

the Duke of Lancaster. He died about a year after him, when Henry had been King thirteen months.

John of Gaunt was buried in St. Paul's, by the side of his first and best-loved wife, Blanche; Geoffrey Chaucer was buried in Westminster Abbey.

So ended the first, and almost the greatest, English writer, of whom no one has spoken an ill word, and who himself spoke no ill words.

Poet, soldier, statesman, and scholar, 'truly his better ne his pere, in school of my rules could I never find. . . . In goodness of gentle, manly speech he passeth all other makers.'*

XII.

And now for Chaucer's 'speech.' How shall I show you its 'goodness,' since it is so difficult to read this old English? Wait a bit. You will soon understand it all, if you take pains at the first beginning. Do not be afraid of the funny spelling, for you must remember that it is not so much that Chaucer spells differently from us, as that we have begun to spell differently from Chaucer. He would think our English quite as funny, and not half so pretty as his own; for the old English, when spoken, sounded very pretty and stately, and not so much like a 'gabble' as ours.

I told you a little while ago, you know, that our talking is much faster than talking was in Chaucer's time; it seems very curious that a language can be so changed in a few hundred years, without people really meaning to change it. But it has changed gradually. Little by little new words have come into use, and others have got 'old-fashioned.' Even the English of *one* hundred years ago was very unlike our own. But the English of *five* hundred years ago was, of course, still more unlike.

XIII.

Now, I have put, as I told you, two versions of Chaucer's poetry on the page, side by side. First, the lines as Chaucer made them, and then the same lines in English such as we speak. You can thus look at both, and compare them.

I will also read you the verses in the two ways of pronouncing them, Chaucer's way and our way: but when you have grown a little used to the old-fashioned English, you will soon see how much prettier and more musical it sounds than our modern tongue, and I think you will like it very much. Besides, it is nice to be able to see the words as Chaucer put them, so as to know exactly how he talked.

In Chaucer's time a great deal of French was spoken in England, and it was mixed up with English more than it is now. The sound of old French and old English were something the same, both spoken very slowly, with a kind of drawl, as much as to say—"I am in no hurry. I have all day before me, and if you want to hear what I have got to say, you must wait till I get my words out."

So if you wish to hear Chaucer's stories, you must let him tell them in his own way, and try and understand his funny, pretty language. And if you do not pronounce the words as he meant, you

* Author of the 'Testament of Love.'

will find the verses will sound quite ugly—some lines being longer than others, and some not even rhyming, and altogether in a jumble.

XIV.

Chaucer himself was very anxious that people should read his words properly, and says in his verses, as if he were speaking to a human being—

GLOSSARY.

great diversity

tongue

pray

defect

And for there is so grete dyversité
 In Englissh,* and in writynge of our tonge,
 So preye I God that non miswrité thee
 Ne thee mys-metere for defaute of tonge. (Troilus.)

To *mis-metre* is to read the *metre* wrong; and the *metre* is the length of the line. If you read the length all wrong, it sounds very ugly.

Now, suppose those lines were read in modern English, they would run thus:—

And because there is so great a diversity
 In English, and in writing our tongue,
 So I pray God that none miswrite thee
 Nor mismetre thee through defect of tongue.

How broken and ragged it all sounds! like a gown that is all ragged and jagged, and doesn't fit. It sounds much better to read it properly.

You will find that when Chaucer's words are rightly pronounced, all his lines are of an even length and sound pretty. I don't think he ever fails in this. This is called having a musical ear. Chaucer had a musical ear. Some people who write poetry have not, and their poetry is good for nothing. They might as well try to play the piano without a musical ear; and a pretty mess they would make of that! †

XV.

When you find any very hard word in Chaucer's verses which you cannot understand, look in the glossary and the modern version beside them; and you will see what is the word for it nowadays. A few words which cannot be translated within the metre you will find at the bottom of the page; but think for yourself before you look. There is nothing like thinking for one's self. Many of the words are like French or German words: so if you have learnt these languages you will be able often to guess what the word means.

For instance, you know how, in French, when you wish to say, *I will not go* or *I am not sure*, two *no's* are used, *ne* and *pas*: *Je n'irai pas*, or *je ne suis pas sûr*. Well, in Chaucer's time two *no's* were used in English. He would have said, "I n'ill nat go," and "I n'am nat sure."

* Alluding to the numerous dialects in use in England at the time.

† The mother should here read to the child some lines with the proper pronunciation: see Preface, pp. x., xi.

There are many lines where you will see two *no*'s. "I n'am nat precious." "I ne told no deintee." "I wol not leve no tales." "I ne owe hem not a word." "There n'is no more to tell," &c. Sometimes, however, *ne* is used by itself, without *not* or *nat* to follow. As "it n'is good," "I n'll say—or sain," instead of "it is not good—I will not say."

