

THE COMPLETE WORKS  
OF  
GEOFFREY CHAUCER



BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
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*The Riverside Press Cambridge*

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GEOFFREY CHAUCER



*The Tabard Inn, Southwark*

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## The Cambridge Poets

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*Geoffrey Chaucer*  
*From an early painting on wood*  
*formerly owned by Charles Eliot Norton*

TO  
MY BELOVED WIFE

## PREFACE

IN OFFERING to the readers of Chaucer this edition, which has been the interrupted occupation of many years, I wish to make a few explanations and acknowledgments.

It was my original plan, and my understanding with the publishers, that the text should be based on such manuscript materials only as were accessible in print. In previous editions, even those of Skeat (1894) and the Globe editors (1898), very incomplete account had been taken of modern investigations of Chaucer's grammar, and I felt that one of the chief services an editor could render would be in the grammatical purification of the text. Having that, perhaps, primarily in view at the outset, I proceeded to make my text afresh from the Chaucer Society's reprints of the various pieces, endeavoring, of course, at the same time to follow sound critical principles in the determination of readings. For certain works I found it necessary to supplement the printed materials by photographs or copies of unpublished manuscripts, or even to base my text (as in the case of the *Boece* and the *Astrolabe*) upon such reproductions of unprinted sources. But for most of the poems the accessible reprints and collations were either complete or extensive enough to serve as a satisfactory basis for a text.

During the progress of my work there appeared a number of important investigations of Chaucer manuscripts, of which I have made full use. Miss Hammond's study of the manuscripts of the *Parliament of Fowls*, for example, and the exhaustive analysis of the manuscripts of the *Troilus* by Professor Root and the late Sir William McCormick were both published after I had first constituted my text of those poems, and I revised my work in the light of them. More recently, the Chaucer Tradition of the late Professor Brusendorff has led to the further reconsideration of many matters. I am greatly indebted to all these studies, and to others that are cited in the textual notes.

For my text of the *Canterbury Tales* I used primarily the eight printed manuscripts and Thynne's edition. I collated also the Cardigan and Morgan copies, and took account of the various textual studies of Zupitza and Koch, McCormick, Tatlock, and Brusendorff. Although I knew I might have access to the photographic reproductions of manuscripts assembled by my friend Professor Manly at the University of Chicago, it did not seem to me either proper or profitable to make a partial and piecemeal use of the material which he and his associates are to publish in full. I felt, too, that the printed manuscripts represent so well the different classes of authorities that their readings, supplemented by my collations and the published reports of other copies, gave me in most cases the necessary evidence for the determination of the text. But, of course, in common with all other Chaucerians, I am eagerly awaiting the light that the Chicago edition will throw upon doubtful passages and upon the history of the composition of the tales.

I at first intended to publish a very full *apparatus criticus*, and collected at least four times as many variant readings of all the poems as are actually printed in the present volume. A number of considerations — chiefly limitations of space, the publication of Professor Root's *Troilus* with copious variants, and the announcement of Professor Manly's forthcoming edition of the *Canterbury Tales* — led me to change my plan and restrict my textual notes to selected variants of especial interest. I hope they will be found to include such readings as concern the student of Chaucer's poetic vocabulary or of his methods in revision. I may add that a good many readings not printed in my notes were reported to Professor Tatlock when he was preparing his *Concordance*, and were registered in that work.

The explanatory notes, though much more extensive than those on the text, have

also been limited by considerations of space. I had very little room for purely illustrative material, for which the reader may profitably consult the previous commentaries, especially those in Skeat's Oxford Chaucer and Professor Manly's selections from the *Canterbury Tales*. I have also not undertaken to give the history of interpretations or to list in full the opinions of commentators, as would be done in a variorum edition. But I have meant to supply the reader, either in the notes or in the glossary, with all necessary help for the understanding of the text; and I have tried to register fully, though in brief form, such literary sources of Chaucer's writings as have been discovered. Matters of common knowledge are stated without citation of authority, or with a general acknowledgment of indebtedness to previous editors. But where special credit seems due, or further information may be desired, references are added; and doubtful interpretations or new suggestions are occasionally discussed at some length.

