



THE CANTERBURY TALES

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

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THE PROLOGUE

When that Aprilis, with his showers swoot,¹
The drought of March hath pierced to the root,
And bathed every vein in such licóur,
Of which virtúe engender'd is the flower;
When Zephyrus eke with his swootë breath
Inspired hath in every holt² and heath
The tender croppës,³ and the youngë sun
Hath in the Ram⁴ his halfë course y-run,
And smallë fowlës makë melody,
That sleepen all the night with open eye,
(So pricketh them natúre in their coráges⁵);
Then longë folk to go on pilgrimages,
And palmers⁶ for to seekë strangë strands,
To fernë hallows couth⁷ in sundry lands;
And specially, from every shirë's end
Of Engleland, to Canterbury they wend,
The holy blissful Martyr for to seek,
That them hath holpen, when that they were sick.

Befell that, in that season on a day,
In Southwark at the Tabard⁸ as I lay,
Ready to wenden on my pilgrimage
To Canterbury with devout coráge,
At night was come into that hostelry
Well nine and twenty in a company
Of sundry folk, by áventure y-fall

In fellowship,⁹ and pilgrims were they all,
That toward Canterbury wouldë ride.
The chamber, and the stables werë wide,
And well we weren eased at the best.¹⁰
And shortly, when the sunnë was to rest,
So had I spoken with them every one,
That I was of their fellowship anon,
And madë forword¹¹ early for to rise,
To take our way there as I you devise.¹²

But natheless, while I have time and space,
Ere that I farther in this talë pace,
Me thinketh it accordant to reasón,
To tell you allë the condition
Of each of them, so as it seemed me,
And which they weren, and of what degree;
And eke in what array that they were in:
And at a Knight then will I first begin.

A KNIGHT there was, and that a worthy man,
That from the timë that he first began
To riden out, he loved chivalry,
Truth and honoúr, freedom and courtesy.
Full worthy was he in his Lordë's war,
And thereto had he ridden, no man farre,¹³
As well in Christendom as in Heatheness,
And ever honour'd for his worthiness.
At Alisandre¹⁴ he was when it was won.
Full often time he had the board begun
Above allë natións in Prusse.¹⁵
In Lettowe had he reysed,¹⁶ and in Russe,
No Christian man so oft of his degree.
In Grenade at the siege eke had he be
Of Algesir,¹⁷ and ridden in Belmarie.¹⁸
At Leyës was he, and at Satalie,
When they were won; and in the Greatë Sea¹⁹
At many a noble army had he be.
At mortal battles had he been fifteen,

And foughten for our faith at Tramissene.²⁰
In listës thriës, and aye slain his foe.
This ilkë²¹ worthy knight had been also
Some timë with the lord of Palatie,²²
Against another heathen in Turkie:
And evermore he had a sovereign price.²³
And though that he was worthy he was wise,
And of his port as meek as is a maid.
He never yet no villainy²⁴ ne said
In all his life, unto no manner wight.
He was a very perfect gentle knight.
But for to tellë you of his array,
His horse was good, but yet he was not gay.
Of fustian he weared a gipon,
Allë besmotted with his habergeon,²⁵
For he was late y-come from his voyáge,
And wentë for to do his pilgrimage.

With him there was his son, a youngë SQUIRE,
A lover, and a lusty bachelor,
With lockës crulle²⁶ as they were laid in press.
Of twenty year of age he was I guess.
Of his statüre he was of even length,
And wonderly deliver,²⁷ and great of strength.
And he had been some time in chevachie,²⁸
In Flanders, in Artois, and Picardie,
And borne him well, as of so little space,²⁹
In hope to standen in his lady's grace.
Embroider'd was he, as it were a mead
All full of freshë flowers, white and red.
Singing he was, or fluting all the day;
He was as fresh as is the month of May.
Short was his gown, with sleevës long and wide.
Well could he sit on horse, and fairë ride.
He couldë songës make, and well indite,
Joust, and eke dance, and well pourtray and write.

So hot he loved, that by nightertale³⁰
He slept no more than doth the nightingale.
Courteous he was, lowly, and serviceable,
And carv'd before his father at the table.³¹

A YEOMAN had he, and servánts no mo'
At that timë, for him list ridë so;³²
And he was clad in coat and hood of green.
A sheaf of peacock arrows³³ bright and keen
Under his belt he bare full thriftily.
Well could he dress his tackle yeomanly:
His arrows drooped not with feathers low;
And in his hand he bare a mighty bow.
A nut-head³⁴ had he, with a brown viságe:
Of wood-craft coud³⁵ he well all the uságe:
Upon his arm he bare a gay bracér,³⁶
And by his side a sword and a bucklér,
And on that other side a gay daggere,
Harnessed well, and sharp as point of spear:
A Christopher³⁷ on his breast of silver sheen.
An horn he bare, the baldric was of green:
A forester³⁸ was he soothly³⁹ as I guess.

There was also a Nun, a PRIORESS,
That of her smiling was full simple and coy;
Her greatest oathë was but by Saint Loy;⁴⁰
And she was cleped⁴¹ Madame Eglentine.
Full well she sang the servicë divine,
Entuned in her nose full seemëly;⁴²
And French she spake full fair and fetisly⁴³
After the school of Stratford attë Bow,
For French of Paris was to her unknow.
At meatë was she well y-taught withal;
She let no morsel from her lippës fall,
Nor wet her fingers in her saucë deep.
Well could she carry a morsel, and well keep,

That no droppë ne fell upon her breast.
In courtesy was set full much her lest.⁴⁴
Her over-lippë wiped she so clean,
That in her cup there was no farthing⁴⁵ seen
Of greasë, when she drunken had her draught;
Full seemëly after her meat she raught:⁴⁶
And sickerly she was of great disport,⁴⁷
And full pleasánt, and amiable of port,
And pained her to counterfeitë cheer
Of court,⁴⁸ and be estatelly of mannére,
And to be holden digne⁴⁹ of reverence.
But for to spoken of her consciéce,
She was so charitable and so pitous,⁵⁰
She wouldë weep if that she saw a mouse
Caught in a trap, if it were dead or bled.
Of smallë houndës had she, that she fed
With roasted flesh, and milk, and wastel bread.⁵¹
But sore she wept if one of them were dead,
Or if men smote it with a yardë⁵² smart:
And all was conscience and tender heart.
Full seemly her wimple y-pinched was;
Her nose tretis;⁵³ her eyen gray as glass;⁵⁴
Her mouth full small, and thereto soft and red;
But sickerly she had a fair forhëad.
It was almost a spannë broad I trow;
For hardily she was not undergrow.⁵⁵
Full fetis⁵⁶ was her cloak, as I was ware.
Of small corál about her arm she bare
A pair of beadës, gauded all with green;⁵⁷
And thereon hung a brooch of gold full sheen,
On which was first y-written a crown'd A,
And after, *Amor vincit omnia*.
Another NUN also with her had she,
[That was her chapellëine, and PRIESTËS three.]

A MONK there was, a fair for the mast'ry,⁵⁸
An outrider, that loved venery;⁵⁹
A manly man, to be an abbot able.
Full many a dainty horse had he in stable:
And when he rode, men might his bridle hear
Jingeling⁶⁰ in a whistling wind as clear,
And eke as loud, as doth the chapel bell,
There as this lord was keeper of the cell.
The rule of Saint Maur and of Saint Benet,⁶¹
Because that it was old and somedeal⁶² strait,
This ilk⁶³ monk let old^e thing^es pace,
And held after the new^e world the trace.
He gave not of the text a pulled hen,⁶⁴
That saith, that hunters be not holy men;
Ne that a monk, when he is cloisterless;
Is like to a fish that is waterless;
This is to say, a monk out of his cloister.
This ilk^e text held he not worth an oyster;
And I say his opinion was good.
Why should he study, and make himself^e wood,⁶⁵
Upon a book in cloister always pore,
Or swinken⁶⁶ with his hand^es, and labou^r,
As Austin bit?⁶⁷ how shall the world be served?
Let Austin have his swink to him reserved.
Therefore he was a prickasour aright:⁶⁸
Greyhounds he had as swift as fowl of flight:
Of pricking⁶⁹ and of hunting for the hare
Was all his lust,⁷⁰ for no cost would he spare.
I saw his sleev^es purfil'd at the hand
With gris,⁷¹ and that the finest of the land.
And for to fasten his hood under his chin,
He had of gold y-wrought a curious pin:
A love-knot in the greater end there was.
His head was bald, and shone as any glass,
And eke his face, as it had been anoint;

He was a lord full fat and in good point;
His eyen steep,⁷² and rolling in his head,
That steamed as a furnace of a lead.
His bootës supple, his horse in great estate,
Now certainly he was a fair prelâte;
He was not pale as a forpined⁷³ ghost;
A fat swan lov'd he best of any roast.
His palfrey was as brown as is a berry.

A FRIAR there was, a wanton and a merry,
A limitour,⁷⁴ a full solemnë man.
In all the orders four is none that can⁷⁵
So much of dalliance and fair languáge.
He had y-made full many a marriáge
Of youngë women, at his owen cost.
Unto his order he was a noble post;
Full well belov'd, and familiár was he
With franklins over all⁷⁶ in his countrý,
And eke with worthy women of the town:
For he had power of confessiön,
As said himselfë, more than a curáte,
For of his order he was licentiate.
Full sweetëly heard he confession,
And pleasant was his absolution.
He was an easy man to give penánce,
There as he wist to have a good pittánce:⁷⁷
For unto a poor order for to give
Is signë that a man is well y-shrive.⁷⁸
For if he gave, he durstë make avant,⁷⁹
He wistë that the man was repentant.
For many a man so hard is of his heart,
He may not weep although him sorë smart.
Therefore instead of weeping and prayéres,
Men must give silver to the poorë freres.

His tippet was aye farsed⁸⁰ full of knives,
And pinnës, for to give to fairë wives;

And certainly he had a merry note:
Well could he sing and playen on a rote;⁸¹
Of yeddings⁸² he bare utterly the prize.
His neck was white as is the fleur-de-lis.
Thereto he strong was as a champion,
And knew well the tavérns in every town.
And every hosteler and gay tapstère,
Better than a lazar⁸³ or a beggère,
For unto such a worthy man as he
Accordeth not, as by his faculty,
To havē with such lazars acquaintáncē.
It is not honest, it may not advance,
As for to dealē with no such pouraille,⁸⁴
But all with rich, and sellers of vitaille.
And ov'r all there as⁸⁵ profit should arise,
Courteous he was, and lowly of servíce;
There n'as no man nowhere⁸⁶ so virtuous.
He was the bestē beggar in all his house:
And gave a certain farmē⁸⁷ for the grant,
None of his bretheren came in his haunt.
For though a widow haddē but one shoe,
So pleasant was his *In principio*,⁸⁸
Yet would he have a farthing ere he went;
His purchase was well better than his rent.
And rage he could and play as any whelp,
In lovēdays;⁸⁹ there could he muchel help.⁹⁰
For there was he not like a cloisterer,
With threadbare cope, as is a poor scholer,
But he was like a master or a pope.
Of double worsted was his semicope,⁹¹
That rounded was as a bell out of press.
Somewhat he lisped for his wantonness,
To make his English sweet upon his tongue;
And in his harping, when that he had sung,
His eyen twinkled in his head aright,
As do the starrēs in a frosty night.

This worthy limitour was call'd Hubérd.

A MERCHANT was there with a forked beard,
In motley, and high on his horse he sat,
Upon his head a Flandrish beaver hat.
His bootës clasped fair and fetisly.⁹²
His reasons aye spake he full solemnly,
Sounding alway th' increase of his winning.
He would the sea were kept⁹³ for any thing
Betwixtë Middleburg and Orëwell.⁹⁴
Well could he in exchange shieldës⁹⁵ sell.
This worthy man full well his wit beset;⁹⁶
There wistë no wight that he was in debt,
So estately was he of governance⁹⁷
With his bargáins, and with his chevisance.⁹⁸
For sooth he was a worthy man withal,
But sooth to say, I n'ot⁹⁹ how men him call.

A CLERK there was of Oxenford¹⁰⁰ also,
That unto logic haddë long y-go.¹⁰¹
As leanë was his horse as is a rake,
And he was not right fat, I undertake;
But looked hollow,¹⁰² and thereto soberly.¹⁰³
Full threadbare was his overest courtesy,¹⁰⁴
For he had gotten him yet no benefice,
Ne was not worldly, to have an office.
For him was lever¹⁰⁵ have at his bed's head
Twenty bookës, clothed in black or red,
Of Aristotle, and his philosophy,
Than robës rich, or fiddle, or psalt'ry.
But all be that he was a philosópher,
Yet haddë he but little gold in coffer,
But all that he might of his friendës hent,¹⁰⁶
On bookës and on learning he it spent,
And busily gan for the soulës pray

Of them that gave him wherewith to scholay.¹⁰⁷
Of study took he mostë care and heed.
Not one word spake he morë than was need;
And that was said in form and reverence,
And short and quick, and full of high senténce.
Sounding in moral virtue was his speech,
And gladly would he learn, and gladly teach.

A SERGEANT OF THE LAW, wary and wise,
That often had y-been at the Parvis,¹⁰⁸
There was also, full rich of excellence.
Discreet he was, and of great reverence:
He seemed such, his wordës were so wise,
Justice he was full often in assize,
By patent, and by plein¹⁰⁹ commission;
For his sciénce, and for his high renown,
Of fees and robës had he many one.
So great a purchaser was nowhere none.
All was fee simple to him, in effect
His purchasing might not be in suspect.¹¹⁰
Nowhere so busy a man as he there was,
And yet he seemed busier than he was.
In termës had he case' and doomës¹¹¹ all,
That from the time of King Will. werë fall.
Thereto he could indite, and make a thing,
There couldë no wight pinch at his writing.¹¹²
And every statute coud¹¹³ he plain by rote.
He rode but homely in a medley¹¹⁴ coat,
Girt with a seint¹¹⁵ of silk, with barrës small;
Of his array tell I no longer tale.

A FRANKËLIN¹¹⁶ was in this company;
White was his beard, as is the daïsy.
Of his complexión he was sanguíne.
Well lov'd he in the morn a sop in wine.
To liven in delight was ever his won,¹¹⁷

For he was Epicurus' owen son,
That held opinion, that plein¹¹⁸ delight
Was verily felicity perfíte.
An householder, and that a great, was he;
Saint Julian¹¹⁹ he was in his countrý.
His bread, his ale, was alway after one;¹²⁰
A better envined¹²¹ man was nowhere none;
Withouten bake-meat never was his house,
Of fish and flesh, and that so plentëous,
It snowed in his house of meat and drink,
Of allë dainties that men couldë think.
After the sundry seasons of the year,
So changed he his meat and his soupére.
Full many a fat partridge had he in mew,¹²²
And many a bream, and many a luce in stew.¹²³
Woe was his cook, but if¹²⁴ his saucë were
Poignant and sharp, and ready all his gear.
His table dormant¹²⁵ in his hall alway
Stood ready cover'd all the longë day.
At sessions there was he lord and sire.
Full often time he was knight of the shire.
An anlace, and a gipciere¹²⁶ all of silk,
Hung at his girdle, white as morning milk.
A sheriff had he been, and a countour.¹²⁷
Was nowhere such a worthy vavasour.¹²⁸

An HABERDASHER, and a CARPENTER,
A WEBBE,¹²⁹ a DYER, and a TAPISER,¹³⁰
Were with us eke, cloth'd in one livery,
Of a solémn and great fraternity.
Full fresh and new their gear y-picked¹³¹ was.
Their knivës were y-chaped¹³² not with brass,
But all with silver wrought full clean and well,
Their girdles and their pouches every deal.¹³³
Well seemed each of them a fair burgéss,

To sitten in a guild-hall, on the dais.¹³⁴
Evereach, for the wisdom that he can,¹³⁵
Was shapely¹³⁶ for to be an alderman.
For chattels haddë they enough and rent,
And eke their wivës would it well assent:
And ellës certain they had been to blame.
It is full fair to be y-clep'd madáme,
And for to go to vigils all before,
And have a mantle royally y-bore.¹³⁷

A Cook they haddë with them for the nones,¹³⁸
To boil the chickens and the marrow bones,
And powder merchant tart and galingale.¹³⁹
Well could he know a draught of London ale.
He couldë roast, and seethe, and broil, and fry,
Makë mortrewës,¹⁴⁰ and well bake a pie.
But great harm was it, as it thoughtë me,
That, on his shin a mormal¹⁴¹ haddë he.
For blanc manger,¹⁴² that made he with the best.

A SHIPMAN was there, wonned far by West:¹⁴³
For ought I wot, be was of Dartëmouth.
He rode upon a rouncy, as he couth,¹⁴⁴
All in a gown of falding¹⁴⁵ to the knee.
A dagger hanging by a lace had he
About his neck under his arm adown;
The hot summer had made his hue all brown;
And certainly he was a good felláw.
Full many a draught of wine he had y-draw
From Bourdeaux-ward, while that the chapmen sleep;
Of nicë conscience took he no keep.
If that he fought, and had the higher hand,
By water he sent them home to every land.
But of his craft to reckon well his tides,
His streamës and his strandës him besides,
His herberow,¹⁴⁶ his moon, and lodemanage,¹⁴⁷

There was none such, from Hull unto Carthage.
Hardy he was, and wise, I undertake:
With many a tempest had his beard been shake.
He knew well all the havens, as they were,
From Scotland to the Cape of Finisterre,
And every creek in Bretagne and in Spain:
His barge y-cleped was the Magdelain.

With us there was a DOCTOR OF PHYSIC;
In all this worldē was there none him like
To speak of physic, and of surgery:
For he was grounded in astronomy.
He kept his patiēt a full great deal
In hourēs by his magic natural.
Well could he fortunē¹⁴⁸ the áscendent
Of his imáges for his patiēt.
He knew the cause of every malady,
Were it of cold, or hot, or moist, or dry,
And where engender'd, and of what humoúr.
He was a very perfect practisour
The cause y-know,¹⁴⁹ and of his harm the root,
Anon he gave to the sick man his boot.¹⁵⁰
Full ready had he his apothecaries,
To send his druggēs and his lectuaries,
For each of them made other for to win:
Their friendship was not newē to begin.
Well knew he the old Esculapius,
And Dioscorides, and eke Rufus;
Old Hippocras, Hali, and Gallien;
Serapion, Rasis, and Avicen;
Averrois, Damascene, and Constantin;
Bernard, and Gatisden, and Gilbertin.¹⁵¹
Of his diet measúable was he,
For it was of no superfluity,
But of great nourishing, and digestible.
His study was but little on the Bible.
In sanguine and in perse¹⁵² he clad was, all

Lined with taffeta, and with sendall.¹⁵³
And yet he was but easy of dispence:
He kept that he won in the pestilence.¹⁵⁴
For gold in physic is a cordial;
Therefore he loved gold in special.

A good WIFE was there OF besidē BATH,
But she was somedeal deaf, and that was scath.¹⁵⁵
Of cloth-making she haddē such an haunt,¹⁵⁶
She passed them of Ypres, and of Gaunt.
In all the parish wifē was there none,
That to the off'ring¹⁵⁷ before her should gon,
And if there did, certain so wroth was she,
That she was out of allē charity.
Her coverchiefs¹⁵⁸ werē full fine of ground;
I durstē swear, they weighedē ten pound
That on the Sunday were upon her head.
Her hosen weren of fine scarlet red,
Full strait y-tied, and shoes full moist¹⁵⁹ and new.
Bold was her face, and fair and red of hue.
She was a worthy woman all her live,
Husbands at the church door had she had five,
Withouten other company in youth;
But thereof needeth not to speak as nouth.¹⁶⁰
And thrice had she been at Jerusalem;
She haddē passed many a strangē stream;
At Rome she had been, and at Bologne,¹⁶¹
In Galice at Saint James,¹⁶² and at Cologne;
She couldē¹⁶³ much of wand'ring by the way.
Gat-toothed¹⁶⁴ was she, soothly for to say.
Upon an ambler easily she sat,
Y-wimpled well, and on her head an hat
As broad as is a buckler or a targe.
A foot-mantle about her hippēs large,
And on her feet a pair of spurrēs sharp.
In fellowship well could she laugh and carp.¹⁶⁵

Of remedies of love she knew perchance,
For of that art she could¹⁶⁶ the oldë dance.

A good man there was of religiön,
That was a poorë PARSON of a town:
But rich he was of holy thought and werk:¹⁶⁷
He was also a learned man, a clerk,
That Christë's gospel truly wouldë preach.
His parishens devoutly would he teach.
Benign he was, and wonder diligent,
And in adversity full patient:
And such he was y-proved often sithes.¹⁶⁸
Full loth were him to cursë for his tithes,
But rather would he given out of doubt,
Unto his poorë parishens about,
Of his off'ring, and eke of his substánce.
He could in little thing have suffisance.¹⁶⁹
Wide was his parish, and houses far asunder,
But he ne left not, for no rain nor thunder,
In sickness and in mischief to visit
The farthest in his parish, much and lit,¹⁷⁰
Upon his feet, and in his hand a staff.
This noble ensample to his sheep he gaf,¹⁷¹
That first he wrought, and afterward he taught.
Out of the gospel he the wordës caught,
And this figúre he added yet thereto,
That if gold rustë, what should iron do?
For if a priest be foul, on whom we trust,
No wonder is a lewëd¹⁷² man to rust:
And shame it is, if that a priest take keep,
To see a shitten shepherd and clean sheep:
Well ought a priest ensample for to give,
By his own cleanness, how his sheep should live.
He settë not his benefice to hire,
And left his sheep eucumber'd in the mire,
And ran unto London, unto Saint Poul's,

To seekë him a chantery¹⁷³ for souls,
Or with a brotherhood to be withhold:¹⁷⁴
But dwelt at home, and keptë well his fold,
So that the wolf ne made it not miscarry.
He was a shepherd, and no mercenary.
And though he holy were, and virtuous,
He was to sinful men not dispitous¹⁷⁵
Nor of his speechë dangerous nor dign,¹⁷⁶
But in his teaching díscreet and benign.
To drawen folk to heaven, with fairness,
By good ensample, was his business:
But it were¹⁷⁷ any person obstinate,
What so he were of high or low estate,
Him would he snibbë¹⁷⁸ sharply for the nonës.¹⁷⁹
A better priest I trow that nowhere none is.
He waited after no pomp nor reverence,
Nor maked him a spiced consciënce,¹⁸⁰
But Christë's lore, and his apostles' twelve,
He taught, and first he follow'd it himselve.

With him there was a PLOUGHMAN, was his brother,
That had y-laid of dung full many a fother.¹⁸¹
A true swinker¹⁸² and a good was he,
Living in peace and perfect charity.
God loved he bestë with all his heart
At allë timës, were it gain or smart,¹⁸³
And then his neighëbour right as himselve.
He wouldë thresh, and thereto dike,¹⁸⁴ and delve,
For Christë's sake, for every poorë wight,
Withouten hire, if it lay in his might.
His tithës payed he full fair and well,
Both of his proper swink, and his chattel.¹⁸⁵
In a tabard¹⁸⁶ he rode upon a mare.

There was also a Reeve, and a Millere,
A Sompnour, and a Pardoner also,
A Manciple, and myself, there were no mo'.

The MILLER was a stout carle for the nones,
Full big he was of brawn, and eke of bones;
That proved well, for ov'r all where¹⁸⁷ he came,
At wrestling he would bear away the ram.¹⁸⁸
He was short-shouldered, broad, a thickë gnarr,¹⁸⁹
There was no door, that he n'old heave off bar,
Or break it at a running with his head.
His beard as any sow or fox was red,
And thereto broad, as though it were a spade.
Upon the cop¹⁹⁰ right of his nose he had
A wart, and thereon stood a tuft of hairs
Red as the bristles of a sowë's ears.
His nosë-thirlës¹⁹¹ blackë were and wide.
A sword and buckler bare he by his side.
His mouth as widë was as a furnáce.
He was a jangler, and a goliardais,¹⁹²
And that was most of sin and harlotries.
Well could he stealë corn, and tollë thrice.
And yet he had a thumb of gold, pardie.¹⁹³
A white coat and a blue hood weared he.
A baggëpipe well could he blow and soun',
And therewithal he brought us out of town.

A gentle MANCIPLE¹⁹⁴ was there of a temple,
Of which achatours¹⁹⁵ mightë take ensample
For to be wise in buying of vitaille.
For whether that he paid, or took by taile,¹⁹⁶
Algate¹⁹⁷ he waited so in his achate,¹⁹⁸
That he was aye before in good estate.
Now is not that of God a full fair grace
That such a lewëd mannë's wit shall pace¹⁹⁹
The wisdom of an heap of learned men?
Of masters had he more than thriës ten,
That were of law expert and curious:
Of which there was a dozen in that house,
Worthy to be stewárds of rent and land

Of any lord that is in Engleland,
To makë him live by his proper good,
In honour debtless, but if he were wood, ²⁰⁰
Or live as scarcely as him list desire;
And able for to helpen all a shire
In any case that mightë fall or hap;
And yet this Manciple set their allër cap. ²⁰¹

The REEVË ²⁰² was a slender choleric man,
His beard was shav'd as nigh as ever he can.
His hair was by his earës round y-shorn;
His top was docked like a priest befor.
Full longë were his leggës, and full lean,
Y-like a staff, there was no calf y-seen.
Well could he keep a garner and a bin: ²⁰³
There was no auditor ²⁰⁴ could on him win.
Well wist he by the drought, and by the rain,
The yielding of his seed and of his grain.
His lordë's sheep, his neat, ²⁰⁵ and his dairy.
His swine, his horse, his store, and his poultry,
Were wholly in this Reeve's governing,
And by his cov'nant gave he reckoning,
Since that his lord was twenty year of age;
There could no man bring him in arrearáge.
There was no bailiff, herd, nor other hine, ²⁰⁶
That he ne knew his sleight and his covine: ²⁰⁷
They were adrad ²⁰⁸ of him, as of the death.
His wonning ²⁰⁹ was full fair upon an heath,
With greenë trees y-shadow'd was his place.
He couldë better than his lord purchase.
Full rich he was y-stored privily.
His lord well could he pleasë subtilly,
To give and lend him of his owen good,
And have a thank, and yet ²¹⁰ a coat and hood.
In youth he learned had a good mistére. ²¹¹
He was a well good wright, a carpentére

This Reeve sate upon a right good stot,²¹²
That was all pomely²¹³ gray, and highte²¹⁴ Scot.
A long surcoat of perse²¹⁵ upon he had,
And by his side he bare a rusty blade.
Of Norfolk was this Reeve, of which I tell,
Beside a town men clepen Baldeswell.
Tucked he was, as is a friar, about,
And ever rode the hinderest of the rout.²¹⁶

A SOMPNOUR²¹⁷ was there with us in that place,
That had a fire-red cherubinnës face,
For sausëfleme²¹⁸ he was, with eyen narrow.
As hot he was and lecherous as a sparrow,
With scalled browës black, and pilled²¹⁹ beard:
Of his viságe children were sore afeard.
There n'as quicksilver, litharge, nor brimstone,
Boras, ceruse, nor oil of tartar none,
Nor ointement that wouldë cleanse or bite,
That him might helpen of his whelkës²²⁰ white,
Nor of the knobbës²²¹ sitting on his cheeks.
Well lov'd he garlic, oniõns, and leeks,
And for to drink strong wine as red as blood.
Then would he speak, and cry as he were wood;
And when that he well drunken had the wine,
Then would he speakë no word but Latin.
A fewë termës knew he, two or three,
That he had learned out of some decree;
No wonder is, he heard it all the day.
And eke ye knowen well, how that a jay
Can clepen²²² "Wat," as well as can the Pope.
But whoso would in other thing him grope,²²³
Then had he spent all his philosophy,
Aye, *Questio quid juris*,²²⁴ would he cry.
He was a gentle harlot²²⁵ and a kind;
A better fellów should a man not find.
He wouldë suffer, for a quart of wine,

A good fellow to have his concubine
A twelvemonth, and excuse him at the full.
Full privily a finch eke could he pull.²²⁶
And if he found owhere²²⁷ a good felláw,
He wouldë teachë him to have none awe
In such a case of the archdeacon's curse;
But if²²⁸ a mannë's soul were in his purse;
For in his purse he should y-punished be.
"Purse is the archëdeacon's hell," said he.
But well I wot, he lied right indeed:
Of cursing ought each guilty man to dread,
For curse will slay right as assoiling²²⁹ saveth;
And also 'ware him of a significavit.²³⁰

In danger had he at his owen guise²³¹
The youngë girlës of the diocese,
And knew their counsel, and was of their rede.²³²
A garland had he set upon his head,
As great as it were for an alëstake:²³³
A buckler had he made him of a cake.

With him there rode a gentle PARDONERE²³⁴
Of Ronceval, his friend and his compere,
That straight was comen from the court of Romë.
Full loud he sang, "Come hither, lovë, tó me."
This Sompnour bare to him a stiff burdoun,²³⁵
Was never trump of half so great a soun'.
This Pardoner had hair as yellow as wax,
But smooth it hung, as doth a strike²³⁶ of flax:
By ounces hung his lockës that he had,
And therewith he his shoulders oversprad.
Full thin it lay, by culpons²³⁷ one and one,
But hood for jollity, he weared none,
For it was trussed up in his wallét.
Him thought he rode all of the newë get,²³⁸
Dishevel, save his cap, he rode all bare.
Such glaring eyen had he, as an hare.

A vernicle²³⁹ had he sew'd upon his cap.
His wallët lay before him in his lap,
Bretful²⁴⁰ of pardon come from Rome all hot.
A voice he had as small as hath a goat.
No beard had he, nor ever one should have.
As smooth it was as it were new y-shave;
I trow he were a gelding or a mare.
But of his craft, from Berwick unto Ware,
Ne was there such another pardonere.
For in his mail²⁴¹ he had a pillowbere,²⁴²
Which, as he saidë, was our Lady's veil:
He said, he had a gobbet²⁴³ of the sail
That Saintë Peter had, when that he went
Upon the sea, till Jesus Christ him hent.²⁴⁴
He had a cross of latoun²⁴⁵ full of stones,
And in a glass he haddë piggë's bones.
But with these relics, whennë that he fond
A poorë parson dwelling upon lond,
Upon a day he got him more money
Than that the parson got in moneths tway;
And thus with feigned flattering and japes,²⁴⁶
He made the parson and the people his apes.
But truëly to tellen at the last,
He was in church a noble ecclesiast.
Well could he read a lesson or a story,
But alderbest²⁴⁷ he sang an offertory:²⁴⁸
For well he wistë, when that song was sung,
He mustë preach, and well afile his tongue,²⁴⁹
To winnë silver, as he right well could:
Therefore he sang full merrily and loud.

Now have I told you shortly in a clause
Th' estate, th' array, the number, and eke the cause
Why that assembled was this company
In Southwark at this gentle hostelry,
That hightë the Tabard, fast by the Bell.²⁵⁰

But now is timē to you for to tell
How that we baren us that ilkē night,²⁵¹
When we were in that hostelry alight.
And after will I tell of our voyáge,
And all the remnant of our pilgrimage.

But first I pray you of your courtesy,
That ye arette it not my villainy,²⁵²
Though that I plainly speak in this mattére.
To tellen you their wordës and their cheer;
Not though I speak their wordës properly.
For this ye knowen all so well as I,
Whoso shall tell a tale after a man,
He must rehearse, as nigh as ever he can,
Every word, if it be in his charge,
All speak he²⁵³ ne'er so rudely and so large;
Or ellës he must tell his tale untrue,
Or feignë things, or findë wordës new.
He may not spare, although he were his brother;
He must as well say one word as another.
Christ spake Himself full broad in Holy Writ,
And well ye wot no villainy is it.
Eke Plato saith, whoso that can him read,
The wordës must be cousin to the deed.
Also I pray you to forgive it me,
All have I²⁵⁴ not set folk in their degree,
Here in this tale, as that they shoulde stand:
My wit is short, ye may well understand.

Great cheerë made our Host us every one,
And to the supper set he us anon:
And served us with victual of the best.
Strong was the wine, and well to drink us lest.²⁵⁵
A seemly man Our Hostë was withal
For to have been a marshal in an hall.
A largë man he was with eyen steep,²⁵⁶
A fairer burgess is there none in Cheap:²⁵⁷

Bold of his speech, and wise and well y-taught,
And of manhoodë lacked him right naught.
Eke thereto was he right a merry man,
And after supper playen he began,
And spake of mirth amongës other things,
When that we haddë made our reckonings;
And saidë thus; "Now, lordingës, truly
Ye be to me welcome right heartily:
For by my troth, if that I shall not lie,
I saw not this year such a company
At once in this herberow,²⁵⁸ as is now.
Fain would I do you mirth, an²⁵⁹ I wist how.
And of a mirth I am right now bethought.
To do you ease,²⁶⁰ and it shall costë nought.
Ye go to Canterbury; God you speed,
The blissful Martyr quitë you your meed;
And well I wot, as ye go by the way,
Ye shapen you²⁶¹ to talken and to play:
For truëly comfort nor mirth is none
To ridë by the way as dumb as stone:
And therefore would I makë you disport,
As I said erst, and do you some comfort.
And if you liketh all²⁶² by one assent
Now for to standen at my judgëment,
And for to worken as I shall you say
To-morrow, when ye riden on the way,
Now by my father's soulë that is dead,
But ye be merry, smiteth off²⁶³ mine head.
Hold up your hands withoutë morë speech."