And, as in this last word *sain* (which only means *say*), you will find often an *n* at the end of words, which makes it difficult to understand them; but you will soon cease to think that a very alarming difficulty if you keep looking at the modern version. As, "I shall nat *lien*" (this means *lie*). "I wol nat *gon*" (*go*): "*withouten* doubt" (*without*). "Ther wold I *don* hem no pleasance" (*do*); "thou shalt *ben* quit" (*be*). "I shall you *tellen*" (*tell*).

And I think you will also be able to see how much better some old words are for expressing the meaning, than our words. For instance, how much nicer 'flittermouse' is than 'bat.' That is an old North-country word, and very German (*Fledermaus*). When you see a little bat flying about, you know it is a bat because you have been told: but 'flitter-mouse' is better than bat, because it means 'floating mouse.' Now, a bat *is* like a mouse floating in the air. The word expresses the movement and the form of the creature.

Again—the old word 'herteles' (heartless), instead of without courage, how well it expresses the want of courage or spirit: we often say people have no heart for work, or no heart for singing, when they are sad, or ill, or weak. Heartless does not always mean cowardly; it means that the person is dejected, or tired, or out of spirits. We have left off using the word heartless in that sense, however, and we have no word to express it. When *we* say heartless, we mean cruel or unkind, which is a perfectly different meaning.

Again, we have no word now for a meeting-time or appointment, as good as the old word 'steven:' we use the French word '*rendezvous*' as a noun, which is not very wise. 'Steven' is a nice, short, and really English word which I should like to hear in use again.

One more instance. The word 'fret' was used for devouring. This just describes what we call 'nibbling' now. The moth fretting a garment—means the moth devouring or nibbling a garment.

This is a word we have lost sight of now in the sense of *eating*; we only use it for 'complaining' or 'pining.' But a *fretted* sky—and the *frets* on a guitar—are from the old Saxon verb *frete*, to eat or devour, and describe a wrinkly uneven surface, like the part of a garment fretted by the moth.

So you must not be impatient with the
old words, which are sometimes much
better for their purpose than
the words we use
nowadays.

CANTERBURY TALES.

CHAUCER'S PILGRIMS.

SOME of Chaucer's best tales are not told by himself. They are put into the mouths of other people. In those days there were no newspapers—indeed there was not much news—so that when strangers who had little in common were thrown together, as they often were in inns, or in long journeys, they had few topics of conversation: and so they used to entertain each other by singing songs, or quite as often by telling their own adventures, or long stories such as Chaucer has written down and called the '*Canterbury Tales*.'

The reason he called them the '*Canterbury Tales*' was because they were supposed to be told by a number of travellers who met at an inn, and went together on a pilgrimage to a saint's shrine at Canterbury.

But I shall now let Chaucer tell you about his interesting company in his own way.

He begins with a beautiful description of the spring—the time usually chosen for long journeys, or for any new undertaking, in those days.

When you go out into the gardens or the fields, and see the fresh green of the hedges and the white May blossoms and the blue sky, think of Chaucer and his Canterbury Pilgrims!

Chaucer's Prologue.

GLOSSARY.

When, sweet	W HAN that Aprille with his schowres swoote	When April hath his sweetest showers brought
root	The drought of Marche hath perced to the roote,	To pierce the heart of March and banish drought,
such liquor	And bathud every veyne in swich licour,	Then every vein is bathéd by his power,
flower	Of which vertue engendred is the flour;	With fruitful juice engendering the flower;
also, breath	Whan Zephirus* eek with his swete breeth	When the light zephyr, with its scented breath,
grove	Enspirud hath in every holte and heeth	Stirs to new life in every holt and heath
young	The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne	The tender crops, what time the youthful sun
run	Hath in the Ram his halfe cours i-ronne,	Hath in the Ram his course but half-way run;
small birds make }	And smale fowles maken melodie,	And when the little birds make melody,
sleep, eye pricketh them, their impulses }	That slepen al the night with open yhe, So priketh hem nature in here corages :—	That sleep the whole night long with open eye, So Nature rouses instinct into song,—
long, go	Thanne longen folk to gon on pilgrimages,	Then folk to go as pilgrims greatly long,
seek, shores	And palmers † for to seeken straunge strondes,	And palmers hasten forth to foreign strands
distant saints	To ferne halwes, kouthe ‡ in sondry londes ;	To worship far-off saints in sundry lands;
	And specially from every schires ende	And specially from every shire's end
go	Of Engelond, to Canturbury they wende,	Of England, unto Canterbury they wend,
blessed, seek	The holy blisful martir § for to seeke,	Before the blessed martyr there to kneel,
them	That hem hath holpen whan that they were	Who oft hath help'd them by his power to
sick	seeke.	heal.

* *Zephyrus*, or *Zephyr*: the god of the west wind. It is become a name for the wind of summer.

† Pilgrims who have brought a palm branch from the Holy Land.

‡ *Kouthe*: past participle of the verb *conne*, to know, or to be able. It was used much as *savoir* is in French—to be able to do, to know how to do a thing. The verse means 'To serve the saints they could, or they knew of, or knew how to serve.'

