she may buy fine clothes. That her husband was guilty to a degree in this respect cannot be denied. He seems, however, to have been in debt until his last voyage to Bruges, 2 and this circumstance should be borne in mind when we judge him. So dissatisfied is the wife that she not only calumniates him in her conversation with Don John, but she even agrees to commit adultery with the monk for the consideration of a hundred marks, in order that she may attire herself as she considers necessary on the following Sunday. When her husband later upbraids her for this excessive outlay, apparently not aware how the funds were obtained, she is all brazenness and pays no heed to his admonition. No doubt, if she had the opportunity, she would repeat the transaction. In many respects, she is one of

1 Lowes, J.L., Convention and Revolt in Poetry, p. 99 ff.
2 1. B 1566.
most contemptible of Chaucer's women. While she may be less vicious than
some, she is more cold-blooded and has the weakest motive of any for her act.

May of the Merchant's Tale is but vaguely described. As far as
figure is concerned, she appears to resemble Alison, but in her attitude toward
life she would seem to be somewhat more serious. At least when old January
chose her for his wife, he considered

"Hir wyse governoance, hir gentillesse,
Hir womanly beringe and hir sadresse." 1

The Shipman later on sums up her qualities by saying

"That she was lyk the brighte morwe of May,
Fulfild of alle beautee and plesaunce." 2

Taking everything into consideration, however, it would appear that
her character is but little better than that of Alison. She, also, is only
too willing to satisfy Damian's desires. In order to do so, she not only
consents to his plans, but even takes an impression of the key to the garden,
so that Damian may get a duplicate. Afterward, when she is discovered in a
most compromising situation, she lies as brazenly as the wife of the Chapman.
Considering the circumstances, she succeeds even better in pulling the wool
over the eyes of her husband.

The wife of Simkin was the illegitimate child of the parish priest
and had been reared in a nunnery. Altho she was quick in taking offence at
any disparaging allusion to her ancestry, she was nevertheless inclined to be
rather proud of the fact that she had ecclesiastical blood in her veins. She
resented being addressed by any other title than "dame,"

"And she was proud, and pert as is a pye." 3

Furthermore, as we are told with exquisite satire,

"She was as digne as water in a dich,
And ful of hoker and bisemare." 4

Or, in other words, all the folk respected her as they would respect ditch water or any other obnoxious substance; because she felt this dislike, she was all the more scornful in her attitude. To her mind, it was a mark of special distinction to be the child of a priest and to have been reared in a convent.

In the action of the narrative she first aids her husband in giving an air of accident to the escape of the clerks' horse. Later she also makes the cake out of their flour. However, in the end she twice plays right into their hands. The irony of fate shows itself in the struggle with the clerks when in the gray of early morning she mistakes her husband for one of the students and gives him a terrible blow upon the head. Whether she realized her mistake in the earlier episode, we do not know. If she did, it evidently made little difference to her for the time being.

The daughter is but superficially described. She is twenty years of age, well built,

"With camuse nose and yön greye as glas."  

The phrase, "greye as glas," is, by the way, a stock comparison in the French courtly poetry. She plays no important part in the action, except in so far as she helps to complete the revenge of the clerks. Her extreme sentimentality is indicated by her last words to Aleyn, when, among other things, she tells him where to find the cake that her mother made from his flour.

The wife of Phebus (Shipman's Tale) may be dismissed with a word. She was a woman, as the Shipman explains in some detail, of an inherently depraved character. If not by birth, she was at least by nature much inferior to her husband. The tale hinges rather on the reaction of Phebus to the crow's revelation than on the infidelity of the wife. For this reason there was no particular necessity for describing her at any great length.

1 l. A 3974.
Not quite so vaguely delineated as the wife of Phebus and of an entirely different type is the wife of Thomas in the *Summoner's Tale*. While we may assume from the manner in which the Monk greets her that she was of pleasing appearance, nothing is told us to this effect. In speaking with Thomas, the Monk refers to her as "meke and pacient." This is precisely the impression that the narrative gives. She attends to her household duties to the best of her ability. Evidently she was a good cook, for the Monk mentions particularly the lightness of her bread. That her ability in culinary matters was not limited to the making of bread may be inferred from the circumstance that under her roof the Monk

"... was wont to be
Refresshed more than in a hundred places."

