

means of collating it with the Ellesmere, Hengwrt, Corpus, Lansdowne, Petworth, and Cambridge MSS. Dr. Morris has availed himself of the first three in his edition of the "Prologue, the Knightes and the Nonnes Tales" (Clarendon Press Series); but though he has consulted the last three also in cases of difficulty, he has found them of little real use.

Chaucer himself seems to have had forebodings of the mutilations which were to befall his works, having already suffered from the negligence of his amanuensis, for in the closing stanzas of his "Troilus and Cressida," he says,

"Go litel booke, go litel tragedie,  
And for ther is so grete diversite  
In Englisch and in writing of our tong,  
So pray I God that non miswritè thee,  
Ne thee mismetre for default of tong,  
And rede wherso thou be or eles song  
Tha<sup>t</sup> thou be anderstond."

And in language more forcible than elegant he imprecates a curse on this unlucky man—

"Adam Scrivener, if evere it thee bifal  
Boece or Troilus for to writè new,  
Under thy long lokkes maist thou have the scall,  
But after my making thou write more trew.  
So ofte a day I mote thy werke renew,  
It to correct and eke to rubbe and scrape,  
And al is thorow thy negligence and rape."

## HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TO THE TIME OF CHAUCER.

The term Anglo-Saxon, which is currently used to designate the language supposed to have been spoken by our forefathers before the Norman Conquest, is an invention of modern times, and has not even the advantage of convenience to recommend it.

It was not until the close of the thirteenth and beginning of the fourteenth century, when the fusion of races was followed by the rise of a truly national spirit and an outburst of literary activity, that a national language had any existence. The greater part of the thirteenth century was a period of dearth and degradation, a

dark age to the student and lover of our glorious tongue. What little was written was in Latin or French, English being considered not only by the proud nobles, but unhappily also by a pedantic priesthood, as unworthy of cultivation, and consequently, being relegated to the ignorant peasantry, it suffered the loss of thousands of good old words. Hitherto the clergy had written in the language of the people to whom they belonged, and had produced many works of great literary merit. These, however, may be easily recognized as belonging to two great dialectic divisions—a north-eastern and south-western, besides minor subdivisions. The great sundering line may roughly be drawn from Shrewsbury through Northampton and Bedford to Colchester, and represents the original partition of the country between the Angles and the Saxons. On the former fell the full force of the Danish invasions, and as we go further north we find the proportion of Scandinavian words and forms to increase.

In the earliest times these languages were almost as distinct as High German and Low German (Platt Deutsch), and the so-called Anglo-Saxon dictionaries confound and mingle the two without distinction. The infusion of Danish or Norse into the Anglian led naturally to a clipping and paring down of inflections, a feature common to all mixed languages; whereas the speech of Wessex, the kingdom of Alfred, preserved much longer its rich inflectional character. Yet even these south-western people seem to have called themselves English rather than Saxons. At any rate King Alfred tells us that his people called their speech English, and Robert of Gloucester says of English, "The Saxones speche yt was, and thorw hem ycome yt ys." Bede, an Angle, calls them Saxons, but the word is of rare occurrence before the thirteenth century. Procopius in the sixth century calls them Frisians.

It is, however, from the East Midland chiefly that the new English arose, where the monks of Peterborough compiled the history of England in English, in chronicles which were copied and scattered throughout the land. Their dialect incorporating all that was good from the others laid the foundation of that literary language which, again taking up a large French element, was destined to become the speech of the nation at large.

Early in the fourteenth century Robert of Brunne, called also Robert Manning, living in Rutland, in the same linguistic province as the monks of Peterborough, wrote *The Handlyng Synne*, which marks an era in the history of our language and literature. In it

may be seen actually or foreshadowed every feature of language, idiom, and grammar which distinguishes the English of to-day from that of King Alfred and from the Teutonic languages of the Continent. His English is no longer inflectional but analytic, the difference being one of kind not of degree merely, as was the case in the Old Anglian when compared with the speech of the West Saxons. Of the language of *The Handlyng Synne* we may say as Sir Philip Sidney did of the Elizabethan age, "English is void of those cumbersome differences of cases, genders, moods, and tenses, which I think was a piece of the Tower of Babylon's curse, that a man should be put to schoole to learne his mother tongue; but for the uttering sweetly and properly the conceit of the minde, which is the ende of speech, that it hath equally with any other tongue in the world."

Of scarcely less value as marking another feature of our present language is the *Ancren Riwle*, written about 1220 by a learned prelate, into which French and Latin words are imported wholesale. Chaucer has been accused of corrupting our language; but if we compare his works with the *Ancren Riwle*, written a century and a half earlier, we shall find that the affectation of French words and idioms by the author of the *Riwle*, an example which for nearly a hundred years none had dared to follow, puts Chaucer rather in the light of a restorer of our language, and justifies Spenser's description of him as "a well of English undefiled." He did not affect a retrograde course, but endeavoured to develop the new powers which English had acquired from this "happy marriage," the fruit of which has been described by none in more glowing terms than by the profound German scholar Grimm. "None of the modern languages has through the very loss and decay of all phonetic laws, and through the dropping of nearly all inflections, acquired greater force and vigour than the English, and from the fulness of those vague and indefinite sounds which may be learned but can never be taught, it has derived a power of expression such as has never been at the command of any human tongue. Begotten by a surprising union of the two noblest languages of Europe, the one Teutonic, the other Romanic, it received that wonderfully happy temper and thorough breeding, where the Teutonic supplied the material strength, the Romanic the suppleness and freedom of expression. . . . In wealth, in wisdom, and strict economy, none of the living languages can vie with it." Such being the character of the language in which Chaucer wrote, it is not necessary to give in

detail the grammatical forms and inflections of the older English dialects.

