

**CHAUCER'S  
PRONUNCIATION AND  
THE SPELLING OF  
THE ELLESMERE MS**

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Chaucer's pronunciation and the spelling of the Ellesmere ms by George Hempl

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**GEORGE HEMPL**

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CHAUCER'S 470  
PRONUNCIATION

AND THE SPELLING OF THE  
ELLESMERE MS

BY  
GEORGE HEMPL PHD  
PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH IN THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

For out of olde felbes as men seyth  
Cometh al this newe corn from here to here  
And out of olde bokes in good feyth  
Cometh al this newe science that men lere  
*Parlement of Foules*

BOSTON  
D C HEATH & CO  
1893

CORRIGENDA.

- p. 12, below, read 'a in *what*', not 'o in *what*'.
- p. 14, Note, line 2, read § 7, not § 37.
- p. 15, (g), line 3, read Iulian 340.
- p. 17, § 4, line 2, read 'slēpen 10'.  
N', line 3, read § 23, not § 18.  
line 5, read § 32, not § 27.
- p. 18, § 5, line 2, read inspired.  
Note, last line, read § 32, not § 27.
- p. 19, § 7, last line, read qu, not qr.  
§ 8, line 4, read Iulian.
- p. 20, line 2, read § 2 *h*, not *h*.  
last word should be 'dō', not 'do'.
- p. 21, § 9, 2, line 2, read 'them', not 'it'.
- p. 25, line before last, read *ū*, not *u*.
- p. 26, Note 1, line 3, read 'the long vowels *ī* and *ū* (not so generally *ē* and *ō*) still.'  
§ 15, line 5, cross out 'and *ū*'.  
line 6, cross out 'stātōe 83, Iulian 340.
- p. 30, 5 end, read § 32, not § 27.
- p. 35. § 33, line 2, read 'quath' not 'queth'.

## PREFACE.

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There are various ways of reading Chaucer. Not a few attempt to read the works of the Middle-English poet as though they were written in the speech of to-day, and succeed in getting a disjointed jargon that is neither poetry nor prose. Others pronounce the vowels approximately as in German, and, slipping in or leaving out enough e's to give a passable rhythm, revel in the glamour of a bogus antiquity. Still others, and they mostly foreigners, strive, with more or less success, to attain a scientific reproduction of the speech of the poet. It is my pleasant duty each year to introduce a hundred odd students to the study of Chaucer; and, much as I despise the naïve and the capricious methods of reading the poet's works, I shrink from imposing a minute study of Middle-English phonology upon a class of undergraduate students, lest at the end of the brief time allotted the subject they find they have the shell but not the kernel.

Still, in these matters one is largely limited by the books in the market. The *Prolog* and *The Knight's Tale* doubtless form the most acceptable pieces for undergraduate students, though the *Tale* does get rather long before it ends; and the Morris-Skeat edition, in spite of its weaknesses, is the best text with a glossary. But the student is there referred to Skeat's edition of another poem for a treatment of the subject of pronunciation, and this is found to be based upon the idiosyncrasies of an inferior MS and to require the gentle correction of Prof. Skeat. I use the Morris-Skeat

book, but I have found that the introduction to the subject is made at a much more rapid pace and in a far more satisfactory manner by the aid of the marked texts in Sweet's *Second Middle-English Primer*. Sweet's excellent treatment of the pronunciation offers, however, unnecessary difficulties to non-philological students; while the choppy and inadequate presentation of the subject in Skeat's echo\* of Sweet's *Primer* is quite unsatisfactory. I have therefore tried to meet the needs of my students in this little book, and shall use along with it Sweet's *Primer*, to be followed by the Morris-Skeat book.

My aim at first was to print but half a dozen pages; as it is, I have not put in anything that I do not try to have my young people master. Others may find it advisable to omit or postpone some sections. Still others may deem it necessary to neglect some of the distinctions I have made: to sound *e* like *è* or even *ay* like *ey*, and to pronounce the words in § 33, 2, and perhaps even those containing *eu* and *ü* as in M<sup>o</sup>E. Surely the failure to prolong double consonants (§ 39) need not be considered a serious matter in the case of the ordinary student. But I should think it folly to ignore the difference between *q* and *o*, which has its counterpart in M<sup>o</sup>E. The section treating of the Relation of ME Vowels to M<sup>o</sup>E Vowels is meant to be of practical use in acquiring the right pronunciation of the ME vowels, especially when the student uses an unmarked text.

I have taken pains to cite instances of nearly every word mentioned, if possible, in the *Prolog* or *The Knight's Tale*. The spelling is, with rare exceptions, that of the Ellesmere MS; the numbers refer to the lines in the Six-Text Edition, which for the *Prolog* accord with the numbering in Sweet and Skeat, and for *The Knight's Tale* will be found in brackets in Skeat's edition.

\* School Edition of Chaucer's Prologue, Oxford, 1891.



PREFACE.

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I have stuck closely to the matter of spelling and pronunciation; but, should my treatment of the subject prove to be of use to others, I hope to find time to prepare an Introduction to the Study of Chaucer that will aim to meet the wants of American students.

GEORGE HEMPL.

Ann Arbor, October 1, 1888.



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