Both in the notes and in the introductions to the various works, besides citing Chaucer's specific sources, I have given some account of the history of his ideas and the development of the literary forms and fashions exemplified in his writings. Such indications have had to be extremely brief, and I have undoubtedly overlooked both sources and parallels for which I might well have found room, even in my limited space. But I hope that my notes may help the reader who is unfamiliar with Chaucer and his period to understand the place of his works in the history of literature. Perhaps some of the discussions will point the way to profitable investigation. And it may be convenient even for the seasoned Chaucerian and the expert in other fields of literature to have in a continuous commentary a brief digest of the results obtained in the numerous source-studies of the past forty years.

Throughout the course of my work I have been indebted to Chaucer scholars, both friends and strangers, for innumerable courtesies, and I have tried to acknowledge such obligations in the proper places. But I should like to repeat here the expression of my thanks to the authorities of the Bodleian Library for allowing me to have a photograph of a manuscript of the *Astrolabe*; to the late librarian of the Cambridge University Library, Mr. Francis J. H. Jenkinson, for a photograph of the manuscript of the *Boece*; to Miss Belle da Costa Greene, for generously placing at my disposal the Morgan manuscript of the *Canterbury Tales*; to President MacCracken of Vassar College, for permitting me to collate the Cardigan manuscript of the *Canterbury Tales* while it was in his possession; and to Mr. G. A. Plimpton, for giving me access to his manuscripts of the *Canterbury Tales* and the *Astrolabe*. And I see no reason why, as a member of Harvard University, I should take for granted the inestimable privileges of the Harvard Library and refrain from thanking the authorities of that institution for their constant liberality and helpfulness. I wish to thank my friends Dr. Grace W. Landrum, Dr. J. P. Bethel, Dr. B. J. Whiting, and Mr. Joseph Butterworth for communicating to me the results of their unpublished investigations. In the typewriting of my manuscript and the verification of references and readings I had the assistance, in the early stages of the work, of Professor Paull F. Baum, and more recently, of Dr. Whiting, Dr. Harold O. White, Dr. Mark Eccles, and Miss Laura Gustafson, from all of whom I have received information and helpful suggestions beyond the ordinary range of secretarial aid. I am particularly indebted to Dr. White for his untiring assistance in the task of seeing the book through the press.

My obligations to a number of friends are so general that they could not be adequately acknowledged in special notes. In the beginning of the work I had the advantage of the advice of President W. A. Neilson, and I have received information and counsel, at various times, from Professors J. M. Manly, J. S. P. Tatlock, and Karl Young, and Mr. Henry B. Hinkley; and my friends and colleagues at Harvard, Professors Lowes, Rand, Ford, and Magoun, have been constantly exposed, by near access



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and intimate association, to my appeals for help. In this work as in everything I have undertaken, I have owed most to Professor Kittredge, under whom I began the study of Chaucer very long ago. He has been my master since my student days, and I have drawn freely upon his learning and wisdom during a friendship of more than forty years.

Other obligations, which I shall not attempt to describe, are acknowledged in the dedication of the book to one who did not live to see it published, but who has shared and sustained all my labors.

F. N. R.

# INTRODUCTION

## THE LIFE OF CHAUCER

AN eminent French critic, complaining that the biographers of men of letters have recently given more attention to their correspondence, diaries, and other intimate records than to their literary productions, expresses the fear that the present period in criticism may be remembered as "*l'âge des petits papiers*." The writer of the life of Chaucer is at least in no danger of going to the extreme described. He may resort too freely to conjecture, as scholars have occasionally done in the attempt to use every scrap of evidence for the reconstruction of Chaucer's life and times. But he will have no private papers to draw upon, and the public records at his disposal deal almost entirely with official appointments and business transactions — the external facts of the poet's career. In the end, for the most part, the biographer will have to let Chaucer's works speak for themselves, rather interpreting him by them than interpreting the writings by the personal experiences of the author.

Within their limited range, however, the recorded facts about Chaucer and his family are rather numerous. More than three hundred entries have been discovered, besides many relating to Thomas Chaucer, and more are constantly coming to light. But the story that they yield can be briefly recapitulated.

The year of Chaucer's birth is unknown. His own testimony, at the Scrope-Grosvenor trial in 1386, that he was then "forty years old and more" makes probable a date somewhat later than 1340. The fact that he was in military service in France in 1359 is also consistent with the assumption that he was born about 1343-44.

