

# **Chaucer for Children:**

*"A Golden Key"*

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# Chaucer for Children:

*"A Golden Key"*

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(Illustrated)

By



**Mrs. H. R. Haweis**

*Illustrated By  
The Author*

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**&**  
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## About Author

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**H**ugh Reginald Haweis (1838 –1901) was

an English cleric and writer. He was the husband of author Mary Eliza Haweis and the father of painter Stephen Haweis.

### *Biography:*

The Reverend H.R. Haweis was born in Egham, Surrey in 1838, the son of the Rev. John Oliver Willyams Haweis of Brighton, Canon of Chichester. He was educated privately in Sussex and

at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he graduated BA in 1860. He travelled in Italy and served under Garibaldi in 1860. On his return to England he was ordained and held various curacies in London, becoming in 1866 incumbent of St James's, Marylebone.

His unconventional methods of conducting the service, combined with his dwarfish figure and lively manner, soon attracted crowded congregations. He married Mary E. Joy in 1866, and both he and Mrs Haweis (d. 1898) contributed largely to periodical literature and travelled a good deal abroad. Haweis was Lowell lecturer in Boston, in 1885, and represented the Anglican Church at the Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893.

He was much interested in music, and wrote books on violins and church bells, besides contributing an article to the 9th edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* on "bell". His best-known book was *Music and Morals* (1871), which went through sixteen editions before the end of the century, and he was for a time from 1868 editor of *Cassell's Magazine*. He also wrote the five-volume *Christ and Christianity*, a popular church history (1886–1887), as well as *Travel and Talk* (1896) and similar chatty and entertaining books. His book *My Musical Life* offers a biographical tour through his career and his spiritual leanings in music, tracing his awakening to music, his interest in the Cremonese violin makers and in Paganini, an exposition of *The Ring of the Nibelungen*, *Parsifal*, *Lohengrin* and *Tannhäuser*, and anecdotes of his meetings with Richard Wagner and Franz Liszt.



# CHAUCER FOR CHILDREN

## KEY TO THE COVER.

---



he 1st Arch contains a glimpse of Palamon and Ar-cite fighting desperately, yet wounded oftener and sharplier by Love's arrows than by each deadly stroke. The ruthless boy aloft showers gaily upon them his poisoned shafts.



The 2nd contains Aurelius and Dorigen—that loving wife left on Breton shores, who was so nearly caught in the trap she set for herself. Aurelius offers her his heart aflame. It is true his attitude is humble, but she is utterly in his power—she cannot get away whilst he is kneeling on her dress.



The 3rd represents the Summoner led away, but this time neither to profit nor to pleasure, by his horned companion. The wicked spirit holds the reins of both

horses in his hand, and the Summoner already quakes in anticipation of what is in store for him.



The 4th contains the three rioters. The emblem of that Death they sought so wantonly hangs over their heads; the reward of sin is not far off.



The 5th Arch is too much concealed by the lock to do more than suggest one of *Griselda's* babes.



The Key, from which the book takes its name, we trust may unlock the too little known treasures of the first of English poets. The *Daisy*, symbol for all time both of Chaucer and of children, and thus curiously fitted to be the connecting link between them, may point the way to lessons fairer than flowers in stories as simple as daisies.

Demy 8vo, cloth limp, 2s. 6d.

# CHAUCER FOR SCHOOLS.

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By Mrs. HAWEIS, Author of 'CHAUCER FOR CHILDREN.'



*This is a copious and judicious selection from Chaucer's Tales, with full notes on the history, manners, customs, and language of the fourteenth century, with marginal glossary and a literal poetical version in modern English in parallel columns with the original poetry. Six of the Canterbury Tales are thus presented, in sections of from 10 to 200 lines, mingled with prose narrative. 'Chaucer for Schools' is issued to meet a widely-expressed want, and is especially adapted for class instruction. It may be profitably studied in connection with the maps and illustrations of 'Chaucer for Children.'*