§ Thomas Beket, Chancellor of Henry II. He was Archbishop of Canterbury for eight years, and was

murdered by servants of the King in 1170. He was canonized, or made a saint, by the Pope, after his death, and pilgrimages were then constantly made to his tomb in Canterbury Cathedral. In those days it was usual in sickness or peril to vow a pilgrimage to the shrine of some saint who was supposed to be able to help people by interceding with God, when pilgrims prayed him to. Erasmus alludes to the quantities of offerings on Thomas Beket's shrine, given by those who believed the saint had healed or helped them.

It happened that one day in the spring, as I was resting at the Tabard* Inn, in Southwark, ready to go on my devout pilgrimage to Canterbury, there arrived towards night at the inn a large company of all sorts of people—nine-and-twenty of them: they had met by chance, all being pilgrims to Canterbury.† The chambers and the stables were roomy, and so every one found a place. And shortly, after sunset, I had made friends with them all, and soon became one of their party. We all agreed to rise up early, to pursue our journey together.‡

But still, while I have time and space, I think I had better tell you who these people were, their condition and rank, which was which, and what they looked like. I will begin, then, with

The Knight.



GLOSSARY.

there,
valuable }

A KNIGHT§ ther was and that a worthy man,
That from the tyme that he ferst bigan

A knight there was, and that a worthy man,
Who from the time in which he first began

* A tabard was an outer coat without sleeves, worn by various classes, but best known as the coat worn over the armour (see p. 48), whereon there were signs and figures embroidered by which to recognize a man in war or tournament: for the face was hidden by the helmet, and it was easier to detect a pattern in bright colours than engraved in dark steel. So, of course, the pattern represented the arms used by him. And thus the tabard got to be called the *coat of arms*. Old families still possess what they call their coat of arms, representing the device chosen by their ancestors in the lists; but they do not wear it any more: it is only a copy of the pattern on paper. A *crest* was also fastened to the helmet for the same purpose of recognition, and there is usually a 'crest' still surmounting the modern 'coat of arms.' The inn where Chaucer slept was simply named after the popular garment. It, or at least a very ancient inn on its site, was recently standing, and known as the Talbot Inn, High Street, Borough: Talbot being an evident corruption of Tabard. We may notice here, that the Ploughman, described later on, wears a tabard, which may have been a kind of blouse or smock-frock, but was probably similar in form to the knight's tabard.

† People were glad to travel in parties for purposes of safety, the roads were so bad and robbers so numerous.

‡ Probably all or many occupied but one bedroom, and they became acquainted on retiring to rest, at the ordinary time—sunset.

§ The word Knight (knecht) really means *servant*. The ancient knights attended on the higher nobles and were their *servants*, fighting under them in battle. For as there was no regular army, when a war broke out everybody who could bear arms engaged himself to fight under some king or lord, anywhere, abroad or in England, and was paid for his services. That was how hundreds of nobly born men got their living—the only way they could get it. This is what the knight Arviragus does in the 'Franklin's Tale,' leaving his bride, to win honour (and money) by fighting wherever he could.

The *squire* waited on the knight much as the knight did on the earl—much in the position of an aide-de-camp of the present day. The *page* served earl, knights, ladies. But knight, squire, and page were all honourable titles, and borne by noblemen's sons. The page was often quite a boy, and when he grew older changed his duties for those of squire, till he was permitted to enter the knight-hood. The present knight is described as being in a lord's service, and fighting under him 'in his war,' but he was a man held in the highest honour.

GLOSSARY.

ride	To ryden out, he lovede chyvalrye,	To ride afield, loved well all chivalry,
frankness	Trouthe and honour, fredom and curtesie.	Honour and frankness, truth and courtesy.
war	Ful worthi was he in his lordes werre,	Most worthy was he in his master's war,
further	And therto hadde he riden, noman ferre, As wel in Cristendom as in hethenesse, And evere honoured for his worthinesse.	And thereto had he ridden, none more far, As well in Christian as in heathen lands, And borne with honour many high commands.

He had been at Alexandria when it was won: in Prussia he had gained great honours, and in many other lands. He had been in fifteen mortal battles, and had fought in the lists for our faith three times, and always slain his foe. He had served in Turkey and in the Great Sea. And he was always very well paid too. Yet, though so great a soldier, he was wise in council; and in manner he was gentle as a woman. Never did he use bad words in all his life, to any class of men: in fact

He was a verray perfight, gentil knight.

He was a very perfect, noble knight.

As for his appearance, his horse was good, but not gay. He wore a gipon of fustian, all stained by his habergeon;* for he had only just arrived home from a long voyage.

The Squire.



there, son	With him ther was his sone, a yong SQUYER,	With him there was his son, a gay young squire,
merry	A lover, and a lusty bachelor,†	A bachelor and full of boyish fire,
locks curled	With lokkes crulle as they were layde in presse.	With locks all curl'd as though laid in a press,
guess	Of twenty yeer he was of age I gesse.	And about twenty years of age, I guess.
wonderfully nimble, great	Of his stature he was of evene lengthe, And wondrously delyver, and gret of strengthe.	In stature he was of an even length, And wonderfully nimble, and great of strength.

