

the claim of our American cousins, those inveterate claimants of all things, to be the sole and original proprietors of the expression, "I guess."

There are also nuns and clergymen, a physician, and a sergeant learned in the law, both of whom are credited with many of the peculiarities still commonly ascribed to their professional descendants.

The "Knight's Tale" is first told in simple and beautiful language, just the story we might expect from the lips of one of the Third Edward's veterans. He tells the mournful story of the Greeks, Arcite and Palæmon, embellished with the extravagant chivalry of the Middle Ages. The other Tales follow in rapid succession, and are each in keeping with the character of its supposed narrator. But the limits of this sketch forbid to linger over them. Suffice it is to say, they are all stamped with the genius of the writer, though some are clothed in language unfit for general reading.

It may, I presume, be taken for granted that this grand old writer is not so well known or so much read as authors of later days, so it may be permissible to point out that his genius is essentially dramatic. His works are not dramatic in form, but in their spirit, their essence, they betray the dramatic mind, and while the genius of Chaucer is quite distinct from that of Shakespeare, yet the faculty of insight into the lives and thoughts of men seems equally acute in both, and, had the earlier writer flourished in the days of Elizabeth and James, one cannot but think that his name would have shed additional lustre over the glorious record of the English drama.

To those who take sufficient interest in the noble literature, which is our inheritance, to search its treasures, let me recommend a careful study of the Prologue to Chaucer's Canterbury Tales: it will amply repay the time devoted to it and it may be safely said to be a work unique in literary annals.