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CHAUCER IN TARTARY

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FOR a just and accurate appreciation of Chaucer's true qualities it is unfortunate that Spenser, Warton, and above all Milton have been our chief guides in the reading of the Squire's Tale. Partly, at least, as a result of their influence the tale is for many commentators 'a typical romance'. For some it has been (as it was for Milton) a whetstone upon which an exquisitely keen style might be further sharpened. Almost all would have us believe that he who introduced humour and realism into the romantic material of the Knight's Tale; who found in the *Troilus* a splendid chance to study human nature; who created the witty Pandarus and whose observation of the world enabled him to transfigure what he found in Boccaccio; who in 'Thopas' ridiculed bad romances, and who elsewhere betrays the fact that he cannot take conventional romance entirely seriously[1]—that this man, in the Squire's Tale, spreads his poetic pinions, and, like the eagle of the *House of Fame* now grown grave and naïve and out of character, carries us off on a romantic joy-ride to a Tartary of golden atmosphere and magic trappings.

Milton's reading of the Squire's Tale is to my mind a curious one, indicating that he perused the tale with a romantic preconception of its solemnity, rather than closely and realistically. Why, indeed, did he mention it in *Il Penseroso* instead of in *L'Allegro*? In *L'Allegro* he exhibits great interest (literary in its associations) in the high life of chivalric persons (117–30). Yet Canacee's bright eyes, and Cambyuskan and his barons, are reserved for *Il Penseroso* (109–15), where the Squire's Tale is associated with the more elevated and tragic strains in poetry, sung 'In sage and solemn tunes' (117).

Spenser, who in the fourth book of the *Faerie Queene* wrote a delightfully Spenserian continuation of the Canacee–Cambalo theme, considered

[1] N.P.T., B[2] 4400–3. All Chaucer quotations are from *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. F. N. Robinson (Cambridge, Mass., 1933).

that although the 'dreddest daungerous' battles of 'Cambell' and 'Triamond' (linked by him with 'Cambine' and Canacee respectively) were not to be found in Chaucer's works, nevertheless

> . . . that renowmed Poet them compyled,
> With warlike numbers and Heroicke sound. . . .[1]

He will now continue the tale, asking Chaucer's pardon, but feeling that the sweet infusion of the poet's own spirit, which survives in him, will enable him to meet with the original meaning or intention of the tale.[2] It may be questioned whether much of Chaucer's spirit survived in Spenser, for the later poet's continuation is, naturally enough, quite un-Chaucerian in manner. At the same time it must be admitted that the theme suggested by Chaucer is grist for Spenser's very romantic mill—better grist for that mill than for Chaucer's, I should say.

Warton's notion of the Squire's Tale is indicated in a statement which, significantly (as showing us both the continuity of Warton's influence and his influence on Chaucer scholarship), is quoted by Skeat:

> I have already spoken at large of the Knight's Tale, one of our author's noblest compositions. That of the Canterbury Tales which deserves the next place, as written in the higher strain of poetry, and the poem by which Milton describes and characterises Chaucer, is the Squire's Tale.[3]

It will be observed that Warton is influenced by Milton. The sort of influence which Warton has exerted in his turn is illustrated by Joseph Sterling's 'Advertisement' for his continuation of the tale:

> The ingenious Mr. Warton, in the first volume and fifteenth section of his History of English Poetry, speaks of the story of CAMBUSCAN in terms of the highest respect. He says, that after the KNIGHT'S TALE, it is the noblest of the productions of Chaucer: He proves that it is an Arabian fiction, engrafted on Gothic chivalry. This Poem was continued by Spenser, and admired by Milton. It has been considerably improved by Mr. BOYSE, the Modernizer. The Concluder feels his poetic powers far inferior to those of CHAUCER and SPENSER; but as he endeavours to amuse, hopes for the indulgence of the Public.[4]

Indeed, we see in Sterling the triple influence—Spenser, Milton, and Warton—in epitome.

