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THE MEDICAL AND ALLIED REFERENCES IN CHAUCER.

There is a peculiar pleasure for medical men in examining the conceptions which the lay mind entertains of the science and art of medicine and its practitioners. This profession is probably viewed under stranger conditions than that of any other class of men, and it is not surprising that doctors are not infrequently credited with the possession of powers and knowledge falling not far short of omniscience.

The first year or two of medical study is a critical period in the life of the professional student of medicine, for he gradually discovers that many beliefs acquired from his mother and reverently upheld, are nothing but figments or only the insignia of refined charlatanism, and he slowly appreciates how little it is possible to know of nature's secrets in health and disease. If his mind be at all critical it will not be the first which has found refuge in the Mephistophelian cynicism

"Der Geist der Medicin ist leicht zu fassen;

Ihr durchstudirt die gross' und kleine Welt

Um es am Ende gehn zu lassen,

Wie's Gott gefällt."

The only safeguard against this prostitution of medical knowledge lies in the remembrance of a common humanity and the practice of a scientific curiosity. Be the medical man cynical, benevolent or philosophical, it cannot be otherwise than pleasing to acquaint himself with the ideas and fancies which have been formed by other men of his science and methods.

It was with this object that a special study of Chaucer was entered upon; to ascertain how that acute and genial observer represented medicine and its practitioners in his writings. The collected results and the general impressions arising out of this search are embodied in this thesis.

A medical man reading Chaucer will find in him abundant illustrations of a period in the History of Medicine, when the interpretation of natural processes proceeded more from certain systems of general philosophy than from an inductive study of phenomena. The physicians and surgeons of Chaucer's day were

rigidly attached to the Hippocratic dogmata as modified by Galen, whose authority was paramount, his medical teaching being considered final. Indicative of the exalted position of these famous physicians in medieval medicine is the couplet, taken probably from the "Romaunt de la Rose":

"Ne hele me may no phisicien,
Noght Ypocras, ne Galyen."

(The Dethe of Blaunche the Duchesse. 570-1).

Paracelsus had not questioned the teaching of these renowned authors, and medicine, like every other natural science, was darkened by fanciful and fantastic explanations of phenomena. Unborn was the experimental spirit, forgotten the Aristotelian injunction to collect and record observations, and more than three hundred years had to come and go before Harvey stirred into life, by a direct appeal to Nature, the dead bones of a Science which since his death has wrought such wonderful conquests.

A system of medicine so crude, almost formless, must be reflected in strange lights for modern readers in the writings of a man who appealed for his audience to the common people. Just as Burns wished "to sing a sang for Scotland's sake" so Chaucer wrote in his most famous and best remembered work with the express object of pleasing "lewed peple".

Any allusion to medical subjects must then have been familiar and readily comprehensible. Moreover, it is probable that a wide and sagacious reader like Chaucer was almost as able to make use of current medical doctrines as was his average medical contemporary, and certainly more fitted than a modern poet or dramatist who attempted the same task to-day: for since the Fourteenth Century the arts and practices of medicine have become converted into a body of facts and inferences demanding a prolonged and almost exclusive mental training for their proper understanding. Again, Chaucer was a child of an age which had not the modern reverence for accurate quotations, and we must accordingly not be astonished to find him intercalating his original work with references to medical authors, precisely as the School Men when they wished to silence an opponent quoted Aristotle, a revered name, but one whose teaching was oftener referred to than studied. Authority pressed heavily upon Geoffrey Chaucer but his gift of humour pre-

-served him from grotesque servility.

The best and the correct method to pursue in this special study of Chaucer would be to work chronologically through his writings, commencing with the work of earlier years and finishing with those of maturity and declining powers. To an extent this would be possible, for a pains-taking criticism has established the most probable sequence of a considerable amount of Chaucer's literary output, but as the order is not incontrovertible, I propose to work through the medical allusions under several headings rather than attempt the evolutionary method.

PATHOLOGY AND GENERAL AETIOLOGY OF DISEASE.

Regarding the causation of disease the humoral pathology was dominant in the Fourteenth Century. The four Humors, Black Bile, Yellow Bile, Blood and Phlegm, were called upon, by their excess or admixture, to explain all diseases, and from this doctrine arose the famous notion of the four temperaments, or in Chaucer's word "complecciouns". No singularity is shown by Chaucer in referring to and accepting this venerated teaching of Galen. Early writers generally make use of it, and numerous instances can be quoted of these medieval beliefs.

In the Prologue of the "Canterbury Tales" there is a characteristic physiognomy depicted in that of the Summonour

"That hadde a fyr-reed cherubynnes face,
For sawcefleem he was, with eyen narwe.

As hoot he was, and lecherous, as a sparwe,

With scaled browes blake and piled berd". (624-627.)

The word "sawcefleem" indicates a red, pimpled face caused, so it was believed, by the presence of too much salt-phlegm --salsum phlegm-- in the blood.

It was a medieval notion, a part of the humoral pathology, that moisture in various parts of the body rose as a vapor to the head -- the vapors or fumes from potations producing, for instance, the deep sleep which follows the free use of alcoholic beverages. Dreams too were sometimes explained in this way

"Hire dremes shul nat been y-toold for me;

Ful were hire heddes of fumositee,

That causeth dreem, of which ther nys no charge".

(Squire's Tale. 357-8.)

The subject of dreams seems to have had a strong fascination for Chaucer: he returns to the subject frequently and his allusions indicate a close acquaintance with the accepted, so-called scientific doctrines of their occurrence and causation, — doctrines based upon the idea of humors.

In the "Nun's Priest's Tale" Pertelote the sensible partner of the dreaming Chauntecleer says

"Have ye no mannes herte, and han a berd ?

'Allas! and konne ye been agast of swevenys ?

No thyng, God woot, but vanitee in swevene is.

Swevenes engendren of replecciouns,

And ofte of fume, and of complecciouns,

Whan humours been to habundant in a wight.

'Certes this dreem, which ye han met to-nyght,

Cometh of the greet superfluytee

Of youre rede colera, pardee,

Which causeth folk to dreden in hir dremes

Of arwes, and of fyre with rede lemes,

Of rede beestes, that they wol hem byte,

Of contekes and of whelpes, grete and lyte;

Right as the humour of malencolie

Causeth ful many a man in sleepe to crie,

For feere of blake beres, or boles blake,

Or elles blake develes wole hem take.

Of othere humours koude I telle also

That werken many a man in sleepe ful wo;"

(4110-4128)

Light-hearted Pandarus, a man of the world, makes use of this ancient hypothesis to destroy the belief of Troilus in the significance of his dreams

"Thy swevenes ek and al swich fantasye

Drif out, and lat hem faren to mischaunce;

For they procede of thy malencolye,

That doth thee fele in slepe al this penaunce.

A straw for alle swevenes signefiaunce!

God help me so, I counte hem nought a bene!
 Ther wot no man aright what dremes mene!

'For prestes of the temple tellen this,
 That dremes ben the revelaciouns
 Of Goddes; and as wel they telle, y-wis,
 That they ben infernals illusiouns;
 And leches seyn, that of complexiouns
 Proceden they, or fast, or glotonye;
 Who wot in soth thus what they signefye?

'Ek othre seyn that thorough impressiouns,
 As, if a wight hath faste a thing in minde,
 That therof comen swiche avisiouns;
 And othre seyn, as they in bookes finde,
 That, after times of the yeer, by kinde
 Men dreme, and that th'effect go'th by the mone:
 But lef no drem, for it is nought to done!

'Wel worth of dremes ay thise olde wives,
 And treweliche ek augurie of thise foules
 For fere of which men wenen lese hir lives,
 As ravenes qualm, or shriking of thise oules!
 To trowen on it bothe fals and foul is:
 Allas, allas, so noble a creature
 As is a man shal dreden swich ordure! "

(Troilus and Criseyde, Bk. 5, 368 - 385.)

Any reference to medical topics found in "Troilus & Criseyde" is especially interesting from the fact that Chaucer took the subject and much of the treatment of it from Boccaccio's "Filostrato".

The "Filostrato" has

"I sogni e le paure caccia via,
 In quel che son lasciali andar ne 'venti;

Essi procedon da malinconia,
 E quel fanno veder che tu paventi;
 Solo Iddio sa il ver di quel che fia,
 Ed i sogni et gli augurii, a che le genti
 Stolte riguardano, non montano un mocq,
 Ne al futuro fanno assai o poco. "

(Parte quinta 32.)

The observations concerning dreams in the above extract commence, as will be seen, with an almost literal transcription from the Italian model. The remaining stanzas are Chaucer's own, and illustrative of his calm judgment founded upon sound observation and careful reading. But it is in the Proem of the "Hous of Fame" that we find the frankest expressions concerning dreams, an occurrence which evidently puzzled Chaucer more than a little. He cannot altogether escape from a vague belief in their having some serious meaning, and appeals to "Grette Clerks" for an investigation.

"But why the cause is, noght wot I.

Wel worthe, of this thyng, grete clerkes,
 That trete of that, and other werkes; "

(The Hous of Fame. 52 - 54. Bx.1.)

There is in this Proem an admirable enumeration of well known causes, - "Complecciouns", "Greet feblenesse of her brayn", "abstinence", "seeknesse", "prisoun", "sterve or greet distresse".

The following lines are a variant of Solomon's remark upon the weariness produced by much reading.

"Or elles by disordynaunce,
 Of naturel acustomaunce,
 That somme men ben to curious
 In studie, or melancolious; "

(The Hous of Fame. 27 - 30. Bx.1.)

An interesting reference is made in the same place to the dreams and visions so commonly reported by the over-zealous in religious work. The imagination of the middle ages was excited by the various monkish orders or individuals who practised ascetism and seclusion from the world, with the consequent development of hallucinations.

"Or elles that devocioun
 Of somme, and contemplacioun,
 Causeth swiche dremes ofte; "

(The Hous of Fame. 33 - 35. Bx.1.)

Medieval metaphysics find a place in

" Or if that spirits have the myght
 To make folk to dreme a-nyght;
 Or if the soule, of propre kynde,
 Be so parfit as men fynde,
 That hit forwot that is to come,
 And that hit warneth alle and somme
 Of everiche of her adventures,
 By avisiouns, or by figures,
 But that our flesh ne hath no myght
 To understonden hit aright,
 For hit is warned to derkly; "

(The Hous of Fame. 41 - 51 Bk.1.)

The whole Proem is richly expressive of the doubting, critical and yet reverent mind of Chaucer; he feels the force and self-destroying influence of authority but is unable to throw off its yoke, and his conclusion, humane and kindly, is touched with that quiet humour which must have made him so generally beloved.

Wycliffite or Roman Catholic cannot have objected to

" For I of noon opinioun
 Nil as now make mencion;
 But oonly that the holy rode
 Turne us every dreem to gode; "

(The Hous of Fame. 55 - 58. Bk.1.)

The doctrine of humours did not exhaust the medieval notions advanced in the explanation of disease; planetary influence was unquestioned in this regard. One line in "The Knight's tale" tells us of the pathogenic power of Saturn,

"My lookyng is the fader of pestilence"

(L. 2466.)

There is in the "L'Envoy de Chaucer à Scogan" a hint of another cause of pestilences. The lines are :-

" But now so wepeth Venus in hir spere,
 That with hir teres she wol drenche us here.
 Allas, Scogan! this is thyn offence!
 Thou causest this deluge of pestilence. "

Chaucer seems to imply that the bad weather may cause

another plague. (Skeat.)

A time-honoured scrap of popular pathology is mentioned twice. These allusions express the old belief that offensive odours, simply on account of their unpleasantness, were able to produce disease.

"For al the world they stynken as a goot;
Hir savour is so rammyssh and so hoot
That though a man a mile from hem be
The savour wole infecte hym, truste me."

(Canon's Yeoman's Tale. 886 - 888)

The Cook has been drinking heavily and part of the reproof administered to him by the Host is

"Hoold cloos thy mouth, man, by thy fader kyn!
The devel of helle sette his foot ther-in!
Thy cursed breeth infecte wole us alle."

(Words of divers of the Pilgrims,-
The Canterbury Tale Group H. 37-38)

This belief in the disease producing power of stench is also referred to by Shakespeare. Another old theory finds mention in the description of the death of Arcite in "The Knight's Tale".

