

The storekeepers complain of slack business. There were no sporting events worthy of note, outside of the usual suburban regatta, and altogether it was a slow week for the man who has to stay in town.

A. J. F.

### DREAM IMPRESSIONS OF A DECADENT.

Ionian laughter languorous and low,  
 Dream laughter, dying ere the dawn of day,  
 Brings back to man the guerdon of his woe  
 And bids the sons of earth resume the fray.  
 And unwept tears of an unconscious grief  
 More subtle than the sorrows of the mind,  
 Immortal longings, shadows of belief  
 In things that are not—or the soul is blind.  
 Echoes of far off music never heard,  
 More sweet than sounds which tremble  
 through the air,  
 Most sweet of all as though some phantom  
 bird  
 Had seized in song all laughter and all care.  
 And perfumed kisses without soil or stain,  
 Such as no mortal lips have ever pressed,  
 A rapture born of neither joy nor pain,  
 Ideal harmony and perfect rest.

L. J.

### A BALLAD BY CHAUCER.

The *Athenæum* of 9th June last gives a brief report of the proceedings of the Philological Society at a meeting held on the 1st June, at which Professor Skeat, Vice-President of the Society, presided. The paragraph concludes with the statement that "Professor Skeat then read and commented on the new 'Balade that Chaucier made,' which he had just found, and which is given on a prior page in the present number of the *Athenæum*."

As the discovery is one which is doubtless a matter of interest to many readers of THE WEEK, who will like to see the new-found poem, I have to ask you to re-publish Professor Skeat's communication to the *Athenæum* in full, and request that you will do me the favor of printing some observations upon it which I respectfully offer.

#### AN UNKNOWN BALLAD BY CHAUCER.

"It has previously been my good fortune, on more than one occasion, to draw attention to poems by Chaucer that were previously unknown.

"British naval history has some reason to boast of 'the glorious first of June.' It was a glorious day for me, as I spent it in consulting manuscripts in the British Museum, not without some good results. In particular I went carefully through the newly-acquired MS. Addit. 34360, formerly MS. Phillipps, 9053, the very MS. which contains the unique ultimate stanza of the remarkable poem to which I have given the name of 'A Complaint to His Lady.' This MS. has been in the hands of Stowe, of Ritson, and of Sir Thomas Phillipps; and the poem just mentioned was printed from it for the Chaucer Society. It is, therefore, almost inexplicable how the poem to which I now propose to draw attention has hitherto escaped observation. It has never been printed, and yet, all the while, any one who consults the MS. may see, staring him in the face, on fol. 21, back (formerly page 36), a title in large, bold characters, not later than 1450, 'Balade that Chaucier made.'

"I think I can account for it. It requires study and care to see how it goes. The metre is extremely intricate; the copy is carelessly written; and the sense is imperfect, owing to the loss of two leading words, and alas! in one place, of a whole line.

"Internal evidence assigns it to Chaucer beyond doubt. It is the most complete example that exists of his mastery over the technicalities of rhythm. It comprises three stanzas, each of nine lines, in the difficult metre of a part of 'Anelida and Arcite.' But it surpasses anything found in that poem, because it actually exhibits only two rhyme-endings in the whole poem (exclusive of the Envoy).

"A few such examples occur in Hoccleve. I once drew attention to this, and added that it was most unlikely that Hoccleve invented the metre for himself. I said that he certainly copied it from some poem by Chaucer which has not come down to us. And now, behold, here it is! It has come down to us, and we did not know it. I now give an exact transcript, with all the faults in spelling of the unique original. However, I supply within brackets two words that are required to complete the sense and metre; and I similarly supply the missing line by slightly altering a line which occurs in Chaucer's 'Ballade to Rosemounde':—

#### BALADE THAT CHAUCIER MADE.

So hath my hert[e] caught in rémembraunce  
 Yowre beaute hoolle, and stidefast gouernaunce,  
 Yowre vertues al[le] and yowre hie noblesse,  
 That you to serve is sette al my plesaunce.  
 So wel me likith yowre womanly contenance,  
 Yowre fresshe fetures and yowre comlynesse,  
 That, whiles I live, myn hert to his may-  
 stresse  
 You hath ful chose in triev (sic) perseueraunce  
 Neucr to chaunge, for no maner distresse.

And sith I shal do [you] this observaunce  
 Al my live, withouten desplesaunce,  
 You for to serve with al my besynesse,  
 [I pray you do to me som daliaunce]  
 And have me somwhat in your souvenaunce.  
 My woful hert[e] suffrih grete duresse;  
 And [loke] how humb[le]ly, with al sym-  
 plesse,  
 My wil I conforme to your ordynaunce,  
 As you best list my paynes for to redresse.

