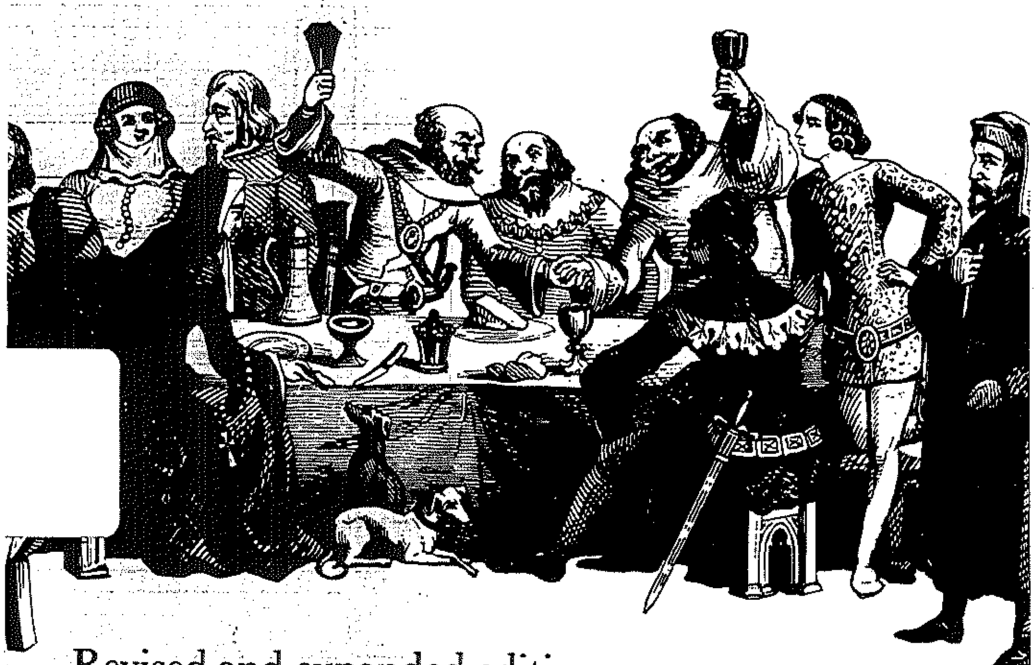
IENTARY ON THE GENERAL PROLOGUE TO *THE CANTERBURY TALES*

Muriel Bowden



Revised and expanded edition,
with a new Preface by the author

CHAPTER XVIII

THE PARDONER OF ROUNCIVALE

ACCOMPANYING the lecherous Summoner, as Chaucer tells us,

> . . . ther rood a gentil Pardoner
> Of Rouncivale, his freend and his compeer;
> (ll. 669–670)

and the more we learn of this second scoundrel, the more fitting it seems that he should be the warm friend and companion of the first. The Pardoner sings a particular song,—

> Ful loude he soong "Come hider, love, to me!"
> This Somonour bar to hym a stiff bourdon;
> Was nevere trompe of half so greet a soun,—
> (ll. 672–674)

and although he has selected a verse which may be part of some popular ditty, the suggestion is that he has not chosen at random: he addresses the words evidently to the evil Summoner, who, far from being unresponsive to depraved and unnatural advances, trumpets forth a bass accompaniment ("bourdon" [1]) to emphasize his perverted friendship with the Pardoner. To be sure Chaucer may here be making allusion also to the generally observed connivance between many summoners and pardoners in their successful efforts to fleece the people; [2] but it seems plain that Chaucer meant the stress to fall on the personal nature of a specific relationship. Certainly Chaucer's description of the physical attributes of the Pardoner mark this figure explicitly as the kind of person we immediately suspect him to be.

> This Pardoner hadde heer as yelow as wex,
> But smothe it heeng as dooth a strike * of flex;

* *strike:* "hank"

> By ounces * henge his lokkes that he hadde,
> And therwith he his shuldres overspradde;
> But thynne it lay, by colpons * oon and oon.
> But hood, for jolitee, wered he noon,
> For it was trussed up in his walet.
> Hym thoughte he rood al of the newe jet *;
> Dischevelee,* save his cappe, he rood al bare.
> Swiche glarynge eyen hadde he as an hare.
>
> . . . .
>
> A voys he hadde as smal as hath a goot.
> No berd hadde he, ne nevere sholde have;
> As smothe it was as it were late shave.
> I trowe he were a geldyng or a mare.
> (ll. 675–684, 688–691)