"The clothered blood, for any lechecraft,
Corrupteth, and is in his bouk y-laft,
That neither veyne-blood ne ventusynge,
Ne drynke of herbes may ben his helpynge;"

(Knight's Tale. 2745-2748.)

It was thought by medical men of Chaucer's time, and still is by many ignorant people, that clotted blood in the system is peculiarly poisonous. In the book "Batman upon Barthol^{me} His Book" published so late as 1582 this injunction is found:-

"Also when bloude rotteth in anye member, but it be taken out by skill or kinde, it tourneth into venime."

There is in the "Parson's Tale" an ætiological discussion of wide range which may be most fitly inserted here.

"Another synne aperteneth to leccherie that com^eth in slepyng; and this synne cometh ofte to hem that been maydenes and eek to hem that been corrupt. And this synne men clepen polucioun, that com^eth in thre maneres. Somtyme of langwissyng of body, for the humours been to ranke and habundant in the body

of man; somtyme of infermetee, for the fieblesse of the vertu retentif, as phisik maketh mencion; somtyme for surfeet of mete and drynke; and somtyme of vileyns thoghtes that been enclosed in mannes mynde whan he gooth to slepe, which may nat been withoute synne; for which men moste kepen hem wisely, or elles may men synnen ful greuously."

(Parson's Tale. ^{Pav.} 10. p.302.)

Apart from the presence of humour in the blood another cause of disease, Gluttony, is frequently mentioned. There is a general observation made in "The Knight's Tale".

"Som man desireth for to han richesse,
That cause is of his moerdre, or greet siknesse;"

("Knight's Tale". 1255-1256.)

And in the "Pardoner's Tale" is found the distich

"O, wiste a man how manye maladyes
Folwen of excesse and of glotonyes,"

(Pardoner's Tale. 513-514.)

Gluttony has, in this respect, the ban of Holy Writ, and readers of Shakespeare have only to be reminded of the frequent and telling allusions which he makes to the ill-results following over-indulgence in wine and food. Medical men ought in this connection to be grateful to Chaucer that he did not brand them as Rabelais did, who said of Doctors that "The skin of their bellies was a long way from their kidneys." Chaucer wrote of the "Doctour of Phisik",

"Of his diete mesurable was he,
For it was of no superfluitee,
But of greet norissyng and digestible."

(The Prologue. 435-437.)

The "Parson's Tale", an adaptation from a French religious manual, is a sermon directed against the great sins and contains a curious mélange of orthodox teaching and homely sense upon the sins of gluttony.

"This synne hath manye speces. The firste is dronkenesse, that is the horrible sepulture of mannes resoun, and therefore whan a man is dronken he hath lost his resoun, and this is a deedly synne. But soothly, whan that a man is nat wont to strong drynke, and peraventure ne knoweth nat the strengthe of the drynke, or hath feblesse in his heed, or hath travailed,

thurgh which he drynketh the moore, al be he sodeynly caught with drynke, it is no deedly synne, but venyal. The seconde spece of glotonye is, that the spirit of a man wexeth al trouble, for dronkenesse bireveth hym the discrecioun of his wit. The thridde spece of glotonye is whan a man devoureth his mete, and hath no rightful manere of etynge. The fourth is, whan thurgh the grete habundance of his mete, the humours in his body been destempered. The fifthe is forgetelnesse by to muchel drynkyng, for which somtyme a man forgeteth er the morwe what he dide at even, or on the nyght biforn.

In othere manere been distinct the speses of glotonye, after *Seint Gregorie*. The firste is for te ete biforn tyme to ete; the seconde is whan a man get hym to delicaat mete or drynke; the thridde is whan taken to muche over mesure; the fourthe is curiositee with greet entente to maken and apparailen his mete; the fifthe is for to eten to gredily. These been the fyve fynGRES of the develes hand, by whiche he draweth folk to synne."

(Parson's Tale. Part of para. 820 - 830)

The same preacher has simple but good advice to offer upon one of the consequences of luxurious habits

"Another remedie agayns lecherie is specially to withdrawen swiche thynges as yeve occasion to thilke vileynye, as ese, etynge and drynkyng; for certes, whan the pot boyleth strongly the beste remedie is to withdrawe the fyr. Slepynge longe in greet quiete is eek a greet norice to lecherie."

(Parson's Tale. Part of para. 950.)

But the "Pardoner's Tale" is famous for what is so clearly Chaucer's own attitude towards gluttonous delights.-

" O wombe! O bely! O stynkyng is thi cod!

Fulfilled of donge and of corrupcioun!

At either ende of thee foul is the soun;

How greet labour and cost is thee to fynde!

These cookes, how they stampe, and streyne, and grynde,

And turnen substaunce into accident,

To fulfillen al thy likerous talent!

Out of the harde bones knocke they

The mary, for they caste noght away

That may go thurgh the golet softe and swoote.

Of spicerie, of leef, and bark, and roote,
 Shal been his sauce y-maked by delit,
 To make hym yet a newer appetit;
 But certes he that haunteth swiche delices
 Is deed, whil that he lyveth in tho vices."

(Pardoner's Tale. 534 - 548.)

Famous too is the vigorous portraiture, a perfect genre painting in words, of drunkenness in the same tale.

"A lecherous thyng is wyn, and dronkenesse
 Is ful of stryvyng and of wrecchednesse.
 O dronke man! disfigured is thy face,
 Sour is thy breeth, foul artow to embrace,
 And thurgh thy dronke nose semeth the soun,
 As though thou seydest ay, "Sampsoun! Sampsoun!"
 And yet, God woot, Sampsoun drank never no wyn.
 Thou fallest as it were a styked swyn,
 Thy tonge is lost and al thyn honeste cure;
 For dronkenesse is verray sepulture
 Of mannes wit and his discrecioun;
 In whom that drynke hath dominacioun,
 He kan no conseil kepe, it is no drede."

(Pardoner's Tale. 549 - 561)

There can be no doubt of Chaucer's interest in the matter of diet. To his observant nature it must often have been clear what advantages and disadvantages followed carefulness or excess in feeding. A minor poem, "The Former Age" is largely an advantageous contrast of simplicity with luxury.

"Unknowen was the quern and eek the melle,
 They eten mast, hawes, and swych pounage,
 And dronken water of the colde welle."

(Ætas Prima. 6- 8.)

The advice given by the Friar to the Merchant, in the "Shipman's Tale", on the latter's departure for Bruges is à propos of this matter of diet, and expresses also the belief that some foods were considered more 'heating' to the blood than others.

"I prey yow, cōsyn, wisely that ye ryde;
 Governeth yow also of youre diete
 Atemprely, and namely in this hete".

(Shipman's Tale. 1450-2).

The "Nun's Priest's Tale" gives, on the other hand, an opportunity to exhibit the benefits of plain living, with the consequent freedom from gout and apoplexy

"Ful sooty was hir bour, and eek hire halle,
 In which she eet ful many a sklendre meel;
 Of poynaunt sauce hir neded never a deel.
 No deyntee morsel passed thurgh hir throte,
 Hir diete was accordant to hir cote;
 Repleccioun ne made hire never sik,
 Attempree diete was al hir phisik,
 And exercise, and hertes suffisaunce.
 The goute lette hire no-thinge for to daunce,
 Napoplexie shente nat hir heed". (4022-31.)

A common article of food-consumption requires specific mention in consequence of a generally known result of its properties. The particular effect of alcohol upon the sexual desires is noted in the "Prologue of The Wife of Bath's Tale"

"In wommen vinolent is no defence, --
 This knowen leechours by experience".

(Prologue of the Wife of Bath's Tale. 467-8).

There are two further references to this effect of alcohol, one made by the "Doctour of Phisik" when telling the story of Virginia, the other found in the "Merchant's Tale". An instructive comparison of these quotations may be made with one from Shakespeare which need not be quoted but is found in "Macbeth". Chaucer nowhere approaches in medical matters the precision of Shakespeare, but Chaucer is like Shakespeare in this particular, that the allusions to alcohol are almost entirely to its effects when taken in excess; it is never mentioned by Chaucer in connection with its medicinal employment. However, Chaucer was quite familiar with the appearances of the various stages of alcoholic poisoning. He notices on several occasions the pallor of extreme intoxication

"The Millere, that for-dronken was al pale".

(Host and Miller. 3120).

"For, in good feith, thy visage is ful pale".

(Words of Divers of The Pilgrims. 30).

"Ful pale he was for-dronken, and nat reed".

(Reeve's Tale. 4150).

Continuing this subject, it does not miss Chaucer's attention how characteristically speech too is affected in advanced stages of drunkenness:

" He yexeth, and he speketh thurgh the nose,

As he were on the quakke or on the pose".

(Reeve's Tale. 4151-2).

" For were it wyn, or oold or moysty ale,

That he hath dronke, he speketh in his nose,

And fneseth faste, and eek he hath the pose".

(Words of Divers of the Pilgrims. 60-2).

This is a fitting place to refer to the only precise mention which Chaucer makes of the intentional employment of aphrodisaics. In the " Merchant's Tale" the story has arrived at the stage when the old man January is to go to bed with his young wife May:

"Soone after that, this hastif Januarie

Wolde go to bedde, he wolde no lenger tarye.

He drynketh ypocras, claree and vernage,

Of spices hoote, tencreessen his corage;

And many a letuarie hath he ful fyn

Swiche as the cursed monk, Daun Constantyn,

Hath writen in his book, De Coitu".

(Merchant's Tale. 1805-1811).

'Ypocras, Claree and Vernage' are the names of wines, the first two being highly spiced. Amongst the works of Constantius mentioned by Sprengel in his "Geschichte der Arzneikunde" (S.465, B.2) is one entitled "De Coitu".

D I S E A S E S .

To make out a list of the particular diseases mentioned by Chaucer is not a difficult matter, the references not being large in

point of number. Madness, syncope, ague, fevers, gout, apoplexy, and some skin affections make up the bulk of the specifically mentioned ailments. Erysipelas is instanced but not under that designation:

"A wilde fyr upon thair bodyes falle!"

(Reeve's Tale. 4172).

The old English synonym "Fir of Seint Antony" for Erysipelas is found in the "Parson's Tale", who also refers to the "Malladie of Hirnia" and "Cancre" (p.280).

Another skin affection, under the form of a famous malediction, is found in Chaucer's "Words unto Adam, his owne Scryveyne":

"Adam Scriveyn, if ever it thee bifalle

Boece or Troylus for to writen newe,

~~Under~~ thy long lokkes thou most have the scalle". (1-3.)

This 'Scalle' is equivalent for 'Scabbe', of which disease Lanfrank says "also Scabbe, sum is drie and summe is wet. If it be drie, it schal propirli be clepid icche. And if it be moist it schal be clepid scabbe". (Science of Chirurgie. p.191).

In the portraiture of the "Cook" there is an interesting and common disease of the skin introduced.

"But greet harm was it, as it thoughte me,

That on his shyne a mormal hadde he".

(The Prologue. 385-6).

The derivation of "Mormal" is from the Middle Latin "malum mortuum" and the Middle French "Mort Mal"; both mean an old callous sore, but the word "mormal" has also the sense of Gangrene or Cancer. Professor Skeat gives a parallel line in Ben Jonson's "Sad Shepherd" where a cook has an old "mortmel on his shin" and the Century Dictionary supplies another from the same author in "Mercury Vindicated" -- "They will give him a quantity of the quintessence shall serve him to cure kibes or the mormal o'the shin". It is clear that not only in Chaucer but in Ben Jonson the condition meant is that of a callous ulceration of the leg. Lanfrank makes use of both words and indeed distinguishes ~~between~~ them. One section of his book is headed "Of the Cancre and the Mormole" and we are told how "Cancrene ben rounde ulceris that fallith in a mannes leggis, and malum mortuum also, and thei fallith bothe in oon place

therefore I wole make difference therof". (Science of Chirurgie)p. 73.)

