

CHAUCER AND HIS TIMES

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Chaucer and his times by Grace E. Hadow

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GRACE E. HADOW

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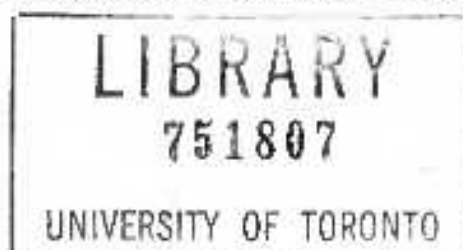
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NOTES ON CHAUCER'S USE OF 'E'

1. Final *e* is usually sounded in Chaucerian verse, but
 - (a) it is slurred over before a word beginning with a vowel, e.g. I noldē settē at al that noyse ſa grote; before certain words beginning with *h*, such as *he*; any part of the verb to *have*; the adverbs *heer*, *how*, and a mute *h* as in *honour*—e.g. Tho reddē he me how Sampson lostē his heres;
 - (b) it is sometimes dropped in certain words in common use such as *were*, *hadde*, *wolde*, etc.—e.g. Wolde go to beddē, he wolde no lenger tarie.
2. Middle *e* is sometimes dropped: e.g. hav(e)nes.
3. Final *e* should always be sounded at the end of a line.

These notes are based on the grammatical hints given in Professor Skeat's Introduction to his single-volume edition of Chaucer's complete works (Clarendon Press, 1901), from which the illustrations in this book are also drawn. To his researches and to those of Professors Lounsbury and Ten Brink, and of the members of the Chaucer Society, all students of Chaucer must gratefully acknowledge their indebtedness. In quoting from Chaucer I have kept to Professor Skeat's spelling. All attempts to modernise Chaucerian verse inevitably result in destroying something of the charm and melody of the original. Readers whose eyes are not accustomed to the forms of Middle English will find practically all difficulty disappear if they read the passages aloud with modern pronunciation. With other Middle English and Scottish poets I have reluctantly taken greater liberties, since their language is often more remote from the speech of to-day. An example of the original Scottish forms will be found on p. 240.

G. E. H.

CHAUCER AND HIS TIMES

CHAPTER I

CHAUCER'S LIFE AND TIMES

“THE biography of Chaucer is built upon doubts and thrives upon perplexities” according to one of the most famous of Chaucer scholars, and the more carefully we consider the evidence upon which this statement is based, the more fully do we find it endorsed. The name Chaucer itself has been variously derived from the Latin *calcearius*, a shoemaker, the French *chaussier*, a maker of long hose, and the French *chaufecire*, chafe-wax (*i. e.* a clerk of the court of Chancery whose duty consisted in affixing seals to royal documents). The one point of agreement seems to be that the family was undoubtedly of French origin, though whether the founder of the English branch came over with the Conqueror or in Henry III's reign, cannot be decided. Most scholars are now agreed that Geoffrey Chaucer was born about 1340, and