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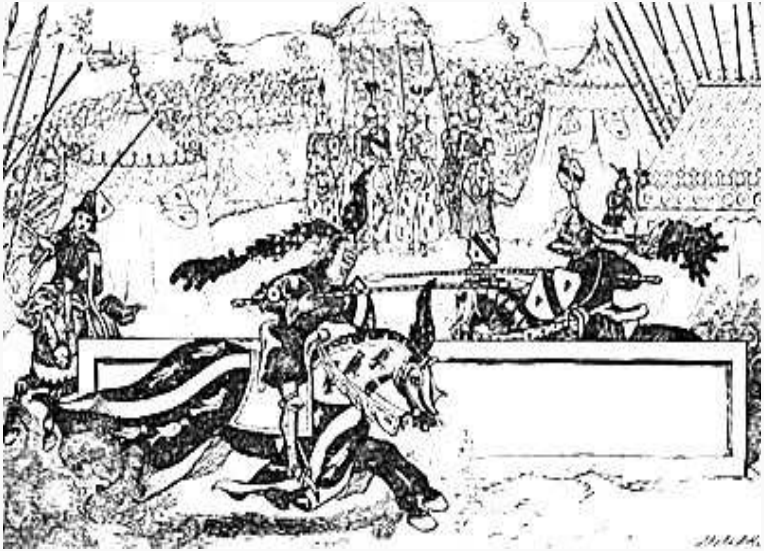
'For those who have yet to make the acquaintance of the sweet and quaint singer, there could not well be a better book than this. Mrs. Haweis is, of course, an enthusiast, and her enthusiasm is contagious. Her volume ought to be included in all lists of school books—at least, in schools where boys and girls are supposed to be laying the foundations of a liberal education.'—Literary World.

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KNIGHT. SQUIRE. BOY. WIFE OF BATH. prioress.  
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MINE HOST ASSEMBLING THE CANTERBURY PIL-  
GRIMS.



'Doth now your devoir, yonge knightes proude!'

CHIEFLY FOR THE USE AND PLEASURE OF  
MY LITTLE LIONEL,  
FOR WHOM I FELT THE NEED OF SOME BOOK OF  
THE KIND,  
I HAVE ARRANGED AND ILLUSTRATED THIS  
CHAUCER STORY-BOOK.

# FOREWORDS TO THE SECOND EDITION.

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**I**n revising *Chaucer for Children* for a New Edition, I

have fully availed myself of the help and counsel of my numerous reviewers and correspondents, without weighting the book, which is really designed for children, with a number of new facts, and theories springing from the new facts, such as I have incorporated in my Book for older readers, *Chaucer for Schools*.

Curious discoveries are still being made, and will continue to be, thanks to the labours of men like Mr. F. J. Furnivall, and many other able and industrious scholars, encouraged by the steadily increasing public interest in Chaucer.

I must express my sincere thanks and gratification for the reception this book has met with from the press generally, and from many eminent critics in particular; and last, not least, from those to whom I devoted my pleasant toil, the children of England.

**M. E. HAWEIS.**



## Forewords To The Mother.

---

**A** Chaucer for Children may seem to some an im-

possible story-book, but it is one which I have been encouraged to put together by noticing how quickly my own little boy learned and understood fragments of early English poetry. I believe that if they had the chance, many other children would do the same.

I think that much of the construction and pronunciation of old English which seems stiff and obscure to grown up people, appears easy to children, whose crude language is in many ways its counterpart.

The narrative in early English poetry is almost always very simply and clearly expressed, with the same kind of repetition of facts and names which, as every mother knows, is what children most require in story-telling. The emphasis<sup>[1]</sup> which the final E gives to many words is another thing which helps to impress the sentences on the memory, the sense being often shorter than the sound.

It seems but natural that every English child should know something of one who left so deep an impression on his age, and on the English tongue, that he has been called by Occleve "the finder of our fair language." For in his day there was actually no *national* language, no *nation-*

a/ literature, English consisting of so many dialects, each having its own literature intelligible to comparatively few; and the Court and educated classes still adhering greatly to Norman-French for both speaking and writing. Chaucer, who wrote for the people, chose the best form of English, which was that spoken at Court, at a time when English was regaining supremacy over French; and the form he adopted laid the foundation of our present National Tongue.

Chaucer is, moreover, a thoroughly religious poet, all his merriest stories having a fair moral; even those which are too coarse for modern taste are rather *naïve* than injurious; and his pages breathe a genuine faith in God, and a passionate sense of the beauty and harmony of the divine work. The selections I have made are some of the most beautiful portions of Chaucer's most beautiful tales.

I believe that some knowledge of, or at least interest in, the domestic life and manners of the 13th, 14th, and 15th centuries, would materially help young children in their reading of English history. The political life would often be interpreted by the domestic life, and much of that time which to a child's mind forms the *dryest* portion of history, because so unknown, would then stand out as it really was, glorious and fascinating in its vigour and vivacity, its enthusiasm, and love of beauty and bravery. There is no clearer or safer exponent of the life of the

14th century, as far as he describes it, than Geoffrey Chaucer.