In the same manner in which he diagnoses the Summoner's malady, Professor Curry interprets the Pardoner's physical peculiarities according to medieval scientific opinion. The Pardoner's wax-yellow hair, which is straight as a hank of flax, and which is spread as best it can be in thin clusters over his shoulders, indicates, according to the *Anonymi de Physiognomonia liber Latinus,* " 'an impoverished blood, lack of virility, and effeminacy of mind; and the sparser the hair, the more cunning and deceptive is the man.' " [3] The Pardoner's "effeminacy of mind" may perhaps be indicated in his absurdly foppish wish to be in fashion: instead of wearing a hood, he folds the hood up in his wallet, and goes bare-headed except for his cap, for that he imagines to be the latest vogue.

Glaring eyes, such as the Pardoner's, are mentioned, Professor Curry points out, in the works of Polemon, who flourished in the second century of the Christian era, and who was "the most famous of the ancient physiognomists and perhaps the founder of the science." [4] Polemon writes that glaring eyes "indicate a 'man given to folly, a glutton, a libertine, and a drunkard,' " [5] and as we read further in the *Canterbury Tales* we realize that the Pardoner amply justifies this statement. The Middle English version of the *Secreta Secretorum* also gives us to understand that the signs of a shameless man are "ryght opyn eighyn and glysinynge . . ." [6]

* *by ounces:* "in thin clusters" *jet:* "fashion" or "style"
colpons: "cuttings" or "bundles" *dischevelee:* "with loose hair"

As one would expect, the physiognomists have a good deal to say about such easily observed characteristics as a small, high voice and an absence of beard. The *Secreta Secretorum* states: "And tho that have the voyce hei, smale and swete and plesaunt, bene neshe [effeminate], and have lytell on manhode, and i-likenyd to women." [7] And the tenth-century physician Rasis, whose works are familiar to Chaucer's Doctor of Physic, remarks that he who has never had a beard is worse than "foolish, lustful, and presumptuous." [8] Nearly all the writers on the *eunuchus*, however, refer to Polemon, Professor Curry finds, as the ultimate authority on the subject. Polemon declares:

When the eye is wide open and, like marble, glitters or coruscates, it indicates a shameless lack of modesty. This quality of the eyes is observed in a man who is not like other men, *ut eunuchus qui tamen non castratus est, sed sine testiculis natus.* I have known, however, only one man of this kind.[9]

But whether or not Chaucer intended the Pardoner to be such a *rara avis*, medically speaking, as a *eunuchus ex nativitate* is questionable.[10] Polemon himself comments on the fact that he has known only one such man; and it is to be noted that in writing of wide open, glittering eyes, Polemon says only that the *eunuchus ex nativitate* possesses them, not that their possession marks the man as such. Consequently, Chaucer's line—"I trowe he were a geldyng or a mare"—may or may not be taken literally, for the doubt Chaucer casts on the virility of the Pardoner is perhaps voiced as a scornful jest aimed against an unfortunately effeminate man who happens also to be a libertine and a thorough rogue. There is nothing upright about the Pardoner—even his very calling is suspect.

A pardoner, sometimes called a *quaestor*, was a distinctively medieval official.† He was engaged as a rule in three activities: in selling indulgences, in selling relics, and in preaching. The first two of these functions are perhaps more spectacular than the last, and they are certainly more closely connected with the word *pardoner;* they are therefore the two functions we tend to emphasize today in any study of the *quaestor*, although for the Middle Ages his preaching was equally important.[11]

Indulgence, as Jusserand explains, first meant "simply a commutation for penance," but gradually the idea of commutation disappeared and was supplanted by an entirely different theory, the theory of the "treasury."

It had indeed become obvious as the use of indulgences spread that they could no longer be justified as offering to the sinner nothing more than his choice between several sorts of penance. They were something else. A short prayer, a small gift in money, would exempt devout people from the greatest penalties and from numberless years of a possible purgatory; the one could scarcely be considered as being the equivalent of the other; how was the equilibrium established between the two scales? The answer was that the deficiency was made up by the application to the sinner of merits, not indeed his own, but merits of Christ, the Virgin, and the saints, of which there was an inexhaustible 'treasury,' the dispensation of which rested with the Pope and the clergy.[12]

