ADVENTURES IN CRITICISM

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CHAUCER

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March 17, 1894. Professor Skeat's Chaucer.

After twenty-five years of close toil, Professor Skeat has completed his great edition of Chaucer.[A] It is obviously easier to be dithyrambic than critical in chronicling this event; to which indeed dithyrambs are more appropriate than criticism. For when a man writes *Opus vitæ meæ* at the conclusion of such a task as this, and so lays down his pen, he must be a churl (even if he be also a competent critic) who will allow no pause for admiration. And where, churl or no churl, is the competent critic to be found? The Professor has here compiled an entirely new text of Chaucer, founded solely on the manuscripts and the earliest printed editions that are accessible. Where Chaucer has translated, the originals have been carefully studied: "the requirements of metre and grammar have been carefully considered throughout": and "the phonology and spelling of every word have received particular attention." We may add that all the materials for a Life of Chaucer have been sought out, examined, and pieced together with exemplary care.

All this has taken Professor Skeat twenty-five years, and in order to pass competent judgment on his conclusions the critic must follow him step by step through his researches—which will take the critic (even if we are charitable enough to suppose his mental equipment equal to Professor Skeat's) another ten years at least. For our time, then, and probably

for many generations after, this edition of Chaucer will be accepted as final.

And the Clarendon Press.

And I seem to see in this edition of Chaucer the beginning of the realization of a dream which I have cherished since first I stood within the quadrangle of the Clarendon Press—that fine combination of the factory and the palace. The aspect of the Press itself repeats, as it were, the characteristics of its government, which is conducted by an elected body as an honorable trust. Its delegates are not intent only on money-getting. And yet the Clarendon Press makes money, and the University can depend upon it for handsome subsidies. It may well depend upon it for much more. As the Bank of England—to which in its system of government it may be likened—is the focus of all the other banks, private or joint-stock, in the kingdom, and the treasure-house, not only of the nation's gold, but of its commercial honor, so the Clarendon Press—traditionally careful in its selections and munificent in its rewards—might become the academy or central temple of English literature. If it would but follow up Professor Skeat's Chaucer with a resolution to publish, at a pace suitable to so large an undertaking, *all the great English classics*, edited with all the scholarship its wealth can command, I believe that before long the Clarendon Press would be found to be exercising an influence on English letters which is at present lacking, and the lack of which drives many to call, from time to time, for the institution in this country of something corresponding to the French Academy. I need only cite the

examples of the Royal Society and the Marylebone Cricket Club to show that to create an authority in this manner is consonant with our national practice. We should have that centre of correct information, correct judgment, correct taste—that intellectual metropolis, in short—which is the surest check upon provinciality in literature; we should have a standard of English scholarship and an authoritative dictionary of the English language; and at the same time we should escape all that business of the green coat and palm branches which has at times exposed the French Academy to much vulgar intrigue.

Also, I may add, we should have the books. Where now is the great edition of Bunyan, of Defoe, of Gibbon? The Oxford Press did once publish an edition of Gibbon, worthy enough as far as type and paper could make it worthy. But this is only to be found in second-hand book-shops. Why are two rival London houses now publishing editions of Scott, the better illustrated with silly pictures "out of the artists' heads"? Where is the final edition of Ben Jonson?

These and the rest are to come, perhaps. Of late we have had from Oxford a great Boswell and a great Chaucer, and the magnificent Dictionary is under weigh. So that it may be the dream is in process of being realized, though none of us shall live to see its full realization. Meanwhile such a work as Professor Skeat's Chaucer is not only an answer to much chatter that goes up from time to time about nine-tenths of the work on English literature being done out of England. This and similar works are the best of all possible answers to those gentlemen who so often interrupt their own chrematistic pursuits to point out in the monthly magazines

the short-comings of our two great Universities as nurseries of chrematistic youth. In this case it is Oxford that publishes, while Cambridge supplies the learning: and from a natural affection I had rather it were always Oxford that published, attracting to her service the learning, scholarship, intelligence of all parts of the kingdom, or, for that matter, of the world. So might she securely found new Schools of English Literature—were she so minded, a dozen every year. They would do no particular harm; and meanwhile, in Walton Street, out of earshot of the New Schools, the Clarendon Press would go on serenely performing its great work.

