

## STUDIES IN THE LIFE-RECORDS OF CHAUCER.

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### I. The Date of Chaucer's Birth.

The description given of Chaucer in the Scrope-Grosvenor roll: "Geffray Chaucere, Esquier, del age de xl ans et plus",<sup>1)</sup> has been a source of uncertainty ever since its discovery. Sir Harris Nicolas said with reference to it in 1832: "the many instances which have been adduced" [*i. e.* in his biographical notices of other witnesses in the controversy] "of the mistakes that occur respecting the ages of the deponents, of whom some are stated to have been ten, and others even twenty years younger than they actually were, prevents Chaucer's deposition [from] being conclusive on the point."<sup>2)</sup> Morley, in 1890, quoted these remarks and cited five examples of the mistakes to which Nicolas had alluded,<sup>3)</sup> but his discussion of the matter, tho often referred to, is both inadequate in extent and inaccurate in statement. It is with justice, therefore, that Miss Hammond says, in discussing the date of Chaucer's birth, "that the mistakes of the other witnesses, altho accepted as such by Morley, require further proof".<sup>4)</sup>

The ages of the deponents testifying in favour of Sir Richard Scrope are in the following instances incorrect by amounts varying between three and seventeen years:<sup>5)</sup>

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<sup>1)</sup> *Life-Records of Chaucer*, p. 265.

<sup>2)</sup> *The Scrope and Grosvenor Controversy*, ed. Nicolas, II. 404, L. 1832, cited hereafter as "Nicolas".

<sup>3)</sup> *English Writers*, V. 94.

<sup>4)</sup> *Chaucer*, p. 43.

<sup>5)</sup> The facts to be cited are derived, with few exceptions, from Nicolas's biographical notices of the deponents, which are contained in his second

*William Sudbury*, 55 ans & plus, but 13 at his father's death in 1348.<sup>1)</sup>

*Sir Guy Bryan*, 60 anz & plus, but first armed in 1327, and already of full age in 1330.<sup>2)</sup>

*Sir John Massy of Tatton*, described as 50 years of age when testifying on behalf of Scrope, but as 43 when testifying on behalf of Grosvenor.<sup>3)</sup>

*Sir John Mussy of Podyngton*, described as 30 years of age when testifying on behalf of Scrope, but as 32 anz & pluys when testifying on behalf of Grosvenor.<sup>4)</sup>

*Sir Laurence de Dutton*, described as 50 years of age when testifying on behalf of Scrope, but as 45 ans & pluys when testifying on behalf of Grosvenor.<sup>5)</sup>

*Sir Ralph Vernon*, described as 50 years of age when examined on behalf of Scrope, but as 46 anz & plus when examined on behalf of Grosvenor.<sup>6)</sup>

*Sir Richard Bingham*, 50 anz & plus, but already married in 1344.<sup>7)</sup>

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volume. The book, however, was not completed, and we therefore lack biographies of 36 of the Scrope witnesses and of all the Grosvenor witnesses. The task of checking the ages of the Grosvenor witnesses would be a very arduous one, and is, I believe, unnecessary, for the Scrope witnesses (about 246 in number) are numerous enough to serve as a basis for valid inference. Moreover, the two classes of witnesses were examined by different persons, and, as will be shown later, according to a different method, so that the two sets of depositions constitute two distinct bodies of material.

<sup>1)</sup> Nicolas, I. 66; II. 218; the first reference being to the record of Sudbury's deposition, the second to Nicolas's biographical notice, where reference is given to the inquisition post mortem which furnishes the evidence as to his age in 1348.

<sup>2)</sup> Nicolas, I. 76; II. 245 f. This appears to be the person Morley calls "Sir George Bogan", for no person of the latter name testified in the controversy. Morley overstates the facts, however, in saying that the deponent was "over eighty"; Nicolas says only that he was "much nearer eighty" than sixty.

<sup>3)</sup> Nicolas, I. 79; I. 360.

<sup>4)</sup> Nicolas, I. 80; I. 255.

<sup>5)</sup> Nicolas, I. 81; I. 255.

<sup>6)</sup> Nicolas, I. 81; I. 271.

<sup>7)</sup> Nicolas, I. 82; II. 266. Morley says he was "aged sixty-six", but Nicolas goes only so far as to say that he must have been born as early as 1325.

*Sir Bryan Stapleton*, 60 ans & pluïs, but armed 50 years.<sup>1)</sup>

*Sir John Constable of Halsham*, 40 anz & pluïs, but 12 years of age at his father's death in 1349.<sup>2)</sup>

*Sir William Melton*, 40, but born, according to the inquisition on the death of his father, in 1339, and according to the inquisition on the death of his mother, in 1341.<sup>3)</sup>

*Sir John Hothom*, 45, but 30 years old at the death of his uncle in 1374.<sup>4)</sup>

*Sir John Warde*, 46 ans & pluïs, but 18 years old at his father's death in 1350.<sup>5)</sup>

*Sir Sampson Strauley*, 40 ans & pluïs, but 19 years old at his "cousin's" death in 1353.<sup>6)</sup>

*Sir Robert Marny*, 52, but first armed in 1336.<sup>7)</sup>

*Sir Walter atte Lee*, 33, but 21 years of age at the death of his father in 1369.<sup>8)</sup>

*Sir James Berners*, 25, but left, at his death in 1388, a son 15 years of age.<sup>9)</sup>

*Sir Bernard Brocas*, 40, but first armed in 1346.<sup>10)</sup>

*John Schakel*, 45, but first armed in 1342.<sup>11)</sup>

*Sir John Clanvowe*, 35, but M. P. in 1348.<sup>12)</sup>

*Sir Thomas Peytevyn*, 60 ans & plus, but first armed in 1333.<sup>13)</sup>

*Sir John Bouchier*, 50, but 20 when he succeeded his father in 1349.<sup>14)</sup>

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<sup>1)</sup> Nicolas, I. 101.

<sup>2)</sup> Nicolas, I. 108; II. 296.

<sup>3)</sup> Nicolas, I. 111; II. 301.

<sup>4)</sup> Nicolas, I. 114; II. 306.

<sup>5)</sup> Nicolas, I. 118; II. 313. Identification not certain.

<sup>6)</sup> Nicolas, I. 152; II. 357 f.

<sup>7)</sup> Nicolas, I. 170; II. 386.

<sup>8)</sup> Nicolas, I. 172; II. 390.

<sup>9)</sup> Nicolas, I. 173; II. 394.

<sup>10)</sup> Nicolas, I. 180; II. 421. Morley says "his age was really fifty-six", but the *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, VI. 365, says merely that he was born "about 1330".

<sup>11)</sup> Nicolas, I. 183; II. 433.

<sup>12)</sup> Nicolas, I. 184; *Parl. Returns*, I. 143, quoted by Kittredge, *Modern Philology*, I. 15, 16. If it should turn out that the M. P. of 1348 was another person, we should still have evidence that the deponent was more than 35 in 1386, for he was already a knight in 1364 (Nicolas, II. 437).

<sup>13)</sup> Nicolas, I. 185; II. 439.

<sup>14)</sup> Nicolas, I. 189; II. 445.