* See p. 48 and Appendix, p. 107.

† "On nommait *Bacheliers* les chevaliers pauvres, les *bas Chevaliers* . . . quand ceux-ci avaient reçu la chevalerie,

on les appelait *Chevaliers-Bacheliers* . . . quant à l'*Ecuyer* (*Squire*) c'était le prétendant à la Chevalerie."—LE GRAND, *Fabliaux & Contes*.

GLOSSARY.

had been	And he hadde ben somtyme in chivachie,*	And he had followed knightly deeds of war
	In Flaundes, in Artoys, and in Picardie,	In Picardy, in Flanders, and Artois,
little	And born him wel, as in so litel space,	And nobly borne himself in that brief space,
stand	In hope to stonden in his lady grace.†	In ardent hope to win his lady's grace.
	Embrowdid‡ was he, as it were a mede	Embroidered was he, as a meadow bright,
	Al ful of fresshe floures, white and reede.	All full of freshest flowers, red and white;
playing on } the flute }	Syngynge he was, or flowtyng al the day;	Singing he was, or flute-playing all day,
	He was as fressh as is the moneth of May.	He was as fresh as is the month of May.
	Schort was his goune, with sleeves long and	Short was his gown, his sleeves were long and
	wyde.	wide,
could, horse	Wel cowde he sitte on hors, and faire ryde.	Well he became his horse, and well could ride;
relate	He cowde songes wel make and endite,	He could make songs, and ballads, and recite,
also, draw } pictures }	Justne and eek daunce, and wel purtray and	Joust and make pretty pictures, dance, and
	write.	write.

As for the young squire's manners—

	Curteys he was, lowly, and servysable,	Courteous he was, lowly, and serviceable,
carved	And carf§ byform his fadur at the table.	And carved before his father at the table.

The Yeoman.



no more	A YEMAN had he, and servantes nomoo	A yeoman had he (but no suite beside :
it pleased } him }	At that tyme, for him luste ryde soo ;	Without attendants thus he chose to ride,)
	And he was clad in coote and hood of grene.	And he was clad in coat and hood of green.

* *Chivachie* : military expeditions.

† See page 45, note †.

‡ Mr. Bell considers that these two lines refer to the squire's complexion of red and white. Speght thinks it means freckled. But there is little doubt that the material

of his dress is what Chaucer means, for there is no other instance of Chaucer calling a complexion *embroidered*, and gorgeously flowered fabrics embroidered with the needle were peculiar to the period and in common use.

§ As it was the custom for sons to do.

The Friar's Tale.

THIS worthy Friar (Chaucer says), as he rode along with the rest of the company, kept looking askance at the Summoner, whom he evidently regarded as an enemy,* and though, as yet, for common civility's sake, he had not said anything to him which could cause a regular quarrel, it was quite plain there was little love lost between them.

When his turn came to tell his story, he saw a chance of annoying the Summoner, which he didn't mean to lose ; and, disagreeable as the Summoner was, it is not very surprising.

GLOSSARY.

— But if it like to this companye,
 I wil yow of a Sompnour telle a game ;
 Pardé, ye may wel knowe by the name,
 That of a Sompnour may no good be sayd ;
 I pray that noon of yow be evel apayd.

joke

disappointed

“But if agreeable to the company,
 I'll tell you of a Summoner such a game !
 Belike you may imagine from the name,
 That of a Summoner can no good be said.
 I pray that none of you be ill repaid !”

The Summoner, who was inoffensive enough just then, whatever he might have been at other times, was not very well pleased at having his trade spoken of in such terms, and felt that it was all a hit at himself ; and mine host, to prevent further squabbling, breaks in with—“ Now, Friar, it is not very courteous to speak at a companion in that style ; a man of your calling ought to know better :—

In companye we wol have no debaat :
 Telleth your tale, and let the Sompnour be.
 Nay, quoth the Sompnour, let him saye to
 me
 What so him list ; whan it cometh to my lot

tell

“ In company we will have no debate,
 Tell on your tale, and let the Summoner be.”
 “Nay,” cried the Summoner, “let him say of
 me
 What he may choose. When my turn comes,
 good lack !

* The Summoners and the Friars were naturally always at variance, both deriving their money from the same source : both belonged to the Church, but the Summoner

was legally qualified to *extort*, whilst the Friar was only permitted to *beg*. Thus, if the Summoner had been to a house first, the Friar was likely to suffer.

GLOSSARY.

requite, groat great	} By God I schal him quyten every grot. I schal him telle which a gret honour	All he has said I'll pay him fairly back! I'll tell him what a pretty trade is his,
be, false	Is to ben a fals flater yng lymytour!	Beggar and flattering limitor that he is!"

Mine host cries out, "Peace, no more of this!" and begs the Friar to go on.

ONCE upon a time there was an archdeacon in my country who punished with great severity all kinds of misdoings.

He had a Summoner ready to his hand, who worked under this strict archdeacon with equal severity. A slyer fellow was there none in England; and most cunningly he watched the people in secret, so as to find out how best to catch them tripping.