It will be sufficient to indicate such as were still in use, but have been subsequently dropped or so worn down as to be no longer easily recognized, and to show at the same time how these are modified by the necessities of metrical composition, so as to be lost to the ear though properly retained in the orthography, in accordance with rules of prosody not unlike those familiar to readers of Latin and French poetry, and which held their ground more or less in English down to the time of Milton.

The use of the final *e* in the language of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries presents the greatest difficulty to all who are unacquainted with the grammatical construction of the early and middle English. It was not, as it now is, a merely conventional sign for marking the long sound of the preceding vowel, as in the modern words *bār* and *bāre*, for which purpose it is indifferent whether it is placed at the end of the syllable or immediately before the vowel to be lengthened, as in *bāre* or *beār*, *sēre* or *seēr*; nor was it, as in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, inserted or omitted at the whim of the writer or convenience of the printer, when we may often see the same word spelled with and without it in the same or consecutive lines; nor was it, as in the artificial would-be antiquated diction of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, employed without any certain rule either as "an aping of the ancients," as Ben Jonson called it, or for lengthening out the line to the number of syllables required by the peculiar metre borrowed from the Italian poets, and to which the more rigid English tongue would otherwise have refused to bend; but it was a real grammatical inflection, marking case and number, distinguishing adverbs from the corresponding adjectives, and in certain verbs of the "strong" form representing the *-en* of the older plural, e.g. *he spak*, *thei spake*, for *spaken*, like the German *er sprach*, *sie sprachen*; so that to write, as the modernized texts have it, *he spake*, would be a blunder as gross as the converse *they speaks* would be now, and to pronounce *they spake* as we do is to rob the line of a syllable and the verse of its rhythm and metre, and, if the word be at the end, it may be of its rime, as for instance where the indirect objective cases *timé* and *Romé* rime with *by me* and *to me*.

The following summary of the peculiar features of Chaucer's grammar is founded on the essay of Prof. Child, and Dr. Morris' Introduction to his Chaucer's Prologue, &c., mentioned above.

## NOUNS.

NUMBER.—1. The plural is mostly formed by adding *-ēs*, pronounced as a distinct syllable.

“And with his *stremēs* dryeth in the *grevēs*  
The silver *dropēs* hongyng on the *levēs*.”

Knights Tale, ll. 637-8.

*-s*, which has now almost entirely replaced the *-ēs*, was as a rule used only in words of more than one syllable and in those ending with a liquid, as *palmers*, *pilgrims*, *naciouns*, &c.

Such forms as *bestis*, *othus*, are probably the provincial or dialectical usages of the scribes employed.

2. Some nouns form their plurals in *-en* or *-n* (the *-an* of O.E.), as *asschen*, *been* (bees), *eyghen* (eyes) [Scot. *een*], *flon* (arrows), *schoon* (shoes), [Scot. *shoon*], and *oxen*; *fon* or *foon* (foes), and *kyn*, which remained till the seventeenth century as *kine*.

3. *Brethren*, *children*, with the obsolete *doughtren* and *sistren*, are formed by adding *-n* to an older plural form in O.E. *-e*, A.S. *-u*. The O.E. *childre*, &c., persists as *childer*, &c., in the provincial dialect of the northern counties.

4. *Deer*, *scheep*, *swin* have never had a plural termination; *folk*, *hors*, *night*, *thing*, and *yeer* or *yer* have acquired such only in recent times, the plural in the earlier ages of our language having had the same form as the singular.

5. *Feet*, *men*, *geese*, *teeth* are plurals formed by a vowel change only.

CASE.—1. The possessive case singular is formed by adding *-ēs* (now mostly *-s*).

“Ful worthi was he in his *lordēs* werre.” Prol. l. 47.

2. The possessive plural had the same form, *foxēs* tales, *mennēs* wittes. But when the nominative ended in *-en* it was sometimes unchanged, as “his *eyghen* sight.”

3. In O.E. *fader*, *brother*, *doughter* were uninflected in the possessive case; thus “my *fader* soule,” Prol. 781; “*brother* sone,” K. T. 2226.

4. Some old feminines of the Saxon 1st declension, which made their possessives in *-an*, had dropped the termination; thus we find *ladyē* grace, *sonnē* upriste (rising), *hertē* blood, *widewē* sone, and we still speak of *Lady* day and *Lady* bird.

5. The indirect objective (dative) occurs sometimes as a distinct case, and ends in *-ē*, as *holtē*, *beddē*, &c.

## ADJECTIVES

Now uninflected had in early English two forms, the definite and indefinite, the former used after demonstrative adjectives, of which the so-called definite article is one, and possessive pronouns (thus differing from the modern German usage), and the indefinite in all other circumstances. In Saxon each was declined, but in Chaucer the only inflection is found in the definite form which ends in *-ē*, as “the *yongē* sonne,” “his *halfē* cours.” This *-ē* is however generally dropped in words of more than one syllable.