Mention has already been made of the Sommonour's face, "of his visage children were aferd". He is said to have had "whelkes white and knobbes sittynge on his chekes". Shakespeare similarly describes the facial appearance of Bardolph in Henry 5th. "One Bardolph, if your Majesty know the man; his face is all bubukles and whelks and knobs and flames o' fire". By 'whelkes' would seem to be meant suppurating and ulcerative acne spots. Skeat quotes from "Eatman on Barthol^{me}" to the effect that "such whelkes have small hoales out of which matter cometh. And this euill com^meth of vicious and gleymie humour, which com^meth to the skin of their head and breedeth therein pimples and whelkes." "Knobbes", - excrescences, the shape of buds or buttons, - may well be the reddened papular stage of acne or the large inflammatory papules often seen on the face of hard drinkers. It is curious that the facial appearance of the Sommonour and Bardolph should be sketched in such similar terms.

A disease of frequent mention is Ague and its congeners. Saturn in the "Knight's Tale" says

"And myne be the maladyes colde,"

(Knight's Tale . 2467.)

Pertelote warns Chaunticleer in the "Nun's Priest's Tale" with

"Ye been ful coleryk of compleccioun,
Ware the sonne in his ascencioun
Ne fynde yow nat repleet of humours hoote;
And if it do, I dar wel leye a grote
That ye shul have a fevere terciane,
Or an agu, that may be youre bane. "

(Nun's Priest's Tale. 4145-4150.)

The known periodical recurrence of these fevers is attested by

"Sey that thy fevere is wont thee for to take
The same time, and lasten til a-morwe;"

(Troilus & Criseyde. 1520-1521. Br. 2.)

The phrase "had a blanche fevere" found in "Troilus & Criseyde" is a jocular reference to a love-lorn state, passionate lovers being credited with a marked degree of pallor. The allusion

"And seyde he hadde a fevere, and ferde amis."

(Troilus & Criseyde. 491. Br. I.)

may have a general significance, but it probably means an Ague attack. And the same may be said of

"O. soth is seid, that heled for to be
As of a fevere, or other gret siknesse,
Men moste drinke, as men may alday see,
Ful bittre drinke; "

(Troilus & Criseyde. 1212-1215. Br. III.)

The translation of Petrarch's 88th. Sonnet in "Troilus & Criseyde" is interesting from its concrete rendering of the poetical figure in the original. Chaucer's words derive their appositeness from the incidents of a malarial seizure.

"Sì lieve di saver, d'error sì carca
Ch'i'medesmo non so quel ch'io mi voglio,
E tremo a mezza state, ardendo il verno."

"Allas! What is this wonder maladye?

For hete of cold, for cold of hete, I dye!"

(Troilus & Criseyde. 419-420. Br. I.)

To another phase of deranged health, insanity, there is scant reference made. Many poets are attracted by the 'mind diseased', but Chaucer was no metaphysician, and his imagination did not employ itself with conditions of mental alienation.

We find many references to poetical and fanciful states of madness, but only one which takes us back to medieval ideas of actual disease. It occurs in the "Knight's Tale."

".....but rather lyk manye,
Engendred of humour malencolik,
Biforn, in his owene celle fantastik."

(Knight's Tale. 1374-1376.)

Mania is thus referred in its causation to the presence of melancholic humour; the site of the disease was located in the "fantastic cell", said to be in the foremost part of the head: melancholia, on the other hand, was believed to arise from infection of the "middle cell of the head".

Chaucer uses on several occasions the word "traunce" but it

conveyed a different meaning from its modern equivalent 'trance'. It seems, in general, to imply a dull, perhaps apathetic state, but one characterised by speechlessness. Arcite in the "Knight's Tale" after a recital of his love pangs

"fil doun in a traunce

A longe time."

(Knight's Tale. 572-3.)

To another love-sick man the same accident happens after an impassioned prayer to "Lord Phebus" for help in his wooing,

"And with that word in swowne he fil adoun,

And longe tyme he lay forth in a traunce."

(Franklin's Tale. 1080-1081.)

Troilus, the famous lover, also suffers in a similar way

"And Troilus he fond allone a-bedde,

That lay, as don these lovers, in a traunce

Bi-twixen hope and derk desesperaunce;"

(Troilus & Criseyde. 1305-1307. Bk. II.)

The word has a graver import in one passage. Of Caesar it is said

"And as he lay of diyng in a traunce,"

(Monk's Tale. 3806.)

Allied to this matter is the use of "frenesye" and "litargye". The one has the simple meaning of the modern word 'frenzy', a temporary state of uncontrollable excitement.

"His sike heed is ful of vanytee;

I holde hym in a manere frenesye."

(Summoner's Tale. 2208-2209.)

"And up his yen caste he, that in fere

Was Pandarus, lest that in frenesye

He sholde falle, or elles soone dye;

And cri'de "A-wak" ful wonderliche and sharpe;

'What! slombrestow as in a litargye? "

(Troilus & Criseyde. 726-730. Bk. I.)

"Litargye" is best explained by a passage from Chaucer's own translation of Boethius, "And whan sche say me nat oonly still but withouten office of tonge and al downbe, sche leyde hir hand sooftly uppon my breest, and seide; 'here nys no peril', quod sche,

" ' he is fallen into a litargye, whiche that is a comune seknesse to hertes that been de^sceyved' ". (P^rosa 2. p. 354.)

Two medical references, one of more precise significance than the other, are of interest. In the "Friar's Tale" is found

* "I have been syk, and that ful many a day;
I may nat go so fer, quod she, 'ne ryde,
But I be deed, so priketh it in my syde."

(Friar's Tale. 1582-1584.)

A pain in the side while walking is often experienced during convalescence from exhausting diseases, though heart failure may^{be} understood. The second of these allusions is made by the Host who, with characteristic boisterousness, breaks in after the "Doktour's Tale" with the well-known observation about "Cardynacle". His feelings have been harrowed by the story of Virginus' daughter, so much so that he cries out

" But wel I woot thou doost myn herte to erme
That I almoost have caught a cardynacle.
By corpus bones! but I have triacle,
Or elles a draughte of moyste and corny ale,
Or but I heere anon a myrie tale,
Myn herte is lost, for pitee^f of this mayde."

(Doctor's Tale. 312-317.)

Since "cardynacle" is simply a variant of "cardiacle" or "cardiac", the general meaning is that sense of oppression which is felt about the heart whenever the sympathetic emotions are actively aroused.

But in his banter the Host wilfully exaggerates, maintaining that "triacle", "ale", or "a myrie Tale" is required to save his heart from disease. The suggested remedy, "Triacle", illustrates an altered significance of a common word. "Treacle has changed its meaning. Originally an antidote against the bite of a wild animal, it came to mean a medicine and later the favourite vehicle for medicine." (E. E. Morris. "An English Miscellany" 1901, page 346.) A metaphor arising out of this supposed all-powerful efficacy of treacle is found in the line

"Christ, which, that is, to every harm triacle".

(Man of Lawe's Tale. 479)

Another meaning of the exclamation is that^{as} Cardiacle is an

enlarged form of 'Cardiac', as the New English Dictionary shows, the Host may chaffingly have accused the Doctor of giving him an ~~an~~ attack of the Cardiac passion, Cardiac passio, which is an old name, according to the Sydenham Society's Lexicon, for Cardialgia or Heartburn. Prof. William Osler, an accomplished student in the bye-ways of medicine, gives the Host's reference to Cardynacle on the title page of his book "Angina Pectoris and allied Neuroses". If he suggest by this that the Host was a sufferer from Angina, which supposition is hardly probable, since the introductory chapter is mainly historical, showing that the disease was not definitely recognised till the 18th. century, then our assent can only be given to the general statement that Cardynacle was a generic term ^{and} applied to many imperfectly understood Cardiac conditions, Angina Pectoris being among them.

Chaucer refers in several places to the very common attacks of weakened heart power which frequently culminate in the act of fainting. In the "Compleynte of Faire Anelida and False Arcite" there occurs a clear presentment of this accident

"She wepeth, wailleth, swouneth pitously,
To grounde deed she falleth as a stoon;
Al crampissheth hir lymes crokedly;
She speketh as hir wyt were al agoon;
Other colour then asshen hath she noon,
Non other word she speketh moche or lyte,
But: 'Mercy! cruel herte myn, Arcite!' "

(Compleynte of Faire Anelida and False Arcite.
168 - 175)

Anelida faints again,

"With face deed, betwyxe pale and grene,
She fel a-swowe; "

(Compleynte of Faire Anelida and False Arcite.
353-354.)

In "Troilus and Criseyde" we are told of the love-sick warrior that

"And down he fil al sodeinliche a-swowne."

(Troilus and Criseyde. 1092. Br. III.)

The treatment he received is also narrated

"Therwith his pous and paumes of his hondes

They gan to frote, and wete his temples tweyne;

(Troilus & Criseyde. 1114-1115. Br. III.)

The well-known movement of the eyeballs in a fainting-fit is thus described

"and she lay as for ded,

Withoute answe're, and felt her limes colde,

Her yen throwen upward to her hed". (*Troilus. Bk. IV. 1157-9.*)

In the "Squire's Tale" Hæmorrhage is definitely mentioned as the cause of the syncope:

"She swowneth now and now for lakke of blood" (430).

These references by Chaucer to a common accident are simple, direct and accurate, but present no special feature. He seems to have been impressed with the often observed bodily effects, the result of powerful emotions. Swooning is very often mentioned, whilst pallor, blushing, weeping, temporary speechlessness are all referred to in this connection.

Facial disfigurements are mentioned twice, warts and freckles being ~~selected~~. Of the Miller it is said

"Upon the cope right of his nose he hade

A werte, and thereon stood a toft of herys,

Reed as the brustles of a sowes erys; "

(The Prologue. 554/556.)

But is not Chaucer in this case really describing a raised hairy mole?

In the description of one of the combatants in the Tournament recorded in the "Knight's Tale" occurs

"A few frakenes in his face y-spreynd,

Bitwixen yelow and somdel blak y-meynd,"

(Knight's Tale. 2169-2170)

These quotations are simple in themselves but medical men will recognise their accuracy. They are also in keeping with the minuteness of description which Chaucer gives to most of his characters; the physiognomical descriptions, as well as the general body-habit of his subjects, are presented in a remarkably clear way. In this particular he makes a very early predecessor of Lavater.

Requiring no special comment are the three following references. An excellent description of a kind of Night-mare is found in "Troilus and Criseyde"

"And whan he fil in any slomberinges,

Anon biginne he sholde for to grone,

And dremen of the dredfulleste thinges
 That mighte ben: as, mete he were allone
 In place horrible making ay his mone,
 Or meten that he was amonges alle
 His enemies and in hir hondes falle.
 And therwithal his body sholde sterte,
 And with the stert al sodeinly awake,
 And swich a tremour fele aboute his herte,
 That of the fere his body sholde quake;
 And therwithal he sholde a noise make,
 And seme as though he sholde falle depe
 From heighe on-lofte. " (Bk.V. 246-259)

Boccaccio's description is

"Qual tu m'odi, ora, Pandaro, cotale
 Ho tutta notte fatto, nè dormire
 Lasciato ni'ha quest'amoroso male;
 O pur se sonno alcun nel mio languire
 Trovato ha luogo, niente mi vale,
 Perche dormendo sogno di fuggire,
 O d'esser solo* in luoghi paurosi,
 O nelle man di nemici animosi.

 E tanta noia m'e questo vedere,
 E si fatto spavento m'e'nel core,
 Che vegghiar mi saria meglio e dolore:
 E spesse volte mi giugne un tremore
 Che mi riscuote e desta, e fa parere
 Che d'alto in basso io caggiar, e destò, amore
 Insieme con Griseida chiamo forte,
 Or per merce pregando, ora per morte".

(Parte Quinta. 26-27).

One mode of death is thus given

"And with that word his speche faille gan,
 For from his feet up to his brest was come
 The coold of deeth, that hadde him overcome;
 And yet moore-over, in his armes two,
 The vital strengthe is lost and al ago.
 Only the intellect, withouten moore

That dwelled in his herte syk and soore,
 Gan faillen when the herte felte deeth,
 Dusked his eyen two and failled breeth".

(Knight's Tale. 2798-2806)

There is a suggestive hint of death by Asphixia in the "Man of Lawe's Tale", the bursting appearance of the eyes being very noticeable in ~~that~~ condition.

"An hand hym smoot upon the nekke boon,
 That doun he fil atones as a stoon;
 And bothe his eyen broste out of his face
 In sighte of every body in that place!". (668-672).