Yet the tale in question, 'after the Knight's Tale . . . the noblest of the productions of Chaucer', is incomplete, and critics have sought to divine

[1] Canto II, Stanza 32 (*The Works of Edmund Spenser*, ed. E. Greenlaw, C. G. Osgood, F. M. Padelford; *Faerie Queene*, Book Four; special editor—Ray Heffner; Baltimore, 1935). [2] Stanza 34.

[3] *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* (Oxford, 1894), iii. 464.

[4] Quoted by Caroline F. E. Spurgeon, *Five Hundred Years of Chaucer Criticism and Allusion* (Cambridge, 1925), i. 479, from *Cambuscan, or the Squire's Tale of Chaucer, modernized by Mr. Boyse; continued from Spencer's Fairy Queen, by Mr. Ogle; and concluded by Mr. Sterling*, Dublin, 1785.

the reason for its unfinished state. R. K. Root suggests that Chaucer did not know how to finish the story, and that, as Chaucer may have seen, its unfinished state is all to the good, for, like 'Kubla Khan', it has the beauty of the incomplete.[1] It is Grace E. Hadow's opinion that the exuberant piling up of the plot material in the fragment is well suited to the naïve Squire, but that his tale would have taken too long, and that Chaucer no doubt cut it off on purpose.[2] I should say, however, that Dr. Furnivall is closer to the mark:

> The completion of the *Squire's Tale* would have taxt Chaucer's utmost power, even when he was at his best. The subject is one into which he could have imported little humanity. The Continuation would have been a constant strain on his invention and fancy. The work wouldn't have repaid the effort, and so the Poet turnd it up, as he did the *Good Women* when he'd done nine of them out of the proposed nineteen. Who of us, in his own line, has not done the like? Man is mortal; and when a fellow man doesn't see his way thro' a bit of work, it bores him, and he drops it.[3]

And yet, is there not much more to be said? I suggest that we can, in the fragment as it stands, see Chaucer importing humanity into his story, somewhat to its detriment as a typical romance. The poet's treatment of the subject-matter indicates that he is not altogether at home in Tartary. So intellectual and realistic and humorous is he by temperament that his patience cannot last out the long recital of marvellous deeds, the long succession of improbable events caused chiefly by the presence of various enchanted gadgets.

The beginning of Part Two of the tale finds the comic spirit hovering over Cambyuskan's revels:

> The norice of digestioun, the sleep,
> Gan on hem wynke and bad hem taken keep
> That muchel drynke and labour wolde han reste;
> And with a galpyng mouth hem alle he keste,
> And seyde that it was tyme to lye adoun,
> For blood was in his dominacioun.
> 'Cherisseth blood, natures freend,' quod he.
> They thanken hym galpynge, by two, by thre,
> And every wight gan drawe hym to his reste,
> As sleep hem bad; they tooke it for the beste. (F 347–56.)

Here the poet is sly. Though the drinking bout had, like all good things, to come to an end, the revellers made the best of it, and, taking physiological factors prudently into consideration ('Cherisseth blood'), they marched off

[1] *The Poetry of Chaucer*, revised edition (Cambridge, Mass., 1922), pp. 265, 269.

[2] *Chaucer and His Times* (London, 1914), pp. 79–82.

[3] 'Forewords', *John Lane's Continuation of Chaucer's 'Squire's Tale'*, Ch. Soc., ser. 2, no. 23, p. xii.

to bed, their gaping mouths repeating the image of that gaping mouth by which they had all been kissed. Chaucer refuses to tell their dreams, for their poor brains are naturally in a state of confusion. Their heads are full of the fumosity caused by the drinking of wine,

> . . . fumositee,
> That causeth dreem of which ther nys no charge.[1] (358–9.)

A victim of such fumosity must sleep it off, and these aristocratic personages are no exception. Having caroused 'Til wel ny the day bigan to sprynge' (346), they now stayed in bed until 'pryme large' (360), or nine in the morning, an unusually late hour in Chaucer's England (or Tartary). Canacee, however, is up betimes.

> She was ful mesurable, as wommen be;
> For of hir fader hadde she take leve
> To goon to reste soone after it was eve.
> Hir liste nat appalled for to be,
> Ne on the morwe unfeestlich for to se,
> And slepte hire firste sleep, and thanne awook.[2] (362–7.)