The vocative case of adjectives is distinguished by an *-e*, as “*leevē* brother,” K. T. 326, “O *strongē* God,” except in words of French origin, and therefore of recent introduction, as “*gentil* sire.”

DEGREES OF COMPARISON.—The comparative is generally formed as now by adding *-er* to the positive. The O.E. termination was *-re*, which is retained in *deere* (dearer), *ferre* (farther), *nerre* (nearer), *sorre* (sorrier).

*Lenger*, *strenger*, and the extant *elder* are examples of inflection together with vowel change.

*Bet* (bette or better) and *mo* (for more) are contracted forms.

The superlative is made by adding *-este* or *-est* to adjectives and *-est* to adverbs; *hext* (highest), and *next*, extant (nighest), are contractions.

The plural is formed by adding *-ē*, not *-es*, “*smalē* fowlēs,” Prol. 9; but adjectives of more than one syllable, and all when used predicatively, drop the *-e*. Some French words form the plural in *-es*, as “places *delitables*.”

## DEMONSTRATIVES.

In O.E. the so-called definite article *the* was in the plural *tho*, a form occasionally, though very rarely, used by Chaucer. The neuter singular was *that*, but except in the phrases “*that* oon” and “*that* other,” contracted into *toon* and *tother*, Chaucer never uses *that* otherwise than as we do now.

He frequently employs *tho* for those, as “*tho* wordēs,” and “oon of *tho* that,” and he writes the plural of *this* as *thise*, *thes*, or *these* indiscriminately.

*Attē*, a word of very frequent occurrence, is a corruption of the Saxon *at tham*, the old objective, O.E. *attan*, *atta*, masc. and neut., *atter*, fem., “*attē* beste,” “*attē* Bow.”

*Thilkē* = the like (A.S. *thyllic, thyle*), "*thilkē* text," Prol. 182, = that text. *Swich*, Prol. 3, and *sikē*, Prol. 245 (A.S. *swylik* = *swa lyk*) = *so like*, our *such*.

*That ilke* = the same (A.S. *ilk*). Scotch, "Graham of that *ilk*," i.e. of that same clan or place [must not be confounded with the Scotch *ilka*, A.S. *alc* = each]. *Same* did not come into use till about the year 1200.

*Som . . . som* = one . . . another.

"He moot ben deed, the kyng as schal a page;  
Som in his bed, som in the deepē see,  
Som in the largē feeld, as men may se."  
Knights Tale, 2172-4.

## PRONOUNS.

SINGULAR.		PLURAL.	
{	Nom. I, Ich, Ik,	{	we.
{	Poss. min (myn), mi (my),	{	our, oure.
{	Obj. me,	{	us.
{	Nom. thou (thow),	{	ye.
{	Poss. thin (thyn), thi (thy),	{	your, youre.
{	Obj. the, thee.	{	yow, you.
	Masc. Fem. Neut. All Genders.		
Nom.	he, she, hit, it, yt,	thei, they.	
Poss.	his, hire, hir, his,	here, her, hir.	
Obj.	him, hire, hir, here, hit, it, yt,	hem.	

Independent or predicative forms are *min* (pl. *mine*); *oure*, *oures*; *thin* (pl. *thine*); *your*, *youres*; *hire*, *heres* (hers); *here*, *heres* (theirs). The forms *owres* and *youres* were borrowed from the Northern dialect.

*Thou* is often joined to its verb, as *schaltow*, *woldestow*, Nonne Prestes Tale, 525; *crydestow*, Knights Tale, 225.

The objective (dative) cases of pronouns are used after impersonal verbs, as "*me* mette;" "*him* thoughte;" after some verbs of motion, as "*goth him*;" "*he* rydeth *him*;" and after such words as *wel*, *wo*, *loth*, and *leaf*.

*Whos* (*whose*) and *whom* are the possessive and objective cases of *who*.

*Which* is joined with *that*, thus, "Hem *whiche that* wepith;" "His love *the which that* he oweth." Alone it sometimes stands for what or what sort of, as—

"Which a miracle ther befel anon."  
Knights Tale, 1817.  
"And *whiche* they weren, and of *what* degre."  
Prol. 40.

What is used for *why* like the Lat. *quid*,

"What schulde he studie and make himselfen wood?"  
Prol. 184.

*That* is sometimes used with a personal pronoun along with it, thus—

"A knight ther was, and that a worthi man,  
*That* from the tymē that he first began  
To ryden out, *he* lovede chivalrye."  
Prol. 43-45.

"Al were they sorē hurt, and namely oon,  
*That* with a spere was thirled *his* brest boon."  
Knights Tale, 1851-2.

In the second instance, *that his* = whose.

*Who* and *who so* are used indefinitely in the same way as our "*one* says," "*As who* seith," "*Who so* that can him rede," Prol. 741.

*Men* and the shortened form *me*, which must not be confounded with the objective of *I*, were used from a very early period down to the seventeenth century in the sense of "one," like the German "*man* sagt," &c., and the French "*on* dit," &c. "*Me tolth*" in the passage quoted from Robert of Gloucester (see page 15) is an instance, and one of the latest is to be found in Lodge's *Wils Miseric*.

"And stop *me* (let *one* stop) his dice, you are a villaine."