March 23, 1895. Essentials and Accidents of Poetry.

A work such as Professor Skeat's Chaucer puts the critic into a frame of mind that lies about midway between modesty and cowardice. One asks—"What right have I, who have given but a very few hours of my life to the enjoying of Chaucer; who have never collated his MSS.; who have taken the events of his life on trust from his biographers; who am no authority on his spelling, his rhythms, his inflections, or the spelling, rhythms, inflections of his age; who have read him only as I have read other great poets, for the pleasure of reading—what right have I to express any opinion on a work of this character, with its imposing commentary, its patient research, its enormous accumulation of special information?"

Nevertheless, this diffidence, I am sure, may be carried too far. After all is said and done, we, with our average life of three-score years and ten, are the heirs of all the poetry

of all the ages. We must do our best in our allotted time, and Chaucer is but one of the poets. He did not write for specialists in his own age, and his main value for succeeding ages resides, not in his vocabulary, nor in his inflections, nor in his indebtedness to foreign originals, nor in the metrical uniformities or anomalies that may be discovered in his poems; but in his *poetry*. Other things are accidental; his poetry is essential. Other interests—historical, philological, antiquarian—must be recognized; but the poetical, or (let us say) the spiritual, interest stands first and far ahead of all others. By virtue of it Chaucer, now as always, makes his chief and his convincing appeal to that which is spiritual in men. He appeals by the poetical quality of such lines as these, from Emilia's prayer to Diana:

"Chaste goddesse, wel wostow that I
Desire to been a mayden al my lyf,
Ne never wol I be no love ne wyf.

I am, thou woost, yet of thy companye,
A mayde, and love hunting and venerye,
And for to walken in the wodes wilde,
And noght to been a wyf, and be with childe..."

Or of these two from the Prioresses' Prologue:

"O moder mayde! O mayde moder free!
O bush unbrent, brenninge in Moyses sighte..."

Or of these from the general Prologue—also thoroughly poetical, though the quality differs:

"Ther was also a Nonne, a Prioresse,
That of hir smyling was ful simple and coy;
Hir gretteste ooth was but by sëynt Loy;

And she was cleped madame Eglentyne.
Ful wel she song the service divyne,
Entuned in hir nose ful semely;
And Frensh she spak ful faire and fetisly,
After the scole of Stratford atte Bowe,
For Frensh of Paris was to hir unknowe..."

Now the essential quality of this and of all very great poetry is also what we may call a *universal* quality; it appeals to those sympathies which, unequally distributed and often distorted or suppressed, are yet the common possessions of our species. This quality is the real antiseptic of poetry: this it is that keeps a line of Homer perennially fresh and in bloom:—

" Ὥς φάτο τοὺς δ’ ἤδη κατέχεν φυσίζοος αἶα
ἐν Λακεδαίμονι αὖθι, φίλῃ ἐν πατρίδι γαιῃ."

These lines live because they contain something which is also permanent in man: they depend confidently on us, and will as confidently depend on our great-grandchildren. I was glad to see this point very courageously put the other day by Professor Hiram Corson, of Cornell University, in an address on "The Aims of Literary Study"—an address which Messrs. Macmillan have printed and published here and in America. "All works of genius," says Mr. Corson, "render the best service, in literary education, when they are first assimilated in their absolute character. It is, of course, important to know their relations to the several times and places in which they were produced; but such knowledge is not for the tyro in literary study. He must first know literature, if he is constituted so to know it, in its absolute character. He can go into the philosophy of its relationships

later, if he like, when he has a true literary education, and when the 'years that bring the philosophic mind' have been reached. Every great production of genius is, in fact, in its essential character, no more related to one age than to another. It is only in its phenomenal character (its outward manifestations) that it has a *special* relationship." And Mr. Corson very appositely quotes Mr. Ruskin on Shakespeare's historical plays—