A group of observations on sickness in general may be cited:-

"The syke met he drynketh of the tonne".

(The Parlement of Foules. 104.

The Greek aphorism is mentioned

"But, cesse cause, ay cesseth maladye!"

(Troilus and Criseyde. Book 2. 483).

"Light is not good for sike folkes yen".

(Troilus and Criseyde. Book 3. 1137).

"And she is faire as is the bryghte morwe,
 That heeleth seke folkes of nyghtes sorwe".

(The Legende of Good Women. 1202-3).

"Thenk not on smert, and thou shalt fele non!"

(Troilus and Criseyde. Book 4. 466).

A frequent accompaniment of old age is cleverly introduced with dramatic effect into ~~one~~ story:

".....olde Januarie

That sleep^{til} that the coughe hath hym awaked."

(Merchant's Tale. 1956-7).

The heddache of sleeplessness is one of the deceptions of Pandarus,

"Al night", quod he, "hath reyn so don me wake

That som of us for gode his hed may ake!" (Troilus. Bk. iii. 1560-1.)

Chaucer in one passage notices the sleep which follows a carousal or hard physical labour

"The norice of digestioun, the sleepe,

Gan on hem wyne, and bad hem taken keepe

That muchel drynke and labour wolde han reste;"

(Squire's Tale. 347 - 349.)

A strange example of vulgar irony is found in "Troilus and Criseyde"

"Right as a man is esed for to fele,
For ache of hed to clawen him on his hele!"

(Troilus and Criseyde.) 727- 728. Dr. IV.)

This, however, is not original to Chaucer: the idea is in Boccaccio's Filostrato, but the Italian author applies the remark to a character, while Chaucer gives a general meaning to the alleged fact.

".....e non era altro che grattarla
Nelle calcagne, ove'l capo prudea. "

(Parte Quarta. 85.)

A somewhat similar expression is applied to the Cook after the hearing of the "Reeve's Tale"

"The Cook of Londoun, whil the Reve spak,
For joye him thoughte he clawed him on the bak;"

(Cook's Tale. 4325 - 4326)

It is certainly to be expected that instances would occur in the writings of a Fourteenth Century Poet of obsolete words and phrases anent medical matters.

The following are the most important:-

"Nostrils" is the modern, shortened form of "Nosethirles",

"His nosethirles blake were and wyde;"

(Prologue. 557.)

"Bote" is used in the sense of remedy.

"Lacerte", (strictly, a flesh y muscle, so called from its having a tail like a lizard. Latin, lacerta= a lizard.) This word is found in the "Knight's Tale", bearing the sense of muscle.

"And every lacerte in his breste adoun."

(Knight's Tale. 2753.)

"Wood", or "Woodnesse", having the meaning of "Mad" or "Madness" is used by Chaucer on too many occasions to quote. He seemed to have thought that it strengthened his description of various states of excitement.

"Canel-boon" may mean either the "neck-bone", i.e. the cervical vertebrae, as is probable in the "Dethe of Blaunche the Duchesse"

"..... nor canel boon,

As be semynge, had she noon. "

(The Dethe of Blaunche the Duchesse. 942-3)

or collar-bone, which is the meaning, according to some authorities, of this passage. The word was used with these different applications, but the Editor of Lanfrank says that the earliest reference for canel-bone (= clavicula) is found in that book (Science of Chirurgie. p. 156.)

"Wang-tooth" (Monk's Tale L.3234) and plural - "Wanges", (Reeve's Tale L. 4030) mean cheek-tooth and cheek-teeth respectively. 'Wang' has the same derivation as the modern German "die Wange", the cheek.

In the second of these allusions there is also a reference to a shivering seizure or Rigor.

Mention is made in several passages of the "Nekke-bone": some of them convey the meaning of there being a single bone in the neck, but one clearly indicates Chaucer's knowledge to the contrary.

"But swich a fairnesse of a nekke

Had that swete, that boon nor brekke

Nas ther non sene that mys-sat;

Hit was smothe, streght, and pure flat,

Wyth-outen hole: "

(The Dethe of Blaunche the Duchesse. 937-942)

"Coillons", (O. Fr. coillon, couillon; Ital. coglione; Lat. coe~~us~~) for Testicles, is vigorously used by the Host in the trouncing he administers to the Pardoner. (Pardoner's Tale. L.952)

"Throte - bolle" (Reeve's Tale L.4272) answers for Pomum Adami.

"Herte - spoon" for breast bone occurs in the "Knight's Tale.

"He feeleth thurgh the herte-spoon the prikke."

(Knight's Tale. 2606.)

"Barm" for bosom is found in the "Monk's Tale" (L.3630) as is also "Wombe" for stomach. (L.3627)

Quaint metaphors, tinged with medical meaning, are the following, found also elsewhere than in the quotations below: -

"And Jhesu Crist, that is oure soules leche."

(Pardoner's Tale. 916)

"Moder, of whom our merci gan to sprynge,

Beth ye my juge and eke my soules leche."

(Chaucer's A B C. 133-134.)

A variant is

"And which a goodly, softe speche
Had that swete, my lyves leche!"

(The Dethe of Blaunche the Duchesse. 918-919)

There are a few allusions to the Cardio-vascular system,
^{none,} but of course, to the fact of circulation of the blood.
A statement of the old error about the 'domination' of the blood
(in this sense one of the four humors) is made in the "Squire's
Tale"

"For blood was in his domynaciun."

(L. 352.)

This was supposed to last from 9 p.m. to 3 a.m.

A fanciful explanation of pallor produced by strong emotion
is

"Whan he hadde mad thus his complaynte,
His sorwful herte gan faste faynte,
And his spirites wexen dede;
The blood was fled for pure drede
Doun to his herte, to make hym warme;
For wel hit feled the herte hadde harme;
To wite eke why hit was a-drad
By kynde, and for to make hit glad;
For hit is membre principal
Of the body; and that made al
His hewe chaunge, and wexe grene,
And pale, for ther no blood was sene
In no maner lyme of his."

(The Dethe of Blaunche the Duchesse. 486-488.)

No mention is made of arteries: veins were the important
vessels, as still is vulgarly believed. They were also considered
the conduits of sensation

"..... and bisily,
Him for to glade, I shal don al my payne,
And in my herte seken every veyne."

(Troilus and Criseyde. 641-643. Br. IV)

Chaucer varies from the original

"Ed il mio male e'l perduto diletto
Tutto nel cor serrato mi terraggio:"

(Parte Quarta 108)

"That feleth harm and smert in every veyne,"

(Troilus and Criseyde. 417. Bk. V.)

"For oetes, longe I may nat live in payne,

For in myn herte is corven every veyne; "

(The Parlement of Foules. 424-425.)

Both "Herte-blood" and "Veyne-blood" find mention

"That to thy Creatour which that thee wroghte,

And with his precious herte-blood thee boghte;

(Pardoner's Tale. 901-902)

"For which that Jesus Crist hymself was slayn,

That boghte us with his herte blood agayn. "

(The Summoner and the Friar. 717-718.)

"That neither veyne-blood ne ventusyng,

Ne drynke of herbes may ben his helpynge; "

(Knight's Tale. 2747-2748.)

"Veyne-blood" signifies here the operation of phlebotomy, and "Herte-blood" bears a metaphorical sense.

The introduction of a poison into the Tale told by the Pardoner illustrates the medieval ignorance of toxicology. Poisons were not infrequently used but the popular imagination had created a common belief in their power to destroy life within a few minutes, a property possessed by very few of them, and these are certain alkaloids only discovered within recent years. The Apothecary, Alchemist and Astrologer were watched with strange emotions, and their operations not being understood the lay mind fell back upon the principle,

Omne ignotum pro magnifico.

It may safely be said that no poison was known in Chaucer's day which could in such small doses, and so quickly, produce death. No clue is given to the recognition of the agent in its effects upon the body, and it would be idle, therefore, to make any guesses.

"And forth he gooth, no lenger wolde he tarie,

Into the toun, unto a pothecarie,

And preyde hym that he hym wolde selle

Som poyssoun, that he myghte his rattes quelle;

And eek ther was a polcat in his hawe,

That, as he seyde, his capouns hadde y-slawe,

And fayne he wolde wreke hym, if he myghte,
On vermyn, that destroyed hym by nyghte.

The pothecarie answerde,"and thou shalt have
A thyng that, al so God my soule save!
In al this world ther nis no creature,
That eten or dronken hath of this confiture,
Noght but the montance of a corn of whete,
That he ne shal his lif anon forlete;
Ye, sterve he shal, and that in lasse while
Than thou wolt goon a-paas nat but a mile;
This poysoun is so strong and violent."

(Pardoner's Tale. 851-867.)

S U R G E R Y .

Chaucer does not introduce into his works many references to the surgical states which ^{must} have often been brought before his eyes, especially since it is true that he went through some of the French wars. There is, however, one graphic description of an accident which happened to Arcite in the Tournament for the possession of his love, Emily.

"He pighte hym on the pomel of his heed,
That in the place he lay as he were deed,
His brest to-brosten with his sadel-bowe.
As blak he lay as any cole or crowe,
So was the blood y-ronnen in his face."

(Knight's Tale. 2689-2693.)

The thorax is evidently injured and there is a gravely impaired aëration of the blood. The body, according to mediæval medicine, was endowed with what was called the "virtue expulsive": this virtue had the power of expelling from the body that which was hurtful to the system. It had three parts, one resident in the Liver and called the "natural virtue", another in the Heart styled the "Spiritual virtue", whilst the "animal virtue" was located in the brain. Arcite is in such a sad plight that

"The vertu expulsif, or animal,
Fro thilke vertu cleped natural,
Ne may the venym voyden ne expelle."

(Knight's Tale. 2749-2751.)

The remainder of the description indicates a gradually increasing pulmonary obstruction, with the issue of bloody and mucous froth from the dying Knight's mouth.

"The pipes of his longes gonne to swelle,
And every lacerte in his brest adoun
Is shent with venym and corrupcioun.
Hym gayneth neither, for to gete his lif,
Vomyt upward, ne dounward laxatif;
Al is to-brosten thilke regioun;
Nature hath no dominacioun."

(Knight's Tale. 2752-8).

And with a charming naïveté we are told

"And certeinly, ther Nature wol nat wirche,
Farewel, phisik! go ber the man to chirche!"

(Knight's Tale. 2756-2760).

An obsolete word having a surgical application is once used by Chaucer.

" His brest was hool withoute for to sene,
But in his herte ay was the arwe kene;
And wel ye knowe that of a sursanure
In surgerye is perilous the cure,
But men myghte touche the arwe, or come therby."

(Franklin's Tale. 1111-1115).

"Sursanure", coming from 'super' and 'sanare', has an etymology which clearly indicates that it is a wound healed, or better, covered in only on the surface. The necessary care required for the proper healing of wounds is alluded to in a fine illustration by the Parson:

"The seconde condicion of verray confession is that it be hastily doon; for certes, if a man hadde a deedly wounde, ever the lenger that he taried to warisshe hymself the moore wolde it corrupte and haste hym to his deeth, and eek the wounde wolde be the wors for to heele; and right so fareth synne that longe tyme is in a man unshewed."

(Parson's Tale. Par. 665).

There is another reference to a wound:

" For trewely ther is noon of us alle,

If any wight wol clawe us on the galle,
That we nyl kike, for he seith us sooth."

(Wife of Bath's Tale. 838-941).

"Galle" here means ' a sore place' and since this word is historically interesting, from a medical point of view, the liberty is taken of quoting from Haeser's Geschichte der Medicin .

The German historian is discussing the origin of one of the several synonyms of the disease Syphilis -- Morbus Gallicus-- "Es scheint nämlich fast, als ob der erste^{ste} Name (Morbus Gallicus) durch ein etymologisches Missverständniss entstanden sey. In Frankreich selbst hiess die Syphilis unter Anderem auch "galle" was entweder "Kratze"(gale) bedeutet, oder an die Aehnlichkeit des Hautleidens mit Galläpfeln oder Eichen erinnern soll, mit denen von deutschen Schriftstellern ausdrücklich die "Zapfen" der Haut-affection verglichen wurden. Auch noch mehr! Auch im Altenglischen heisst der Tripper "galle" und "apegalle". Ferner bedeutet das Englische Zeitwort "gall" abreiben, reizen, wunddrücken, und das gleichlautende Substantivum nicht blos "Galle", sondern auch eine Schramme. "Ape" heisst "Affe, hässliches Weib"; "Apegalle" demnach eine durch Umgang mit gemeinen Weibern erworbene Schramme. Es ist deshalb durchaus nicht unwahrscheinlich, das der Name "galle" als die Wurzel des "morbus gallicus" zu betrachten ist, und dass diesem Namen nicht allein die "Mala Franzos" der Deutschen, sondern auch die Hypothese des Ursprungs der Krankheit in dem Heere Carl's VIII vor Neapel ihre Entstehung verdankt."(B.2. S.221-222 I.

