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Chaucer, The First National Poet
Chaucer was the first great national poet of England giving full expression to the new hopes and aspirations of the people of his times. He voiced through his poetry that national unity which had been brought about by the fusion of the Normans and the Anglo-Saxons. The growing influence of France was checked and for the first time the poet in the natural language of England gave expression to the life ideals, hopes and aspirations of the people of the 14th century belonging to his country. In his picture of the Canterbury Pilgrimage, with the frankness of criticism prevailing among all its members, with the strength of its public opinion with its power of regulating its own affairs we find what as yet had nowhere else appeared in modern European literature, the image of an organized 'nation'. The foundation

of Chaucer's art lies in ~~English~~
~~the~~ English life and English
character.

Modern poetry is characteris-
ed by realism. The modern
poet is a keen, observer of
the various tendencies of his
times which are being put by
him in poetry. This modern
note of realism had been sou-
nded by Chaucer long ago in
the 14th century. He made
a thorough study of his time
in its varied aspects and
gave expression, to its hopes
and aspirations, its fears
and doubts in 'The Canterbury
Tales'. He reflected his centu-
ry not in fragments but as
a whole and was its chroni-
cler as Froissart had been of
France during the same time.
He had the innate instinct to
catch within his purview the
soul of his generation in all
its fullness and its depth.
He had the seeing eye, the
retentive memory, the jud-

gement to select, and the capacity to expound. His observations about his times are true and realistic, and are not set forth with the vision of a dreamy allegorist. He stands in much the same relation to the life of his time as Pope does to the earlier phases of the eighteenth century and Tennyson of the Victorian age. He presents successfully its cross-section of English life in the late fourteenth century.

The end.

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