> "If it be said that Shakespeare wrote perfect historical plays on subjects belonging to the preceding centuries, I answer that they *are* perfect plays just because there is no care about centuries in them, but a life which all men recognize for the human life of all time; and this it is, not because Shakespeare sought to give universal truth, but because, painting honestly and completely from the men about him, he painted that human nature which is, indeed, constant enough—a rogue in the fifteenth century being *at heart* what a rogue is in the nineteenth century and was in the twelfth; and an honest or knightly man being, in like manner, very similar to other such at any other time. And the work of these great idealists is, therefore, always universal: not because it is *not portrait*, but because it is *complete* portrait down to the heart, which is the same in all ages; and the work of the mean idealists is *not* universal, not because it is portrait, but because it is *half* portrait—of the outside, the manners and the dress, not of the heart. Thus Tintoret and Shakespeare paint, both of them, simply Venetian and English nature as they saw it in their

> time, down to the root; and it does for *all* time; but as for any care to cast themselves into the particular ways of thought, or custom, of past time in their historical work, you will find it in neither of them, nor in any other perfectly great man that I know of."—*Modern Painters.*

It will be observed that Mr. Corson, whose address deals primarily with literary training, speaks of these absolute qualities of the great masterpieces as the *first* object of study. But his words, and Ruskin's words, fairly support my further contention that they remain the *most important* object of study, no matter how far one's literary training may have proceeded. To the most erudite student of Chaucer in the wide world Chaucer's poetry should be the dominant object of interest in connection with Chaucer.

But when the elaborate specialist confronts us, we are apt to forget that poetry is meant for mankind, and that its appeal is, or should be, universal. We pay tribute to the unusual: and so far as this implies respect for protracted industry and indefatigable learning, we do right. But in so far as it implies even a momentary confusion of the essentials with the accidentals of poetry, we do wrong. And the specialist himself continues admirable only so long as he keeps them distinct.

I hasten to add that Professor Skeat *does* keep them distinct very successfully. In a single sentence of admirable brevity he tells us that of Chaucer's poetical excellence "it is superfluous to speak; Lowell's essay on Chaucer in 'My Study Windows' gives a just estimate of his powers." And with this, taking the poetical excellence for granted, he

proceeds upon his really invaluable work of preparing a standard text of Chaucer and illustrating it out of the stores of his apparently inexhaustible learning. The result is a monument to Chaucer's memory such as never yet was reared to English poet. Douglas Jerrold assured Mrs. Cowden Clarke that, when her time came to enter Heaven, Shakespeare would advance and greet her with the first kiss of welcome, "*even* should her husband happen to be present." One can hardly with decorum imagine Professor Skeat being kissed; but Chaucer assuredly will greet him with a transcendent smile.

The Professor's genuine admiration, however, for the poetical excellence of his poet needs to be insisted upon, not only because the nature of his task keeps him reticent, but because his extraordinary learning seems now and then to stand between him and the natural appreciation of a passage. It was not quite at haphazard that I chose just now the famous description of the Prioresse as an illustration of Chaucer's poetical quality. The Professor has a long note upon the French of Stratford atte Bowe. Most of us have hitherto believed the passage to be an example, and a very pretty one, of Chaucer's playfulness. The Professor almost loses his temper over this: he speaks of it as a view "commonly adopted by newspaper-writers who know only this one line of Chaucer, and cannot forbear to use it in jest." "Even Tyrwhitt and Wright," he adds more in sorrow than in anger, "have thoughtlessly given currency to this idea." "Chaucer," the Professor explains, "merely states a *fact*" (the italics are his own), "viz., that the Prioress spoke the usual Anglo-French of the English Court, of the English

law-courts, and of the English ecclesiastics of higher ranks. The poet, however, had been himself in France, and knew precisely the difference between the two dialects; but he had no special reason for thinking *more highly*" (the Professor's italics again) "of the Parisian than of the Anglo-French.... Warton's note on the line is quite sane. He shows that Queen Philippa wrote business letters in French (doubtless Anglo-French) with 'great propriety'" ... and so on. You see, there was a Benedictine nunnery at Stratford-le-Bow; and as "Mr. Cutts says, very justly, 'She spoke French correctly, though with an accent which savored of the Benedictine Convent at Stratford-le-Bow, where she had been educated, rather than of Paris.'" So there you have a fact.

And, now you have it, doesn't it look rather like Bitzer's horse?

> "Bitzer," said Thomas Gradgrind. "Your definition of a horse?"
>
> "Quadruped. Graminivorous. Forty teeth, namely twenty-four grinders, four eye-teeth, and twelve incisive. Sheds coat in the spring; in marshy countries sheds hoofs too. Hoofs hard, but requiring to be shod with iron. Age known by marks in mouth." Thus (and much more) Bitzer.