As to the difficulties of understanding Chaucer, they have been greatly overstated. An occasional reference to a glossary is all that is requisite; and, with a little attention to a very simple general rule, anybody with moderate intelligence and an ear for musical rhythm can enjoy the lines.

In the first place, it must be borne in mind that the *E* at the end of the old English words was usually a syllable, and must be sounded, as *Aprillē, swootē, &c.*

Note, then, that Chaucer is always *rhythmical*. Hardly ever is his rhythm a shade wrong, and therefore, roughly speaking, *if you pronounce the words so as to preserve the rhythm* all will be well. When the final *e* must be sounded in order to make the rhythm right, sound it, but where it is not needed leave it mute.<sup>[2]</sup>

Thus:—in the opening lines—

Whan that | *April* | *le* with | his *schowr* | *es* swoote-  
when, showers, sweet

The drought | of *Marche* | hath per | cèd to | the  
rootepierced, root

And bath | *ud* *eve* | *ry* *veyne* | in *swich* | *licoursuch*, liquor  
Of whiche | *vertue* | *engen* | *drèd* is | the flour. (*Pro-*  
*logue*.)flower

You see that in those words which I have put in italics the final E must be sounded slightly, for the rhythm's sake.

And *sma* | *le* *fow* | *les* *ma* | *ken* *me* | *lodies* *small* *birds*  
make

That *sle* | *pen* *al* | *the* *night* | *with* *o* | *pen* *ye*. (*Pro-*  
*logue*.) *sleep*, all

Again, to quote at random—

The *bu* | *sy* *lark* | *e* *mess* | *ager* | *of* *day*, *lark*, *messen-*  
*ger*

*Salu* | *eth* *in* | *hire* *song* | *the* *mor* | *we* *gray*. (*Knight's*  
*Tale*.) *saluteth*, *her*, *morning*

*Ful* *long* | *e* *wern* | *his* *leg* | *gus*, *and* | *ful* *lene*; *legs*, *lean*  
*Al* *like* | *a* *staff* | *ther* *was* | *no* *calf* | *y-sene*. (*Prologue—*  
*'Reve.*)

or in Chaucer's exquisite greeting of the daisy—

*Knelyng* | *alwey* | *til* *it* | *unclo* | *sèd* *was* *always*  
*Upon* | *the* *sma* | *le*, *sof* | *te*, *swo* | *te* *gras*. (*Legend of*  
*Good Women*.) *small*, *soft*, *sweet*

How much of the beauty and natural swing of Chaucer's poetry is lost by translation into modern English, is but too clear when that beauty is once perceived; but I thought some modernization of the old lines would help the child to catch the sense of the original more readily:

for my own rendering, I can only make the apology that when I commenced my work I did not know it would be impossible to procure suitable modernized versions by eminent poets. Finding that unattainable, I merely endeavoured to render the old version in modern English as closely as was compatible with sense, and the simplicity needful for a child's mind; and I do not in any degree pretend to have rendered it in poetry.

The beauty of such passages as the death of Arcite is too delicate and evanescent to bear rough handling. But I may here quote some of the lines as an example of the importance of the final *e* in emphasizing certain words with an almost solemn music.

And with | that word | his *spech* | *e fail* | *e gan*;speech,  
fail

For fro | his feete | up to | his brest | was come  
The cold | of deth | that hadde | him o | ver  
nome;overtaken

And yet | moreo | ver in | his *ar* | *mes* tnoonow, arms  
The vi | tal strength | is lost, | and al | agoo.gone  
Only | the in | tellect, | withou | ten more,without  
That dwel | led in | his *her* | *te sik* | and sore,heart, sick  
*Gan fay*/ | *e when* | the *her* | *te felt* | *e deth*. (*Knight's  
Tale*.)began to fail, felt death

There is hardly anything finer than Chaucer's version of the story of these passionate young men, up to the

touching close of Arcite's accident and the beautiful patience of death. In life nothing would have reconciled the almost animal fury of the rivals, but at the last such a resignation comes to Arcite that he gives up Emelye to Palamon with a sublime effort of self-sacrifice. Throughout the whole of the Knight's Tale sounds as of rich organ music seem to peal from the page; throughout the Clerk's Tale one seems to hear strains of infinite sadness echoing the strange outrages imposed on patient Grizel. But without attention to the rhythm half the grace and music is lost, and therefore it is all-important that the child be properly taught to preserve it.