It need not surprise us that the good woman was tired and fretful when the Monk visited her husband. Not only was the latter sick unto death, but, as she tells the former with the utmost resignation,

"My child is deed with-inne thys wykes two."

Compared with the other women that have been discussed in this connection, she forms a striking contrast. It is to be regretted that Chaucer did not elaborate her character at greater length.

Taking everything into consideration, Chaucer has presented to us the most diverse women imaginable. He has at one time or other thrown upon the screen almost every conceivable variation of womanhood. His range extends from personalities so good that they affect us as incarnations of virtue rather than human beings down to the utterly depraved. The difference is by no means confined to morals. There is a vast disparity between the almost excessive refinement and delicate appearance of the Prioress and the revolting foulness of the enchanted Princess in the *Life of Bath's Tale*.

1 l. D 1766 ff.
2 l. D 1832.
Neither has he confined himself to any one class. At first, quite naturally, the courtly ladies attracted his attention, but later, when his own genius had subordinated the French and the Italian influences, he delineated even more effectively the women of the Church as well as those of the common folk. While it cannot be denied that many of them have certain traits in common, as have all mortals to a greater or less degree, yet on the whole there is very little danger of confusing one with the other. None of them are abstractions or even portraits, but all of them are living, breathing personalities.

There remain to be considered in this section several pilgrims to whom thus far little or no reference has been made. These are the Miller, the Rove, the Cook, the Shipman, the two Yeomen, and the Plowman. While the first two of these are men of considerable wealth, the others are in much poorer circumstances. The first four are exceedingly coarse in their speech, the Canon's Yeoman is less so, and of the remaining two no tale has come down to us.

The Miller of the General Prologue is by no means a pleasing personality. Hard-muscled and big of bone, he was the victor of every wrestling match in which he took part. There was no door, however large and strong, that he could not lift off its hinges,

"Or brake it at a reaving, with his heed."

His beard was red like the hair of a fox, and broad like a spade. A tuft of hair, red like his beard and harsh like a sow's bristles, grew out of a wart on his nose. Both his mouth and his nostrils were conspicuously large. A white coat and a blue hood composed the most noticeable portion of his attire. For protection he carried a sword and buckler.

In his trade he took care of his own interests by stealing as much of the grain as he could before it entered the burrs, and then, for good measure, 1

1 l. A 551.
he took three times as much toll as he should.

To tell tales of a no very edifying nature was one of his chief amusements. He say, in fact, have been a kind of goliard. On the pilgrimage he had brot along a bagpipe, which he could play quite proficiently.

"And ther-with-al he broghte us out of town."

We can make a pretty safe conjecture as to the nature of his repertoire.

The troop of pilgrims is not very far on its way when the Miller makes his presence known. The Knight has finished his story, and the Host turns to the Monk, asking him to continue. The Miller, however, evidently fortified himself pretty well with Southwark ale before starting out, and by the time that the Knight had completed his narrative, it had mounted to his head. He overhears the Host's request and before the Monk can reply, breaks in with,

"I can a noble tale for the none,
With which I wol now quyte the Knightes tale."

At the same time he indicates its nature,

"For I wol telle a legende and a lyf
Both of a Carpenter, and of his wyf.
Now that a clerk hath set the wrightes cappe." This arouses the ire of the Reve, who, as we shall see, was at one time a carpenter, for he imagines that it is to be told for his particular benefit. However, the Miller tells the story of a carpenter, his wife Alison, the parish clerk Absolon, and hende Nicholas. I have already considered the narrative at some length; it is, therefore, needless to do so again. That it is quite characteristic of the Miller will be admitted by all.

Almost as realistic as this Miller of the Prologue is Simkin of the Reve's Tale. Altho the Reve surely did his best to put the character of Simkin in as bad a light as possible, he is not much worse than the Miller. Simkin can

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2 l. A 566
3 l. A 3126 ff. 4 l. A 3141 ff.
also play the bagpipe, and he is a skillful wrestler. Vanity is one of his chief faults,

"As any pecok was he proud and gay."  

Furthermore, he could fish, shoot, mend nets, and turn wooden caps on a lathe. Altho the Reve does not go into detail concerning his physique, it would appear that he was of great muscular strength, for he frequently took part in market brawls. To protect himself the better, he habitually carried both a sword and a large knife.

Like the Miller of the Prologue, Simkin is a past master at the art of stealing:

"A theef he was for sothe of corn and mele,  
And that a sly, and usament for to stele."  