T H E R A P E U T I C S .

One would expect to find in such early poetry only those references to therapeutic measures involving the use of drugs of the commonest kind. It is so. Women had in those and later days a great deal to do with the drugging of the sick, and they were relied upon for information of this kind. Bundles of herbs were annually collected and kept ready for use in most houses. Illustrative of the high esteem in which women held such knowledge is the present of the 'Magic Ring' to Canacea in the "Squire's Tale", which revealed to the wearer the medicinal secrets of all plants.

"And every gras that groweth upon roote
She shal eek knowe and whom it wol do boote,

Al be his woundes never so depe and wyde."

(Squire's Tale. 153-158.)

Again, in the same tale

"Now kan nat Canacee but herbes delve
Out of the ground, and make salves newe
Of herbes preciouise, and fyne of hewe,
To heelen with this hauk; "

(Squire's Tale. 638-641.)

Popular treatment is exemplified in the remedial measures adopted for those injured in the Tournament described in the "Knight's Tale"

"To othere woundes and to broken armes,
Somme hadden salves and somme hadden charmes,
Fermacies of herbes, and eek save
They dronken, for they wolde hir lymes have."

(Knight's Tale. 2711-2714.)

"Save" is the common herb Sage, which was one of the most highly esteemed of medieval remedies.

"Cur moriatur homo cui Salvia crescit in horto.
Salvia comfortat nervos, manuumque tremorem
Tollit, et ejus ope febris acuta fugit.
Salvia cum ruta faciunt tibi pocula tuta."

These are only a few of the praises of Salvia Salvatrix, naturae conciliatrix, which may be found in the Salernitan Regimen Sanitatis and similar compendiums. (Janus. Janvier 1901.)

Salves and ointments, together with herbal concoctions,—"fermacies"—constituted the staple treatment of the Doctor. The extensive use of salves is illustrated by two general references. Criseyde says

"If to this soor ther may be founden salve,
It shal not lakke, certain, on myn halve! "

(Troilus and Criseyde. 944-945. B.R.V.)

And in Rosemounde,

"It is an oynement unto my wounde,"

(Rosemounde. 7.)

A Plaster, composed of various medicinal agents, was another very commonly employed method to promote the healing of wounds.

"Greet was the sorwe for the haukes harm

That Canacee and alle hir women made;
 They nyste how they myghte the faucon glade,
 But Canacee hom bereth hire in hir lappe,
 And softly in plastres gan hire wrappe,
 Ther as she with hire beek hadde hurt hirselve."

(Squire's Tale. 632-637.)

"Drogges" or Drugs, "Letuaries" or Electuaries, were prepared by the Apothecaries according to the prescriptions of the Physicians. It is not quite clear what Chaucer meant by "Drogges": it may be that they were dried powders, mainly powdered herbs, but "letuaries" were practically what would be understood by the word to-day, i.e., a thick concoction to be licked from a spoon. That they were in extensive use is evident from

"But al too late com'th the letuarie
 Whan men the cors unto the grave carie!"

(Troilus and Criseyde. 741-742. Bk. V.)

Also in "Troilus and Criseyde" Chaucer makes a poetical use of this common knowledge of medicinal herbs in the beautiful lines

"For th'ilke grounde that ber'th the wedes wikke
 Ber'th eek these holsom herbes as ful ofte;
 And next the foule netle, rough and thikke,
 The rose waxeth swete, smothe, and softe;"

(Troilus and Criseyde. 946-949. Bk. I.)

And again,-

"Wo worth the faire gemme vertules!
 Wo worth that herbe also that doth no bote!"

(Troilus and Criseyde. 344-345. Bk. II.)

Of particular remedies and drugs mentioned there are the following:- Laurel, Centaury, Hellebore, Fumitory, Caper-spurge, Gattertree, Herbe yve, Borax, Ceruce, Oil-of-Tarter, Quicksilver, Litharge, Brimstone, Aloes, Opium, Gold, Narcotics and Hyaena's-gall

Pertelote says to Chaunticleer in the "Nun's Priest's Tale"

"A day or two ye shul have digestyves
 Of wormes, er ye take youre laxatyves
 Of lawriol, centaure and fumetere,
 Or elles of ellebor that groweth there,
 Of katapuce or of gaitrys beryis,

Of herbe yve, growyng in oure yeerd, ther mery is;
 Pekke hem up right as they growe and ete hem yn; "

Nun's Priest's Tale. 4151-4157.)

A "digestyve" is "a medicine or substance promoting digestion of food," (New English Dictionary) and it may be observed that Pertelote was well informed in advising Chaunticleer to pick the remedies "as they grew", for it was the herbalist's custom to collect his plants as fresh as possible.

Centaury and Hellebore are included in the Herbarium Apuleian and of his work it is said that, - "Its translation into English shows its popularity, and amid the scarcity of old English manuscripts four copies still exist of this work, and three glossaries show themselves indebted to it." (Rev. Oswald Cockayne, 8, 80. Saxon Leechdoms).

Information thus promulgated before the Norman conquest must have had to do with the formation of the common regard for these drugs. Both of them, - Centaury Major and Helleborus Albus- are found in the Herbarium and the Saxon translation endowed with special curative powers in Liver derangements, from which, according to Pertelote, her husband was suffering. It is probable, however, that Helleborus nigrus is alluded to by Pertelote, as Helleborus Albus is not a native of England and the black variety was considered by the ancients 'a mighty purger' of melancholy.

Later reference to the efficacy of these drugs is made by Batman upon Bartholm . "Lawriol" is Laurel, Dafne Laureola. The Berries were accounted good "for hardness of the inwards". (P. 45 Saxon Leechdoms). "Katapuce" is Caperspurge, Euphorbia Lathyris; it too was good for "sore of the inwards". (P. 45, Saxon Leechdoms)

Skeat surmises that the berries of the Buckthorn which closely resemble and are often mistaken for those of the Cornel-tree, may probably be meant here. *(this paragraph is misplaced: it should follow the next.)*

"Gaitrys" is a name properly belonging to the Dogwood (Cornus sanguinea) but in various districts applied to other similar shrubs. (New English Dictionary).

"Herbe-yve" is somewhat doubtful, Professor Skeat identifying it with Ground Pine, whose leaves are extremely nauseous: Pertelote is ironical in saying "Ther mery is".

It may be mentioned that "Earth Ivy" is given in the

translation of the Herbarium Apuleii as useful for "sore of milt".
(P. 43.)

"Fumetere", i.e. Fumitory, was largely used for Liver complaints.

Though these and other drastic purgatives were used by medieval Doctors to an extreme degree we do not find that Chaucer satirises their employment, nor does he deal at all slightly with the equally destructive custom of bleeding.

The popular credit of purgatives is seen in the earnest advice of Pertelote to her troubled husband;

" 'Now Sire,' quod she, 'whan we flee fro the bemes',
For Goddes love, as taak som laxatyf.
Up peril of my soule, and of my lyf,
I conseilte yow the beste, I wol nat lye,
That bothe of colere and of malencolye
Ye purge yow, and, for ye shal nat tarie,
Though in this toun is noon apothecarie,
I shal myself to herbes techen yow
That shul been for youre hele, and for youre prow;
And in oure yeerd tho herbes shal I fynde,
The whiche han of hire propretee by kynde
To purge yow, bynethe and eek above.
Forget nat this, for Goddes owene love! "

(Nun's Priest's Tale. 4132-4144.)

Chaunticleer's is the only voice raised in disbelief of purgation.

"; and I seye forthermoor,
That I ne telle of laxatyves no stoor,
For they been venymes, I woot it weel;
I hem diffye, I love hem never a deel! "

(Nun's Priest's Tale. 4343-4346.)

Chaucer was unlike Molière in this respect, who whipped with his tremendous satire the medical men of his time for their idolatry and ruinous practice of these modes of treatment. Molière had been a patient: Chaucer so far as we know enjoyed good health. However, these two writers had minds of a greatly different order. The Frenchman had a keener insight into the characters of men and women and an unerring eye for their defects, which he held

up to crushing ridicule, while the Englishman dealt with his fellow more kindly and was more influenced by authority.

It is very pleasing to note that medical men are treated most kindly by Chaucer, at all events they are neither satirised nor ridiculed. There is only one indirect allusion of a slighting character made and it is by the Host

"The devel made a Reve for to preche,
.Cr of a souterre shipman or a leche."

(Reeve's Tale. 3903 - 3904.)

"Ex Sutore medicus" was an old popular proverb.

.Of the Sommonour we are told that

"Of his visage children were aferd.
Ther nas quyk-silver, lytarge, ne brymstoon,
Boras, ceruce, ne oille of Tartre noon,
He oynement that wolde clense and byte,
That hym myghte helpen of the whelkes white,
Nor of the knobbes sittynge on his chekes."

(Prologue. 628 - 633.)

It would appear as if ~~most~~ of the drugs here mentioned were intended for external application only, since the Arabian modification of Greek medicine, a method which was dominant in Chaucer's day, dreaded the poisonous effects of internal administration.

"Von den metallischen Mitteln wurde fast stets nur äusserlich Gebrauch gemacht, weil man die giftige Wirkung der meisten fürchtete"

(Haeser. B. I. S.240.)

Quicksilver, Litharge, and Sulphur are ancient remedies for skin diseases. Lanfrank mentions Litharge as a remedy for "wet scab". (Science of Chirurgie. P.192.) The same author (Ibid P.190) in giving some directions for the cure of certain cutaneous affections says, " And than anoynte his face with olio tartarino".

In a note to this recommendation the Editor remarks :-

"The translator has omitted the prescription of oleum tartarinum given in the Latin original. "Oylle of tarter- Recipe, Tarter oil . whyt wyn made in pouder temperd wt venygre as past, bynde yt in a clothe and put yt under embers, to yt be welle brent: than put yt in a ston pot with an holle benethe. And this ys oylle off tarter". (In modern English, Cream of Tartar.)

"Ceruce", (a complex substance formed of the oxides and

carbonates of lead) was introduced into medical use by the Arabian Physicians who were not aware of its complex composition. It formed a part of certain cosmetics.

"Borax" had also the same origin and application.

Narcotics are mentioned in several places. In the "Knight's Tale"—

"For he hade yeve his gayler drynke so,
Of a clarree, maad of a certeyn wyn,
With narcotikes, and opie of Thebes fyn,
That al that nyght, thogh that men wolde him shake,
The gayler sleepe, he myghte nat awake;"

(Knight's Tale. 1470-1474.)

In "The Legende of Good Women",—

"And seyde, Hereof a draught, or two, or thre,
Yif hym to drynke, whan he gooth to reste,
And he shal slepe as longe as ever the leste;
The narcotikes and opies ben so stronge."

(The Legende of Good Women. 2667- 2670.)

Though opium was known to the Greeks it is uncertain what is meant by "Opie of Thebes".

Aloes-wood is only used in a simile

"The woful teres that they leten falle
As bittre weren, out of teres kinde,
For payne, as is ligne aloes or galle;"

(Troilus and Criseyde. Book 4. 1135-1137)

Chaucer is more concrete than Boccaccio:—

".....e le cascanti
Lacrime si bevean, senza aver cura
Ch'amare fosser oltre lor natura."

(Parta quarte 115.)

In the short Poem, "Fortune", an undoubted medieval remedy is mentioned:—

"Thee nedeth nat the galle of noon hyene,
That cureth yen derke fro hir penaunce;"

(Fortune. 35 - 36.)