The maiden's father and his lords had behaved with typical male disregard of the golden mean, but womanly Canacee was more prudent: she didn't want to have a hangover. 'Cambuskan bold' loses something of his romantic aura as a result of his being thus subtly compared with his more reasonable daughter, but at the same time the poet has been thoroughly in his element for a considerable number of highly entertaining lines.

We must on with romance, however. Canacee awoke,

> For swich a joye she in hir herte took
> Bothe of hir queynte ryng and hire mirour,
> That twenty tyme she changed hir colour;
> And in hire sleep, right for impressioun
> Of hire mirour, she hadde a visioun. (368–72.)

Excitement and anticipation caused her to awaken at an unusually early hour ('er that the sonne gan up glyde' [373]). She called upon her duenna ('hir maistresse hire bisyde' [374]),[3] and announced her intention of getting up. At this point the comic spirit again interposes. The old woman was something of a busybody.

> Thise olde wommen that been gladly wyse,
> As is hire maistresse, answerde hire anon,
> And seyde, 'Madame, whider wil ye goon
> Thus erly, for the folk been alle on reste?'[4] (376–9.)

Is surprised and aged prudence to stand in the way of youth's impatient activity? There is only one way to deal with the maddening wisdom of the very old: reassert one's will without explaining one's motive, and lead the old one to a bald conclusion:

> 'I wol,' quod she, 'arise, for me leste
> Ne lenger for to slepe, and walke aboute.' (380–1.)

Walk about she does on as pretty a spring morning as any in Chaucer (393–400). The story is not getting anywhere, however, and Chaucer realizes the fact. On with the plot! Characterization and setting must not predominate here! Humorously the poet resolves to settle down to the complication of events: there is a knot to be tied, and an intricate one (401–8). But, as it turns out, he balks at the first loop. The Canacee–falcon episode cannot hold his interest. He leaves it unfinished, and, as Lounsbury pointed out, what there is of it is not very carefully done.[5]

Lounsbury also showed that Part One had been written with greater care, that it did not contain the violations of grammar, the inconsistencies, and the awkward transitions of Part Two.[5] But even if Part One is better done in some ways than Part Two, it still causes the poet difficulty in maintaining unity of tone.

A chief difficulty is his unwillingness to go into elaborate description of courtly celebrations, courtly people, and courtly speeches. This unwillingness is more than the mere desire to avoid prolixity. It indicates a good deal about Chaucer's literary values. Not only did he consider some subjects tedious; he also thought them somewhat ridiculous, and he could not refrain from making subtle and humorous insinuations at their expense.

[1] I here follow Manly in taking 'of which ther nys no charge' to be a restrictive clause, and so omit the comma which Robinson has after 'dreem'. Not all dreams were without significance, but those caused by fumes were. Robinson directs our attention to Pard. T. (C 562–72) and Manly to N.P.T. (B² 4111–14). Note, however, that Pard. T., cited by Robinson, contains the better passage to explain Manly's punctuation; Pertelote did not believe in dreams at all. And the Pardoner, like Cambyuskan, is directly concerned with over-abundance of wine, whereas Pertelote is thinking of over-abundance of humours.

[2] H. B. Hinckley, *Notes on Chaucer* (Northampton, 1907), p. 230, says of line 362: 'This has rightly been pointed out as an illustration of Chaucer's delicate observation. Women require less sleep than men.' Do they? The question is beside the point. Since Canacee went to bed early and got up early, whereas Cambyuskan went to bed late and got up late, it would seem that she got just as much sleep as he did. Chaucer means that she is moderate in her pleasures.

[3] See Manly's note (*C.T.*, p. 602).

[4] Robinson explains: 'Her governess, like these old women who are usually inquisitive, answered at once', and for the unusual meaning 'usually' of 'gladly' points to N.P.T., B² 4414. See also Manly's note (p. 602). Hinckley (p. 224) also argues strongly in favour of 'usually', with special reference to F 224. I see no reason, however, for thinking that 'wyse' means 'inquisitive'. 'Prudent' or 'wise' will do, and in that case the force of 'gladly' may be, 'They like to think themselves wise'. The translation 'inquisitive' seems to stretch the meaning of 'wyse' too much, and certainly, if we take 'wyse' to mean 'wise', then Chaucer does not intend to say that wisdom is a quality *usually* possessed by old women of the type treated so summarily by Canacee.