I shall not spare this Summoner here, though he be mad as a hare with it all; for Summoners have no jurisdiction over us Friars, you know, and never will have, all the days of their lives. We are out of their power!

["So are other refuse of the people * besides Friars!" interrupted the angry Summoner, when he heard that.

"Peace, with bad luck to you!" cries mine host, also getting angry; "and let the Friar tell his story. Now tell on, master, and let the Summoner gale!" †]

This false thief—this Summoner—used to find out, in all sorts of underhand ways, what people did, right or wrong, by spying in secret, and by keeping people to spy for him. And when he found out anybody doing wrong, he would threaten to summon them before the court, and they used to bribe him with money to let them off. If they were too poor to bribe him, he would make the archdeacon punish them; but if they had enough money to give him, he did not care how many bad things they did, and never told the archdeacon. This was very unjust and wicked, as it encouraged people to do wrong; and the Summoner grew quite rich in this evil way, for he kept all the money himself, and did not give it to the archdeacon. He was, you see, a thief as well as a spy;

	For in this world nys dogge for the bowe ‡	No dog on earth that's trainēd to the bow
whole	That can an hurt dere from an hol y-knowe,	Can a hurt deer from an unhurt one know,

better than this cunning man knew what everybody was about,—

because thereon, purpose	} And for that was the fruyt of al his rent, Therefore theron he set all his entent.	And, since that was the source of all his pelf, To winning gain he did devote himself.
befell, once	And so bifel, that oones on a day This Sompnour, ever wayting on his pray,	And so it chanc'd that, once upon a day, This Summoner, ever waiting for his prey,

* Houses of ill-fame were exempted from ecclesiastical interference on the ground that they were a necessary evil, and might be thus better *surveille*.

† *Gale*—sing: it means here, 'If the Summoner likes

to squeak when he feels the shoe pinch, let him!'

‡ "A dog trained for shooting with the bow, part of whose education consisted in following the stricken deer only, and separating it from the herd."—*Bell*.

GLOSSARY.

	Rod forth to sompne a widew, an old ribibe,*	Rode forth to summon a widow, a poor soul,
	Feynyng a cause, for he wolde han a bribe.	And feign'd a cause, that he might get a dole.
saw	And happede that he say bifore him ryde	It happen'd that he saw before him ride
	A gay yeman under a forest syde.	A yeoman gay, along the forest side.
	A bowe he bar, and arwes bright and kene;	A bow he bore, and arrows, bright and keen;
short cloak	He had upon a courtepy of grene;	He had on a short upper cloak of green;
head	An hat upon his heed with frenges blake.	A black-fringed hat upon his head was set.
	Sir, quoth this Sompnour, heyl and wel	The Summoner cried out, "Hail, sir, and well
overtaken	overtake.	met!"
fellow	Welcome, quod he, and every good felawe.	"Welcome," quoth he, "and every one as
		good!
ridest thou, wood	} Whider ridestow under this grene schawe?	And whither ridest thou in this green wood?
	(Sayde this yiman) wiltow fer to-day?	(The yeoman said) and is it far you go?"
	This Sompnour him† answerd and sayde, Nay:	The Summoner made answer, and said, "No:
purpose	Here faste by, quod he, is myn entent	Close handy here my errand lies," quoth he,
raise	To ryden, for to reysen up a rent	"I ride to raise a rent that's owing me,
duty	That longith to my lordes dueté.	Belonging to my master's property."

"Art thou a bailiff, then?" asks the yeoman. The Summoner was ashamed to say what he really was, so he said, "Yes."

"Good," said the stranger. "Thou art a bailiff and I am another. Let us be friends. I am unknown in this country; but if you will come and see me in my country, I have plenty of gold and silver in my chest, and I will share it all with you."

"Thank you," said the greedy Summoner; and they shook hands, and promised to be staunch friends and sworn brothers till they died! And thus they rode on together.

The Summoner, who was always inquisitive and asking questions, was very anxious to know where he could find this amiable new friend, who was so free with his money.

	Brother, quoth he, wher now is your dwellyng,	"Brother," quoth he, "your dwelling now,
		where is't,
seek	Another day if that I schulde yow seeche?	If I some future day the place could reach?"

Notice the cunning yeoman's answer:—

	This yiman him answered in softe speche:	The yeoman answered him in softest speech:
	Brother, quod he, fer in the north‡ contre,	"Brother," quoth he, "far in the north
		countree,
where	Wheras I hope somtyme I schal the se;	Whereat I hope sometime I shall thee see.
separate, teach	} Er we depart I schal the so wel wisse,	Before we part I shall direct thee so,
shalt thou, miss	} That of myn hous ne schaltow never misse.	Thou canst not fail my dwelling-place to know."

* *Ribibe*: a shrill musical instrument—metaphorical for a shrill old woman.

† Tyrwhitt.

‡ The hell of the Teutonic race, before they were

Christians, was in the north, and after their conversion, as their converters adopted their name, only giving the place a Christian character, it was natural that the people should retain their original notion of its position.—*Bell*.