Having established the theory, the Church needed officials to put it into practice, and about the beginning of the fourteenth century certain persons were authorized to give shares in the heavenly treasury to those of the faithful who repented and confessed. In return for these shares, the faithful gave money to be used for the maintenance of the Church on earth. The officials were called either *pardoners* (because of what they gave), or *quaestores* * (because of what they asked).[13]

Opportunities for dishonesty were inherent in the pardoners' calling: indulgences could be forged by anyone who chose to name himself a pardoner; or the legitimate pardoner, even if he did not turn thief and appropriate for himself the money he received, could sell his pardons without exaction of either repentance or confession on the part of the buyer, since the matter was left to the discretion of the pardoner. Furthermore, the Church herself aggravated the evils of the system. As the people became aware of this easy road to heaven, the demand for more imposing indulgences brought about a shockingly great supply: in the popular mind, indulgences must now be made to liberate from both punishment and guilt, and in that way they were issued—*a culpa et a poena.*[14] The Church made some effort to do away with this last outrage, which was subversive of the theory of sacraments, but too many avaricious officials surrounded those popes who would have recalled such flagrant

* or, *quaestuarii*

money-making devices. A facsimile of a pardon issued as a confessional letter under a bull of crusading indulgence by Sixtus IV in 1480 is printed by Lea, who writes about it as follows:

> [The letter] grants to the recipient the right to choose a confessor who can absolve him from all sins, however enormous, as often as he wishes, though those which are reserved to the pope can be absolved only once, and to grant him full remission and indulgence once during life and again at death. Then follows the formula of absolution, showing that it was customary to perform this at once, by the pardoner or one of his assistants.[15]

As Lea points out, nothing is said as to confession or contrition, the theologian's theory that God alone can pardon the *culpa* is ignored, and a highly "saleable article" is in the hands of an unscrupulous salesman.[16] If Chaucer's Pardoner is armed with such documents, it is easy to believe that his "bulles of popes and of cardynales, of patriarkes and bishopes," [17] find the ready market of which he so blatantly boasts.

The second activity of the pardoners, the selling of relics, combined naturally with the selling of indulgences; the *quaestor* became notorious for the monstrous objects he foisted on the simple as genuine sacred remains. Boniface IX, in a papal edict of 1390, charges, for example, that the pardoners always vow that they come fully authorized from Rome, yet many are nothing but vagabonds, or beggars, or secular clerks who hawk false pardons and relics, and who thus irreverently abuse that which is genuine by an infamous and hateful profit on that which is false. For a small amount these men will also pretend to absolve the wicked without any of the proper forms, they will release from vows, they will allow heretics to re-enter the Church, they will say they are able to remove excommunication. Since their power comes only from themselves, they are without restraint, and of course the money they collect remains theirs.[18]

If Boniface's grave papal complaint is added to Chaucer's words about the Pardoner as an individual, it is apparent that here is a man truly to be despised and mistrusted. Chaucer writes in irony that this undoubted rogue—

> . . . streit was comen fro the court of Rome.
> . . . .

> A vernycle hadde he sowed upon his cappe.
> His walet lay biforn hym in his lappe,
> Bretful of pardoun, comen from Rome al hoot.
> (ll. 671, 685–687)

Thus the Pardoner, like his flesh-and-blood brethren, claims that he comes directly from Rome; he bears a wallet stuffed with pardons as evidence. Can one question the authenticity of pardons when there are so many of them, "al hoot" from the *quaestorum* oven? Moreover, the Pardoner has had the foresight to sew a "vernycle" on his cap in further protestation that he is genuine; he is aware that pilgrims to Rome usually bring home this token of their journey. A vernicle was a miniature copy of the handkerchief which legend credited St. Veronica with having given to Christ on the way to Calvary; the original handkerchief, said to be preserved in the Church of St. Peter at Rome, was thought to have been miraculously imprinted with an image of Christ's face.[19]

Chaucer's Pardoner is also true to type in bearing false relics:

> But of his craft, fro Berwyk into Ware,
> Ne was ther swich another pardoner.
> For in his male he hadde a pilwe-beer,
> Which that he seyde was Oure Lady veyl:
> He seyde he hadde a gobet of the seyl
> That Seint Peter hadde, whan that he wente
> Upon the see, til Jhesu Crist hym hente.
> He hadde a croys of latoun ful of stones,
> And in a glas he hadde pigges bones.
> But with thise relikes, whan that he fond
> A povre person dwellynge upon lond,
> Upon a day he gat hym moore moneye
> Than that the person gat in monthes tweye;
> And thus, with feyned flaterye and japes,
> He made the person and the peple his apes.
> (ll. 692–706)

The Pardoner is a crafty scoundrel: by his tricks ("japes"), he knows just how to flatter and fool both guileless priest and simple flock (he makes "the person and the peple his apes"). He convinces his victims that the worthless objects he carries are sacred—in his bag ("male"), he says, are Our Lady's veil (in reality a mere pillowcase, or "pilwe-beer"), a fragment ("gobet") of the sail from St.

