

## Notes to the Prologue to the Canon's Yeoman's Tale

1. "The introduction," says Tyrwhitt, "of the Canon's Yeoman to tell a Tale at a time when so many of the original characters remain to be called upon, appears a little extraordinary. It should seem that some sudden resentment had determined Chaucer to interrupt the regular course of his work, in order to insert a satire against the alchemists. That their pretended science was much cultivated about this time, and produced its usual evils, may fairly be inferred from the Act, which was passed soon after, 5 H. IV. c. iv., to make it felony 'to multiply gold or silver, or to use the art of multiplication.'" Tyrwhitt finds in the prologue some colour for the hypothesis that this Tale was intended by Chaucer to begin the return journey from Canterbury; but against this must be set the fact that the Yeoman himself expressly speaks of the distance to Canterbury yet to be ridden.

2. Fully five mile: From some place which the loss of the Second Nun's Prologue does not enable us to identify.

3. Peytrel: the breast-plate of a horse's harness; French, "poitrail."

4. A maile twyfold: a double valise; a wallet hanging across the crupper on either side of the horse.

5. Multiply: transmute metals, in the attempt to multiply gold and silver by alchemy.

6. "Consciус ipse sibi de se putat omnia dici" ("The conspirator believes that everything spoken refers to himself") -- "De Moribus," I. i. dist. 17.