Stress of romance words in Chaucer's prologue to The Knight's Tale.

Helen S. Ward
University of Louisville

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"STRESS OF ROMANCE WORDS IN CHANCER'S PROLOGUE TO THE KNIGHT'S TALE."

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of
"MASTER OF ARTS."

by
HELEN S. WARD
1909.
Stress of Romance Words in Chaucer's Prologue to the Knight's Tale.

The effect of the Norman-French Conquest on the vocabulary of the English language was profound. Prior to the Twelfth Century the language contained but few word forms foreign to the Old English. The vocabulary of the Eleventh Century contained about thirty words of French origin and these must have come into the language previous to the conquest.

The Twelfth Century marks the beginning of an important era in the language of the Islanders—the commencement of a rapid linguistic change. In the English of the Thirteenth Century about twelve per cent of the words were Romanic. If we take the writers of this period the proportion will be smaller. The North Midland Ormulum written about 1200 is almost entirely free from foreign words. The author intended his work to be recited to the illiterate and so stroye to make the language plain. Yet such a word as gyn, shortened form of French engen (in genuity) shows that even in his environment the vocabulary of the humbler classes had been affected by these words of foreign importation. While on the other hand the Ancren Riwle of this period, by an unknown writer, owing possibly to the nature of its subject, contains a considerable number of borrowed words.

The Norman French were a Scandanavian tribe with a changed
nature, Christianized in the Mediaeval sense of the term, and highly civilized. A peculiar quality of the race was their suppleness—living among Frenchmen they easily acquired the customs and language of the people. The advent of this foreign element into England was not followed by the breaking down of existing institutions, suppression of the native language but rather a coalescence of foreign and native customs and word forms.

The difference between the English of 1300 and 1350 marks the time when the higher Norman classes in England became familiar with the English. Up to this time there had been two races in England, having each a language of its own. The Nobility of the Normans retained their French and only in rare instances acquired the English. But the events of the Thirteenth Century were gradually narrowing the chasm which had separated the two races. When the French possessions of the English in France were wrested from the hands of King John the political ties which bound the Norman-French in England to their brethren across the channel were severed. Henceforth they were Englishmen not Frenchmen. They fought side by side with their neighbors against their French enemies. Social barriers were breaking down. Marriage ties were connecting the two races. Englishmen were acquiring wealth and high social position. The feeling of a common nationality was beginning to prevail over the estranging memories of subjugation and race. It was only natural that the French-speaking aristocracy should begin to learn the English. It is said that during the first half of the Fourteenth Century French was the language used in the schools, but during the last half English
took its place. Of the vernacular literature from the Conquest to the middle of the Fourteenth Century by far the larger part consisted of translations from the French and Latin. All that was written down to the Thirteenth Century was for the comparatively unlearned and even these would reasonably be supposed to have some knowledge of the language of the higher classes, since the one who had no knowledge of French could not read at all. But when English became again the medium through which the educated were addressed, the writer could borrow, without fear of being unintelligible, from the French. In the writings of the end of the Thirteenth Century and the first half of the Fourteenth, the proportion of French words was so great that the English of this period can well be called a mixed language. The group of poems, Alisaunder, Coeur de Lion, Arthur and Merlin of this period contain many long passages in which every noun, adjective and verb of importance is French. In the Cursor Mundi of the same period there is an average of at least one Romance word in every two lines. The Alliterative Poems of the Midland and Northern dialects (1350) have a great abundance of French words. Chaucer's style abounds in words of French origin. It is less marked by Gallicisms than any other writings of his day, and it cannot be absolutely proven that he has used even in his translations foreign words which had not gained a recognized place in the English vocabulary. His verse is among the smoothest in all literature. The Romance forms are smoother, longer, more subtle, more fitted than the native ones, to the dignified thoughts and refinement of feelings expressed in the verse.

Note the skilful discrimination in the use of words, the wonderful grace and smoothness of the rythme, accomplished largely by the
use of foreign elements with their great breadth of vowel sound in
the opening lines of the Prologue:

When that Aprille with his shoures scote
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
When Zephrinus eek with his swete breeth
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his halue cours yronne,
And made sweites maken melodye,
That slepen al the nyght with open ye,
So priketh hem nature in hir corages;
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,
And palmers for to seken straunge strondes.
To feme halwes kowthe in sondry londes,
And specially from every shires ende.
Of Engelond to Caunterbury they wende,
The hooly blisful martir for to seke,
That hem hath holpen whan that they seeke.

