

Note to the Canon's Yeoman's Tale

1. The Tale of the Canon's Yeoman, like those of the Wife of Bath and the Pardoner, is made up of two parts; a long general introduction, and the story proper. In the case of the Wife of Bath, the interruptions of other pilgrims, and the autobiographical nature of the discourse, recommend the separation of the prologue from the Tale proper; but in the other cases the introductory or merely connecting matter ceases wholly where the opening of "The Tale" has been marked in the text.

2. Jupartie: Jeopardy, hazard. In Froissart's French, "a jeu partie" is used to signify a game or contest in which the chances were exactly equal for both sides.

3. Squames: Scales; Latin, "squamae."

4. Descensories: vessels for distillation "per descensum;" they were placed under the fire, and the spirit to be extracted was thrown downwards. Croslets: crucibles; French, "creuset.". Cucurbites: retorts; distilling-vessels; so called from their likeness in shape to a gourd -- Latin, "cucurbita." Alembikes: stills, limbecs.

5. Seared pokettes: the meaning of this phrase is obscure; but if we take the reading "cered poketts," from the Harleian manuscript, we are led to the supposition that it signifies receptacles -- bags or pokes -- prepared with wax for some process. Latin, "cera," wax.

6. Argoil: potter's clay, used for luting or closing vessels in the laboratories of the alchemists; Latin, "argilla;" French, "argile."

7. Citrination: turning to a citrine colour, or yellow, by chemical action; that was the colour which proved the philosopher's stone.

8. Ingots: not, as in its modern meaning, the masses of metal shaped by pouring into moulds; but the moulds themselves into which the fused metal was poured. Compare Dutch, "ingieten," part. "ingehoten," to infuse; German, "eingiessen," part. "eingegossen," to pour in.

9. Threpe: name; from Anglo-Saxon, "threapian."

10. Bratt: coarse cloak; Anglo-Saxon, "bratt." The word is still used in

Lincolnshire, and some parts of the north, to signify a coarse kind of apron.

11. Long on: in consequence of; the modern vulgar phrase "all along of," or "all along on," best conveys the force of the words in the text.

12. Annualere: a priest employed in singing "annuals" or anniversary masses for the dead, without any cure of souls; the office was such as, in the Prologue to the Tales, Chaucer praises the Parson for not seeking: Nor "ran unto London, unto Saint Poul's, to seeke him a chantery for souls."

13. Mortify: a chemical phrase, signifying the dissolution of quicksilver in acid.

14. Blin: cease; from Anglo-Saxon, "blinnan," to desist.

15. Name: took; from Anglo-Saxon, "niman," to take. Compare German, "nehmen," "nahm."

16. Los: praise, reputaion. See note 5 to Chaucer's tale of Meliboeus.

17. Grame: sorrow; Anglo-Saxon, "gram;" German, "Gram."

18. Arnaldus Villanovanus, or Arnold de Villeneuve, was a distinguished French chemist and physician of the fourteenth century; his "Rosarium Philosophorum" was a favourite text-book with the alchemists of the generations that succeeded.

19. Hermes Trismegistus, counsellor of Osiris, King of Egypt, was credited with the invention of writing and hieroglyphics, the drawing up of the laws of the Egyptians, and the origination of many sciences and arts. The Alexandrian school ascribed to him the mystic learning which it amplified; and the scholars of the Middle Ages regarded with enthusiasm and reverence the works attributed to him -- notably a treatise on the philosopher's stone.

20. Secret of secrets: "Secreta Secretorum;" a treatise, very popular in the Middle Ages, supposed to contain the sum of Aristotle's instructions to Alexander. Lydgate translated about half of the work, when his labour was interrupted by his death about 1460; and from the same treatise had been taken most of the seventh book of Gower's "Confessio Amantis."

21. Tyrwhitt says that this book was printed in the "Theatrum Chemicum," under the title, "Senioris Zadith fi. Hamuelis tabula chymica" ("The chemical

tables of Senior Zadith, son of Hamuel"); and the story here told of Plato and his disciple was there related of Solomon, but with some variations.

22. *Ignotum per ignotius*: To explain the unknown by the more unknown.

23. Though he multiply term of his live: Though he pursue the alchemist's art all his days.