Our counsel was not longë for to seech:²⁶⁴
Us thought it was not worth to make it wise,²⁶⁵
And granted him withoutë more advise,²⁶⁶
And bade him say his verdict, as him lest.

"Lordings (quoth he), now hearken for the best;
But take it not, I pray you, in disdain;
This is the point, to speak it plat²⁶⁷ and plain.

That each of you, to shorten with your way
In this voyáge, shall tellen talës tway,
To Canterbury-ward, I mean it so,
And homeward he shall tellen other two,
Of aventúres that whilom have befall.
And which of you that bear'th him best of all,
That is to say, that telleth in this case
Talës of best senténcé and most solace,
Shall have a supper at your allër cost²⁶⁸
Here in this placë, sitting by this post,
When that ye come again from Canterbury.
And for to makë you the morë merry,
I will myselfë gladly with you ride,
Right at mine owen cost, and be your guide.
And whoso will my judgëment withsay,
Shall pay for all we spenden by the way.
And if ye vouchësafe that it be so,
Tell me anon withoutë wordës mo',²⁶⁹
And I will early shapë me therefore."

This thing was granted, and our oath we swore
With full glad heart, and prayed him also,
That he would vouchësafe for to do so,
And that he wouldë be our governour,
And of our talës judge and reportour,
And set a supper at a certain price;
And we will ruled be at his device,
In high and low: and thus by one assent,
We be accorded to his judgëment.
And thereupon the wine was fet²⁷⁰ anon.
We drunken, and to restë went each one,
Withouten any longer tarrying

A-morrow, when the day began to spring,
Up rose our host, and was our allër cock,²⁷¹
And gather'd us together in a flock,
And forth we ridden all a little space,
Unto the watering of Saint Thomas:²⁷²

And there our host began his horse arrest,
And saidë; “Lordës, hearken if you lest.
Ye weet your forword, [273](#) and I it record.
If evensong and morning-song accord,
Let see now who shall tellë the first tale.
As ever may I drinkë wine or ale,
Whoso is rebel to my judgëment,
Shall pay for all that by the way is spent.
Now draw ye cuts, ere that ye farther twin. [274](#)
He which that hath the shortest shall begin.”

“Sir Knight (quoth he), my master and my lord,
Now draw the cut, for that is mine accord.
Come near (quoth he), my Lady Prioress,
And ye, Sir Clerk, let be your shamefastness,
Nor study not: lay hand to, every man.”

Anon to drawn every wight began,
And shortly for to tellen as it was,
Were it by áventure, or sort, or cas, [275](#)
The sooth is this, the cut fell to the Knight,
Of which full blithe and glad was every wight;
And tell he must his tale as was reasón,
By forword, and by composition,
As ye have heard; what needeth wordës mo’?
And when this good man saw that it was so,
As he that wise was and obediént
To keep his forword by his free assent,
He said; “Sithen [276](#) I shall begin this game,
Why, welcome be the cut in Goddë’s name.
Now let us ride, and hearken what I say.”

And with that word we ridden forth our way;
And he began with right a merry cheer
His tale anon, and said as ye shall hear.

THE KNIGHT'S TALE²⁷⁷

Whilom,²⁷⁸ as oldë stories tellen us,
There was a duke that hightë²⁷⁹ Theseus.
Of Athens he was lord and governor,
And in his timë such a conqueror
That greater was there none under the sun.
Full many a richë country had he won.
What with his wisdom and his chivalry,
He conquer'd all the regne of Feminie,²⁸⁰
That whilom was y-cleped Scythia;
And weddedë the Queen Hippolyta,
And brought her home with him to his country
With muchel²⁸¹ glory and great solemnity,
And eke her youngë sister Emily,
And thus with vict'ry and with melody
Let I this worthy Duke to Athens ride,
And all his host, in armës him beside.

And certes, if it n'ere²⁸² too long to hear,
I would have told you fully the mannëre,
How wonnen²⁸³ was the regne of Feminie,
By Theseus, and by his chivalry;
And of the greatë battle for the nonce
Betwixt Athenës and the Amazons;
And how assieged was Hippolyta,
The fairë hardy queen of Scythia;
And of the feast that was at her wedding,
And of the tempest at her homecoming.

But all these things I must as now forbear.

I have, God wot, a largë field to ear;²⁸⁴

And weakë be the oxen in my plough;

The remnant of my tale is long enow.

I will not letten eke none of this rout.²⁸⁵

Let every fellow tell his tale about,

And let see now who shall the supper win.

There as I left,²⁸⁶ I will again begin.

This Duke, of whom I makë mentioún,

When he was come almost unto the town,

In all his weal²⁸⁷ and in his mostë pride,

He was ware, as he cast his eye aside,

Where that there kneeled in the highë way

A company of ladies, tway and tway,

Each after other, clad in clothës black:

But such a cry and such a woe they make,

That in this world n'is creatúre living,

That heardë such another waimenting.²⁸⁸

And of this crying would they never stenten,²⁸⁹

Till they the reinës of his bridle henten.²⁹⁰

“What folk be ye that at mine homecoming

Perturben so my feastë with crying?”

Quoth Theseus; “Have ye so great envý

Of mine honoúr, that thus complain and cry?

Or who hath you misboden,²⁹¹ or offended?

Do tellë me, if it may be amended;

And why that ye be clad thus all in black?”

The oldest lady of them all then spake,

When she had swooned, with a deadly cheer,²⁹²

That it was ruthë²⁹³ for to see or hear.

She saidë; “Lord, to whom fortune hath given

Vict'ry, and as a conqueror to liven,

Nought grieveth us your glory and your honoúr;

But we beseechen mercy and succóur.

Have mercy on our woe and our distress;

Some drop of pity, through thy gentleness,

Upon us wretched women let now fall.
For certës, lord, there is none of us all
That hath not been a duchess or a queen;
Now be we caitives,²⁹⁴ as it is well seen:
Thanked be Fortune, and her falsë wheel,
That none estate ensureth to be wele.²⁹⁵
And certes, lord, t' abiden your presënce
Here in this temple of the goddess Clemence
We have been waiting all this fortënight:
Now help us, lord, since it lies in thy might.

“I, wretched wight, that weep and wailë thus,
Was whilom wife to king Capaneus,
That starf²⁹⁶ at Thebes, cursed be that day:
And allë we that be in this array,
And maken all this lamentatioun,
We losten all our husbands at that town,
While that the siegë thereabouten lay.
And yet the oldë Creon, well-away!
That lord is now of Thebes the city,
Fulfilled of ire and of iniquity,
He for despite, and for his tyranny,
To do the deadë bodies villainy,²⁹⁷
Of all our lordës, which that been y-slaw,²⁹⁸
Hath all the bodies on an heap y-draw,
And will not suffer them by none assent
Neither to be y-buried, nor y-brent,²⁹⁹
But maketh houndës eat them in despite.”
And with that word, withoutë more respite
They fallen groff,³⁰⁰ and cryden piteously;
“Have on us wretched women some mercy,
And let our sorrow sinken in thine heart.”

This gentle Duke down from his courser start
With heartë piteous, when he heard them speak.
Him thoughtë that his heart would all to-break,
When he saw them so piteous and so mate,³⁰¹
That whilom weren of so great estate.

And in his armës he them all up hent,³⁰²
And them comforted in full good intent,
And swore his oath, as he was truë knight,
He wouldë do so farforthly his might³⁰³
Upon the tyrant Creon them to wreak,³⁰⁴
That all the people of Greecë shouldë speak,
How Creon was of Theseus y-served,
As he that had his death full well deserved.
And right anon withoutë more abode³⁰⁵
His banner he display'd, and forth he rode
To Thebes-ward, and all his host beside:
No ner³⁰⁶ Athenës would he go nor ride,
Nor take his easë fully half a day,
But onward on his way that night he lay:
And sent anon Hippolyta the queen,
And Emily her youngë sister sheen³⁰⁷
Unto the town of Athens for to dwell:
And forth he rit;³⁰⁸ there is no more to tell.

The red statúe of Mars with spear and targe
So shineth in his whitë banner large,
That all the fieldës glitter up and down:
And by his banner borne is his pennon
Of gold full rich, in which there was y-beat³⁰⁹
The Minotaur³¹⁰ which that he slew in Crete.
Thus rit this Duke, thus rit this conquerour,
And in his host of chivalry the flower,
Till that he came to Thebes, and alight
Fair in a field, there as he thought to fight.
But shortly for to speaken of this thing,
With Creon, which that was of Thebes king,
He fought, and slew him manly as a knight
In plain batáille, and put his folk to flight:
And by assault he won the city after,
And rent adown both wall, and spar, and rafter;
And to the ladies he restored again
The bodies of their husbands that were slain,

To do obséquies, as was then the guise.³¹¹

But it were all too long for to devise³¹²

The greatë clamour, and the waimenting,³¹³

Which that the ladies made at the brenning³¹⁴

Of the bodiës, and the great honour

That Theseus the noble conqueror

Did to the ladies, when they from him went:

But shortly for to tell is mine intent.

When that this worthy Duke, this Theseus,

Had Creon slain, and wonnen Thebés thus,

Still in the field he took all night his rest,

And did with all the country as him lest.³¹⁵

To ransack in the tas³¹⁶ of bodies dead,

Them for to strip of harness and of weed,³¹⁷

The pillers³¹⁸ did their business and cure,

After the battle and discomfiture.

And so befell, that in the tas they found,

Through girt with many a grievous bloody wound,

Two youngë knightës ligging by and by³¹⁹

Both in one armës,³²⁰ wrought full richëly:

Of whichë two, Arcita hight that one,

And he that other hightë Palamon.

Not fully quick, nor fully dead they were,

But by their coat-armoúr, and by their gear,

The heralds knew them well in speciál,

As those that weren of the blood royál

Of Thebes, and of sistren two y-born.³²¹

Out of the tas the pillers have them torn,

And have them carried soft unto the tent

Of Theseus, and he full soon them sent

To Athens, for to dwellen in prisón

Perpetually, he n'oldë no ranson.³²²

And when this worthy Duke had thus y-done,

He took his host, and home he rit anon

With laurel crowned as a conquerour;

And there he lived in joy and in honour

Term of his life;³²³ what needeth wordës mo’?
And in a tower, in anguish and in woe,
Dwellen this Palamon, and eke Arcite,
For evermore, there may no gold them quite.³²⁴

Thus passed year by year, and day by day,
Till it fell onës in a morn of May
That Emily, that fairer was to seen
Than is the lily upon his stalkë green,
And fresher than the May with flowers new
(For with the rosë colour strove her hue;
I n’ot³²⁵ which was the finer of them two),
Ere it was day, as she was wont to do,
She was arisen, and all ready dight,³²⁶
For May will have no sluggardy a-night;
The season pricketh every gentle heart,
And maketh him out of his sleep to start,
And saith, “Arise, and do thine óbservance.”

This maketh Emily have rémembrance
To do honoúr to May, and for to rise.
Y-clothed was she fresh for to devise;
Her yellow hair was braided in a tress,
Behind her back, a yardë long I guess.
And in the garden at the sun uprist³²⁷
She walketh up and down where as her list.
She gathereth flowers, party³²⁸ white and red,
To make a sotel³²⁹ garland for her head,
And as an angel heavenly she sung.
The greatë tower, that was so thick and strong,
Which of the castle was the chief dungeón³³⁰
(Where as these knightës weren in prisón,
Of which I toldë you, and tellë shall),
Was even joinant³³¹ to the garden wall,
There as this Emily had her playing.

Bright was the sun, and clear that morrowning,
And Palamon, this woful prisoner,
As was his wont, by leave of his gaoler,

Was ris'n, and roamed in a chamber on high,
In which he all the noble city sigh,³³²
And eke the garden, full of branches green,
There as this fresh Emelia the sheen
Was in her walk, and roamed up and down.
This sorrowful prisoner, this Palamon
Went in his chamber roaming to and fro,
And to himself complaining of his woe:
That he was born, full oft he said, Alas!
And so befell, by áventure or cas,³³³
That through a window thick of many a bar
Of iron great, and square as any spar,
He cast his eyes upon Emelia,
And therewithal he blent³³⁴ and cried, Ah!
As though he stungen were unto the heart.
And with that cry Arcite anon up start,
And saidë, "Cousin mine, what aileth thee,
That art so pale and deadly for to see?
Why cried'st thou? who hath thee done offence?
For Goddë's love, take all in patience
Our prison,³³⁵ for it may none other be.
Fortune hath giv'n us this adversity'.
Some wick'³³⁶ aspéct or dispositiön
Of Saturn, by some constellatiön,
Hath giv'n us this, although we had it sworn,
So stood the heaven when that we were born,
We must endure; this is the short and plain."

This Palamon answér'd, and said again:
"Cousin, forsooth of this opiniön
Thou hast a vain imaginatiön.
This prison caused me not for to cry;
But I was hurt right now thorough mine eye
Into mine heart; that will my banë³³⁷ be.
The fairness of the lady that I see
Yond in the garden roaming to and fro,
Is cause of all my crying and my woe.

I n'ot whe'r³³⁸ she be woman or goddëss.
But Venus is it, soothly³³⁹ as I guess."
And therewithal on knees adown he fill,
And saidë: "Venus, if it be your will
You in this garden thus to transfigúre,
Before me sorrowful wretched creatúre,
Out of this prison help that we may scape.
And if so be our destiny be shape
By etern word to dien in prisón,
Of our lineage have some compassiún,
That is so low y-brought by tyranny."

And with that word Arcita gan espy³⁴⁰
Where as this lady roamed to and fro.
And with that sight her beauty hurt him so,
That if that Palamon was wounded sore,
Arcite is hurt as much as he, or more.
And with a sigh he saidë piteously:
"The freshë beauty slay'th me suddenly
Of her that roameth yonder in the place.
And but³⁴¹ I have her mercy and her grace,
That I may see her at the leastë way,
I am but dead; there is no more to say."
This Palamon, when he these wordës heard,
Dispiteously³⁴² he looked, and answér'd:
"Whether say'st thou this in earnest or in play?"
"Nay," quoth Arcite, "in earnest, by my fay.³⁴³
God help me so, me lust full ill to play."³⁴⁴
This Palamon gan knit his browës tway.
"It were," quoth he, "to thee no great honoúr
For to be false, nor for to be traitoúr
To me, that am thy cousin and thy brother
Y-sworn full deep, and each of us to other,
That never for to dien in the pain,³⁴⁵
Till that the death departen shall us twain,
Neither of us in love to hinder other,
Nor in none other case, my levë³⁴⁶ brother;

But that thou shouldest truly farther me
In every case, as I should farther thee.
This was thine oath, and mine also certáin;
I wot it well, thou dar'st it not withsayn.³⁴⁷
Thus art thou of my counsel out of doubt.
And now thou wouldest falsely be about
To love my lady, whom I love and serve,
And ever shall, until mine heartë sterve.³⁴⁸
Now certes, false Arcite, thou shalt not so.
I lov'd her first, and toldë thee my woe
As to my counsel, and my brother sworn
To farther me, as I have told befor.
For which thou art y-bounden as a knight
To helpë me, if it lie in thy might,
Or ellës art thou false, I dare well sayn,"
 This Arcita full proudly spake again:
"Thou shalt," quoth he, "be rather³⁴⁹ false than I,
And thou art false, I tell thee utterly;
For *par amour* I lov'd her first ere thou.
What wilt thou say? thou wist it not right now³⁵⁰
Whether she be a woman or goddëss.
Thine is affectiön of holiness,
And mine is love, as to a creature:
For which I toldë thee mine áventure
As to my cousin, and my brother sworn.
I posë,³⁵¹ that thou loved'st her befor:
Wost³⁵² thou not well the oldë clerkë's saw,³⁵³
That who shall give a lover any law?
Love is a greater lawë, by my pan,³⁵⁴
Than may be giv'n to any earthly man:
Therefore positive law, and such decree,
Is broke alway for love in each degree
A man must needës love, maugré his head.³⁵⁵
He may not flee it, though he should be dead,
All be she³⁵⁶ maid, or widow, or else wife.
And eke it is not likely all thy life

To standen in her grace, no more than I:
For well thou wost thyselfë verily,
That thou and I be damned to prisón
Perpetual, us gaineth no ransom.
We strive, as did the houndës for the bone;
They fought all day, and yet their part was none.
There came a kite, while that they were so wroth,
And bare away the bone betwixt them both.
And therefore at the kingë's court, my brother,
Each man for himselfë, there is no other.
Love if thee list; for I love and aye shall:
And soothly, levë brother, this is all.
Here in this prison musten we endure,
And each of us takë his áventüre."

Great was the strife and long betwixt them tway,
If that I haddë leisure for to say;
But to the effect: it happen'd on a day
(To tell it you as shortly as I may),
A worthy duke that hight Perithous,
That fellow was to the Duke Theseus³⁵⁷
Since thilkë³⁵⁸ day that they were children lite,³⁵⁹
Was come to Athéns, his fellow to visite,
And for to play, as he was wont to do;
For in this world he loved no man so;
And he lov'd him as tenderly again.
So well they lov'd, as oldë bookës sayn,
That when that one was dead, soothly to tell,
His fellow went and sought him down in hell:
But of that story list me not to write.
Duke Perithous loved well Arcite,
And had him known at Thebes year by year:
And finally at réquest and prayére
Of Perithous, withoutë ransón
Duke Theseus him let out of prisón,
Freely to go, where him list over all,
In such a guise, as I you tellen shall
This was the forword,³⁶⁰ plainly to indite,

Betwixtē Theseus and him Arcite:
That if so were, that Arcite were y-found
Ever in his life, by day or night, one stound³⁶¹
In any country of this Theseus,
And he were caught, it was accorded thus,
That with a sword he shouldē lose his head;
There was none other remedy nor rede.³⁶²
But took his leave, and homeward he him sped;
Let him beware, his neckē lieth to wed.³⁶³

How great a sorrow suff'reth now Arcite!
The death he feeleth through his heartē smite;
He weepeth, wailleth, crieth piteously;
To slay himself he waiteth privily.
He said; "Alas the day that I was born!
Now is my prison worsē than beforē:
Now is me shape³⁶⁴ eternally to dwell
Not in purgatory, but right in hell.
Alas! that ever I knew Perithous.
For ellēs had I dwelt with Theseus
Y-fettered in his prison evermo'.
Then had I been in bliss, and not in woe.
Only the sight of her, whom that I serve,
Though that I never may her grace deserve,
Would have sufficed right enough for me.
O dearē cousin Palamon," quoth he,
"Thine is the vict'ry of this áventúre,
Full blissfully in prison to endure:
In prison? nay certes, in paradise.
Well hath fortúne y-turned thee the dice,
That hast the sight of her, and I th' absénce.
For possible is, since thou hast her presénce,
And art a knight, a worthy and an able,
That by some cas,³⁶⁵ since fortune is changeáble,
Thou may'st to thy desire sometime attain.
But I that am exiled, and barrén
Of allē grace, and in so great despair,

That there n'is earthë, water, fire, nor air,
Nor creature, that of them maked is,
That may me helpë nor comfort in this,
Well ought I sterve in wanhope³⁶⁶ and distress.
Farewell my life, my lust,³⁶⁷ and my gladnéss.
Alas, why plainen men so in commúne
Of purveyance of God,³⁶⁸ or of Fortúne,
That giveth them full oft in many a guise
Well better than they can themselves devise?
Some man desireth for to have richness,
That cause is of his murder or great sickness.
And some man would out of his prison fain,
That in his house is of his meinie³⁶⁹ slain.
Infinite harmës be in this mattére.
We wot never what thing we pray for here.
We fare as he that drunk is as a mouse.
A drunken man wot well he hath an house,
But he wot not which is the right way thither,
And to a drunken man the way is slither.³⁷⁰
And certes in this world so farë we.
We seekë fast after felicity,
But we go wrong full often truëly.
Thus we may sayen all, and namely³⁷¹ I,
That ween'd,³⁷² and had a great opinión,
That if I might escapë from prisón
Then had I been in joy and perfect heal,
Where now I am exiled from my weal.
Since that I may not see you, Emily,
I am but dead; there is no remedy."

Upon that other sidë, Palamon,
When that he wist Arcita was agone,
Much sorrow maketh, that the greatë tower
Resounded of his yelling and clamour.
The purë fetters³⁷³ on his shinnës great
Were of his bitter saltë tearës wet.

"Alas!" quoth he, "Arcita, cousin mine,

Of all our strife, God wot, the fruit is thine.
Thou walkest now in Thebes at thy large,
And of my woe thou givest little charge.³⁷⁴
Thou mayst, since thou hast wisdom and manhead,³⁷⁵
Assemble all the folk of our kindred,
And make a war so sharp on this countrý,
That by some áventure, or some treatý,
Thou mayst have her to lady and to wife,
For whom that I must needës lose my life.
For as by way of possibility,
Since thou art at thy large, of prison free,
And art a lord, great is thine ávantage,
More than is mine, that sterve³⁷⁶ here in a cage.
For I must weep and wail, while that I live,
With all the woe that prison may me give,
And eke with pain that love me gives also,
That doubles all my torment and my woe.”

Therewith the fire of jealousy upstart
Within his breast, and hent him by the heart
So woody,³⁷⁷ that he like was to behold
The box-tree, or the ashes dead and cold.
Then said; “O cruel goddess, that govérn
This world with binding of your word etern,³⁷⁸
And writen in the table of adamant
Your parlement³⁷⁹ and your eternal grant,
What is mankind more unto you y-hold³⁸⁰
Than is the sheep, that rouketh³⁸¹ in the fold!
For slain is man, right as another beast,
And dwelleth eke in prison and arrest,
And hath sicknéss, and great adversity,
And oftentimes guiltëless, pardie.³⁸²
What governance is in your prescience,
That guiltëless tormenteth innocence?
And yet increaseth this all my penance,
That man is bounden to his observance
For Goddë’s sake to letten of his will,³⁸³

Whereas a beast may all his lust³⁸⁴ fulfil.
And when a beast is dead, he hath no pain;
But man after his death must weep and plain,
Though in this worldë he have care and woe:
Withoutë doubt it mayë standen so.

“The answer of this leave I to divinës,
But well I wot, that in this world great pine³⁸⁵ is:
Alas! I see a serpent or a thief
That many a truë man hath done mischief,
Go at his large, and where him list may turn.
But I must be in prison through Saturn,
And eke through Juno, jealous and eke wood,³⁸⁶
That hath well nigh destroyed all the blood
Of Thebes, with his wastë wallës wide.
And Venus slay’th me on that other side
For jealousy, and fear of him, Arcite.”

Now will I stent³⁸⁷ of Palamon a lite,³⁸⁸
And let him in his prison stillë dwell,
And of Arcita forth I will you tell.
The summer passeth, and the nightës long
Increasë double-wise the painës strong
Both of the lover and the prisonére.
I n’ot³⁸⁹ which hath the wofuller mistére.³⁹⁰
For, shortly for to say, this Palamon
Perpetually is damned to prisón,
In chainës and in fetters to be dead;
And Arcite is exiled on his head³⁹¹
For evermore as out of that country,
Nor never more he shall his lady see.
You lovers ask I now this question,³⁹²
Who lieth the worse, Arcite or Palamon?
The one may see his lady day by day,
But in prison he dwellë must alway.
The other where him list may ride or go,
But see his lady shall he never mo’.
Now deem all as you listë, ye that can,

For I will tell you forth as I began.

When that Arcite to Thebes comen was,
Full oft a day he swelt,³⁹³ and said, "Alas!"
For see this lady he shall never mo'.
And shortly to concluden all his woe,
So much sorrow had never creatúre
That is or shall be while the world may dure.
His sleep, his meat, his drink is him byraft,³⁹⁴
That lean he wex,³⁹⁵ and dry as any shaft.³⁹⁶
His eyen hollow, grisly to behold,
His hue fallow,³⁹⁷ and pale as ashes cold,
And solitary he was, ever alone,
And wailing all the night, making his moan.
And if he heardë song or instrument,
Then would he weepen, he might not be stent.³⁹⁸
So feeble were his spirits, and so low,
And changed so, that no man couldë know
His speech, neither his voice, though men it heard.
And in his gear³⁹⁹ for all the world he far'd
Not only like the lovers' malady
Of Eros, but rather y-like maníe,⁴⁰⁰
Engender'd of humoúrs meláncholic,
Before his head in his cell fántastic.⁴⁰¹
And shortly turned was all upside down,
Both habit and eke dispositioún,
Of him, this woful lover Dan⁴⁰² Arcite.
Why should I all day of his woe indite?
When he endured had a year or two
This cruel torment, and this pain and woe,
At Thebes, in his country, as I said,
Upon a night in sleep as he him laid,
Him thought how that the winged god Mercúry
Before him stood, and bade him to be merry.
His sleepy yard⁴⁰³ in hand he bare upright;
A hat he wore upon his hairës bright.
Arrayed was this god (as he took keep)⁴⁰⁴.

As he was when that Argus⁴⁰⁵ took his sleep;
And said him thus: "To Athens shalt thou wend;⁴⁰⁶
There is thee shapen⁴⁰⁷ of thy woe an end."
And with that word Arcite woke and start.
"Now truëly how sore that e'er me smart,"
Quoth he, "to Athens right now will I fare.
Nor for no dread of death shall I not spare
To see my lady that I love and serve;
In her preséncë I reckë not to sterve."⁴⁰⁸
And with that word he caught a great mirrór,
And saw that changed was all his colór,
And saw his visage all in other kind.
And right anon it ran him ill his mind,
That since his facë was so disfigúr'd
Of malady the which he had endúr'd,
He mightë well, if that he bare him low,⁴⁰⁹
Live in Athenës evermore unknow,
And see his lady well-nigh day by day.
And right anon he changed his array,
And clad him as a poorë labourer.
And all alone, save only a squiér,
That knew his privity⁴¹⁰ and all his cas,⁴¹¹
Which was disguised poorly as he was,
To Athens is he gone the nextë⁴¹² way.
And to the court he went upon a day,
And at the gate he proffer'd his service,
To drudge and draw, what so men would devise.⁴¹³
And, shortly of this matter for to sayn,
He fell in office with a chamberlain,
The which that dwelling was with Emily.
For he was wise, and couldë soon espy
Of every servant which that served her.
Well could he hewë wood, and water bear,
For he was young and mighty for the nones,⁴¹⁴
And thereto he was strong and big of bones
To do that any wight can him devise.

A year or two he was in this servíce,
Page of the chamber of Emily the bright;
And Philostrate he saidë that he hight.
But half so well belov'd a man as he
Ne was there never in court of his degree.
He was so gentle of conditioun,
That throughout all the court was his renown.
They saidë that it were a charity
That Theseus would énhance his degree,⁴¹⁵
And put him in some worshipful servíce,
There as he might his virtue exercise.
And thus within a while his namë sprung
Both of his deedës, and of his good tongue,
That Theseus hath taken him so near,
That of his chamber he hath made him squire,
And gave him gold to máintain his degree;
And eke men brought him out of his country
From year to year full privily his rent.
But honestly and slyly⁴¹⁶ he it spent,
That no man wonder'd how that he it had.
And three year in this wise his life be lad,⁴¹⁷
And bare him so in peace and eke in werre,⁴¹⁸
There was no man that Theseus had so derre.⁴¹⁹
And in this blissë leave I now Arcite,
And speak I will of Palamon a lite.⁴²⁰

In darkness horrible, and strong prisón,
This seven year hath sitten Palamon,
Forpined,⁴²¹ what for love, and for distress.
Who feeleth double sorrow and heaviness
But Palamon? that love distraineth⁴²² so,
That wood⁴²³ out of his wits he went for woe,
And eke thereto he is a prisonére
Perpetual, not only for a year.
Who couldë rhyme in English properly
His martyrdom? forsooth, it is not I;⁴²⁴
Therefore I pass as lightly as I may.

It fell that in the seventh year, in May
The thirdë night (as oldë bookës sayn,
That all this story tellen morë plain),
Were it by áventure or destiny
(As, when a thing is shapen⁴²⁵ it shall be),
That, soon after the midnight, Palamon
By helping of a friend brake his prisón,
And fled the city fast as he might go,
For he had given drink his gaoler so
Of a clary,⁴²⁶ made of a certain wine,
With narcotise and opie⁴²⁷ of Thebes fine,
That all the night, though that men would him shake,
The gaoler slept, he mightë not awake:
And thus he fled as fast as ever he may.
The night was short, and fastë by the day
That needës cast he must⁴²⁸ himself to hide.
And to a grovë fastë there beside
With dreadful foot then stalked Palamon.
For shortly this was his opinión,
That in the grove he would him hide all day,
And in the night then would he take his way
To Thebes-ward, his friendës for to pray
On Theseus to help him to warray.⁴²⁹
And shortly either he would lose his life,
Or winnen Emily unto his wife.
This is th' effect, and his intention plain.

Now will I turn to Arcita again,
That little wist how nighë was his care,
Till that Fortúne had brought him in the snare.
The busy lark, the messenger of day,
Saluteth in her song the morning gray;
And fiery Phoebus riseth up so bright,
That all the orient laugheth at the sight,
And with his streamës⁴³⁰ drieth in the greves⁴³¹
The silver droppës, hanging on the leaves;
And Arcite, that is in the court royál

With Theseus, his squier principal,
Is ris'n, and looketh on the merry day.
And for to do his óbservance to May,
Remembering the point⁴³² of his desire,
He on his courser, starting as the fire,
Is ridden to the fieldës him to play,
Out of the court, were it a mile or tway.
And to the grove, of which I have you told,
By áventure his way began to hold,
To makë him a garland of the greves,⁴³³
Were it of woodbine, or of hawthorn leaves,
And loud he sang against the sun so sheen.⁴³⁴
"O May, with all thy flowers and thy green,
Right welcome be thou, fairë freshë May,
I hope that I some green here gotten may."
And from his courser, with a lusty heart,
Into the grove full hastily he start,
And in a path he roamed up and down,
There as by áventure this Palamon
Was in a bush, that no man might him see,
For sore afeard of his death was he.
Nothing ne knew he that it was Arcite;
God wot he would have trowed it full lite.⁴³⁵
But sooth is said, gone since full many years,⁴³⁶
The field hath eyen, and the wood hath ears.
It is full fair a man to bear him even,⁴³⁷
For all day meeten men at unset steven.⁴³⁸
Full little wot Arcite of his felláw,
That was so nigh to hearken of his saw,⁴³⁹
For in the bush he sitteth now full still.
When that Arcite had roamed all his fill,
And sungen all the roundel⁴⁴⁰ lustily,
Into a study he fell suddenly,
As do those lovers in their quaintë gears,⁴⁴¹
Now in the crop, and now down in the breres,⁴⁴²
Now up, now down, as bucket in a well.

Right as the Friday, soothly for to tell,
Now shineth it, and now it raineth fast,
Right so can geary⁴⁴³ Venus overcast
The heartës of her folk, right as her day
Is gearful,⁴⁴⁴ right so changeth she array.
Seldom is Friday all the weekë like.
When Arcite had y-sung, he gan to sike,⁴⁴⁵
And sat him down withouten any more:
“Alas!” quoth he, “the day that I was bore!
How longë, Juno, through thy cruelty
Wilt thou warrayen⁴⁴⁶ Thebes the city?
Alas! y-brought is to confusion
The blood royál of Cadm’ and Amphion:
Of Cadmus, which that was the firstë man,
That Thebes built, or first the town began,
And of the city first was crowned king.
Of his lineáge am I, and his offspring
By very line, as of the stock royál;
And now I am so caitiff and so thrall,⁴⁴⁷
That he that is my mortal enemy,
I serve him as his squiër poorëly.
And yet doth Juno me well morë shame,
For I dare not beknow⁴⁴⁸ mine owen name,
But there as I was wont to hight Arcite,
Now hight I Philostrate, not worth a mite.
Alas! thou fell Mars, and alas! Juno,
Thus hath your ire our lineage all fordo’.⁴⁴⁹
Save only me, and wretched Palamon,
That Theseus martýreth in prisón.
And over all this, to slay me utterly,
Love hath his fiery dart so brenningly⁴⁵⁰
Y-sticked through my truë careful heart,
That shapen was my death erst than my shert.⁴⁵¹
Ye slay me with your eyen, Emily;
Ye be the causë wherefore that I die.
Of all the remnant of mine other care

Ne set I not the mountance of a tare,⁴⁵²
So that I could do aught to your pleasance.”
And with that word he fell down in a trance
A longë time; and afterward upstart
This Palamon, that thought thorough his heart
He felt a cold sword suddenly to glide:
For ire he quoke,⁴⁵³ no longer would he hide.
And when that he had heard Arcite’s tale,
As he were wood,⁴⁵⁴ with facë dead and pale,
He start him up out of the bushes thick,
And said: “False Arcita, false traitor wick’,⁴⁵⁵
Now art thou hent,⁴⁵⁶ that lov’st my lady so,
For whom that I have all this pain and woe,
And art my blood, and to my counsel sworn,
As I full oft have told thee herebeforn,
And hast bejaped⁴⁵⁷ here Duke Theseus,
And falsely changed hast thy namë thus;
I will be dead, or ellës thou shalt die.
Thou shalt not love my lady Emily,
But I will love her only and no mo’;
For I am Palamon thy mortal foe.
And though I have no weapon in this place,
But out of prison am astart⁴⁵⁸ by grace,
I dreadë⁴⁵⁹ not that either thou shalt die,
Or else thou shalt not loven Emily.
Choose which thou wilt, for thou shalt not astart.”