Compare the above lines with the following quotation from the
Ormulum. Aside from its utter lack of literary appeal and the un-
attractiveness of its subject matter the rustic, monotonous quality
of the movement is felt:

Nu brotherr Walterr,brotherr min
afterr the floeshess hinde;
and brotherr min i Cristendom
thurhh fulluhht annd thurhh trowrothe,
annd brotherrr min i Godess has,  
set o the threde wise,
thurhh thatt witt hafenn takenn ba  
annd reyhell bo to foluuhhenn
unnderr hanunnhiss had annd lif,
swa summ Sarnt Awwsten sette,
icc hafe don swa summ thee badd,  
annd forthedd te then wille
icc hafe wennd instellar Ennglisssh
Godspelles hallahhe lare,  
afterr thatt little witt tatt me
min Drihtten hafeth lenedd.

The foreign words which have come into our language do not stand apart from native words as a distinct and independent class—they are Anglicized, subjected to English laws and analogies and conform to native ones. The conformity of foreign elements to native stress laws was a gradual process. In the early English verse we find hon'our, cuntnex coulour etc accented as in Old French. The usage of Chaucer in this respect is variable; for example, we find hon'our as well as hon our. Again about thirty per cent of the Norman-French words have in Chaucer's Prologue shifted the accent to the first syllable of the word, thus conforming to the laws of English stress; armee bat ailles etc. But long before the end of the Fourteenth Century, Chaucer's period, some of these Romance forms, either from long and constant usage or to suit the requirements of the verse, have acquired in addition to their original Romance stress, English stress.
It would seem from the following words, appended as a verification of above statement, that some words on the contrary shortly after their introduction into the vernacular language were subjected to English stress conditions. Honure became in verse honure as early as 1275. This is the first reference in the Oxford to the word.

In the Fourteenth Century the French and English accents are still to be seen but with greater prevalence of the Romance.

Words of French origin were, when first introduced into English stressed in accordance to their native system of accentuation.

Words with French Stress in Chaucer's Prologue to Knight's Tale.

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<td>ar ray(tarray)</td>
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<td>&quot; 594.</td>
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<td>bar gaynes</td>
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<td>ben e fise</td>
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pit aunces,
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pre or esse,
pul trye,
pur treye,
pur chase,
pur chasyng,
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re likes,
rem e dies,
re noun,
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saut rie,  

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sain dal,  

sainte,  

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so laas,  

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stat ure,  

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super flu i tee,  

sur cote,  

sur ge ry,  

tab ard,  


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" 296.  

" 316.  

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" 152.  

" 110.  

" 360.
As early as 1200 the German stress, or the first syllable of the word accented, began to assert itself in French words.

**English Stress.**

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mag \, yk,
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maun ciple,
maun ciple,
man ciple,
man tel,
mar chant,
mar chant,
mar chal,
med lee,
mor mal,
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<td>roun cy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>309.</td>
<td>san gwyne,</td>
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<tr>
<td>122.</td>
<td>ser geant,</td>
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<tr>
<td>346.</td>
<td>ser vice,</td>
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<td>19.</td>
<td>se sons,</td>
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<td>543.</td>
<td>se son,</td>
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<tr>
<td>623.</td>
<td>som nour,</td>
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<tr>
<td>673.</td>
<td>som q nour,</td>
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<tr>
<td>799.</td>
<td>som q nour,</td>
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<td>748.</td>
<td>sop' er,</td>
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<td>327.</td>
<td>sop' er,</td>
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<td>709.</td>
<td>stat ut,</td>
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<td>438.</td>
<td>stor ie,</td>
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<tr>
<td>719.</td>
<td>stude,</td>
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<tr>
<td>240.</td>
<td>tab' ard,</td>
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<tr>
<td>307.</td>
<td>tau emes,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ver' tu,</td>
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</table>
Chaucer and other writers of his period took advantage of the circumstance of the accent being unfixed and stressed some words of Romance origin in two ways.