*Sir John Lovel*, 40, but 21 in 1361, when he succeeded his brother.<sup>1)</sup>

*Philip, Lord Darcy*, 32, but 11 in 1362, at the death of his brother.<sup>2)</sup>

It will be observed that these discrepancies are not all in the same direction, for the ages assigned to the Scrope witnesses in some cases exceed and in others fall short of the ages assigned to them in other contemporary documents.<sup>3)</sup> Since the average excess is about four, and the average deficiency about eight years, it is clear that skepticism in regard to the value of this document as evidence of age has been well founded. And these inaccuracies become even more significant when we observe that, so far as the ages assigned to the Scrope witnesses can be checked with the material that is accessible, inaccuracy would appear to have been the rule rather than the exception. For, as compared with the twenty-three cases cited above, I find only fourteen cases in which the age set down in the roll agrees substantially with the age of the deponent as stated in other contemporary documents.<sup>4)</sup>

<sup>1)</sup> Nicolas, I. 190; II. 450.

<sup>2)</sup> Nicolas, I. 194; II. 460. All of the depositions, on both sides, were made between 16 June, 1386, and 17 January, 1387.

<sup>3)</sup> Of course it is quite possible that in certain cases the Scrope-Grosvenor roll may be right and the other records wrong. But even when we have made due allowance for this possibility there remains such a large number of gross and palpable errors that we are not encouraged to accept the evidence of the depositions unless they can be corroborated by other evidence.

<sup>4)</sup> The ages of the following deponents correspond, within two years, to the ages stated in other documents:

*Sir John Loudham, the Son*, 34, and 4 years of age in 1356 (Nicolas, I. 53; II. 175).

*Sir John Saint Clere*, 56, and 3 in 9 Edw. III (1335—36) (Nicolas, I. 54; II. 177).

*Sir Thomas Roos of Kendal*, 80 ans & plus, and 2 1/2 in 1309 (Nicolas, I. 132; II. 333).

*Sir Robert Constable*, 33 ans & plus, and 25 in 1378 (Nicolas, I. 135; II. 339).

*Sir Gerard Salvayn*, 28, and 16 in 1374 (Nicolas, I. 136; II. 340).

*Sir John Loudham, the Elder*, 70 ans & plus, and 4 in 12 Edw. II (1318—19) (Nicolas, I. 150; II. 354).

I have no intention of proposing a theory to explain all of these discrepancies. But I think it is clear that in very many cases the age of the witness, as given in the roll, is not based upon his own statement, but is merely a rough estimate of the person who took down the testimony. The cases of Sir Guy Bryan, Sir John Massy of Tatton, Sir Lawrence de Dutton, Sir Ralph Vernon, Sir Bernard Brocas, and others, can scarcely be explained on any other hypothesis. Nor can we explain so easily in any other way the remarkable partiality of the roll for round numbers in its statement of ages. It is certainly an extraordinary fact that, among about 140 persons between 35 and 64 years of age, there should be more than 75 persons who are said to be either 40, 50, or 60 years of age.<sup>1</sup>) Certainly no special pains could have been taken to ascertain the ages of the Scrope witnesses, for in nearly twenty-five per-cent of the cases the roll does not state their ages at all.<sup>2</sup>) In a great many cases the

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*Sir Gerveys Clifton*, 74 on or about 11 Nov., 1386, and 14 in 1327 (Nicolas, I. 152; II. 356).

*John Roos of Hamlake*, 21, and 18 in 1384 (Nicolas, I. 181; II. 423).

*Hugh, Lord Burnell*, 40, and 36 in 1383 (Nicolas, I. 193; II. 457).

*Roger, Lord Clifford*, born 1333, and made proof of his age in 1354 (Nicolas, I. 197; II. 469).

*Henry, Lord Percy*, 20, and born 20 May, 1364 (Nicolas, I. 199; *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, XLIV. 395).

*Henry Percy, earl of Northumberland*, 45, and born in 1342 (Nicolas, I. 215; *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, XLIV. 399).

*Edmund Langley, duke of York*, 44, and born 5 June, 1341 (Nicolas, I. 219; *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, XXXII. 109).

*Richard Fitzalan, earl of Arundel*, 38, and born 1346 (Nicolas, I. 219; *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, XIX. 98).

<sup>1</sup>) There are (approximately) 20, 24, and 33 persons who are set down as 40, 50, and 60 years of age, respectively, whereas (to take the age of next greatest frequency within these limits) there are only 7 persons who are said to be 54 years old. In this enumeration I have made no distinction between 40, etc., and 40 "et plus", etc. An examination of the examples of discrepancies given above shows that not much dependance is to be placed upon the presence or absence of "et plus" as an indication that the age is given approximately or exactly.

<sup>2</sup>) In about 59 cases out of about 246 the ages of the Scrope witnesses is not stated, all of these omissions occurring among the depositions printed by Nicolas in I. 49—140. In many of these cases the roll omits also to state the number of years the deponent has borne arms, but where the age

witness must have stated his age, with greater or less exactness, but if he did not, the person who recorded the testimony appears either to have ignored the matter of age, or else to have estimated it roughly from the witness's appearance.

The description, "del age de xl ans et plus", therefore, can scarcely be relied upon as indicating anything more precise than that Chaucer was in 1386 between thirty-six and fifty-two years of age, for it is important to observe that ten of the cases of discrepancy noted above occur in the depositions of witnesses examined by Sir John de Derwentwater, who examined Chaucer and all the persons whose testimony is printed by Nicolas in pages 160—218. Upon the most favourable estimate of its value the description cannot be depended upon as giving us any limit more precise than an age between thirty-eight and forty-eight. Now if we had no other evidence for fixing the date of his birth, this would be considerably better than nothing. But we have evidence that enables us to place it within limits considerably more precise than those named above. We know that Chaucer bore arms in 1359 and that he carried letters for the earl of Ulster from Calais to England in October, 1360.<sup>1)</sup> Since he could scarcely have rendered these services if he were less than fifteen in 1359, Chaucer must have been born not later than 1344. A *terminus a quo* for the date of his birth is furnished by the Man of Law's allusion to the *Book of the Duchess*:

In youthe he made of Ceys and Alcion.<sup>2)</sup>

is stated the other item of information is usually (but not always) given. On the other hand, the ages of the Grosvenor witnesses are always stated (with a decided partiality for round numbers), but the number of years they have borne arms is seldom or never stated.

<sup>1)</sup> *Life-Records*, pp. 154, 265; *Modern Language Notes*, XXVII. 79 ff.

<sup>2)</sup> B 57. Seeing that critical opinion has so strongly favoured the hypothesis that the Man of Law here alludes to an independent treatment of the Ceys and Alcion story, earlier than the *Book of the Duchess*, I ought not perhaps to assume the contrary hypothesis without justifying my position by formal argument. But obviously the present occasion is not a suitable one for presenting such an argument. I must content myself, therefore, with pointing out that, as shown by the relation of this line to the rest of the passage, and also by the phraseology of the line itself, the Man of Law is not speaking of *Ceys and Alcion* (a work bearing that

As the *Book of the Duchess* was written late in 1369 or early in 1370 and the Man of Law's allusion was made in 1390 or later,<sup>1)</sup> we can scarcely suppose that Chaucer was older than thirty in the year 1370. If so, he was born not earlier than 1340. These two pieces of evidence, then, enable us to place the year of his birth somewhere between 1340 and 1344. It is now generally recognised that Chaucer's allusions to his old age constitute no real objection to placing his birth between such limits.<sup>2)</sup> If, therefore, the argument here presented be accepted, it has been shown that the evidence of the Scrope-Grosvenor roll can be disregarded in estimating the date of Chaucer's birth, for we have other

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title) but of Ceys and Alceion, two famous lovers whose story Chaucer had once told in verse. He is speaking, not of what *works* Chaucer has written, but of what lovers he has written *about*. The difference of purpose is quite clear if we compare B 46 ff. with the passage, *L. G. W.*, B 417 ff., which does give a list of Chaucer's works. The story of these two lovers as told in the introduction to the *B. D.* is quite sufficient to account for the Man of Law's allusion. Therefore the hypothesis of an earlier and independent treatment of the story is quite gratuitous, for it was proposed to solve a difficulty that does not exist.