This Arcite then, with full dispiteous⁴⁶⁰ heart,
When he him knew, and had his talë heard,
As fierce as lion pulled out a sword,
And saidë thus; “By God that sitt’th above,
N’ere it⁴⁶¹ that thou art sick, and wood for love,
And eke that thou no weap’n hast in this place,
Thou should’st never out of this grovë pace,
That thou ne shouldest dien of mine hand.
For I defy the surety and the band,
Which that thou sayest I have made to thee.

What? very fool, think well that love is free;
And I will love her maugré⁴⁶² all thy might.
But, for thou art a worthy gentle knight,
And wilnest to darraine her by bataille,⁴⁶³
Have here my troth, to-morrow I will not fail,
Without weeting⁴⁶⁴ of any other wight,
That here I will be founden as a knight,
And bringë harness⁴⁶⁵ right enough for thee;
And choose the best, and leave the worst for me.
And meat and drinkë this night will I bring
Enough for thee, and clothes for thy bedding.
And if so be that thou my lady win,
And slay me in this wood that I am in,
Thou may'st well have thy lady as for me."
This Palamon answer'd, "I grant it thee."
And thus they be departed till the morrow,
When each of them hath laid his faith to borrow.⁴⁶⁶

O Cupid, out of allë charity!
O Regne⁴⁶⁷ that wilt no fellow have with thee!
Full sooth is said, that love nor lordëship
Will not, his thanks,⁴⁶⁸ have any fellowship.
Well finden that Arcite and Palamon.
Arcite is ridd anon unto the town,
And on the morrow, ere it were daylight,
Full privily two harness hath he dight,⁴⁶⁹
Both suffisant and meetë to darraine⁴⁷⁰
The battle in the field betwixt them twain.
And on his horse, alone as he was born,
He carrieth all this harness him befor;
And in the grove, at time and place y-set,
This Arcite and this Palamon be met.
Then changë gan the colour of their face;
Right as the hunter in the regne⁴⁷¹ of Thrace
That standeth at a gappë⁴⁷² with a spear
When hunted is the lion or the bear,
And heareth him come rushing in the greves,⁴⁷³

And breaking both the boughës and the leaves,
Thinketh, “Here comes my mortal enemy,
Withoutë fail, he must be dead or I;
For either I must slay him at the gap;
Or he must slay me, if that me mishap:”
So fared they, in changing of their hue
As far as either of them other knew.⁴⁷⁴
There was no good day, and no saluting,
But straight, withoutë wordës rehearsing,
Evereach of them holp to arm the other,
As friendly, as he were his owen brother.
And after that, with sharpë spearës strong
They foined⁴⁷⁵ each at other wonder long.
Thou mightest weenë,⁴⁷⁶ that this Palamon
In his fighting were as a wood⁴⁷⁷ lion,
And as a cruel tiger was Arcite:
As wildë boars gan they together smite,
That froth as white as foam, for irë wood.⁴⁷⁸
Up to the ancle fought they in their blood.
And in this wise I let them fighting dwell,
And forth I will of Theseus you tell.

The Destiny, minister general,
That executeth in the world o’er all
The purveyáncë,⁴⁷⁹ that God hath seen beforne;
So strong it is, that though the world had sworn
The contrary of a thing by yea or nay,
Yet some time it shall fallën on a day
That falleth not eft⁴⁸⁰ in a thousand year.
For certainly our appetitës here,
Be it of war, or peace, or hate, or love,
All is this ruled by the sight⁴⁸¹ above.
This mean I now by mighty Theseus,
That for to hunten is so desiróús—
And namëly⁴⁸² the greatë hart in May—
That in his bed there dawneth him no day
That he n’is clad, and ready for to ride

With hunt and horn, and houndës him beside.
For in his hunting hath he such delight,
That it is all his joy and appetite
To be himself the greatë hartë's bane;⁴⁸³
For after Mars he serveth now Diane.
Clear was the day, as I have told ere this,
And Theseus, with allë joy and bliss,
With his Hippolyta, the fairë queen,
And Emily, y-clothed all in green,
On hunting be they ridden royally.
And to the grove, that stood there fastë by,
In which there was an hart, as men him told,
Duke Theseus the straightë way doth hold,
And to the laund⁴⁸⁴ he rideth him full right,
There was the hart y-wont to have his flight,
And over a brook, and so forth on his way.
This Duke will have a course at him or tway
With houndës, such as him lust⁴⁸⁵ to command.
And when this Duke was comë to the laund,
Under the sun he looked, and anon
He was ware of Arcite and Palamon,
That foughtë breme,⁴⁸⁶ as it were bullës two.
The brightë swordës wentë to and fro
So hideously, that with the leastë stroke
It seemed that it wouldë fell an oak,
But what they werë, nothing yet he wote.
This Duke his courser with his spurrës smote,
And at a start⁴⁸⁷ he was betwixt them two,
And pulled out a sword and cried, "Ho!
No more, on pain of losing of your head.
By mighty Mars, he shall anon be dead
That smiteth any stroke, that I may see!
But tell to me what mister⁴⁸⁸ men ye be,
That be so hardy for to fightë here
Withoutë judge or other officer,
As though it were in listës⁴⁸⁹ royally."

This Palamon answered hastily,
And saidë: "Sir, what needeth wordës mo'?
We have the death deserved bothë two,
Two woful wretches be we, and caitives,
That be accumbered⁴⁹⁰ of our own lives,
And as thou art a rightful lord and judge,
So give us neither mercy nor refuge.
And slay me first, for saintë charity,
But slay my fellow eke as well as me.
Or slay him first; for, though thou know it lite,⁴⁹¹
This is thy mortal foe, this is Arcite,
That from thy land is banisht on his head,
For which he hath deserved to be dead.
For this is he that came unto thy gate
And saidë, that he hightë Philostrate.
Thus hath he japed⁴⁹² thee full many year,
And thou hast made of him thy chief esquiér;
And this is he, that loveth Emily.
For since the day is come that I shall die
I makë plainly⁴⁹³ my confessiön,
That I am thilkë⁴⁹⁴ woful Palamon,
That hath thy prison broken wickedly.
I am thy mortal foe, and it am I
That so hot loveth Emily the bright,
That I would die here present in her sight.
Therefore I askë death and my jewise.⁴⁹⁵
But slay my fellow eke in the same wise,
For both we have deserved to be slain."

This worthy Duke answér'd anon again,
And said, "This is a short conclusiön.
Your own mouth, by your own confessiön
Hath damned you, and I will it record;
It needeth not to pain you with the cord;
Ye shall be dead, by mighty Mars the Red."⁴⁹⁶

The queen anon for very womanhead
Began to weep, and so did Emily,

And all the ladies in the company.
Great pity was it as it thought them all,
That ever such a chance should befall,
For gentle men they were, of great estate,
And nothing but for love was this debate;
They saw their bloody woundes wide and sore,
And cried all at once, both less and more,
“Have mercy, Lord, upon us women all.”
And on their bare knees adown they fall,
And would have kiss’d his feet there as he stood,
Till at the last aslaked was his mood⁴⁹⁷
(For pity runneth soon in gentle heart);
And though at first for ire he quoke and start,
He hath consider’d shortly in a clause
The trespass of them both, and eke the cause:
And although that his ire their guilt accused,
Yet in his reason he them both excused;
As thus; he thoughte well that every man
Will help himself in love if that he can,
And eke deliver himself out of prison.
And eke his hearte had compassion
Of women, for they wepten ever-in-one:⁴⁹⁸
And in his gentle heart he thought anon,
And soft unto himself he said: “Fie
Upon a lord that will have no mercy,
But be a lion both in word and deed,
To them that be in repentance and dread,
As well as to a proud despiteous⁴⁹⁹ man
That will maintainē what he first began.
That lord hath little of discretión,
That in such case can no divisió: ⁵⁰⁰
But weigheth pride and humbless after one.”⁵⁰¹
And shortly, when his ire is thus agone,
He gan to look on them with eyen light,⁵⁰²
And spake these same wordes all on height.⁵⁰³
“The god of love, ah! *benedicite*,⁵⁰⁴

How mighty and how great a lord is he!
Against his might there gainë⁵⁰⁵ none obstáculos,
He may be call'd a god for his mirácles.
For he can maken at his owen guise
Of every heart, as that him list devise.
Lo here this Arcite, and this Palamon,
That quietly were out of my prisón,
And might have lived in Thebes royally,
And weet⁵⁰⁶ I am their mortal enemy,
And that their death li'th in my might also,
And yet hath love, maugré their eyen two,⁵⁰⁷
Y-brought them hither bothë for to die.
Now look ye, is not this an high folly?
Who may not be a fool, if but he love?
Behold, for Goddë's sake that sits above,
See how they bleed! be they not well array'd?
Thus hath their lord, the god of love, them paid
Their wages and their fees for their servíce;
And yet they weenë for to be full wise,
That servë love, for aught that may befall.
But this is yet the bestë game⁵⁰⁸ of all,
That she, for whom they have this jealousy,
Can them therefor as muchel thank as me.
She wot no more of all this hotë fare,⁵⁰⁹
By God, than wot a cuckoo or an hare.
But all must be assayed hot or cold;
A man must be a fool, or young or old;
I wot it by myself full yore agone:⁵¹⁰
For in my time a servant was I one.
And therefore since I know of lovë's pain,
And wot how sore it can a man distraín,⁵¹¹
As he that oft hath been caught in his las,⁵¹²
I you forgivë wholly this trespáß,
At réquest of the queen that kneeleth here,
And eke of Emily, my sister dear.
And ye shall both anon unto me swear,

That never more ye shall my country dere,⁵¹³
Nor makë war upon me night nor day,
But be my friends in allë that ye may.
I you forgive this trespass every deal.”⁵¹⁴
And they him sware his asking⁵¹⁵ fair and well,
And him of lordship and of mercy pray’d,
And he them granted grace, and thus he said:
 “To speak of royal lineage and richëss,
Though that she were a queen or a princess,
Each of you both is worthy doubtëless
To weddë when time is; but natheless
I speak as for my sister Emily,
For whom ye have this strife and jealousy,
Ye wot yourselves, she may not wed the two
At once, although ye fight for evermo’:
But one of you, all be him loth or lief,⁵¹⁶
He must go pipe into an ivy leaf.”⁵¹⁷
This is to say, she may not have you both,
All be ye never so jealous, nor so wroth.
And therefore I you put in this degree,
That each of you shall have his destiny
As him is shape;⁵¹⁸ and hearken in what wise;
Lo hear your end of that I shall devise.
My will is this, for plain conclusiön
Withouten any replicatiön,⁵¹⁹
If that you liketh, take it for the best,
That evereach of you shall go where him lest,⁵²⁰
Freely withoutë ransom or dangér;
And this day fifty weekës, farre ne nerre,⁵²¹
Evereach of you shall bring an hundred knights,
Armed for listës up at allë rights
All ready to darraine⁵²² her by bataille,
And this behete⁵²³ I you withoutë fail
Upon my troth, and as I am a knight,
That whether of you bothë that hath might,
That is to say, that whether he or thou

May with his hundred, as I spake of now,
Slay his contráry, or out of listës drive,
Him shall I given Emily to wive,
To whom that fortune gives so fair a grace.
The listës shall I make here in this place.
And God so wisly on my soulë rue,⁵²⁴
As I shall even judgë be and true.
Ye shall none other endë with me maken
Than one of you shallë be dead or taken.
And if you thinketh this is well y-said,
Say your advice,⁵²⁵ and hold yourselves apaid.⁵²⁶
This is your end, and your conclusión.”
Who looketh lightly now but Palamon?
Who springeth up for joyë but Arcite?
Who could it tell, or who could it indite,
The joyë that is maked in the place
When Theseus hath done so fair a grace?
But down on knees went every manner⁵²⁷ wight,
And thanked him with all their heartës’ might,
And namëly⁵²⁸ these Thebans oftë sithe.⁵²⁹
And thus with good hope and with heartë blithe
They take their leave, and homeward gan they ride
To Thebes-ward, with his old wallës wide.
I trow men wouldë deem it negligence,
If I forgot to tellë the dispence⁵³⁰
Of Theseus, that went so busily
To maken up the listës royally,
That such a noble theatre as it was,
I dare well say, in all this world there n’as.⁵³¹
The circuít a milë was about,
Walled of stone, and ditched all without.
Round was the shape, in manner of compáss,
Full of degrees,⁵³² the height of sixty pas,⁵³³
That when a man was set on one degree
He letted⁵³⁴ not his fellow for to see.
Eastward there stood a gate of marble white,

Westward right such another opposite.
And, shortly to concludë, such a place
Was never on earth made in so little space,
For in the land there was no craftës-man,
That geometry or arsmetrikë can,⁵³⁵
Nor pourtrayor,⁵³⁶ nor carver of imágenes,
That Theseus ne gave him meat and wages
The theatre to make and to devise.
And for to do his rite and sacrifice
He eastward hath upon the gate above,
In worship of Venus, goddess of love,
Done⁵³⁷ make an altar and an oratory;
And westward, in the mind and in memory
Of Mars, he maked hath right such another,
That costë largely of gold a fother.⁵³⁸
And northward, in a turret on the wall,
Of alabaster white and red corál
An oratory richë for to see,
In worship of Diane of chastity,
Hath Theseus done⁵³⁹ work in noble wise.
But yet had I forgotten to devise⁵⁴⁰
The noble carving, and the portraitures,
The shape, the countenance of the figúres
That weren in there oratories three.
First in the temple of Venus may'st thou see
Wrought on the wall, full piteous to behold,
The broken sleepës, and the sikës⁵⁴¹ cold,
The sacred tearës, and the waimentings,⁵⁴²
The fiery strokës of the desirings,
That Lovë's servants in this life endure;
The oathës, that their covenants assure.
Pleasance and Hope, Desire, Foolhardiness,
Beauty and Youth, and Bawdry and Richéss,
Charms and Sorc'ry, Leasings⁵⁴³ and Flattery,
Dispencë, Business, and Jealousy,
That wore of yellow goldës⁵⁴⁴ a garland,

And had a cuckoo sitting on her hand,
Feasts, instruments, and carolës and dances,
Lust and array, and all the circumstánces
Of Love, which I reckon'd and reckon shall
In order, werë painted on the wall,
And more than I can make of mentión.
For soothly all the mount of Citheron,⁵⁴⁵
Where Venus hath her principal dwelling,
Was showed on the wall in pourtraying,
With all the garden, and the lustiness.⁵⁴⁶
Nor was forgot the porter Idleness,
Nor Narcissus the fair of yore agone,⁵⁴⁷
Nor yet the folly of King Solomon,
Nor yet the greatë strength of Hercules,
Th' enchantments of Medea and Circés,
Nor of Turnus the hardy fierce couráge,
The richë Croesus caitif in serváge.⁵⁴⁸
Thus may ye see, that wisdom nor richéss,
Beauty, nor sleight, nor strength, nor hardiness,
Ne may with Venus holdë champartie,⁵⁴⁹
For as her listë the world may she gie.⁵⁵⁰
Lo, all these folk so caught were in her las⁵⁵¹
Till they for woe full often said, Alas!
Sufficë these ensamples one or two,
Although I could reckon a thousand mo'.

The statue of Venus, glorious to see
Was naked floating in the largë sea,
And from the navel down all cover'd was
With wavës green, and bright as any glass.
A citole⁵⁵² in her right hand haddë she,
And on her head, full seemly for to see,
A rosë garland fresh, and well smelling,
Above her head her dovës flickering.
Before her stood her sonë Cupido,
Upon his shoulders wingës had he two;
And blind he was, as it is often seen;

A bow he bare, and arrows bright and keen.
Why should I not as well eke tell you all
The portraiture, that was upon the wall
Within the temple of mighty Mars the Red?
All painted was the wall in length and brede⁵⁵³
Like to the estres⁵⁵⁴ of the grisly place
That hight the great temple of Mars in Thrace,
In thilkë⁵⁵⁵ cold and frosty región,
There as Mars hath his sovereign mansion.
First on the wall was painted a forést,
In which there dwelled neither man nor beast,
With knotty gnarry⁵⁵⁶ barren treës old
Of stubbës sharp and hideous to behold;
In which there ran a rumble and a sough,⁵⁵⁷
As though a storm should bursten every bough:
And downward from an hill under a bent,⁵⁵⁸
There stood the temple of Mars Armipotent,
Wrought all of burnish'd steel, of which th' entry
Was long and strait, and ghastly for to see.
And thereout came a rage and such a vise,⁵⁵⁹
That it made all the gatës for to rise.
The northern light in at the doorë shone,
For window on the wallë was there none
Through which men mighten any light discern.
The doors were all of adamant etern,
Y-clenched overthwart and endëlong⁵⁶⁰
With iron tough, and, for to make it strong,
Every pillar the temple to sustain
Was tunnë-great,⁵⁶¹ of iron bright and sheen.
There saw I first the dark imagining
Of felony, and all the compassing;
The cruel ire, as red as any glede,⁵⁶²
The pickëpurse,⁵⁶³ and eke the palë dread;
The smiler with the knife under the cloak,
The shepen⁵⁶⁴ burning with the blackë smoke;
The treason of the murd'ring in the bed,

The open war, with woundës all be-bled;
Conteke⁵⁶⁵ with bloody knife, and sharp menace.
All full of chirking⁵⁶⁶ was that sorry place.
The slayer of himself eke saw I there,
His heartë-blood had bathed all his hair:
The nail y-driven in the shode⁵⁶⁷ at night,
The coldë death, with mouth gaping upright.
Amiddës of the temple sat Mischance,
With discomfort and sorry countenance;
Eke saw I Woodness⁵⁶⁸ laughing in his rage,
Armed Complaint, Outhees,⁵⁶⁹ and fierce Outrage;
The carrain⁵⁷⁰ in the bush, with throat y-curve,⁵⁷¹
A thousand slain, and not of qualm y-storve;⁵⁷²
The tyrant, with the prey by force y-reft;
The town destroy'd, that there was nothing left.
Yet saw I brent the shippës hoppësteres,⁵⁷³
The hunter strangled with the wildë bears:
The sow freting⁵⁷⁴ the child right in the cradle;
The cook scalded, for all his longë ladle.
Nor was forgot, by th' infortune of Mart⁵⁷⁵
The carter overridden with his cart;
Under the wheel full low he lay adown.
There were also of Mars' division,
The armourer, the bowyer,⁵⁷⁶ and the smith,
That forgeth sharpë swordës on his stith.⁵⁷⁷
And all above depainted in a tower
Saw I Conquest, sitting in great honoúr,
With thilkë⁵⁷⁸ sharpë sword over his head
Hanging by a subtle y-twined thread.
Painted the slaughter was of Julius,⁵⁷⁹
Of cruel Nero, and Antonius:
Although at that time they were yet unborn,
Yet was their death depainted there beforne,
By menacing of Mars, right by figúre,
So was it showed in that portraitúre,

As is depainted in the stars above,
Who shall be slain, or ellës dead for love.
Sufficeth one ensample in stories old,
I may not reckon them all, though I wo'ld.

The statue of Mars upon a cartë⁵⁸⁰ stood
Armed, and looked grim as he were wood,⁵⁸¹
And over his head there shonë two figúres
Of starrës, that be cleped in scriptures,
That one Puella, that other Rubeus.⁵⁸²
This god of armës was arrayed thus:
A wolf there stood before him at his feet
With eyen red, and of a man he eat:
With subtle pencil painted was this story,
In redouting⁵⁸³ of Mars and of his glory.

Now to the temple of Dian the chaste
As shortly as I can I will me haste,
To tellë you all the descriptioun.
Depainted be the wallës up and down
Of hunting and of shamefast chastity.
There saw I how woful Calistope,⁵⁸⁴
When that Dian aggrieved was with her,
Was turned from a woman till a bear,
And after was she made the lodëstar:⁵⁸⁵
Thus was it painted, I can say no far,⁵⁸⁶
Her son is eke a star as men may see.
There saw I Danë⁵⁸⁷ turn'd into a tree,
I meanë not the goddess Dianë,
But Peneus' daughter, which that hight Danë.
There saw I Actaeon an hart y-maked,⁵⁸⁸
For vengeance that he saw Dian all naked:
I saw how that his houndës have him caught,
And freten⁵⁸⁹ him, for that they knew him not.
Yet painted was, a little farthermore
How Atalanta hunted the wild boar,
And Meleager, and many other mo',
For which Diana wrought them care and woe.

There saw I many another wondrous story,
The which me list not drawn to memory.
This goddess on an hart full high was set,⁵⁹⁰
With smallë houndës all about her feet,
And underneath her feet she had a moon,
Waxing it was, and shouldë wanë soon.
In gaudy green her statue clothed was,
With bow in hand, and arrows in a case.⁵⁹¹
Her eyen castë she full low adown,
Where Pluto hath his darkë regioun.
A woman travailing was her befor,
But, for her child so longë was unborn,
Full piteously Lucina⁵⁹² gan she call,
And saidë; "Help, for thou may'st best of all."
Well could he paintë lifelike that it wrought;
With many a florin he the hues had bought.
Now be these listës made, and Theseus,
That at his greatë cost arrayed thus
The temples, and the theatre every deal,⁵⁹³
When it was done, him liked wonder well.
But stint⁵⁹⁴ I will of Theseus a lite,⁵⁹⁵
And speak of Palamon and of Arcite.
The day approacheth of their returning,
That evereach an hundred knights should bring,
The battle to darraigne⁵⁹⁶ as I you told;
And to Athens, their covenant to hold,
Hath ev'reach of them brought an hundred knights,
Well armed for the war at allë rights.
And sickerly⁵⁹⁷ there trowed⁵⁹⁸ many a man,
That never, sithen⁵⁹⁹ that the world began,
For to spoken of knighthood of their hand,
As far as God hath maked sea and land,
Was, of so few, so noble a company.⁶⁰⁰
For every wight that loved chivalry,
And would, his thankës,⁶⁰¹ have a passant⁶⁰² name,
Had prayed, that he might be of that game,

And well was him, that thereto chosen was.
For if there fell to-morrow such a case,
Ye knowë well, that every lusty knight,
That loveth par amour, and hath his might,
Were it in Engleland, or ellëswhere,
They would, their thankës, willen to be there,
T' fight for a lady; *benedicite*,
It were a lusty⁶⁰³ sightë for to see.
And right so fared they with Palamon;
With him there wentë knightës many one.
Some will be armed in an habergeon,
And in a breastplate, and in a gipon;⁶⁰⁴
And some will have a pair of platës⁶⁰⁵ large;
And some will have a Prussë⁶⁰⁶ shield, or targe;
Some will be armed on their leggës weel;⁶⁰⁷
Some have an axe, and some a mace of steel.
There is no newë guise,⁶⁰⁸ but it was old.
Armed they weren, as I have you told,
Evereach after his opinión.

There may'st thou see coming with Palamon
Licurgus himself, the great king of Thrace:
Black was his beard, and manly was his face.
The circles of his eyen in his head
They glowed betwixtë yellow and red,
And like a griffin looked he about,
With kemped⁶⁰⁹ hairës on his browës stout;
His limbs were great, his brawns were hard and strong,
His shoulders broad, his armës round and long.
And as the guise⁶¹⁰ was in his country,
Full high upon a car of gold stood he,
With fourë whitë bullës in the trace.
Instead of coat-armour on his harness,
With yellow nails, and bright as any gold,
He had a bearë's skin, coal-black for old.⁶¹¹
His long hair was y-kempt behind his back,
As any raven's feather it shone for black.

A wreath of gold arm-great,⁶¹² of hugë weight,
Upon his head sate, full of stonës bright,
Of finë rubies and clear diamánts.

About his car there wentë white alauns,⁶¹³
Twenty and more, as great as any steer,
To hunt the lion or the wildë bear,
And follow'd him, with muzzle fast y-bound,
Collars of gold, and torettes⁶¹⁴ filed round.
An hundred lordës had he in his rout,⁶¹⁵
Armed full well, with heartës stern and stout.

With Arcita, in stories as men find,
The great Emetrius the king of Ind,
Upon a steedë bay,⁶¹⁶ trapped in steel,
Cover'd with cloth of gold diápred⁶¹⁷ well,
Came riding like the god of armës, Mars.
His coat-armoúr was of a cloth of Tars,⁶¹⁸
Couched⁶¹⁹ with pearlës white and round and great.
His saddle was of burnish'd gold new beat;
A mantëlet on his shoulders hanging
Bretful⁶²⁰ of rubies red, as fire sparkling.
His crispë hair like ringës was y-run,⁶²¹
And that was yellow, glittering as the sun.
His nose was high, his eyen bright citrine,⁶²²
His lips were round, his colour was sanguine,
A fewë fracknes in his face y-sprent,⁶²³
Betwixt yellow and black somedeal y-ment,⁶²⁴
And as a lion he his looking cast.⁶²⁵
Of five and twenty year his age I cast.⁶²⁶
His beard was well begunnen for to spring;
His voice was as a trumpet thundering.
Upon his head he wore of laurel green
A garland fresh and lusty to be seen;
Upon his hand he bare, for his delight,
An eagle tame, as any lily white.
An hundred lordës had he with him there,

All armed, save their heads, in all their gear,
Full richly in all manner things.
For trust ye well, that earls, dukes, and kings
Were gather'd in this noble company,
For love, and for increase of chivalry.
About this king there ran on every part
Full many a tame lion and leopard.
And in this wise these lords all and some⁶²⁷
Be on the Sunday to the city come
About prime,⁶²⁸ and in the town alight.

This Theseus, this Duke, this worthy knight,
When he had brought them into his city,
And inned⁶²⁹ them, ev' reach at his degree,
He feasteth them, and doth so great labour
To easen them,⁶³⁰ and do them all honour,
That yet men ween⁶³¹ that no man's wit
Of none estate could amend⁶³² it.
The minstrelsy, the service at the feast,
The great gifts to the most and least,
The rich array of Theseus' palace,
Nor who sate first or last upon the dais,⁶³³
What ladies fairest be, or best dancing,
Or which of them can carol best or sing,
Or who most feelingly speaketh of love;
What hawks sitten on the perch above,
What hounds ligger⁶³⁴ on the floor adown,
Of all this now make I no mention;
But of th' effect; that thinketh me the best;
Now comes the point, and hearken if you lest.⁶³⁵

The Sunday night, ere day began to spring,
When Palamon the lark heard sing,
Although it were not day by hours two,
Yet sang the lark, and Palamon right thro⁶³⁶
With holy heart, and with an high courage,
Arose, to wend⁶³⁷ on his pilgrimage
Unto the blissful Cithera benign,

I meanë Venus, honourable and digne.⁶³⁸
And in her hour⁶³⁹ he walketh forth a pace
Unto the listës, where her temple was,
And down he kneeleth, and with humble cheer⁶⁴⁰
And heartë sore, he said as ye shall hear.

“Fairest of fair, O lady mine Venus,
Daughter to Jove, and spouse of Vulcanus,
Thou gladder of the mount of Citheron!⁶⁴¹
For thilkë⁶⁴² love thou haddest to Adon⁶⁴³
Have pity on my bitter tearës’ smart,
And take mine humble prayer to thine heart.
Alas! I havë no languáge to tell
Th’ effectë, nor the torment of mine hell;
Mine heartë may mine harmës not betray;
I am so cónfused, that I cannot say.
But mercy, lady bright, that knowest well
My thought, and seest what harm that I feel.
Consider all this, and rue upon⁶⁴⁴ my sore,
As wisly⁶⁴⁵ as I shall for evermore
Enforce my might, thy true servant to be,
And holdë war alway with chastity:
That make I mine avow,⁶⁴⁶ so ye me help.
I keepë not of armës for to yelp,⁶⁴⁷
Nor ask I not to-morrow to have victóry,
Nor rénown in this case, nor vainë glory
Of prize of armës,⁶⁴⁸ blowing up and down,
But I would have fully possessioun
Of Emily, and die in her service;
Find thou the manner how, and in what wise.
I reckë not but⁶⁴⁹ it may better be
To have vict’ry of them, or they of me,
So that I have my lady in mine arms.
For though so be that Mars is god of arms,
Your virtue is so great in heaven above,
That, if you list, I shall well have my love.
Thy temple will I worship evermo’,

And on thine altar, where I ride or go,
I will do sacrifice, and firës bete.⁶⁵⁰
And if ye will not so, my lady sweet,
Then pray I you, to-morrow with a spear
That Arcita me through the heartë bear.
Then reck I not, when I have lost my life,
Though that Arcita win her to his wife.
This is th' effect and end of my prayère—
Give me my love, thou blissful lady dear.”
When th' orison was done of Palamon,
His sacrifice he did, and that anon,
Full piteously, with allë circumstances,
All tell I not as now⁶⁵¹ his observánces.
But at the last the statue of Venus shook,
And made a signë, whereby that he took⁶⁵²
That his prayér accepted was that day.
For though the signë shewed a delay,⁶⁵³
Yet wist he well that granted was his boon;
And with glad heart he went him home full soon.

The third hour unequál⁶⁵⁴ that Palamon
Began to Venus' temple for to gon,
Up rose the sun, and up rose Emily,
And to the temple of Dian gan hie.
Her maidens, that she thither with her lad,⁶⁵⁵
Full readily with them the fire they had,
Th' incense, the clothës, and the remnant all
That to the sacrifice belongë shall,
The hornës full of mead, as was the guise;
There lacked nought to do her sacrifice.
Smoking⁶⁵⁶ the temple full of clothës fair,
This Emily with heartë debonnair⁶⁵⁷
Her body wash'd with water of a well.
But how she did her rite I dare not tell;
But⁶⁵⁸ it be any thing in general;
And yet it were a game⁶⁵⁹ to hearen all;
To him that meaneth well it were no charge:

But it is good a man to be at large.⁶⁶⁰
Her bright hair combed was, untressed all.
A coronet of green oak cerrial⁶⁶¹
Upon her head was set full fair and meet.
Two firës on the altar gan she bete,
And did her thingës, as men may behold
In Stace⁶⁶² of Thebes, and these bookës old.
When kindled was the fire, with piteous cheer
Unto Dian she spake as ye may hear.

“O chastë goddess of the woodës green,
To whom both heav’n and earth and sea is seen,
Queen of the realm of Pluto dark and low,
Goddess of maidens, that mine heart hast know
Full many a year, and wost⁶⁶³ what I desire,
To keep me from the vengeance of thine ire,
That Actaeon aboughtë⁶⁶⁴ cruelly:
Chastë goddëss, well wottest thou that I
Desire to be a maiden all my life,
Nor never will I be no love nor wife.
I am, thou wost,⁶⁶⁵ yet of thy company,
A maid, and love hunting and ventry,⁶⁶⁶
And for to walken in the woodës wild,
And not to be a wife, and be with child.
Nought will I know the company of man.
Now help me, lady, since ye may and can,
For those three formës⁶⁶⁷ that thou hast in thee.
And Palamon, that hath such love to me,
And eke Arcite, that loveth me so sore,
This grace I prayë thee withoutë more,
As sendë love and peace betwixt them two:
And from me turn away their heartës so,
That all their hotë love, and their desire,
And all their busy torment, and their fire,
Be queint,⁶⁶⁸ or turn’d into another place.
And if so be thou wilt do me no grace,
Or if my destiny be shapen so

That I shall needës have one of them two,
So send me him that most desireth me.
Behold, goddess of cleanë chastity,
The bitter tears that on my cheekës fall.
Since thou art maid, and keeper of us all,
My maidenhead thou keep and well conserve,
And, while I live, a maid I will thee serve.”

The firës burn upon the altar clear,
While Emily was thus in her prayére:
But suddenly she saw a sightë quaint.⁶⁶⁹
For right anon one of the firës queint
And quick’d⁶⁷⁰ again, and after that anon
That other fire was queint, and all agone:
And as it queint, it made a whisteling,
As doth a brandë wet in its burning.
And at the brandës end outran anon
As it were bloody droppës many one:
For which so sore aghast was Emily,
That she was well-nigh mad, and gan to cry,
For she ne wistë what it signified;
But onëly for fearë thus she cried,
And wept, that it was pity for to hear.
And therewithal Diana gan appear
With bow in hand, right as an hunteress,
And saidë; “Daughter, stint⁶⁷¹ thine heaviness.
Among the goddës high it is affirm’d,
And by eternal word writ and confirm’d,
Thou shalt be wedded unto one of tho⁶⁷²
That have for thee so muchë care and woe:
But unto which of them I may not tell.
Farewell, for here I may no longer dwell.
The firës which that on mine altar brenn,⁶⁷³
Shall thee declaren, ere that thou go henne,⁶⁷⁴
Thine áventure of love, as in this case.”
And with that word, the arrows in the case⁶⁷⁵
Of the goddess did clatter fast and ring,

And forth she went, and made a vanishing,
For which this Emily astonied was,
And saidë; “What amounteth this, [676](#) alas!
I put me under thy protection,
Diane, and in thy disposition.”

And home she went anon the nextë [677](#) way.
This is th’ effect, there is no more to say.

The nextë hour of Mars follówing this
Arcite to the temple walked is
Of fiercë Mars, to do his sacrifice
With all the ritës of his pagan guise.
With piteous [678](#) heart and high devotiön.
Right thus to Mars he said his orison.

“O strongë god, that in the regnës [679](#) cold
Of Thracë honoured art, and lord y-hold, [680](#)
And hast in every regne, and every land
Of armës all the bridle in thine hand,

And them fortunest as thee list devise, [681](#)
Accept of me my piteous sacrifice.