You will see later why he was so anxious to bring the Summoner to his own dwelling.

GLOSSARY.

you	Now, brother, quod this Sompnour, I yow pray	"Now, brother," said the Summoner, "I pray,
ride	Teche me, whil that we ryden by the way,	Teach me while we are riding on our way,
since, be	Syn that ye ben a baily as am I,	Since you a bailiff are, as well as I,
subtilty	Som subtilte, as tel me faithfully	Some subtle craft, and tell me faithfully
my	In myn office how I may moste* wyne.	How in my office I most gold may win,
refrain	And spare not for consciens or for synne, But, as my brother, tel me how do ye?	And hide not aught for conscience or for sin, But as my brother, tell me how do ye?"

The strange yeoman is delighted at these questions, and you will see that in his answer he pretends to describe himself, but he is really describing all the Summoner does!

	Now, by my trouthe, brothir myn, sayde he, As I schal telle the a faithful tale.	"Now, by my troth, my brother dear," quoth he, "I will be frank with you, and tell you all:
narrow, small severe	} My wages ben ful streyt and eek ful smale;	The wages that I get are very small,
laboricus	My lord to me is hard and daungerous, And myn office is ful laborous,	My master's harsh to me, and stingy too, And hard is all the work I have to do;
	And therfor by extorcions† I lyve.	And therefore by extortion do I live.
give	Forsoth I take al that men wil me yive,	Forsooth, I take what any one will give;
always, cunning	} Algate by sleighte or by violence, Fro yer to yer I wyne my despence, I can no better telle faithfully.	Either by cunning or by violence From year to year I snatch my year's expense. No better can I tell you honestly."
	Now, certes, quod this Sompnour, so fare I.	"Now, truly," cried the Summoner, "so do I!
knows	I spare not to take, God it woot,	I never spare to take a thing, God wot,
unless	But-if it be to hevye or to hoot.‡	Unless it be too heavy or too hot.
get	What I may gete in counseil prively,	What I can grasp by counsel prively,
conscience	No more consciens of that have I;	No scruples in that matter trouble me.
were it not for games, shriven	} Nere myn extorcions I mighte not lyven, Ne of such japes I wil not be schreven.	Without extortion I could ne'er subsist, So in my pranks I ever will persist;
	Stomak ne conscience know I noon.	Stomach nor conscience truly I have none.
curse	I schrew thes schrifte-fadres, everichoon.	I hate all these shrift-fathers, every one!
	Wel be we met, by God and by seint Jame!	Well met are we, our ways are just the same.
	But, leve brother, telle me thy name?	But, my dear fellow, tell me now your name?"
	Quod this Sompnour. Right§ in this mene- while	The Summoner entreated him. Meanwhile
began	This yeman gan a litel for to smyle.	That yeoman broke into a little smile.
wilt thou	Brothir, quod he, woltow that I the telle?	"Brother," he answered, "wilt thou have me tell?"

* Tyrwhitt.

† Money forced out of people by threats or ill-usage.

‡ A proverbial expression.

§ Tyrwhitt.

GLOSSARY.

	I am a feend, my dwellyng is in helle,	—I am a fiend, my dwelling is in hell,
here	And her I ryde about my purchasyng,	And here I ride about my purchasing
know	To wite wher men wol yive me eny thing.	To know what men will give me anything.
the effect	My purchas is theeffect of all my rent.	Such gains make up the whole of all my rent.
	Loke how thou ridest for the same entent	Look how thou journeyest for the same intent.
	To wynne good, thou rekkist never how,	To reap thy gains, thou carest never how!
	Right so fare I, for ryde I wolde now	Just so I do—for I will journey now
prey	Unto the worldes ende for a praye.	Unto the wide world's end to get my prey."
ah	A, quod the Sompnour, <i>benedicite</i> , what say ye?*	"Mercy!" the Summoner cried, "what is't ye say?"

He is rather aghast at this awful confession, bad as he admits himself to be. He had sincerely thought it was a real yeoman; and when he says to him, with a strange and evil smile, "Shall I tell you?—*I am a fiend, my dwelling is in hell,*" the horrible candour strikes him dumb for a minute. He rather wishes he wasn't his sworn brother. But he very soon gets over this, thinking of the gold and silver, and begins to talk quite friendly.

truly	I wende ye were a yemen trewely :	"I thought you were a yeoman, verily :
shape	Ye have a mannes schap as wel as I.	Ye have a human shape as well as I."

"Have you then a distinct form in hell like what I see?"

"No, certainly," says the fiend, "there we have none, but we take a form when we will."

it seem to you }	Or ellis make yow seme that we ben schape	"Or else we make you think we have a shape,
	Somtyme like a man, or like an ape ;	Sometimes like to a man, or like an ape ;
	Or lik an aungel can I ryde or go ;	Or like an angel I can ride or go ;
	It is no wonder thing though it be so.	It is not wondrous that it should be so."

"Why, a common conjurer can deceive you any day, and I have tenfold more cunning than a conjurer!"