1) Tatlock, *Development and Chronology of Chaucer's Works*, 172 ff.

2) The parallels given by Skeat, *Oxford Chaucer*, I. xvi, and Lowes, *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, XX. 782 ff., ought to convince anyone, but it may be worth while to add two others. Bokenham says in regard to undertaking literary work:

But sekyr, I fere to gynne so late,  
Lest men wolde ascryuen it to dotage;  
For wel I know that fer in age  
I am runne & my lyues date  
Aprochith faste & the fers rage  
Of cruel deth — so wyl my fate  
Ineuytable — hath at my gate  
Set hys carte to carye me hens,  
And I ne may ne can, than I hym hate,  
Ageyn hys fors make resistens

(*Legenden*, ed. Horstmann, St. Anne, II. 7—16, p. 37).

Yet when he wrote these lines the author was probably between 50 and 52 years of age (Horstmann, pp. V—VII). Caxton says, at the age of about 52, "age creepeth on me daily and feebleth all the body" (Epilogue to Book III of the *Recuyell of the Histories of Troy*, printed in A. W. Pollard, *Fifteenth Century Prose and Verse*, p. 216).

evidence that enables us to fix the date much more precisely than we could do by means of the datum that the poet's age was "forty years and more" in 1386.

## II. The Date of Chaucer's Marriage; the Date of his Entrance into the Royal Household.

Koch wrote in 1890, with reference to this matter: "It is not quite impossible that Chaucer may have been married before that year [1374]; but what attractions could the state of wedlock offer to a valet or squire, if we read in king Edward II's Household and Wardrobe Ordinances that those young men had constantly to attend upon his Majesty, and were not allowed to keep their wives at court or following the court?"<sup>1)</sup> The ordinance here referred to is as follows:

And that none of the kinges meignee, of what condition soever he be, knight or clarke, serjant, esquier, charetter or sompter boy, page or sutor, keepe his wife at the court, nor els-where as a folower of the court; but only such women to be there, which are in chief with the kinge, or such as are intitled in the marshalsy in the Coroners roul, there to be imploied in certaine offices.<sup>2)</sup>

But since Philippa Chaucer was one of the queen's *damoiselles* the prohibition does not apply to her and therefore furnishes no objection to the view that Chaucer was married as early as 1366.

Nor was Chaucer the only esquire whose wife was a member of the royal household. Three of his colleagues, according to the list of September 1, 1369, were John Olney, Esmon Rose, and John Belvale.<sup>3)</sup> Of these, the two former were married to ladies who were *damoiselles* at the same time as Philippa Chaucer,<sup>4)</sup> and the latter to a lady who was also

<sup>1)</sup> *Chronology of Chaucer's Writings*, pp. 17 f.

<sup>2)</sup> *Life-Records*, p. 56.

<sup>3)</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 173, 174. Olney and Belvale are named as esquires to the queen, and Rose as an esquire to the king, in the household account of December, 1368 [?], *Life-Records*, pp. 164, 165.

<sup>4)</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.



in the Queen's service. The fact of their marriage is proved by the documents that follow:

To John de Olneye, usher of the chamber of Philippa, the late queen of England, and Stephanetta his wife, to whom the lord the king, by his letters patent, lately granted 25 marks yearly, to be received at the Exchequer during the lives of the said John and Stephanetta, for the good services rendered as well by him to the same lord the king, as by her to Philippa, the late queen of England. In money delivered to them, etc.<sup>1)</sup>

To John Belevale, and Catherine, his wife, to whom the lord the king, by his letters patent, lately granted 20 marks yearly, to be received at the Exchequer during their lives, for the good service rendered by them as well to the same lord the king as to Philippa, late queen of England. In money delivered to them, etc.<sup>2)</sup>

23 March, 1378. The like [*i. e.* *Inspecimus* and confirmation] in favour of Edmund Rose, yeoman of the late king, retained, of letters patent dated 24 July, 17 Edward III, being a grant to the said Edmund and Agnes Archer, his wife, damsel of queen Philippa, of 40 marks yearly at the Exchequer until otherwise ordered.<sup>3)</sup>

The circumstances of these grantees are a perfect parallel with those of Geoffrey and Philippa Chaucer, except in one respect. In these cases the annuities were granted to the husband and wife jointly, whereas Philippa Chaucer received a grant of 10 marks yearly in September, 1366, and Geoffrey Chaucer received another of 20 marks yearly in June, 1367.<sup>4)</sup> From this it *might* be argued that Geoffrey and Philippa were not married as early as 1366. But the facts are equally consistent with a different interpretation. It is quite possible

<sup>1)</sup> *Issue Roll of Thomas de Brantingham*, translated by Frederick Devon, p. 40. This roll runs from April, 1370, to April, 1371.

<sup>2)</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 365.

<sup>3)</sup> *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, 1377—1381*, p. 187.

<sup>4)</sup> *Life-Records*, pp. 158, 160.

that Geoffrey Chaucer was not a member of the royal household in September, 1366, when Philippa received her grant of an annuity. In view of the fact that Chaucer's name does not appear in the household account ending 31 January, 1367,<sup>1)</sup> the possibility just stated becomes, I think, a fairly strong probability.

### III. Chaucer's Lease of the Mansion over Aldgate.

On 10 May, 1374, the mayor, aldermen, and commonalty of the City of London granted to Chaucer, for life, the premises described as "totam mansionem supra portam de Algate, cum domibus superedificatis et quodam celario subtus eandem portam, in parte australi eiusdem porte, cum suis pertinenciis".<sup>2)</sup> We do not know why this grant was made to Chaucer, for the document from which I have quoted records merely the fact of the grant and the terms on which it was given. It may therefore be useful to call attention to certain leases made, during Chaucer's lifetime, of mansions situated over the other gates of the City. These leases will at least prove that the privilege Chaucer received was not an extraordinary one, and they may also suggest to us the grounds upon which he obtained it.

On 27 October, 1375, a mansion over the gate of Aldersgate, with gardens adjacent, was granted to Ralph Strode, the Common Pleader of the City, to be held by him as long as he remained in office,<sup>3)</sup> and on 15 September, 1378,

<sup>1)</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 158f. Chaucer's name is absent also from the household account of 1361, *ibid.*, p. 155. Mr. Kirk says, in his Forewords to the *Life-Records*, p. xix, that the language of the patent of 20 June, 1367, "implies that Geoffrey had been in the king's service for some years". But in fact we can place no dependence upon the words "pro bono servicio quod dilectus vallectus noster Galfridus Chaucer nobis impendit et impendet infuturum" as an indication of the length of service rendered by Chaucer previous to the granting of the patent. For when Henry IV grants to Chaucer an annuity of 40 marks, 13 Oct., 1399, the patent (*Life-Records*, p. 327) employs the same language as was used in the patent of 1367 — "servicio quod dilectus Armiger noster Galfridus Chaucer nobis impendit et impendet" — altho Henry IV was then only in the second week of his reign.

<sup>2)</sup> *Life-Records*, Doc. 80.