His father was John Chaucer and his mother probably Agnes, mentioned as John Chaucer's wife in 1349. She is described in the same document as a relative and heir of Hamo de Copton, and is to be identified, on the evidence of a recently discovered cartulary of Holy Trinity, Aldgate, with his niece Agnes, daughter of James de Copton. She cannot have been married to John Chaucer before 1328, when, according to documentary evidence, he was still single, and a date considerably later seems likely in view of the fact that she had been married earlier to a man named Northwell, kinsman of William de Northwell, keeper of the King's wardrobe, and that after John Chaucer's death, in 1366 or 1367, she became the wife of Bartholomew atte Chapel. John Chaucer, born between 1310 and 1312, was the son of Robert Chaucer, who in 1307 had married a widow, Mary Heyroun (perhaps born Stace). Robert Chaucer died before 1316, and in 1323 Mary married Richard Chaucer, perhaps a kinsman of Robert. She died before April 12, 1349, as appears from Richard's will, which was proved in July of the same year.

According to John Philpot's *Visitation of Kent*, Geoffrey Chaucer had a sister Catherine, who was married to Simon Manning of Codham, and through her many New England families trace a connection with the poet's line. Of other children of John Chaucer nothing is known. Elizabeth Chaucy, for whose admission to Barking Abbey John of Gaunt gave £51-8-2 in 1381, is held by some to have been a sister of Geoffrey, and by others to have been his daughter.

The name Chaucer or Chaucier (Fr. "*Chaussier*") would indicate that the family was once occupied with shoe-making, and their earliest known residence in London was in Cordwainers' Street. But Chaucer's immediate ancestors — his father, grandfather, and step-grandfather — were vintners or wine-merchants. They appear to have been prosperous people, with rising fortunes and some standing at court. In 1310 Robert

Chaucer was collector of customs on wines from Aquitaine. John Chaucer attended Edward III in Flanders in 1338, and in 1348 he was appointed to collect the custom on cloths in certain ports. He was also deputy to the King's Butler in Southampton. Thus the family had made a modest beginning in the career of public service which Geoffrey Chaucer successfully continued.

The earliest known records of Geoffrey Chaucer himself are in the household accounts of Elizabeth, Countess of Ulster and wife of Prince Lionel. They state that in May, 1357, he received clothing from her wardrobe in London, and that in December of that year, at Hatfield in Yorkshire, he was allowed twenty shillings "for necessities at Christmas." The same account-book records the journeys of Elizabeth to Reading, Stratford-atte-Bowe, and other places, and her attendance at several great entertainments, such as the Feast of St. George, given by Edward III in 1358 to the King of France, the Queen of Scotland, the King of Cyprus, and other notables. It is probable that Chaucer, as a page in the household, would have been present on many such occasions, and his acquaintance with John of Gaunt may date from Christmas, 1357, when that nobleman, then Earl of Richmond, was a guest at Hatfield.

It is not known how long Chaucer was in the service of Lionel and Elizabeth. In 1359-60 he was in the English army in France, and was taken prisoner near Reims. On March 1, 1360, he was released for a ransom, to which the King contributed £16, and in May he returned to England. Later in the year, during the peace negotiations, he was back in France and carried letters from Calais to England. That he was still in Lionel's service is shown by the fact that his payment is recorded in the Prince's expense book. But for the following seven years information about him is lacking, and at the end of that period he seems to have been in the service of the King. On June 20, 1367, he received from Edward a pension of twenty marks for life, and was described as "*dilectus vallerctus noster*." If he had been attached particularly to the train of Elizabeth, he may have left Lionel's household after her death in 1363; or he may have continued in the Prince's service till 1367. In any case he can hardly have been with Lionel on the occasion of the Prince's second marriage, May 28, 1368, to Violante, the daughter of Barnabo Visconti of Milan. For there has recently been discovered a bill of privy seal, dated July 17, 1368, granting Chaucer a passport from Dover and an allowance of £10 for traveling expenses. The purpose of his journey is entirely unknown. He may have gone to join Lionel in Italy, but it seems more probable that he was traveling in the service of the King. In fact this may be the first of the series of diplomatic missions that took him repeatedly to the Continent during a period of ten years. If Chaucer continued to be attached to Lionel till 1366 or 1367, one other possibility must be considered. It has been suggested that he spent some time with the Prince in Ireland; and it is rather striking that the gap in our records of Chaucer very nearly coincides with the period (1361-66) of Lionel's service in Ireland as the King's Lieutenant.