The belief in the efficacy of the gall of various animals is very ancient. The Medicina de Quadrupedibus of Sextus Placitus, which was translated into English before the Norman Conquest, gives

several prescriptions. The galls of a fox, hare, wild-buck, goat, well are therein all ordered to be separately used for dimness of sight or ocular pains. (Vol. 1. Saxon Leechdoms)
The allusion to gold as a remedy is only found in the description of the Doktour of Phisik,--

"For gold in phisik is a cordial, "

(Prologue. 443.)

A testimony to the fancied and fantastical value ascribed to the Rex Metallorum in disease. However, the difficulty for the doctors was the dissolving of the metal: a prescription for the making of Aurum potabile is frequently given by old writers, the solution of the metal by the mineral acids being very imperfectly understood.

One therapeutic measure to which ~~slight~~reference is made is that of bleeding. It is well known that medicine suffered during the dark ages as did other branches of knowledge. Empiricism was rampant; monks and women practised their superstitious habits and the orthodox medical practitioners were in most cases arrant humbugs. A vivid portrait has been left by Charles Reade in the "Cloister and the Hearth" of a doctor and his unblushing quackery--methods illustrative of the period immediately prior to the introduction of printing. The union of the priest and doctor in the middle ages was very close. Fuller gives a quaint notice of it :-

"The Ancient Brittons, who went without cloathes, may well be presumed to live without physick. Yet, seeing very Beasts know what is good for themselves (the Deer, CretanDictamum; and Toad, his antidote of Plantaine) sure they had some experimental receipts used amongst them, and left the rest to nature and temperance to cure. The Saxons had those they termed Leaches, or Bloud-letters, but were little skilled in methodical practise. Under the Normans, they began in England (and would we had fetched Physicians only and not diseases from France!) yet three hundred years since it was no distinct profession by itself, but practised by men in Orders; witness Nicholas de Fernham, the chief English Physician and Bishop of Durham; Hugh of Evesham, a Physician and Cardinal; Grisant, a Physician and Pope. Yea, the word Physician appears not in our Statutes till the days of King Henry the Eight, who incorporated their Colledge at London; since which time they have multiplied and flourished in our Nation, but never more.

and more learned then. than in our age, wherein that art, and especially the anatomical part thereof, is much improved, our Civil Wars perchance occasioning the latter."

From a variety of causes the Priest was forbidden to practise medicine. Dr. Lucknill remarks that

"Dr. Millingen, in his *Curiosities of Medical Experience*, explains the origin of barber surgeons, from the decadence of medical practice among the priests. In 1163, at the Council of Tours, Pope Alexander 3rd., maintaining that the devil, to seduce the priesthood from the duties of the altar, involved them in mundane occupations under the plea of humanity, prohibited the study both of medicine and law amongst all who had taken religious vows. In 1215 Honourius 3rd. "fulminated a fresh anathema" ordaining, that as the church abhorred all cruel and sanguinary practices, not only should no priest be allowed the practice of surgery, but that the priestly benediction should be refused to all those who professed it. Unable to quit their cloisters, in surgical cases, which could not be so easily cured at a distance, sooner than lose the emoluments of the profession, they sent their servants, or rather the barbers of the community, who shaved and bled and drew teeth in their neighbourhood ever since the clergy could no longer perform their operations, on the plea of the maxim, "*Ecclesia abhorret à sanguine*"; bleeding and tooth-drawing being, I believe, the only cases where this maxim was noticed. From this circumstance arose the barber craft or "barber surgeons".

It is easy to understand how naturally, under these circumstances, bleeding, as a remedial measure, would fall into the hands of the secular attendants of a church. We find in Chaucer a simple but convincing illustration of this decadence of medicine. "The gay and joly clerk, Absolon," in that broadly humorous tale told by the Miller, is an adept at many things, and amongst others

"Wel koude he laten blood and clippe and shave,"

(Miller's Tale. 3026.)

This reference and the following,—"Veyne-blood",—are, strange to say, the only instances found in Chaucer's writings of the practice

of phlebotomy: ^{by} the alternative, - "ventusynge"-, is meant the
 'wet method' of cupping, - one old method of removing blood.

"The clothered blood, for any lechecrait,
 Corrupteth, and is in his bouk y-laft,
 That neither veyne-blood ne ventusynge,
 Ne drynke of herbes may ben his helpynge;"

(Knight's Tale. 2745 - 2748.)

O B S E R V A T I O N S .

There is a remarkable allusion to a subject which concerns
 Midwifery in the "Merchant's Tale": it is to the strange 'longings'
 which women frequently experience during pregnancy.

"This fresshe May, that is so bright and sheene,
 Can for to syke and seyde, "Allas, my syde!
 Now, Sire," quod she, "for aught that may bityde,
 I moste han of the peres that I see,
 Or I moot dye, so soore longeth me
 To eten of the smale peres grene.
 Help, for hir love that is of hevene queene!
 I telle yow wel, a womman in my plit
 may han to fruyt so greet an appetit
 That she may dyen, but she of it have."

(Merchants Tale. 2328 - 2337.)

While there can be no doubt of the accuracy of the reference
 it is odd that it is not expressly told that May is enceinte.
 Another mention of pregnancy is found in the "Knight's Tale".

"A womman travaillynge was hire biforn,
 But, for hir child so longe was unborn,
 Ful pitously Lucyna gan she calle
 And seyde, "Helpe, for thou mayst best of alle."

(Knight's Tale. 2083 - 2086.)

A curious reference is made to the suckling of children in the
 "Clerk's Tale". To tempt his patient wife Grisildis, the husband
 causes one child after another to be taken away from her, and of one
 it is said

38

"And it was two year old, and fro the breast
departed of his norice, "

(Clerk of Oxford's Tale. 617 - 620.)

Lactation over such an extended period is not an uncommon incident even now- a- days, and it is interesting to compare Chaucer's casual introduction of the function with the garrulous chatter of Juliet's nurse, who weaned her charge when the infant was almost three years old,-

"On Lammass-eve at night shall she be fourteen that shall
she, marry; I remember it well: 'Tis since the earthquake
now eleven years: and she was weaned."

That tedious sermon, "The Parson's Tale", contains piquant teaching upon the subject of infantile feeding,

'For soothly ther is nothyng that savoureth so wel to a child
as the milk of his norice, ne no thyng moore abhomyrable than
thilke milk whan it is medled with oother mete."

(Parson's Tale. P. 267, para. 120.)

The birth of a monstrosity is alluded to in the "Man of Law's Tale",-

"The lettre spak, the queene delivered was
Of so horrible a feendly creature,
That in the castel noon so hardy was
That any while dorste ther endure."

(Man of Law's Tale. 750 - 753.)

To another phase of child-bearing the Host gives expression in unmeasured terms,-

".....but and I were a pope,
Nat oonly thou, but every myghty man,
Though he were shorn ful hye upon his pan,
Sholde have a wyf, - for al the world is lorn;
Religioun hath take up al the corn
Of tredyng, and we borel men been shrympes;
Of fieble trees ther comen wrecched ympes.
This maketh that oure heires beth so skilendre
And feble that they may nat wel engendre;"

(Merry words of Host to Monk. 3140 - 3148.)

by some
Practices thought to be quite modern are denounced in the

"Parson's Tale" :-

"Eek in a woman by negligence overlyeth hire child in hire slepyng, it is homycide and deedly synne. Eek whan man destourbeth concepcioun of a child, and maketh a woman outhur bareyne by drynkyng venemouse herbes thurgh which she may nat conceyve, or sleeth a child by drynkes, or elles putteth thynges in hire secree places to sle the child, or elles dooth unkyndely synne by which man or woman shodeth hire nature, in manere or in place ther as a child may nat be conceived, or elles if a woman have conceyved and hurt hirselfe, and sleeth the child, yet it is homycide."

(Parson's Tale. P.286. para. 373.)

The necessity for such admonitions in times long prior to Chaucer is attested by Mr. Cockayne (Saxon Leechdoms. p.66.)

"Saxon women are often warned of the wickedness of getting rid of an unborn child by abortive agencies, and especially by a drink."

The paucity of references to childbearing and cognate subjects ^{in such essentially popular poetry} is, I think, an evidence of the natural refinement of Chaucer's mind, which rivalled that of Balzac in its perfect knowledge of women. The Wife of Bath's bold harangue about the functions of the pudenda comes under a different heading, but is curiously indicative of how closely Chaucer had studied the frail sex.

---o---o---o---o---o---o---

After this review of the medical allusions made by the Father of English Poetry there is still left one aspect of his presentation of medicine to be discussed and one of great interest,-- no less than the portraiture of the Doctour of Phisik. The immortal prologue to the Canterbury Tales is a moving gallery of typical characters, drawn with the greatest kindness and humanity. No figure is more interesting or more artistically limned than that of the physician. Chaucer has sketched for posterity what must be taken as, and admittedly is, a faithful presentment of the idea of a 14th. Century Doctor. We are informed not only of his outward appearance, but his characteristics are indelibly impressed upon our imaginations. Chaucer wielded a broad brush and his palette held bold colours. His essentially English mind expressed itself in words of no

ambiguity, and his readers are liable, in consequence, to miss the peculiar quality which often exists. It is frequently as if the breadth of Frans Hals were combined with the delicate grace of Vandyck. This combination of vigorous and refined observation is well exhibited in the portrait of an early English medical man, a creation which should appeal to every practitioner of medicine.

" With us ther was a Doctour of Phisik;

In all this world ne was ther noon hym lik,

To speke of phisik and of surgerye;

For he was grounded in astronomye.

He kepte his pacient a ful greet deel

In houres, by his magyk natureel.

Wel koude he fortunen the ascendent

Of his ymages for his pacient. "

(Prologue. 411 - 418.)

The "Doctour" was evidently a practitioner of the astrological as well as of the medical art: it is not just to accuse him of charlatanism as would be done if a modern doctor relied upon such mythical help in the treatment of disease. Chaucer himself was not free of the old belief in the influence of ^{the} stars upon man's destiny. In the "Man of Law's Tale" our author expresses himself very clearly upon this subject,-

" Faraventure in thilke large book,

Which that men clipe the hevene, y-writen was

With sterres, whan that he his birthe took,

That he for love sholde han his deeth, alias!

For in the sterres, clerer than is glas,

Is writen, God woot, whoso koude it rede,

The deeth of every man, withouten drede.

In sterres many a wynter ther biforn

Was writen the deeth of Ector, Achilles,

Of Pompei, Julius, er they were born,

The strife of Thebes, and of Ercules,

Of Sampson, Turnus, and of Scocrates

The deeth; but mennes wittes ben so duille

That no wight kan wel rede it atte fulle."

(Man of Law's Tale. 186 - 205.)

...A Treatise, written by Chaucer for his son's use, in which
 concerning proof of how much attention he had paid to astronomical
 matters. This treatise is unfinished, but one quotation is
 enough to show with what kind of information its author intended
 to supply his son, in so far as health and disease were believed
 to be affected by astronomical influences:-

"And understonde also that whan an hote planete cometh in
 an hote signe, than encreasith his hete; and yf a planete
 be colde, than amenusith his coldenesse by cause of the
 root sygne. And by thys conclusioun maist thou take
 ensauple in alle the signes, be thei moist or drie, or
 moeble or fixe, reknyng the qualite of the planete as I
 first seide. And everiche of these 12 signes hath respect
 to a certeyn parcel of the body of a man, and hath it in
 governaunce, as Aries hath thin heved, and Taurus thy nose
 and thy throte, Gemini thin armeholes and thin armes, and
 so furthe as shal be shewid more playn in the 5 partie of
 this tretis,"

(A Treatise on the Astrolabe. para. 21.)

Astrology did not exhaust this practitioner's diagnostic ability.

"He knew the cause of everich maladye,
 Were it of hoot, or cold, or moyste, or drye,
 And where they engendred and of what humour;
 He was a verray parfit praktisour."

(Prologue. 419 - 422.)

The continuation of the portrait is really an accusation which
 medical men always devoutly hope may have been a libel but one they
 know at the same time to be occasionally true even in these
 altruistic days,-

"The cause y-knowe and of his harm the roote,
 Anon he yaf the sike man his boote.
 Ful redy hadde he his apothecaries
 To sende him drogges and his letuaries,
 For ech of hem made oother for to wynne.
 His frendshipe nas nat newe to bigynne."

(Prologue. 425 - 428.)