<sup>3)</sup> R. R. Sharpe, *Calendar of Letter Books of the City of London*, H. p. 15. A second grant was made to Strode of the mansion over Aldgate, 4 Nov., 1377, for life (*ibid.*, p. 83).

certain tenements over Ludgate were granted, on the same condition, to William Wircestre and Philip Waleworthe, Serjeants of the Chamber.<sup>1)</sup> During Northampton's mayoralty (1381—1383) Strode's grant was cancelled, and the mansion over Aldersgate was granted to Wircestre and Waleworthe, who had surrendered their tenements over Ludgate.<sup>2)</sup> The term of their lease was the same as before, as long as they should remain in office. The tenements over Ludgate were then granted "at the repeated request of the king" to John Beauchamp, the king's esquire, to be held by him during the pleasure of the mayor, aldermen, and commonalty of the City.<sup>3)</sup> But afterwards, when it was ordained that a prison should be established in the houses over Ludgate, John Beauchamp petitioned that he might have the mansion and gardens over Aldersgate, and they were granted to him, Wircestre and Waleworth being allowed to hold the houses over Ludgate until it should be necessary to surrender them for the purpose of the prison.<sup>4)</sup>

On 23 May, 1386, the mansion over Aldersgate was granted to John Fekynham, the king's esquire, for life.<sup>5)</sup> Some months later, on 4 October, 1386, the Common Council passed a resolution to the effect that thenceforth no grants should be made of the City gates, etc., but that they should remain in the hands of the City.<sup>6)</sup> Notwithstanding this resolution, however, the mansion over Aldgate (formerly Chaucer's) was granted for life on the very next day to

<sup>1)</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>2)</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 83, 208, 245.

<sup>3)</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 208.

<sup>4)</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 208. The date of this entry appears from p. 207 to be 11 Dec., 1382. After the prison over Ludgate had been established, the custody of the tenements, of the gate itself, and of the prisoners therein was granted to Richard Jargevylle (*ibid.*, p. 253), a City Serjeant (*ibid.*, p. 292).

<sup>5)</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 284. The record does not state that he was an esquire of the king, but we find in the *Calendar of the Patent Rolls*, 1385—1389, p. 344, a grant from the king to "John Fekenham, esquire", dated 12 Aug., 1387; also, *ibid.*, 1391—1396, p. 610, a grant to "the king's esquire John Fekkenham, usher of the chamber", dated 26 July, 1395. Numerous other references to him are to be found in the Patent Rolls of Richard's reign.

<sup>6)</sup> *Calendar of Letter Books*, H, p. 290.

Richard Forster, whom we may with considerable probability identify with the Richard Forster who was one of the king's esquires in 1369.<sup>1</sup>) And on 4 December, 1395, the mansion over Aldersgate, then in the occupation of Nicolas Covelee,

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<sup>1</sup>) *Ibid.*; *Life-Records*, Doc. 192; *ibid.*, p. 174. We meet with the name Richard Forster (or Forester) at three places in the *Life-Records*; a Richard Forster, as stated above, was one of Chaucer's fellow esquires in September, 1369; Richard Forester was appointed, with John Gower, as Chaucer's attorney on 21 May, 1378 (*Life-Records*, D.c. 120); and Richard Forster succeeded Chaucer as tenant of the mansion over Aldgate in 1386. It seems reasonable to assume that the records of 1369 and 1378 refer to the same person, for nothing would be more natural than that Chaucer should select as one of his attorneys a man who had been his associate in the king's household. The identification of the Richard Forster of 1386 with the king's esquire of 1369 is not certain, but I believe that it is correct. We know that Forster was not a City official and we know that a Richard Forster had been a member of the royal household. Therefore, since all the other known grantees are found to be either City officials or members of the household, it is a fair inference that this grantee is identical with the former king's esquire,

It is impossible to *prove* either of these identifications, for there were at least three men of that name living in London during Chaucer's lifetime. (1) Richard Forster, a woolmonger, son and heir of Nicholas atte Chambre, called Forster, died before 13 Feb., 1382, leaving a widow named Emma, who afterwards married John Munstede, a draper; Elizabeth Forster, his daughter, also married a draper, John Bramstone (*Letter Books*, H, pp. 185 f.; Hardy and Page, *Calendar to the Feet of Fines, London and Middlesex*, I, pp. 170 f.). (2) Richard Forster married, c. 1393, Idonia, daughter of William Knyghtcote, who died before 27 July, 1387, leaving to Idonia and her two sisters the sum of £ 1471 7 s. 1 d., of which sum it appears that Idonia and her husband received £ 500 (*Letter Books*, H, pp. 316, 323, 401 f.). (3) Richard Forster, of Haldenham, and Agnes his wife are recorded in a fine of 9 Henry IV as parties to the transfer of two messuages in Idelstre (Hardy and Page, I, p. 175). There are numerous other references to Richard Forster of London in the Patent Rolls, Letter Books, Feet of Fines, and other documents, but they are not of much value for biographical purposes because it is impossible to determine which individual is referred to, except, of course, that records later than 13 Feb., 1382, must relate either to (2) or (3). It is fairly certain, however, that it was (2) who received the grant of the mansion over Aldgate in 1386, for the first clear mention of (3) occurs more than twenty years later.

It is only fair to say, in conclusion, that Chaucer is quite likely to have been acquainted with Richard Forster, woolmonger, as well as with Richard Forster, esquire, and that it may have been the former whom he appointed as his attorney. It seems more likely, however, that it was the latter.

Serjeant of the Chamber, was granted, together with a pension of 100 s. a year, to John Blytone, late the mayor's esquire.<sup>1)</sup>

The facts set forth in the preceding paragraphs throw some light on Chaucer's grant. Most of the grantees — Ralph Strode, William Wircestre, Philip Waleworth, Nicolas Covelee, and John Blytone — were officials of the City. The others — John Beauchamp, John Fekynham, and Richard Forster — were all (if I may assume the correctness of Forster's identification) esquires of the king. Since Chaucer was never a City official,<sup>2)</sup> and cannot have obtained the grant on that ground, it seems reasonable to infer that he owed his mansion over Aldgate to the fact that he was one of the king's esquires.

#### IV. The Cecilia Chaumpaigne Episode.

It was suggested some years ago, in a communication made by Mr. Floyd to Dr. Furnivall, that Cecilia Chaumpaigne belonged to the Pembrokeshire family of that name.<sup>3)</sup> Walter Rye, on the other hand, suggested that she belonged to the Suffolk Chaumpaignes.<sup>4)</sup> It is quite certain, however, that her father was a resident neither of Pembroke nor Suffolk, but was a London baker. This is proved by the data contained in his will, the abstract of which I quote below:

Chaumpeney (William), baker. — To be buried in the church of S. Thomas the Apostle. Bequests to the churches and ministers of S. Mary de Fanchirche and S. Thomas aforesaid; to various religious orders, the Hospital of S. Mary without Bysshopesgate, and the work of S. Paul's Church. Provision made for chantries in the said church of S. Thomas for the good of his soul, *and the souls of Agnes and Alice his wives*, and others out of the issues and profits of a certain

<sup>1)</sup> *Letter Books*, H, p. 433.

<sup>2)</sup> In his position of controller of the custom and subsidy in the port of London, Chaucer was an officer of the Crown, not of the City. Besides, he did not receive that office until 8 June, nearly a month after he received the grant of the mansion over Aldgate.

<sup>3)</sup> *Trial-Forewords*, p. 138.

<sup>4)</sup> *Athenæum*, 29 January, 1881, p. 166.

tenement in the parish of S. Thomas, which tenement so charged he leaves to John atte Welde and Isabella, wife of the same, his daughter, in tail; remainder to the rector of the said parish church and his successors forever. To Robert Chaumpeneys and to the aforesaid Isabella, as well as to John his son and *Agnes, Idonea, Marion, and Cecilia his daughters*, and to Juliana, daughter of John Chaumpeneys his son, and others, he leaves sums of money and household goods. To Sir William, the rector of the aforesaid church of S. Thomas, the residue of all his movable goods and chattels for pious and charitable uses. Dated London, Friday next after the Feast of Nativity of S. John Baptist [24 June], A. D. 1360.<sup>1)</sup>

Cecilia Chaumpaigne describes herself on 1 May, 1380, as "filiam quondam Willelmi Chaumpaigne et Agnetis vxoris eius";<sup>2)</sup> so that the identification is unquestionable.