Chaucer was probably married as early as 1366 to Philippa, daughter of Sir Payne Roet, and sister of Katherine Swynford, afterwards the third wife of John of Gaunt. In that year Philippa Chaucer, in the service of the Queen, was granted an annual stipend of ten marks. In 1369 both Geoffrey and Philippa received cloth for mourning after the death of Queen Philippa. But Philippa Chaucer is not actually described as Geoffrey's wife until 1374, when Chaucer receives a pension of ten pounds from John of Gaunt. Two years earlier the Duke had granted a similar stipend to Philippa for her services to Constance, his wife. In 1374 Chaucer received from the King an award of a daily pitcher of wine, which was commuted, in 1378, to an additional pension of twenty marks. The payments of the royal pensions are recorded year by year, though with some irregularity, in Philippa's case until 1387, when she apparently died, and in Chaucer's case until May 1, 1388, when he assigned his claim to John Scalby. The nature of this transaction is not quite clear. Perhaps Chaucer made over the annuity to secure ready money. On the face of

the royal grant it appears simply that at Chaucer's request the pension was transferred to Scalby, who is also described as a deserving subject. It is unknown how long Chaucer received the annuity from John of Gaunt. When it was granted it was said to be for life, but very few records of payments have been published, and the accounts in which they would have been entered appear to be lost. The Lancaster Register shows several payments by the Duke for New Year's gifts for Philippa — in 1373 for a silver-gilt buttoner with six buttons, and in 1380, 1381, and 1382 for silver-gilt cups.

To return to Chaucer's offices at court and in the civil service, he is enrolled, in a list apparently dating from 1368, among the Esquires of the Royal Household, and he is still called "scutifer regis" in Beverlee's accounts in 1377. In 1368, as already noted, he was abroad on unknown business. In 1369 he saw military service for the second time in France, doubtless in the campaign in Picardy conducted by John of Gaunt. In 1370 he received letters of protection from June till Michaelmas because of his absence abroad in the King's service. The business on which he was engaged is again unknown. From December 1, 1372, till May 23, 1373, he was once more on the Continent, on what is usually regarded as his first Italian journey. He was commissioned to negotiate with the Genoese about the choice of an English port for their commerce, but the records show that he visited Florence as well as Genoa. From this famous journey, which has a place in Chaucer's intellectual development comparable to that of the "*Italienische Reise*" in Goethe's, has usually been dated his first acquaintance with the Italian language and literature. But he may have been chosen for the mission because he already had some knowledge of Italian. It is possible, too, though not very probable, that he had been in Italy with Lionel four years before. Shortly after his return to England in 1373, according to a writ recently discovered, Chaucer was directed to investigate an affair relative to a Genoese tariff at Dartmouth. This assignment has been reasonably taken as evidence of his knowledge of Italian, but does not indicate how early he acquired it.

On May 10, 1374, Chaucer obtained rent-free from the municipality the house above Aldgate which he did not give up till 1388. This seems to fix his settlement in the City, after having lived seventeen years or more (with one interval of which we have no record) in the households of Lionel and Edward. It also marks the beginning of a long series of official and professional appointments. On June 2, 1374, he was made Controller of Customs and Subsidy of Wools, Skins, and Hides in the port of London, on condition that he should write his rolls with his own hand. The regular stipend of this office was ten pounds a year, in addition to which Chaucer seems to have received annually, as a reward for diligent service, a gift of ten marks. Such payments to the controller are recorded as early as 1373 (before Chaucer held the office), and the entries continue with some irregularity during his term of service.

In November, 1375, Chaucer was granted the wardship of the lands and heir of Edward Staplegate, in Kent, an appointment which brought him in emoluments of £104; and in December of the same year he received the wardship of another Kentish minor, William de Solys, in the parish of Nonington. In July, 1376, he was granted the substantial sum of £71-4-6, the fine of John Kent for exporting wool without license or the payment of custom. Chaucer's receipts from these grants, it has been estimated, must have been equal to approximately five thousand pounds in modern currency. A writ of July, 1375, very recently reported, which shows Chaucer to have been manucaptor for John de Romesey, treasurer of Calais, in an action connected with the seizure of goods of Thomas Langton on a charge of felony, brings further evidence of Chaucer's standing at the time as a substantial man of affairs.