Words with both Romance and English Stress:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Line</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cat 'el</td>
<td>540.</td>
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<tr>
<td>bok e lel,</td>
<td>112.</td>
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<tr>
<td>burgeys,</td>
<td>369.</td>
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<tr>
<td>cer teyn,</td>
<td>451.</td>
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<tr>
<td>hon'our,</td>
<td>46.</td>
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<tr>
<td>par fit,</td>
<td>338.</td>
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<tr>
<td>phi sik,</td>
<td>411.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pur'chase,</td>
<td>608.</td>
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<td>re soun,</td>
<td>37.</td>
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<tr>
<td>re soun,</td>
<td>847.</td>
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<td>san gwyn,</td>
<td>333.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ser'vye,</td>
<td>250.</td>
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<td>348.</td>
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<tr>
<td>tab' ard,</td>
<td>541.</td>
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<tr>
<td>vit' aille,</td>
<td>248.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vit' aille,</td>
<td>569.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cat 'el</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>bok e lel,</td>
<td>558.</td>
</tr>
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<td>668.</td>
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<td>754.</td>
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<td>cer teym,</td>
<td>815.</td>
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<td>hon or,</td>
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<td>413.</td>
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<td>pur chas,</td>
<td>256.</td>
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<td>re sons,</td>
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<tr>
<td>vit aille,</td>
<td>749.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acor dant.

O. F. acor dant pr. pple. of acorder.

1315- Acor daunt--Shoreham 89

Acor daunt to thy trausyl,
Lord; grante me thy coroune.

1374- A cor daunt.

Chaucer- Patl. Foules 203

Ther with wynd;
Made in the leuys grene a noyse softe
Acor daunt to the bryddis song a lofte.

1393- Ac cor daunt:

Gower Conf. III. 163.

So thy prince for to queme
Is nought to reson accordaunt.

Batáilla-Latin.

O. F. battaille.
M. E. batayle, bataile, bataille.

1297- Bat ayde

R. Glouc. 369.

Pere, as be batayle was, an
abbey he let rere bat ys y-cluped
in Engelond, abbey of be bast ayle.

1297- R. Glouc. 514 Battaille

H' mette hom atte laste.
at bin colne & smête there an bataile.

1300- Bat el.

Cursor M. -3463.

Bituix Wh/born a batel blind.
Whenne bat/bei to bataile jede

Yon es a stalworth bat ail wright.

Alle his burns blime in X batailes he setts.

Durst nane of Walis in bataill ride.

Bokeler, bokeleer.

Latin type Bucculærius, adj.
O.F. boucler, buckler.

K. Alis 1190.

Saddes,
That sweord and bockler hadde.
Chaucer Prol. 558.

A swerd and a booler baar he by his side.

Bok' e leer Prol. 668
Bok' e ler, " 471
Bok' e ler, 112.

Catel:
Latin Capitāli, neuter of adj. capitālis, O. F. (Central)
Chatel. Pr. Captal, capdal O.F., had also according to dialect
and date, catel, katel, cateul, cathel, catel.
M. E. cathel, catail, catayl.

Say 30673.
He nam tonnes (goode) and pat catel (1205chte) dame (per)ine.

Sarmun 46 in E. E. P. (1862)
6 Sippat pe world nis nogt and cat' el nis bot vanite.

It wastes bodi and als catel.

Hors, asse, mule, ox, camell
Dunstan deid al fair catell.
1325- Cat. el.

Metr. Hom. (1862) 131.

An unseli knafe
That wald gladli catel have.

1330- Cat. el.

Amis. & Amil 1885.

Al her catel than was spent
Save twelf pans.

1340- Cat el.

Ayerd. 36.

Het hi hadde huet cas yualle-hire catel sauf.

1375- Cat tel.

Barbour Bruce XVIII, 274.

Bot cattell haffundyn nane,
Outane a kow that was haltand.

1393- Cat el.

Gower Conf. II 128.

Of golde, of categ, or of londe.

1394- Cat ell.


Oper catell oper clop to coveren wip our bohes.

Certeyn.

Late Latin or Romanic type,
certanus, certain.
1297 - Cer teyn.