"Why," said the Summoner, quite interested, "do you have several shapes, and not only one?"

"We borrow whatever shape is best to catch our prey," said the evil one.

"What makes you take all that trouble?" says the Summoner.

dear	Ful many a cause, lieve sir Sompnour,	"Full many a cause, my good sir Summoner,"
	Sayde this feend. But al thing hath a tyme ;	Replied the fiend. "But all things have a time ;
	The day is schort, and it is passed prime,†	The day is short, and it is now past prime,
won	And yit ne wan I nothing in this day ;	Yet have I not won anything to-day ;
attend	I wol entent to winning, if I may,	I'll give my mind to winning, if I may,
	And not entende our thinges to declare.	And not our privy doings to declare."

For you see the fiend was more intent upon his business than even the Summoner. However, he

* Tyrwhitt ; more forcible,

† The first quarter of the artificial day : *i.e.* 9 o'clock.

goes on to say, that sometimes he is obliged to work under the great God, without whose sufferance he could never have any power at all.

GLOSSARY.

God's	For somtyme we ben Goddis instrumentes	"Sometimes God uses us as instruments
means	And menes to don his comaundementes,	And means, to work out His all-wise intents :
He chooses	When that Him list, upon His creatures,	When on us this divine command He lays,
various	In divers acts and in divers figures.	We serve in divers forms and divers ways."

"But you needn't be in such a hurry," he says to the Summoner. "You'll know more than you like perhaps before long."

one, jest	} But oon thing warne I the, I wol not jape,	} Thou wilt algates wite how we ben schape.	} "But of one thing I warn thee, not in play, That thou shalt know what we are like, some day.
always know			
come, learn	Thou schalt hereafterward, my brother deere,	Thou shalt hereafter come, my brother dear,	Thou shalt hereafter come, my brother dear,
own	Com wher the nedith not of me to leere,*	Whither thou wilt not need of me to hear ;	Whither thou wilt not need of me to hear ;
be able, to counsel,	} For thou schalt by thin oughn experience	} Conne,† in a chayer, reden of this sentence	} For thou shalt learned be—nay, specially wise
meaning better, alive			
quickly	Or Daunt also. Now let us ryde blyve,	Or Dante either. Let us now ride fast,	Or Dante either. Let us now ride fast,
	For I wol holde companye with the	For I will keep companionship with thee	For I will keep companionship with thee
	Til it be so that thou forsake me.	Till thou desirest to depart from me."	Till thou desirest to depart from me."

A pleasant prospect ! However, the Summoner was quite content, so long as the silver and gold were shared with him. He declares he will never forsake his sworn brother, though he be a fiend, and promises to share all his own goods with the evil one ! adding—

thee	Tak thou thi part, and that men wil the	"Take thou thy part, whatever men will give,
give	yyven,	
mine, live	And I schal myn, thus may we bothe lyven ;	And I will do the same, so both shall live ;
either	And if that eny of us have more than other, Let him be trewe, and part it with his brother.	And if the one get more than doth the other, Let him be true and share it with his brother."
	I graunte, quod the devel, by my fay.	"I grant it," said the devil, "by my fay."
ride	And with that word thay riden forth hir way.	With that, they rode together on their way.

As they proceeded they saw right at the town's end a cart laden with hay. The road was heavy with mud, so that the cart stuck. The carter smote his horses, and cried like mad, "Hait ! go on ! §

* Tyrwhitt. Morris has 'nothing for to leere.'

† This verse means, 'You shall hereafter understand this subject so well, as to be able to give lectures on it, as a professor in his chair ;' *chayer* being the term for pulpit or professor's chair ; *conne* part of the verb *conne*, to know or be able ; and *rede*, to counsel. The evil one is sarcastic on the special wickedness of the Summoner.

‡ Alluding to Eneas' visit to infernal regions (6th book of 'Eneid') and Dante's 'Inferno.'

§ The text has 'Heit, Scot, heit, brok, what spare ye for the stones?' and it is singular that 'hayt' is still the word used by waggoners in Norfolk to make their horses go on ; while Scot remains one of the commonest names for a horse in Norfolk and Suffolk. The Reeve's horse in the Prologue is called Scot also. Brock means a badger, hence applied to a grey horse. The carter presently calls this horse 'myn oughne lyard (grey) boy.'

The fiend take you—what a labour I have with you. The fiend have it all, cart, horse, and hay!”

The Summoner, hearing this, remembered he was to have half of all the evil one's goods, and whispered to him, “Don't you hear what the carter says? Take it all quick—he has given it you—hay, and cart, and the three horses!”

“Nay,” said the evil one, “he does not *mean* what he says. He is only in a passion. Ask him yourself, or else wait and see what comes next.”

The carter whacked his horses, and they began to stoop and pull the cart out, and then he said, “Hait! bless you—good Dobbins—well pulled, my own grey boy! Now is my cart out of the mud.”

“There, brother, what did I tell you?” says the fiend. “Now, you see the churl said one thing, but he thought another. Let us go on; I shall get nothing here.”