If so be that my youthë may deserve,
And that my might be worthy for to serve
Thy godhead, that I may be one of thine,
Then pray I thee to rue upon my pine, [682](#)

For thilkë [683](#) pain, and thilkë hotë fire,
In which thou whilom burned’st for desire
Whennë that thou usedest [684](#) the beauty
Of fairë youngë Venus, fresh and free,
And haddest her in armës at thy will:

And though thee onës on a time misfill, [685](#)
When Vulcanus had caught thee in his las, [686](#)

And found thee ligging [687](#) by his wife, alas!
For thilkë sorrow that was in thine heart,

Have ruth [688](#) as well upon my painë’s smart.

I am young and unconning, [689](#) as thou know’st,
And, as I trow, [690](#) with love offended most,

That e'er was any living creature:
For she, that doth⁶⁹¹ me all this woe endure,
Ne recketh ne'er whether I sink or fleet.⁶⁹²
And well I wot, ere she me mercy hete,⁶⁹³
I must with strengthë win her in the place:
And well I wot, withoutë help or grace
Of thee, ne may my strengthë not avail:
Then help me, lord, to-morr'w in my bataille,
For thilkë fire that whilom burned thee,
As well as this fire that now burneth me;
And do⁶⁹⁴ that I to-morr'w may have victóry.
Mine be the travail, all thine be the glory.
Thy sovereign temple will I most honoúr
Of any place, and alway most laboúr
In thy pleasance and in thy craftës strong.
And in thy temple I will my banner hong,⁶⁹⁵
And all the armës of my company,
And evermore, until that day I die,
Eternal fire I will before thee find.
And eke to this my vow I will me bind:
My beard, my hair that hangeth long adown,
That never yet hath felt offensiön⁶⁹⁶
Of razor nor of shears, I will thee give,
And be thy truë servant while I live.
Now, lord, have ruth upon my sorrows sore,
Give me the victory, I ask no more."

The prayer stint⁶⁹⁷ of Arcita the strong,
The ringës on the temple door that hong,
And eke the doorës, clattered full fast,
Of which Arcita somewhat was aghast.
The firës burn'd upon the altar bright,
That it gan all the temple for to light;
A sweetë smell anon the ground up gaf,⁶⁹⁸
And Arcita anon his hand up haf,⁶⁹⁹
And more incénse into the fire he cast,
With other ritës more and at the last

The statue of Mars began his hauberk ring;
And with that sound he heard a murmuring
Full low and dim, that saidë thus, "Victóry."
For which he gave to Mars honour and glory.
And thus with joy, and hopë well to fare,
Arcite anon unto his inn doth fare.

As fain⁷⁰⁰ as fowl is of the brightë sun.

And right anon such strife there is begun
For thilkë granting,⁷⁰¹ in the heav'n above,
Betwixtë Venus the goddëss of love,
And Mars the sternë god armipotent,
That Jupiter was busy it to stent:⁷⁰²
Till that the palë Saturnus the cold,⁷⁰³
That knew so many of adventures old,
Found in his old experience such an art,
That he full soon hath pleased every part.
As sooth is said, eld⁷⁰⁴ hath great advantage,
In eld is bothë wisdom and uságe:⁷⁰⁵
Men may the old out-run, but not out-rede.⁷⁰⁶
Saturn anon, to stint the strife and drede,
Albeit that it is against his kind,
Of all this strife gan a remédy find.

"My dearë daughter Venus," quoth Saturn,
"My course,⁷⁰⁷ that hath so widë for to turn,
Hath morë power than wot any man.
Mine is the drowning in the sea so wan;
Mine is the prison in the darkë cote,⁷⁰⁸
Mine the strangling and hanging by the throat,
The murmur, and the churlish rebelling,
The groyning,⁷⁰⁹ and the privy poisoning.
I do vengeance and plein⁷¹⁰ correctiön,
I dwell in the sign of the liön.
Mine is the ruin of the highë halls,
The falling of the towers and the walls
Upon the miner or the carpenter:
I slew Samson in shaking the pillar:

Mine also be the maladiës cold,
The darkë treasons, and the castës⁷¹¹ old:
My looking is the father of pestilence.
Now weep no more, I shall do diligence
That Palamon, that is thine owen knight,
Shall have his lady, as thou hast him hight.⁷¹²
Though Mars shall help his knight, yet natheless
Betwixtë you there must sometime be peace:
All be ye not of one complexiön,
That each day causeth such divisiön,
I am thine aye!,⁷¹³ ready at thy will;
Weep now no more, I shall thy lust⁷¹⁴ fulfil.”
Now will I stenten⁷¹⁵ of the gods above,
Of Mars, and of Venus, goddess of love,
And tellë you as plainly as I can
The great effect, for which that I began.

Great was the feast in Athens thilkë⁷¹⁶ day;
And eke the lusty season of that May
Made every wight to be in such pleasance,
That all that Monday jousten they and dance,
And spenden it in Venus’ high servíce.
But by the causë that they shouldë rise
Early a-morrow for to see that fight,
Unto their restë wentë they at night.
And on the morrow, when the day gan spring,
Of horse and harness⁷¹⁷ noise and clattering
There was in the hostelries all about:
And to the palace rode there many a rout⁷¹⁸
Of lordës, upon steedës and palfreys.
There mayst thou see devising of harness
So uncouth⁷¹⁹ and so rich, and wrought so weel
Of goldsmithry, of brouding,⁷²⁰ and of steel;
The shieldës bright, the testers,⁷²¹ and trappures;⁷²²
Gold-hewen helmets, hauberks, coat-armures;
Lordës in parements⁷²³ on their coursërs,
Knightës of retinue, and eke squiërs,

Nailing the spears, and helmës buckëling,
Gniding⁷²⁴ of shieldës, with lainers⁷²⁵ lacing;
There as need is, they werë nothing idle:
The foamy steeds upon the golden bridle
Gnawing, and fast the armourers also
With file and hammer pricking to and fro;
Yeomen on foot, and knavës⁷²⁶ many one
With shortë stavës, thick as they may gon;⁷²⁷
Pipës, trumpets, nakéres,⁷²⁸ and clariouns,
That in the battle blowë bloody souns;
The palace full of people up and down,
There three, there ten, holding their questioun,⁷²⁹
Divining⁷³⁰ of these Theban knightës two.
Some saiden thus, some said it shall he so;
Some helden with him with the blackë beard,
Some with the ballëd,⁷³¹ some with the thick-hair'd;
Some said he lookëd grim, and wouldë fight:
He had a sparth⁷³² of twenty pound of weight.
Thus was the hallë full of divining⁷³³
Long after that the sunnë gan up spring.
The great Theseus that of his sleep is waked
With minstrelsy, and noisë that was maked,
Held yet the chamber of his palace rich,
Till that the Theban knightës both y-lich⁷³⁴
Honoúred were, and to the palace fet.⁷³⁵
Duke Theseus is at a window set,
Array'd right as he were a god in throne:
The people presseth thitherward full soon
Him for to see, and do him reverence,
And eke to hearken his hest⁷³⁶ and his sentence.⁷³⁷
An herald on a scaffold made an O,⁷³⁸
Till the noise of the people was y-do:⁷³⁹
And when he saw the people of noise all still,
Thus shewed he the mighty Dukë's will.

“The lord hath of his high discretión

Considered that it were destruction
To gentle blood, to fighten in the guise
Of mortal battle now in this emprise:
Wherefore to shapë⁷⁴⁰ that they shall not die,
He will his firstë purpose modify.
No man therefore, on pain of loss of life,
No manner⁷⁴¹ shot, nor poleaxe, nor short knife
Into the lists shall send, or thither bring.
Nor short sword for to stick with point biting
No man shall draw, nor bear it by his side.
And no man shall unto his fellow ride
But one course, with a sharp y-grounden spear:
Foin⁷⁴² if him list on foot, himself to wear.⁷⁴³
And he that is at mischief⁷⁴⁴ shall be take,
And not slain, but be brought unto the stake,
That shall be ordained on either side;
Thither he shall by force, and there abide.
And if so fall⁷⁴⁵ the chiefëtain be take
On either side, or ellës slay his make,⁷⁴⁶
No longer then the tourneying shall last.
God speedë you; go forth and lay on fast.
With long sword and with macë fight your fill.
Go now your way; this is the lordës will.”
The voice of the people touched the heaven,
So loudë criëd they with merry steven:⁷⁴⁷
“God savë such a lord that is so good,
He willeth no destruction of blood.”
Up go the trumpets and the melody,
And to the listës rode the company
By ordinance,⁷⁴⁸ throughout the city large,
Hanged with cloth of gold, and not with sarge.⁷⁴⁹
Full like a lord this noble Duke gan ride,
And these two Thebans upon either side:
And after rode the queen and Emily,
And after them another company
Of one and other, after their degree.

And thus they passed thorough that city,
And to the listës camë they by time:

It was not of the day yet fully prime.⁷⁵⁰

When set was Theseus full rich and high,
Hippolyta the queen, and Emily,
And other ladies in their degrees about,
Unto the seatës presseth all the rout.
And westward, through the gatës under Mart,
Arcite, and eke the hundred of his part,
With banner red, is enter'd right anon;
And in the selvë⁷⁵¹ moment Palamon
Is, under Venus, eastward in the place,
With banner white, and hardy cheer⁷⁵² and face.
In all the world, to seeken up and down
So even⁷⁵³ without variatioun

There were such companiës never tway.
For there was none so wise that couldë say
That any had of other ávantáge
Of worthiness, nor of estate, nor age,
So even were they chosen for to guess.

And in two ranges fairë they them dress.⁷⁵⁴
When that their namës read were every one,
That in their number guilë⁷⁵⁵ were there none,
Then were the gatës shut, and cried was loud;
“Do now your dévoir, youngë knights proud!”

The heralds left their pricking⁷⁵⁶ up and down.
Now ring the trumpet loud and clarioun.
There is no more to say, but east and west
In go the spearës sadly⁷⁵⁷ in the rest;
In go the sharpë spurs into the side.
There see me who can joust, and who can ride.
There shiver shaftës upon shieldës thick;
He feeleth through the heartë-spoon⁷⁵⁸ the prick.
Up spring the spearës twenty foot on height;
Out go the swordës as the silver bright.
The helmës they to-hewen, and to-shred;⁷⁵⁹

Out burst the blood, with sternë streamës red.
With mighty maces the bones they to-brest.⁷⁶⁰
He through the thickest of the throng gan threst.⁷⁶¹
There stumble steedës strong, and down go all.
He rolleth under foot as doth a ball.
He foineth⁷⁶² on his foe with a trunchoun,
And he him hurtleth with his horse adown.
He through the body hurt is, and sith take,⁷⁶³
Maugré his head, and brought unto the stake,
As forward⁷⁶⁴ was, right there he must abide.
Another led is on that other side.
And sometime doth⁷⁶⁵ them Theseus to rest,
Them to refresh, and drinken if them lest.⁷⁶⁶
Full oft a day have thilkë⁷⁶⁷ Thebans two
Together met, and wrought each other woe:
Unhorsed hath each other of them tway.⁷⁶⁸
There is no tiger in the vale of Galaphay,⁷⁶⁹
When that her whelp is stole, when it is lite,⁷⁷⁰
So cruel on the hunter, as Arcite
For jealous heart upon this Palamon:
Nor in Belmarie⁷⁷¹ there is no fell lión,
That hunted is, or for his hunger wood,⁷⁷²
Or for his prey desireth so the blood,
As Palamon to slay his foe Arcite.
The jealous strokes upon their helmets bite;
Out runneth blood on both their sidës red,
Sometime an end there is of every deed.
For ere the sun unto the restë went,
The strongë king Emetrius gan hent⁷⁷³
This Palamon, as he fought with Arcite,
And made his sword deep in his flesh to bite,
And by the force of twenty is he take,
Unyielding, and is drawn unto the stake.
And in the rescue of this Palamon
The strongë king Licurgus is borne down:

And king Emetrius for all his strength
Is borne out of his saddle a sword's length,
So hit him Palamon ere he were take:
But all for nought; he was brought to the stake:
His hardy heartē might him helpē naught,
He must abidē, when that he was caught,
By force, and eke by composition.⁷⁷⁴

Who sorroweth now but woful Palamon
That must no morē go again to fight?
And when that Theseus had seen that sight,
Unto the folk that foughtē thus each one,
He cried, "Ho! no more, for it is done!
I will be truē judge, and not party.
Arcite of Thebes shall have Emily,
That by his fortune hath her fairly won."
Anon there is a noise of people gone,
For joy of this, so loud and high withal,
It seemed that the listēs shouldē fall.

What can now fairē Venus do above?
What saith she now? what doth this queen of love?
But weepeth so, for wanting of her will,
Till that her tearēs in the listēs fill:⁷⁷⁵
She said: "I am ashamed doubtēless."
Saturnus saidē: "Daughter, hold thy peace.
Mars hath his will, his knight hath all his boon,
And by mine head thou shalt be eased⁷⁷⁶ soon."

The trumpeters with the loud minstrelsy,
The heralds, that full loudē yell and cry,
Be in their joy for weal of Dan⁷⁷⁷ Arcite.
But hearken me, and stintē noise a lite,⁷⁷⁸
What a mirācle there befell anon.
This fierce Arcite hath off his helm y-done,
And on a courser for to shew his face
He pricketh endēlong⁷⁷⁹ the largē place,
Looking upward upon this Emily;
And she again him cast a friendly eye

(For women, as to speaken in commúne,⁷⁸⁰
They follow all the favour of fortúne),
And was all his in cheer,⁷⁸¹ as his in heart.
Out of the ground a fire infernal start,
From Pluto sent, at réquest of Saturn,
For which his horse for fear began to turn,
And leap aside, and founder⁷⁸² as he leap:
And ere that Arcite may take any keep,⁷⁸³
He pight him on the pummel⁷⁸⁴ of his head,
That in the place he lay as he were dead,
His breast to-bursten with his saddle-bow.
As black he lay as any coal or crow,
So was the blood y-run into his face.
Anon he was y-borne out of the place
With heartë sore, to Theseus' palace.
Then was he carven⁷⁸⁵ out of his harnéss.
And in a bed y-brought full fair and blive,⁷⁸⁶
For he was yet in mem'ry and alive,
And always crying after Emily.

Duke Theseus, with all his company,
Is comë home to Athens his city,
With allë bliss and great solemnity.
Albeit that this áventure was fall,⁷⁸⁷
He wouldë not discómförtë⁷⁸⁸ them all.
Men said eke, that Arcite should not die,
He should be healed of his malady.
And of another thing they were as fain,⁷⁸⁹
That of them allë was there no one slain,
All⁷⁹⁰ were they sorely hurt, and namely⁷⁹¹ one,
That with a spear was thirled⁷⁹² his breast-bone.
To other woundës, and to broken arms,
Some hadden salvës, and some hadden charms:
And pharmacies of herbs, and ekë save⁷⁹³
They dranken, for they would their livës have.
For which this noble Duke, as he well can,

Comfórteth and honoúreth every man,
And madë revel all the longë night,
Unto the strangë lordës, as was right.
Nor there was holden no discomforting,
But as at jousts or at a tourneying;
For soothly there was no discomfiture,
For falling is not but an áventure.⁷⁹⁴
Nor to be led by force unto a stake
Unyielding, and with twenty knights y-take
One person all alone, withouten mo',
And harried⁷⁹⁵ forth by armës, foot, and toe,
And eke his steedë driven forth with staves,
With footmen, bothë yeomen and eke knaves,⁷⁹⁶
It was aretted⁷⁹⁷ him no villainy:
There may no man clepen it cowardy.⁷⁹⁸
For which anon Duke Theseus let cry—⁷⁹⁹
To stenten⁸⁰⁰ allë rancour and envy—
The gree⁸⁰¹ as well on one side as the other,
And either side alike as other's brother:
And gave them giftës after their degree,
And held a feastë fully dayës three:
And conveyed the kingës worthily
Out of his town a journëe⁸⁰² largëly.
And home went every man the rightë way,
There was no more but "Farewell, Have good day."
Of this batáille I will no more indite,
But speak of Palamon and of Arcite.

 Swellëth the breast of Arcite and the sore
 Increaseth at his heartë more and more.
The clotted blood, for any leachë-craft,⁸⁰³
Corrupteth and is in his bouk y-laft,⁸⁰⁴
That neither veinë-blood nor ventousing,⁸⁰⁵
Nor drink of herbës may be his helping.
The virtue expulsive or animal,
From thilkë virtue called natural,
Nor may the venom voidë, nor expel.

The pipës of his lungs began to swell,
And every lacert⁸⁰⁶ in his breast adown
Is shent⁸⁰⁷ with venom and corruptioun.
Him gaineth⁸⁰⁸ neither, for to get his life,
Vomit upwârd, nor downward laxative;
All is to-bursten thilkë regiön;
Nature hath now no domination.
And certainly where nature will not wirch,⁸⁰⁹
Farewell physíc: go bear the man to chirch.⁸¹⁰
This all and some is, Arcite must die.
For which he sendeth after Emily,
And Palamon, that was his cousin dear.
Then said he thus, as ye shall after hear.
“Nought may the woful spirit in mine heart
Declare one point of all my sorrows’ smart
To you, my lady, that I love the most;
But I bequeath the service of my ghost⁸¹¹
To you aboven every creature,
Since that my life ne may no longer dure.
Alas the woe! alas, the painës strong
That I for you have suffered, and so long!
Alas the death! alas, mine Emily!
Alas departing⁸¹² of our company!
Alas, mine heartë’s queen! alas, my wife!
Mine heartë’s lady, ender of my life!
What is this world? what askë men to have?
Now with his love, now in his coldë grave
Alone, withouten any company.
Farewell, my sweet, farewell, mine Emily,
And softly take me in your armës tway,
For love of God, and hearken what I say.
I have here with my cousin Palamon
Had strife and rancour many a day agone,
For love of you, and for my jealousy.
And Jupiter so wis my soulë gie,⁸¹³
To speaken of a servant properly,

With allë circumstances truëly,
That is to say, truth, honour, and knighthëad,
Wisdom, humbless,⁸¹⁴ estate, and high kindred,
Freedom, and all that longeth to that art,
So Jupiter have of my soulë part,
As in this world right now I know not one,
So worthy to be lov'd as Palamon,
That serveth you, and will do all his life.
And if that you shall ever be a wife,
Forget not Palamon, the gentle man."

And with that word his speech to fail began.
For from his feet up to his breast was come
The cold of death, that had him overnome.⁸¹⁵
And yet moreover in his armës two
The vital strength is lost, and all ago.⁸¹⁶
Only the intellect, withoutë more,
That dwelled in his heartë sick and sore,
Gan failë, when the heartë feltë death;
Dusked⁸¹⁷ his eyen two, and fail'd his breath.
But on his lady yet he cast his eye;
His lastë word was; "Mercy, Emily!"
His spirit changed house, and wentë there,
As I came never I cannot tell where.⁸¹⁸
Therefore I stent,⁸¹⁹ I am no diviníster;⁸²⁰
Of soulës find I nought in this regíster.
Ne me list not th' opinions to tell
Of them, though that they writen where they dwell;
Arcite is cold, there Mars his soulë gie.⁸²¹
Now will I speakë forth of Emily.

Shriek'd Emily, and howled Palamon,
And Theseus his sister took anon
Swooning, and bare her from the corpse away.
What helpeth it to tarry forth the day,
To tellë how she wept both eve and morrow?
For in such cases women have such sorrow,
When that their husbands be from them y-go,⁸²²

That for the morë part they sorrow so,
Or ellës fall into such malady,
That at the lastë certainly they die.
Infinite be the sorrows and the tears
Of oldë folk, and folk of tender years,
In all the town, for death of this Theban:
For him there weepeth bothë child and man.
So great a weeping was there none certáin,
When Hector was y-brought, all fresh y-slain,
To Troy: alas! the pity that was there,
Scratching of cheeks, and rending eke of hair.
“Why wouldest thou be dead?” these women cry,
“And haddest gold enough, and Emily.”

No manner man might gladden Theseus,
Saving his oldë father Egeus,
That knew this worldë’s transmutatioun,
As he had seen it changen up and down,
Joy after woe, and woe after gladness;
And shewed him example and likeness.
“Right as there diëd never man,” quoth he,
“That he ne liv’d in earth in some degree, [823](#)
Right so there lived never man,” he said,
“In all this world, that sometime be not died.
This world is but a throughfare full of woe,
And we be pilgrims, passing to and fro:
Death is an end of every worldly sore.”
And over all this said he yet much more
To this effect, full wisely to exhort
The people, that they should them recomfórt.

Duke Theseus, with all his busy cure, [824](#)
Casteth about, [825](#) where that the sepulture
Of good Arcite may best y-maked be,
And eke most honourable in his degree.
And at the last he took conclusiún,
That there as first Arcite and Palamon
Haddë for love the battle them between,
That in that selvë [826](#) grovë, sweet and green,

There as he had his amorous desires,
His cómplaint, and for love his hotë fires,
He wouldë make a fire,⁸²⁷ in which th' office
Of funeral he might all áccomplice;
And let anon command⁸²⁸ to hack and hew
The oakës old, and lay them on a rew⁸²⁹
In culpons,⁸³⁰ well arrayed for to brenne.⁸³¹
His officers with swiftë feet they renne⁸³²
And ride anon at his commandëment.
And after this, Duke Theseus hath sent
After a bier, and it all oversprad
With cloth of gold, the richest that he had;
And of the samë suit he clad Arcite.
Upon his handës were his glovës white,
Eke on his head a crown of laurel green,
And in his hand a sword full bright and keen.
He laid him bare the visage⁸³³ on the bier,
Therewith he wept, that pity was to hear.
And, for the people shouldë see him all,
When it was day he brought them to the hall,
That roareth of the crying and the soun'.⁸³⁴
Then came this woful Theban, Palamon,
With sluttery beard, and ruggy ashy hairs,⁸³⁵
In clothës black, y-dropped all with tears,
And (passing over weeping Emily)
The ruefullest of all the company.
And inasmuch as⁸³⁶ the servíce should be
The more noble and rich in its degree,
Duke Theseus let forth three steedës bring,
That trapped were in steel all glittering.
And covered with the arms of Dan Arcite.
Upon these steedës, that were great and white,
There sattë folk, of whom one bare his shield,
Another his spear in his handës held;
The thirdë bare with him his bow Turkeis,⁸³⁷
Of brent⁸³⁸ gold was the case⁸³⁹ and the harness:

And ridë forth a pace with sorrowful cheer⁸⁴⁰
Toward the grove, as ye shall after hear.

The noblest of the Greekës that there were
Upon their shoulders carried the bier,
With slackë pace, and eyen red and wet,
Throughout the city, by the master street,⁸⁴¹
That spread was all with black, and wondrous high
Right of the same is all the street y-wrie.⁸⁴²
Upon the right hand went old Egeus,
And on the other side Duke Theseus,
With vessels in their hand of gold full fine,
All full of honey, milk, and blood, and wine;
Eke Palamon, with a great company;
And after that came woful Emily,
With fire in hand, as was that time the guise,⁸⁴³
To do th' office of funeral servíce.

High labour, and full great appareling⁸⁴⁴
Was at the service, and the pyre-making,
That with its greenë top the heaven raught,⁸⁴⁵
And twenty fathom broad its armës straught:⁸⁴⁶
This is to say, the boughës were so broad.
Of straw first there was laid many a load.
But how the pyre was maked up on height,
And eke the namës how the treës hight,⁸⁴⁷
As oak, fir, birch, asp,⁸⁴⁸ alder, holm, poplére,
Will'w, elm, plane, ash, box, chestnut, lind,⁸⁴⁹ laurére,
Maple, thorn, beech, hazel, yew, whipul tree,
How they were fell'd, shall not be told for me;
Nor how the goddës⁸⁵⁰ rannen up and down
Disinherited of their habitatióun,
In which they wonned⁸⁵¹ had in rest and peace,
Nymphës, Faunës, and Hamadryadës;
Nor how the beastës and the birdës all
Fledden for fearë, when the wood gan fall;
Nor how the ground aghast⁸⁵² was of the light,

That was not wont to see the sunnë bright;
Nor how the fire was couched⁸⁵³ first with stre,⁸⁵⁴
And then with dry stickës cloven in three,
And then with greenë wood and spicery,⁸⁵⁵
And then with cloth of gold and with pierrie,⁸⁵⁶
And garlands hanging with full many a flower,
The myrrh, the incense with so sweet odoúr;
Nor how Arcita lay among all this,
Nor what richëss about his body is;
Nor how that Emily, as was the guise,
Put in⁸⁵⁷ the fire of funeral servíce;
Nor how she swooned when she made the fire,
Nor what she spake, nor what was her desire;
Nor what jewels men in the fire then cast
When that the fire was great and burned fast;
Nor how some cast their shield, and some their spear,
And of their vestiments, which that they wear,
And cuppës full of wine, and milk, and blood,
Into the fire, that burnt as it were wood;⁸⁵⁸
Nor how the Greekës with a hugë rout⁸⁵⁹
Three timës riden all the fire about
Upon the left hand, with a loud shouting,
And thriës with their spearës clattering;
And thriës how the ladies gan to cry;
Nor how that led was homeward Emily;
Nor how Arcite is burnt to ashes cold;
Nor how the lykë-wakë⁸⁶⁰ was y-hold
All thilkë⁸⁶¹ night, nor how the Greekës play
The wakë-plays,⁸⁶² ne keep⁸⁶³ I not to say:
Who wrestled best naked, with oil anoint,
Nor who that bare him best in no disjoint.⁸⁶⁴
I will not tell eke how they all are gone
Home to Athenës when the play is done;
But shortly to the point now will I wend,⁸⁶⁵
And maken of my longë tale an end.

By process and by length of certain years

All stinted⁸⁶⁶ is the mourning and the tears
Of Greekës, by one general assent.
Then seemed me there was a parlement⁸⁶⁷
At Athens, upon certain points and cas:⁸⁶⁸
Amongës the which points y-spoken was
To have with certain countries álliáncë,
And have of Thebans full obeisáncë.
For which this noble Theseus anon
Let⁸⁶⁹ send after the gentle Palamon,
Unwist⁸⁷⁰ of him what was the cause and why:
But in his blackë clothes sorrowfully
He came at his commandment on hie;⁸⁷¹
Then sentë Theseus for Emily.

When they were set,⁸⁷² and hush'd was all the place
And Theseus abided⁸⁷³ had a space
Ere any word came from his wisë breast
His eyen set he there as was his lest,⁸⁷⁴
And with a sad viságe he sighed still,
And after that right thus he said his will.
“The firstë mover of the cause above
When he first made the fairë chain of love,
Great was th’ effect, and high was his intent;
Well wist he why, and what thereof he meant:
For with that fairë chain of love he bond⁸⁷⁵
The fire, the air, the water, and the lond
In certain bondës, that they may not flee:⁸⁷⁶
That samë prince and mover eke,” quoth he,
“Hath stablish’d, in this wretched world adown,
Certain of dayës and duratión
To all that are engender’d in this place,
Over the whichë day they may not pace,⁸⁷⁷
All⁸⁷⁸ may they yet their dayës well abridge.
There needeth no authority to allëge
For it is proved by experience;
But that me list declarë my sentëncë.⁸⁷⁹

Then may men by this order well discern,
That thilkë⁸⁸⁰ mover stable is and etern.
Well may men know, but that it be a fool,
That every part deriveth from its whole.
For nature hath not ta'en its beginning
Of no partie nor cantle⁸⁸¹ of a thing,
But of a thing that perfect is and stable,
Descending so, till it be corruptáble.
And therefore of his wisë purveyance⁸⁸²
He hath so well beset⁸⁸³ his ordinance,
That species of things and progressiõns
Shallen endurë by successiõns,
And not etern, withouten any lie:
This mayst thou understand and see at eye.
Lo th' oak, that hath so long a nourishing
From the time that it 'ginneth first to spring,
And hath so long a life, as ye may see,
Yet at the last y-wasted is the tree.
Consider eke, how that the hardë stone
Under our feet, on which we tread and gon,⁸⁸⁴
Yet wasteth, as it lieth by the way.
The broadë river some time waxeth drey.⁸⁸⁵
The greatë townës see we wane and wend.⁸⁸⁶
Then may ye see that all things have an end.
Of man and woman see we well also,
That needës in one of the termës two—
That is to say, in youth or else in age—
He must be dead, the king as shall a page;
Some in his bed, some in the deepë sea,
Some in the largë field, as ye may see:
There helpeth nought, all go that ilkë⁸⁸⁷ way:
Then may I say that allë thing must die.
What maketh this but Jupiter the king?
The which is prince, and cause of allë thing,
Converting all unto his proper will,
From which it is derived, sooth to tell

And hereagainst no creature alive,
Of no degree, availeth for to strive.
Then is it wisdom, as it thinketh me,
To make a virtue of necessity,
And take it well, that we may not eschew,⁸⁸⁸
And namely what to us all is due.
And whoso grudgeth⁸⁸⁹ ought, he doth folly,
And rebel is to him that all may gie.⁸⁹⁰
And certainly a man hath most honoúr
To dien in his excellence and flower,
When he is sicker⁸⁹¹ of his goodë name.
Then hath he done his friend, nor him,⁸⁹² no shame
And gladder ought his friend be of his death,
When with honoúr is yielded up his breath,
Than when his name appalled is for age;⁸⁹³
For all forgotten is his vassalage.⁸⁹⁴
Then is it best, as for a worthy fame,
To dien when a man is best of name.
The contrary of all this is wilfulness.
Why grudgú we, why have we heaviness,
That good Arcite, of chivalry the flower,
Departed is, with duty and honoúr,
Out of this foulë prison of this life?
Why grudgë here his cousin and his wife
Of his welfare, that loved him so well?
Can he them thank?—nay, God wot, never a deal—⁸⁹⁵
That both his soul and eke themselves offend,⁸⁹⁶
And yet they may their lustës not amend.⁸⁹⁷
What may I cóclude of this longë série,⁸⁹⁸
But after sorrow I rede⁸⁹⁹ us to be merry,
And thankë Jupiter for all his grace?
And ere that we departë from this place,
I redë that we make of sorrows two
One perfect joyë lasting evermo':
And look now where most sorrow is herein,
There will I first amenden and begin.

“Sister,” quoth he, “this is my full assent,
With all th’ advice here of my parlement,
That gentle Palamon, your owen knight,
That serveth you with will, and heart, and might,
And ever hath, since first time ye him knew,
That ye shall of your grace upon him rue,⁹⁰⁰
And take him for your husband and your lord:
Lend me your hand, for this is our accord.

Let see⁹⁰¹ now of your womanly pity.

He is a kingë’s brother’s son, pardie.⁹⁰²

And though he were a poorë bachelére,
Since he hath served you so many a year,
And had for you so great adversity,

It mustë be considered, ’lieveth me.⁹⁰³

For gentle mercy oweth to passen right.”⁹⁰⁴

Then said he thus to Palamon the knight;

“I trow there needeth little sermoning

To makë you assentë to this thing.

Come near, and take your lady by the hand.”

Betwixtë them was made anon the band,

That hight matrimony or marriáge,

By all the counsel of the baronage.

And thus with allë bliss and melody

Hath Palamon y-wedded Emily.

And God, that all this widë world hath wrought,

Send him his love, that hath it dearly bought.

For now is Palamon in all his weal,

Living in bliss, in riches, and in heal;⁹⁰⁵

And Emily him loves so tenderly,

And he her serveth all so gentilly,

That never was there wordë them between

Of jealousy, nor of none other teen.⁹⁰⁶

Thus endeth Palamon and Emily

And God save all this fairë company.

THE MILLER'S TALE

THE PROLOGUE

When that the Knight had thus his talë told,
In all the rout was neither young nor old,
That he not said it was a noble story,
And worthy to be drawnen to memory;⁹⁰⁷
And namely the gentles every one.⁹⁰⁸
Our Host then laugh'd and swore, "So may I gon,⁹⁰⁹
This goes aright; unbuckled is the mail;⁹¹⁰
Let see now who shall tell another tale:
For truely this game is well begun.
Now telleth ye, Sir Monk, if that ye conne,⁹¹¹
Somewhat, to quiten⁹¹² with the Knightë's tale."
The Miller that fordrunken was all pale,⁹¹³
So that unnethes⁹¹⁴ upon his horse he sat,
He would avalen⁹¹⁵ neither hood nor hat,
Nor abide⁹¹⁶ no man for his courtesy,
But in Pilatë's voice⁹¹⁷ he gan to cry,
And swore by armës, and by blood, and bones,
"I can a noble talë for the nones,⁹¹⁸
With which I will now quite⁹¹⁹ the Knightë's tale."
Our Host saw well how drunk he was of ale,

And said; "Robin, abide, my levë⁹²⁰ brother,
Some better man shall tell us first another:
Abide, and let us workë thriftily."⁹²¹
"By Goddë's soul," quoth he, "that will not I,
For I will speak, or ellës go my way!"
Our Host answer'd; "Tell on a devil way;⁹²²
Thou art a fool; thy wit is overcome."
"Now hearken," quoth the Miller, "all and some:
But first I make a protestatioun.
That I am drunk, I know it by my soun':
And therefore if that I misspeak or say,
Wite⁹²³ it the ale of Southwark, I you pray:
For I will tell a legend and a life
Both of a carpenter and of his wife,
How that a clerk hath set the wrightë's cap."⁹²⁴
The Reeve answer'd and saidë, "Stint thy clap,⁹²⁵
Let be thy lewëd drunken harlotry.
It is a sin, and eke a great folly
To apeiren⁹²⁶ any man, or him defame,
And eke to bringë wives in evil name.
Thou may'st enough of other thingës sayn."
This drunken Miller spake full soon again,
And saidë, "Levë brother Osëwold,
Who hath no wifë, he is no cuckóld.
But I say not therefore that thou art one;
There be full goodë wivës many one.
Why art thou angry with my talë now?
I have a wife, pardie, as well as thou,
Yet n'old⁹²⁷ I, for the oxen in my plough,
Taken upon me morë than enough,
To deemen⁹²⁸ of myself that I am one;
I will believë well that I am none.
An husband should not be inquisitive
Of Goddë's privity, nor of his wife.
So he may findë Goddë's foison⁹²⁹ there,
Of the remnant needeth not to enquëre."