### V. Chaucer's Controllership.

The patent of 8 June, 1374, appointing Chaucer controller of the custom and subsidy of wools, etc., is so explicit that there is no doubt as to the office it conferred. But the patent of 8 May, 1382, granting him the "*officium Contrarotulatoris parue Custume nostre in Portu Londonie, habendum et excercendum per se vel sufficientem deputatum suum*";<sup>3)</sup> is somewhat ambiguous, for there were two taxes, quite distinct from each other, that were called "*parva custuma*". There

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<sup>1)</sup> R. R. Sharpe, *Calendar of Wills, Court of Hustings, London*, Pt. II, pp. 13 f. Italics mine. The will was proved on the Monday after the Feast of St. Valentine, 1361. Rye, *l. c.*, and Kirk, *Life-Records*, p. 227, mention records relating to Robert Chaumpaigne. Kirk also says, *ibid.*, p. xxx, "In 1379, Robert Chaumpayn, saddler, son of William Chaumpayn, formerly citizen and saddler of London, evidently a brother of Cecily, failed to pay 52 l. due on a recognisance to Robert Boxford", etc.

<sup>2)</sup> *Life-Records*, p. 225. If, as would appear to be the case, Agnes, Cecilia's mother, was William Chaumpaigne's first wife, Cecilia must have been at least twenty-two years of age in May, 1380, allowing an interval of not less than two years between the death of his first wife and his marriage to his second.

<sup>3)</sup> *Life Records*, Doc. 155.

was (1) the "parva custuma" or "nova custuma"; originally prescribed by the Carta Mercatoria in 1303, which levied specific duties on certain kinds of merchandise and a duty of 3 *d.* in the pound on all other goods;<sup>1)</sup> and (2) a subsidy, granted periodically by Parliament, which levied a duty of 2 *s.* on each tun of wine imported and a duty of 6 *d.* in the pound on all other goods exported or imported.<sup>2)</sup> The term "parva custuma" was applied to both of these taxes.<sup>3)</sup> Chaucer's appointment was to the office concerned with the first of these taxes, the "nova custuma". This is proved by the following patent, dated 12 January, 1384:

Appointment, during pleasure, as from St. Andrew's last, of John Balsham of London as controller of the subsidy of 2 *s.* a tun of wine and 6 *d.* a pound of other merchandise, exported and imported, as granted by the Commons in Parliament, in the port of London ...<sup>4)</sup>

<sup>1)</sup> Atton and Holland, *The King's Customs*, L. 1908; pp. 13—15; W. Cunningham, *The Growth of English Industry and Commerce during the Early and Middle Ages*, Camb., 1905, p. 277; for the statute of Nova Custuma see *Munimenta Gildhallae Londoniensis*, Vol. II, Pt. 1, *Liber Customarum*, pp. 205 ff.

<sup>2)</sup> Atton and Holland, pp. 23—25. The rate of the subsidy varied; that named above was the subsidy for 1382 (*Rotuli Parliamentorum*, III. 124, but in 1390 the rate was 3 *s.* a tun of wine and 12 *d.* a pound of other merchandise (*ibid.*, III. 279). This duty was also called Tunnage and Poundage.

<sup>3)</sup> For the application of the term to the "nova custuma" see *Life-Records*, Doc. 82, "officia tam . . . quam Contrarotulatoris parue Custume vinorum, ac trium denariorum de libra", etc. For its application to Tunnage and Poundage see the following patent:

Rex omnibus ad quos etc. salutem. Sciatis quod commisimus dilecto nobis Ricardo Laton' officium contrarotulatoris tam customarum et subsidii lanarum coriorum et pellium lanutarum quam parue custume et subsidii trium solidorum de quolibet dolio vini et duodecim denariorum de libra nobis in parlamento nostro anno regni nostri quartodecimo tento concessorum in portu ville de Melcombe . . .

(22 October 1392, Patent Roll, 16 Richard II, pt. 2, mem. 26.)

The patent, dated 23 May, 1399, appointing Thomas Olyvere to these same offices in the ports of Colchester and Maldon is substantially identical in its language with Laton's; it is contained in Patent Roll, 22 Richard II, pt. 3, mem. 12. It may be that "parva custuma" alone always meant the "nova custuma", the words "et subsidium" being added when the other duty was meant.

<sup>4)</sup> *Calendar of the Patent Rolls*, 1381—1385, p. 363.

For, since we know that Chaucer remained continuously in exercise of his office from the date of his appointment until he was superseded, 14 December, 1386, this appointment of John Balsham must relate to an office different from that held by Chaucer.<sup>1)</sup>

It is of some interest to ascertain who were Chaucer's predecessors and successors in his two controllerships. I find that the following appointments were made during Richard II's reign to the controllership of the petty custom [*i. e.* the "nova custuma"] in the port of London:

22 June, 1377	John Oxwyk. <sup>2)</sup>
28 October, 1380	Stephen Brunne. <sup>3)</sup>
20 April, 1381	John atte Hide. <sup>4)</sup>
20 April, 8 May, 1382	Geoffrey Chaucer.
14 December, 1386	Henry Gisors. <sup>5)</sup>
2 September, 1388	Robert Kesteven. <sup>6)</sup>
18 January, 1389	Henry Gisors. <sup>7)</sup>
9 December, 1389	Hugh Martyn. <sup>8)</sup>
24 June, 1392	Robert Wolmersty. <sup>9)</sup>

<sup>1)</sup> *Life-Records*, Docs. 155, 159, 160, 162, 167, 171, 182, 191, 198, 200.

<sup>2)</sup> *Calendar of the Patent Rolls*, 1377—1381, p. 5; as his patent is dated the first day of Richard's reign it is likely to have been a reappointment. Oxwyk was controller of the subsidy of 6 *d.* in the pound as well as the petty custom proper. He appears to have been a citizen of London, by trade an apothecary (*ibid.*, 1388—1392, p. 65; 1391—1396, p. 267).

<sup>3)</sup> *Ibid.*, 1377—1381, p. 552.

<sup>4)</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 615. John Hyde, clerk, and John Hyde, chaplain, are mentioned in the Patent Rolls, 22 May, 1386, and 25 March, 1390 (*ibid.*, 1385—1389, p. 149; 1388—1392, p. 237).

<sup>5)</sup> *Ibid.*, 1385—1389, p. 248.

<sup>6)</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 502. Robert Kesteven received letters of protection, 31 May 1389, as going on the king's service to the castle of Berwick upon Tweed, to stay there in the company of the earl of Northumberland, warden of the same (*ibid.*, 1388—1392, p. 166).

<sup>7)</sup> *Ibid.*, 1388—1392, p. 3.

<sup>8)</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163. Hugh Martyn, king's servitor, received on 30 May, 1382, a grant of all the lands, etc., held in King's Walden by John Wylkyn, who had been convicted of felony and treason (*ibid.*, 1381—1385, p. 125; cf. *ibid.*, p. 258).

<sup>9)</sup> *Ibid.*, 1391—1396, p. 97. He was reappointed 1 April, 1393 (*ibid.*, p. 245). Robert Wolmersty, king's servant, received on 1 June, 1389, a grant of the free chapel of Kellam, co. Cardigan; and was appointed escheator in the same county, 17 April, 1391 (*ibid.*, 1388—1392, pp. 47, 398).