March 30, 1895. The Texts of the "Canterbury Tales."

It follows, I hope, from what I said last week, that by far the most important service an editor can render to Chaucer and to us is to give us a pure text, through which the native

beauty of the poetry may best shine. Such a text Professor Skeat has been able to prepare, in part by his own great industry, in part because he has entered into the fruit of other men's labors. The epoch-making event in the history of the Canterbury Tales (with which alone we are concerned here) was Dr. Furnivall's publication for the Chaucer Society of the famous "Six-Text Edition." Dr. Furnivall set to work upon this in 1868.

The Six Texts were these:—

1. The great "Ellesmere" MS. (so called after its owner, the Earl of Ellesmere). "The finest and best of all the MSS. now extant."

2. The "Hengwrt" MS., belonging to Mr. William W.E. Wynne, of Peniarth; very closely agreeing with the "Ellesmere."

3. The "Cambridge" MS. Gg 4.27, in the University Library. The best copy in any public library. This also follows the "Ellesmere" closely.

4. The "Corpus" MS., in the library of Corpus Christi College, Oxford.

5. The "Petworth" MS., belonging to Lord Leconfield.

6. The "Lansdowne" MS. in the British Museum. "Not a good MS., being certainly the worst of the six; but worth reprinting owing to the frequent use that has been made of it by editors."

In his Introduction, Professor Skeat enumerates no fewer than fifty-nine MSS. of the Tales: but of these the above six (and a seventh to be mentioned presently) are the most

important. The most important of all is the "Ellesmere"—the great "find" of the Six-Text Edition. "The best in nearly every respect," says Professor Skeat. "It not only gives good lines and good sense, but is also (usually) grammatically accurate and thoroughly well spelt. The publication of it has been a great boon to all Chaucer students, for which Dr. Furnivall will be ever gratefully remembered.... This splendid MS. has also the great merit of being complete, requiring no supplement from any other source, except in a few cases when a line or two has been missed."

Professor Skeat has therefore chiefly employed the Six-Text Edition, supplemented by a seventh famous MS., the "Harleian 7334"—printed in full for the Chaucer Society in 1885—a MS. of great importance, differing considerably from the "Ellesmere." But the Professor judges it "a most dangerous MS. to trust to, unless constantly corrected by others, and not at all fitted to be taken as the basis of a text." For the basis of his text, then, he takes the Ellesmere MS., correcting it freely by the other seven MSS. mentioned.

Now, as fate would have it, in the year 1888 Dr. Furnivall invited Mr. Alfred W. Pollard to collaborate with him in an edition of Chaucer which he had for many years promised to bring out for Messrs. Macmillan. The basis of their text of the Tales was almost precisely that chosen by Professor Skeat, *i.e.* a careful collation of the Six Texts and the Harleian 7334, due preponderance being given to the Ellesmere MS., and all variations from it stated in the notes. "A beginning was made," says Mr. Pollard, "but the giant in the partnership had been used for a quarter of a century to doing, for nothing, all the hard work for other people, and

could not spare from his pioneering the time necessary to enter into the fruit of his own Chaucer labors. Thus the partner who was not a giant was left to go on pretty much by himself. When I had made some progress, Professor Skeat informed us that the notes which he had been for years accumulating encouraged him to undertake an edition on a large scale, and I gladly abandoned, in favor of an editor of so much greater width of reading, the Library Edition which had been arranged for in the original agreement of Dr. Furnivall and myself with Messrs. Macmillan. I thought, however, that the work which I had done might fairly be used for an edition on a less extensive plan and intended for a less stalwart class of readers, and of this the present issue of the Canterbury Tales is an instalment."[B]

So it comes about that we have two texts before us, each based on a collation of the Six-Text edition and the Harleian MS. 7334—the chief difference being that Mr. Pollard adheres closely to the Ellesmere MS., while Professor Skeat allows himself more freedom. This is how they start—

"Whán that Apríllė with híse shourės soote
The droghte of March hath percėd to the roote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licóur
Of which vertú engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eck with his swetė breeth 5
Inspirėd hath in every holt and heeth
The tendrė croppės, and the yongė sonne
Hath in the Ram his halfė cours y-ronne,
And smalė fowelės maken melodye
That slepen al the nvght with open eye,— 10

So priketh hem Natúre in hir coráges,—
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages ..."
(*Pollard*.)