Most of his trade came from "the Soler-halle at Canterbregge." It so happened at one time that the Manciple of the Hall who had usually attended to the grinding became mortally ill, and from that day Simkin

"... thef hothemele and corne  
An hundred tyms more than biforn;  
For ther-biforn he thef but curteisly,  
But now he was a theef outrageously."  

This circumstance caused the clerks Aley and John, who have already been considered, to see what they could do toward preventing this wholesale robbery. The result is already known. At first Simkin gets the best of the clerks, but before the tale is finished, he is completely vanquished. Under the circumstances, this was, of course, the natural outcome.

The Reve of the General Prologue is an entirely different type of man from the Miller. Where the latter achieves his ends by brute force, the former depends upon his wits. He is a slender, coleric man. If his opponent could

1. A 3926.  
2. A 3039 ff.  
3. A 3995 ff.  
4. See p. above.
have known Julius Caesar, he would have been less likely to cross arms with him. His lownness of body was especially marked in his lower limbs, -
"Ful longe were his legges, and ful lene,
Y-lyk a staf, ther was no calf y-seen."

The top of his head was bald like that of a priest. The rest of his hair was cropped short, while
"His berd was shave as ny as ever he can."

The Reve made no grand display of dress, but contented himself with
a gray overcoat, long and loose, tucked in at the waist by a belt,
"And by his syde he bar a rusty blade."

The only indication of his wealth was the "ful good stot" on which he was making the pilgrimage.

At one time he had followed the carpenter's trade. This evidently did not offer him sufficient opportunities to exercise his business acumen, so he had become the overseer of a manor. In this he had been unusually successful. He was so good and so shrewd a husbandman that his lord had placed the entire estate into his hands. No person on or off the estate could get the best of him in any transaction, for somehow or other the Reve
"... knew his sleighte and his covyne;
They were adrad of him, as of the deeth."

In all his dealings, he was ever on the lookout to line his own purse. As a result he had acquired sufficient wealth to lend money to his master, most of which, as the poet observes, the Reve had embezzled. The lord was none the wiser, but was so well pleased with this accommodation that he not only thanked his manager, but gave him also presents of clothing. Finally, we are told that
"His woning was ful fair up-on a heeth,
With grene tre's shadowed was his place."
We learn more concerning the Reve in the prologues to the Miller’s Tale and to his own. In the former, he remonstrates with the Miller, since he anticipates the nature of his story:—

"It is a sanye and eek a great folye
To aperien man, or him diffame,
And eek to bringen wyves in swich fame."

That he spoke thus is quite evidently not due alone to the fact that he feared his trade would be caricatured. This is brot out in his prologue where he dilates at some length on the inherent depravity of man. Had the former consideration been the only one, we would be justified in expecting some such introduction as the Summoner employs. It appears to me that Professor Curry shoots beside the mark when he considers the Reve to have been "a lecher of the worst type, a churl, a pitiful example of the burnt-out body, in which there still lives a concupiscent mind." ① The remarks which he makes in his prologue refer rather to mankind in general as he knew it than to himself. Whatever wild oats he may have sown in his youth have long been repented.

Neither does the Reve tell his tale out of any particular desire to revenge himself on the Miller; on the contrary, from the manner in which he begins, I think it quite likely that, had the Host not interrupted, he would have told a "moral thing" of the most pronounced kind. But he feels that the company,—for is not the Host the spokesman of the party,—expects something by way of refutation. And so he submits. Before he begins, however, he will make his own position clear:—

"I pray yow alle that ye nat yow grove,
Thogh I answer and souldel sette his howve;
For leveful is with force force of-shoewe.

. . .

Right in his charles termes wol I speke." ③

① Chaucer’s Reeve and Miller, Publ. £od. Lat. Asso., v. 28 (N.S.), p. 191.
② l. A 3146 ff.
③ l. A 3910 ff.
He keeps his word. His tale, to which frequent reference has been made in this chapter, gave the Miller his quietus. The purpose was only too obvious; the big, hulking, mouthy wrestler was completely overcome by "a scelendre colerik man," who in all modesty "rood the hindreste of our route." Compared with the exquisite characterization of Siskin, that of the carpenter in the Miller's Tale has completely failed in its purpose. The Reve has indeed overcome force with force, and that with no apparent effort.