I have adhered generally to Morris's text (1866), being both good and popular,<sup>[3]</sup> only checking it by his Clarendon Press edition, and by Tyrwhitt, Skeat, Bell, &c., when I conceive force is gained, and I have added a running glossary of such words as are not immediately clear, on a level with the line, to disperse any lingering difficulty.

In the pictures I have been careful to preserve the right costumes, colours, and surroundings, for which I have resorted to the MSS. of the time, knowing that a child's mind, unaided by the eye, fails to realize half of what comes through the ear. Children may be encouraged to verify these costumes in the figures upon many tombs and stalls, &c., in old churches, and in old pictures.

In conclusion I must offer my sincere and hearty thanks to many friends for their advice, assistance, and encouragement during my work; amongst them, Mr. A. J. Ellis, Mr. F. J. Furnivall, and Mr. Calderon.

Whatever may be the shortcomings of the book, I cannot but hope that many little ones, while listening to Chaucer's Tales, will soon begin to be interested in the picturesque life of the middle ages, and may thus be led to study and appreciate 'The English Homer'[\[4\]](#) by the pages I have written for my own little boy.

## ACCENT OF CHAUCER.

---

**T**he mother should read to the child a fragment of

Chaucer with the correct pronunciation of his day, of which we give an example below, inadequate, of course, but sufficient for the present purpose. The whole subject is fully investigated in the three first parts of the treatise on 'Early English Pronunciation, with special reference to Shakespere and Chaucer,' by Alexander J. Ellis, F.R.S.

The *a* is, as in the above languages, pronounced as in *âne, appeler, &c.* *E* commonly, as in *écarté, &c.* The final *e* was probably indistinct, as in German now, *habe, werde, &c.*—not unlike the *a* in *China*: it was lost before a vowel. The final *e* is still sounded by the French in singing. In old French verse, one finds it as indispensable to the rhythm as in Chaucer,—and as graceful,—hence probably the modern retention of the letter as a syllable in vocal music.

*Ou* is sounded as the French *ou*.

*I* generally as on the Continent, *ee*: never as we sound it at present.

*Ch* as in Scotch and German.



I quote the opening lines of the Prologue as the nearest to hand.

Whan that Aprille with his schowres swoote  
The drought of Marche hath perced to the roote,  
    And bathud every veyne in swich licour,  
    Of which vertue engendred is the flour;  
Whan Zephirus eek with his swete breethe  
    Enspirud hath in every holte and heethe  
    The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne  
    Hath in the Ram his halfe cours i-ronne,  
    And smale fowles maken melodie,  
    That slepen al the night with open yhe,  
So priketh hem nature in here corages—&c.

Whan that Aprilla with his shōōrēs sohta  
The drōōkht of March hath pairsed to the rohta,  
    And bahthed ev'ry vīn in sweech licōōr,  
    Of which vairtú enjendrèd is the flōōr;  
Whan Zephirōōs aik with his swaita braitha  
    Enspeered hath in ev'ry holt and haitha  
    The tendra croppes, and the yōōnga sōōnna  
    Hath in the Ram his halfa cōōrs i-rōōnna,  
    And smahla fōōles mahken melodee-a,  
    That slaipen al the nikht with ohpen ee-a,  
So pricketh hem nahtúr in heer coràhges, &c.

It will thus be seen that many of Chaucer's lines end with a *dissyllable*, instead of a single syllable. *Sote, rote, brethe, hethe, &c.* (having the final *e*), are words of two syllables; *corages* is a word of three, *ages* rhyming with *pilgrimages* in the next line. It will also be apparent that some lines are lengthened with a syllable too much for strict *metre*—a licence allowed by the best poets,—which, avoiding as it does any possible approach to a dog-grel sound, has a lifting, billowy rhythm, and, in fact, takes the place of a 'turn' in music. A few instances will suffice:—

'And though that I no wepne have in this place.'

'Have here my troth, tomorwe I nyl not fayle,  
Withouten wityng of eny other wight.'

'As any raven fether it schon for-blak.'

'A man mot ben a fool other yong or olde.'