"Whan that Aprille with his shoures sote
The droghte of Marche hath perced to the rote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eek with his swete breeth 5
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
The tendre croppes, and the yong sonne
Hath in the Ram his halfe cours y ronne,
And smale fowles maken melodye,
That slepen al the night with open yë, 10
(So priketh hem nature in hir corages:)
Than longen folk to goon on pilgrimages..."
(*Skeat*.)

On these two extracts it must be observed (1) that the accents and the dotted e's in the first are Mr. Pollard's own contrivances for helping the scansion; (2) in the second, l. 10, "yë" is a special contrivance of Professor Skeat. "The scribes," he says (Introd. Vol. IV. p. xix.), "usually write *eye* in the middle of a line, but when they come to it at the end of one, they are fairly puzzled. In l. 10, the scribe of Hn ('Hengwrt') writes *lye*, and that of Ln ('Lansdowne') writes *yhe*; and the variations on this theme are curious. The spelling *ye* (= yë) is, however, common.... I print it 'yë' to distinguish it from *ye*, the pl. pronoun." The other differences are accounted for by the varying degrees in which the two editors depend on the Ellesmere MS. Mr. Pollard sticks to the Ellesmere. Professor Skeat corrects it by

the others. Obviously the editor who allows himself the wider range lays himself open to more criticism, point by point. He has to justify himself in each particular case, while the other's excuse is set down once for all in his preface. But after comparing the two texts in over a dozen passages, I have had to vote in almost every case for Professor Skeat.

The Alleged Difficulty of Reading Chaucer.

The differences, however, are always trifling. The reader will allow that in each case we have a clear, intelligible text: a text that allows Chaucer to be read and enjoyed without toil or vexation. For my part, I hope there is no presumption in saying that I could very well do without Mr. Pollard's accents and dotted e's. Remove them, and I contend that any Englishman with an ear for poetry can read either of the two texts without difficulty. A great deal too much fuss is made over the pronunciation and scansion of Chaucer. After all, we are Englishmen, with an instinct for understanding the language we inherit; in the evolution of our language we move on the same lines as our fathers; and Chaucer's English is at least no further removed from us than the Lowland dialect of Scott's novels. Moreover, we have in reading Chaucer what we lack in reading Scott—the assistance of rhythm; and the rhythm of Chaucer is as clearly marked as that of Tennyson. Professor Skeat might very well have allowed his admirable text to stand alone. For his rules of pronunciation, with their elaborate system of signs and symbols, seem to me (to put it coarsely) phonetics gone mad. This, for instance, is how he would have us read the Tales:—

"Whán-dhat Ápríllə/wídh iz-shúurez sóotə
dhə-drúuht' ov-Márchə/hath pérsed tóo dhə róotə,
ənd-báadhed év'ri véinə/in-swích likúur,
ov-whích vertýy/enjéndred iz dhə flúur...."

—and so on? I think it may safely be said that if a man need this sort of assistance in reading or pronouncing Chaucer, he had better let Chaucer alone altogether, or read him in a German prose translation.

April 6, 1895.

Why is Chaucer so easy to read? At a first glance a page of the "Canterbury Tales" appears more formidable than a page of the "Faërie Queene." As a matter of fact, it is less formidable; or, if this be denied, everyone will admit that twenty pages of the "Canterbury Tales" are less formidable than twenty pages of the "Faërie Queene." I might bring several recent editors and critics to testify that, after the first shock of the archaic spelling and the final "e," an intelligent public will soon come to terms with Chaucer; but the unconscious testimony of the intelligent public itself is more convincing. Chaucer is read year after year by a large number of men and women. Spenser, in many respects a greater poet, is also read; but by far fewer. Nobody, I imagine, will deny this. But what is the reason of it?

