

**CLARENDON PRESS
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CHAUCER: THE LEGEND
OF GOOD WOMEN**

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WALTER W. SKEAT

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Clarendon Press Series

CHAUCER
THE LEGEND OF GOOD WOMEN

SKEAT

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HENRY FROWDE



New York
MACMILLAN AND CO.

Clarendon Press Series

CHAUCER

THE LEGEND OF GOOD WOMEN

EDITED BY THE

REV. WALTER W. SKEAT, LITT.D.

*Elrington and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon
in the University of Cambridge*

'Dan Chancer, the first warbler, whose sweet breath
Prelude those melodious bursts, that fill
The spacious times of great Elizabeth
With sounds that echo still'

A Dream of Fair Women

Oxford

AT THE CLARENDON PRESS

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INTRODUCTION.

I HAVE undertaken the present edition of Chaucer's 'Legend of Good Women' because none of the existing editions give a wholly satisfactory text, nor do they give more than extremely meagre comments upon the various points of interest connected with the poem. Some account of former editions will be given below, following upon the descriptions of the MSS.

The present poem presents several points of peculiar, I might almost say of unique interest. It is the immediate precursor of the Canterbury Tales, and enables us to see how the poet was led on towards the composition of that immortal poem. This is easily seen, upon investigation of the date at which it was composed.

DATE OF THE POEM: A.D. 1385.

The question of the date has been well investigated by Ten Brink; but it may be observed beforehand that the allusion to the 'queen' in l. 496 has long ago been noticed, and it has been thence inferred, by Tyrwhitt, that the Prologue must have been written after 1382, the year when Richard II. married his first wife, the 'good queen Anne.' But Ten Brink's remarks enable us to look at the question much more closely.

He shows that Chaucer's work can be clearly divided into three chief periods, the chronology of which he presents in the following form.

FIRST PERIOD.

- 1366 (at latest). The Romaunt of the Rose.
- 1369. The Book of the Duchesse.
- 1372. (end of the period).