I think that any one reading these lines twice over as I have roughly indicated, will find the accent one not difficult to practise; and the perfect rhythm and ring of the lines facilitates matters, as the ear can frequently guide the pronunciation. The lines can scarcely be read too slowly or majestically.

I must not here be understood to imply that difficulties in reading and accentuating Chaucer are chimerical, but only that it is possible to understand and enjoy him without as much difficulty as is commonly supposed. In perusing the whole of Chaucer, there must needs be exceptional readings and accentuation, which in detail only a student of the subject would comprehend or care for.

The rough rule suggested in the preface is a good one, as far as the rhythm goes: as regards the sound, I have given a rough example.

I will quote a fragment again from the Prologue as a second instance:—

Ther was also a nonne, a prioresse,  
That of hire smylyng was ful symple and coy;  
Hire gretteste ooth nas but by Seynte Loy;  
And sche was cleped Madame Eglentyne.  
Ful wel sche sang the servise devyne,  
Entuned in hire nose ful semyly;  
And Frensch sche spak ful faire and fetysly,  
Aftur the scole of Stratford atte Bowe,  
For Frensch of Parys was to hire unknowe.

Ther was ahlsoa a nõõn, a preeoressa,  
That of her smeeling was fööł sim-pland cooy;  
Heer graitest ohth nas bööt bee SĪ-ent Looy,

And shay was cleppèd Mādān Eglanteena.  
Fööl well shay sang the *servicē divinā*,  
Entúned in heer nohsa fööl saimaly;  
And French shai spahk fööl fēr and faitisly,  
Ahfter the scohl of Strahtford ahtta Bow-a,  
For French of Pahrees was toh her öön-know-a.

Observe *simpland* for *simple and*: simple being pronounced like a word of one syllable. With the common English pronunciation the lines would not scan. 'Vernicle,' 'Christofre,' 'wimple,' 'chilindre,' 'companionable,' &c., are further instances of this mute *e*, and may be read as French words.

# CHAUCER THE TALE- TELLER.

---

## I.

**D**o you like hearing stories? I am going to tell you of some one who lived a very long time ago, and who was a very wise and good man, and who told more wonderful stories than I shall be able to tell *you* in this little book. But you shall hear some of them, if you will try and understand them, though they are written in a sort of English different from what you are accustomed to speak.

But, in order that you really may understand the stories, I must first tell you something about the man who made them; and also why his language was not the same as yours, although it was English. His name was Chaucer—Geoffrey Chaucer. You must remember his name, for he was so great a man that he has been called the 'Father of English Poetry'—that is, the beginner or inventor of all the poetry that belongs to our England; and when you are grown up, you will often hear of Chaucer and his works.

## II.

Chaucer lived in England 500 years ago—a longer time than such a little boy as you can even think of. It is now the year 1876, you know. Well, Chaucer was born about 1340, in the reign of King Edward III. We should quite have forgotten all Chaucer's stories in such a great space of time if he had not written them down in a book. But, happily, he did write them down; and so we can read them just as if he had only told them yesterday.

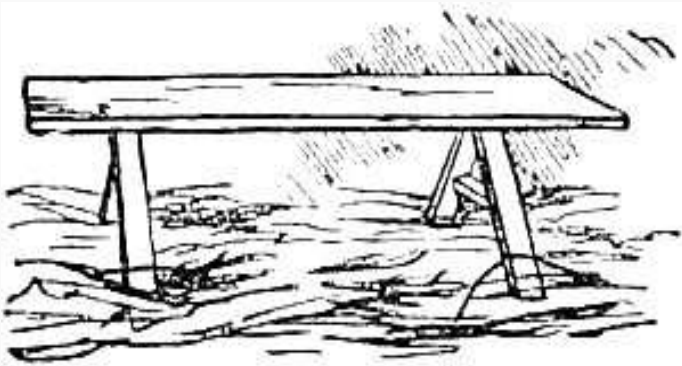
If you could suddenly spring back into the time when Chaucer lived, what a funny world you would find! Everybody was dressed differently then from what people are now, and lived in quite a different way; and you might think they were very uncomfortable, but they were very happy, because they were accustomed to it all.

People had no carpets in those days in their rooms. Very few people were rich enough to have glass windows. There was no paper on the walls, and very seldom any pictures; and as for spring sofas and arm-chairs, they were unknown. The seats were only benches placed against the wall: sometimes a chair was brought on grand occasions to do honour to a visitor; but it was a rare luxury.