What should I more say, but that this Millére
He would his wordës for no man forbear,
But told his churlish⁹³⁰ tale in his mannére;
Me thinketh, that I shall rehearse it here.
And therefore every gentle wight I pray,
For Goddë's love to deem not that I say
Of evil intent, but that I must rehearse
Their tales all, be they better or worse,
Or ellës falsen⁹³¹ some of my mattere.
And therefore whoso list it not to hear,
Turn o'er the leaf, and choose another tale;
For he shall find enough, both great and smale,
Of storial⁹³² thing that toucheth gentiless,
And eke morality and holiness.
Blame not me, if that ye choose amiss.
The Miller is a churl, ye know well this,
So was the Reeve, with many other mo',
And harlotry⁹³³ they toldë bothë two.
Avise you⁹³⁴ now, and put me out of blame;
And eke men should not make earnest of game.⁹³⁵

THE TALE

Whilom there was dwelling in Oxenford
A richë gnof,⁹³⁶ that guestës held to board,⁹³⁷
And of his craft he was a carpentér.
With him there was dwelling a poor scholér,
Had learned art, but all his fantasy
Was turned for to learn astrology.
He coudë⁹³⁸ a certain of conclusions
To deemë⁹³⁹ by interrogations,

If that men asked him in certain hours,
When that men should have drought or ellës show'rs:
Or if men asked him what shouldë fall
Of everything, I may not reckon all.

This clerk was called Hendy⁹⁴⁰ Nicholas;
Of dernë⁹⁴¹ love he knew and of solace;
And therewith he was sly and full privy,
And like a maiden meekë for to see.
A chamber had he in that hostelry
Alone, withouten any company,
Full fetisly y-dight⁹⁴² with herbës swoot,⁹⁴³
And he himself was sweet as is the root
Of liquorice, or any setewall.⁹⁴⁴
His Almagest,⁹⁴⁵ and bookës great and small,
His astrolabe,⁹⁴⁶ belonging to his art,
His augrim stonës,⁹⁴⁷ layed fair apart
On shelvës couched⁹⁴⁸ at his beddë's head,
His press y-cover'd with a falding⁹⁴⁹ red.
And all above there lay a gay psalt'ry
On which he made at nightës melody,
So sweetëly, that all the chamber rang:
And *Angelus ad virginem*⁹⁵⁰ he sang.
And after that he sung the kingë's note;
Full often blessed was his merry throat.
And thus this sweetë clerk his timë spent
After his friendës finding and his rent.⁹⁵¹

This carpenter had wedded new a wife,
Which that he loved morë than his life:
Of eighteen year, I guess, she was of age.
Jealous he was, and held her narr'w in cage,
For she was wild and young, and he was old,
And deemed himself bélike⁹⁵² a cuckóld.
He knew not Cato,⁹⁵³ for his wit was rude,
That bade a man wed his similitude.
Men shouldë wedden after their estate,

For youth and eld⁹⁵⁴ are often at debate.
But since that he was fallen in the snare,
He must endure (as other folk) his care.
Fair was this youngë wife, and therewithal
As any weasel her body gent⁹⁵⁵ and small.
A seint⁹⁵⁶ she weared, barred all of silk,
A barm-cloth⁹⁵⁷ eke as white as morning milk
Upon her lendës,⁹⁵⁸ full of many a gore.⁹⁵⁹
White was her smock,⁹⁶⁰ and broider'd all before,
And eke behind, on her collar about
Of coal-black silk, within and eke without.
The tapës⁹⁶¹ of her whitë volupere⁹⁶²
Were of the samë suit of her collére;
Her fillet broad of silk, and set full high:
And sickerly⁹⁶³ she had a likerous⁹⁶⁴ eye.
Full small y-pulled were her browës two,
And they were bent,⁹⁶⁵ and black as any sloe.
She was well more blissful on to see⁹⁶⁶
Than is the newë perjenetë⁹⁶⁷ tree;
And softer than the wool is of a wether.
And by her girdle hung a purse of leather,
Tassel'd with silk, and pearlëd with latoun.⁹⁶⁸
In all this world to seeken up and down
There is no man so wise, that coudë thenche⁹⁶⁹
So gay a popelot,⁹⁷⁰ or such a wench.
Full brighter was the shining of her hue,
Than in the Tower the noble⁹⁷¹ forged new.
But of her song, it was as loud and yern,⁹⁷²
As any swallow chittering on a bern.⁹⁷³
Thereto⁹⁷⁴ she couldë skip, and make a game,⁹⁷⁵
As any kid or calf following his dame.
Her mouth was sweet as braket,⁹⁷⁶ or as methe,⁹⁷⁷
Or hoard of apples, laid in hay or heath.
Wincing⁹⁷⁸ she was as is a jolly colt,

Long as a mast, and upright as a bolt.
A brooch she bare upon her low collére,
As broad as is the boss of a bucklére.
Her shoon were laced on her leggës high;
She was a primerole,⁹⁷⁹ a piggesnie,⁹⁸⁰
For any lord t' have ligging⁹⁸¹ in his bed,
Or yet for any good yeoman to wed.

Now, sir, and eft⁹⁸² sir, so befell the case,
That on a day this Hendy⁹⁸³ Nicholas
Fell with this youngë wife to rage and play,⁹⁸⁴
While that her husband was at Oseney,⁹⁸⁵
As clerkës be full subtle and full quaint.
And privily he caught her by the queint,
And said; "Y-wis,⁹⁸⁶ but if I have my will,
For dernë⁹⁸⁷ love of thee, leman,⁹⁸⁸ I spill."⁹⁸⁹
And heldë her fast by the haunchë bones,
And saidë "Leman, love me well at once,
Or I will dien, all so God me save."
And she sprang as a colt doth in the trave:⁹⁹⁰
And with her head she writhed fast away,
And said; "I will not kiss thee, by my fay.⁹⁹¹
Why let be," quoth she, "let be, Nicholas,
Or I will cry out harow and alas!⁹⁹²
Do away your handës, for your courtesy."
This Nicholas gan mercy for to cry,
And spake so fair, and proffer'd him so fast,
That she her love him granted at the last,
And swore her oath by Saint Thomas of Kent,
That she would be at his commandement,
When that she may her leisure well espy.
"My husband is so full of jealousy,
That but⁹⁹³ ye waitë well, and be privy,
I wot right well I am but dead," quoth she.
"Ye mustë be full derne⁹⁹⁴ as in this case."
"Nay, thereof care thee nought," quoth Nicholas:

“A clerk had litherly beset his while,⁹⁹⁵
But if⁹⁹⁶ he could a carpenter beguile.”
And thus they were accorded and y-sworn
To wait a time, as I have said befor.
When Nicholas had done thus every deal,⁹⁹⁷
And thwacked her about the lendës well,
He kiss’d her sweet, and taketh his psalt’ry
And playeth fast, and maketh melody.
Then fell it thus, that to the parish church,
Of Christë’s owen workës for to wirch,⁹⁹⁸
This good wife went upon a holy day:
Her forehead shone as bright as any day,
So was it washen, when she left her werk.

Now was there of that church a parish clerk,
The which that was y-cleped Absolon.
Curl’d was his hair, and as the gold it shone,
And strutted⁹⁹⁹ as a fannë large and broad;
Full straight and even lay his jolly shode.¹⁰⁰⁰
His rode¹⁰⁰¹ was red, his eyen grey as goose,
With Paulë’s windows carven¹⁰⁰² on his shoes.
In hosen red he went full fetisly.¹⁰⁰³
Y-clad he was full small and properly,
All in a kirtle¹⁰⁰⁴ of a light waget;¹⁰⁰⁵
Full fair and thickë be the pointës set.
And thereupon he had a gay surplíce,
As white as is the blossom on the rise.¹⁰⁰⁶
A merry child he was, so God me save;
Well could he letten blood, and clip, and shave,
And make a charter of land, and a quittance.
In twenty manners could he trip and dance,
After the school of Oxenfordë tho,¹⁰⁰⁷
And with his leggës castë to and fro;
And playen songës on a small ribible;¹⁰⁰⁸
Thereto he sung sometimes a loud quinible.¹⁰⁰⁹
And as well could he play on a gitérn.¹⁰¹⁰

In all the town was brewhouse nor tavérn,
That he not visited with his solas,¹⁰¹¹
There as that any garnard tapstere¹⁰¹² was.
But sooth to say he was somedeal squaimous¹⁰¹³
Of farting, and of speechë dangerous.

This Absolon, that jolly was and gay,
Went with a censer on the holy day,
Censing¹⁰¹⁴ the wivës of the parish fast;
And many a lovely look he on them cast,
And namëly¹⁰¹⁵ on this carpénter's wife:
To look on her him thought a merry life.
She was so proper, and sweet, and likerous.
I dare well say, if she had been a mouse,
And he a cat, he would her hent anon.¹⁰¹⁶
This parish clerk, this jolly Absolon,
Hath in his heartë such a love-longing!
That of no wife took he none offering;
For courtesy he said he wouldë none.
The moon at night full clear and brightë shone,
And Absolon his gitern hath y-taken,
For paramours he thoughtë for to waken,
And forth he went, jolif¹⁰¹⁷ and amorous,
Till he came to the carpentérë's house,
A little after the cock had y-crow,
And dressed him¹⁰¹⁸ under a shot¹⁰¹⁹ window,
That was upon the carpentérë's wall.
He singeth in his voice gentle and small;
*"Now, dear lady, if thy will be,
I pray that ye will rue¹⁰²⁰ on me;"*
Full well accordant to his giterning.
This carpenter awoke, and heard him sing,
And spake unto his wife, and said anon,
"What, Alison, hear'st thou not Absolon,
That chanteth thus under our bower¹⁰²¹ wall?"
And she answer'd her husband therewithal;
"Yes, God wot, John, I hear him every deal."

This passeth forth; what will ye bet¹⁰²² than well?
From day to day this jolly Absolon
So wooeth her, that him is woebegone.
He waketh all the night, and all the day,
To comb his lockës broad, and make him gay.
He wooeth her by means and by brocage,¹⁰²³
And swore he wouldë be her owen page.
He singeth brokking¹⁰²⁴ as a nightingale.
He sent her piment,¹⁰²⁵ mead, and spiced ale,
And wafers¹⁰²⁶ piping hot out of the glede:¹⁰²⁷
And, for she was of town, he proffer'd meed.¹⁰²⁸
For some folk will be wonnen for richëss,
And some for strokes, and some with gentiless.
Sometimes, to show his lightness and mast'ry,
He playeth Herod¹⁰²⁹ on a scaffold high.
But what availeth him as in this case?
So loveth she the Hendy Nicholas,
That Absolon may blow the buckë's horn:¹⁰³⁰
He had for all his labour but a scorn.
And thus she maketh Absolon her ape,
And all his earnest turneth to a jape.¹⁰³¹
Full sooth is this provërb, it is no lie;
Men say right thus alway; the nighë sly
Maketh oft time the far lief to be loth.¹⁰³²
For though that Absolon be wood¹⁰³³ or wroth
Because that he far was from her sight,
This nigh Nicholas stood still in his light.
Now bear thee well, thou Hendy Nicholas,
For Absolon may wail and sing "Alas!"

And so befell, that on a Saturday
This carpenter was gone to Oseney,
And Hendy Nicholas and Alisón
Accorded were to this conclusiön,
That Nicholas shall shapë him a wile¹⁰³⁴
The silly jealous husband to beguile;
And if so were the gamë went aright,

She shouldë sleepen in his arms all night;
For this was her desire and his also.
And right anon, withoutë wordës mo',
This Nicholas no longer would he tarry,
But doth full soft unto his chamber carry
Both meat and drinkë for a day or tway.
And to her husband bade her for to say,
If that he asked after Nicholas,
She shouldë say, "She wist¹⁰³⁵ not where he was;
Of all the day she saw him not with eye;
She trowed¹⁰³⁶ he was in some malady,
For no cry that her maiden could him call
He would answer, for nought that might befall."
Thus passed forth all thilkë¹⁰³⁷ Saturday,
That Nicholas still in his chamber lay,
And ate, and slept, and diddë what him list
Till Sunday, that the sunnë went to rest.¹⁰³⁸
This silly carpenter had great marvail¹⁰³⁹
Of Nicholas, or what thing might him ail,
And said; "I am adrad,¹⁰⁴⁰ by Saint Thomas!
It standeth not aright with Nicholas:
God shieldë¹⁰⁴¹ that he died suddenly.
This world is now full tickle¹⁰⁴² sickerly.¹⁰⁴³
I saw to-day a corpse y-borne to chirch,
That now on Monday last I saw him wirch.¹⁰⁴⁴
"Go up," quod he unto his knave,¹⁰⁴⁵ "anon;
Clepe¹⁰⁴⁶ at his door, or knockë with a stone:
Look how it is, and tell me boldëly."
This knavë went him up full sturdily,
And, at the chamber door while that he stood,
He cried and knocked as that he were wood:¹⁰⁴⁷
"What how? what do ye, Master Nicholay?
How may ye sleepen all the longë day?"
But all for nought, he heardë not a word.
An hole he found full low upon the board,

There as¹⁰⁴⁸ the cat was wont in for to creep,
And at that hole he looked in full deep,
And at the last he had of him a sight.
This Nicholas sat ever gaping upright,
As he had kyked¹⁰⁴⁹ on the newë moon.
Adown he went, and told his master soon,
In what array he saw this ilkë¹⁰⁵⁰ man.

This carpenter to blissen him¹⁰⁵¹ began,
And said: "Now help us, Saintë Frideswide.¹⁰⁵²
A man wot¹⁰⁵³ little what shall him betide.
This man is fall'n with his astronomy
Into some woodness¹⁰⁵⁴ or some agony.
I thought aye well how that it shouldë be.
Men should know nought of Goddë's privity.¹⁰⁵⁵
Yea, blessed be alway a lewëd¹⁰⁵⁶ man,
That nought but only his believë can.¹⁰⁵⁷
So far'd another clerk with astrónomý:
He walked in the fieldës for to pry
Upon¹⁰⁵⁸ the starrës, what there should befall,
Till he was in a marlë pit y-fall.¹⁰⁵⁹
He saw not that. But yet, by Saint Thomas!
Me rueth sore of¹⁰⁶⁰ Hendy Nicholas:
He shall be rated of his studying,¹⁰⁶¹
If that I may, by Jesus, heaven's king!
Get me a staff, that I may underspore¹⁰⁶²
While that thou, Robin, heavest off the door:
He shall out of his studying, as I guess."
And to the chamber door he gan him dress.¹⁰⁶³
His knavë was a strong carl for the nonce,
And by the hasp¹⁰⁶⁴ he heav'd it off at once;
Into the floor the door fell down anon.
This Nicholas sat aye as still as stone,
And ever he gap'd upward into the air.
The carpenter ween'd¹⁰⁶⁵ he were in despair,
And hent¹⁰⁶⁶ him by the shoulders mightily,

And shook him hard, and cried spitously;¹⁰⁶⁷
“What, Nicholas? what how, man? look adown:
Awake, and think on Christë’s passioún.
I crouchë thee¹⁰⁶⁸ from elvës, and from wights.”¹⁰⁶⁹
Therewith the night-spell said he anon rights,¹⁰⁷⁰
On the four halvës¹⁰⁷¹ of the house about,
And on the threshold of the door without.
“Lord Jesus Christ, and Saintë Benedight,
Blessë this house from every wicked wight,
From the night mare, the white Pater-noster;
Where wonnest¹⁰⁷² thou now, Saintë Peter’s sister?”
And at the last this Hendy Nicholas
Gan for to sigh full sore, and said; “Alas!
Shall all time world be lost eftsoonës¹⁰⁷³ now?”
This carpenter answér’d; “What sayest thou?
What? think on God, as we do, men that swink.”¹⁰⁷⁴
This Nicholas answer’d; “Fetch me a drink;
And after will I speak in privity
Of certain thing that toucheth thee and me:
I will tell it no other man certain.”

This carpenter went down, and came again,
And brought of mighty ale a largë quart;
And when that each of them had drunk his part,
This Nicholas his chamber door fast shet,¹⁰⁷⁵
And down the carpentér by him he set,
And saidë; “John, mine host full lief¹⁰⁷⁶ and dear,
Thou shalt upon thy truthë swear me here,
That to no wight thou shalt my counsel wray:¹⁰⁷⁷
For it is Christë’s counsel that I say,
And if thou tell it man, thou art forlore:¹⁰⁷⁸
For this vengeance thou shalt have therefor,
That if thou wrayë¹⁰⁷⁹ me, thou shalt be wood.”¹⁰⁸⁰
“Nay, Christ forbid it for his holy blood!”
Quoth then this silly man; “I am no blab,¹⁰⁸¹
Nor, though I say it, am I lief to gab.”¹⁰⁸²

Say what thou wilt, I shall it never tell
To child or wife, by him that harried Hell.”[1083](#)
“Now, John,” quoth Nicholas, “I will not lie;
I have y-found in my astrology,
As I have looked in the moonë bright,
That now on Monday next, at quarter night,
Shall fall a rain, and that so wild and wood,[1084](#)
That never half so great was Noë’s flood.
This world,” he said, “in less than half an hour
Shall all be dreint,[1085](#) so hideous is the shower:
Thus shall mankindë drench,[1086](#) and lose their life.”
This carpenter answer’d; “Alas, my wife!
And shall she drench? alas, mine Alisoún!”
For sorrow of this he fell almost adown,
And said; “Is there no remedy in this case?”
“Why, yes, for God,” quoth Hendy Nicholas;
“If thou wilt worken after lore and rede,[1087](#)
Thou may’st not worken after thine own head.
For thus saith Solomon, that was full true:
Work all by counsel, and thou shalt not rue.[1088](#)
And if thou workë wilt by good counsel,
I undertake, withoutë mast or sail,
Yet shall I savë her, and thee, and me.
Hast thou not heard how saved was Noë,
When that our Lord had warned him beforne,
That all the world with water should be lorn?”[1089](#)
“Yes,” quoth this carpenter, “full yore ago.”[1090](#)
“Hast thou not heard,” quoth Nicholas, “also
The sorrow of Noë, with his fellowship,
That he had ere he got his wife to ship?[1091](#)
Him had been lever,[1092](#) I dare well undertake,
At thilkë[1093](#) time, than all his wethers black,
That she had had a ship herself alone.
And therefore know’st thou what is best to be done?
This asketh haste, and of an hasty thing
Men may not preach or makë tarrying.

Anon go get us fast into this inn¹⁰⁹⁴
A kneading trough, or else a kemelin,¹⁰⁹⁵
For each of us; but look that they be large,
In whichë we may swim as in a barge:
And have therein vitailë suffisant
But for one day; fie on the remenant;
The water shall aslake¹⁰⁹⁶ and go away
Aboutë prime¹⁰⁹⁷ upon the nextë day.
But Robin may not know of this, thy knave,¹⁰⁹⁸
Nor eke thy maiden Gill I may not save:
Ask me not why: for though thou askë me
I will not tellë Goddë's privity.
Sufficeth thee, but if thy wit be mad,¹⁰⁹⁹
To have as great a grace as Noë had;
Thy wife shall I well saven out of doubt.
Go now thy way, and speed thee hereabout.
But when thou hast for her, and thee, and me,
Y-gotten us these kneading tubbës three,
Then shalt thou hang them in the roof full high,
So that no man our purveyance¹¹⁰⁰ espy:
And when thou hast done thus as I have said,
And hast our vitaille fair in them y-laid,
And eke an axe to smite the cord in two
When that the water comes, that we may go,
And break an hole on high upon the gable
Into the garden-ward, over the stable,
That we may freely passë forth our way,
When that the greatë shower is gone away.
Then shalt thou swim as merry, I undertake,
As doth the whitë duck after her drake:
Then will I clepe,¹¹⁰¹ 'How, Alison? How, John?
Be merry: for the flood will pass anon.'
And thou wilt say, 'Hail, Master Nicholay,
Good-morrow, I see thee well, for it is day.'
And then shall we be lordës all our life
Of all the world, as Noë and his wife.

But of one thing I warnë thee full right,
Be well advised, on that ilkë¹¹⁰² night,
When we be enter'd into shippë's board,
That none of us not speak a single word,
Nor clepe nor cry, but be in his prayére,
For that is Goddë's owen hestë¹¹⁰³ dear.
Thy wife and thou must hangen far atween,¹¹⁰⁴
For that betwixtë you shall be no sin,
No more in looking than there shall in deed.
This ordinance is said: go, God thee speed.
To-morrow night, when men be all asleep,
Into our kneading tubbës will we creep,
And sittë there, abiding Goddë's grace.
Go now thy way, I have no longer space
To make of this no longer sermoning:
Men say thus: Send the wise, and say nothing:
Thou art so wise, it needeth thee nought teach.
Go, save our lives, and that I thee beseech."

This silly carpenter went forth his way,
Full oft he said, "Alas! and Well-a-day!"
And to his wife he told his privy,
And she was ware, and better knew than he
What all this quaintë cast was for to say.¹¹⁰⁵
But natheless she fear'd as she would dey,¹¹⁰⁶
And said: "Alas! go forth thy way anon.
Help us to scape, or we be dead each one.
I am thy true and very wedded wife;
Go, dearë spouse, and help to save our life."
Lo, what a great thing is affection!
Men may die of imaginación,
So deeply may impressión be take.
This silly carpenter begins to quake:
He thinketh verily that he may see
This newë flood come weltering as the sea
To drenchen¹¹⁰⁷ Alison, his honey dear.
He weepeth, waileth, maketh sorry cheer;¹¹⁰⁸

He sigheth, with full many a sorry sough.¹¹⁰⁹
He go'th, and getteth him a kneading trough,
And after that a tub, and a kemelin,
And privily he sent them to his inn:
And hung them in the roof full privily.
With his own hand then made he ladders three,
To climbë by the ranges and the stalks¹¹¹⁰
Unto the tubbës hanging in the balks;¹¹¹¹
And victualed them, kemelin, trough, and tub,
With bread and cheese, and good ale in a jub,¹¹¹²
Sufficing right enough as for a day.
But ere that he had made all this array,
He sent his knave, and eke his wench¹¹¹³ also,
Upon his need¹¹¹⁴ to London for to go.
And on the Monday, when it drew to night,
He shut his door withoutë candle light,
And dressed¹¹¹⁵ every thing as it should be.
And shortly up they climbed all the three.
They sattë stillë well a furlong way.¹¹¹⁶
“Now, Pater noster, clum,”¹¹¹⁷ said Nicholay,
And “clum,” quoth John; and “clum,” said Alison:
This carpenter said his devotiön,
And still he sat and bidden his prayére,
Awaking on the rain, if he it hear.
The deadë sleep, for weary business,
Fell on this carpenter, right as I guess,
About the curfew-time,¹¹¹⁸ or little more,
For travail of his ghost¹¹¹⁹ he groaned sore,
And eft he routed, for his head mislay.¹¹²⁰
Adown the ladder stalked Nicholay;
And Alison full soft adown she sped.
Withoutë wordës more they went to bed,
There as¹¹²¹ the carpenter was wont to lie:
There was the revel, and the melody.
And thus lay Alison and Nicholas,

In business of mirth and in solace,
Until the bell of *laudes*¹¹²² gan to ring,
And friars in the chancel went to sing.

This parish clerk, this amorous Absolon,
That is for love alway so woebegone,
Upon the Monday was at Oseney
With company, him to disport and play;
And asked upon cas¹¹²³ a cloisterer¹¹²⁴
Full privily after John the carpenter;
And he drew him apart out of the church,
And said, "I n'ot;¹¹²⁵ I saw him not here wirch¹¹²⁶
Since Saturday; I trow that he be went
For timber, where our abbot hath him sent.
For he is wont for timber for to go,
And dwellen at the Grange a day or two:
Or else he is at his own house certain.
Where that he be, I cannot soothly sayn."¹¹²⁷
This Absolon full jolly was and light,
And thought, "Now is the time to wake all night,
For sickerly¹¹²⁸ I saw him not stirring
About his door, since day began to spring.
So may I thrive, but I shall at cock crow
Full privily go knock at his window,
That stands full low upon his bower wall:¹¹²⁹
To Alison then will I tellen all
My lovë-longing; for I shall not miss
That at the leastë way I shall her kiss.
Some manner comfort shall I have, parfay,¹¹³⁰
My mouth hath itched all this livelong day:
That is a sign of kissing at the least.
All night I mette¹¹³¹ eke I was at a feast.
Therefore I will go sleep an hour or tway,
And all the night then will I wake and play."
When that the first cock crowed had, anon
Up rose this jolly lover Absolon,
And him arrayed gay, at point devise.¹¹³²

But first he chewed grains¹¹³³ and liquorice,
To smellë sweet, ere he had combed his hair.

Under his tongue a truë love¹¹³⁴ he bare,
For thereby thought he to be gracious.
Then came he to the carpentërë's house,
And still he stood under the shot window;
Unto his breast it raught,¹¹³⁵ it was so low;
And soft he coughed with a semisoún'.¹¹³⁶

"What do ye, honeycomb, sweet Alisoún?

My fairë bird, my sweet cinamomé,¹¹³⁷

Awaken, leman¹¹³⁸ mine, and speak to me.

Full little thinkë ye upon my woe,

That for your love I sweat there as¹¹³⁹ I go.

No wonder is that I do swelt¹¹⁴⁰ and sweat.

I mourn as doth a lamb after the teat.

Y-wis,¹¹⁴¹ leman, I have such love-longíng,

That like a turtle true is my mourning.

I may not eat, no morë than a maid."

"Go from the window, thou jack fool," she said:

"As help me God, it will not be, come ba me.¹¹⁴²

I love another, else I were to blamë,

Well better than thee, by Jesus, Absolon.

Go forth thy way, or I will cast a stone;

And let me sleep; a twenty devil way."¹¹⁴³

"Alas!" quoth Absolon, "and well away!

That true love ever was so ill beset:

Then kiss me, since that it may be no bet,¹¹⁴⁴

For Jesus' love, and for the love of me."

"Wilt thou then go thy way therewith?" quoth she.

"Yea, certes, leman," quoth this Absolon.

"Then make thee ready," quoth she, "I come anon."

[And unto Nicholas she said full still:¹¹⁴⁵

"Now peace, and thou shalt laugh anon thy fill."]

This Absolon down set him on his knees,

And said; "I am a lord at all degrees:

For after this I hope there cometh more;
Leman, thy grace, and, sweetë bird, thine ore."¹¹⁴⁶
The window she undid, and that in haste.
"Have done," quoth she, "come off, and speed thee fast,
Lest that our neighëbours should thee espy."
Then Absolon gan wipe his mouth full dry.
Dark was the night as pitch or as the coal,
And at the window she put out her hole,
And Absolon him fell ne bet ne werse,¹¹⁴⁷
But with his mouth he kiss'd her naked erse
Full savourly. When he was ware of this,
Aback he start, and thought it was amiss,
For well he wist a woman hath no beard.
He felt a thing all rough, and long y-hair'd,
And saidë; "Fy, alas! what have I do?"
"Te he!" quoth she, and clapt the window to;
And Absolon went forth at sorry pace.
"A beard, a beard," said Hendy Nicholas;
"By God's corpus, this game went fair and well."
This silly Absolon heard every deal,¹¹⁴⁸
And on his lip he gan for anger bite;
And to himself he said, "I shall thee quite."¹¹⁴⁹
Who rubbeth now, who frotteth¹¹⁵⁰ now his lips
With dust, with sand, with straw, with cloth, with chips,
But Absolon? that saith full oft, "Alas!
My soul betake I unto Sathanas,
But me were lever¹¹⁵¹ than all this town," quoth he,
"Of this despite awroken¹¹⁵² for to be.
Alas! alas! that I have been y-blent."¹¹⁵³
His hotë love is cold, and all y-quent.¹¹⁵⁴
For from that time that he had kiss'd her erse,
Of paramours he settë not a kers,¹¹⁵⁵
For he was healed of his malady;
Full often paramours he gan defy,
And weep as doth a child that hath been beat.
A softë pace he went over the street

Unto a smith, men callen Dan¹¹⁵⁶ Gerveis,
That in his forgë smithed plough-harnæss;
He sharped share and culter busily.
This Absolon knocked all easily,
And said; “Undo, Gerveis, and that anon.”
“What, who art thou?” “It is I, Absolon.”
“What? Absolon, what? Christë’s sweetë tree,¹¹⁵⁷
Why rise so rath?¹¹⁵⁸ hey! *benedicite*,
What aileth you? some gay girl,¹¹⁵⁹ God it wote,
Hath brought you thus upon the virëtote:¹¹⁶⁰
By Saint Neot, ye wot well what I mean.”
This Absolon he raughtë¹¹⁶¹ not a bean
Of all his play; no word again he gaf,¹¹⁶²
For he had morë tow on his distaff¹¹⁶³
Than Gerveis knew, and saidë; “Friend so dear,
That hotë culter in the chimney here
Lend it to me, I have therewith to don:¹¹⁶⁴
I will it bring again to thee full soon.”
Gerveis answered; “Certes, were it gold,
Or in a pokë¹¹⁶⁵ nobles all untold,
Thou shouldst it have, as I am a true smith.
Hey! Christë’s foot, what will ye do therewith?”
“Thereof,” quoth Absolon, “be as be may;
I shall well tell it thee another day.”
And caught the culter by the coldë stele.¹¹⁶⁶
Full soft out at the door he gan to steal,
And went unto the carpentërë’s wall
He coughed first, and knocked therewithal
Upon the window, light as he did ere.¹¹⁶⁷
This Alison answered; “Who is there
That knocketh so? I warrant him a thief.”
“Nay, nay,” quoth he, “God wot, my sweetë lefe,¹¹⁶⁸
I am thine Absolon, my own darling.
Of gold,” quoth he, “I have thee brought a ring,
My mother gave it me, so God me save!

Full fine it is, and thereto well y-grave:¹¹⁶⁹
This will I give to thee, if thou me kiss.”
Now Nicholas was risen up to piss,
And thought he would amenden all the jape;¹¹⁷⁰
He shouldë kiss his erse ere that he scape:
And up the window did he hastily,
And out his erse he put full privily
Over the buttock, to the haunchë bone.
And therewith spake this clerk, this Absolon,
“Speak, sweetë bird, I know not where thou art.”
This Nicholas anon let fly a fart,
As great as it had been a thunder dent;¹¹⁷¹
That with the stroke he was well nigh y-blent;¹¹⁷²
But he was ready with his iron hot,
And Nicholas amid the erse he smote.
Off went the skin an handbreadth all about.
The hotë culter burned so his tout,¹¹⁷³
That for the smart he weened¹¹⁷⁴ he would die;
As he were wood,¹¹⁷⁵ for woe he gan to cry,
“Help! water, water, help for Goddë’s heart!”
This carpenter out of his slumber start,
And heard one cry “Water,” as he were wood,¹¹⁷⁶
And thought, “Alas! now cometh Noë’s flood.”
He sat him up withoutë wordës mo’,
And with his axe he smote the cord in two;
And down went all; he found neither to sell
Nor bread nor ale,¹¹⁷⁷ till he came to the sell,¹¹⁷⁸
Upon the floor, and there in swoon he lay.
Up started Alison and Nicholay,
And cried out an “harow!”¹¹⁷⁹ in the street.
The neighbours allë, bothë small and great
In rannë, for to gauren¹¹⁸⁰ on this man,
That yet in swoonë lay, both pale and wan:
For with the fall he broken had his arm.
But stand he must unto his owen harm,
For when he spake, he was anon borne down

With Hendy Nicholas and Alisoún.

They told to every man that he was wood;¹¹⁸¹

He was aghast¹¹⁸² so of Noë's flood,

Through phantasy, that of his vanity

He had y-bought him kneading-tubbës three,

And had them hanged in the roof above;

And that he prayed them for Goddë's love

To sitten in the roof for company.

The folk gan laughen at his phantasy.

Into the roof they kyken,¹¹⁸³ and they gape,

And turned all his harm into a jape.¹¹⁸⁴

For whatso'er this carpenter answér'd,

It was for nought, no man his reason heard.

With oathës great he was so sworn adown,

That he was holden wood in all the town.

For every clerk anon right held with other;

They said, "The man was wood, my levë¹¹⁸⁵ brother;"

And every wight gan laughen at his strife.

Thus swived¹¹⁸⁶ was the carpentérë's wife,

For all his keeping¹¹⁸⁷ and his jealousy;

And Absolon hath kiss'd her nether eye;

And Nicholas is scalded in the tout.