## VERBS.

I. The so-called weak verbs, or those which form the past tense by the addition of the suffix *-ed*, were thus declined:—

Present Tense.	
SINGULAR.	PLURAL.
1. I lovē,	We lov-en or lovē.
2. Thou lov-est,	Ye lov-en or lovē.
3. He lov-eth,	They lov-en or lovē.
Past Tense.	
1. I lov-ed,	We lov-eden, lov-ed.
2. Thou lov-edest,	You lov-eden, lov-ed.
3. He lov-ed,	They lov-eden, lov-ed.

The MSS. of Chaucer's poetical works frequently have *loved*, those of his prose very rarely.

In some, as the Harl. MS., we find *has* for *hast*, *dos* for *dost*, an evidence of the influence of the Northumbrian, in which the 2nd pers. sing. ended in *-es*, and we sometimes meet with the termination *-eth* in the 3rd plur. pres., simulating the singular, owing to the fact of that being the plural inflexion of all three persons in the southern counties = *-ath* in A. Sax.

"And over his heed ther *schyneth* two figures."  
Knights Tale, 1185, Harl. MS.

We often find *-th* for *-eth*, as *spekth* for *speketh*.

Saxon verbs whose roots end in *-d*, *-t*, and rarely in *-s*, are contracted in the 3rd sing. pres., as *sit* for *sitteth*, *writ* for *writeth*, *halt* for *holdeth*, *find* for *findeth*, *stont* for *stondeth* (stands), and *rist* for *riseth*.

II. Some verbs of the weak conjugation form the past tense by adding *-dē* or *-tē* instead of *-ede*, as *heren*, *herdē*; *hiden*, *hiddē*; *kepen*, *keptē*; but if the root end in *d* or *t*, preceded by another consonant, *-ē* only is added instead of *-dē* and *-tē*, as *wenden*, *wendē*; *sterten*, *stertē*; *letten* (to hinder), *lettē*.

III. In some verbs forming a link between the weak and strong conjugations we have a change of the vowel root together with the addition of the suffix *-dē* or *-tē*, as *sellen*, *solde*; *tellen*, *tolde*; *seche* (to seek), *soughte*; and others in which modern English has abandoned the vowel change, as *delen*, *daltē* (dealt); *leden*, *laddē* (led); *leven*, *laftē* (left).

#### THE STRONG VERBS

Are those which form the past tense by merely changing the root vowel, as *sterven*, to die, *starf*, and the past part. by the addition of *-en* or *-ē*, besides a vowel change which may or may not be the same as in the past tense, as *storven* or *stovē* (O.E. *ystorven*). Cf. Ger. *sterben*, *starb*, *gestorben*.

The 1st and 3rd persons singular of the past tense had no final *e*, as printed in some modern editions; the three persons plural ended in *-en* or *-ē*, and the 2nd person singular in *-ē*, frequently dropped, or occasionally in *-est*.

Some strong verbs had two forms for the past tense, one simple and the other taking the suffix of weak verbs—

Present.	Past.
Weep,	wep or weptē.
Creep,	crep or creptē.

A number of the older verbs of this conjugation, in which the root vowel of the past participle was not the same as that of the past tense, employed it in the plural of the latter thus—

<i>Sterven</i> , past sing. <i>starf</i> ,	p. plur. <i>storven</i> ; p. part. (y) <i>storven</i> .
<i>Riden</i> ,	" <i>rood</i> or <i>rod</i> , " <i>riden</i> ; " (y) <i>riden</i> .
<i>Smiten</i> ,	" <i>smoot</i> ; " <i>smiten</i> ; " (y) <i>smiten</i> .

This difference between the numbers was soon lost.

#### SUBJUNCTIVE.

The present singular ends in *-e*, the plural in *-en*; the past singular in *-ede*, *-de*, or *-te*, the plural in *-eden*, *-den*, or *-ten*, in all the persons; except in a few such forms as *speke* we, *go* we.

#### IMPERATIVE.

The only inflections are an *-eth*, or occasionally an *-e* in the 2nd pers. plural; and in verbs conjugated like *tellen* and *loven*, an *-e* in the singular also.

#### THE INFINITIVE.

Originally the infinitive ended in *-en* (the Saxon *-an*), but the *-n* was often dropped, leaving an *-e* only, a change which began in the south.

The so-called gerund, really the objective (dative) case of the infinitive, and known by being preceded by *to*, in the sense of "for the purpose of," "in order to," &c., was formed from the former by adding *-e*, and must not in its full or contracted forms be confounded with the infinitive.

Ex. *to doon-e* = *to don-ne*. In Prol. 134, "no ferthing *sene*" = *for to senne*. In l. 720, "*for to telle*" is the gerund also, but the *-n* has been discarded.

The present participle usually ends in *-yng*, or *-yngē* when the rime demands it. Originally the participle ended in *-inde* or *-ind* in the south, *-ande* or *-and* (occasionally met with in Chaucer) in the north, both forms being employed in the east midland.

Verbal nouns were formed by the termination *-ung* or later *-ing*,

and then the participles were assimilated to them by changing *-inde* and *-ind* into *-ynge*, *-yng*, or *-ing*, as in our present language.

The infinitive in *-an* or *-en* was also under certain circumstances reduced to the same termination *-ing*, and the several forms co-existing in our language present much difficulty to students.

