

Leslie was Bab's companion for life. After this second sea-side sojourn, the bride returned to a pretty house of her own, quite near to Charles and Cary; and Barbara was never heard to complain of finding it dull or stupid, though summer does not last all the year round with any of us.—*Chambers's Ed. Jour.*

CHAUCER.

Born Circ. A. D. 1328.—Died Circ. A. D. 1400.

VARIOUS accounts have been given even of the place of Chaucer's birth; but he himself, in one of his prose pieces, his "Testament of Love," seems expressly to intimate that he was a native of London. Of his family nothing whatever can be said to be known. Some suppose him to have been of noble descent; while others, judging by the name—which, in old French, signifies a breeches-maker—conclude that he must have sprung from a plebeian stock. A common tradition is that his father was one Richard Chaucer, who kept a tavern, according to Stowe, in the Royal street, at the corner of Kirton-lane, and was buried in 1348 in his parish church of St. Mary Alder-mansbury, to which he left his house and appurtenances. The old editors of his works, and most of the other writers who mention the circumstance, tell us that he was born in the year 1328. He certainly received a learned education, and most probably studied at one of the Universities, but whether at Oxford or Cambridge is doubtful. Most of his biographers make him to have attended both, as the easiest way of reconciling the accounts of different authorities. From the university they transfer him to the Middle, or, as some will have it, the Inner Temple; but for the belief that he ever was a student of law, there is little or no foundation.

In the year 1367 an annuity of 20 marks was conferred upon Chaucer by Edward III., and, in the patent of this grant, which has been printed by Rymer, the poet is styled by the king *valletus noster*, or, as Mr. Tyrwhitt translates it, "our yeoman," a title given to young men before they were knighted. "How long he had served the king," says the writer, "in that or any other station, and what particular merits were rewarded by his royal bounty, are points equally unknown." Before this, indeed, Leland and his other early biographers tell us that he had travelled through France and the low countries; but for this statement there seems to be no proper authority. Soon after his return home, they say, he became page to the king; and his annuity, it is insinuated, was bestowed upon him as a reward for the delight which he communicated to his royal master by the poetical fusions and sallies of wit in which his genius already distinguished itself. Whether in this or in some other way, he appears at any rate to have gradually risen in favor at court; as

four years afterwards we find another annuity of the same amount conferred upon him, and the year following he received the honourable appointment of envoy, along with two other gentlemen, to the republic of Genoa, to manage some public negotiation, the nature of which, however, is not known. A visit to Italy, the land of beauty, romance and song, could not fail to produce the happiest effect upon such a genius as that of Chaucer. It appears to have been in the course of his visit that he met with Petrarch at Padua, and learned from him, as he tells us himself, the pathetic story of Griselda, which he afterwards so beautifully versified, and which had just been translated into Latin by Petrarch—who died the following year—from Boccaccio's Decameron. On his return to England he received a new mark of royal favour in the grant of a pitcher of wine daily for life, which was afterwards commuted for another annuity of twenty marks. The same year he obtained the lucrative place of comptroller of the customs of wool and hides for the port of London. The dues and occasional perquisites of his office, together with his previous grants, must have produced him a considerable income; although it is probable that his biographers have greatly overrated its amount when they state him to have been in the receipt of about a thousand pounds sterling a-year. Nor does the attention he was obliged to give to business appear to have withdrawn him from the acquaintance of the Muse. In a very interesting passage of his House of Fame, he has put into the mouth of the eagle, who acts a principal part in the story, the following account of his own habits, which, from the mention of his reckonings, seems evidently to refer to this period of his life, during which, therefore, we may presume the poem to have been written:—

"—— thou hast no tidings,
Of Lovis folk if they be glade,
Ne of nothing else that God made,
And not only from far countree
That no tidings come in to thes;
Not of thy very neighbors
That dwellen almost at thy doore,
Thou hearest neither that ne this;
For whae thy labour all done is,
And hast made all thy reckonings,
Instead of rest, and of new things,
Thou goest home to thine house anon,
And all so dumb as any stone;
Thou sittest at another book
Till fully daisied is thy look,
And livest thus as an hermit," &c.

His early biographers tell us that he had long before this united himself to Philippa Rowet, the sister of Catherine Rowet, who had been brought over from Hainault by King Edward's third son, the famous John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, to be one of the attendants on his countess, Blanche, but who soon became