13 July, 1396            John Stranton.<sup>1)</sup>  
 17 February, 1397    Thomas Stranston.<sup>2)</sup>

And the following appointments to the controllership of the custom and subsidy of wools, etc., in the same port:

22 June, 1377            Geoffrey Chaucer (reappointed).  
 4 December, 1386    Adam Yerdele.<sup>3)</sup>  
 2 July, 1387            John de Hermesthorpe.<sup>4)</sup>  
 30 November, 1390    John Hermesthorpe.<sup>5)</sup>  
 8 December, 1391    Roger Barry.<sup>6)</sup>  
 20 July, 1392           William Preston.<sup>7)</sup>  
 31 July, 1396           Robert Wolmersty.<sup>8)</sup>  
 17 February, 1397    William Preston.<sup>9)</sup>

<sup>1)</sup> *Ibid.*, 1396—1399, p. 20. But the patent bears the notation, "Vacated because nothing was done herein", so that it would appear that Stranton did not actually serve.

<sup>2)</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>3)</sup> *Ibid.*, 1385—1389, p. 241.

<sup>4)</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 330. He is entitled in the patent "the king's clerk". Many other notices of him are to be found in the Patent Rolls.

<sup>5)</sup> *Ibid.*, 1388—1392, p. 356.

<sup>6)</sup> *Ibid.*, 1391—1396, p. 7.

<sup>7)</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126. A William Preston, chaplain and parson of Henton Bluet, diocese of Bath and Wells, received from the king, 18 October, 1385, and 26 May, 1388, the vicarages of Wollavynton and Lapley (*ibid.*, 1385—1389, pp. 35, 451).

<sup>8)</sup> *Ibid.*, 1396—1399, p. 20. It would appear that Wolmersty did not actually receive the office, for the patent has the notation, "Vacated because nothing was done herein".

<sup>9)</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79. Preston was reappointed at the beginning of Henry IV's reign (*ibid.*, 1399—1401, pp. 2, 7), 12 October, 1399, and appears to have retained his office until 24 November, 1400, when Thomas Straweston was appointed (*ibid.*, p. 383). Straweston is no doubt identical with Thomas Strowston, appointed controller of the petty custom on 10 October, 1399 (*ibid.*, p. 11), and I believe that Thomas Stranston, appointed 17 February, 1397, as above, is the same person. The patents for these offices seldom or never name the person who is succeeded by the appointee, so that only a very long and laborious search would ensure one's finding all the appointments to a given office. I have collected all the material to which the excellent indexes of the calendars give a clue, and I believe the lists to be substantially complete. The patent of Hugh Martyn (*ibid.*, 1388—1392, p. 334) grants to him, after he has been serving as controller of the petty custom for a year and a quarter without receiving any wages therefor, the usual wages "as received by William Leek, late controller", but I find

A mere inspection of the dates and names here listed suffices to show that Chaucer's tenure of the controllership of the custom and subsidy greatly exceeded that of the other controllers during Richard's reign, and that his tenure of the controllership of the petty custom was exceeded only by that of Robert Wolmersty, who (if we ignore the appointment of John Stranton, which did not take effect) served a few days longer than Chaucer. We see also that Chaucer was the only controller who held the two offices simultaneously. These facts, and especially his long tenure of office, are good evidence (if any more be needed) of Chaucer's business ability.

An examination of the patents for these appointments (or rather of the abstracts contained in the calendars) shows further that Chaucer was the only controller of the petty custom in the port of London during Richard's reign whose patent provided that he might exercise the office either personally or by deputy.<sup>1)</sup> Moreover, Chaucer's successors in the controllership of the custom and subsidy were all required by their patents to exercise the office in person, and I can find but one case in which one of his successors received, subsequent to appointment, such permission to appoint a deputy as Chaucer received in 1385.<sup>2)</sup> This is as follows:

3 July, Grant, by advice of the Council, to John de Harnes-  
1387 thorp, controller of the custom and subsidy of wools,

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no record of Leek's appointment during Richard's reign. I suspect that he was appointed in the previous reign, but I am unable to verify this surmise, for the Patent Rolls for the later years of Edward III's reign have not yet been calendared.

<sup>1)</sup> All of the controllers except Henry Gisors and Robert Kesteven are expressly required to exercise the office in person. The patents of these two appointees, as I have ascertained, are substantially identical with Document 153 of the *Life-Records*, Chaucer's patent of 20 April, 1382, which neither permits nor forbids the exercise of the office by deputy.

<sup>2)</sup> *Life-Records*, Doc. 177. In the *Athenaeum* of 28 January, 1888, p. 116, W. D. Selby says in regard to Chaucer's petition for leave to appoint a deputy at the Wool Quay:

The date of this petition is readily fixed, for among the documents discovered of late years was one in which the deputy here applied for is actually named. The date is 1385, and Richard Baret was, I believe, the man who became Chaucer's "sufficient deputy ..."

The *Life-Records* do not contain the document here referred to and I should be very glad to obtain information in regard to it.

hides and wool-fells in the port of London, that as he is one of the chamberlains of the Exchequer, he may execute the office of controller aforesaid by deputy and remain chamberlain, notwithstanding statutes to the contrary, provided that he be present at the former as often as he can attend.

By C.<sup>1)</sup>

Chaucer's privilege of appointing a deputy seems, indeed, to have been a very unusual one, contrary to the settled practice of administering these controllerships, not merely in London but in the other ports as well,<sup>2)</sup> and the terms of the grant to Hermesthorpe show this very clearly. Moreover, the care that is taken to state the reasons that existed for granting the privilege to Hermesthorpe contrasts strongly with the absence of such statement in Chaucer's grant. One suspects that the latter would have been more specific had the reasons for granting the privilege been of a similar kind in the two cases.

## VI. Chaucer's Surrender of his Annuities.

The king's patent of 1 May, 1388, after reciting the terms of Chaucer's two annuities of 20 marks each, concludes with:

Nos, ad supplicacionem prefati Galfridi, et pro eo quod ipse dictas literas nostras nobis in Cancellaria nostra restituit cancellandas, de gracia nostra speciali, et pro bono seruicio quod Johannes Scalby nobis impendet in futurum, concessimus eidem Johanni dictas quadraginta marcas percipiendas singulis annis ad Scaccarium nostrum . . . . ., ad totam vitam ipsius Johannis, vel quousque pro statu suo aliter duxerimus ordinandum.<sup>3)</sup>

Most of the scholars who have discussed this incident in Chaucer's life — Morris, Fleay, Hales, Ward, Ten Brink,

<sup>1)</sup> *Calendar of the Patent Rolls*, 1385—1389, p. 329.

<sup>2)</sup> I have examined, by means of the calendars, about 75 patents for these controllerships in London and other ports during the reign of Richard II but have found none except Chaucer's that expressly permits the appointment of a deputy.

<sup>3)</sup> *Life-Records*, Doc. 205.