[5] *Studies in Chaucer* (New York, 1892), iii. 317–18.

There is humour in Chaucer's refusal to describe Canacee's beauty:

> But for to telle yow al hir beautee,
> It lyth nat in my tonge, n'yn my konnyng;
> I dar not undertake so heigh a thyng.
> Myn Englissh eek is insufficient.
> It moste been a rethor excellent,
> That koude his colours longynge for that art,
> If he sholde hire discryven every part.
> I am noon swich, I moot speke as I kan.[1] (34–41.)

Chaucer seems here to avoid the tedious, itemized descriptions of the rhetoricians.[2] He may also have had his eye humorously cocked at conventional descriptions in romances, for in chivalric literature the formal portrait or *effictio* 'became the almost invariable method of presenting feminine beauty'.[3] Two romances which Chaucer is almost certain to have known well—*Libeaus Desconus* and *Guy of Warwick*—contain just such description of a heroine as Chaucer refuses to provide for Canacee. He prefers to use the itemizing technique when he has a real human being worthy of his attention; hence we have the wife in the Miller's Tale, and the Wyf of Bath. Canacee is for the moment a colourless romantic *ingénue*, and he lets her alone until he comes to Part Two, where he sees an opportunity of doing something with her. In thus neglecting her, he not only uses the familiar rhetorical device of *occupatio*, but also exhibits glee in the avoidance of a rhetorical trap. Had he given us a description of Canacee according to the 'colours', he might have produced something like the model for description of a woman in Gaufred de Vinsauf's *Nova Poetria*.[4] With Gaufred in mind, we may well approve Chaucer's wisdom in leaving Canacee unitemized, but we may also consider that some exposition of the traits of so important a heroine would (if it were good) serve to arouse our interest in her. Cambyuskan, who has no important part to play in the development of the plot so far as it goes, is described at some length (12–27), but Canacee, who figures so largely in Part Two, is not described at all. Chaucer seems to fear that the description might not be good; the subject-matter makes him uncomfortable, and he dismisses it with a jest.

Is he winking humorously when he says that to give an account of Cambyuskan's menu would 'occupie a someres day' (64)? How much sly wit is there in lines 65–75? At least an elvish elusiveness is discernible. If, in this exotic tale, foreign marvels are not to be described, what *is* to be done? Why not charm the reader with oriental colour? Material on the oriental bill of fare was available, whether in print or in rumour;[1] the *Epistola Presbyteri Johannis ad Emmanuelem regem Graecorum* was known in England in Chaucer's time.[2] Chaucer was a bookish man, well able to look up material he needed, and in the habit of doing so. In the *Epistola* he might have learned that some of Prester John's subjects considered it 'a most holy thing to eat human flesh', and that others thought the large ants of India a delicacy.[3] Admittedly a picture of Canacee and Cambyuskan eating ants would not have helped the atmosphere of the story; it follows that if Chaucer was familiar with the *Epistola* or with other similar accounts, written or spoken, he was amused at the thought of what he was holding back from his readers; there is ironic understatement in these three lines:

> Eek in that lond, as tellen knyghtes olde,
> Ther is some mete that is ful deynte holde,
> That in this lond men recche of it but smal. . . . (69–71.)

At any rate, the *Gawain* poet would not have thought some sort of elaborate description a 'los of tyme', and Chaucer's thinking so indicates either his ingrained distaste for a certain kind of detail or his willingness to joke about his poetic matter.

Chivalric courtesy appears to be the poet's butt when he is introducing the strange knight's long speech describing the magic gifts (89–109). In lines 105–8, where Chaucer probably puns on 'style' and 'stile,' he suggests that from the everyday, commonsense point of view ('as to commune entente'), a plain summary of the Knight's words will indicate his meaning well enough; the aristocratic preoccupation with fine words and elaborate speeches is like the rhetorical *effictio* in having something laughable about it.