Peter's boat, and a latten, or brass,[20] cross, studded with false[21] gems. The "pigges bones" which the Pardoner bears in a glass container will doubtless be foisted on the gullible as the holy remains of some saint. Small wonder that the Pardoner gets more money in one day, as a rule, than the honest parish priest in two months! In all England, from Berwick to Ware,[22] there is not another pardoner as clever—and to make his cheating the more successful, this trickster turns to the pulpit, for he is an exceptionally artful and practised speaker.

> But trewely to tellen atte laste,
> He was in chirche a noble ecclesiaste.
> Wel koude he rede a lessoun or a storie,
> And alderbest he song an offertorie;
> Ful wel he wiste, whan that song was songe,
> He must preche and wel affile his tonge*
> To wynne silver, as he ful wel koude;
> Therefore he song the murierly and loude.
>
> (ll. 707–714)

As has been said, preaching was a recognized activity of the pardoners,[23] although as far as we know no pardoner's sermon has been preserved. (Dr. Owst suggests that swindlers of every period refuse to commit themselves in writing!) There is not a single item about pardoners in medieval Episcopal Registers which fails to include mention of these men as preachers,[24] however; and, as Dr. Owst makes clear, Chaucer's picture of the Pardoner is as realistic in this respect as in every other.

But not only is Chaucer's Pardoner accustomed to the pulpit. He is also a skilled demagogic orator who knows exactly the kind of sermon to preach that will thoroughly fascinate his audience, which fact he later demonstrates in his own *Tale;* he knows how to read a lesson, too, or a series of lessons (a "storie"),[25]—so that suspicious minds will be closed and purses opened,—and how to capitalize on his soprano voice by singing the offertory[26] the best of all, for the offertory precedes the sermon,† and the tongue must be in smooth running order for that if silver is to be won. As Chaucer concludes, in a final burst of irony, our Canterbury-bound Pardoner is truly "a noble ecclesiaste"!

* *affile his tonge:* "make his tongue smooth"

Although he writes in strong disapproval of the sins of pardoners, Chaucer is silent about the theory that gave rise to their office. Wyclif, on the other hand, sternly condemns the theory of indulgences,[27] and consequently the Lollard writers speak of even licensed pardoners as "deceitful," while the imposter is, of course, vilified by them. One Lollard, for example, says indignantly:

> . . . there cometh a pardoner with stollen bullis and false relekis, grauntynge mo yeris of pardon than comen bifore domes day for gevynge of worldly catel to riche placis where is no nede . . . And this pardoner schalle telle of more power than evere crist grauntid to petir or poul or ony apostle, to drawe the almes fro pore bedrede neigheboris that ben knowen feble and pore, and to gete it to hem self and wasten it ful synfulli in ydelnesse and glotonye and lecherie . . .[28]

The orthodox reformer accepts the theory, but despises the practice. One such homilist, in enumerating different kinds of thieves, says in disgust:

> Sothell [*sic*] theves beth the men that slyly can robbe men with many queynt sotell wordes, and with fals behestynge; and sum with fals letters and seeles, with crosses, and reliques that thei bere abowten them, and sei that thei be of seyntes bones or of holy mens clothinge, and behoteth myche mede that will offre to hem, and hire the letters of pardon, ichon of other, as a kowe or a nox that men lat to hure; the wiche thei sell all for the penny, and fo [*sic*] no man's mede, with many fals lesynges, as the feend here maister techeth hem, for to robbe the pore pepull sotelly of ther goodes.[29]

And an article of the Oxford Petition of 1414 states uncompromisingly:

> Whereas the shameless pardoners purchase their vile traffic in farm with Simon, sell Indulgences with Gehazi, and squander their gains in disgraceful fashion with the Prodigal Son: but what is more detestable still, although not in holy orders, they preach publicly, and pretend falsely that they have full powers of absolving both living and dead alike from punishment and guilt, along with other blasphemies, by means of which they plunder and seduce the people, and in all probability drag them down with their own person to the infernal regions, by affording them frivolous hope and an audacity to commit sin: therefore, let the abuses of this pestilential sect be blotted out from the threshold of the Church.[30]

