A Possible Source of Chaucer, "Canterbury Tales" A 4134 and D 415

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MISCELLANEOUS NOTES.

‘WAYTE WHAT’ = ‘WHATEVER.’

IN the *N. E. D.*, under *Look*, 4 b [*look* prefixed to interrogative pronoun or adv., or relative conj., forming indefinite relatives = *whoever*, *whatever*, *however*, etc.], Mr Bradley observes: ‘The absence of examples between the 12th and the 16th c. is remarkable; the idiom was prob. preserved in some non-literary dialect.’ No doubt, because the phrase is, in most cases, so easily understood without the reader being aware that it is an idiom, many instances must have been overlooked. Is there any edition of *Measure for Measure* where a note points it out in this line: ‘*Look what* I will not, that I cannot do’ (II, ii, 52)? And in fact, the idiom occurs in Chaucer, though not with ‘look,’ yet with its synonym ‘wait’:

Wayte what thing we may nat lightly have,
Ther-after wol we crye al-day and crave.

Wife of Bath's Prologue, 517.

A POSSIBLE SOURCE OF CHAUCER, ‘CANTERBURY TALES, A 4134 AND D 415.

The source of the two lines:

and With empty hand men may na haukes tulle,

 With empty hand men may none haukes lure,
may be the following passage:

Car si cum li loirres afaité
Por venir au soir at au main
Le gentil espervier à main,
Ainsi sont afaitié par dons
A donner graces et pardons
Li portiers as fins amoureux.

Roman de la Rose, ed. P. Marteau, ll. 7820–5.

J. DEROCQUIGNY.