The first and chief reason is this—Forms of language change, but the great art of narrative appeals eternally to men, and its rules rest on principles older than Homer. And whatever else may be said of Chaucer, he is a superb narrator. To borrow a phrase from another venerable art, he

is always "on the ball." He pursues the story—the story, and again the story. Mr. Ward once put this admirably—

> "The vivacity of joyousness of Chaucer's poetic temperament ... make him amusingly impatient of epical lengths, abrupt in his transitions, and anxious, with an anxiety usually manifested by readers rather than by writers, to come to the point, 'to the great effect,' as he is wont to call it. 'Men,' he says, 'may overlade a ship or barge, and therefore I will skip at once to the effect, and let all the rest slip.' And he unconsciously suggests a striking difference between himself and the great Elizabethan epic poet who owes so much to him, when he declines to make as long a tale of the chaff or of the straw as of the corn, and to describe all the details of a marriage-feast *seriatim*:
>
> 'The fruit of every tale is for to say:
> They eat and drink, and dance and sing and play.'
>
> This may be the fruit; but epic poets, from Homer downward, have been generally in the habit of not neglecting the foliage. Spenser in particular has that impartial copiousness which we think it our duty to admire in the Ionic epos, but which, if truth were told, has prevented generations of Englishmen from acquiring an intimate personal acquaintance with the 'Fairy Queen.' With Chaucer the danger certainly rather lay in the opposite direction."

Now, if we are once interested in a story, small difficulties of speech or spelling will not readily daunt us in the time-honored pursuit of "what happens next"—certainly not if we

know enough of our author to feel sure he will come to the point and tell us what happens next with the least possible palaver. We have a definite want and a certainty of being satisfied promptly. But with Spenser this satisfaction may, and almost certainly will, be delayed over many pages: and though in the meanwhile a thousand casual beauties may appeal to us, the main thread of our attention is sensibly relaxed. Chaucer is the minister and Spenser the master: and the difference between pursuing what we want and pursuing we-know-not-what must affect the ardor of the chase. Even if we take the future on trust, and follow Spenser to the end, we cannot look back on a book of the "Faërie Queene" as on part of a good story: for it is admittedly an unsatisfying and ill-constructed story. But my point is that an ordinary reader resents being asked to take the future on trust while the author luxuriates in casual beauties of speech upon every mortal subject but the one in hand. The first principle of good narrative is to stick to the subject; the second, to carry the audience along in a series of small surprises—satisfying expectation and going just a little beyond. If it were necessary to read fifty pages before enjoying Chaucer, though the sum of eventual enjoyment were as great as it now is, Chaucer would never be read. We master small difficulties line by line because our recompense comes line by line.

Moreover, it is as certain as can be that we read Chaucer to-day more easily than our fathers read him one hundred, two hundred, three hundred years ago. And I make haste to add that the credit of this does not belong to the philologists.

The Elizabethans, from Spenser onward, found Chaucer distressingly archaic. When Sir Francis Kynaston, *temp*. Charles I., translated "Troilus and Criseyde," Cartwright congratulated him that he had at length made it possible to read Chaucer without a dictionary. And from Dryden's time to Wordsworth's he was an "uncouthe unkiste" barbarian, full of wit, but only tolerable in polite paraphrase. Chaucer himself seems to have foreboded this, towards the close of his "Troilus and Criseyde," when he addresses his "litel book"—

"And for there is so great diversitee
In English, and in wryting of our tonge,
So preye I God that noon miswryte thee,
Ne thee mismetre for defaute of tonge.
And red wher-so thou be, or elles songe,
That thou be understoude I God beseche!..."

And therewith, as though on purpose to defeat his fears, he proceeded to turn three stanzas of Boccaccio into English that tastes almost as freshly after five hundred years as on the day it was written. He is speaking of Hector's death:—

"And whan that he was slayn in this manere,
His lighte goost ful blisfully it went
Up to the holownesse of the seventh spere
In convers leting every element;
And ther he saugh, with ful avysement,
The erratik starres, herkening armonye
With sownes ful of hevenish melodye.

"And down from thennes faste he gan avyse
This litel spot of erthe, that with the see

Embraced is, and fully gan despyse
This wrecched world, and held al vanitee
To respect of the pleyn felicitee
That is in hevene above; and at the laste,
Ther he was slayn, his loking down he caste;

"And in himself he lough right at the wo
Of hem that wepten for his death so faste;
And dampned al our werk that folweth so
The blinde lust, the which that may not laste,
And sholden al our harte on hevene caste.
And forth he wente, shortly for to telle,
Ther as Mercurie sorted him to dwelle...."