The Carpenter of the Miller's Tale may now be considered. The only resemblance between him and the Reve is that both were carpenters by trade and that both were wealthy. Beyond that all similarity ceases. Considering the circumstances that the Miller evidently intended to caricature the Reve to at least a certain extent, he has from this point of view made a sorry failure of his story.

The characterization is also much vaguer. All reference to his personal appearance is omitted. He is old in years, and like January of the Merchant's Tale, he has lately married a young wife, Alison, of whom he is insanely jealous. Two other traits, somewhat related to each other, are his extreme credulity and his equally extreme superstition. Certainly we cannot imagine the Reve swallowing such a preposterous concoction as hende Nicholas serves up to the Carpenter. Much less would he pin his chances for rescue to kneading troughs in a Deluge of such magnitude

"That half so great was never Moën's flood."

And while it would be unwise to make a positive statement to that effect, we can scarcely imagine the Reve holding much stock in elves or fairies, to say nothing of using charms to drive them out. Men of his turn of mind are more inclined to leave such matters to witches and wizards.

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1 See above, p. 162. Also p. 111 ff.

2 1. A 622 ff.

3 1. A 3513.

4 1. A 3480 ff.
Bearing these considerations in mind, it will be readily granted that however well the Miller may have described the Carpenter, - and the delineation is really good, - he did not accomplish his purpose nearly so well as the Reve did in his case.

Chaucer tells us little enough of the Cook in the General Prologue. Most of the description is devoted to his skill in the kitchen. His liking for ale is also commented upon. The only personal touch is the cancerous sore upon his shin. In the prologue to his tale, we learn that he was immensely pleased with the narrative of the Reve. Evidently, he too had had some unpleasant experiences with that class. He also seems to know something about the danger of lodging any person who happens along:

"'Wei oughte a man avysed for to be
When that he broghte in-to his privatree.'"  
Incidentally he tells us that his name is Hodge, or Roger, and that he hails from Ware in Hertfordshire. He is just thinking of a tale concerning "an hostyleer," -

"'A litel tape that fil in our citee,'"  
which he would like to relate. The Host, after some jesting remarks concerning his occupation and an admonition not to be "wrooth for game," grants him his wish.

The tale, however, is not completed.  
Evidently it would have been of a nature very similar to that of the Miller and the Reve, and as Root observes,  
undoubtedly the chief reason that Chaucer abandoned it was because he felt three of that type "would be too large a dose of 'mirth'." The per-

1. A 4334 ff.
2. A 4343.
3. The Tale of Gygestyn is a spurious tale of the Cook which may be found in the Appendix to Group A of the Canterbury Tales, p. 645 ff., v. 4, The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer.
4. The Poetry of Chaucer, p. 179.
sonality of the chief character, Perkin Reveler, is, however, pretty sharply outlined in the fragment. He was an apprentice to the "craft of vitailleurs," but his mind was more bent on pleasure and women than on business. Merry he was as a goldfinch in the shrubbery, attending every gathering where he could dance and sing, or play upon his guitar or rebeck. This desire for pleasure and excitement caused him often to neglect his work. But worse than this, he was also addicted to gambling.

"For in the toune nas ther no prenty
That fairer coude caste a paire of dys." 1

Regardless of his ability, he appears to have lost more than he won, as the master discovered to his cost.

"For ofter tyne he fond his box ful bare." 2

Finally, it became too much of a good thing for the latter, and shortly before Perkin's apprenticeship was over, he was discharged. The young reprobate then sent his bed and clothing

"Un-to a compeor of his owne sort," 3

and that is the last we hear of him.

The Cook is mentioned once more in the Canterbury Tales, namely in the prologue to the *L'anciple's Tale*. The Southwark ale had not been sufficient to quench his thirst for any great length of time, so during the course of the pilgrimage he occasionally imbibed some more. By the time the party came to the little village of Bob-up-and-down, he was in drunken stupor, scarcely able to remain astride his horse. The Host notices his condition, and in a spirit of fun demands a tale of him. The Cook, who is quite aware of his state, manages to say with some degree of coherence,

1 l. A 4385 ff. 2 l. A 4390. 3 l. A 4419.
"... so god my soule blesse
As ther is falle on me swich hevinesse,
Soet I nat why, that me were lever slope
Ther the beste galoun wyn in Chepe!"