Haeser states deliberately that the Doctor and his Apothecary were old friends in the art of enriching themselves by mutual encouragement and selfishly devised methods. The Physician prescribed for his Patient drugs and electuaries which were obtained from the Apothecary, whom he specially recommended, and there can be no hesitation in believing that this particular Physician was highly extolled by his favoured Apothecary. It might have been worse for,—"Charakteristisch genug ist frollend die in sehr vielen Schriften dieser und der späteren Zeit,-- (the author is speaking of John of Caddesden's work "Rosa Anglica") gewöhnliche Trennung der Heilmittel für Reiche und Arme, der Schamlose Wucher mit Arkanen, und die Aufstellung eines besondern Kapitels solcher Krankheiten, welche dem Arzt wenig eintragen. (Haeser B.I. S.321-322.)"

Following this hit at the money-making proclivities of a trusted servant of the people, is the enumeration of the educational works upon which the mind of the Doctor had been fed:-

"Wel knew he the olde Esculapius
And Deyscorides, and eek Rufus,
Olde Ypocras, Haly and Galyen,
Serapion, Razis, and Avycen,
Averrois, Damascien and Constantyn,
Bernard and Gatesden and Gilbertyn."
(Prologue. 429 - 434.)

Of these fifteen authors the majority are Arabian, an arresting testimony to the intellectual value of the Mohammedan military conquests and domination of the thought and speculations of Europe during a period of Moslem history which has been so vividly described by Dr. Draper in his "Conflict of Science and Religion".

Averrhoes was the famous commentator upon Plato and Aristotle; Avicenna upon Aristotle, and his book "The Canon of Medicine" was widely adopted in the European Universities and Schools of the middle ages. Chaucer refers again to this author in the "Parson's Tale" when describing the effects of a poison,-

"But certes, I suppose that Avycen
Iroot never in no Canon, ne in no fen,

He wouter shyned on impudently
That he shold thus errounse and flout a lye."
(Parson's Tale. 607 - 609.)

These names are John of Damascus, Haly, Rhazes, Serapion, and Constantine Aesculapius. Of the last mentioned it is recorded that he was one of the founders of the famous Medical School at Salerno in Italy. John of Damascus and Rhazes belong to the 8th. Century, Haly and Serapion are of the 11th. Serapion was probably the name of an Arab Physician who assumed it because of its renown, since the original Serapion, a famous Greek Physician, lived long before the time of Christ. Of the Greek names, AEsculapius, Hippocrates, Dioscorides, Galen and Aetius are most are well known, but it was impossible for the Doctor to have known the works of AEsculapius, for no written work of his exists. Indeed, it is widely believed that AEsculapius was mythical figure. It is not to be supposed that the Doctors of Physik read the writings of these authorities in Greek or Arabic. Latin translations were current, Greek was almost unknown, and Arabic was certainly not an accomplishment of this "verray parfi. practisour".

The line "Bernard and Gadesden and Gilbertyn" is a tribute to Chaucer to contemporary medicine. Bernard was a Scot, Bernard Gordon, and taught medicine at the famous School of Montpellier. Gilbertyn is Gilbertus Anglicus, one of the earliest English medical writers, and lived in the 13th. Century. Gadesden is John of Gadesden who was a fellow of Merton College and died in 1361. The special interest about this man is that Chaucer may have had opportunities of meeting him, since 1340 is about the year of Chaucer's birth and both were London men. This Physician wrote the first English book of Medicine, which he styled "Rosa Anglica". Guyvon Chauliac characterised this production as "Una fatua rosa" (quoted by Haeser, Geschichte der Med. **Bat. Szr.**)

The conjecture that Chaucer drew his Doctor, not only as regards his professional qualities but also his general character, from John of Gadesden is supported by the following passage taken from Dr. Norman Moore's article in the Dictionary of National Biography: -

"The Rosa Anglica is crammed with quotations from Galen, Dioscorides, Rufus of Ephesus, Aetius, Serapion, Avicenna, Averrhoes, John of Damascus, Isaac, Mesue, Gilbertus Anglicus, and even the physician of Salerno. It is also crammed with quotations which appeared in the works of the

"...than his medical knowledge."

It must ever be a matter of conjecture if Chaucer had any other object than to give a dramatic background, in this allusion to the scholastic side of the character, to the canvas upon which the more definite features of the Doctor were to be painted. Medicine in Chaucer's day as a study had lost its original terms. Hippocrates and Galen were largely mere names, conveying no special meaning, were in fact the gloss used to conceal ignorance and superstition. The revivifying influence of the Arabian Physicians, though operative, had waned, and their translations of and commentaries upon Hippocrates, Galen and Aristotle still formed the staple of medical literature: respect for authority had almost crushed out of existence independent judgment, with inevitable result that unjustifiable ^{use} was made of honored names. Chaucer himself, not once nor twice, quotes authorities which, is good reason to believe, must have been unknown to him, and even imputes to ancient writers words and beliefs never uttered or held by them. In the "Wife of Bath's Tale" there is a most audacious disregard for accuracy in the references to classical authorities, but it must be allowed that here the disregard was largely intentional, - to add piquancy to the voluble wife's monologue. Chaucer, doubtless, in the course of his reading had come across the names of the old-world authors and with the instinct of a dramatist had pieced them together in order to give to his character-sketch of a Doctour of Phisik a kind of mise-en-scene. The idea which the poet had in enumerating authors whom the Doctour of Phisik "well knewe" -- if their names were not copied directly from "Rosa Anglica" -- was to embody the current notion of a Physician being a learned man. The names of Caius, Linacre and Harvey are later instances of scholarly men who practised medicine. In fact till times very near our own the Physician was either one of wide and general learning than a Scientist, as we think of him to-day. There is a quaint description of the qualities required by the Surgeon in Lanfranks "Science of Chirurgie" which might be often remembered than it is by modern medical men. (p. 8).

"Der surgeon muste studie in alle the parties of philosophie and in logic, that he mowe undirstande scripturis; in gramer, that he mowe be able to write; in arithmetike, that he mowe be able to count; in naturall philosophie, that he mowe be able to knowe the causes of diseases; in chirurgerie, that he mowe be able to cure diseases; in anatomy, that he mowe be able to knowe the members of the body; in surgery, that he mowe be able to cut; in pharmacy, that he mowe be able to make medicines; in diet, that he mowe be able to knowe the good and bad of food; in exercise, that he mowe be able to knowe the good and bad of labour; in sleep, that he mowe be able to knowe the good and bad of rest; in all these things he muste be perfect."

in Chaucer's time is found in the "Shipman's Prologue":

"But it shal nat ben of philosophye,
Ne of phisyk, ne termes queint of lawe;
There is but litel Latin in my mawe."

(Man of Law's Tale. 1180-1182.)

Professor Skeat takes "Phisyk" to have reference to "Philosophy, Law, &c." but the force of the Shipman's observation seems equally to point to the inference that medicine he intend. The Story-teller will not trouble his hearers with references to Philosophical, Medical, or Legal matters for which considerable Latinity would be required.

Whether the Doctour of Phisik is credited with too much learning or not, there can be no doubt that the description of the Physician would appeal to readers as typical of the student and practitioner to whom the care and cure of disease was then entrusted.

The remainder of the word portrait is taken up with an inimitable exposition of the man, apart from his professional work.

"Of his diete mesurable was he,
For it was of no superfluitee,
But of greet norissyng and digestible."

(Prologue. 435 - 437.)

How vividly does Chaucer impress us with the astuteness of the Doctor, whose daily avocations brought him only too frequently into contact with avoidable disease, and also with the character of the man who had sufficient strength of purpose to avoid these consequences in his own person!

The stinging line:

"His studie was but litel on the Bible."

(Prologue. 438.)

has become almost a reproach to the medical profession. How true it may be must be left to personal observation and experience. Chaucer simply epitomises in full-blooded English a sentiment that found frequent expression in ancient and medieval times. A well known proverb "Ubi tres medici duo atheri" attests the popular reaction of medieval times.

in medieval times as to-day the only one who wore the out-door garb of his members. It was still so in Chaucer's day; each profession wore a distinctive dress, and handsome indeed must have been that of the Doctor.

"In sangwyn and in pers he clad was al,
Lyned with taffata and with sendal."

(Prologue. 439-440.)

A cloth of blood red colour lined with fine silk is indicative of the dignity and worldly substance of the character and in this respect the lines addressed by the irrepressible Jar Bailly, the Host, to the Doctor must be recalled,—"Thou art a propte man, and lyk a prelat"; i.e. "Thou art as fine looking as *grand* as a bishop".

And now Chaucer winds up with lines of remarkable vigour, characterising his subject, satirising and withal endowing him with a living and not unkindly personality. One cannot but be attracted towards this somewhat niggardly and avaricious healer. Gold was counted a remedy of singular power and Chaucer laughingly alluded to this. He makes the reference alive with meaning - a stroke of genius in the delineation of the character. One wonders whether Chaucer had been like Molière more impressed by the worldly and commercial abilities of contemporary Doctors than by their learning and skill.

"And yet he was but esy of dispence,
He kepte that he wan in pestilence.
For gold in phisik is a cordial,
Therefore he lovede gold in special."

(Prologue. 441-444.)

As a piece of artistic composition this portrait of the Doctor is worthy of its author's genius. Vigorous, life-like, instinct with meaning and suggestion is the picture, and one's memory recurs to it again and again with renewed pleasure. It is like a piece of sculpture in which the chisel-marks are made more to suggest life than to copy it: the lines are not many but all-sufficient for a living likeness to be conveyed to the observer who, as he gazes, fills in the details of the face and figure. Chaucer's portrait is again in the sculpture of Balzac & Rodin,

... a work ...
...
...

English literature is justly proud of the splendid heritage left by its children, and no part of that inheritance is more honoured than the Prologue of the Canterbury Tales.

English ^{Medicine} may be justly proud that Chaucer thought fit to introduce into his cabinet ^{of portraits} a man who was no unworthy representative of a profession which has, whatever its failures may be, laboured to acquire knowledge, in order that it might be truthfully said of all its members

"He was a verray parfit practisour".

---o---o---o---o---o---o---o---o---

The question, how far Chaucer reveals his own character in his attitude towards medicine, is one which may allowably be put. It cannot be expected that a study of Chaucer's representations of medicine will enlarge very much our understanding of a man who was so broad and tolerant in his sympathies; nevertheless, ^{the} pleasure and perhaps profit may be derived from a synthesis of mind, as it ^{partially} is ^{of which} exposed by an inferential study of the medical allusions ^{he} makes use. His more eminent successor Shakespeare has attracted a great deal of attention from medical men: in fact, it has been a pleasant task for some to advocate the view that our greatest dramatist had, if not some regular medical training, at least favourable and special opportunities for the observation of the human body when diseased or deranged.

His medical and surgical references are so numerous, precise and varied, that it is not surprising to find the claim advanced that ordinary reading and observation will not account for his possession of such special knowledge: a particular training, and educational opportunities are by these writers thought necessary to explain satisfactorily the remarkably intelligent notions which Shakespeare possessed of Elizabethan medicine. So this as it is; in the case of Chaucer we cannot even entertain the flattering fancy that the immortal author of the Canterbury Tales was in any way connected with the practice or study of medicine. This view

...the ... of ... and ...
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One of the most strongly marked features of Chaucer's art is its dramatic capacity. Long before a regular drama existed in England Chaucer had, particularly but not exclusively, in the *Canterbury Tales* produced real dramatic compositions: his distribution of the *Tales* to suitable Tellers, and the devices which combined the pilgrims into a coherent whole, indicate the peculiar gift of the dramatist in presenting living men and women to the reader.

The Doctor is a grave and reverend man, one to whom respect and attention would naturally be paid. How suitably fitted are the judicious words which he introduces at the commencement of his tale to the character depicted by Chaucer in the Prologue.

Of the maiden Virginia the Doctor says : -

"Dacus hadde of hire mouth right no maistrie,
 For wyn and youthe dooth Venus encrease,
 As man in fyr wol casten oille or greesse.
 And of hir owene vertu unconstreyned
 She hath ful ofte tyme syk hire feyned,
 For that she wolde fleen the compaignye
 Where likly was to treten of folye,-
 As is at feestes, revels, and at daunces,
 That been occasions of daliaunces;
 Swich thynges maken children for to be
 To soone ripe and boold, as men may se,
 Which is ful perilous, and hath been yore,
 For al to soone may she lerne loore
 Of booldnesse, whan she woxen is a wyf."