The past participle of weak verbs ends in *-ed* or *-d*, or occasionally in *-et* or *-t*; of strong verbs in *-en* or *-e*, with change of the root vowel in some, and they are all sometimes preceded by the old prefix *y-*, *i-* (A.S. *ge-*), as *i-ronne*, *i-falle*, *y-clept*.

#### ANOMALOUS VERBS.

Those whose inflexions cannot be brought under any rule, some of which are defective, and others, as *to go*, whose wanting parts are made up by borrowing the corresponding members of others, are the truly *irregular* verbs. This name has also been most unhappily given by grammarians trained in the schools of Greek and Latin to those of the strong conjugation because they are the most removed from the inflectional systems of those languages; whereas they are the most characteristic of the Teutonic family, and in that sense the more regular. Words taken from the Latin are thus instinctively in every instance referred to the weak conjugation as the less peculiarly Teutonic of the two.

1. *Ben*, *been*, to be; 1st sing. pres. ind. *am*; 2nd, *art*; 3rd, *is*; plur. *been*, *aren*, *are*; past, *was*, *wast*, *was*, and *were*; imp. sing. *be*, pl. *beth*; p. part. *ben*, *been*.

This, the "verb substantive," is in fact made up of portions of three distinct verbs, which long coexisted in different dialects or even in the same so late as the seventeenth century, as may be seen in the A.V. of the Bible and in Milton, and to this day among the peasantry.

2. *Conne*, to know or to be able; pres. ind., 1st, *can*; 2nd, *can* or *canst*; 3rd, *can*; pl. *connen*, *conne*; past, 1st and 3rd, *couth*, *cowthe*, *cowde*; p.p. *couth*, *coud*. The *l* in the modern word has been inserted through a false analogy with *would* and *should*.

3. *Darren*, *dare*; pres. ind., *dar*, *darst*, *dar*; pl. *dar*, *dorre*; past, *dorste*, *durste*.

4. *May*; pres. ind. sing., 1st and 3rd, *may*, *mow*; 2nd, *mayst* or *maist*; pl. *mowen*, *mowe*; pres. subj. *move*; past tense, 1st and 3rd, *mighte*, *moghte*.

5. *Mot*, *must*, *may*; ind. pres. sing., 1st and 3rd, *mot*, *moot*; 2nd *must*, *moot*; pl. *mooten*, *moote*; past tense, *moste*.

6. *Owen*, to owe (moral obligation); pres. *oweth*; past, *oughte*, *aughte*; pl. *oughten*, *oughte*.

7. *Schal*, shall (compulsion); pres. ind. sing., 1st and 3rd, *schal*; 2nd, *schalt*; pl. *schullen*, *schuln*, *schul*; past, *schulde*, *scholde*.

8. *Thar*, need (Ger. *dürfen*); pres. ind. sing. *thar*; past, *thurte*; subj. 3rd, *ther*.

9. *Witen*, to know; pres. ind. sing., 1st and 3rd, *wat*, *wot*; 2nd, *wost*; pl. *witen*, *wite*, *woole*; past, *wiste*.

10. *Wil*, will; pres. ind. sing., 1st, *wille*, *wil*, *wolle*, *wol*; 2nd, *wilt*, *wolt*; 3rd, *wile*, *wole*, *wol*; pl. *woln*, *willen*, *wille*; past, *wolde*.

It has the full meaning of the Latin *volo*, e.g. "Owre swete Lord of heven, that no man *wil perische*" (i.e. *neminem vult perdere*), *Persones Tale*.

#### NEGATIVE VERBS.

*Nam* = am not.

*Nylle*, *nyl* = will not.

*Nys* = is not.

*Nolde* = would not.

*Nas* = was not.

*Nat*, *not*, *noot* = knows not.

*Nere* = were not.

*Nost* = knowest not.

*Nath* = hath not.

*Nyste*, *nysten* = knew not.

*Nadde*, *nade* = had not.

#### ADVERBS.

1. Adverbs are formed from adjectives by adding *-ē* to the latter, as *brightē*, brightly; *deepē*, deeply; *lowē*, lowly. This is the explanation of the seeming use of the adjective for the adverb in modern English, and which is called by some grammarians the "flat adverb."

2. Others are formed as now by adding *-lyche* or *-ly*, as *schortly*, *rudelyche*, *pleynly*.

3. And a few have *e* before the *-ly*, as *boldēly*, *trewēly*, *softēly*.

4. Some end in *-en* or *-e*, as *aboven*, *abovē*; *abouten*, *aboutē*; *withouten*, *withoutē*; *siththen*, *siththē*, since. Many have dropped the *-n*, retaining the *-e* only, as *asondre*, *bekyndē*, *bynethē*, *biyondē*, *bytwenē*, *hennē* (hence), *thennē* (thence), *oftē* in Chaucer, though *often* is the more usual form at present, *seldē* (seldom), *soonē*.

5. Adverbs in *-es*: *needes*, needs; *ones*, once; *twies* or *twie*, twice; *thries*, *thrie*, thrice; *unnethes*, scarcely; *whiles*, *bysides*, *togideres*; *hennes*, hence; *thennes*, thence; *whennes*, whence; *agaynes*, *ayens*, against; *amonges*, among, amongst; *amyddes*, amidst.