Who have prepared our ears to admit this passage, and many as fine? Not the editors, who point out very properly that it is a close translation from Boccaccio's "Teseide," xi. 1-3. The information is valuable, as far as it goes; but what it fails to explain is just the marvel of the passage—viz., the abiding "Englishness" of it, the native ring of it in our ears after five centuries of linguistic and metrical development. To whom, besides Chaucer himself, do we owe this? For while Chaucer has remained substantially the same, apparently we have an aptitude that our grandfathers and great-grandfathers had not. The answer surely is: We owe it to our nineteenth century poets, and particularly to Tennyson, Swinburne, and William Morris. Years ago Mr. R.H. Horne said most acutely that the principle of Chaucer's rhythm is "inseparable from a full and fair exercise of the genius of our language in versification." This "full and fair exercise" became a despised, almost a lost, tradition after

Chaucer's death. The rhythms of Skelton, of Surrey, and Wyatt, were produced on alien and narrower lines. Revived by Shakespeare and the later Elizabethans, it fell into contempt again until Cowper once more began to claim freedom for English rhythm, and after him Coleridge, and the despised Leigh Hunt. But never has its full liberty been so triumphantly asserted as by the three poets I have named above. If we are at home as we read Chaucer, it is because they have instructed us in the liberty which Chaucer divined as the only true way.

Footnote

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[A] The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer. Edited, from numerous manuscripts, by the Rev. Walter W. Skeat, Litt. D., LL.D., M.A. In six volumes. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press. 1894.

[B] Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. Edited, with Notes and Introduction, by Alfred W. Pollard. London: Macmillan & Co.

"THE PASSIONATE PILGRIM."

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January 5, 1805. "The Passionate Pilgrim."

The Passionate Pilgrim (1599). *Reprinted with a Note about the Book, by Arthur L. Humphreys. London: Privately Printed by Arthur L. Humphreys, of* 187, *Piccadilly. MDCCCXCIV.*

I was about to congratulate Mr. Humphreys on his printing when, upon turning to the end of this dainty little volume, I discovered the well-known colophon of the Chiswick Press—"Charles Whittingham & Co., Took's Court, Chancery Lane, London." So I congratulate Messrs. Charles Whittingham & Co. instead, and suggest that the imprint should have run "Privately Printed *for* Arthur L. Humphreys."

This famous (or, if you like it, infamous) little anthology of thirty leaves has been singularly unfortunate in its title-pages. It was first published in 1599 as *The Passionate Pilgrims. By W. Shakespeare. At London. Printed for W. Jaggard, and are to be sold by W. Leake, at the Greyhound in Paules Churchyard.* This, of course, was disingenuous. Some

of the numbers were by Shakespeare: but the authorship of some remains doubtful to this day, and others the enterprising Jaggard had boldly conveyed from Marlowe, Richard Barnefield, and Bartholomew Griffin. In short, to adapt a famous line upon a famous lexicon, "the best part was Shakespeare, the rest was not." For this, Jaggard has been execrated from time to time with sufficient heartiness. Mr. Swinburne, in his latest volume of Essays, calls him an "infamous pirate, liar, and thief." Mr. Humphreys remarks, less vivaciously, that "He was not careful and prudent, or he would not have attached the name of Shakespeare to a volume which was only partly by the bard—that was his crime. Had Jaggard foreseen the tantrums and contradictions he caused some commentators—Mr. Payne Collier, for instance—he would doubtless have substituted 'By William Shakespeare *and others*' for 'By William Shakespeare.' Thus he might have saved his reputation, and this hornets' nest which now and then rouses itself afresh around his aged ghost of three centuries ago."