Courtly social behaviour is treated with a kind of light and tender humour in the lines (275–90) dealing with the revelry and dancing and dissimulation of love-looks at Cambyuskan's court.
Still,

> *Who koude telle yow* the forme of daunces
> So unkouthe, and so fresshe contenaunces,
> Swich subtil lookyng and dissymulynges

[1] The lines may, of course, be taken to represent the Squire's modesty. But in the *General Prologue* we learn that the young man had some literary ability—he could compose the words for songs ('endite', A 95)—and if Chaucer had wanted to describe Canacee's charms, he could have omitted the disclaimer of rhetorical ability.

[2] Cf. the satirical reference to Geoffrey de Vinsauf in N.P.T., B² 4537–41.

[3] L. A. Haselmayer, 'The Portraits in Chaucer's Fabliaux', *R.E.S.* xiv (1938), 310.

[4] E. Faral, *Les Arts poétiques du XII^e et du XIII^e siècle* (Paris, 1924), pp. 214–15, ll. 563–97.

[1] Cf. Manly, *C.T.*, p. 599, *n.* to ll. 67–71: 'Chaucer had heard in some way of the strange foods eaten by the Tartars. Skeat thinks his information came from Marco Polo, but rumors concerning the strange things eaten in Tartary were as common then as those concerning Chinese foods are now.'

[2] J. L. Lowes, 'The Squire's Tale and the Land of Prester John', *Washington University Studies*, *f*, part ii (1913), pp. 1–18, especially p. 14; H. S. V. Jones in *Sources and Analogues* (Chicago, 1941), p. 358.

[3] Ibid., p. 359.

For drede of jalouse mennes aperceyvynges?
No man but Launcelot, and he is deed.
Therefore I passe of al this lustiheed;
I say namoore, but in this jolynesse
I lete hem, til men to the soper dresse. (283–90; italics mine.)

The lines call to mind a delightful scene, but at the same time there is the subtly humorous refusal to go into detail, seen especially in the reference to the narrator (who may be thought of as either the Squire or Chaucer) as a dull man, and in 'No man but Launcelot, and he is deed'. Elusive humour there is also in the lines:

He moste han knowen love and his servyse,
And been a feestlych man as fressh as May,
That sholde yow devysen swich array. (280–2.)

Either Chaucer is deliberately making the Squire modestly and wittily inconsistent with what has been said about him in the *General Prologue*, or else he is here, as elsewhere, whimsically referring to himself as a man who is not in the swim where love is concerned.

In Part One, then, Chaucer's manner of humorously shying away from detail gives him opportunities for humour, a humour which prevents us from considering the tale a typical romance. In connexion with the magic gifts, however, far from making use of light, rather nervous *occupatio*, he perhaps says rather too much—or, more precisely, lets his own personality appear inappropriately and to the spoiling of the romantic effect. A comparison with the analogue *Li Roumans de Cleomadès par Adenès li Rois*[1] will serve to make clear the Chaucerian quality of the Squire's Tale.

Adenès treats the magic horse (for him a wooden one) and the other magic devices with more *naïveté* than Chaucer. I do not mean that Adenès literally believes in all that he hears about magic; but, no doubt for the sake of romantic effect, he at least consistently affects to do so, whereas Chaucer does not. People of small understanding, says Adenès, ask him how such things as those of which he has spoken can be done. 'And do you know what I say to them?' he asks. 'I say to them that necromancy is a very marvellous branch of learning; for many marvels have been performed by means of it, one knows that well.'[2] And various marvels of Virgil are called to mind by the poet himself, whereas Chaucer lets the people in his story make most of the references to mythology and legend. In Chaucer the 'lewed peple' (221), buzzing like a swarm of bees (204), and ever deeming the worst because they are ignorant of what they are talking about (220–4), exclaim over numerous parallels to the gifts. Their wondering on the horse

[1] As quoted and summarized by Jones, op. cit., pp. 365–74.
[2] Ibid., p. 367, ll. 1639–48.

of brass was so great that since the downfall of Troy, when men wondered at a horse also, there had not been such a wondering (305–8). Particularly amusing is one scatterbrain's fear that the horse may contain armed men:

'Myn herte,' quod oon, 'is everemoore in drede;
I trowe som men of armes been therinne,
That shapen hem this citee for to wynne.
It were right good that al swich thyng were knowe.' (212–15.)