Between 1376 and 1381 Chaucer was again employed on several missions or embassies, of some of which the exact nature is unknown. In December, 1376, he received, with Sir John de Burley, a sum of money for secret service to the King. But no record of this journey appears to be preserved. In February, 1377, according to the Ex-

chequer Rolls, Chaucer was sent to Flanders with Sir Thomas Percy, again "on the King's secret affairs." Froissart says that he and Sir Guichard d'Angle and Sir Richard Stury were commissioners to treat of peace. But none of the three is mentioned in the royal commission of February 20. Chaucer's accounts show that he was away from London from February 17 to March 25, and that he actually went to Paris and Montreuil. He was in France again, between April 30 and June 26, for fourteen days, and received £26-13-4 for this service, which seems to have been connected with the second negotiations for peace. Though Chaucer is again not named in the commission directed to the Bishops of St. Davids, Hereford, and others, Stow asserts, in his Annals, that he was sent with the bishops. Because of his frequent absences in the King's service Chaucer was given permission, during that same year, to employ Thomas de Evesham, a substantial London merchant, as deputy for the controllership of wools and hides.

On June 22, 1377, Richard II became King, and he at once confirmed Chaucer in his office of controller. The following March he confirmed the annuities awarded by Edward III to both Chaucer and Philippa.

According to a record of March 6, 1381, Chaucer took part, after Richard's accession, on a commission to negotiate a marriage between the King and a daughter of the King of France. He may have accompanied the Earl of Salisbury and Sir Guichard d'Angle, who were sent to France on this business in the summer of 1377. Another commission was appointed for the same purpose in January, 1378, but Chaucer is not mentioned as a member. If he did go to France at that time, he apparently returned to England before March 9, when he became a surety for William de Beauchamp on matters pertaining to Pembroke Castle. But again in May he was sent abroad on the King's service. He went in the retinue of Sir Edward de Berkeley to Lombardy to negotiate with Bernabo Visconti, Lord of Milan, and Sir John Hawkwood "for certain affairs touching the expedition of the King's war." Chaucer was absent from May 28 to September 19. He received at the time, through Walworth and Philpot, the sum of £66-13-4 for wages and expenses. But his actual expenses exceeded his allowance by fourteen pounds, and the balance was apparently not paid him until February, 1380. During his absence on this second (or possibly third) Italian journey he left powers of attorney with John Gower, the poet, and Richard Forester.

After the year 1378 there is only one record known of Chaucer's service on a mission abroad. In July, 1387, according to an entry recently discovered, he was granted protection for a year, to go to Calais in the retinue of Sir William Beauchamp. This time again his duties are unknown, and there is no mention of him in the account of William de la Pole, Beauchamp's controller. If Chaucer was away from England for any length of time during that year, the question naturally arises (as raised by Miss Rickert, who called attention to the record) whether the date usually assumed for the beginning of the *Canterbury Tales* should be put somewhat later.

Except for this single mission, Chaucer's public services after 1378, so far as is known, were performed in England. In 1374, the year of his appointment as Controller of the Customs, as already noted, he had leased the house over Aldgate which he occupied for the twelve years of his service at the Custom House. His residence was of course interrupted by the foreign journeys that have been mentioned, and also, it seems, by absences on private business in 1383, when he obtained leave to appoint a deputy for four months, and in 1384, when he was granted the same privilege for a month. In 1382 he was appointed Controller of the Petty Custom on wines and other merchandise, with permission to have a permanent deputy. In February, 1385, he obtained leave to have a permanent deputy in the wool custom. But the following year his employment at the Custom House came to an end — whether through voluntary resignation, or through the hostile action of Gloucester's commission, is unknown. He gave up his house over Aldgate, which was leased in October, 1386, to Richard Forster, or Forester. He must

have already retired to live in Kent, for which county he had been appointed justice of the peace in 1385, and was elected Knight of the Shire in the summer of 1386.

At this point may be mentioned an incident of the period of Chaucer's controllership which has occasioned considerable discussion. On May 1, 1380, a certain Cecily Chaumpaigne released Chaucer of every sort of action "*tam de raptu meo, tam de alia re vel causa.*" It has sometimes been supposed that this referred to an act of physical rape, and Skeat even suggested that "Little Lewis," for whom Chaucer composed the *Astrolabe*, was Cecily's son. But it is more probable, and is now generally believed, that the case was one of civil "raptus," or abduction. Chaucer's own father had been abducted as a child in an attempt to force him to marry Joan de Westhale; and in 1387, Chaucer himself served on a commission to inquire into the "raptus," or abduction, of a Kentish heiress, Isabella atte Halle. In the case of Cecily Chaumpaigne, the principal offender seems to have been John Grove, who entered into a bond to pay her ten pounds.