(Doctor's Tale. 58 - 71.)

The wisdom and instruction of these lines could not be uttered more authoritatively than by a man whose professional and confidential relationships entitled him to freer speech than was permitted to other men.

Bearing this dramatic sense in mind, united as it was with the sense of the Doctor's position, it is somewhat strange to find the

Chaucer's "The Knight's Tale" is a departure from Boccaccio's text. The shared in the victories and defeats of an English army, the camp diseases with the injuries and surgical horrors of the battlefield must have been familiar to him, yet with the exception of joust recorded in the "Knight's Tale" no reference is made to the medical and surgical consequences of the clash of arms. Scourge was rampant: Chaucer makes no reference to its ravages. That observant eyes missed them is impossible to believe. Shakespeare on frequent occasions introduces into his plays the disease and its terrible consequences with words of apt significance. There can be no doubt of Shakespeare's vivid recognition of the scourge. I am inclined to attribute this absence of the realistic element in Chaucer's attitude to some aspects of medical matters to a peculiar fastidiousness. His aesthetic sense was offended by the gruesome sights. It is significant that he says of the Cook

"But greet harm was it, as it thoughte me,

That on his shyne a mormal hadde he."

¶ Prologue. 385 - 386.)

The description too of the Sommeour breathes the spirit of a man of refined and sensitive tastes repelled by the coarse appetites of a sensualist, whose delights were in "garlicks", "oynons" and "strong wyn reed as blood".

Again, though a special opportunity existed, he merely refers to the presence of the plague which wrought such dreadful havoc in England, not attempting to give of it such a vivid account as did his copy Boccaccio in the Decamerone of the Italian visitation.

Chaucer is clearly unlike some moderns in their reaction to the objective presentation of filthy morbidity. His interest in medicine is largely that of a literary man and one feels that his introduction of medical topics, with few exceptions, is more the result of reading than of serious interest in actual disease.

There is a great difference between the knowledge of medicine possessed by the 14th. and 16th. century Physicians, but a comparison of Chaucer and Shakespeare in this regard will reveal a disparity.

are so marked in Shakespeare's medical knowledge.

Dreams, as we have seen, ~~mystified~~ Chaucer, but he regarded madness as a real disease. Every one knows how deftly, dramatically and accurately Shakespeare exhibits mental alienation. Chaucer's direct allusion to madness

..... but rather lyk manye,
Ingendred of humour malencolik,
Biforn, in his owene cellie fantastik."

(Knight's Tale. 1374 - 1378.)

is clearly the expression of popular belief and no more. He uses the dramatic use of delusions and similes drawn from the observation of 'deranged psychological states. Perhaps the explanation of this deficiency, discernible too in other aspects of his writings, is that Chaucer was not a metaphysician, or at all events was not troubled himself with the solution of the gravest problems of life; the modern notion of Weltschmerz was happily unknown to him. Could there be a more debon air spirit than his? For faced with the fact of death he is no soliloquising Hamlet, but with the gay spirit of the Troubadour says of a dead Knight

"His spirit chaunged hous, and wente ther,
As I can never, I kan nat tellen wher."

(Knight's Tale. 2809 - 2810.)

This general interest in medicine is evidenced further by comparatively few diseases specifically mentioned by Chaucer, a fact of some significance considering the range of subjects and characters he introduced into his work.

It is not expected that there would be found in a Poet's writings a Compendium of Medicine but from the references he actually makes it is permissible to infer his attitude to the subject as a whole. But while this particular interest in the nature of disease is absent, no one knew better than Chaucer how to introduce with telling effect the general relationship of doctor and patient.

"For who-so list have heling of his leche,
To him bihoveth first unwrye his wounde. "

(Troilus and Criseyde. 867-868. Bk. I.)

Another example is this bit of homely wisdom found in the
"Summonour's Tale",

"What nedeth hym that hath a parfit leche
To sechen othere leches in the toun ? "

(Summoner's Tale. 1956 - 1957.)

These two illustrations are worthy of proverbial application.
It must have amused Chaucer to have witnessed the rapidity with
which irresponsible advice was tendered for the cure of any
disease. Troilus is sick

"And every wight gan waxen for accesse
A leche anon, and seide, "In this manere
Men curen folk".- 'This charme I wol thee love. "

(Troilus and Criseyde. 1578 - 1580. Bk. II)

The mention of a charm gives an opportunity to quote the
half-denunciatory, half-doubting words of the Parson,

"What seye we of hem that bileeven in divynallis, as by
flight or by noyse of briddes, or of beestes, or by sort,
by geomancie, by dremes, by chirkyng of dores, or
crackyng of houses, by gnawynge of rattes, and swich
manere wrecchednesse ? Certes, al this thyng is defenden
by God, and by al hooly Chirche; for which they been
acursed til they come to amendement, that on swich thing
setten hire bileeve. Charmes for woundes or malice of
men, or of beestes, if they taken any effect, it may be
peraventure that God suffreth it, for folk sholden yeve
the moore feith and reverence to his name. "

(Parson's Tale. Para. 605.)

A common experience in a Doctor's life is thus expressed,

"Now let us stinte of Troilus a stonde,
That fareth lik a man that hurt is sore
And is compel of aking of his wounde

And thus he drieth forth his aventure."

(Troilus and Criseyde. B.I. 1030 - 1032.)

Professor Skeat's reading of this is

"And is partly well eased of the aching of his wound, but is the more healed: and like an easy patient (that is a patient not in pain) awaits (literally, abides) the prescription of him who tries to cure him: and thus he perseveres in his destiny."

It has been shown that Chaucer makes a fair number of references to the great branches of the Science and Art of Medicine, but when we consider these allusions the conclusion is evident that Chaucer did not possess ^{the} myriad-mindedness of Shakespeare. Chaucer introduced medical and allied subjects into his writings just in the same spirit as an accomplished conversationalist of to-day would make use of them in a *causoric*, - to make more vivid his observations. In a word, Chaucer was an excellent raconteur, and spoke of medicine and disease only so far as the art of a story-teller demanded.

One introduction of a medical topic is of antiquarian interest to medical men, and one which makes a fit termination to this thesis. The loquacious Host breaks out and addresses the Doctor in this wise,

"I pray to God so save thy gentil cors;
And eek thyne uryngals, and thy jurdones,
Thyn Ypocras, and eek thy Caliones,
And every boyste ful of thy letuarie ; "

(The Words of the Host to the Physician
and the Pardoner. 303-306.)

This is the only reference made by Chaucer to the diagnostic methods adopted by contemporary physicians. "Ypocras" is not Hippocrates in this instance though the famous Greek's name was almost always spelt in this way by Chaucer, and in early English manuscripts generally. The reference is to a highly spiced liquor named after the Physician, of which many recipes are given.

named after Galen whose name is spelt 'Galien' not only in the text but in other authors".

It is not clear if Professor Skeat intends to connect the word 'drinks' those similar to 'Ypocras' or those of a more generally medicinal character. Landfrank, for instance, frequently gives recipes of 'Galien', and it seems a natural transition, since the famous Greek's prescriptions were so extensively used, to call these preparations 'Galions' or 'Galiones'. The authority of Galen in medical matters would assist in this transition. I am inclined to believe that the Host alluded to these medicinal preparations. "Jurdanes", Jordanes, or in the singular, Jordan, is a word familiar to Shakespeare readers. He says (and the quotation will serve as an unpleasant reminder of the debasing effect of common usage upon certain words) - "empty the Jordan". "Jordan" originally meant a peculiarly shaped bottle in which pilgrims brought home water taken from the river Jordan.

But the most interesting feature of the Host's taunt is in his allusion to the 'Urynals', which were special vessels used for the reception of the excretion.

The diagnosis of disease by an external examination of the urine is an old clinical method. In Chaucer's day it was a fairly respectable procedure; but as can be easily understood it gave such opportunities for deception and quackery that it is not surprising to find that the College of Physicians had very early to denounce the practice.

Doctors were not alone in making use of 'Urynals' for fraudulent purposes, as is seen from an enumeration of the things used by some of the Alchemists to gull the people. The Canon Yeoman gives a long list of chemical substances and appliances kept by his master and among them "oure urynals". (Canon's Yeoman's Tale. L. 752.)

It is trusted that this enquiry has not proved barren in results, though they may not equal those obtained from the study of the works of men of profound learning like Ben Jonson, or of equally profound observers like Shakespeare.

detail has to be given illustrating the social life of the time, and in this sense an appreciation of the medical aspect reflected in the most popular authors is a help in the broadening of the public mind.

It is hoped that in some measure this essay may have accomplished a little in that direction. As to the special value to medical practitioners, the results are not of such varied interest as might perhaps be hoped for, but whatever they may be, they are sufficient to show that in Chaucer's reflex of life, as mirrored in his writings, there is a not inconsiderable attention paid to the speculations and work of daily medical practice.

For Appendix & Note see pp. 56-58.

In Chaucer's Tale of Melibeus there are a few general references of a medical character, but none of especial value. For this reason partly, but chiefly on account of the Tale being merely a translation of the French "L'Histoire de Melibée et de Prudence", only one extract will be given, as Chaucer's version differs from the original. In other respects the English is a fluent rendering of the French.

" Lors respondi dame Prudence: Sire, dit-elle, "je te prie que tu ne rappelles point en ton courage se je dy chose qui te desplaie etc., (P.204 Le Ménagier de Paris, publié par La Société des Bibliophiles Français).

Chaucer's translation is :-

"My lord", quod she, "I biseke yow in al humblesse that yow nat wilfully replie agayn my resouns, ne distempre yow, thoogh I speke thyng that yow displese;" etc.

The choice of the word 'distempre' is a convincing illustration of the impress which the doctrines of the humoral pathology had made upon the ordinary language. Prudence feared that her husband's heart might be 'distempered', i.e. affected by the presence of a surplus 'humour' most probably the one styled 'choler', because that, in excess, was said to make a man choleric.

Another medical allusion which is purposely omitted is in the account of the disease and death of King Antiochus narrated in the "Fourth Tale". Chaucer recites almost word for word the story as it is found in the Second Book Maccabees. (Chapter, 8.)

In a letter to Dr. Furnivall, the founder of the Chaucer Society, who had lent me some valuable books, I said:

"May I trouble you to help me elucidate these quotations,-

"..... Who hath ben wel y-bete
To-day, with swerdes and with slinge-stones,
But Troilus, that hath caught him an hete!"

(Troilus and Criseyde. B.2. 940-941.)

"Caught him an hete" puzzles me: can it bear the simple meaning of exhaustion from long exposure to the sun, or that Troilus was ill with a feverish attack?

"Then gan the veyne of Troilus to blede,
For he was hit, and wex al red for shame."

(Troilus and Criseyde. B.1. 866-867.)

This is not, according to Rossetti, found in the Italian. Can this be taken as a poetical explanation of blushing?

Dr. Furnivall most kindly referred these quotations to F. J. C. Skeat, who replied as follows:-

"Hath caught him an hete" -- got violently hot, sweated with exertion. See N.E.D., s.v. HEAT. 4.d.

The Chaucer example might well have been cited in N.E.D. I think it has here a secondary meaning and that Pandarus says, - "you are in a mighty sweat, you look red enough; of course it's because you've been fighting: the true reason was that he was hot with the passion of love. And that is why I explain it by 'passion' in my glossary. It bears a double sense.

In the second passage, the reference is to phlebotomy. But here again, it is merely metaphorical. Troilus was bleeding with excitement of his feelings; and so he blushed, or was suffused with blood. But the blood did not actually run out of him, as when a man is really hit with a lance."

It is believed that all references & authorities are given in the text, with the exception of Dr. Bucknill's observations (p. 37). These & the quotation from Fuller are taken from Dr. Bucknill's "Shakespeare's Medical Knowledge".

For convenience, the Globe Edition of Chaucer's Works has been adopted: the references apply to that volume, but all have been compared with Prof. Skeat's 6 vol. Edition.

The typist has in several instances altered the original arrangement of paragraphs: this was only discovered after the binding of the thesis. Time prevented rectification.