And yet, if we accept the horse of brass in the first place by a willing suspension of disbelief, then there ought to be nothing nonsensical about the parallels sought by the jangling ones. Why should Chaucer thus ridicule them slyly? Or is that his main intention? The lines which suggest ridicule are separated by stretches of allusion and speculation. Does Chaucer feel that calling to mind various marvellous trappings of history and mythology will add a romantic glow to his story?

Why, then, does he have the simple castle folk attempt scientific explanations of the marvels?

And somme of hem wondred on the mirour
That born was up into the maister-tour,
How men myghte in it swiche thynges se.
Another answerde, and seyde it myghte wel be
Naturelly, by composicioums
Of anglis and of slye reflexioums,
And seyde that in Rome was swich oon.
They speken of Alocen, and Vitulon,
And Aristotle, that writen in hir lyves
Of queynte mirours and of perspectives,
As knowen they that han hir bookes herd.
. . . . . .
But nathelees somme seiden [*à propos* of Canacee's ring] that it was
Wonder to maken of fern-asshen glas,
And yet nys glas nat lyk asshen of fern:
But, for they han yknowen it so fern,
Therfore cesseth hir janglyng and hir wonder.
As soore wondren somme on cause of thonder,
On ebbe, on flood, on gossomer, and on myst,
And alle thyng, til that the cause is wyst.
Thus jangle they, and demen, and devyse. . . . (225–35; 253–61.)

The learned tone in 225–35 and the commonsense tone in 253–61 are unromantic, and incongruous in the romantic setting. Chaucer imparts to his swarm of ignorant bees the realistic attitude taken by Jean de Meung and Dame Nature in the *Roman de la Rose*.[1] In the references to Alocen

[1] Resemblances between Sq. T. and *R.R.* are noted in D. S. Fansler, *Chaucer and the Roman de la Rose* (New York, 1914), pp. 36–7; E. Koeppel, 'Chauceriana', *Angl.* xiv

(the Arab generally known as Alhazen) and Aristotle, Chaucer echoes (whether consciously or unconsciously) Nature's admiring citation of these scientists as authorities in the field of optics.[1] Nature embodies much of De Meung's knowledge of the physical sciences, and also his antagonism toward superstitious belief in the supernatural. Those who, having seen what fantastic visions can be created by the use of mirrors, say that they have seen the devils at work are fools.[2] Vitulon (the Pole Vitello who translated and added to Alhazen's book on optics) is not mentioned by De Meung, and so we may suppose that Chaucer echoes not necessarily the *Roman* but perhaps simply the very considerable reputation which the three experts on optics enjoyed during the Middle Ages. Alhazen 'was one of the most important mathematicians and physicists of the Arabs . . . [His] *Optics* . . . had a great influence in the middle ages on the study of optics in Europe from Roger Bacon to Kepler'.[3] Vitello enjoyed similar prestige,[4] and the third book of Aristotle's *Meteorology*, embodying the results of his researches in perspective and optics, was known to the Middle Ages in Latin translations from the Arabic.[5] Regardless of the exact source of the knowledge displayed by the swarm of bees, it is curious that they should murmur so like the arch-realist Jean de Meung. They do so more specifically when they speak of making glass from fern-ashes. De Meung, in referring to this process, is illustrating the alchemical point that many substances can be reduced to one chemical common denominator; and he takes alchemy to be a serious and worthwhile science.[6] Thunder, he says, is not (as some foolishly suppose) caused by demons, but is simply the result of the natural actions of winds and storms operating under celestial influence;[7] 'vapour' is one of the accompanying phenomena.[8] Now on what basis can we accept such realism as appropriate in the Squire's Tale? It might be argued that since we are to accept the strange knight's gifts as truly magical, Chaucer's intention is to make the people seem foolish for taking a realistic attitude in a fantastic situation. But in that case he is inconsistent, for the folk were romantic enough in their classical allusions. They

> . . . maden skiles after hir fantasies,
> Rehercyng of thise olde poetries, (205–6.)

