

it for a manner better suited to his genius, and left it to less powerful hands. In it he has been surpassed by Petrarch, and in some sort by Boccaccio, writers belonging to the true Italian school, whose influence, first manifesting itself in Chaucer's writings, through him passed gradually into our literature, and at length showed its effects in the poems of Surrey and Wyatt, the "courtly makers"¹ of the reign of Henry the Eighth.

As is well known, Chaucer borrowed several of his plots from Italians. The *Clerk's Tale* is adapted from Petrarch,

"Fraunceis Petrark the laureat poete
Highte this clerk, whos rhetorike swete
Enlumined all Itaille of poetrie,—"

while the *Knight's Tale* is from Boccaccio. Still the alterations effected by his thoroughly English mind are patent enough, alterations similar to those made by the writers of Queen Anne's time in the ideas and style they brought from France: the beauties both retained, but the weaknesses, the sentimentalities, both alike cut ruthlessly away. Borrowing, and even translating (in the *Roman de la Rose*) so much from Romance sources, it was inevitable that Chaucer's language should be deeply tinged with the Romance style, nor would it have been remarkable if this had been so, even to a greater extent than it actually is. His power over the language enabled him to unite together in his poetry the two different elements, as no one before him had done; and it perhaps was this faculty as much as any other, that caused the period in which he wrote to become a sort of landmark between the old and the newer English.

There have not been wanting some who have accused Chaucer of destroying the language by the crowd of

¹ *Maker* (like Greek ποιητης), a poet.

"As I do when I *make*." PIERS PLOWMAN.