The rooms of most people in those days had blank walls of stone or brick and plaster, painted white or coloured, and here and there—behind the place of honour, per-

haps—hung a sort of curtain, like a large picture, made of needlework, called tapestry. You may have seen tapestry hanging in rooms, with men and women and animals worked upon it. That was almost the only covering for walls in Chaucer's time. Now we have a great many other ornaments on them, besides tapestry.

The rooms Chaucer lived in were probably like every one's else. They had bare walls, with a piece of tapestry hung here and there on them—a bare floor, strewn with rushes, which must have looked more like a stable than a sitting-room. But the rushes were better than nothing. They kept the feet warm, as our carpets do, though they were very untidy, and not always very clean.



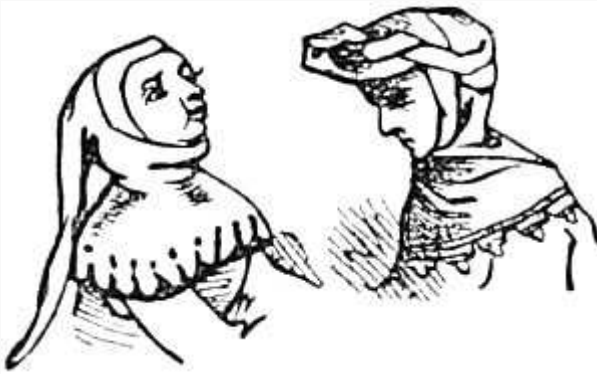
When Chaucer wanted his dinner or breakfast, he did not go to a big table like that you are used to: the table came to him. A couple of trestles or stands were brought

to him, and a board laid across them, and over the board a cloth, and on the cloth were placed all the curious dishes they ate then. There was no such thing as coffee or tea. People had meat, and beer, and wine for breakfast, and dinner, and supper, all alike. They helped themselves from the common dish, and ate with their fingers, as dinner-knives and forks were not invented, and it was thought a sign of special good breeding to have clean hands and nails. Plates there were none. But large flat cakes of bread were used instead; and when the meat was eaten off them, they were given to the poor—for, being full of the gravy that had soaked into them, they were too valuable to throw away. When they had finished eating, the servants came and lifted up the board, and carried it off.

### III.

And now for Chaucer himself! How funny you would think he looked, if you could see him sitting in his house! He wore a hood, of a dark colour, with a long tail to it, which in-doors hung down his back, and out of doors was twisted round his head to keep the hood on firm. This tail was called a *liripipe*.





He did not wear a coat and trousers like your father's, but a sort of gown, called a tunic, or dalmatic, which in one picture of him is grey and loose, with large sleeves, and bright red stockings and black boots; but on great occasions he wore a close-fitting tunic, with a splendid belt and buckle, a dagger, and jewelled garters, and, perhaps, a gold circlet round his hair. How much prettier to wear such bright colours instead of black! men and women dressed in green, and red, and yellow then; and when they walked in the streets, they looked as people look in pictures.



DINNER IN THE OLDEN TIME.



GEOFFREY CHAUCER.

You may see how good and clever Chaucer was by his face; such a wise, thoughtful, pleasant face! He looks very kind, I think, as if he would never say anything harsh or bitter; but sometimes he made fun of people in a merry way. Words of his own, late in life, show that he was

rather fat, his face small and fair. In manner he seemed 'elvish,' or shy, with a habit of staring on the ground, 'as if he would find a hair.'

All day he worked hard, and his spare time was given to 'studying and reading away,' till his head ached and his look became dazed. (*House of Fame*.)

Chaucer lived, like you, in London. Whether he was born there is not known;<sup>[5]</sup> but as his father, John Chaucer, was a vintner in Thames Street, London, it is probable that he was. Not much is known about his parents or family, except that his grandfather, Richard Chaucer, was also a vintner; and his mother had an uncle who was a moneyer; so that he came of respectable and well-to-do people, though not noble.<sup>[6]</sup> Whether he was educated at Oxford or Cambridge, whether he studied for the bar or for the Church, there is no record to show; but there is no doubt that his education was a good one, and that he worked very hard at his books and tasks, otherwise he could not have grown to be the learned and cultivated man he was. We know that he possessed considerable knowledge of the classics, divinity, philosophy, astronomy, as much as was then known of chemistry, and, indeed, most of the sciences. French and Latin he knew as a matter of course, for the better classes used these tongues more than English—Latin for writing, and French for writing and speaking; for, by his translations from the