Langland mentions the wickedness of pardoners a number of times. The false pardoner is pictured as preaching "as he a prest were," showing his bull "with bisshopis seles," and absolving the people from any sin. The ignorant are gulled by him, and give him rings and brooches—alas, their gold only goes to keep gluttons, worthless fellows, and lovers of lechery.[31] Again, Langland writes, the pardoner is prominent on the list of the wicked,[32] the pardoner is the sole person to give a liar house-room,[33] and so on.

More popular literature occasionally also attacks the *quaestor.* When the preaching friar in *Pierce the Ploughmans Crede* would hold up the Augustinians to scorn, his worst accusation is that they live by "pur pardoners craft." [34] And in the early fifteenth-century political poem, the *Reply of Friar Daw Topias,* Friar Topias tells Jack Upland that the latter mistook pardoners for friars in the charge that friars "sette to ferme" the whole realm:

> I trowe thou menys the pardonystres
> of seint Thomas of Acres,
> of Antoun, or of Runcevale
> that rennen so fast aboute . . .[35]

(Here we must note Brother Topias's reference to "Runcevale," the convent from which Chaucer's Pardoner claims to come. More of this important headquarters for pardoners will be said later.) On the whole, however, the unsophisticated folk of Chaucer's day seem to have accepted the pardoner, whose sin was so much more subtle than the easily observed wrong-doings of the hypocritical friar and the blackmailing summoner. As Professor Trevelyan remarks, it was the worldly-wise who hated the pardoner with "all the force of intellectual scorn and moral indignation"; credulous, simple people received him and his "miraculous" relics gladly.[36]

Before taking leave of generalities about the pardoners, we should refer to John Heywood's *Foure P. P.,*[37] which indicates that even in the sixteenth century pardoners were still plying their dubious trade, and that literary comment on such trade was still timely. Heywood's pardoner, in the course of a liar's competition with a "poticary," a "pedler," and a "palmer," offers as a sample of his powerful ability to lie the statement that his pardons bring a soul to heaven "without any payne"; and his false relics, which he shamelessly

offers to his rascally companions to kiss and to buy, are only slight exaggerations of the "relics" borne by Chaucer's Pardoner.[38]

Chaucer's Pardoner represents the only fourteenth-century fully developed portrait of an individual *quaestor;* other pictures of the pardoner condemn him as one of a class, although scholars have long pointed out the resemblance Chaucer's Pardoner bears to Jean de Meun's False-Seeming; both characters boast of their misdeeds in almost identical language.[39] But at best False-Seeming is only the personification of an unspecified class of ecclesiastic, and therefore hardly possesses the substance necessary to be a true parallel to Chaucer's painfully vivid and highly individualistic Pardoner. A much better probability for literary relationship is Boccaccio's Fra Cipolla (or "Brother Onion"), for although Fra Cipolla is not actually a pardoner, his actions proclaim him one in spirit, and there is nothing shadowy about him. The part of Boccaccio's story which concerns us may be briefly summarized as follows:

> Fra Cipolla was not a scholar, but he was so excellent a talker and so ready of wit that his audiences not only admired him as a great rhetorician, but declared him to be Tully himself or maybe Quintilian. He preached in the parish church whenever he felt like it, and he always had relics to show and tell about. Once he came to a simple parish and informed the people that he had brought from Palestine one of the Angel Gabriel's feathers which had fallen from his wings in the Virgin's chamber "whenas he came to announce to her in Nazareth"! Fra Cipolla, hoping to drum up enthusiasm for contributions, promised to display this wonderful relic the next day, but when the appointed time came, he found that a practical-joker (a sophisticated stranger to the little parish) had substituted a few coals for the feather, which was in truth that of a parrot. Undismayed, and with his usual ready wit, Fra Cipolla announced to the assemblage that these coals also were relics, for they were the very ones over which St. Lawrence had been "roasted"; indeed, since St. Lawrence's Day was so near, the Lord Himself had substituted the more timely relic! [40]

But although it is possible that Chaucer borrowed from Boccaccio, it seems far more likely that he painted the richly coloured portrait of the Pardoner from life. Certainly the added fact that Chaucer takes pains to specify that this distressingly typical *quaestor* and highly individualized human being is "of Rouncivale" inclines us even more decidedly to the belief that the Pardoner must have been known to the poet and at least to some of his audience.