On February 19, 1386, Philippa Chaucer, whose close relation to the family of John of Gaunt and Constance of Castile has already been mentioned, was admitted to the fraternity of Lincoln Cathedral, along with Henry, Earl of Derby, John Beaufort, Sir Thomas Swynford, and several members of the Duke's household. In the following year she apparently died, for there is no record of the payment of her annuity after June 18, 1387.

It is uncertain, as has already been remarked, whether Chaucer's retirement from the Custom House was voluntary, or was due to the hostility of Gloucester and his faction toward the King's appointees. Possibly Gloucester's influence may be responsible, too, for Chaucer's failure to be reelected to Parliament, in which he sat only for the session of 1386. At any rate it was not until 1389, when Richard became of age and assumed control of affairs, that Chaucer began to receive new preferments. Nothing definite is known about his financial condition in the interval. But a series of writs have been discovered, issued between April and June, 1388, enjoining his attachment for debt.

In 1389 Chaucer was appointed to the important and responsible office of Clerk of the King's Works, which he held for twenty-three months. He had charge of buildings and repairs in the Tower, Westminster Palace, and eight other royal residences, together with lodges, mews, parks, and other belongings. In 1390 he was given a special commission to attend to repairs in St. George's Chapel, Windsor. It was part of his business, in the same year, to construct scaffolds for two tournaments at Smithfield; and, in addition to the regular duties of his office as Clerk, he was appointed in March to a commission, headed by Sir Richard Stury, to look after the walls, bridges, sewers, and ditches along the Thames from Greenwich to Woolwich. Thus during his clerkship Chaucer must have been a very active man of affairs. He had the management of large numbers of workmen and very considerable sums of money. He must have been obliged to travel constantly from place to place in supervising his various pieces of construction. The records show that in September, 1390, he was robbed either twice or three times within four days, and on one of these occasions he was assaulted and beaten. Perhaps as a result of this experience, or because he found his office routine burdensome, or wished to have leisure for writing, he gave up the clerkship in the following year. The reasons for his withdrawal are a matter of conjecture. Some scholars have inferred from the recorded writs requiring him to settle his accounts and turn his offices over to John Gedney, his successor, that he was forced to resign because of dilatoriness or other kind of delinquency. It is even suggested that he was blamed for allowing himself to be robbed. But the assault and robbery is at least equally likely to have been a reason for his voluntary resignation. His accounts, moreover, when finally rendered, showed the government to be in his debt for the sum of £21, the equivalent of approximately six hundred pounds today. On this score, then, also, Chaucer might have had reason for voluntarily relinquishing the office.

At some date before June 22, 1391 — and perhaps before June 17, when he gave up the Clerkship of the Works — he was appointed deputy forester of the royal forest of North Petherton in Somerset. The appointment was renewed in 1398. The manor of Newton Pacey and the forestership, which was an appurtenance thereof, belonged to the Mortimers, earls of March, from 1359 until, by the failure of the Mortimer line, they passed into the hands of the Duke of York. It has been supposed that Chaucer received his first appointment from Edward Mortimer, the third earl, and his second from Eleanor, the dowager countess. But it has been recently shown that Sir Peter Courtenay had the administration of the forestership continuously from 1382 till 1405, first as custodian during the minority of the third earl, and after 1393 as lessee. So Chaucer appears to have owed his appointments to Courtenay. Since Courtenay was Constable of Windsor Castle during the time when Chaucer was in charge of the repairs of St. George's Chapel, this Petherton appointment may have some bearing on the theory that Chaucer's services as Clerk of the Works were terminated for inefficiency. It is not known how long Chaucer continued his work as forester after the renewal of his appointment in 1398.

