

**THE KNIGHT'S TALE;
OR, PALAMON
AND ARCITE**

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The Knight's Tale; Or, Palamon and Arcite by Walter W. Skeat & Geoffrey Chaucer

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WALTER W. SKEAT & GEOFFREY CHAUCER

**THE KNIGHT'S TALE;
OR, PALAMON
AND ARCITE**

THE KING'S CLASSICS UNDER
THE GENERAL EDITORSHIP OF
PROFESSOR GOLLANCZ





*Canterbury Pilgrims,
from a fifteenth century M.S. of
Lydgate to Siege of Thebes.
Brit. Mus. 18.5.2 fol. 148.*

THE KNIGHT'S TALE
OR PALAMON AND
ARCITE BY GEOFFREY
CHAUCER DONE INTO
MODERN ENGLISH BY
THE REV. PROFESSOR
WALTER W. SKEAT

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"DAN CHADCEER, WELL OF ENGLISH UNDEFILED,
ON FAME'S ETERNAL READ-ROLL WORTHY TO BE FILED."

SPENSER.

"CHAUCER (OF ALL ADMIR'D) THE STORY GIVES;
THESE CONSTANT TO ETERNITY IT LIVES."

The Two Noble Kinsmen.

" THE MORNING-STAR OF SONG, WHO MADE
HIS MUSIC HEARD BELOW;
DAN CHADCEER, THE FIRST WARBLER, WHOSE SWEET BREATH
PRELUDED THOSE MELODIOUS BURLYS THAT FILL
THE SPACIOUS TIMES OF GREAT ELIZABETH
WITH SOUNDS THAT ECHO STILL."

TENNYSON: *A Dream of Fair Women.*

PREFACE

Chaucer.—Amongst the rather numerous English poets who wrote in times preceding the sixteenth century, the chief name is that of Geoffrey Chaucer. Indeed, not a few of our oldest poems were written by anonymous authors, or by authors of whom we know little beyond the mere name. Fortunately, owing to his connexion with the court and with official duties, the chief events in Chaucer's life are tolerably well ascertained; and a good account of him is readily accessible in all the more recent books that treat of English literature. It is necessary to consult recent accounts, because the older ones contain numerous statements founded upon guesswork, which later researches have shown to be misleading and erroneous.

His Writings.—Many pieces were once assigned to Chaucer which were certainly not composed by him, but there is now little dispute as to his genuine works. The whole question is fully discussed in my Chaucer

Canon (Oxford, 1900). His seven longest poems, arranged in order of length, are *The Canterbury Tales*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *The Legend of Good Women*, *The House of Fame*, (a fragment of) *The Romaunt of the Rose*, *The Book of the Duchess*, and *The Assembly or Parliament of Fowls*.

The Canterbury Tales.—Of these, *The Canterbury Tales*, the longest and the best of his works, are deservedly famous. The general scheme of this poem, as indicated in the celebrated *Prologue*, is well known. Chaucer represents a company of pilgrims to the shrine of St. Thomas at Canterbury as assembling at the Tabard Inn, in Southwark, late in the evening of April 16. The exact year is not given, but we may suppose it to have been about 1385.

After describing the pilgrims severally, Chaucer sets them down to supper, in the course of which the host of the Tabard, Harry Bailey by name, proposed to them a mode of amusement during their pilgrimage, to which they all readily assented. This was, that each pilgrim should relate two stories on the way to Canterbury, and two more on the homeward journey; and he himself would ride with them as their guide and umpire. Whoever, according to the general verdict, told the best stories was to receive a supper at the