This remark draws out the Manciple who begins to poke fun at him. Thereupon
the ire of honest Hodge is aroused,-

"And on the maunciple he gan rodde feste
For lakke of speche, and doon the hors him caste." 2

The ensuing trouble was great! The Cook lay in the mire, helpless as a log, and there was nothing to do but to stop and assist him in getting mounted again. For realism and humor the following lines are as good as anything that Chaucer ever wrote:-

"And, er that he agayn were in his sadel,
Ther was greet showving bothe to and fro,
To lifte him up, and muchel care and wo,
So unweldy was this sory palled gost."

The Host advises the Manciple to make peace with their drunken companion, which he accordingly does by offering him some wine. And lo and behold: the latter drinks greedily and thanks the Manciple "in swich wyse as he coude." This marvelous change in the temper of Hodge inspires a short apostrophe to Achus and the soothing effect of wine which the Host pronounces at this point. Thus passes Hodge of Ware from the scene.

Among the motley group of pilgrims, there was also a Shipman, "woning fer by weste." He wore a loose cloak of folding, a coarse, woolen material resembling serge. His knife was carried from a cord around his neck, and hung loose under his arm. Finally,

"The hote somer had maad his hewe al broun."

The Shipman was a good sailor in his day. Not only did he understand how to battle with the elements and find a comfortable lodging when in port, but he was also a good fighter. 5 Piracy on the high seas was a common thing in those

1 l. H 42 ff.  2 l. H 47 ff.  3 l. H 52 ff.  4 l. A 394.

days. It is, therefore, not strange that it should be said of our sailor pilgrim that

"Of nyce conscience took he no keep.  
If that he caught, and hadde the hyer hand,  
By water he sente hem hoon to every lond."  

At the same time, he did not always use force,-

"Ful many a draughte of wyn had he y-drawe  
From Burdeux-ward, whyl that the chapman sleep."  

This pilgrim made the journey on a "rouncy," or plow horse, which he rode in the proverbial clumsy fashion of sailors.

The tale of the Shipman, in which a chapman, his wife, and a monk, Don John, appear, has already been considered in detail; it is needless, therefore, to speak of it in this connection. It has also been pointed out that there is nothing in the tale which makes it particularly suited to the Shipman.

The Yeoman of the General Prologue was the servant of the Squire.  

As his coat, belt, and hood of green indicated, he was a forester by occupation. Even tho the poet had not told us that

"Of wode-craft wel coude he al the usage,"  
the mere fact that he was in the service of the Knight would be sufficient evidence that he was above the average in intelligence and ability. This is further substantiated by the manner in which he cares for his weapons. His arrows were always bright and keen with no loose or ruffled feathers which might

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1 l. A 399 ff.  
2 l. A 396 ff.  
3 See above, pp. 96, 146.  
4 See above, p. 59.  
5 l. A 110.
cause them to fly beside the mark. He also bore more weapons than did most of the pilgrims. Some of these, however, were undoubtedly used by his master when occasion required. Among them were a heavy bow, a sword, a dagger sharp as a spear, and a small shield. In addition, he was provided with the usual bracer for archers and a horn.

Altheo nothing is told us of his appearance beyond that

"A not-heed hadde he, with a brown visage," he was certainly a man of considerable strength and agility. The circumstance that the bow which he carried is described as mighty would imply that he had a large physique. A most conspicuous object of his attire was a large silver brooch bearing a figure of Saint Christopher. Such an ornament, it was commonly thought, shielded its wearer from hidden dangers.

As in the case of several other pilgrims, no tale of the Yeoman has come down to us.

Another Yeoman, to whom reference has already been made, may be considered here. He is the servant of the Canon who joined the pilgrims shortly after they had left Boghton under Blee. For seven years, he has been in the service of the alchemist, and the effect of it is plainly to be seen both in his appearance and manner. His complexion, that one time "was bothe fresh and reed," has become of a pale, leaden hue, while his eyes are still bleory from the effects of his work. When he began his service, he was

"1. . . . want to be right fresh and gay
   of clothing and of other good array," and now necessity requires him to wear a sock for a cap. Not only has he lost his health and come down in life, but he is so indebted

"Of gold that I have borwed, trevely,
That whyl I live, I shal it quyte never."
In the beginning, when the yeoman first rides up to the pilgrims, he is "ful of curteisye," and he does his utmost to throw sand into the eyes of the party concerning the learning and ability of his master. After a little, however, he becomes confidential with the Host, and unconsciously lets him look behind the scenes. The Canon remonstrates, but to no avail. Undoubtedly the Yeoman's heart had been at the breaking point long before this. All that was needed to open the flood-gates was a sympathetic ear. It is, therefore, not surprising that under the kindly encouragement of the Host, he should resolve to sever his relations with the Canon.