With that they went a little way outside the town. The Summoner began to whisper to his companion, “Here there lives an old beldame who would almost as soon lose her head as give up a penny of her goods. But I mean to have twelve pence* out of her, though she should go mad; or else I'll haul her up before the court. And yet, all the same, I know no harm of her. But if you want a lesson how to extort your gains in your country, you may take example of me!”

The Summoner goes and raps at the old widow's gate. “Come out, you old crone. I dare say you are in mischief there!” he cried.

“Who knocks?” said the old woman. “God save you, sir. What is your will?”

“I've a bill of summons against you. On pain of cursing, see that you are to-morrow before the archdeacon, to answer to the court.”

“God help me,” says the poor old woman, in great distress. “I have been ill a long time, and cannot walk so far, and to ride† would kill me, my side pricks so. May I not ask for a libel,‡ and answer there by my procurator whatever there is against me?”

“Yes,” says the Summoner, “pay me—let's see—twelve pence, and I will let you off. I shall not get much profit out of that. My master gets it, and not I. Make haste and give me twelve pence—I can't wait.”

“Twelve pence!” said the poor widow. “Now, heaven help me out of this. I have not so much as twelve pence in the whole wide world. You know that I am old and poor. Rather give me alms.”

“Nay, then,” cries the hard-hearted Summoner, “I will not let you off, even if you die of it.”

“Alas!” says she, “I am not guilty.”

“Pay me!” cried he, “or I will carry off your new pan besides, which you owe me, for when you were summoned to the court before, I paid for your punishment!”

“You lie,” cried the poor old woman. “I was never summoned before to that court in all my life; and I have done no wrong. May the evil one catch you for your wickedness, and carry you away, and my pan too!”

* The value of twelve pence may be estimated by the relative value of food and labour. *Bell* says, “Twelve pence would have bought two dozen hens, or three gallons of red wine, or hired a *dozen* common labourers for *twelve* days,” but surely he means a *dozen* labourers for *one* day, or one labourer for twelve days.

† There was then no means of conveyance for people who could not walk except horseback.

‡ A libel, a copy of the information or indictment. A libel is still the expression in the ecclesiastical courts.—*Bell*. The abuses, we see, have led to another interpretation of the word libel—as *libellous*.

And when the fiend heard her curse the Summoner on her knees, he came forward and said, "Now, good mother, are you in earnest when you say that?"

"May the devil fetch him, pan and all, before he dies, if he doesn't repent!"

"Repent!" cries the wicked Summoner, "I don't mean to repent anything I do, I can tell you. I wish I had everything you possess besides—even every rag you have on!"

"Now, brother," says the evil one, "don't be angry; for you and this pan are mine by right. This very night you shall go with me to hell, and you will soon know more about our mysteries than a master of divinity!"

GLOSSARY.

caught	And with that word the foule fend him hente ;	With that the foul fiend took him for his own,
	Body and soule, he with the devyl wente,	Body and soul he's with the devil gone,
their	Wher as the Sompnours han her heritage ;	Whither these Summoners have their heritage
made	And God, that maketh after His ymage	And God, who did create in His image
	Mankynde, save and gyde us alle and some,	Mankind, protect and guide us all our days,
grant	And leene this Sompnour good man to bycome.	And lead this Summoner here to mend his ways.

Lordings, I could have told you, if I had time, all the pains and punishments which came to this wicked Summoner in hell. But let us all pray to be kept from the tempter's power. The lion lies in wait always to slay the innocent, if he can. Dispose your hearts ever to withstand the evil fiend who longs to make you his slaves! He will not tempt you above what you can bear, for Christ will be your champion and your knight.* And pray that this Summoner with us, may repent of his misdeeds before the devil carries him away.

Notes by the Way.

LEGENDS of the kind told by the Friar were very popular in the mediæval times, believed in by some as they were laughed at by others. Mr. Wright conjectures that this tale was translated from some old fabliau. The Friar evidently counted on the unpopularity of this class of men, the Summoners, when he held his fellow-traveller up to general ignominy in this way. It seems a breach of civility and fair-play to modern minds, but the Summoners were in reality hated universally for their extortion or for their secret power among the people. As you have seen, the host begins by calling for justice, but the popular feeling was but too clearly on the Friar's side from the first, and mine host shares it. (*Vide* notes, pp. 31, 57.)

This Tale would appear by no means to discourage swearing; but mark the distinction drawn between a hearty, deliberate malediction, and the rapid unmeaning oath which sowed the common talk. The lesson was probably the more forcible through the absence of any hypercritical censure of 'strong language'—censure which would have been vain indeed, in an age when common oaths were thought as much less of, as positive cursing was more of, than in the present day.

The rough moral deduced was admirably suited to the coarse and ignorant minds of the lower orders.

* This singular (to us) term as applied to Christ, was of course borrowed from the popular notion of warfare, when each knight, inspired by some fair inciter, was the more valiant for her sake. The term is both picturesque and forcible as an appeal to the common understanding, in which the Friars were naturally adepts.