Considryng eke, how I hange in balaunce  
 In your service; suche, loo! is my chaunce,  
 Abidyng grace, whan that yowre gentilnesse  
 Of my grete woo list do allegeaunce,  
 And with yowre pite me som wise avaunce,  
 In ful rebatyng of myn hevynesse:  
 And thinkith be raison that wommanly no-  
 blesse

Shuld nat desire for til do the outrance  
 Ther-as she fyndith now vnbusumnesse.

#### LENOUYE.

Auctour of norture, lady of plesaunce,  
 Soueraigne of beaute, floure of womman-  
 hede,  
 Take ye now hede vnto my Ignoraunce,  
 But this receyvith of yowre goodelyhede;  
 Thynkyng that I have caught in rémembraunce  
 Yowre beaute hole, your stidefast gouernaunce.

"Suggested emendations: 2, Your (for Yowre), throughout; hool. 3, alle (two syllables); hy. 4, set. 5, lykth. 7, herte (but the final e is very slight). 8, trew (elsewhere spelt triew). 11, Al my lyf (accent on Al). 14, souvenaunce (remembrance, a beautiful and new word). 15, suffreth greet. 18, omit for. 21, gracé (two syllables); omit that. 22, allegeaunce means alleviation. 25, Read, And thinkth resoun. 26, Read, desyre for to do; omit the. 29, Read, flour. 30, Tak; myn. 31, goodlihede. 33, hool. I suspect that, in line 5, womanly is a substitution for wofly.

"Note the delicate way in which the last two lines of the Envoy catch up the echo of the first two lines of the poem. There is nothing so harmonious in all English literature, except the parallel case in which the very same master repeats the line ending with the same word remembrance

at the end of his 'Complaint of Anelida.' And this consideration clinches the whole matter and precludes the possibility that the poem can be spurious.

"WALTER W. SKEAT."

#### REMARKS ON THE EMENDATIONS PROPOSED BY PROF. SKEAT, TO BE MADE IN "THE BALADE THAT CHAUCIER MADE."

The students of old English literature, and especially all the lovers of Chaucer, will doubtless feel grateful to Prof. Skeat for this latest interesting discovery he has made in the course of his researches among MSS. of the British Museum. No one, I presume, will hesitate to regard as Chaucer's own work a poem that bears so much internal evidence of its authenticity as does this "Balade" which has thus been fortunately restored to light. Nor will its beauties of metrical form and poetic expression, so well indicated in Mr. Skeat's communication to the *Athenæum*, fail to receive due appreciation. In other respects, too, the opinions entertained and the suggestions offered by so high an authority will be received with all the deferential regard to which they are justly entitled. But it can hardly be expected that even the weight of his acknowledged eminence among the explorers and students of our old English authors will at once secure a general approval of all the emendations and changes he has suggested as proper to be made in the text of this "Balade." However imperfect is the manuscript copy by which this newly-recovered treasure has been preserved for us, the lovers of the sweet and gentle father of English poetry will not too readily admit every alteration in it, no matter how slight that alteration may be, which any person of learning and cultivated taste in these later days may confidently propose. Although few of them may have had the ample opportunities for careful investigation and study of original documents which the Cambridge Professor of Anglo-Saxon has enjoyed, many of them will be inclined to question very closely the propriety of any change they may be asked to make in the working of a manuscript, admitted to be old, that contains a hitherto unpublished poem by their favourite poet. For myself, I may be permitted to say that I have made a careful examination of all the emendations suggested by Mr. Skeat in his communication to the *Athenæum*, which is reprinted above. And I have come to the conclusion that they are, with two or three exceptions, entirely unnecessary, and are, collectively, of little value. Let us consider them in detail, referring to them separately by the numerals by which they are severally designated in Mr. Skeat's article. Each number denotes the line, or verse, in which the proposed amendment is to be made.

In the first verse of the "Balade" Prof. Skeat has inserted the final e, which we commonly call mute, as an addition to the word hert given in the manuscript. The same word occurs in two other places in the poem, in the seventh verse and in the fifteenth. In the last place he has, as in the first, inserted it, quite properly, since the metre requires it in both those places. But he has also suggested its introduction into the seventh verse, where it is not necessary. The next emendation relates to verse 3, in which Mr. Skeat directs that we should write your instead of yowre. He further directs us to change this latter form in like manner in every place in which it occurs in the "Balade." But why does he not also put