It is needless to go into detail concerning the tale of the Canon's Yeoman. Part of it treats of the practice of alchemy as he had learned it, while the remainder describes the manner in which another alchemist had deceived a credulous priest. Altho the Yeoman denies it to be so, it is nevertheless quite probable that the alchemist in the narrative is his own master. In fact, it is not impossible that the Yeoman himself had a hand in the deception.

In the entire series of the Canterbury Tales, this is the tale that comes nearest to being autobiographical. In none of the others does the narrator tell a story that approximates so closely his experiences. It is undoubtedly this circumstance quite as much as the subject-matter itself which gives this tale such an unusual air of verisimilitude. Whether or not Chaucer had himself been duped by an alchemist we do not know, but we are safe in assuming that he did have first-hand knowledge of their art and was well aware of the deceptions practiced on the gullible. Alchemy appears to have been the confidence game par excellence of the fourteenth century.

There still remains one pilgrim to be considered. He is the humble plowman, brother of the "povre Persoun of a town." In that and deed he was
quite as holy a man as his brother:

"God loved he best with al his hole herte
At alle tynes, thogh him gamed or smerte,
And thanne his neighbour right as him-selve."  1

Laboring from early morning until late at night, paying his tithes cheerfully, aiding a helpless neighbor without ever expecting any return, and bearing no man ill will, he lived at peace with all the world. That he himself often lost thereby as far as material gain is concerned, may be inferred from the circumstance that he traveled on a mare. People of any means whatever always rode a gelding or a stallion.

As in the case of the Squire's Yeoman, the Plowman as far as we know never had the opportunity to tell a story. 2 From one point of view the Canterbury Tales have perhaps not suffered thereby. On the other hand, his tale would undoubtedly have gone a little ways in offsetting the extreme coarseness of some others.

With the Plowman the discussion of the bourgeoisie and the other folk of Chaucer's narrative poetry is completed. As in the former chapters, so also in this instance it may be of value to review briefly the results of this section before summing up the study as a whole.

Because of their much greater diversity, the characters in this chapter cannot be so readily classified as those of the former section. There are present, nevertheless, certain rather well defined tendencies which make it possible to form groups what will aid somewhat in getting a bird's-eye view.

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1 l.A 533.

2 There are two so-called tales of the Plowman extant; both, however, are spurious. Concerning these, Miss Hammond (Chaucer, a Biographical Manual, p. 444) remarks as follows: "One is of unknown authorship, and was first printed with the works of Chaucer in the 1542 Thynne; the other is by Noccele, and is thus far known in two MS copies."
Most noticeable, of course, is the circumstance that the majority of the men belong to the more prosperous classes. Many lack refinement and culture, but on the whole they have accumulated some wealth. This absence of culture is especially marked in the case of the millers and the carpenters. It is to be explained largely by the fact that these persons do not live in the city, but in rural districts, where manners and customs are always somewhat cruder than in the towns. Of those who belong to the more refined class the Franklin was especially worthy of notice. He, as we remember, was the aspirant after "gentilless." He thus forms a sort of connecting link between the middle classes and the aristocracy.

In connection with Dorigen of the Franklin's Tale there were discussed a group of women appearing in the various narratives who are of considerable importance because their lives illustrate some one virtue. They are all very serious in their attitude toward life; rather than sacrifice their ideals, they will suffer the extremity of hardship or even death. This group was composed of Constance (Shipman's Tale), Virginia (Physician's Tale), Dorigen (Franklin's Tale), Griselda (Clerk's Tale), and Saint Cecilia (Second Nun's Tale). While these narratives are very uneven in technique, yet the characterization is very forceful.

