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LITERARY.

CHAUCER.

What a pity that Chaucer is almost a foreigner to the modern English reader! He is so fresh, so joyous, so brimful of sweet gayety, so true to the brighter side of life, we need him constantly as a set off against the gloomy introspectiveness of modern literary art. His wit is arch, not caustic; his laughter comes from the heart; his very satire is without malice. Even when he is pathetic, it is with a childlike grace that gives to tears the charm of summer rain. Whatever he gives us has the true ring of pure gold. It is the utterance of one who has lived in the open air and loves the fields and their flowers, the woods and their birds; who has known the life of courts and of cities; who has seen the shock of battle, and felt the pain of captivity; who has gone on stately embassies, and talked with learned clerks abroad. The closet poets of our day may have their little coteries of adorers for this generation, and perhaps for

another; but the poet for all time is he who has lived like a true man, has known life and mankind and the outer world, and sings from the fullness of a knowledge which is not drawn from books alone. Possibly this is in one sense, the secret of his charming optimism. A man for whom life was so full can not easily be imagined putting to himself or to others a question so absurd as, "Is life worth living?"

Nor is it only the cheerfulness of Chaucer—that bright face with which he turns from life to tell its story—that makes him so delightful a companion. His large variety; his clear, lively directness in story-telling; his exquisite choice of language—one of the surest notes of the true poet—the sweetness and richness of the music his verse makes, when rightly read; his delicacy of feeling for all that is lovely in form or lofty in thought, are as dear to us now, after all the splendid additions that have been made to literature since his day, as they would have been had these never