6. *Of-newē*, anew, newly (cf. *of yore*, *of late*); *as-now*, at present;

on *slepð*, asleep (fell on *sleep*, A.V. Acts xiii. 36) (cf. on *honting*, a hunting, &c.).

7. *There* and *then* occasionally stand for *where* and *when*.

8. *As*, used before *in*, *to*, *for*, *by*, = considering, with respect to, so far as concerns.

"As in so litel space." Prol. 87.

*As* is used before the imperative in supplicatory phrases—

"As keep me fro thi vengeaunce and thin yre." K. T. 1444.

"As sende love and pees betwixe hem two." K. T. 1459.

(Cf. use of *que* in French.)

9. *But*, only (be-out) takes a negative before it. "I *nam but* deed." K. T. 416. Cf. again the French, "Je ne suis que . . ."

10. Two or more negatives do not make an affirmative. This is the usage of the A.S., and still holds its ground among "uneducated" persons.

"He *nevere* yit *no vileinye ne sayde*

In al his lyf unto *no maner wight*." Prol. 70, 71.

### PREPOSITIONS.

Occasionally *til* = to (cf. the German *bis*), *unto* = until, *up* = upon, and *uppon* = on.

### CONJUNCTIONS.

*Ne . . . ne* = neither . . . nor; *other . . . other* = either . . . or (cf. Ger. *oder*); *what . . . and* = both . . . and.

### THE FINAL E.

The use and meaning of the final *e* in the several parts of speech may be thus summed up.

In many nouns and adjectives it represents the Anglo-Saxon terminations in *-a*, *-e*, or *-u*, and is then always sounded: *assē* and *cuppē* = A.S. *assa* and *cuppa*; *hertē* and *marē* = A.S. *heorte* and *mare*; *halē* and *wodē* = A.S. *healu* and *wudu*; *derē* and *dryē* = A.S. *deore* and *dryge*.

It is sounded when it stands as the sign of the objective indirect (or dative) case, as *rootē*, *breethē*, *heethē* (Prol. 2, 5, 6), and in *beddē* and *briggē*, from *bed* and *brig*.

It is sounded when it marks—

(a) The definite form of the adjective, "the *youngē sonne*." Prol. 7.

(b) The plural of adjectives, "*smallē fowles*." Prol. 9.

(c) The vocative of adjectives, "O *strongē god!*" K. T. 1515.

In verbs it is sounded when it represents the older termination *-en* or *-an* as a sign of—

(a) The infinitive, as to "*seekē*, *tellē*." Prol. 17, 38.

(b) The "gerund," as "*senē*." Prol. 134.

(c) The past participle, as "*i-ronnē*, *i-fallē*." Prol. 8, 25.

(d) And in the past tenses of weak verbs in *-de* or *-te*, as *wentē*, *cowdē*, *woldē*, *feddē*, *wepdē*.

It is sounded in adverbs where it—

(a) Represents older vowel-endings, as *sonē*, *twiē*, *thriē*.

(b) Marks the adverb from the corresponding adjective, as *fairē*, *rightē* = fairly, rightly.

(c) When it stands for the O.E. *-en*, A.S. *an*: *aboutē*, *abovē*, O.E. *abouten*, *aboven*, A.S. *abutan*, *abufan*.

(d) When followed by *-ly* in the double adverbial ending *-ēly*, as *hertēly*, *lustēly*, *semēly*, *trewēly*.

It is silent in the past tenses of weak verbs in *-ede*, = *ed*, as *lovede*. Prol. 97.

It is mostly silent in—

(a) The personal pronouns *oure*, *youre*, *hire*, *here*.

(b) And in many words of more than two syllables.

The final unaccented *e* in words of French origin is generally silent, but often sounded as in French verse. The scanning of each particular line must decide.

### VERSIFICATION.

The poetry of the Greeks and Romans was purely metrical. In their languages the distinction between long and short vowels was strongly marked, and the lines were composed of a definite number of feet, the feet consisting of two or more syllables long or short following one another in a regular order. Rimes when they occurred accidentally were looked on as faults.

In the later and debased age of the Latin language, when the pronunciation became corrupted, the regular metres gave way to verses composed of a fixed number of syllables, guided by accent rather than quantity, and with rimes in regular order.

This form of versification first appears in the later Latin hymns of the Western Church, and was adopted from the first in the poetry of the Romance languages.

Quite different was the verse employed by the early Germanic and Scandinavian poets, its distinctive feature being alliteration. Two more or less emphatic words in the first, and one in the second line of each couplet began with the same consonant.

In the north and west of England the alliterative verse held its ground so late as the fifteenth century, but in the southern and eastern shires the riming verse was employed in the thirteenth.

The *Vision of Piers Plowman* (A.D. 1362) is a good example of alliterative verse.

"I was *w*eri of *w*andringe,  
And *w*ent me to *r*este  
Under a *b*rod *b*anke  
*B*i a *b*ourne syde.  
And as I *l*ay and *l*eonede  
And *l*okede on the *w*atres,  
I *s*lumberde in a *s*lepyngge,  
Hit *s*ownede so murie."

In this extract the words in italics constitute the alliteration, the others, as *was* in the first, *Bi* in the fourth, and *so* in the last, are unemphatic, and contain the characteristic letter of each couplet only by accident.

Chaucer, a man of general culture, living in the south-eastern counties, and familiar with the poetry of Italy and France, naturally chose the metrical and riming style of verse.