That a ghost can suffer no inconvenience from hornets I take to be indisputable: but as a defence of Jaggard the above hardly seems convincing. One might as plausibly justify a forger on the ground that, had he foreseen the indignation of the prosecuting counsel, he would doubtless have saved his reputation by forbearing to forge. But before constructing a better defence, let us hear the whole tale of the alleged misdeeds. Of the second edition of *The Passionate Pilgrim* no copy exists. Nothing whatever is known of it, and the whole edition may have been but an ideal construction of Jaggard's sportive fancy. But in 1612

appeared *The Passionate Pilgrime, or certaine amorous Sonnets between Venus and Adonis, newly corrected and augmented. By W. Shakespeare. The third edition. Whereunto is newly added two Love Epistles, the first from Paris to Hellen, and Hellen's answere back again to Paris. Printed by W. Jaggard.* (These "two Love Epistles" were really by Thomas Heywood.) This title-page was very quickly cancelled, and Shakespeare's name omitted.

Mr. Humphrey's Hypothesis.

These are the bare facts. Now observe how they appear when set forth by Mr. Humphreys:—

> "Shakespeare, who, when the first edition was issued, was aged thirty-five, acted his part as a great man very well, for he with dignity took no notice of the error on the title-page of the first edition, attributing to him poems which he had never written. But when Jaggard went on sinning, and the third edition appeared under Shakespeare's name *solely*, though it had poems by Thomas Heywood, and others as well, Jaggard was promptly pulled up by both Shakespeare and Heywood. Upon this the publisher appears very properly to have printed a new title-page, omitting the name of Shakespeare."

Upon this I beg leave to observe—(1) That although it may very likely have been at Shakespeare's own request that his name was removed from the title-page of the third edition, Mr. Humphreys has no right to state this as an ascertained fact. (2) That I fail to understand, if Shakespeare acted properly in case of the third edition, why

we should talk nonsense about his "acting the part of a great man very well" and "with dignity taking no notice of the error" in the first edition. In the first edition he was wrongly credited with pieces that belonged to Marlowe, Barnefield, Griffin, and some authors unknown. In the third he was credited with these and some pieces by Heywood as well. In the name of common logic I ask why, if it were "dignified" to say nothing in the case of Marlowe and Barnefield, it suddenly became right and proper to protest in the case of Heywood? But (3) what right have we to assume that Shakespeare "took no notice of the error on the title-page of the first edition"? We know this only—that if he protested, he did not prevail as far as the first edition was concerned. That edition may have been already exhausted. It is even possible that he *did* prevail in the matter of the second edition, and that Jaggard reverted to his old courses in the third. I don't for a moment suppose this was the case. I merely suggest that where so many hypotheses will fit the scanty data known, it is best to lay down no particular hypothesis as fact.

Another.

For I imagine that anyone can, in five minutes, fit up an hypothesis quite as valuable as Mr. Humphreys'. Here is one which at least has the merit of not making Shakespeare look a fool:—W. Jaggard, publisher, comes to William Shakespeare, poet, with the information that he intends to bring out a small miscellany of verse. If the poet has an unconsidered trifle or so to spare, Jaggard will not mind giving a few shillings for them. "You may have, if you like," says Shakespeare, "the rough copies of some songs in my

Love's Labour's Lost, published last year"; and, being further encouraged, searches among his rough MSS., and tosses Jaggard a lyric or two and a couple of sonnets. Jaggard pays his money, and departs with the verses. When the miscellany appears, Shakespeare finds his name alone upon the title-page, and remonstrates. But, of the defrauded ones, Marlowe is dead; Barnefield has retired to live the life of a country gentleman in Shropshire; Griffin dwells in Coventry (where he died, three years later). These are the men injured; and if they cannot, or will not, move in the business, Shakespeare (whose case at law would be more difficult) can hardly be expected to. So he contents himself with strong expressions at The Mermaid. But in 1612 Jaggard repeats his offence, and is indiscreet enough to add Heywood to the list of the spoiled. Heywood lives in London, on the spot; and Shakespeare, now retired to Stratford, is of more importance than he was in 1599. Armed with Shakespeare's authority Heywood goes to Jaggard and threatens; and the publisher gives way.

Whatever our hypothesis, we cannot maintain that Jaggard behaved well. On the other hand, it were foolish to judge his offence as if the man had committed it the day before yesterday. Conscience in matters of literary copyright has been a plant of slow growth. But a year or two ago respectable citizens of the United States were publishing our books "free of authorial expenses," and even corrected our imperfect works without consulting us. We must admit that Jaggard acted up to Luther's maxim, "*Pecca fortiter*." He went so far as to include a piece so well known as Marlowe's *Live with me and be my love*—which proves at any rate his