This tale is done, and God save all the rout.¹¹⁸⁸

THE REEVE'S TALE

THE PROLOGUE

When folk had laughed all at this nice case
Of Absolon and Hendy Nicholas,
Diversë folk diversely they said,
But for the morë part they laugh'd and play'd;¹¹⁸⁹
And at this tale I saw no man him grieve,
But it were only Osëwold the Reeve.
Because he was of carpentérë's craft,
A little ire is in his heartë laft;¹¹⁹⁰
He gan to grudge¹¹⁹¹ and blamed it a lite.¹¹⁹²
"So thé I,"¹¹⁹³ quoth he, "full well could I him quite¹¹⁹⁴
With blearing¹¹⁹⁵ of a proudë miller's eye,
If that me list to speak of ribaldry.
But I am old; me list not play for age;¹¹⁹⁶
Grass time is done, my fodder is now foráge.
This whitë top¹¹⁹⁷ writeth mine oldë years;
Mine heart is also moulded¹¹⁹⁸ as mine hairs;
And I do fare as doth an open-erse;¹¹⁹⁹
That ilkë¹²⁰⁰ fruit is ever longer werse,
Till it be rotten in mullok or in stre.¹²⁰¹
We oldë men, I dread, so farë we;

Till we be rotten, can we not be ripe;
We hop¹²⁰² away, while that the world will pipe;
For in our will there sticketh aye a nail,
To have an hoary head and a green tail,
As hath a leek; for though our might be gone,
Our will desireth folly ever-in-one:¹²⁰³
For when we may not do, then will we speak,
Yet in our ashes cold does fire reek.¹²⁰⁴
Four gledes¹²⁰⁵ have we, which I shall devise,¹²⁰⁶
Vaunting, and lying, anger, covetise.¹²⁰⁷
These fourë sparks belongen unto eld.
Our oldë limbës well may be unweld,¹²⁰⁸
But will shall never fail us, that is sooth.
And yet have I alway a coltë's tooth,¹²⁰⁹
As many a year as it is passed and gone
Since that my tap of life began to run;
For sickerly,¹²¹⁰ when I was born, anon
Death drew the tap of life, and let it gon:
And ever since hath so the tap y-run,
Till that almost all empty is the tun.
The stream of life now droppeth on the chimb.¹²¹¹
The silly tonguë well may ring and chime
Of wretchedness, that passed is full yore:¹²¹²
With oldë folk, save dotage, is no more."¹²¹³
When that our Host had heard this sermoning,
He gan to speak as lordly as a king,
And said; "To what amounteth all this wit?
What? shall we speak all day of holy writ?
The devil made a Reeve for to preach,
As of a souter¹²¹⁴ a shipman, or a leach.¹²¹⁵
Say forth thy tale, and tarry not the time:
Lo here is Deptford, and 'tis half past prime:¹²¹⁶
Lo Greenwich, where many a shrew is in.
It were high time thy talë to begin."

"Now, sirs," quoth then this Osëwold the Reeve,

“I pray you all that none of you do grieve,
Though I answér, and somewhat set his hove,¹²¹⁷
For lawful is force off with force to shove.¹²¹⁸
This drunken miller hath y-told us here
How that beguiled was a carpentére,
Paráventure in scorn—for I am one:
And, by your leave, I shall him quite anon.
Right in his churlish termës will I speak—
I pray to God his neckë might to-break.
He can well in mine eyë see a stalk,¹²¹⁹
But in his own he cannot see a balk.”

THE TALE¹²²⁰

At Trompington, not far from Cantebrig,¹²²¹
There goes a brook, and over that a brig,
Upon the whichë brook there stands a mill:
And this is very sooth that I you tell.
A miller was there dwelling many a day,
As any peacock he was proud and gay:
Pipen he could, and fish, and nettës bete,¹²²²
And turnë cups, and wrestle well, and shete.¹²²³
Aye by his belt he bare a long pavade,¹²²⁴
And of his sword full trenchant was the blade.
A jolly popper¹²²⁵ bare he in his pouch;
There was no man for peril durst him touch.
A Sheffield whittle bare he in his hose.
Round was his face, and camuse¹²²⁶ was his nose.
As pilled¹²²⁷ as an apë's was his skull.
He was a market-beter at the full.¹²²⁸

There durstë no wight hand upon him legge,¹²²⁹

That he ne swore anon he should abegge.¹²³⁰

A thief he was, for sooth, of corn and meal,
And that a sly, and used well to steal.

His name was hoten deinous Simekin.¹²³¹

A wife he haddë, come of noble kin:

The parson of the town her father was.

With her he gave full many a pan of brass,

For that Simkin should in his blood ally.

She was y-foster'd in a nunnery:

For Simkin wouldë no wife, as he said,

But she were well y-nourish'd, and a maid,

To saven his estate and yeomanry:

And she was proud, and pert as is a pie.¹²³²

A full fair sight it was to see them two;

On holy days before her would he go

With his tippët¹²³³ y-bound about his head;

And she came after in a gite¹²³⁴ of red,

And Simkin haddë hosen of the same.

There durstë no wight call her aught but Dame:

None was so hardy, walking by that way,

That with her either durstë rage or play,¹²³⁵

But if¹²³⁶ he would be slain by Simekin

With pavade, or with knife, or bodëkin.

For jealous folk be per'lous evermo':

Algate¹²³⁷ they would their wivës wendë so.¹²³⁸

And eke for she was somewhat smutterlich,¹²³⁹

She was as dign¹²⁴⁰ as water in a ditch,

And all so full of hoker,¹²⁴¹ and bismare.¹²⁴²

Her thoughtë that a lady should her spare,¹²⁴³

What for her kindred, and her nortelrie¹²⁴⁴

That she had learned in the nunnery.

One daughter haddë they betwixt them two

Of twenty year, withouten any mo,

Saving a child that was of half year age,

In cradle it lay, and was a proper page.¹²⁴⁵
This wenchë thick and well y-growen was,
With camuse nose, and eyen gray as glass;
With buttocks broad, and breastës round and high;
But right fair was her hair, I will not lie.

The parson of the town, for she was fair,¹²⁴⁶
In purpose was to make of her his heir
Both of his chattels and his messuage,
And strange he made it of¹²⁴⁷ her marriage.
His purpose was for to bestow her high
Into some worthy blood of ancestry.

For holy Church's good may be dispended¹²⁴⁸
On holy Church's blood that is descended.
Therefore he would his holy blood honoúr,
Though that he holy Churchë should devour.

Great soken¹²⁴⁹ hath this miller, out of doubt,
With wheat and malt, of all the land about;
And namely¹²⁵⁰ there was a great collége
Men call the Soler Hall at Cantebrege,¹²⁵¹
There was their wheat and eke their malt y-ground.
And on a day it happed in a stound,¹²⁵²
Sick lay the manciple¹²⁵³ of a malady,
Men weened wisly¹²⁵⁴ that he shouldë die.
For which this miller stole both meal and corn
An hundred timës morë than beforne.
For theretofore he stole but courteously,
But now he was a thief outrageously.
For which the warden chid and madë fare,¹²⁵⁵
But thereof set the miller not a tare;¹²⁵⁶
He crack'd his boast,¹²⁵⁷ and swore it was not so.

Then were there youngë poorë scholars two,
That dwelled in the hall of which I say;
Testif¹²⁵⁸ they were, and lusty for to play;
And only for their mirth and revelry
Upon the warden busily they cry,

To give them leave for but a little stound,¹²⁵⁹
To go to mill, and see their corn y-ground:
And hardily¹²⁶⁰ they durstë lay their neck,
The miller should not steal them half a peck
Of corn by sleight, nor them by force bereave.¹²⁶¹
And at the last the warden give them leave:
John hight the one, and Alein hight the other,
Of one town were they born, that hightë Strother,¹²⁶²
Far in the North, I cannot tell you where.
This Alein he made ready all his gear,
And on a horse the sack he cast anon:
Forth went Alein the clerk, and also John,
With good sword and with buckler by their side.
John knew the way, him needed not no guide,
And at the mill the sack adown he lay'th.

Alein spake first; "All hail, Simón, in faith,
How fares thy fairë daughter, and thy wife?"
"Alein, welcome," quoth Simkin, "by my life,
And John also: how now, what do ye here?"
"By God, Simón," quoth John, "need has no peer.¹²⁶³
Him serve himself behoves that has no swain,¹²⁶⁴
Or else he is a fool, as clerkës sayn.
Our manciple I hope¹²⁶⁵ he will be dead,
So workës aye the wangës¹²⁶⁶ in his head:
And therefore is I come, and eke Alein,
To grind our corn and carry it home again:
I pray you speed us hence as well ye may."
"It shall be done," quoth Simkin, "by my fay.
What will ye do while that it is in hand?"
"By God, right by the hopper will I stand,"
Quoth John, "and see how that the corn goes in.
Yet saw I never, by my father's kin,
How that the hopper waggës to and fro."
Alein answered, "John, and wilt thou so?
Then will I be beneathë, by my crown,
And see how that the mealë falls adown

Into the trough, that shall be my disport:¹²⁶⁷
For, John, in faith I may be of your sort;
I is as ill a miller as is ye.”

This miller smiled at their nicéty,¹²⁶⁸
And thought, “All this is done but for a wile.
They weenen¹²⁶⁹ that no man may them beguile,
But by my thrift yet shall I blear their eye,¹²⁷⁰
For all the sleight in their philosophy.
The more quaintë knackës¹²⁷¹ that they make,
The morë will I steal when that I take.
Instead of flour yet will I give them bren.¹²⁷²
The greatest clerks are not the wisest men,
As whilom to the wolf thus spake the mare:¹²⁷³
Of all their art ne count I not a tare.”
Out at the door he went full privily,
When that he saw his timë, softëly.
He looked up and down, until he found
The clerkës’ horse, there as he stood y-bound
Behind the mill, under a levesell:¹²⁷⁴
And to the horse he went him fair and well,
And stripped off the bridle right anon.
And when the horse was loose, he gan to gon
Toward the fen, where wildë marës run,
Forth, with “Weheel!” through thick and eke through thin.
This miller went again, no word he said,
But did his note,¹²⁷⁵ and with these clerkës play’d,¹²⁷⁶
Till that their corn was fair and well y-ground.
And when the meal was sacked and y-bound,
Then John went out, and found his horse away,
And gan to cry, “Harow, and well-away!
Our horse is lost: Alein, for Goddë’s bones,
Step on thy feet; come off, man, all at once:
Alas! our warden has his palfrey lorn.”¹²⁷⁷
This Alein all forgot, both meal and corn;
All was out of his mind his husbandry:¹²⁷⁸
“What, which way is he gone?” he gan to cry.

The wife came leaping inward at a renne,¹²⁷⁹
She said; "Alas! your horse went to the fen
With wildë mares, as fast as he could go.
Unthank¹²⁸⁰ come on his hand that bound him so,
And his that better should have knit the rein."
"Alas!" quoth John, "Alein, for Christë's pain
Lay down thy sword, and I shall mine also.
I is full wight,¹²⁸¹ God wate,¹²⁸² as is a roe.
By Goddë's soul he shall not scape us bathe.¹²⁸³
Why n' had thou put the capel¹²⁸⁴ in the lathe?¹²⁸⁵
Ill hail, Alein, by God thou is a fonne."¹²⁸⁶
These silly clerkës have full fast y-run
Toward the fen, both Alein and eke John;
And when the miller saw that they were gone,
He half a bushel of their flour did take,
And bade his wife go knead it in a cake.
He said; "I trow, the clerkës were afeard,
Yet can a miller make a clerkë's beard,¹²⁸⁷
For all his art: yea, let them go their way!
Lo where they go! yea, let the children play:
They get him not so lightly, by my crown."
These silly clerkës runnen up and down
With "Keep, keep; stand, stand; jossa,¹²⁸⁸ warderere.
Go whistle thou, and I shall keep¹²⁸⁹ him here."
But shortly, till that it was very night
They couldë not, though they did all their might,
Their capel catch, he ran away so fast:
Till in a ditch they caught him at the last.
Weary and wet, as beastës in the rain,
Comes silly John, and with him comes Alein.
"Alas," quoth John, "the day that I was born!
Now are we driv'n till hething¹²⁹⁰ and till scorn.
Our corn is stol'n, men will us fonnës¹²⁹¹ call,
Both the warden, and eke our fellows all,
And namëly¹²⁹² the miller, well-away!"
Thus plained John, as he went by the way

Toward the mill, and Bayard¹²⁹³ in his hand.
The miller sitting by the fire he fand.¹²⁹⁴
For it was night, and forther¹²⁹⁵ might they not,
But for the love of God they him besought
Of herberow and easë,¹²⁹⁶ for their penny.¹²⁹⁷
The miller said again, "If there be any,
Such as it is, yet shall ye have your part.
Mine house is strait, but ye have learned art;
Ye can by arguments maken a place
A milë broad, of twenty foot of space.
Let see now if this placë may suffice,
Or make it room with speech, as is your guise."¹²⁹⁸
"Now, Simon," said this John, "by Saint Cuthberd
Aye is thou merry, and that is fair answér'd.
I have heard say, man shall take of two things,
Such as he findës, or such as he brings.
But specially I pray thee, hostë dear,
Gar¹²⁹⁹ us have meat and drink, and make us cheer,
And we shall pay thee truly at the full:
With empty hand men may not hawkës tull.¹³⁰⁰
Lo here our silver ready for to spend."
This miller to the town his daughter send
For ale and bread, and roasted them a goose,
And bound their horse, he should no more go loose:
And them in his own chamber made a bed.
With sheetës and with chalons¹³⁰¹ fair y-spread,
Not from his owen bed ten foot or twelve:
His daughter had a bed all by herselfe,
Right in the samë chamber by and by:¹³⁰²
It might no better be, and causë why—
There was no roomer herberow¹³⁰³ in the place.
They suppen, and they speaken of solace,
And drinken ever strong ale at the best.
Aboutë midnight went they all to rest.
Well had this miller varnished his head;
Full pale he was, fordrunken, and nought red.¹³⁰⁴

He yoxed,¹³⁰⁵ and he spake thorough the nose,
As he were in the quakke,¹³⁰⁶ or in the pose.¹³⁰⁷
To bed he went, and with him went his wife,
As any jay she light was and jolife,¹³⁰⁸
So was her jolly whistle well y-wet.
The cradle at her beddë's feet was set,
To rock, and eke to give the child to suck.
And when that drunken was all in the crock¹³⁰⁹
To beddë went the daughter right anon,
To beddë went Alein, and also John.
There was no morë; needed them no dwale.¹³¹⁰
This miller had so wisly¹³¹¹ bibbed ale,
That as a horse he snorted in his sleep,
Nor of his tail behind he took no keep.¹³¹²
His wife bare him a burdoun,¹³¹³ a full strong;
Men might their routing¹³¹⁴ hearken a furlong.
The wenchë routed eke for company.

Alein the clerk, that heard this melody,
He poked John, and saidë: "Sleepest thou?
Hearest thou ever such a song ere now?
Lo what a compline¹³¹⁵ is y-mell¹³¹⁶ them all.
A wildë fire upon their bodies fall,
Who hearken'd ever such a ferly¹³¹⁷ thing?
Yea, they shall have the flow'r of ill ending!
This longë night there tidës¹³¹⁸ me no rest.
But yet no force,¹³¹⁹ all shall be for the best.
For, John," said he, "as ever may I thrive,
If that I may, yon wenchë will I swive.¹³²⁰
Some easëment has law y-shapen¹³²¹ us.
For, John, there is a law that sayeth thus,
That if a man in one point be aggriev'd,
That in another he shall be reliev'd.
Our corn is stol'n, soothly it is no nay,
And we have had an evil fit to-day.
And since I shall have none amendement

Against my loss, I will have easement:
By Goddë's soul, it shall none, other be."
This John answer'd; "Alein, avisë thee:¹³²²
The miller is a perilous man," he said,
"And if that he out of his sleep abraid,¹³²³
He mightë do us both a villainy."¹³²⁴
Alein answer'd; "I count him not a fly."
And up he rose, and by the wench he crept.
This wenchë lay upright, and fast she slept,
Till he so nigh was, ere she might espy,
That it had been too latë for to cry:
And, shortly for to say, they were at one.
Now play, Alein, for I will speak of John.

 This John lay still a furlong way or two,¹³²⁵
And to himself he madë ruth¹³²⁶ and woe.
"Alas!" quoth he, "this is a wicked jape;¹³²⁷
Now may I say, that I is but an ape.
Yet has my fellow somewhat for his harm;
He has the miller's daughter in his arm:
He auntred¹³²⁸ him, and hath his needës sped,
And I lie as a draff-sack in my bed;
And when this jape is told another day,
I shall be held a daffe¹³²⁹ or a cockenay:¹³³⁰
I will arise, and auntre it, by my fay:
Unhardy is unsely,¹³³¹ as men say."
And up he rose, and softëly he went
Unto the cradle, and in his hand it hent,¹³³²
And bare it soft unto his beddë's feet.
Soon after this the wife her routing lete,¹³³³
And gan awake, and went her out to piss,
And came again, and gan the cradle miss,
And groped here and there, but she found none.
"Alas!" quoth she, "I had almost misgone,
I had almost gone to the clerkës' bed.
Ey! *benedicite*, then had I foul y-sped."
And forth she went, till she the cradle fand.

She groped alway farther with her hand,
And found the bed, and thoughtë not but good,¹³³⁴
Because that the cradle by it stood,
And wist not where she was, for it was derk;
But fair and well she crept in by the clerk,
And lay full still, and would have caught a sleep.
Within a while this John the Clerk up leap,
And on this goodë wife laid on full sore;
So merry a fit had she not had full yore.¹³³⁵
He pricked hard and deep, as he were mad.

This jolly life have these two clerkës lad,
Till that the thirdë cock began to sing.
Alein wax'd weary in the morrowing,
For he had swonken¹³³⁶ all the longë night,
And saidë; "Farewell, Malkin, my sweet wight.
The day is come, I may no longer bide,
But evermore, where so I go or ride,
I is thine owen clerk, so have I hele."¹³³⁷
"Now, dearë leman,"¹³³⁸ quoth she, "go, farewele:
But ere thou go, one thing I will thee tell.
When that thou wendest homeward by the mill,
Right at the entry of the door behind
Thou shalt a cake of half a bushel find,
That was y-maked of thine owen meal,
Which that I help'd my father for to steal.
And goodë leman, God thee save and keep."
And with that word she gan almost to weep.
Alein uprose and thought, "Ere the day daw
I will go creepen in by my felláw:"
And found the cradle with his hand anon.
"By God!" thought he, "all wrong I have misgone:
My head is totty of my swink¹³³⁹ tonight,
That maketh me that I go not aright.
I wot well by the cradle I have misgo';
Here lie the miller and his wife also."
And forth he went a twenty devil way

Unto the bed, there as the miller lay.
He ween'd¹³⁴⁰ t' have creeped by his fellow John,
And by the miller in he crept anon,
And caught him by the neck, and gan him shake,
And said; "Thou John, thou swinë's-head, awake
For Christë's soul, and hear a noble game!
For by that lord that called is Saint Jame,
As I have thriës in this shortë night
Swived the miller's daughter bolt-upright,
While thou hast as a coward lain aghast."¹³⁴¹
"Thou falsë harlot," quoth the miller, "hast?
Ah, falsë traitor, falsë clerk," quoth he,
"Thou shalt be dead, by Goddë's dignity,
Who durstë be so bold to disparáge¹³⁴²
My daughter, that is come of such lineáge?"
And by the throatë-ball¹³⁴³ he caught Alein,
And he him hent¹³⁴⁴ dispiteously¹³⁴⁵ again,
And on the nose he smote him with his fist;
Down ran the bloody stream upon his breast:
And in the floor with nose and mouth all broke
They wallow, as do two pigs in a poke.
And up they go, and down again anon,
Till that the miller spurned¹³⁴⁶ on a stone,
And down he backward fell upon his wife,
That wistë nothing of this nicë strife:
For she was fall'n asleep a little wight¹³⁴⁷
With John the clerk, that waked had all night:
And with the fall out of her sleep she braid.¹³⁴⁸
"Help, holy cross of Bromëholm,"¹³⁴⁹ she said;
"*In manus tuas!* Lord, to thee I call.
Awake, Simón, the fiend is on me fall;
Mine heart is broken; help; I am but dead:
There li'th one on my womb and on mine head.
Help, Simkin, for these falsë clerks do fight"
This John start up as fast as e'er he might,
And groped by the wallës to and fro

To find a staff; and she start up also,
And knew the estres¹³⁵⁰ better than this John,
And by the wall she took a staff anon:
And saw a little shimmering of a light,
For at an hole in shone the moonë bright,
And by that light she saw them both the two,
But sickerly¹³⁵¹ she wist not who was who,
But as she saw a white thing in her eye.
And when she gan this whitë thing espy,
She ween'd¹³⁵² the clerk had wear'd a volupere;¹³⁵³
And with the staff she drew aye nere and nere,¹³⁵⁴
And ween'd to have hit this Alein at the full,
And smote the miller on the pilled¹³⁵⁵ skull,
That down he went, and cried, "Harow! I die."
These clerkës beat him well, and let him lie,
And greithen¹³⁵⁶ them, and take their horse anon,
And eke their meal, and on their way they gon:
And at the mill door eke they took their cake
Of half a bushel flour, full well y-bake.

Thus is the proudë miller well y-beat,
And hath y-lost the grinding of the wheat,
And payed for the supper every deal¹³⁵⁷
Of Alein and of John, that beat him well;
His wife is swived, and his daughter als;¹³⁵⁸
Lo, such it is a miller to be false.
And therefore this proverb is said full sooth,
"Him thar¹³⁵⁹ not winnen¹³⁶⁰ well that evil do'th;
A guiler shall himself beguiled be:"
And God that sitteth high in majesty
Save all this company, both great and smale.
Thus have I quit¹³⁶¹ the Miller in my tale.

THE COOK'S TALE

THE PROLOGUE

The Cook of London, while the Reeve thus spake,
For joy he laugh'd and clapp'd him on the back:
"Aha!" quoth he, "for Christë's passiön,
This Miller had a sharp conclusiön,
Upon this argument of herbergage.¹³⁶²
Well saidë Solomon in his languáge,
Bring thou not every man into thine house,
For harbouring by night is periloús.
Well ought a man avised for to be¹³⁶³
Whom that he brought into his privity.
I pray to God to give me sorrow and care
If ever, since I hightë¹³⁶⁴ Hodge of Ware,
Heard I a miller better set a-werk;¹³⁶⁵
He had a jape¹³⁶⁶ of malice in the derk.
But God forbid that we should stintë¹³⁶⁷ here,
And therefore if ye will vouchsafe to hear
A tale of me, that am a poorë man,
I will you tell as well as e'er I can
A little jape that fell in our city."

Our Host answór'd and said; "I grant it thee.
Roger, tell on; and look that it be good,

For many a pasty hast thou letten blood,
And many a Jack of Dover¹³⁶⁸ hast thou sold,
That had been twicë hot and twicë cold.
Of many a pilgrim hast thou Christë's curse,
For of thy parsley yet fare they the worse.
That they have eaten in thy stubble goose:
For in thy shop doth many a fly go loose.
Now tell on, gentle Roger, by thy name,
But yet I pray thee be not wroth for game;¹³⁶⁹
A man may say full sooth in game and play."
"Thou sayst full sooth," quoth Roger, "by my fay;
But sooth play quad play,¹³⁷⁰ as the Fleming saith,
And therefore, Harry Bailly, by thy faith,
Be thou not wroth, else we departë¹³⁷¹ here,
Though that my tale be of an hostelére.¹³⁷²
But natheless, I will not tell it yet,
But ere we part, y-wis¹³⁷³ thou shalt be quit."
And therewithal he laugh'd and madë cheer,¹³⁷⁴
And told his tale, as ye shall after hear.

THE TALE

A prentice whilom dwelt in our city,
And of a craft of victuallers was he:
Galliard¹³⁷⁵ he was, as goldfinch in the shaw,¹³⁷⁶
Brown as a berry, a proper short felláw:
With lockës black, combed full fetisly.¹³⁷⁷
And dance he could so well and jollily,
That he was called Perkin Revellour.
He was as full of love and paramour,
As is the honeycomb of honey sweet;

Well was the wenchë that with him might meet.
At every bridal would he sing and hop;
He better lov'd the tavern than the shop.
For when there any riding was in Cheap,¹³⁷⁸
Out of the shoppë thither would he leap,
And, till that he had all the sight y-seen,
And danced well, he would not come again;
And gather'd him a meinie of his sort,¹³⁷⁹
To hop and sing, and makë such disport:
And there they settë steven¹³⁸⁰ for to meet
To playen at the dice in such a street.
For in the townë was there no prentíce
That fairer couldë cast a pair of dice
Than Perkin could; and thereto he was free
Of his dispence, in place of privity.¹³⁸¹
That found his master well in his chaffare,¹³⁸²
For oftentime he found his box full bare.
For, soothëly, a prentice revelloúr,
That haunteth dice, riot, and paramoúr,
His master shall it in his shop abie,¹³⁸³
All¹³⁸⁴ have he no part of the minstrelsy.
For theft and riot they be convertible,
All¹³⁸⁵ can they play on giterne or ribible.¹³⁸⁶
Revel and truth, as in a low degree,
They be full wroth¹³⁸⁷ all day, as men may see.
This jolly prentice with his master bode,
Till he was nigh out of his prenticehood,
All¹³⁸⁸ were he snubbed¹³⁸⁹ both early and late,
And sometimes led with revel to Newgate.
But at the last his master him bethought,
Upon a day when he his paper¹³⁹⁰ sought,
Of a proverb, that saith this samë word;
Better is rotten apple out of hoard,
Than that it should rot all the remenánt:
So fares it by a riotous servánt;
It is well lessë harm to let him pace,¹³⁹¹

Than he shend¹³⁹² all the servants in the place.

Therefore his master gave him a quittance,

And bade him go, with sorrow and mischance.

And thus this jolly prentice had his leve.¹³⁹³

Now let him riot all the night, or leave.¹³⁹⁴

And, for there is no thief without a louke,¹³⁹⁵

That helpeth him to wasten and to souk¹³⁹⁶

Of that he bribë can, or borrow may,

Anon he sent his bed and his array

Unto a compere¹³⁹⁷ of his owen sort,

That loved dice, and riot, and disport;

And had a wife, that held for countenance¹³⁹⁸

A shop, and swived¹³⁹⁹ for her sustenance.

:¹⁴⁰⁰

THE MAN OF LAW'S TALE

THE PROLOGUE

Our Host^e saw well that the bright^e sun
Th' arc of his artificial day had run
The fourth^e part, and half an hour^e more;
And, though he were not deep expert in lore,
He wist it was the eight-and-twenty day
Of April, that is messenger to May;
And saw well that the shadow of every tree
Was in its length of the same quantity
That was the body erect that caused it;
And therefore by the shadow he took his wit,¹⁴⁰¹
That Phoebus, which that shone so clear and bright,
Degrees was five-and-forty clomb on height;
And for that day, as in that latitude,
It was ten of the clock, he gan conclude;
And suddenly he plight¹⁴⁰² his horse about.

“Lordings,” quoth he, “I warn you all this rout,¹⁴⁰³
The fourth^e partie of this day is gone.
Now for the love of God and of Saint John
Los^e no time, as farforth as ye may.
Lordings, the tim^e wasteth night and day,
And steals from us, what privily sleeping,
And what through negligence in our waking,

As doth the stream, that turneth never again,
Descending from the mountain to the plain.
Well might Senec, and many a philosópher,
Bewailë timë more than gold in coffer.
For loss of chattels may recover'd be,
But loss of timë shendeth¹⁴⁰⁴ us, quoth he.
It will not come again, withoutë dread,¹⁴⁰⁵
No morë than will Malkin's maidenhead,¹⁴⁰⁶
When she hath lost it in her wantonness.
Let us not mouldë thus in idleness.
Sir Man of Law," quoth he, "so have ye bliss,
Tell us a tale anon, as forword is.¹⁴⁰⁷
Ye be submitted through your free assent
To stand in this case at my judgëment.
Acquit you now, and holdë your behest;¹⁴⁰⁸
Then have ye done your dévoir¹⁴⁰⁹ at the least."

"Hostë," quoth he, "*de par dieux jeo asente*;¹⁴¹⁰
To breakë forword is not mine intent.
Behest is debt, and I would hold it fain,
All my behest; I can no better sayn.
For such law as a man gives another wight,
He should himselfë usen it by right.
Thus will our text: but natheless certáin
I can right now no thrifty¹⁴¹¹ talë sayn,
But Chaucer (though he can but lewëdly¹⁴¹²
On metres and on rhyming craftily)
Hath said them, in such English as he can,
Of oldë time, as knoweth many a man.
And if he have not said them, levë¹⁴¹³ brother,
In one book, he hath said them in another
For he hath told of lovers up and down,
More than Ovidë made of mentioun¹⁴¹⁴
In his Epistolae, that be full old.
Why should I tellë them, since they he told?
In youth he made of Ceyx and Alcyon,¹⁴¹⁵
And since then he hath spoke of every one

These noble wivës, and these lovers eke.
Whoso that will his largë volume seek
Called the Saintës' Legend of Cupíd:¹⁴¹⁶
There may he see the largë woundës wide
Of Lucrece, and of Babylon Thisbé;
The sword of Dido for the false Enée;
The tree of Phillis for her Demophon;
The plaint of Diane, and of Hermion,
Of Ariadne, and Hypsipilé;
The barren islë standing in the sea;
The drown'd Leander for his fair Heró;
The tearës of Heléne, and eke the woe
Of Briseïs, and Laodamia;
The cruelty of thee, Queen Medeá,
Thy little children hanging by the halse,¹⁴¹⁷
For thy Jason, that was of love so false.
Hypermnestra, Pénelop', Alcest',
Your wifhood he commendeth with the best.
But certainly no wordë writeth he
Of thilkë wick'¹⁴¹⁸ example of Canacé,
That loved her own brother sinfully;
(Of all such cursed stories I say, Fy),
Or else of Tyrius Apollonius,
How that the cursed king Antiochus
Bereft his daughter of her maidenhead;
That is so horrible a tale to read,
When he her threw upon the pavëment.
And therefore he, of full avisëment,¹⁴¹⁹
Would never write in none of his sermons
Of such unkind¹⁴²⁰ abominatións;
Nor I will none rehearse, if that I may.
But of my tale how shall I do this day?
Me were loth to be liken'd doubtëless
To Muses, that men call Pieridës¹⁴²¹
(*Metamorphoseos*¹⁴²² wot what I mean),
But natheless I reckë not a bean,

Though I come after him with hawëbake;¹⁴²³
I speak in prose, and let him rhymës make.”
And with that word, he with a sober cheer
Began his tale, and said as ye shall hear.

THE TALE¹⁴²⁴

O scatheful harm, condition of povérty,
With thirst, with cold, with hunger so confounded;
To askë help thee shameth in thine heartë;
If thou none ask, so sore art thou y-wounded,
That very need unwrappeth all thy wound hid.
Maugré thine head thou must for indigence
Or steal, or beg, or borrow thy dispence.¹⁴²⁵

Thou blamest Christ, and sayst full bitterly,
He misdeparteth¹⁴²⁶ riches temporal;
Thy neighëbour thou witest¹⁴²⁷ sinfully,
And sayst, thou hast too little, and he hath all:
“Parfay (sayst thou) sometime he reckon shall,
When that his tail shall brennen in the glede,¹⁴²⁸
For he not help’d the needful in their need.”

Hearken what is the sentence of the wise:
Better to die than to have indigence.
Thy selvë neighëbour¹⁴²⁹ will thee despise,
If thou be poor, farewell thy reverence.
Yet of the wisë man take this senténcé,
Allë the days of poorë men be wick’,¹⁴³⁰
Beware therefore ere thou come to that prick.¹⁴³¹

If thou be poor, thy brother hateth thee,
And all thy friendës flee from thee, alas!
O richë merchants, full of wealth be ye,

O noble, prudent folk, as in this case,
Your baggës be not fill'd with ambës ace,¹⁴³²
But with six-*cinque*,¹⁴³³ that runneth for your chance;
At Christenmass well merry may ye dance.

Ye seekë land and sea for your winnîngs,
As wisë folk ye knowen all th' estate
Of regnës,¹⁴³⁴ ye be fathers of tidings,
And talës, both of peace and of debate:¹⁴³⁵
I were right now of talës desolate,¹⁴³⁶
But that a merchant, gone in many a year,
Me taught a tale, which ye shall after hear.

In Syria whilom dwelt a company
Of chapmen rich, and thereto sad¹⁴³⁷ and true,
That widëwherë¹⁴³⁸ sent their spicery,
Clothës of gold, and satins rich of hue.
Their chaffare¹⁴³⁹ was so thriftly¹⁴⁴⁰ and so new,
That every wight had dainty¹⁴⁴¹ to chaffare¹⁴⁴²
With them, and eke to sellë them their ware.

Now fell it, that the masters of that sort
Have shapen them¹⁴⁴³ to Romë for to wend,
Were it for chapmanhood¹⁴⁴⁴ or for disport,
None other message would they thither send,
But come themselves to Rome, this is the end:
And in such place as thought them ávantage
For their intent, they took their herbergage.¹⁴⁴⁵

Sojourned have these merchants in that town
A certain time as fell to their pleasance:
And so befell, that th' excellent renown
Of th' emperorë's daughter, Dame Constance,
Reported was, with every circumstance,
Unto these Syrian merchants in such wise,
From day to day, as I shall you devise¹⁴⁴⁶

This was the common voice of every man:
"Our emperor of Romë, God him see,¹⁴⁴⁷
A daughter hath, that since the world began,

To reckon as well her goodness and beauty,
Was never such another as is she:
I pray to God in honour her sustene,
And would she were of all Európe the queen.