Pollard, Skeat — have been of opinion that Chaucer *sold* his annuities, that is, assigned them to Scalby and received a lump sum in return.<sup>1)</sup> But Nicolas and Kirk, whose knowledge of the public records was probably superior to that of any other persons who have written considerably on Chaucer, expressed a good deal of uncertainty in regard to this matter. Nicolas said:

This proceeding has been considered as a proof that Chaucer, being much distressed, had sold his pensions to Scalby; and altho such an inference is probable, its correctness is by no means certain.<sup>2)</sup>

Kirk wrote:

It may be asserted, without fear of contradiction, that it was a most unusual thing for any man to surrender a pension, and for the king to grant it to some one else. Lands and tenements, or offices, were frequently surrendered in this way, but not pensions. It is hard to tell whether Chaucer sold his interest to Scalby, or whether it was intended that Scalby should act as a trustee. The former would be an almost unheard-of proceeding, while the latter could hardly have been the case, as the new grant was made to Scalby for the term of his own life, and he was to receive payment at the Exchequer.<sup>3)</sup>

Mr. Kirk's opinion upon questions relating to the records is always to be received with the greatest respect, but in this case, as I shall try to show, he appears to be in error.

The surrender of an annuity, with a request that it be granted to another person, was by no means an extraordinary occurrence. I have found in the Patent Rolls of Richard II's reign twenty-five cases analogous to the transfer of Chaucer's annuities to John Scalby, and I believe that an examination

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<sup>1)</sup> Morris, *Prologue*, etc., p. xiii; Fleay, *Guide to Chaucer and Spenser*, p. 14; Hales, *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, X. 164; Ward, *Chaucer*, p. 105; Ten Brink, *History of English Literature*, II. 120; Pollard, *Primer*, p. 17; Skeat, *Oxford Chaucer*, I. xxxix. My collection of opinions is obviously not exhaustive.

<sup>2)</sup> *Aldine Chaucer*, L. 1893, I. 34.

<sup>3)</sup> *Life-Records*, p. xxxvi.

of some of them will enable us to understand more clearly the nature of that transaction. Typical examples are these:

- 11 March, The like [viz., *Inspeximus* and confirmation], in favour  
1387. of Roger Belet and Agnes his wife, of letters patent, dated 1 December, 23 Edward III, being a grant to them of 10 *l.* yearly at the Exchequer.

By the Great Council.

*Vacated by surrender and cancelled, because the king with the assent of the said Agnes, who survived the said Roger, granted that sum to John Cokayn, for life, 6 April, 6 Richard II. <sup>1)</sup>*

- 23 March, The like [viz., *Inspeximus* and confirmation], in favour  
1388. of William Pusy, one of the yeomen of the late king's household, of letters patent dated 15 July, 50 Edward III, being a like grant to him of 100 *s.* yearly at the Exchequer.

By the Great Council.

*Vacated by surrender and cancelled, because the king, with his consent, granted the said amount to John Cokayn, 10 April, 6 Richard II. <sup>2)</sup>*

The grant to John Cokayn is as follows:

- 6 April, Grant, for life, to John Cokayn, "l'uncle", of 15 *l.*  
1388. yearly at the Exchequer at the supplication<sup>3)</sup> of Agnes, late the wife of Roger Belet, and William Pusy, to whom 10 *l.* and 100 *s.* yearly respectively were granted by letters patent dated 1 December, 23 Edward III, and 15 July, 50 Edward III, and confirmed by letters patent of the present king, surrendered.

By p. s. <sup>4)</sup>

- 11 March, *Inspeximus* and confirmation, in favour of Thomas  
1378. de Laleham, of letters patent, dated 20 January, 32 Edward III, being a grant to him, for life, of 2 *d.* daily out of the farm of Kyngeston-upon-Thames.

By the Great Council.

<sup>1)</sup> *Calendar of the Patent Rolls*, 1377—1381, p. 148.

<sup>2)</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 187.

<sup>3)</sup> The phrases "at the supplication of" and "with the assent of" appear to be interchangeable. Cf. the notation on Roger Belet's patent above.

<sup>4)</sup> *Ibid.*, 1381—1385, p. 265.

*Vacated by surrender and cancelled, because the king at his request granted the said sum to John Stapenhull, one of the yeomen of the king's kitchen, 8 March, 16 Richard II.<sup>1)</sup>*

The grant to John Stapenhull is as follows:

8 March, Grant, for life, at the supplication of Thomas de 1393. Laleham and on his surrender of the like grant, to John Stapenhull, one of the yeomen of the kitchen, of 2*d.* a day from the farm of Kyngeston upon Thames. By p. s.<sup>2)</sup>

In a number of cases the records prove that the surrender and transfer operated to the advantage of the original grantee. Nicholas Rynenettes of Polayn received, 19 May, 1390, for life or until further order, a grant of 20*l.* a year from the issues of the City of London and county of Middlesex; upon his surrender of his letters patent the king granted him that sum for the life of Anne, his wife, 16 June, 1395.<sup>3)</sup> Similarly, Perrine Whetteneye, one of the queen's ladies, surrendered her grant of 10*l.* a year, upon which it was granted again to herself and her husband, Thomas Clanevowe, esquire of the king, in survivorship, 2 October, 1392.<sup>4)</sup> In these two cases the original grantee was enabled to provide in this way for a surviving wife or husband; in other cases he was enabled, by the surrender and transfer of his annuity, to provide for a son. Master John Goderiche, King Edward's cook, had letters patent for a grant of 20*l.* yearly at the Exchequer; these were surrendered and cancelled because at his supplication King Richard granted these 20*l.* to William, his son, for life, 3 April, 1391.<sup>5)</sup> Likewise, John de Burlegh, knight, surrendered his letters patent for 100 marks a year, and at his request that sum was granted to his son, John de Burlegh, for life, 25 October, 1378.<sup>6)</sup>

<sup>1)</sup> *Ibid.*, 1377—1381, p. 150.

<sup>2)</sup> *Ibid.*, 1391—1396, p. 258.

<sup>3)</sup> *Ibid.*, 1388—1392, p. 250.

<sup>4)</sup> *Ibid.*, 1388—1392, p. 250; 1391—1396, p. 185.

<sup>5)</sup> *Ibid.*, 1377—1381, p. 212; 1388—1392, p. 394.

<sup>6)</sup> *Ibid.*, 1377—1381, p. 281.

Moreover, the very language of some of these patents proves that the transfer was made in consequence of an arrangement of some kind between the original and the later grantee. For example:

18 July, Grant, for life, to John de Notyngnam, one of the  
1383. clerks of the Treasury, of 10 marks yearly from the assize of bread and ale in Cambridge at the hands of the chancellor of the University, in lieu of an annuity of that amount at the Exchequer, granted to Thomas Prest, for life, ... *which annuity the said Thomas demised to the said John.*

By p. s. <sup>1)</sup>

7 June, Grant, for life, to John Derby, late poulturer of the  
1386. household of the king's mother, of the 2 *d.* daily payable by the receiver of the honor of Walyngford, under letters patent of the king's father confirmed by the king, to William atte Halle, *who has granted all his estate therein to the said John*, and surrendered in Chancery the said letters patent and confirmation.