(1892), 257–8; F. P. Magoun, 'Chaucer and the Roman de la Rose, vv. 16096–105', *Romanic Review*, xvii (1926), 69–70.

[1] *Roman*, ed. E. Langlois, S.A.T.F., 1914 ff., ll. 18024–60 (Alhazen and Aristotle), 18197–206 (Aristotle only).

[2] ll. 18231–8; 18275–86.

[3] *The Encyclopaedia of Islām* (London, 1927), ii. 382 a.

[4] L. Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science* (New York, 1923), ii. 456.

[5] F. H. Fobes, 'Mediaeval Versions of Aristotle's *Meteorology*', *Classical Philology*, x (1915), 297–300; Langlois, op. cit., notes (iv. 313, 314) to 18031, 18200–6.

[6] ll. 16096–148. [7] ll. 17880–912. [8] ll. 17885–91.

or, in other words, called upon imagination rather than upon reason. Were they, then, ridiculously imaginative in some of their sayings, and ridiculously reasonable in others? It is possible that idle jangling could embody both faults, but the effect is confusing and lacking in unity of impression. And, finally, it may be asked whether, in a piece which sets out to be seriously romantic, it is effective to have the extras prick the bubble world of the principal actors with the pin of common sense. Chaucer—intellectual, sensible, pragmatic—makes himself felt in these references to ancient and medieval scientific notions, although he suggests scientific explanations by dramatic methods only, and, for himself, sidesteps the question of the proper tempering for a magic sword, about which he does not know enough to speak (243–6).

Chaucer lingers unnecessarily over the people and their speculations. His lively interest in human nature keeps him from his story, just as in Part Two. And so the very human crowd in the Squire's Tale babbles out that sort of comparison which, in *Cleomadès*, is presented in all seriousness by the poet himself. But even Chaucer's supposedly unintellectual mob is in some ways fairly sophisticated—more so than Adenès, certainly. The result is that Chaucer's lines are confusing. The poet himself, it is possible, does not know precisely what he is trying to do: belittle the garrulous mob, obtain romantic effect by suggesting a whole tradition of magic gadgets, or dabble in scientific speculation. Because of Chaucer's livelier mind and keener interest in human beings, the passage is, of course, much more interesting than its parallel in *Cleomadès*, just as the tale as a whole is more interesting than many romances. Yet these very qualities of superiority prevent Chaucer from achieving a uniformly romantic tone.

It will be noticed that I say that Chaucer does not achieve a *uniformly* romantic tone. That romance is present I should be the last to deny. Canacee's pretty morning joy in her ring and mirror is not only romance—it is romance intensified and burnished to splendid golden tones which make a *Beves* seem like some battered brass bedstead, and gold there is too in Cambyuskan's kingship and the lusty weather and the loud minstrelsy, in vapour gliding from the earth, in pity running soon in gentle heart, in 'wyn, in all this melodye' (292). Is it fair or decorous to say that Canacee didn't want to have a hangover, when Chaucer himself certainly does not state the idea so baldly but instead displays considerable delicacy, saying that the maiden did not want to be fatigued, worn out, 'appalled' in the morning, that she did not want 'unfeestlich for to se' or in other words to have the carnival spirit of high festivity depart from her? There is a fine subtlety and a tender hedonism here; in that joyful early awakening, fair, fresh Canacee reaps her reward for abstinence. But Cambyuskan loses dignity by our comparing him with his daughter, and Chaucer's humour is of a

heartier kind when Sleep with gaping mouth kisses all the revellers and bids them cherish blood, which bidding they respect with gaping thanks and take for the best. Even so, in the grotesqueness of this image of the yawning kiss there may be something of romance. A general truth is well put by J. W. Mackail when he says that Chaucer '. . . carries romance even into his comedy, as he carries his comedy even into romance', that 'This is what gives his work so complex and intricate a fascination'.[1]