“In her is highë beauty without pride,
And youth withoutë greenhood¹⁴⁴⁸ or follý:
To all her workës virtue is her guide;
Humbless hath slain in her all tyranny:
She is the mirror of all courtesy,
Her heart a very chamber of holiness,
Her hand miníster of freedom for almess.”¹⁴⁴⁹

And all this voice was sooth, as God is true;
But now to purpose¹⁴⁵⁰ let us turn again.
These merchants have done freight¹⁴⁵¹ their shippës new,
And when they have this blissful maiden seen,
Homë to Syria then they went full fain,
And did their needës,¹⁴⁵² as they have done yore,¹⁴⁵³
And liv’d in weal;¹⁴⁵⁴ I can you say no more.

Now fell it, that these merchants stood in grace¹⁴⁵⁵
Of him that was the Soudan¹⁴⁵⁶ of Syrie:
For when they came from any strangë place
He would of his benignë courtesy
Make them good cheer, and busily espy¹⁴⁵⁷
Tidings of sundry regnës,¹⁴⁵⁸ for to lear¹⁴⁵⁹
The wonders that they mightë see or hear.

Amongës other thingës, speciállý
These merchants have him told of Dame Constance’
So great nobless, in earnest so royálly,
That this Soudan hath caught so great pleasance
To have her figure in his remembránce,
That all his lust,¹⁴⁶⁰ and all his busy cure,¹⁴⁶¹
Was for to love her while his life may dure.

Paráventure in thilkë¹⁴⁶² largë book,
Which that men call the heaven, y-written was
With starrës, when that he his birthë took,
That he for love should have his death, alas!

For in the starrës, clearer than is glass,
Is written, God wot, whoso could it read,
The death of every man withoutë dread.¹⁴⁶³

In starrës many a winter therebeforn
Was writ the death of Hector, Achilles,
Of Pompey, Julius, ere they were born;
The strife of Thebes; and of Hercules,
Of Samson, Turnus, and of Socrates
The death; but mennë's wittës be so dull,
That no wight can well read it at the full.

This Soudan for his privy council sent,
And, shortly of this matter for to pace,¹⁴⁶⁴
He hath to them declared his intent,
And told them certain, but¹⁴⁶⁵ he might have grace
To have Constance, within a little space,
He was but dead; and charged them in hie¹⁴⁶⁶
To shapë¹⁴⁶⁷ for his life some remedy.

Diversë men diversë thingës said;
And arguments they casten up and down;
Many a subtle reason forth they laid;
They speak of magic, and abusión;¹⁴⁶⁸
But finally, as in conclusión,
They cannot see in that none ávantage,
Nor in no other way, save marriáge.

Then saw they therein such difficulty
By way of reason, for to speak all plain,
Because that there was such diversity
Between their bothë lawës, that they sayn,
They trowë¹⁴⁶⁹ that no Christian prince would fain¹⁴⁷⁰
Wedden his child under our lawë sweet,
That us was given by Mahound¹⁴⁷¹ our prophéte.

And he answered: "Rather than I lose
Constance, I will be christen'd doubtëless:
I must be hers, I may none other choose,
I pray you hold your arguments in peace,¹⁴⁷²
Savë my life, and be not reckëless

To gettë her that hath my life in cure,¹⁴⁷³
For in this woe I may not long endure.”

What needeth greater dilatation?
I say, by treaty and ambassadry,
And by the Popë’s mediation,
And all the Church, and all the chivalry,
That in destruction of Mah’metry,¹⁴⁷⁴
And in increase of Christë’s lawë dear,
They be accorded¹⁴⁷⁵ so as ye may hear;

How that the Soudan, and his baronage,
And all his lieges, shall y-christen’d be,
And he shall have Constance in marriáge,
And certain gold, I n’ot¹⁴⁷⁶ what quantity,
And hereto find they suffisant surety.
The same accord is sworn on either side;
Now, fair Constance, Almighty God thee guide!

Now wouldë some men waiten, as I guess,
That I should tellen all the purveyance,¹⁴⁷⁷
The which the emperor of his nobless
Hath shapen¹⁴⁷⁸ for his daughter, Dame Constance.
Well may men know that so great ordinance
May no man tellen in a little clause,
As was arrayed for so high a cause.

Bishops be shapen¹⁴⁷⁹ with her for to wend,¹⁴⁸⁰
Lordës, ladíes, and knightës of renown,
And other folk enough, this is the end.
And notified is throughout all the town,
That every wight with great devotioun
Should pray to Christ, that he this marriáge
Receive in gree,¹⁴⁸¹ and speedë this voyáge.

The day is comen of her départing—
I say the woful fatal day is come,
That there may be no longer tarrying,
But forward they them dressen¹⁴⁸² all and some.
Constance, that was with sorrow all o’ercome,
Full pale arose, and dressed her to wend,

For well she saw there was no other end.

Alas! what wonder is it though she wept,
That shall be sent to a strange natión
From friendës, that so tenderly her kept,
And to be bound under subjection
of one, she knew not his condition?
Husbands be all good, and have been of yore,¹⁴⁸³
That knowë wivës; I dare say no more.

“Father,” she said, “thy wretched child Constance,
Thy youngë daughter, foster’d up so soft,
And you, my mother, my sov’reign pleasance
Over all thing, out-taken¹⁴⁸⁴ Christ on loft,¹⁴⁸⁵
Constance your child her recommendeth oft
Unto your grace; for I shall to Syrie,
Nor shall I ever see you more with eye.

“Alas! unto the barbarous natión
I must anon, since that it is your will:
But Christ, that starf¹⁴⁸⁶ for our redemption,
So give me grace his hestës¹⁴⁸⁷ to fulfil.
I, wretched woman, no force though I spill!¹⁴⁸⁸
Women are born to thraldom and penánce,
And to be under mannë’s governance.”

I trow at Troy when Pyrrhus brake the wall,
Or Ilion burnt, or Thebes the city,
Nor at Rome for the harm through Hannibal,
That Romans hath y-vanquish’d timës three,
Was heard such tender weeping for pity,
As in the chamber was for her partíng;
But forth she must, whether she weep or sing.

O firstë moving cruel Firmament,¹⁴⁸⁹
With thy diurnal sway that crowdest¹⁴⁹⁰ aye,
And hurtlest all from East till Occident
That naturally would hold another way;
Thy crowding set the heav’n in such array
At the beginning of this fierce voyáge,
That cruel Mars hath slain this marriage.

Unfortunate ascendant tortuous,
Of which the lord is helpless fall'n, alas!
Out of his angle into the darkest house;
O Mars, O Atyzar,¹⁴⁹¹ as in this case;
O feeble Moon, unhappy is thy pace.¹⁴⁹²
Thou knittest thee where thou art not receiv'd,¹⁴⁹³
Where thou wert well, from thennës art thou weiv'd.¹⁴⁹⁴

Imprudent emperor of Rome, alas!
Was there no philosópher in all thy town?
Is no time bet¹⁴⁹⁵ than other in such case?
Of voyage is there none electión,
Namely¹⁴⁹⁶ to folk of high conditióh,
Not when a root is of a birth y-know?¹⁴⁹⁷
Alas! we be too lewëd,¹⁴⁹⁸ or too slow.

To ship was brought this woeful fairë maid
Solemnëly, with every circumstance:
"Now Jesus Christ be with you all," she said.
There is no more, but "Farewell, fair Constance."
She pained her¹⁴⁹⁹ to make good countenance.
And forth I let her sail in this mannér,
And turn I will again to my mattér.

The mother of the Soudan, well of vices,
Espied hath her sonë's plain intent,
How he will leave his oldë sacrifices:
And right anon she for her council sent,
And they be come, to knowë what she meant,
And when assembled was this folk in fere,¹⁵⁰⁰
She sat her down, and said as ye shall hear.

"Lordës," she said, "ye knowen every one,
How that my son in point is for to lete¹⁵⁰¹
The holy lawës of our Alkaron,¹⁵⁰²
Given by God's messenger Mahométe:
But one avow to greatë God I hete,¹⁵⁰³
Life shall rather out of my body start,
Than Mahomet's law go out of mine heart.

“What should us tiden¹⁵⁰⁴ of this newë law,
But thraldom to our bodies, and penánce,
And afterward in hell to be y-draw,
For we renied Mahound our creance?¹⁵⁰⁵
But, lordës, will ye maken assurance,
As I shall say, assenting to my lore?¹⁵⁰⁶
And I shall make us safe for evermore.”

They sworn and assented every man
To live with her and die, and by her stand:
And every one, in the best wise he can,
To strengthen her shall all his friendës fand.¹⁵⁰⁷
And she hath this emprise taken in hand,
Which ye shall hearë that I shall devise;¹⁵⁰⁸
And to them all she spake right in this wise.

“We shall first feign us Christendom to take;¹⁵⁰⁹
Cold water shall not grieve us but a lite.¹⁵¹⁰
And I shall such a feast and revel make,
That, as I trow, I shall the Soudan quite.¹⁵¹¹
For though his wife be christen'd ne'er so white,
She shall have need to wash away the red,
Though she a fount of water with her led.”

O Soudaness,¹⁵¹² root of iniquity,
Virago thou, Semiramis the secónd!
O serpent under femininity,
Like to the serpent deep in hell y-bound!
O feigned woman, all that may confound
Virtue and innocence, through thy malíce,
Is bred in thee, as nest of every vice!

O Satan envious! since thilkë day
That thou wert chased from our heritage,
Well knowest thou to woman th' oldë way.
Thou madest Eve to bring us in serváge:¹⁵¹³
Thou wilt fordo¹⁵¹⁴ this Christian marriáge:
Thine instrument so (well-away the while!)
Mak'st thou of women when thou wilt beguile.

This Soudaness, whom I thus blame and warray,¹⁵¹⁵

Let privily her council go their way:
Why should I in this talë longer tarry?
She rode unto the Soudan on a day,
And said him, that she would reny her lay,¹⁵¹⁶
And Christendom of priestës' handës fong,¹⁵¹⁷
Repenting her she heathen was so long;
Beseeching him to do her that honour,
That she might have the Christian folk to feast:
"To pleasë them I will do my labouúr."
The Soudan said, "I will do at your hest,"¹⁵¹⁸
And kneeling, thanked her for that request;
So glad he was, he wist¹⁵¹⁹ not what to say.
She kiss'd her son, and home she went her way.
Arrived be these Christian folk to land
In Syria, with a great solemnë rout,
And hastily this Soudan sent his sond,¹⁵²⁰
First to his mother, and all the realm about,
And said, his wife was comen out of doubt,
And pray'd them for to ride again¹⁵²¹ the queen,
The honour of his regnë¹⁵²² to sustene.
Great was the press, and rich was the array
Of Syrians and Romans met in fere.¹⁵²³
The mother of the Soudan rich and gay
Received her with all so glad a cheer¹⁵²⁴
As any mother might her daughter dear:
And to the nextë city there beside
A softë pace solemnely they ride.
Nought, trow I, the triúmph of Julius
Of which that Lucan maketh such a boast,
Was royaller, or morë curious,
Than was th' assembly of this blissful host:
But O this scorpion, this wicked ghost,¹⁵²⁵
The Soudaness, for all her flattering
Cast¹⁵²⁶ under this full mortally to sting.
The Soudan came himself soon after this,
So royally, that wonder is to tell,

And welcomed her with all joy and bliss.
And thus in mirth and joy I let them dwell.
The fruit of his mattér is that I tell;
When the time came, men thought it for the best
That revel stint,¹⁵²⁷ and men go to their rest.

The time is come that this old Soudaness
Ordained hath the feast of which I told,
And to the feast the Christian folk them dress
In general, yea, bothë young and old.
There may men feast and royalty behold,
And dainties more than I can you devise;
But all too dear they bought it ere they rise.

O sudden woe, that ev'r art successoúr
To worldly bliss! sprent¹⁵²⁸ is with bitterness
Th' end of our joy, of our worldly laboúr;
Woe occupies the fine¹⁵²⁹ of our gladness.
Hearken this counsel, for thy sickness:¹⁵³⁰
Upon thy gladë days have in thy mind
The unware¹⁵³¹ woe of harm, that comes behind.

For, shortly for to tell it at a word,
The Soudan and the Christians every one
Were all to-hewn and sticked at the board,¹⁵³²
But it were only Dame Constance alone.
This oldë Soudaness, this cursed crone,
Had with her friendës done this cursed deed,
For she herself would all the country lead.

Nor there was Syrian that was converted,
That of the counsel of the Soudan wot,¹⁵³³
That was not all to-hewn, ere he astarted:¹⁵³⁴
And Constance have they ta'en anon foot-hot,¹⁵³⁵
And in a ship all steerëless,¹⁵³⁶ God wot,
They have her set, and bid her learn to sail
Out of Syria again-ward to Itale.¹⁵³⁷

A certain treasure that she thither lad,¹⁵³⁸
And, sooth to say, of victual great plenty,
They have her giv'n, and clothës eke she had,

And forth she sailed in the saltë sea:
O my Constance, full of benignity,
O emperorë's youngë daughter dear,
He that is lord of fortune be thy steer!¹⁵³⁹

She bless'd herself, and with full piteous voice
Unto the cross of Christ thus saidë she;
"O dear, O wealful¹⁵⁴⁰ altar, holy cross,
Red of the Lambë's blood, full of pity,
That wash'd the world from old iniquity,
Me from the fiend and from his clawës keep,
That day that I shall drenchen¹⁵⁴¹ in the deep.

"Victorious tree, protection of the true,
That only worthy werë for to bear
The King of Heaven, with his woundës new,
The whitë Lamb, that hurt was with a spear;
Flemer¹⁵⁴² of fiendës out of him and her
On which thy limbës faithfully extend,¹⁵⁴³
Me keep, and give me might my life to mend."

Yearës and days floated this creature
Throughout the sea of Greece, unto the strait
Of Maroc,¹⁵⁴⁴ as it was her áventure:
On many a sorry meal now may she bait,
After her death full often may she wait,¹⁵⁴⁵
Ere that the wildë wavës will her drive
Unto the place there as¹⁵⁴⁶ she shall arrive.

Men mighten askë, why she was not slain?
Eke at the feast who might her body save?
And I answer to that demand again,
Who saved Daniel in the horrible cave,
Where every wight, save he, master or knave,¹⁵⁴⁷
Was with the lion frett,¹⁵⁴⁸ ere he astart?¹⁵⁴⁹
No wight but God, that he bare in his heart.

God list¹⁵⁵⁰ to shew his wonderful mirácle
In her, that we should see his mighty workës:
Christ, which that is to every harm triácle,¹⁵⁵¹

By certain meanës oft, as knowë clerkës,¹⁵⁵²
Doth thing for certain endë, that full derk is
To mannë's wit, that for our, ignorance
Ne cannot know his prudent purveyance.¹⁵⁵³

Now since she was not at the feast y-slaw,¹⁵⁵⁴
Who keptë her from drowning in the sea?
Who keptë Jonas in the fish's maw,
Till he was spouted up at Nineveh?
Well may men know, it was no wight but he
That kept the Hebrew people from drowníng,
With dryë feet throughout the sea passing.

Who bade the fourë spirits of tempést,¹⁵⁵⁵
That power have t' annoyë land and sea,
Both north and south, and also west and east,
Annoyë neither sea, nor land, nor tree?
Soothly the cómmander of that was he
That from the tempest aye this woman kept,
As well when she awoke as when she slept.

Where might this woman meat and drinkë have?
Three year and more how lasted her vitaille?¹⁵⁵⁶
Who fed the Egyptian Mary in the cave
Or in desért? no wight but Christ *sans faille*.¹⁵⁵⁷
Five thousand folk it was as great marvaille
With loavës five and fishës two to feed:
God sent his foison¹⁵⁵⁸ at her greatë need.

She driven forth into our oceán
Throughout our wildë sea, till at the last
Under an hold,¹⁵⁵⁹ that nempnen¹⁵⁶⁰ I not can,
Far in Northumberland, the wave her cast,
And in the sand her ship sticked so fast,
That thennës would it not in all a tide:¹⁵⁶¹
The will of Christ was that she should abide.

The Constable of the castle down did fare¹⁵⁶²
To see this wreck, and all the ship he sought,¹⁵⁶³
And found this weary woman full of care;
He found also the treasure that she brought:

In her languágë mercy she besought,
The life out of her body for to twin,¹⁵⁶⁴
Her to deliver of woe that she was in.

A manner Latin corrupt¹⁵⁶⁵ was her speech,
But algate¹⁵⁶⁶ thereby was she understond.
The Constable, when him list no longer seech,¹⁵⁶⁷
This woeful woman brought he to the lond.
She kneeled down, and thanked Goddë's sond;¹⁵⁶⁸
But what she was she would to no man say
For foul nor fair, although that she should dey.¹⁵⁶⁹

She said, she was so mazed in the sea,
That she forgot her mindë, by her truth.
The Constable had of her so great pity
And eke his wifë, that they wept for ruth:¹⁵⁷⁰
She was so diligent withoutë slouth
To serve and please every one in that place,
That all her lov'd, that looked in her face.

The Constable and Dame Hermegild his wife
Were Pagans, and that country every where;
But Hermegild lov'd Constance as her life;
And Constance had so long sojourned there
In orisons, with many a bitter tear,
Till Jesus had converted through His grace
Dame Hermegild, Constábless of that place.

In all that land no Christians durstë rout;¹⁵⁷¹
All Christian folk had fled from that countrý
Through Pagans, that conquered all about
The plages¹⁵⁷² of the North by land and sea.
To Wales had fled the Christianity
Of oldë Britons,¹⁵⁷³ dwelling in this isle;
There was their refuge for the meanëwhile.

But yet n'ere¹⁵⁷⁴ Christian Britons so exiled,
That there n'ere¹⁵⁷⁵ some which in their privity
Honoured Christ, and heathen folk beguiled;
And nigh the castle such there dwelled three:
And one of them was blind, and might not see,

But¹⁵⁷⁶ it were with thilk¹⁵⁷⁷ eyen of his mind,
With which men mayë see when they be blind.

Bright was the sun, as in a summer's day,
For which the Constable, and his wife also,
And Constance, have y-take the rightë way
Toward the sea, a furlong way or two,
To playen, and to roamë to and fro;
And in their walk this blindë man they met,
Crooked and old, with eyen fast y-shet.¹⁵⁷⁸

"In the name of Christ," criéd this blind Britón,
"Dame Hermegild, give me my sight again!"
This lady wax'd afrayed of that soun',¹⁵⁷⁹
Lest that her husband, shortly for to sayn,
Would her for Jesus Christë's love have slain,
Till Constance made her hold, and bade her wirch¹⁵⁸⁰
The will of Christ, as daughter of holy Church.

The Constable wax'd abashed¹⁵⁸¹ of that sight,
And saidë; "What amounteth all this fare?"¹⁵⁸²
Constance answered; "Sir, it is Christ's might,
That helpeth folk out of the fiendë's snare."
And so farforth¹⁵⁸³ she gan our law declare,
That she the Constable, ere that it were eve,
Converted, and on Christ made him believe.

This Constable was not lord of the place
Of which I speak, there as he Constance fand,¹⁵⁸⁴
But kept it strongly many a winter space,
Under Allá, king of Northumberland,
That was full wise, and worthy of his hand
Against the Scotës, as men may well hear;
But turn I will again to my mattére.

Satan, that ever us waiteth to beguile,
Saw of Constance all her perfectioún,
And cast¹⁵⁸⁵ anon how he might quite her while;¹⁵⁸⁶
And made a young knight, that dwelt in that town,
Love her so hot of foul affectioún,
That verily him thought that he should spill¹⁵⁸⁷

But¹⁵⁸⁸ he of her might onës have his will.

He wooed her, but it availed nought;
She wouldë do no sinnë by no way:
And for despite, he compassed his thought
To makë her a shameful death to dey;¹⁵⁸⁹
He waiteth when the Constable is away,
And privily upon a night he crept
In Hermegilda's chamber while she slept.

Weary, forwaked¹⁵⁹⁰ in her orisons,
Sleepeth Constance, and Hermegild also.
This knight, through Satanas' temptatións,
All softëtly is to the bed y-go,¹⁵⁹¹
And cut the throat of Hermegild in two,
And laid the bloody knife by Dame Constance,
And went his way, there God give him mischance.

Soon after came the Constable home again,
And eke Allá that king was of that land,
And saw his wife despiteously¹⁵⁹² slain,
For which full oft he wept and wrung his hand;
And in the bed the bloody knife he fand
By Dame Constance: Alas! what might she say?
For very woe her wit was all away.

To King Allá was told all this mischance,
And eke the time, and where, and in what wise,
That in a ship was founden this Constance,
As here before ye have me heard devise.¹⁵⁹³
The kingë's heart for pity gan agrise,¹⁵⁹⁴
When he saw so benign a creature
Fall in disease¹⁵⁹⁵ and in misáventure.

For as the lamb toward his death is brought,
So stood this innocent before the king:
This falsë knight, that had this treason wrought,
Bore her in hand¹⁵⁹⁶ that she had done this thing:
But natheless there was great murmuring
Among the people, that say they cannot guess
That she had done so great a wickedness.

For they had seen her ever virtuoús,
And loving Hermegild right as her life:
Of this bare witness each one in that house,
Save he that Hermegild slew with his knife:
This gentle king had caught a great motife¹⁵⁹⁷
Of this witness, and thought he would inquire
Deeper into this case, the truth to lear.¹⁵⁹⁸

Alas! Constance, thou has no champiún,
Nor fightë canst thou not, so well-away!
But he that starf¹⁵⁹⁹ for our redemption,
And bound Satán, and yet li'th where he lay,¹⁶⁰⁰
So be thy strongë champion this day:
For, but Christ upon thee mirácle kithe,¹⁶⁰¹
Withoutë guilt thou shalt be slain as swithe.¹⁶⁰²

She set her down on knees, and thus she said;
“Immortal God, that savedest Susanne
From falsë blame; and thou merciful maid,
Mary I mean, the daughter to Saint Anne,
Before whose child the angels sing Osanne,¹⁶⁰³
If I be guiltless of this felony,¹⁶⁰⁴
My succour be, or ellës shall I die.”

Have ye not seen sometime a palë face
(Among a press) of him that hath been lad¹⁶⁰⁵
Toward his death, where he getteth no grace,
And such a colour in his face hath had,
Men mightë know him that was so bestad¹⁶⁰⁶
Amongës all the faces in that rout?
So stood Constance, and looked her about.

O queenës living in prosperity,
Duchesses, and ye ladies every one,
Havë some ruth¹⁶⁰⁷ on her adversity!
An emperor's daughtér, she stood alone;
She had no wight to whom to make her moan.
O blood royál, that standest in this drede,¹⁶⁰⁸
Far be thy friendës in thy greatë need!

This king Allá had such compassiún,

As gentle heart is full filled of pity,
That from his eyen ran the water down
“Now hastily do fetch a book,” quoth he;
“And if this knight will swearë, how that she
This woman slew, yet will we us advise¹⁶⁰⁹
Whom that we will that shall be our justice.”¹⁶¹⁰

A Briton book, written with Evangiles,¹⁶¹¹
Was fetched, and on this book he swore anon
She guilty was; and, in the meanëwhiles,
An hand him smote upon the neckë bone,
That down he fell at once right as a stone:
And both his eyen burst out of his face
In sight of ev’rybody in that place.

A voice was heard, in general audience,
That said; “Thou hast deslander’d guiltëless
The daughter of holy Church in high presence;
Thus hast thou done, and yet hold I my peace?”¹⁶¹²
Of this marvel aghast was all the press,
As mazed folk they stood every one
For dread of wreakë,¹⁶¹³ save Constance alone.

Great was the dread and eke the repentance
Of them that haddë wrong suspiciön
Upon this sely¹⁶¹⁴ innocent Constance;
And for this miracle, in conclusiön,
And by Constance’s mediatiön,
The king, and many another in that place,
Converted was, thanked be Christë’s grace!

This falsë knight was slain for his untruth
By judgëment of Alla hastily;
And yet Constance had of his death great ruth;¹⁶¹⁵
And after this Jesus of his mercy
Made Alla weddë full solemnëly
This holy woman, that is so bright and sheen,
And thus hath Christ y-made Constance a queen.

But who was woeful, if I shall not lie,
Of this wedding but Donegild, and no mo’,

The kingë's mother, full of tyranny?
Her thought her cursed heart would burst in two;
She would not that her son had donë so;
Her thought it a despite that he should take
So strange a creature unto his make.¹⁶¹⁶

Me list not of the chaff nor of the stre¹⁶¹⁷
Make so long a tale, as of the corn.
What should I tellen of the royalty
Of this marriage, or which course goes beforne,
Who bloweth in a trump or in an horn?
The fruit of every tale is for to say;
They eat and drink, and dance, and sing, and play.

They go to bed, as it was skill¹⁶¹⁸ and right;
For though that wivës be full holy things,
They mustë take in patience at night
Such manner¹⁶¹⁹ necessities as be pleasings
To folk that have y-wedded them with rings,
And lay a lite¹⁶²⁰ their holiness aside
As for the time, it may no better betide.

On her he got a knavë¹⁶²¹ child anon,
And to a Bishop and to his Constable eke
He took his wife to keep, when he is gone
To Scotland-ward, his foemen for to seek.
Now fair Constance, that is so humble and meek,
So long is gone with childë till that still
She held her chamb'r, abiding Christë's will

The time is come, a knavë child she bare;
Mauricius at the font-stone they him call.
This Constable doth forth come¹⁶²² a messenger,
And wrote unto his king that clep'd was All',
How that this blissful tiding is befall,
And other tidings speedful for to say.
He¹⁶²³ hath the letter, and forth he go'th his way.

This messenger, to do his ávantage,¹⁶²⁴
Unto the kingë's mother rideth swithe,¹⁶²⁵
And saluteth¹⁶²⁶ her full fair in his language.

“Madame,” quoth he, “ye may be glad and blithe,
And thankē God an hundred thousand sithe;¹⁶²⁷
My lady queen hath child, withoutē doubt,
To joy and bliss of all this realm about.

“Lo, here the letter sealed of this thing,
That I must bear with all the haste I may:
If ye will aught unto your son the king,
I am your servant both by night and day.”
Donegild answer’d, “As now at this time, nay;
But here I will all night thou take thy rest,
To-morrow will I say thee what me lest.”¹⁶²⁸

This messenger drank sadly¹⁶²⁹ ale and wine,
And stolen were his letters privily
Out of his box, while he slept as a swine;
And counterfeited was full subtilly
Another letter, wrote full sinfully,
Unto the king, direct of this mattēre
From his Constable, as ye shall after hear.

This letter said, the queen deliver’d was
Of so horrible a fiendlike creatūre,
That in the castle none so hardy¹⁶³⁰ was
That any while he durst therein endure:
The mother was an elf by áventure
Become,¹⁶³¹ by charmēs or by sorcery,
And every man hated her company.

Woe was this king when he this letter had seen,
But to no wight he told his sorrows sore,
But with his owen hand he wrote again;
“Welcome the sond¹⁶³² of Christ for evermore
To me, that am now learned in this lore:¹⁶³³
Lord, welcome be thy lust¹⁶³⁴ and thy pleasance,
My lust I put all in thine ordinance.

“Keepē¹⁶³⁵ this child, all be it foul or fair,
And eke my wife, unto mine homecoming:
Christ when him list may send to me an heir,
More agreeáble than this to my liking.”

This letter he sealed, privily weeping.
Which to the messenger was taken soon,
And forth he went, there is no more to do'n. [1636](#)

O messenger full fill'd of drunkenness,
Strong is thy breath, thy limbës falter aye,
And thou betrayest allë secretness;
Thy mind is lorn, [1637](#) thou janglest as a jay;
Thy face is turned in a new array; [1638](#)
Where drunkenness reigneth in any rout, [1639](#)
There is no counsel hid, withoutë doubt.

O Donegild, I have no English dign [1640](#)
Unto thy malice, and thy tyranny:
And therefore to the fiend I thee resign,
Let him indite of all thy treachery.
Fy, mannish, [1641](#) fy! O nay, by God I lie;
Fy, fiendlike spirit! for I dare well tell,
Though thou here walk, thy spirit is in hell.

This messenger came from the king again,
And at the kingë's mother's court he light, [1642](#)
And she was of this messenger full fain, [1643](#)
And pleased him in all that e'er she might.
He drank, and well his girdle underpight; [1644](#)
He slept, and eke he snored in his guise
All night, until the sun began to rise.

Eft [1645](#) were his letters stolen every one,
And counterfeited letters in this wise:
The king commanded his Constable anon,
On pain of hanging and of high jewise, [1646](#)
That he should suffer in no manner wise
Constance within his regne [1647](#) for to abide
Three dayës, and a quarter of a tide; [1648](#)

But in the samë ship as he her fand,
Her and her youngë son, and all her gear,
He shouldë put, and crowd [1649](#) her from the land,
And charge her, that she never eft come there.

O my Constance, well may thy ghost¹⁶⁵⁰ have fear,
And sleeping in thy dream be in penance,¹⁶⁵¹
When Donegild cast¹⁶⁵² all this ordinance.¹⁶⁵³

This messenger, on morrow when he woke,
Unto the castle held the next¹⁶⁵⁴ way,
And to the constable the letter took;
And when he this dispiteous¹⁶⁵⁵ letter sey,¹⁶⁵⁶
Full oft he said, "Alas, and well-away!
Lord Christ," quoth he, "how may this world endure?
So full of sin is many a creature.

"O mighty God, if that it be thy will,
Since thou art rightful judge, how may it be
That thou wilt suffer innocence to spill,¹⁶⁵⁷
And wicked folk reign in prosperity?
Ah! good Constance, alas! so woe is me,
That I must be thy tormentor, or dey¹⁶⁵⁸
A shameful death, there is no other way."

Wept both¹⁶⁵⁹ young and old in all that place,
When that the king this cursed letter sent;
And Constance, with a deadly pal¹⁶⁶⁰ face,
The fourth¹⁶⁶¹ day toward her ship she went:
But natheless she took in good intent
The will of Christ, and kneeling on the strond¹⁶⁶²
She said¹⁶⁶³, "Lord, aye welcome be thy sond.¹⁶⁶⁴

"He that me kept¹⁶⁶⁵ from the fals¹⁶⁶⁶ blame,
While I was in the land among¹⁶⁶⁷es you,
He can me keep from harm and eke from shame
In the salt sea, although I see not how:
As strong as ever he was, he is yet now,
In him trust I, and in his mother dear;
That is to me my sail and eke my stere."¹⁶⁶⁸

Her little child lay weeping in her arm,
And, kneeling, piteously to him she said,
"Peace, little son, I will do thee no harm:"
With that her kerchief off her head she braid,¹⁶⁶⁹
And over his little eyen she it laid,

And in her arm she lulled it full fast,
And unto heav'n her eyen up she cast.

“Mother,” quoth she, “and maiden bright, Mary,
Sooth is, that through a woman's eggement¹⁶⁶³
Mankind was lorn,¹⁶⁶⁴ and damned aye to die;
For which thy child was on a cross y-rent:¹⁶⁶⁵
Thy blissful eyen saw all his torment,
Then is there no comparison between
Thy woe, and any woe man may sustene.

“Thou saw'st thy child y-slain before thine eyen,
And yet now lives my little child, parfay:¹⁶⁶⁶
Now, lady bright, to whom the woeful cryen,
Thou glory of womanhood, thou fairë may,¹⁶⁶⁷
Thou haven of refuge, bright star of day,
Rue¹⁶⁶⁸ on my child, that of thy gentleness
Ruest on every rueful¹⁶⁶⁹ in distress.

“O little child, alas! what is thy guilt,
That never wroughtest sin as yet, pardie?¹⁶⁷⁰
Why will thine hardë¹⁶⁷¹ father have thee spilt?¹⁶⁷²
O mercy, dearë Constable,” quoth she,
“And let my little child here dwell with thee:
And if thou dar'st not save him from blame,
So kiss him onës in his father's name.”

Therewith she looked backward to the land,
And saidë, “Farewell, husband ruthëless!”¹⁶⁷³
And up she rose, and walked down the strand
Toward the ship, her following all the press:¹⁶⁷⁴
And ever she pray'd her child to hold his peace,
And took her leave, and with an holy intent
She blessed her, and to the ship she went.

Victualed was the ship, it is no drede,¹⁶⁷⁵
Abundantly for her a full long space:
And other necessities that should need¹⁶⁷⁶
She had enough, heried¹⁶⁷⁷ be Goddë's grace:
For wind and weather, Almighty God purchase,¹⁶⁷⁸

And bring her home; I can no better say;
But in the sea she drived forth her way.

Allá the king came home soon after this
Unto the castle, of the which I told,
And asked where his wife and his child is;
The Constable gan about his heart feel cold,
And plainly all the matter he him told
As ye have heard; I can tell it no better;
And shew'd the king his seal, and eke his letter

And saidë; "Lord, as ye commanded me
On pain of death, so have I done certáin."
The messenger tormented¹⁶⁷⁹ was, till he
Mustë beknow,¹⁶⁸⁰ and tell it flat and plain,
From night to night in what place he had lain;
And thus, by wit and subtle inquiring,
Imagin'd was by whom this harm gan spring.

The hand was known that had the letter wrote,
And all the venom of the cursed deed;
But in what wise, certáinly I know nót.
Th' effect is this, that Alla, out of drede,¹⁶⁸¹
His mother slew, that may men plainly read,
For that she traitor was to her liegeánce:¹⁶⁸²
Thus ended oldë Donegild with mischance.