The Petherton forestership is the last regular office that Chaucer is known to have held. In the discharge of its duties he may have spent a good deal of time in Somerset during the last decade of his life. But his designation, in April, 1396, as a member of a board of Greenwich freeholders to represent Gregory Ballard in an action concerning real estate would indicate that he retained his residence in Kent. Occasional entries in the records give evidence of his presence in London, and show that he continued to enjoy the royal favor. In January, 1393, he received a gift of ten pounds for "good service rendered to the King during the year now present." In February, 1394, after he had received all the arrears due him as Clerk of the Works, the King granted him a new annuity of twenty pounds, equal in value to about two-thirds of the annuity of forty marks he had assigned to Scalby in 1388. It is possible that during the year 1395-96 Chaucer was in attendance upon Henry, Earl of Derby (afterwards Henry IV). For at Christmas, 1395, and again in the following February, he appears to have delivered £10 to Henry from the clerk of the wardrobe. He also received from Henry a gift of a scarlet robe trimmed with fur, valued at over eight pounds. In December, 1397, Chaucer received a further mark of the King's favor in the grant of a butt of wine yearly. The informal promise apparently made at that time was confirmed by letters patent in the following October. Henry IV, immediately after his coronation in October, 1399, renewed Richard's grants of the annuity of £20 and the hogshead of wine, and gave Chaucer an additional annuity of forty marks.

The payments of these stipends in Chaucer's last years appear from the records to have been very irregular. From the fact that he obtained a number of advances or loans from the Exchequer it has been inferred that he was in financial need. His begging poems, the *Envoy to Scogan* and the *Complaint to his Purse*, have also been cited in support of the opinion. But the poems are not to be taken too seriously, and the records give very little evidence of poverty, though Chaucer may have been in temporary embarrassment as the result of a suit for over £14 brought against him by Isabella Bukholt. He was given letters of protection for two years, "that certain jealous persons might not interfere with his performance of the king's business." The grounds of the Bukholt claim are unknown, but since the claimant's husband had been keeper of the royal park at Clarendon and the mews at Charing Cross, and thus a subordinate of Chaucer as Clerk of the Works, it has been reasonably inferred that the suit had to do with the conduct of that office or the distribution of its perquisites.

On December 4, 1399, Chaucer took a long lease, for fifty-three years, of a house in the garden of Westminster Abbey. But his actual occupation of it was brief. The last recorded payment of his pension was on June 5, 1400, and according to the generally

accepted date inscribed on his tomb in Westminster Abbey, he died on October 25, 1400.

The foregoing summary, which has been of necessity in large part a recital of dates and figures, includes all the more significant of the recorded facts of Chaucer's life that have thus far come to light. The account has been condensed by the omission of many entries relating to gifts, loans, and payments, and other transactions of minor importance. But the substance of the story, as it is now understood, has been here related. As shown by the comments made in the course of the narrative, the records are often of uncertain interpretation. They also leave us without positive information on such important matters as the dates of the poet's birth and marriage, the circumstances of his education, or the names and history of his children. They tell us little, except by implication, about his more intimate personal life or his intellectual interests. And, far from giving any information about his literary work, the contemporary documents cited do not once betray the fact that he was a man of letters.

On some of these points, however, information is supplied by other sources, and the story has been pieced out with tradition and conjecture, especially by the earlier biographers. In fact the more critical modern historians have rejected a whole series of traditions, which make up what Lounsbury called "the Chaucer legend."

It has not been easy to separate fact from legend in the case of assertions made on entirely unknown authority. With respect to Chaucer's education, for example, the older biographers reported a tradition that he studied at one or both of the universities. But no support has been found for the statement, and it is now generally rejected. Another tradition, however, that Chaucer was a member of one of the Inns of Court, which was rejected as legendary by Lounsbury, has lately been shown to be very probably true. It rests upon the declaration of Speght that Master Buckley had seen a record of the Inner Temple to the effect that Chaucer was fined two shillings for beating a Franciscan friar in Fleet Street. The records of the Inner Temple for the period have perished or disappeared, but since Master Buckley was their keeper in the sixteenth century his testimony is entitled to respect. The story in itself is perfectly credible, even the two-shilling fine being the kind of penalty commonly exacted for such an offense as is described. Legal training, moreover, would have been a natural preparation for Chaucer's career in business and public affairs, and in his writings — though this point should not be unduly pressed as evidence — he shows considerable acquaintance with the law. His study at the Temple may have fallen between 1361 and 1367 — a period, it will be remembered, during which we have no records of his doings.

With reference to Chaucer's family very little information has been found outside the records. Mention has already been made of Catherine Chaucer, his sister, and of Elizabeth Chauncy, who may have been his daughter. The "little Lewis" for whom he composed the *Astrolabe* was probably his son. Reasons have been given for identifying him with the younger Lewis Clifford, who was perhaps Chaucer's godson, and could therefore have been addressed as "son" in the treatise. But the recent discovery of the name of Lewis Chaucer in a record supports the usual belief that the boy was Chaucer's own child. He may have been a namesake and godson of Sir Lewis Clifford.