The name "Roncesvalles" is commonly known as the place of Roland's death while on the celebrated retreat from Spain in 778 A.D.; but Galloway states, in his *Hospital and Chapel of Saint Mary Roncevall,*[41] that Roncesvalles had become famous long before the *Song of Roland*. In very early Christian times,[42] a small religious House was established in the village of Roncesvalles, which lay at the southern end of the pass through the Western Pyrenees, a House which soon became noted in the small world of those distant centuries for its good works and its strongly independent character. The Order so established was formalized in the tenth century, and its members eventually adopted the Augustinian Rule. One of the first acts of the new organization, the Order of *Nuestra Señora de Roncesvalles,* was to found a hospice for the wayfarer.[43] This hospice and the church, reputed to be built upon the rock split by the mighty Roland, brought much added fame to the Order, partly because of the renown of the hero Roland, but more largely because the hospice and church were situated on one of the roads leading to the much visited shrine of St. James at Compostella: the twelfth-century guide-book for pilgrims to Compostella,[44] for example, speaks more than once of the hospice and church at Roncesvalles.[45]

Expansion of the Order at Roncesvalles was, of course, inevitable, and Houses were established outside of Spain, a number of them in England and Ireland. The first record of the Order in England is a letter of protection issued to them in 1229; only three years after this, the Order inherited a number of estates from William Marshall, Earl of Pembroke, among them being his houses at "Cherring."[46] Since the hospital and chapel established at Charing (known as St. Mary Roncevall) later became conspicuously connected with pardoners, the presumptive evidence is strong that Chaucer's "Rouncivale" means this particular House of the parent Order in Roncesvalles.

The records of St. Mary Roncevall for several years "consist mainly of statements of the gifts received from various important persons," Galloway writes; the House was steadily growing in wealth and power.[47] The exact position occupied by the hospital is uncertain. It probably extended from the mid-section of the present Charing Cross Railway Station in alignment with York Gate towards the

present Craven Street and Northumberland Avenue.[48] Just before the beginning of the fourteenth century, a certain Brother Lupus appears in the records as preceptor of all the Houses in England and Ireland, and as prior of St. Mary Roncevall at Charing. Brother Lupus was also a papal envoy, and he was licensed to sell indulgences; from his advent as leader of the Order in England until well into the fifteenth century, the selling of indulgences was the special interest of the alien St. Mary Roncevall: [49] Brother Lupus had all too successfully demonstrated that traffic in pardons was an exceedingly profitable business.

St. Mary Roncevall reached its most prosperous days during the second quarter of the fourteenth century; after the Black Death its affairs were in much confusion. At that time, Galloway says, "the vacant benefices in the possession of the alien Houses were sought for and obtained by clergy on the spot who had influence, and there can be no doubt that . . . many of these persons were more concerned in advancing their own interests and in retaining the possessions thus secured than in guarding the rights of the Convent." [50] John of Gaunt was a patron of St. Mary Roncevall, and the fact that such an unscrupulous politician as he gave letters of introduction in 1372 to three of the Hospital's "procureurs" to noted ecclesiastics who were "to further them in their collection of alms," [51] is a strong indication that this branch of the Order was unduly interested in material gains. Scandals, particularly those arising from the sale of pardons, became more and more flagrant, with the result that in 1379 the Crown seized the buildings and lands of St. Mary Roncevall, and issued a writ "to arrest and bring before the King and Council all persons . . . proved . . . to have collected alms in the realm as Proctor of the Hospital, and converted the same to their own use." [52] It must be admitted that it was the policy of the government at this time to suppress all alien religious Orders: because of the war, the period was one of "England for the English"; but certainly the notoriety attendant upon the seizure of St. Mary Roncevall had its basis almost entirely in the behaviour of the many pardoners connected with the Order. After much litigation, the House at Charing was restored to the aliens, for the time being, in 1383, but the Order was never again free from suspicion or from accusations leveled against it for improper practice.[53] It is especially significant for our study of Chaucer's Pardoner "of Rouncivale" that in 1387 there was a particularly open scandal concerning the unauthorized sale of pardons by representatives of this Convent;[54] Chaucer, the friend of court officials to whom St. Mary Roncevall had become a source of unmitigated irritation, could scarcely have failed to place the Pardoner there.

