

THE PEOPLE'S MAGAZINE, AND WEEKLY JOURNAL.

Vol. I.

MONTREAL, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 1846.

No. 5

SPECIMENS OF OLD ENGLISH POETS.

No. II.—CHAUCER.

Portraits from the Pilgrimage to Canterbury.

[Chaucer wrote in the last half of the fourteenth century, and has ever since enjoyed a high reputation. His description of manners, customs, and characters, belong of course wholly to Roman Catholic times, as the reformation in Britain did not take place until nearly a century afterwards. The three portraits given in our last were those of a Nun, a Monk, and a Friar, being, we may presume, ordinary specimens of the three monastic orders. The next that we shall give is a very different character. He is described as a poor person (parson) of the town, and a learned clerk, and is evidently a specimen of the faithful under-shepherds whom the great Shepherd of the sheep raises up for himself in all ages.]

THE PARSON.

A good man ther was of religioun,
That was a poure Person of a town :
But riche he was of holy thought and werk.
He was also a lerned man, a Clerk,
That Cristes gospel trewely wolde preche ;
His parishens devoutly would he teche.
Benigne he was, and wonder diligent,
And in adversite ful patient,—
And swiche he was ypreved often sithes :
Ful loth were him to cursen for his tithes :
But rather wolde he yeven, out of doute,
Unto his poure parishens, aboute,
Of his offring, and, eke, of his substance.
He coude in litel thing have suffisance.
Wide was his parish, and houses fer asonder ;
But he ne lef nought, for no rain ne thunder,
In sikeness and in mischief to visite
The ferrest in his parish, moche and lite,—
Upon his fete, and in his hand a staf.
This noble ensample to his shepe he yaf,—
That, first, he wrought ; and, afterward, he taught.
Out of the gospel he tho wördes caught,
And this figure he added yet therto,
That if gold ruste, what shulde iron do ?
For if a preeste be foule, on whom we trust,
No wonder is a lewed man to rust ;
And shame it is, if that a preest take kepe,
To see a shitten shepherd and clenre shepe.
Wel ought a preest ensample for to yeve
By his clenenesse, how his shepe shulde live.
He sette not his benefice to hire,
And lette his shepe acombred in the mire,
And ran unto London, unto Seint Poules,
To seken him a chanterie for soules ;
Or with a brotherhede to be withold ;
But dwelt at home and kepte wel his fold,
So that the wolf ne made it not miscarie ;
He was a shepherd and no mercenarie.
And though he holy were, and vertuous,—
He was, to sinful men, not dispitous ;
Ne of his speche dangerous ne digne ;
But, in his teching, discrete and benigne.
To drawn folk to heven, with fairnesse,
By good ensample, was his besinesse :
But if it were any persone obstinat,
What so he were of highe, or low estat,
Him wolde he snibben sharply for the nones.
A better preest I trowe that no wher non is.
He waited after no pomp ne reverence,
Ne maked him no spiced conscience :
But Cristes lore, and his apostles twelve,
He taught,—but first he solwed it himselfe.

[The next and last that we shall give, though there are many more, and all interesting, is the Miller—a character who is always represented in old poetry as being endowed with a large measure of the might which then often made right, and ready to exercise that might in no very scrupulous way. This is more than hinted in the present case, where it is said he could steal corn well, and take toll thrice.]

THE MILLER.

The Miller was a stout carl for the nones,
Ful bigge he was of braun, and eke of bones ;
That proved wel ; for over all ther he came,
At wrastling he wold here away the ram.
He was short shuldered, brode, a thikke gnarre,
Ther n'as no dore, that he n'olde heve of barre.
Or breke it at a renning with his hede.
His berde as any sowe or fox was rede,
And therto brode, as though it were a spade :
Upon the cop right of his nose he hade
A wert, and theron stode a tuste of heres,
Rede as the bristles of a sowes eres :
His nose-thirles blacke were and wide.
A swerd and bokeler he bare by his side.
His mouth as wide was as a forneis :
He was a jangler and a goliardeis,
And that was most of sinne and harlotries,
Wel coude he stelen corne and tollen thries.
And yet he had a thomb of gold parde.
A white cote and a blew hode wered he.
A baggepipe wel coude he blowe and soune,
And therwithall he brought us out of tounne.

LOUISE DE LORRAINE.

A TALE FROM HISTORY.

On the 30th of April 1553, at Nomein, in a Gothic chateau on the banks of the Seine, was born the Princess Louise, daughter of Marguerite d'Égmond, the first wife of Nicolas, Duc de Mercœur and Comte de Vaudemont. At the birth of this child there was no prince in the eldest branch of the house of Lorraine. Nicolas anxiously desired a son ; therefore the little girl was received more with resignation than pleasure. She was not baptised, with the pomp due to her rank, at the cathedral of Nancy, where her cousin the Duc Charles de Lorraine then ruled, but received the baptismal rite at the little chapel of Nomein : her sponsors were the bishop of Toul and the Comtesse Louise de Salins, whose name was given to her.

The little Louise was scarcely two years old when Madame de Champy, her governess, one day came to seek her, all in tears, and bore her to the couch of her dying mother, who had never recovered the birth of Louise. Tapers were burning at the foot of the bed, whilst a kneeling priest recited the prayers for the dying. These prayers, repeated in a sad and monotonous tone by the persons around, filled the poor child's heart with terror, and she uttered loud cries. Her voice seemed to restore the dying mother to life ; the comtesse extended her arms, and Louise forgot her fear in embracing her parent, who unsfastened from her own neck a string of pearls, to which was suspended a sacred relic. 'May this guard thee, my child, as it has protected me,' said the dying mother, putting the necklace over the fair golden curls of Louise ; 'and never, never part with it !' Then, unable to speak more, she pressed her already cold lips to the forehead of Louise, and signed to Madame de Champy to remove her quickly, lest the child should be witness to her death.

The Comte de Vaudemont loved his wife tenderly, and for a long time could not endure the sight of the infant whose birth had caused so grievous a loss. Louise was entirely confided to her governess, whose attachment to her pupil increased in proportion