

sent, to form the rich, flexible and sturdy language which has gone on growing and expanding until it has become the English of to-day. Such a time was reached at the dawn of the Chaucerian era. Rulers and ruled had become fused, perhaps it would be more accurate to say hammered, into one, when causes, to which I shall hereafter refer, had prepared the literary ground. As ever happens, when occasion demands, the men arose, and we had the first great epoch in English Literature, the era as inseparably associated with the name of Geoffrey Chaucer, as that of Elizabeth and James I is with that of William Shakespeare.

The Chaucerian period is chiefly to be remembered for the writings of Chaucer himself. The "Father of English Poetry" was trained in the camp and Court of Edward III, then the most brilliant in Europe, and was often employed on diplomatic services of great importance.

He had early served in the fierce wars which the Anjouine kings of England waged in France, and, for at least twenty-seven years, had borne arms. Not the life, one would imagine, adapted to encourage the muse's growth. In his first expedition with the armies of Edward III he was made prisoner by the French. It is not unlikely that the knowledge gained during his captivity, may have had its influence on his later career. But, it would seem that the astute princes, who held the reins of government during those stormy times, attached more importance to Chaucer's ability as a diplomatist than to his skill in the arts of war, as we find him frequently employed on missions of importance to various parts of the continent, at one time seeking to extend English trade in Italy, where he remained a year and is supposed to have become acquainted with Petrarch. Whether that be so or not, it is fair to assume that, during his stay, he acquired that knowledge of Italian literature and of the Italian people which has in a marked degree impressed itself upon his works.