After this group of women,—which was somewhat of a digression,—the Merchant was considered. He is an important representative of the commercial class. He, as well as the Chapman of the Shipman's Tale, are typical men of business, more interested in quick sales and large profits than in anything else. As one result, both men meet with marital difficulties. These were followed by the Manciple. He is the self-made man of the Tales. Because of a natural bent for business and no lack of courage he has managed to acquire considerable wealth in his position with the barristers of the Temple. A group of five tradespeople was next discussed. They were especially con-
spicuous because of their rich clothing and expensive equipment. They are given but scant attention in the General Prologue, and since no tales of them are extant, we know very little concerning them.

While not strictly a member of the commercial classes, yet the Host is in a way related to them. He is Chaucer's most sustained character and one of his greatest. Without him the Canterbury Tales would have lost much. Although he did not completely control the course of the tales, nevertheless he was always exercising a stabilizing influence. So great a character is the Host that he has become the ancestor of a long line of descendants in English literature.

The Wife of Bath is often considered to be Chaucer's greatest creation. From a realistic point of view, this estimate of her character can undoubtedly find ample support. She lacks, however, the moral strength to make her a really great personality. In this respect she is much inferior to any member of the group considered earlier in the chapter.

Much the same criticism may be made of several other woman characters which appear in the tales from time to time. The most important of these are Alisoun of the Miller's Tale, the Wife of the Chapman in the Shipman's Tale, and May of the Merchant's Tale. Although the delineation is in some respects superior to that of the women in the former group, they are much inferior to them in moral strength.

The millers and the carpenters are wealthy, but much less refined than the men considered at the opening of the chapter. The Reve of the Prologue, who had at one time been a carpenter, leaves the best impression with us. The tales of both the Miller and the Carpenter of the Prologue belong, from a technical point of view, to the best that the poet ever wrote. The characterization is unusually good, the dramatic qualities are of a very high order, and
the extremely long didactic passages which tend to mar much of Chaucer’s
greatest work are reduced to a minimum. It is to be regretted, however, that
both, because of their coarseness, must always occupy a subordinate position
in the work of the poet.

Both the Cook and the Shipman are of much the same type as the two
dignitaries just mentioned. The Cook, altho not a vicious man, cares far too
much for his ale to be a pleasant man. The Shipman is a representative of the
good old days when wooden ships were manned by iron men.

Finally, three members of the lower classes were considered. These
were the two yeomen and the plowman. The autobiographical interest of the
Canon’s Yeoman was especially pointed out.

Before concluding, a few words should be said concerning the
influence of the fabliau on the later work of Chaucer. There can be little
doubt that Chaucer made considerable use of this form of literature during
the writing of the Canterbury Tales. We are reasonably certain that the
sources of several tales are to be found in the fabliaux of the day. Just as
the study of Italian literature had been invaluable in the delineation of
courty characters, so the acquaintance with the fabliau was of great assistance
in the characterization of the other classes. Hart has shown in great detail
how in the Reve’s Tale Chaucer has anticipated the modern short-story thru his
emphasis on the unity of time and brevity of action. As we remember, the intro-
duction of lengthy digressions is one of our poet’s greatest faults. Hart
believes that Chaucer’s increased knowledge of technique was derived very largely
from a study of the fabliau.

1 W. M. Hart, The Fabliau and Popular Literature, Publ. Mod. Lang. Assoc.,
v. 23, p. 329 ff. Consult also in this connection Pilgr and Epic, Harvard
Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature, v. 11, by the same author and
Character in the “History of England” by Herbert Le Scourd Creek in the
We see, then, that while the characters discussed in this chapter do not really mark any increase of ability to portray individual persons, nevertheless, because of their variety, they enable us to appreciate to a far greater extent the true genius of Chaucer. They prove conclusively that he did not limit himself to any one class or school, but delineated with equal power all sorts and conditions of men.

It appears hardly necessary to summarize the results of this study in a separate chapter. Since at the close of each section its conclusions have been stated, there is but little more that need be said at this point.

In so far as was possible I have attempted to emphasize the great gulf that separates the highly individualized characterization of Chaucer from that of his predecessors and contemporaries. He is undoubtedly the last of the medievalists and the first of the moderns. That he should be intensely interested in the medieval life, literature, and that was a matter of course. No man with his type of intellect would lock himself within the narrow confines of a monastic cell. That he should be the first representative of the new age is due to his genius. Before his time characterization was objective and stereotyped. He was the first to recognize that in reality personality is primarily subjective and infinitely varied. And because he recognized this fact and was able to incorporate it in his work, he may justly be called the first of the moderns.


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