But did Chaucer mean his audience to take "of Rouncivale" literally? Are we to accept the Pardoner as a bona fide member of the Order of *Nuestra Senora de Roncesvalles* having a cell at Charing, and hence as an Austin Canon?[55] Miss Marie Hamilton argues strongly for an affirmative answer to these questions.[56] She reasons that Chaucer's irony would be the more telling if he pictured a legitimate, clerical pardoner as guilty of all the sins of an imposter. She points out that the Pardoner's preaching and his reading of lessons indicate that he is in major orders,[57] and that the Canons Regular were the only Order whose members were "destined normally for the priesthood" and whose institution was "essentially sacerdotal." Miss Hamilton claims that the Pardoner's lack of tonsure, his defiance of certain Augustinian rules,[58] and his remark to the Wife of Bath concerning his possible marriage[59] in no way weaken the argument, for these matters can all be taken as evidence of the Pardoner's deliberate contempt for his Rule. The Pardoner may even have actually been to Rome when we meet him, for although he later boasts freely of the falsity of his relics, he does not speak of the falsity of his indulgences; and since the English of the late fourteenth century were in general opposed to papal bulls of any kind, as Miss Hamilton observes, there would again be added irony in the Pardoner's bearing genuine credentials which the company would think worthless.[60]

But whether or not the Pardoner comes in fact from St. Mary Roncevall, it is fitting that he claims to do so, and such claim removes all necessity for polite discretion. The Pardoner may properly be shown to be the scoundrel he is: a lying, avaricious, and shameless cheat, hawking his pigs' bones as relics, preaching eloquent sermons only to deceive, and openly singing love-ditties in his girlish voice to a diseased and wicked summoner.

NOTES

(The abbreviations used to designate books and articles mentioned in the Notes will be found listed alphabetically in the Bibliography, opposite the full reference. References to lines in the *Canterbury Tales* are given by fragment and line numbers only.)

1. Miss Dieckmann (*MP*, XXVI, 279–280) writes that *Fa-burden* and *Faux-bourdon* are terms given by the English and French respectively to the style of part-singing developed during the time of Chaucer. *Burdoun* was also associated with a humming or droning sound. Miss Dieckmann quotes from Charles W. Pearce, who says in *Modern Academic Counterpoint:* "Of the three singers standing before the book [in medieval part-singing], those who were chosen for the two upper parts sang their notes in the ordinary manner as they were written; but the remaining performer, chosen for the apparent *bourdon,* or lowest voice (the Cantus Firmus), possessed actually the highest voice. He therefore transposed the plainsong at sight to the octave above, and so sang it throughout."

The Summoner, who bears "a stif burdoun" to the Pardoner, however, undoubtedly possesses the genuine *bourdon,* or lowest voice.

2. Owst, *Preaching,* p. 104. See Bishop Grandisson of Exeter's *Register* (middle of fourteenth century).

3. Curry, *Ch. and Med. Sci.,* p. 58.

4. *Ibid.,* p. 57.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Secreta Secretorum,* p. 223. (Curry calls my attention to this reference and to the one following.)

7. *Ibid.,* p. 231.

8. Curry, *op. cit.,* p. 59.

9. *Ibid.,* pp. 61 f.

10. Curry accepts the theory that Chaucer intended the Pardoner to be a "eunuch from birth." He argues that Chaucer's line, "I trowe he were a geldyng or a mare," is meant as literal fact, and he adds a number of other statements taken from the *Pardoner's Prologue* and *Tale,* to support his contention (pp. 58 f., 64 ff.). As all his points, except the one line just quoted, are outside the *General Prologue,* the details of his argument are here omitted. They are fully discussed, and scholarly objections to them are raised, in an article by G. G. Sedgewick, *MLQ,* I (1940), 431–458.

11. Owst, *op. cit.,* p. 99.

12. Jusserand, *Eng. Way. Life,* p. 311.

13. *Ibid.,* pp. 311 f.

14. Lea, *Hist. Confession and Indulgences,* III, 54–82.

15. *Ibid.,* p. 70 in note. The facsimile is in the Appendix to this volume, and is taken from the original in the White Historical Library, Cornell University. Lea transcribes (p. 70 in note) the form of absolution as follows: "Misereatur tui omnipotens deus etc. Dominus noster ihesus cristus per suam piissimam misericordiam te absolvat. Et auctoritate ejus et beatorum Petri