It is commonly held, and is highly probable, that Thomas Chaucer, who rose to wealth and influence in the beginning of the fifteenth century, was also the poet's son. None of the rather numerous documentary records that have been preserved of both men gives direct evidence of their relationship, which is first positively asserted by Thomas Gascoigne in his *Dictionarium Theologicum*. But Thomas Chaucer is known to have used the poet's seal, and the arms on his tomb clearly prove his connection with the Roets, the family of Chaucer's wife. In fact it is now generally agreed that Thomas was the son of Philippa. But it has been suspected by a few investigators, and has recently been ably argued by Dr. Russell Krauss, that Thomas's father was John of Gaunt. In



the lack of more positive evidence than we possess, such a theory can be neither proved nor disproved. But when all allowance is made for the laxity of standards in the English court in the fourteenth century, and for the rather helpless position of retainers or subordinates in the households of the great, and even for the notoriously loose life of John of Gaunt, it still seems improbable that he injured and humiliated Chaucer, and entered into a relation with two sisters which would have been regarded as incestuous. For it is well known that Katherine, Philippa's sister, was first his mistress and afterwards his wife. The antecedent improbability of such action the evidence so well presented by Dr. Krauss is not strong enough to overcome. Neither the Lancastrian arms on Thomas's tomb, nor John of Gaunt's gifts and favors to Philippa and her husband, and to Thomas Chaucer himself, demand the explanation assumed. Moreover, the silence of the poet's contemporaries with regard to his relationship to Thomas really proves nothing. For, by hypothesis, Thomas was the son of Geoffrey's wife. Since he bore Chaucer's name he must have passed as his son, and this apparent relationship between the two men must have been a matter of common knowledge. If it was also an open secret that Thomas was a bastard, and for that reason contemporary writers never refer to him as Geoffrey's son, it is a little strange that the fact was not disclosed by some of the scribes or chroniclers who have preserved reports of other court scandals. Moreover, Gascoigne's testimony deserves respect as coming from a man of standing and an Oxfordshire neighbor of Thomas Chaucer.

The life of Thomas Chaucer is not strictly a part of the present story. But it may be of interest to note that he was in the service of John of Gaunt and Henry IV, and received annuities, like Geoffrey Chaucer, from both Richard and Henry. About 1394-95 he married Maud Burgersh. Their daughter, Alice, was married successively to the Earl of Salisbury and William de la Pole, later Duke of Suffolk. After 1411 Thomas paid the rent on the house at Westminster which Geoffrey had occupied at the end of his life. In 1413 he became forester of North Petherton, and is often referred to as Geoffrey's successor in that office. But it is more accurate to say that he followed Courtenay in the lease of the bailiwick of the forests of Somerset. Neither his occupation of the Westminster house nor his Petherton forestership proves anything with regard to his relationship to Geoffrey. His public career was distinguished. He was chief butler to Richard II and his three successors, envoy to France, member of the King's Council, and several times Speaker of the House of Commons.

To return to Geoffrey Chaucer, the life-records, of which a chronological outline has here been presented, tell a very incomplete story, but they show at least the range of his experience and acquaintance. From boyhood he had personal knowledge of the court, living in close association successively with the households of Lionel, Edward III, and John of Gaunt. His biographers disagree as to the extent of patronage and protection accorded to him by Lancaster. But the *Book of the Duchess* suggests that the poet stood in some dependent relation to the Duke, to whom he was certainly indebted for important favors in the early seventies. How long they were continued is not a matter of record, and it is uncertain how far Lancaster concerned himself with Chaucer's official appointments. Chaucer's association with Henry of Derby in the nineties may have no connection with his earlier relations to Gaunt, though it indicates a continued adherence to the Lancastrian house.

It is also uncertain to what degree Chaucer enjoyed the special favor of Richard and Anne. Complimentary references to the Queen have been recognized in the *Knight's Tale* and the *Troilus*, and the *Legend* was apparently to be presented to her, — perhaps was written at the royal command. But the evidence is not sufficient to show, what has sometimes been conjectured, that Anne intervened personally in the appointment of a deputy to relieve Chaucer in 1385. In one case the King's favor may have worked to Chaucer's disadvantage. The loss of his controllership in 1386 he may have owed to the