His *Canterbury Tales* (except those of Melibeus and the Persones, which are in prose) are written in what is commonly called the heroic couplet. The lines consist of ten syllables, of which the second, fourth, sixth, eighth, and tenth are accented, or as the classical scholar would express it, they consist of five iambs. Very often, oftener indeed than is noticed by the ordinary reader, there is an eleventh and unaccented syllable at the end, the verse being then identical with iambic trimeter catalectic of the Greek and Latin poets; and far more rarely there are but nine syllables, an unaccented odd syllable beginning the line, and followed by four iambs.

To take a few unequivocal examples from the Prologue. The typical verse is seen in ll. 19, 20—

Byfel | that in | that se | soun on | a day,  
In South | werk at | the Tab | ard as | I lay.

The verse of eleven syllables in ll. 11, 12—

So prik | eth hem | nature | in here | corag | es,  
Thanne long | en folk | to gon | on pil | grimag | es.

And that of nine in l. 391—

In | a gowne | of fal | dyng to | the kne.

The opening couplet, though generally read as decasyllabic, is really composed of eleven, as will be seen by a reference to the grammar of Chaucer—

Whan that | April | lē with | his schow | res swoot | ē,  
The drought | of Marche | hath per | ced to | the root | ē.

The word *nonē's*, our *nonce*, must be read as a dissyllable in l. 523, or it would not rime with *non is* in that following, and in ll. 21, 22, *pilgrimagē* and *coragē* are probably to be read as in French poetry, the third syllable lightly sounded. So in the Parson's Prologue, l. 17, 345, Wright's ed.—

"Do you | plesaun | cē le | ful as | I can."

Short unemphatic syllables are often slurred over, or two such consecutive syllables pronounced almost as one. These contractions may be arranged under several distinct heads.

1. That which has entered so largely into our spoken language, by which *wandering* and *wanderer* are pronounced *wand'ring* and *wand'rer*, *camest* as *cam'st*, &c.

2. The synælepha of classic prosodists, or elision of a final vowel before another word beginning with a vowel or a silent *h*. This was far more frequent in our early poetry than is generally known, and often practised by Milton in his *Paradise Lost*.

3. A method of obliterating a short syllable which is of very common occurrence in Chaucer, though, as it seems to me, inadequately explained even by Dr. Morris and other equally eminent commentators. *The final consonant of a word ending with a short syllable is in reading to be attached to the initial vowel of the next.* It will be observed that in the great majority of contractions the following word begins with a vowel giving a clue to the proper reading.



Examples of the first are—

- “ And *thinketh* | here *cometh* | my mor | tel en | emy.” K. T. 785.  
 “ Sche gad | *ereth* flour | és par | ty white | and rede.” K. T. 196.  
 “ *Schuln* the | declar | en, or | that thou | go henne.” K. T. 1493.

Of the second or synalcepha are—

- “ And cer | tes lord | to *abi* | den your presence.” K. T. 69.  
 “ What schulde | he stud | *ie and* make | himsel | ven wood.” Prol. 184.

Besides countless elisions of the terminal *e* which would have been sounded had the next word begun with a consonant.

Synæresis, or the blending of two vowels in the middle of a word, is seen in—

- “ Ne stud | *ieth* nat; | ley hand | to ev | ery man.” Prol. 841.

Where *every* is also contracted after the first method into two syllables.

It is scarcely possible to scan a dozen lines without meeting an instance of the third mode of contraction, but a few examples may be given here—

- “ And forth | we *ride* | n a lit | el more | than pass.” Prol. 819.  
 “ And won | derly | *delyve* | r and gret | of strengthe.” Prol. 84.  
 “ As an | y rav | ens *fethe* | r it schon | for blak.” K. T. 1286.  
 “ A man | to light | a *cande* | t at his | lanterne.”

Cant. Tales, l. 5961, Wright's edition.

- “ And though | that I | no *wepe* | n have in | this place.” K. T. 733.  
 Thou schul | dest *neve* | re out of | this grov | é pace.” K. T. 744.

*Whether* is frequently sounded as a single syllable, and is sometimes written *wher*.

- “ I not | *whether* sche | be wom | man or | godesse.” K. T. 243.  
 “ Ne rec | cheth nev | ere wher | I synke | or fleete.” K. T. 1539.

Words borrowed from the French ending in *-le* or *-re* are pronounced as in that language, with the final *e* mute: *table*, *temple*, *miracle*, *noble*, *propre*, *chapitre*, as *tabl*, *templ*, *miracl*, *nobl*, *propr*, *chapitr*; and those of more than one syllable ending in *-ance* (*-aunce*), *-ence*, *-oun*, *-ie* (*-ige*), *-er*, *-ere*, *-age*, *-une*, *-ure*, and *-lle*, are generally accented on the last syllable (not counting the silent *e*), as *acquyntaunce*, *resoûn*, *manère*, *avauntage*, &c.; but occasionally the accent is thrown back as in modern English, e.g. *bâtaille*, K. T.

21; *máner*, Prol. 71; *fórtune*, each of these words being elsewhere accented on the last syllable. Even some purely English words exhibit the same variety, as *hóntyng* and *húntyng*. K. T. 821 and 1450.