R. Glouc. (1724) 378.

To a man to bere remoure a certeyn rente by pagere.

1300 - Cer tain.

Cursor M. 12785.

To bring fra certain tine and.

1300 - Cer tain.

Cursor M. 8933.

Ilk dai: a certain bote par lighted dun of heuen ture Angels.

1300 - Cer tain.

Cursor M. 27001.

Sant paule sais of yr last dai, Es man mai certain per-of sai.

1300 - Cer tain er.

Cursor M. 23732.

Es nothing certainer pan dede, Ne uncertainer pan es te tide.

1314 - Cer teyn.

Guy Warw. (A) 900.

His stede, that certeyn was and gode at nede.

1320 - Ser tayn.

Seuyn Sag. (W.) 2901.

Sir, for sertayn
That wald I here and that ful fayn.
1325- Ser tayn.

Coer de 13028.

Rychard bad his men seche
For some wys clark and sertayn leche
For to loke hys urym.

1330- Cer tayn.

R. Brunne Chron. (1810) 39.

For he pam bisouht to to gy come a certeyn

1330- Cer tayn.

R. Brunne Chron. (1810) 82.

My boke sais certayn pat he gaf neuer pat rede.

1340- Cer' tayn.

Cursor M.11577 (Lani)

This was pe somne in certayn
Of the childryn pat was slayne.

1340- Cer'tain'

Cursor M.19507 (Fairf)

Walcanda fra stede to stede in mare certain faippen ware are.

1362- Cer' tayne.


pei timbre not so lye,
Ne bowte none
Borgages beaes certeyne.

1377- Corteayne.


It is an unreasonable Religions
pat hath rige nowte of cerseyne.
1374- Certeyn.

Chaucer Troylus III, 547.

She to soper come, With a certeyn of her owene men.

1386- Certeyn.


Bisecching him to lene him a certeyn of gold.

1386- Certeyn.

Chaucer Prol. 375.

Certeyn " 815.

Conscience, Latin, conscientia.
O.F. conscience, Twelfth Century.

1393- Conscience.

Gower Conf.I. 62.

An ypoorite is this
A man which feigneth conscience.

1325- Conscience.

Metr. Hom. 32.

And my conscience gan me mald
It schawed thar ful openlye
That I led me life wrang wishe.

1340- Conscience.

Gaw and Gr. Knt. 1196.

Pe lede lay.
Compast in his conscience to quat
Pat case my ȝt Mene o per amount.

1340/ Conscience.
Pe tendreayne egnawying within
Of conscience pat bite als vemyn.

"\n
1385

Conscience.

Chaucer I.C.W. 1253.

Dido

Osil y wemen... ful... of pite of trouthe of conscience.

1386

Conscience.

Chaucer Prol. 150.

Al was conscience.

1393

Conscience.


Pompeie sig his peciens
And toke pite with conscience.

1393

Conscience.

Gower Conf. II, 108.

But upon youre conscience
Min holy fader,li meth ye.

Honore—honor.

Latin, honorem, O.F. onor, onur.
Early M.E. anor, anour.
Late M.E. honor, honour, honour.

1200

Onur.


Hie gwen here elmesse, o Fer onur to haven, o fer he maielles
for shame.

1275

Honure.

Say 6085.

Hie leide hine mid honure Heze in pan toure.
1300- Honour.

Cursor M. 23586.

Heuen and erth als creature
Sal ber than wirscap and honur.

1300 - Honour.

Cursor M. 437.

And thus he (Lucifer) leses his hret honur.

1320- On oure.

R. Brunne Medit.1131.

We onely hym *pünü* and do hym onoure.

1330- Honour.

Otuel 473.

It hadde be more honour to pe.
For so pe to habbe i-smite me

1385- Honour.

Chaucer L.G.W: Pro1.81.

You see I do yt in honour Of love.

1385- Honour.

Chaucer Pro1.582.

1385-(or 1386)

Honour.

Chaucer Pro1. 46.

1388- Honour.

King Allis.1388.

Hâ-3af. Wche lordyng gret honoure
And parted we phem his fader treasure.
1890—Honour.

Gower Conf. III. 24.

So as she may—
Her honour and her name save.

Helen S. Ward.