

tending with the wily Scot, or with the impetuous Frank. Though her armies were frequently driven to the closest straits, the nation's heart was often thrilled with shouts of victory. Scotland lay at her feet; France was at her mercy; and the sovereigns of these two countries were captives of the British king. It was among these stirring scenes that GEOFFREY CHAUCER, "the father of English poetry," was born and educated. He also participated in them; for, besides occupying positions of trust at home, he entered the army, which was invading France, and was afterwards sent on diplomatic business to foreign courts. We cannot easily estimate the influence which such events necessarily had in the formation and development of the poet's intellectual character. We can only infer it from his productions, and from the manifest effects produced upon the national character. Chaucer was a representative Englishman; and while the nation was slowly developing, his mind readily and decidedly received the impetus given by those great civil commotions. However, it is probable that the name of Chaucer would have been found in political records alone—seldom mentioned by the historian, and entirely unknown by the majority—had it not been for his poetic genius. Many a man has performed honourable and important service for his country, whose name has not outlived his century. But he sought in the Pierian grotto the companionship and inspiration of the Muses, rearing for himself "a monument more enduring than brass, and higher than the regal structure of the Pyramids."

His writings show their author to have been a close student, extensively read in law, philosophy and theology, as well as in the sciences, so far as then known. It would have been impossible for genius alone to have accomplished the work he performed. Indefatigable in his pursuits, deep in his researches, and constant in his efforts, he left many a glittering gem to be admired and used by posterity.