Yet it does not appear that in the Squire's Tale Chaucer achieves a consistent harmony between his subtly shifting moods and the substance of his story. His excessive use of whimsical *occupatio* betrays a certain skittishness, an uncomfortable awareness that all is not well with him in these strange regions, and when the folk debate in ignorant-wise fashion about the magic gifts we do not have fine weaving of various poetic threads but, rather, artistic confusion. And whether the richest passage of all (the first fifty-three lines of Part Two) be sly in humour or skilful in delicate counterpoint of high comedy with high romantic sentiment, it fits ill with the rest of the story; and so with what is surely reluctance (though humorous) the poet 'condescends' to his tale and makes of that matchless sunrise promenade an immediate end, while we share his feeling and wish that Canacee had had to walk through whole parks full of vapour and gay Chaucerian songsters before she found the falcon. The best lines in the tale have to do with human comedy, and human joys and pleasures of the natural world, rather than specifically with the ring and the mirror and the sword and the horse of brass whereon the Tartar king did or did not ride. This is what happens, as it seems to me: precisely those traits which we most love in Chaucer—sagacious realism, humour, critical intellect, subtlety of mood, and natural human gusto—keep him from maintaining the wide-eyed *naïveté* and quaint curiosity required by his theme, and make him realize that it is better to abandon his attempt to force an entrance into fairyland than to get stuck in a magic casement.

[1] *Springs of Helicon* (New York, 1909), pp. 58–9.

RULE A WIFE AND HAVE A WIFE AND *EL SAGAZ ESTACIO*

By Edward M. Wilson

Warwick Bond, in his introduction to *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife*, remarks that: 'For the main plot (Leon, Margarita, and the Duke) no direct source has hitherto been indicated beyond some obvious general example in *The Taming of the Shrew*, which is, however, sufficiently distinct. Hallam, while owning a likelihood of some Spanish prototype, recognized native qualities in the variety and spirit of character and the vivacious humour. Indeed the vigour of Leon's part throughout suggests that the author is working on a conception of his own.'[1] Bond notes how the main plot is interwoven with the sub-plot, which, as is well known, derives from a French translation of Cervantes's novel *El casamiento engañoso*, and adds: 'A germ at least for Leon and Margarita is furnished in the Doña Clementa and Don Lope of Cervantes's novel; the duenna might suggest the complaisant old ladies of I. iv; and a further distinct leaning upon the tale is noticeable in the transfer of Estefania's *cousinship with a former lover* to Margarita and Duke (cf. Leon's satirical "What cousin's this?", IV. iii. 126, following lines 97, 99). But the vigorous Leon remains without a forerunner.'[2] This essay will attempt to prove that Fletcher's main plot is largely derived from Alonso Jerónimo de Salas Barbadillo's novel *El sagaz Estacio marido examinado*.

Rule a Wife and Have a Wife was licensed in 1624.[3] In 1615 Salas Barbadillo was granted permission to print a book entitled *El sagaz Estacio marido examinado* in the kingdom of Aragon, but there is no trace of an edition of this work before 1620,[4] when it was published in Madrid. It was not translated into English during the seventeenth century and, though

[1] *The Works of Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher Variorum Edition*, iii. 364.

[2] Ibid. 365.

[3] The critics are agreed that Fletcher had no collaborator in this play. Beaumont died in 1616 and no other hand has been detected in it.

[4] There is an imperfect copy of the first edition in the British Museum and a good copy of another edition of the following year. The *Suma del Privilegio de Aragón* may be found in the preliminaries to either of these editions or in the convenient reprint of Francisco A. Icaza: Salas Barbadillo, *La peregrinación sabia y El sagaz Estacio, marido examinado* (Madrid, Clásicos castellanos, 1924). My quotations are from this edition, which is usually reliable (see, however, p. 190, n. 2). The two early editions are described by Cotarelo in his preface to Salas Barbadillo, *Obras* (Madrid, 1907), I. lxxvi–lxxvii. Icaza's transcription of the title-page of the 1620 edition does not tally with Cotarelo's, which is that of the British Museum copy; perhaps there were two editions of 1620.

For a general account of Salas Barbadillo's life and works, see the prefaces of Cotarelo and Icaza, also that of E. B. Place to Alonso Jerónimo de Salas Barbadillo, *La casa del placer honesto* (Boulder, Colorado, 1927).