

poets, for a measure of Chaucer's greatness. The task of selection has been guided in every instance by special reasons, and it seemed undesirable to multiply for young readers passages which abound in archaic words and phrases. But even from the short specimens here given, it may be seen that Chaucer resembles Shakespeare in happy sprightliness and serene benignity; that he is, as all poets should be, "simple, sensuous, passionate"; that he knows how to awaken laughter by delicate touches of satire, and also to bring tears into the eyes by natural pathos. If he resembles Shakespeare in his cheerfulness, and power of describing character and telling a story, he resembles Wordsworth in his freedom from mere "poetic phraseology."

And anone, as I the day espied,  
No lenger wolde I in my bed abide,  
But unto a wood that was fast by  
I went forth alone and boldely,  
And held the way downe by a brooke side,  
Til I came to a land of white and grene,  
So faire one had I never in been,  
The ground was grene y-powdrèd with daisie,  
The floures and the groves alike high  
All grene and white—was nothing else seene.

Could anything be more exquisitely true yet more absolutely simple than the little touch of simple white and green with which the poet brings a spring meadow under the sunlight before our eyes?

Chaucer has been compared to an April day, full in itself of warmth and brightness, but followed often by rough weeks and frosty nights, which nip all the early blossoms. He died in 1400, and the whole remainder of the fifteenth century does not produce a single pre-eminent poet. The jealousy and opposition of the clergy to all novelties—a prescient intuition of the day when they should smart under the scourge of such poets as Skelton, Lindsay, and Butler—the absence of all patronage, the troubles in the civil wars of the Roses, in which, says the