RADCLIFFE COLLEGE MONOGRAPHS, NO. 10. ON THE SOURCES OF THE NONNE PRESTES TALE

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KATE OELZNER RETERSEN

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BY

KATE OELZNER PETERSEN

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PREFACE.

THE material for this paper was collected at the Harvard College Library, to the authorities of which, and in particular to Mr. Kiernan, the Superintendent of Circulation, I am indebted for free access to the collections of Folk-Lore and of Example Books in Gore Hall.

Acknowledgments are due to Professor Marsh and to Dr. Poll of Harvard University, who have aided me by their criticism and advice; to Professor von Jagemann, who has kindly made translations for me; and to Dr. W. A. Neilson, who has given me important references.

To Professor Kittredge, under whose direction this investigation was begun and carried on, I am deeply indebted. My thanks are due to him for valuable references and suggestions, too numerous to be recorded in the course of the paper, for revising the entire text in proof, and, in short, for help of every description.

K. O. P.

BROOKLYN, July, 1898.

CONTENTS.

ON THE SOURCES OF THE NONNE PRESTES TALE.

As the starting point of the *Nun's Priest's Tale*, Chaucer has taken an episode from the cycle of Renart the Fox. But in working up the story, he has combined new material so freely with old that the outlines of the traditional epic tale are often not easy to trace. The new matter, indeed, makes up more than two thirds of the whole.[1]

An investigation of the sources of Chaucer's poem, therefore, involves two problems: first, the relation of the animal episode in the *Nun's Priest's Tale* to the epic of Renart; and second, the extent to which the added material is original with Chaucer.

I. The Cock and Fox Story in Learned, in Oral, and in Epic Tradition.

As being in a sense the nucleus of the *Nun's Priest's Tale*, the animal adventure may be considered first, — or in other words, the Cock and Fox story as it appears in literary and oral tradition.

The traditional Cock and Fox story is found in three varieties of narrative: the learned fable and the epic animal tale, — both of which are forms of literary tradition, — and the popular animal tale of oral tradition. The distinctive character of each of the three varieties will become evident through a comparison of the varying forms which the Cock and Fox tale assumes in passing through these different types. For the learned fable, in such a comparison, the version of the story in the Anglo-Latin *Romulus* is fairly representative, inasmuch as that collection has been of the highest importance in the development of the written fable. For the epic tale, a summary of the Chantecler episode as it occurs in *Reinhart Fuchs* has been made, because the German rendering represents the tale in a less elaborate stage of development than the *Roman de*

[1] See p. 117 for evidence on this point.

Renart.[1] For the oral animal tale, a Flemish *märchen* is given, because in it the approach to the epic form is most apparent.

In the table which follows, there is no intention of assuming anything as to the history or connection of the three varieties of the story. They are merely brought into comparison in order that the characteristics of the class which each represents may be defined.

FABLE.	FOLK-LORE.	ANIMAL EPIC.
ANGLO-LATIN ROMULUS.[2]	FLEMISH TALE.[3]	REINHART FUCHS.[4]
		A well-to-do peasant, Lanzelîn, and his wife, old Ruotzela, lived in prosperity, near a village be-

[1] The Cock and Fox story proper of the *Roman de Renart* is the Chantecler episode of Branch ii. Other adventures of the French cycle in which the Cock and the Fox figure, are enumerated in n. 4 below.

[2] Hervieux, II, 533 (old ed.), 598 (new ed.); Oesterley, App., 45. Cf. other versions of the fable type: Berne *Romulus*, Hervieux, II, 308 (new ed.), 747 (old ed.); Extravagantes, no. 3 — Stainhöwel, p. 196, Grimm, *R. F.*, p. 421, Hervieux, II, 274 (new ed.), 726 (old ed.); Marie, no. 51; *Gallus et Vulpes*, Grimm u. Schmeller, p. 345 ff.; Baldo, Du Méril, p. 253 f.; Bromyard, J., XIII, 28; Gerard of Minden, *Niederdeutsche Denkm.*, II, no. 46; Hoffmann von Fallersleben, no. 7. Cf. also for the cock's trick: Alcuin, Du Méril, p. 137 f. (Wolf and Cock); Grimm, *R. F.*, p. 420; and allusions in a Latin poem quoted by Du Méril, p. 144, note 1 (Wolf and Fox); *De Vos un de Hane*, Haupt's *Zs.*, V, 406 ff.

[3] Joos iii, 75 ff. Cf. other versions in folk-lore: Cerquand, p. 237 (Basque); *Archivio*, 1887, p. 565 (Nivernais); *Rev. Trad. Pop.*, 1890, p. 439 (Gouray); *Wallonia*, p. 100; Campbell, I, 271; Asbjørnsen, no. 34. Cf. also for the cock's trick: *Rev. Trad. Pop.*, 1895, p. 32 (Aveyron); Lespy, p. 102 (Béarn); Bladé, *La Gascogne*, III, 199: Meyrac, p. 451 (Ardennes); Campbell, III, 93. For allied stories in oral and written literature, see pp. 26 ff., below.

[4] Reissenberger, *R. F.*, vv. 11–176. Cf. other epic versions: *Roman de Renart*, Martin, branch ii, 23–468; and indirectly, — branch ix, 1065 ff.; branch xiv, 1–201; branch xvi, 1–638; branch xvii, 1074–1203; branch ia, 1669–1672. — *The Nonne Prestes Tale*; and imitations of it by R. Henryson, *The Taill of Schir Chantecleir and the Foxe*, Laing, p. 118 ff.; and Dryden, *The Cock and the Fox*, *Works*, III, 306 ff.; and allusions to it: Lydgate's *Minor Poems*, Percy Society, p. 151; *Kingis Quair*, st. 156, ed. Skeat, p. 39; *The Tale of Cockelbie Sow*, Fitt iii, 99 ff. (Laing's *Select Remains*, p. 263); Gawain Douglas, *Prologue to Æneid*, xii; Camden's *Remains*, p. 317; *Shakspere Jest Book*, p. 28 f.; *The Ancient Drama*, III, 158, quoted by Skeat, V, 250. — Cf. also, indirectly, *Ysengrimus*, iv, 811–1044.