The *-ed* of past participles and the *-ede* of past tenses are to be alike pronounced as a distinct syllable, *-ed*; thus *percéd*, Prol. l. 2, has two syllables, *entunéd*, l. 123, *y-pinchéd*, l. 151, have three, but *lovede*, l. 97, and similar forms, are to be sounded *lov-éd*, &c., with two, not three syllables.

The initial *h* in the several cases of the pronoun *he*, in the tenses of the verb *to have*, and in the word *how*, is so lightly sounded as to admit of the elision of a final *-e* before it.

- “ Wel cowde he dresse his takel yemanly.” Prol. 106.

Both *e*'s would otherwise be sounded.

In all other words the initial *h* is too strongly aspirated to permit of this.

Not only is the negative *ne* frequently shortened into an initial *n*-before *am*, *is*, *hadde*, [*nadde*], *wot*, [*not*], &c., but we meet with such contractions as *thass* for *the asse*, *tabiden* for *to abiden*, &c. This may be merely due to the scribes. Cf. Prol. 450, where we have the elision in reading though not in the text.

The metrical analysis of the first eighteen lines of the Prologue, given in p. 37, will be found to illustrate most of the foregoing rules of prosody, and will serve as a guide to the correct scanning of Chaucer's verse, which when read as it should be will be found as smooth and regular in its rhythm as any of the present day.

In order to mark the pronunciation without deviating from the orthography of the best MSS. I have in this passage, as in the text generally, adopted the following simple devices and signs.

The final *e* when naturally silent, or when, as in the words *he*, *the*, &c., there can be no doubt as to its pronunciation, is printed in small romans; when, on the other hand, it is to be sounded where it is either silent or omitted in modern English, it is distinguished thus -*é*; and where an *e* which would be sounded under other circumstances is elided before a word beginning with a vowel or lightly aspirated *h*, it will be found in italics.

Other vowels likewise when elided, whether by synalcepha or by any of the contractions explained above, are marked by italics.

If at the same time it be borne in mind that the finals *-es*, *-en*, and

-ed, being *Saxon* inflections, are, unless the contrary be indicated as above, to be sounded as distinct syllables, and that the -ede of the past tense is to be pronounced -ed, and that, with the exception of the few nine-syllabled verses, every line is either a perfect or a catalectic iambic, a little practice will enable the student to scan the poetry of Chaucer with ease.

A very few irregular contractions, either poetic licenses or anticipations of future pronunciations, may be found, as in Prol. 463. where "*thries hadde*" must be read as our "*thrice had.*"

"And thries | hadde sche | ben at | Jeru | salem."

I will conclude this section with a slightly altered transcription of Dr. Morris' remarks on the pronunciation and scanning of the passage on p. 37.

1. The final *e* in *Aprille* is sounded; but it is silent in the French words *veyne*, *vertue*, and *nature*, and in *Marche*, *holte*, and *kouthe*, because followed here by a vowel or lightly aspirated *h*.
2. The final *e* in *swote*, *smale*, *strange*, *ferne*, and *seeke* (in the last line) is sounded, as the sign of the plural.
3. The final *e* in *roote*, *breethe*, *heethe* is sounded, as the sign of the objective (indirect) case.
4. The final *e* in *swete*, *yonge*, *halfe* is sounded, as the definite form of the adjective.
5. The final *e* in *sonne*, *ende* is sounded, as representing older terminations.
6. The final *e* in *i-ronne* is sounded, as representing the old and fuller ending of the past participle -*en* (*y-ronnen*).
7. The final *e* in *wende* is sounded, as representing the -*en* of the plural.
8. And in *seeke* (l. 17), as the -*en* of the older infinitive.
  - 7a. The full forms of the plural are found in *slepen*, *maken*, *longen*, and
  - 8a. Of the infinitive in *seeken*, in all of which it is of course sounded.
9. The final -*es* in *schowres*, *croppes*, *fowles*, *halwes*, *strondes*, *londes*, is sounded as the inflexion of the plural; and
10. In *schires* as that of the possessive case.
11. *Vertue*, *licour*, *nature*, and *corages* are accented on the last syllable of the root, as being French words of comparatively recent introduction into English.

Whan that | April | lē with | his schow | res swoot | ē  
 The drought | of Marche | hath per | ced to | the root | ē.  
 And bath | ed eve | ry veyne | in swich | licour,  
 Of which | vertue | engen | dred is | the flour;  
 Whan Ze | phirus | eke with | his swe | tē breeth | ē  
 Enspir | ed hath | in eve | ry holte | and heeth | ē  
 The ten | dre crop | pes, and | the yong | ē sonn | ē  
 Hath in | the Ram | his hal | fē cours | i-ron | nē,  
 And smal | ē fowl | es mak | en mel | odi-e  
 10 That sle | pen al | the night | with o | pen eye,  
 So prik | eth hem | nature | in here | corag | es:—  
 Thanne long | en folk | to gon | on pil | grimag | es,  
 And palm | ers for | to seek | en strang | ē strond | es  
 To fer | ne hal | wes, kouthe | in son | dry lond | es:  
 15 And spe | cially, | from eve | ry schi | res end | ē  
 Of Eng | elond, | to Caunt | erbury | they wend | ē,  
 The ho | ly blis | ful mar | tir for | to seek | ē,  
 That hem | hath hol | pen whan | that they | were seek | ē.