By p. s. <sup>2)</sup>

17 July, Grant, for life, to Roger Cokerell, yeoman of the  
1383. king's chapel within his household, of 3 *d.* daily from the issues of the king's manor of Chilterne Langele, on condition that he keep the park there, John Parker, under-parker there, to whom that sum was granted .... *having agreed to demise it to him.*

By p. s. <sup>3)</sup>

6 Aug., Grant, for life, to Robert Spicer of 10 marks yearly  
1383. at the Exchequer in lieu of a similar grant to him of 5 marks by letters patent dated 11 November, 50 Edward III, confirmed by letters patent of the king, surrendered; William de Rokyngham, groom of the late king's household, *having granted to him his*

<sup>1)</sup> *Ibid.*, 1381—1385, p. 317; cf. 1377—1381, p. 154. *Italics mine.*

<sup>2)</sup> *Ibid.*, 1385—1389, p. 163; cf. 1377—1381, p. 202. *Italics mine.*

<sup>3)</sup> *Ibid.*, 1381—1385, p. 318; cf. 1377—1381, p. 275. *Italics mine.*

*interest in a like grant to him of 5 marks at the same date, also now surrendered.* By p. s.<sup>1)</sup>

There was nothing irregular about these transfers; if there had been, more pains would have been taken to conceal the nature of the transaction. They were often made with the assent of the Council, and the following patent is a formal licence for such a transfer:

6 June, 1391. Licence for the lady de Mohun to demise to Thomas de Percy the 100 *l.* a year which she receives for her life from the sheriffs of London under letters patent of the king now surrendered, and grant thereof to the said Thomas for his life. By p. s.<sup>2)</sup>

The documents that have been quoted above prove beyond all reasonable doubt that Chaucer assigned his annuity to John Scalby in accordance with a common practice of the time, and it is unnecessary to quote more examples.<sup>3)</sup> But while I agree with the critics cited above in believing that Chaucer sold his annuity to Scalby, I am not able to assent to their theory that poverty obliged him to make the transfer.<sup>4)</sup> Poverty, of course, is not the only motive a man may have for capitalising a portion of his income, and such evidence

<sup>1)</sup> *Ibid.*, 1381—1385, pp. 304, 308. Cf. 1377—1381, p. 175, which seems to say that it was Rokyngham who eventually got both annuities. *Italics mine.*

<sup>2)</sup> *Ibid.*, 1388—1392, p. 429; cf. *ibid.*, pp. 157, 158.

<sup>3)</sup> The other cases I have noticed are to be found in the *Calendar of the Patent Rolls*, 1377—1381, p. 152, 1381—1385, p. 131; 1377—1381, p. 165, *ibid.*, p. 404; 1377—1381, p. 179, 1381—1385, p. 398; 1377—1381, p. 187, 1391—1396, p. 368; 1377—1381, p. 196, 1381—1385, p. 403; 1377—1381, p. 220, 1381—1385, p. 125; 1377—1381, p. 248, 1388—1392, p. 398; 1377—1381, pp. 497, 498, 1385—1389, p. 157; 1381—1385, pp. 455, 456, 1388—1392, p. 505; 1381—1385, p. 548, 1388—1392, p. 385; 1388—1392, p. 358, 1396—1399, p. 73; 1388—1392, p. 402, 1391—1396, p. 574; 1377—1381, p. 162, 1381—1385, p. 377.

<sup>4)</sup> All of the writers cited above on p. 20 assign poverty as the cause, except Fleay; Ward says that the language of the patent implies that Chaucer had raised money on his annuities and could pay it only by making over the annuities themselves. Kirk also (*Life-Records*, p. xxxvi) says that "Chaucer must have been in very low circumstances at this period". This view is scarcely consistent with his other opinion, cited below on p. 25.



as we have is against the theory that Chaucer was in need in May, 1388. We know that he was in very good circumstances in April, 1391, for at that time he lent to the king's works the large sum of £ 66 13 s. 4 d.,<sup>1)</sup> a sum greater than the whole of his accrued salary as clerk of the works, from the date of his appointment to the date of the loan. This fact establishes a presumption against the theory that Chaucer suffered financial distress in May, 1388.<sup>2)</sup>

## VII. Geoffrey Chaucer, Clerk of the King's Works.

The following persons were appointed during Richard II's reign to the office of clerk of the king's works:

John Blake,	14 April, 1378. <sup>3)</sup>
Arnald Brocas,	3 May, 1381. <sup>4)</sup>
Roger Elmham,	6 January, 1388. <sup>5)</sup>
Geoffrey Chaucer,	12 July, 1389. <sup>6)</sup>
John Gedney,	17 June, 1391. <sup>7)</sup>
John Bernard,	16 December, 1396. <sup>8)</sup>
William Bulcote,	21 September, 1397. <sup>9)</sup>

This list shows that Chaucer's tenure of the office, altho short, was not extraordinarily so. It therefore gives us no clue to the cause of Chaucer's supersession.

What makes the list worth giving at all is the fact that we find upon identifying the other appointees that all of them were clerks of the king, and that Chaucer was the only

<sup>1)</sup> *Life-Records*, Docc. 230, 249.

<sup>2)</sup> Kirk's view, that down to the beginning of 1398 there is no good reason for supposing that Chaucer was in pecuniary difficulties (*Life-Records*, p. xlvii) is certainly sound. That the poet was not badly off in 1394 may be inferred from the fact that he had at that time, according to the testimony of the God of Love, a library of sixty books, which was a very considerable collection for a mediaeval scholar (Prologue to *L. G. W.*, A 273 f.).

<sup>3)</sup> *Calendar of the Patent Rolls*, 1377—1381, p. 197.

<sup>4)</sup> *Ibid.*, 1381—1385, p. 6.

<sup>5)</sup> *Ibid.*, 1385—1389, p. 379.

<sup>6)</sup> *Life-Records*, Doc. 209.

<sup>7)</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. 236. I find no patent for his appointment in the *Calendar*.

<sup>8)</sup> *Calendar of the Patent Rolls*, 1396—1399, p. 48.

<sup>9)</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 206.

layman who held the office during Richard's reign.<sup>1)</sup> Whatever may be the significance of this fact, it is at any rate of considerable interest, even if that interest be only a curious one.<sup>2)</sup>

<sup>1)</sup> Blake, Brocas, and Bernard are entitled "king's clerks" in the patents appointing them to the office. Roger de Elmham is called "king's clerk" in a commission dated 8 August, 1386 (*ibid.*, 1385—1389, p. 259). John Gedney is also entitled "king's clerk", as well as constable of Bordeaux [castle], which office he had held for some time previous to 12 August, 1387, for on that day he was reappointed to the constablenesship (*ibid.*, 1388—1392, p. 127; 1385—1389, p. 350). William Bulcote is entitled, in the patent appointing him to the office, "Master William Bulcote", and on 13 May, 1394, "Master William Bulcote" was presented to the church of Withirley in the diocese of Lincoln (*ibid.*, 1391—1396, p. 415). The Patent Rolls contain a considerable number of entries relating to these men, chiefly presentations to benefices. It is possible that other persons may have held the office during this period, but I have been unable to discover them. John Pynson is called clerk of the king's works, 26 May, 1378 (*ibid.*, 1377—1381, p. 223), but this appears to be an error, for Pynson was appointed purveyor on 10 April, 1378, and there are numerous references to Blake as clerk of the works up to 1381 (*ibid.*, p. 210 and index). Likewise, John Godmeston, who is frequently mentioned in the Patent Rolls as clerk of the works within the great hall within the palace of Westminster, held an office quite distinct from Chaucer's, being charged solely with repairs to the hall (*ibid.*, 1391—1396, p. 348; 1396—1399, p. 19).

<sup>2)</sup> Ten Brink says in regard to this appointment that Chaucer "was allowed to do by proxy what he did not feel inclined to do himself" (*History of English Literature*, II. 125), and Skeat says, "he was permitted to execute his duties by deputy" (*Oxford Chaucer*, I. xl). If this implies, as it seems to do, that Chaucer's privilege of appointing deputies as clerk of the works was similar to the privilege he had enjoyed in this respect as controller of the petty custom, it is misleading, for the deputies of the clerk of the works were subordinates without whom it would have been impossible to carry on the business of the office, not substitutes on whom Chaucer could unload his own duties. This fact becomes evident when we examine with attention the documents that relate to Chaucer's business as clerk of the works, and when we note also that his predecessors and successors regularly made use of deputies (see indexes to the *Calendar of the Patent Rolls*, 1377—1401).

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