The sorrow that this Alla night and day
Made for his wife, and for his child also,
There is no tonguë that it tellë may.
But now will I again to Constance go,
That floated in the sea in pain and woe
Five year and more, as liked Christë's sond,¹⁶⁸³
Ere that her ship approached to the lond.¹⁶⁸⁴

Under an heathen castle, at the last,
Of which the name in my text I not find,
Constance and eke her child the sea upcast.
Almighty God, that saved all mankind,
Have on Constance and on her child some mind,
That fallen is in heathen hand eftsoon¹⁶⁸⁵

In point to spill,¹⁶⁸⁶ as I shall tell you soon!

Down from the castle came there many a wight
To gauren¹⁶⁸⁷ on this ship, and on Constance:
But shortly from the castle, on a night,
The lordë's steward—God give him mischance—
A thief that had renied our creance,¹⁶⁸⁸
Came to the ship alone, and said he would
Her leman¹⁶⁸⁹ be, whether she would or n'ould.¹⁶⁹⁰

Woe was this wretched woman then begone;
Her child cri'd, and she cried piteously:
But blissful Mary help'd her right anon,
For, with her struggling well and mightily,
The thief fell overboard all suddenly,
And in the sea he drenched¹⁶⁹¹ for vengeance,
And thus hath Christ unwemmed¹⁶⁹² kept Constánce.

O foul lust of luxúry! lo thine end!
Not only that thou faintest¹⁶⁹³ mannë's mind,
But verily thou wilt his body shend.¹⁶⁹⁴
Th' end of thy work, or of thy lustës blind,
Is cómplaining: how many may men find,
That not for work, sometimes, but for th' intent
To do this sin, be either slain or shent?

How may this weakë woman have the strength
Her to defend against this renegade?
O Góliath, unmeasurable of length,
How mightë David makë thee so mate?¹⁶⁹⁵
So young, and of armoúr so desolate,¹⁶⁹⁶
How durst he look upon thy dreadful face?
Well may men see it was but Goddë's grace.

Who gave Judith couráge or hardiness
To slay him, Holofernes, in his tent,
And to deliver out of wretchedness
The people of God? I say for this intent,
That right as God spirit of vigour sent
To them, and saved them out of mischance,
So sent he might and vigour to Constance.

Forth went her ship throughout the narrow mouth
Of Jubaltare and Septe,¹⁶⁹⁷ driving alway,
Sometimë west, and sometime north and south,
And sometime east, full many a weary day:
Till Christë's mother (blessed be she aye)
Had shapen¹⁶⁹⁸ through her endëless goodness
To make an end of all her heaviness.

Now let us stint of Constance but a throw,¹⁶⁹⁹
And speak we of the Roman emperor,
That out of Syria had by letters know
The slaughter of Christian folk, and dishonór
Done to his daughter by a false traitór—
I mean the cursed wicked Soudaness,
That at the feast let¹⁷⁰⁰ slay both more and less.

For which this emperor had sent anon
His senator, with royal ordinance,
And other lordës, God wot, many a one,
On Syrians to takë high vengeance:
They burn and slay, and bring them to mischance
Full many a day: but shortly this is th' end,
Homeward to Rome they shaped them to wend.

This senator repaired with victóry
To Romë-ward, sailing full royally,
And met the ship driving, as saith the story,
In which Constancë sat full piteously:
And nothing knew he what she was, nor why
She was in such array; nor she will say
Of her estate, although that she should dey.¹⁷⁰¹

He brought her unto Rome, and to his wife
He gave her, and her youngë son also:
And with the senator she led her life.
Thus can our Lady bringen out of woe
Woeful Constance, and many another mo':
And longë time she dwelled in that place,
In holy works ever, as was her grace.

The senatorë's wife her auntë was,

But for all that she knew her ne'er the more:
I will no longer tarry in this case,
But to King Alla, whom I spake of yore,
That for his wifë wept and sighed sore,
I will return, and leave I will Constance
Under the senatorë's governance.

King Alla, which that had his mother slain,
Upon a day fell in such repentance;
That, if I shortly tell it shall and plain,
To Rome he came to receive his penitance,
And put him in the Popë's ordinance
In high and low, and Jesus Christ besought
Forgive his wicked works that he had wrought.

The fame anon throughout the town is borne,
How Alla king shall come on pilgrimage,
By harbingers that wentë him befor,
For which the senator, as was uságe,
Rode him again,¹⁷⁰² and many of his lineáge,
As well to show his high magnificence,
As to do any king a reverence.

Great cheerë¹⁷⁰³ did this noble senator
To King Allá and he to him also;
Each of them did the other great honór;
And so befell, that in a day or two
This senator did to King Alla go
To feast, and shortly, if I shall not lie,
Constance's son went in his company.

Some men would say,¹⁷⁰⁴ at réquest of Constance
This senator had led this child to feast:
I may not tellen every circumstance,
Be as be may, there was he at the least:
But sooth is this, that at his mother's hest¹⁷⁰⁵
Before Allá, during the meatë's space,¹⁷⁰⁶
The child stood, looking in the kingë's face.

This Alla king had of this child great wonder,
And to the senator he said anon,

“Whose is that fairë child that standeth yonder?”

“I n’ot,”¹⁷⁰⁷ quoth he, “by God and by Saint John;
A mother he hath, but father hath he none,
That I of wot:” and shortly in a stound¹⁷⁰⁸
He told to Alla how this child was found.

“But God wot,” quoth this senator also,
“So virtuous a liver in all my life
I never saw, as she, nor heard of mo’
Of worldly woman, maiden, widow or wife:
I dare well say she haddë lever¹⁷⁰⁹ a knife
Throughout her breast, than be a woman wick’,¹⁷¹⁰
There is no man could bring her to that prick.¹⁷¹¹

Now was this child as like unto Constance
As possible is a creature to be:
This Alla had the face in remembráncé
Of Dame Constance, and thereon mused he,
If that the childë’s mother were aught she¹⁷¹²
That was his wife; and privily he sight,¹⁷¹³
And sped him from the table that he might.¹⁷¹⁴

“Parfay,”¹⁷¹⁵ thought he, “phantom¹⁷¹⁶ is in mine head.
I ought to deem, of skilful judgëment,¹⁷¹⁷
That in the saltë sea my wife is dead.”
And afterward he made his argument,
“What wot I, if that Christ have hither sent
My wife by sea, as well as he her sent
To my country, from thennës that she went?”

And, after noon, home with the senator
Went Alla, for to see this wondrous chance.
This senator did Alla great honór,
And hastily he sent after Constance:
But trustë well, her listë not to dance.
When that she wistë wherefore was that sond,¹⁷¹⁸
Unneth¹⁷¹⁹ upon her feet she mightë stand.

When Alla saw his wife, fair he her gret,¹⁷²⁰
And wept, that it was ruthë for to see,

For at the firstë look he on her set
He knew well verily that it was she:
And she, for sorrow, as dumb stood as a tree:
So was her heartë shut in her distress,
When she remember'd his unkindëness.

Twicë she swooned in his owen sight,
He wept and him excused piteously:
“Now God,” quoth he, “and all his hallows¹⁷²¹ bright
So wisly¹⁷²² on my soulë have mercý,
That of your harm as guiltëless am I,
As is Mauríce my son, so like your face,
Else may the fiend me fetch out of this place.”

Long was the sobbing and the bitter pain,
Ere that their woeful heartës mightë cease;
Great was the pity for to hear them plain,¹⁷²³
Through whichë plaintës gan their woe increase.
I pray you all my labour to release,
I may not tell all their woe till to-morrow,
I am so weary for to speak of sorrow.

But finally, when that the sooth is wist,¹⁷²⁴
That Alla guiltless was of all her woe,
I trow an hundred timës have they kiss'd,
And such a bliss is there betwixt them two,
That, save the joy that lasteth evermo',
There is none like, that any creatúre
Hath seen, or shall see, while the world may dure.

Then prayed she her husband meekëly
In the relief of her long piteous pine,¹⁷²⁵
That he would pray her father specially,
That of his majesty he would incline
To vouchësafe some day with him to dine:
She pray'd him eke, that he should by no way
Unto her father no word of her say.

Some men would say, how that the child Mauríce
Did this messáge unto the emperor:
But, as I guess, Alla was not so nice,¹⁷²⁶

To him that is so sovereign of honór
As he that is of Christian folk the flow'r,
Send any child, but better 'tis to deem
He went himself; and so it may well seem.

This emperor hath granted gentilly
To come to dinner, as he him besought:
And well rede¹⁷²⁷ I, he looked busily
Upon this child, and on his daughter thought.
Alla went to his inn, and as him ought
Arrayed¹⁷²⁸ for this feast in every wise,
As farforth as his cunning¹⁷²⁹ may suffice.

The morrow came, and Alla gan him dress,¹⁷³⁰
And eke his wife, the emperor to meet:
And forth they rode in joy and in gladness,
And when she saw her father in the street,
She lighted down and fell before his feet.
“Father,” quoth she, “your youngë child Constance
Is now full clean out of your rémembrance.

“I am your daughter, your Constance,” quoth she,
“That whilom ye have sent into Syrie;
It am I, father, that in the salt sea
Was put alone, and damned¹⁷³¹ for to die.
Now, goodë father, I you mercy cry,
Send me no more into none heatheness,
But thank my lord here of his kindëness.”

Who can the piteous joyë tellen all,
Betwixt them three, since they be thus y-met?
But of my talë make an end I shall,
The day goes fast, I will no longer let.¹⁷³²
These gladdë folk to dinner be y-set;
In joy and bliss at meat I let them dwell,
A thousand fold well more than I can tell.

This child Maurice was since then emperór
Made by the Pope, and lived Christianly,
To Christë's Churchë did he great honór:
But I let all his story passë by,

Of Constance is my tale especially,
In the oldë Roman gestës¹⁷³³ men may find
Mauríce's life, I bear it not in mind.

This King Alla, when he his timë sey,¹⁷³⁴
With his Constance, his holy wife so sweet,
To England are they come the rightë way,
Where they did live in joy and in quiët.

But little while it lasted, I you hete,¹⁷³⁵
Joy of this world for time will not abide,
From day to night it changeth as the tide.

Who liv'd ever in such delight one day,
That him not moved either conscience,
Or ire, or talent, or some kind affray,¹⁷³⁶
Envy, or pride, or passion, or offence?
I say but for this endë this sentënce,¹⁷³⁷
That little while in joy or in pleasance
Lasted the bliss of Alla with Constance.

For death, that takes of high and low his rent,
When passed was a year, even as I guess,
Out of this world this King Alla he hent,¹⁷³⁸
For whom Constance had full great heaviness.
Now let us pray that God his soulë bless:
And Dame Constancë, finally to say,
Toward the town of Romë went her way.

To Rome is come this holy creature,
And findeth there her friendës whole and sound:
Now is she scaped all her áventure:
And when that she her father hath y-found,
Down on her kneës falleth she to ground,
Weeping for tenderness in heartë blithe
She herieth¹⁷³⁹ God an hundred thousand sithe.¹⁷⁴⁰

In virtue and in holy almës-deed
They liven all, and ne'er asunder wend;
Till death departeth them, this life they lead:
And fare now well, my tale is at an end.—
Now Jesus Christ, that of his might may send

Joy after woe, govérn us in his grace
And keep us allë that be in this place.

THE WIFE OF BATH'S TALE

THE PROLOGUE¹⁷⁴¹

Experience, though none authority¹⁷⁴²
Were in this world, is right enough for me
To speak of woe that is in marriage:
For, lordings, since I twelve year was of age,
(Thanked be God that is etern on live),¹⁷⁴³
Husbands at the church door have I had five—¹⁷⁴⁴
For I so often have y-wedded be—
And all were worthy men in their degree.
But me was told, not longë timë gone is,
That sithen¹⁷⁴⁵ Christë went never but onës
To wedding, in the Cane¹⁷⁴⁶ of Galilee,
That by that ilk¹⁷⁴⁷ example taught he me,
That I not wedded shouldë be but once.
Lo, hearken eke a sharp word for the nonce,¹⁷⁴⁸
Beside a wellë Jesus, God and man,
Spake in reproof of the Samaritan:
“Thou hast y-had five husbandës,” said he;
“And thilkë¹⁷⁴⁹ man, that now hath wedded thee,
Is not thine husband:”¹⁷⁵⁰ thus said he certáin;
What that he meant thereby, I cannot sayn.
But that I askë, why the fifthë man

Was not husband to the Samaritan?
How many might she have in marriage?
Yet heard I never tellen in mine age¹⁷⁵¹
Upon this number definitioun.
Men may divine, and glosen¹⁷⁵² up and down;
But well I wot, express without a lie,
God bade us for to wax and multiply;
That gentle text can I well understand.
Eke well I wot, he said, that mine husband
Should leave father and mother, and take to me;
But of no number mentión made he,
Of bigamy or of octogamy;
Why then should men speak of it villainy?¹⁷⁵³
 Lo here, the wisë king Dan¹⁷⁵⁴ Solomon,
I trow that he had wivës more than one;
As would to God it lawful were to me
To be refreshed half so oft as he!
What gift¹⁷⁵⁵ of God had he for all his wivës?
No man hath such, that in this world alive is.
God wot, this noble king, as to my wit,¹⁷⁵⁶
The first night had many a merry fit
With each of them, so well was him on live.¹⁷⁵⁷
Blessed be God that I have wedded five!
Welcome the sixth whenever that he shall.
For since I will not keep me chaste in all,
When mine husband is from the world y-gone,
Some Christian man shall weddë me anon.
For then th' apostle saith that I am free
To wed, a' God's half,¹⁷⁵⁸ where it liketh me.
He saith, that to be wedded is no sin;
Better is to be wedded than to brin.¹⁷⁵⁹
What recketh me¹⁷⁶⁰ though folk say villainy¹⁷⁶¹
Of shrewed¹⁷⁶² Lamech, and his bigamy?
I wot well Abraham was a holy man,
And Jacob eke, as far as ev'r I can.¹⁷⁶³
And each of them had wivës more than two;

And many another holy man also.
Where can ye see, in any manner age,¹⁷⁶⁴
That highē God defended¹⁷⁶⁵ marriage
By word express? I pray you tell it me;
Or where commanded he virginity?
I wot as well as you, it is no dread,¹⁷⁶⁶
Th' apostle, when he spake of maidenhead,
He said, that precept thereof had he none:
Men may counsēl a woman to be one,¹⁷⁶⁷
But counseling is no commandēment;
He put it in our owen judgēment.
For, haddē God commanded maidenhead,
Then had he damned¹⁷⁶⁸ wedding out of dread;¹⁷⁶⁹
And certes, if there were no seed y-sow,¹⁷⁷⁰
Virginity then whereof should it grow?
Paul durstē not commanden, at the least,
A thing of which his Master gave no hest.¹⁷⁷¹
The dart¹⁷⁷² is set up for virginity;
Catch whoso may, who runneth best let see.
But this word is not ta'en of every wight,
But there as¹⁷⁷³ God will give it of his might.
I wot well that th' apostle was a maid,
But natheless, although he wrote and said,
He would that every wight were such as he,
All is but counsel to virginity.
And, since to be a wife he gave me leave
Of indulgence, so is it no reprove¹⁷⁷⁴
To weddē me, if that my make¹⁷⁷⁵ should die,
Without exceptiōn¹⁷⁷⁶ of bigamy;
All were it¹⁷⁷⁷ good no woman for to touch
(He meant as in his bed or in his couch),
For peril is both fire and tow t' assemble;
Ye know what this example may resemble.
This is all and some, he held virginity
More profit than wedding in frailty:¹⁷⁷⁸

(Frailty clepe I, but if¹⁷⁷⁹ that he and she
Would lead their livës all in chastity),
I grant it well, I have of none envý
Who maidenhead prefer to bigamy;
It liketh them t' be clean in body and ghost;¹⁷⁸⁰
Of mine estate¹⁷⁸¹ I will not make a boast.

For, well ye know, a lord in his household
Hath not every vessel all of gold;¹⁷⁸²
Some are of tree, and do their lord servíce.
God calleth folk to him in sundry wise,
And each one hath of God a proper gift,
Some this, some that, as liketh him to shift.¹⁷⁸³
Virginity is great perfectiún,
And continence eke with devotiún:
But Christ, that of perfection is the well,¹⁷⁸⁴
Bade not every wight he should go sell
All that he had, and give it to the poor,
And in such wise follow him and his lore:¹⁷⁸⁵
He spake to them that would live perfectly—
And, lordings, by your leave, that am not I;
I will bestow the flower of mine age
In th' acts and in the fruits of marriage.

Tell me also, to what conclusiún¹⁷⁸⁶
Were members made of generatiún,
And of so perfect wise a wight¹⁷⁸⁷ y-wrought?
Trust me right well, they were not made for nought.
Glose whoso will, and say both up and down,
That they were made for the purgatióún
Of urine, and of other thingës smale,
And eke to know a female from a male:
And for none other causë? say ye no?
Experience wot well it is not so.
So that the clerkës¹⁷⁸⁸ be not with me wroth,
I say this, that they werë made for both,
That is to say, for office,¹⁷⁸⁹ and for ease¹⁷⁹⁰
Of engendrure, there we God not displease.

Why should men ellës in their bookës set,
That man shall yield unto his wife her debt?
Now wherewith should he make his payëment,
If he us'd not his silly instrument?
Then were they made upon a creature
To purge urine, and eke for engendrure.
But I say not that every wight is hold,¹⁷⁹¹
That hath such harness¹⁷⁹² as I to you told,
To go and usë them in engendrure;
Then should men take of chastity no cure.¹⁷⁹³
Christ was a maid, and shapen¹⁷⁹⁴ as a man,
And many a saint, since that this world began,
Yet ever liv'd in perfect chastity.
I will not vie¹⁷⁹⁵ with no virginity.
Let them with bread of pured¹⁷⁹⁶ wheat be fed,
And let us wivës eat our barley bread.
And yet with barley bread, Mark tell us can,¹⁷⁹⁷
Our Lord Jesus refreshed many a man.
In such estate as God hath cleped us,¹⁷⁹⁸
I'll persevere, I am not precious,¹⁷⁹⁹
In wifhood I will use mine instrument
As freely as my Maker hath it sent.
If I be dangerous¹⁸⁰⁰ God give me sorrow;
Mine husband shall it have, both eve and morrow,
When that him list come forth and pay his debt.
A husband will I have, I will no let,¹⁸⁰¹
Which shall be both my debtor and my thrall,¹⁸⁰²
And have his tribulatiön withal
Upon his flesh, while that I am his wife.
I have the power during all my life
Upon his proper body, and not he;
Right thus th' apostle told it unto me,
And bade our husbands for to love us well;
All this senténce me liketh every deal.—¹⁸⁰³
Up start the Pardoner, and that anon;

“Now, Dame,” quoth he, “by God and by Saint John,
Ye are a noble preacher in this case.

I was about to wed a wife, alas!

What? should I bie¹⁸⁰⁴ it on my flesh so dear?

Yet had I lever¹⁸⁰⁵ wed no wife this year.”

“Abide,”¹⁸⁰⁶ quoth she; “my tale is not begun.

Nay, thou shalt drinken of another tun

Ere that I go, shall savour worse than ale.

And when that I have told thee forth my tale

Of tribulatió in marriáge,

Of which I am expert in all mine age,

(This is to say, myself hath been the whip),¹⁸⁰⁷

Then mayest thou choose whether thou wilt sip

Of thilkë tunnë,¹⁸⁰⁸ that I now shall broach.

Beware of it, ere thou too nigh approach,

For I shall tell examples more than ten:

Whoso will not beware by other men,

By him shall other men corrected be:

These samë wordës writeth Ptolemý;

Read in his Almagest, and take it there.”

“Dame, I would pray you, if your will it were,”

Saidë this Pardoner, “as ye began,

Tell forth your tale, and sparë for no man,

And teach us youngë men of your practique.”

“Gladly,” quoth she, “since that it may you like.

But that I pray to all this company,

If that I speak after my fantasy,

To takë nought agrief¹⁸⁰⁹ what I may say;

For mine intent is only for to play.—

Now, Sirs, then will I tell you forth my tale.

As ever may I drinkë wine or ale

I shall say sooth; the husbands that I had

Three of them werë good, and two were bad.

The three were goodë men, and rich, and old.

Unnethës¹⁸¹⁰ mightë they the statute hold¹⁸¹¹

In which that they were bounden unto me.

Yet wot well what I mean of this, pardie.¹⁸¹²
As God me help, I laugh when that I think
How piteously at night I made them swink,¹⁸¹³
But, by my fay,¹⁸¹⁴ I told of it no store:¹⁸¹⁵
They had me giv'n their land and their treasór,
Me needed not do longer diligence
To win their love, or do them reverence.
They loved me so well, by God above,
That I toldë no dainty¹⁸¹⁶ of their love.
A wise woman will busy her ever-in-one¹⁸¹⁷
To get their lovë, where that she hath none.
But, since I had them wholly in my hand,
And that they had me given all their land,
Why should I takë keep¹⁸¹⁸ them for to please,
But¹⁸¹⁹ it were for my profit, or mine ease?
I set them so a-workë, by my fay,
That many a night they sangë, well-away!
The bacon was not fetched for them, I trow,
That some men have in Essex at Dunmow.¹⁸²⁰
I govern'd them so well after my law,
That each of them full blissful was and fawe¹⁸²¹
To bringë me gay thingës from the fair.
They were full glad when that I spake them fair,
For, God it wot, I chid them spiteously.¹⁸²²
Now hearken how I bare me properly.
Ye wisë wivës, that can understand,
Thus should ye speak, and bear them wrong on hand,¹⁸²³
For half so boldëly can there no man
Swearen and lien as a woman can.
(I say not this by wivës that be wise,
But if it be when they them misadvise.)¹⁸²⁴
A wisë wife, if that she can¹⁸²⁵ her good,
Shall bearë them on hand the cow is wood,¹⁸²⁶
And takë witness of her owen maid
Of their assent: but hearken how I said.

“Sir oldë kaynard,¹⁸²⁷ is this thine array?
Why is my neighëbourë’s wife so gay?
She is honour’d over all where¹⁸²⁸ she go’th,
I sit at home, I have no thrifty cloth.¹⁸²⁹
What dost thou at my neighëbourë’s house?
Is she so fair? art thou so amoroús?
What rown’st¹⁸³⁰ thou with our maid? *ben’dicite*,
Sir oldë lechour, let thy japës¹⁸³¹ be.
And if I have a gossip, or a friend
(Withoutë guilt), thou chidest as a fiend,
If that I walk or play unto his house.
Thou comest home as drunken as a mouse,
And preachest on thy bench, with evil prefe:¹⁸³²
Thou say’st to me, it is a great mischief
To wed a poorë woman, for costäge:¹⁸³³
And if that she be rich, of high paräge,¹⁸³⁴
Then say’st thou, that it is a tormentry
To suffer her pride and meláncholy.
And if that she be fair, thou very knave,
Thou say’st that every holour¹⁸³⁵ will her have;
She may no while in chastity abide,
That is assailed upon every side.
Thou say’st some folk desire us for richéss,
Some for our shape, and some for our fairness,
And some, for she can either sing or dance,
And some for gentiless and dalliance,
Some for her handës and her armës smale:
Thus goes all to the devil, by thy tale;
Thou say’st, men may not keep a castle wall
That may be so assailed over all.¹⁸³⁶
And if that she be foul, thou say’st that she
Coveteth every man that she may see;
For as a spaniel she will on him leap,
Till she may findë some man her to cheap;¹⁸³⁷
And none so grey goose goes there in the lake,
(So say’st thou) that will be without a make.¹⁸³⁸

And say'st, it is a hard thing for to weld¹⁸³⁹
A thing that no man will, his thankës,¹⁸⁴⁰ held.¹⁸⁴¹
Thus say'st thou, lorel,¹⁸⁴² when thou go'st to bed,
And that no wise man needeth for to wed,
Nor no man that intendeth unto heaven.
With wildë thunder dint¹⁸⁴³ and fiery leven¹⁸⁴⁴
Motë¹⁸⁴⁵ thy wicked neckë be to-broke.
Thou say'st, that dropping houses, and eke smoke,
And chiding wivës, makë men to flee
Out of their owne house; ah! *ben'dicite*,
What aileth such an old man for to chide?
Thou say'st, we wivës will our vices hide,
Till we be fast,¹⁸⁴⁶ and then we will them shew.
Well may that be a proverb of a shrew.¹⁸⁴⁷
Thou say'st, that oxen, asses, horses, hounds,
They be assayed at diversë stounds,¹⁸⁴⁸
Basons and lavers, ere that men them buy,
Spoonës, stoolës, and all such husbandry,
And so be pots, and clothës, and array,¹⁸⁴⁹
But folk of wivës makë none assay,
Till they be wedded—oldë dotard shrew!—
And then, say'st thou, we will our vices shew.
Thou say'st also, that it displeaseth me,
But if¹⁸⁵⁰ that thou wilt praisë my beauty,
And but¹⁸⁵¹ thou pore alway upon my face,
And call me fairë dame in every place;
And but¹⁸⁵² thou make a feast on thilkë¹⁸⁵³ day
That I was born, and make me fresh and gay;
And but thou do to my norice¹⁸⁵⁴ honoúr,
And to my chamberere¹⁸⁵⁵ within my bow'r,
And to my father's folk, and mine allies;¹⁸⁵⁶
Thus sayest thou, old barrel full of lies.
And yet also of our prentice Jenkin,
For his crisp hair, shining as gold so fine,
And for he squireth me both up and down,

Yet hast thou caught a false suspicioún:
I will him not, though thou wert dead to-morrow.
But tell me this, why hidest thou, with sorrow,¹⁸⁵⁷
The keyës of thy chest away from me?
It is my good¹⁸⁵⁸ as well as thine, pardie.
What, think'st to make an idiot of our dame?
Now, by that lord that callèd is Saint Jame,¹⁸⁵⁹
Thou shalt not both, although that thou wert wood,¹⁸⁶⁰
Be master of my body, and my good,
The one thou shalt forego, maugré¹⁸⁶¹ thine eyen.
What helpeth it of me t' inquire and spyen?
I trow thou wouldest lock me in thy chest.
Thou shouldest say, 'Fair wife, go where thee lest;¹⁸⁶²
Take your disport; I will believe no tales;
I know you for a true wife, Dame Ales.'¹⁸⁶³
 "We love no man, that taketh keep¹⁸⁶⁴ or charge
Where that we go; we will be at our large.
Of allë men most blessed may he be,
The wise astrologer Dan¹⁸⁶⁵ Ptolemy,
That saith this proverb in his Almagest:
'Of allë men his wisdom is highést,
That recketh not who hath the world in hand.'
By this proverb thou shalt well understand,
Have thou enough, what thar¹⁸⁶⁶ thee reck or care
How merrily that other folkës fare?
For certes, oldë dotard, by your leave,
Ye shall have [pleasure] right enough at eve.
He is too great a niggard that will werne¹⁸⁶⁷
A man to light a candle at his lantérn;
He shall have never the less light, pardie.
Have thou enough, thee thar¹⁸⁶⁸ not plainë¹⁸⁶⁹ thee.
Thou say'st also, if that we make us gay
With clothing and with precious array,
That it is peril of our chastity.
And yet—with sorrow!—thou enforcest thee,
And say'st these words in the apostle's name:

'In habit made with chastity and shame¹⁸⁷⁰
Ye women shall apparel you,' quoth he,
'And not in tressed hair and gay perrie,¹⁸⁷¹
As pearlës, nor with gold, nor clothës rich.'
After thy text nor after thy rubrich
I will not work as muchel as a gnat.
Thou say'st also, I walk out like a cat;
For whoso wouldë singe the cattë's skin
Then will the cattë well dwell in her inn;¹⁸⁷²
And if the cattë's skin be sleek and gay,
She will not dwell in housë half a day,
But forth she will, ere any day be daw'd,
To shew her skin, and go a caterwaw'd.¹⁸⁷³
This is to say, if I be gay, sir shrew,
I will run out, my borel¹⁸⁷⁴ for to shew.
Sir oldë fool, what helpeth thee to spyen?
Though thou pray Argus with his hundred eyen
To be my wardécorps,¹⁸⁷⁵ as he can best,
In faith he shall not keep me, but me lest:¹⁸⁷⁶
Yet could I make his beard,¹⁸⁷⁷ so may I thé.¹⁸⁷⁸
"Thou sayest eke, that there be thingës three,
Which thingës greatly trouble all this earth,
And that no wightë may endure the ferth:¹⁸⁷⁹
O lefe¹⁸⁸⁰ sir shrew, may Jesus short¹⁸⁸¹ thy life.
Yet preachest thou, and say'st, a hateful wife
Y-reckon'd is for one of these mischances.
Be there none other manner resemblances¹⁸⁸²
That ye may liken your parables unto,
But if a silly wife be one of tho?¹⁸⁸³
Thou likenest a woman's love to hell;
To barren land where water may not dwell.
Thou likenest it also to wild fire;
The more it burns, the more it hath desire
To cónsume every thing that burnt will be.
Thou sayest, right as wormës shend¹⁸⁸⁴ a tree,

Right so a wife destroyeth her husbond;
This know they well that be to wivës bond.”

Lordings, right thus, as ye have understand,
Bare I stiffly mine old husbands on hand,¹⁸⁸⁵
That thus they saiden in their drunkenness;
And all was false, but that I took witness
On Jenkin, and upon my niece also.
O Lord! the pain I did them, and the woe,
Full guiltëless, by Goddë's sweetë pine;¹⁸⁸⁶
For as a horse I couldë bite and whine;
I couldë plain,¹⁸⁸⁷ an'¹⁸⁸⁸ I was in the guilt,
Or ellës oftentime I had been spilt.¹⁸⁸⁹
Whoso first cometh to the nilll, first grint;¹⁸⁹⁰
I plained first, so was our war y-stint.¹⁸⁹¹
They were full glad to excuse them full blive¹⁸⁹²
Of things that they never aguilt their live.¹⁸⁹³
Of wenches would I bearë them on hand,¹⁸⁹⁴
When that for sickness scarcely might they stand,
Yet tickled I his heartë for that he
Ween'd¹⁸⁹⁵ that I had of him so great chertë:¹⁸⁹⁶
I swore that all my walking out by night
Was for to éspy wenches that he dight:¹⁸⁹⁷
Under that colour had I many a mirth.
For all such wit is given us at birth;
Deceit, weeping, and spinning, God doth give
To women kindly,¹⁸⁹⁸ while that they may live.
And thus of one thing I may vauntë me,
At th' end I had the better in each degree,
By sleight, or force, or by some manner thing,
As by continual murmur or grudging,¹⁸⁹⁹
Namely¹⁹⁰⁰ a-bed, there haddë they mischance,
There would I chide, and do them no pleasance:
I would no longer in the bed abide,
If that I felt his arm over my side,
Till he had made his ransom unto me,

Then would I suffer him do his nicety.¹⁹⁰¹
And therefore every man this tale I tell,
Win whoso may, for all is for to sell;
With empty hand men may no hawkës lure;
For winning would I all his will endure,
And makë me a feigned appetite—
And yet in bacon¹⁹⁰² had I never delight:
That made me that I ever would them chide.
For, though the Pope had sitten them beside,
I would not spare them at their owen board,
For, by my troth, I quit¹⁹⁰³ them word for word.
As help me very God omnipotent,
Though I right now should make my testament,
I owe them not a word, that is not quit,
I brought it so aboutë by my wit,
That they must give it up, as for the best,
Or ellës had we never been in rest.
For, though he looked as a wood¹⁹⁰⁴ lión,
Yet should he fail of his conclusión.
Then would I say, “Now, goodë lefe,¹⁹⁰⁵ take keep¹⁹⁰⁶
How meekly looketh Wilken ourë sheep!
Come near, my spouse, and let me ba¹⁹⁰⁷ thy cheek.
Ye shouldë be all patient and meek,
And have a sweet y-spiced¹⁹⁰⁸ conscience,
Since ye so preach of Jobë’s patience.
Suffer alway, since ye so well can preach,
And but¹⁹⁰⁹ ye do, certáin we shall you teach
That it is fair to have a wife in peace.
One of us two must bowë¹⁹¹⁰ doubtëless:
And since a man is more reasónable
Than woman is, ye must be suff’rable.
What aileth you to grudge¹⁹¹¹ thus and groan?
Is it for ye would have my [love] alone?
Why, take it all: lo, have it every deal,¹⁹¹²
Peter!¹⁹¹³ shrew¹⁹¹⁴ you but ye love it well.
For if I wouldë sell my *bellë chose*,

I couldë walk as fresh as is a rose,
But I will keep it for your owen tooth.
Ye be to blame, by God, I say you sooth.”
Such manner wordës haddë we on hand.
Now will I speaken of my fourth husbánd.
My fourthë husband was a revellour;
This is to say, he had a paramour,
And I was young and full of ragerie,¹⁹¹⁵
Stubborn and strong, and jolly as a pie.
Then could I dancë to a harpë smale,
And sing, y-wis,¹⁹¹⁶ as any nightingale,
When I had drunk a draught of sweetë wine.
Metellius, the foulë churl, the swine,
That with a staff bereft his wife of life
For¹⁹¹⁷ she drank wine, though I had been his wife,
Never should he have daunted me from drink:
And, after wine, of Venus most I think.
For all so sure as cold engenders hail,
A liquorish mouth must have a liquorish tail.
In woman vinolent¹⁹¹⁸ is no defence,¹⁹¹⁹
This knowë lechours by experience.
But, lord Christ, when that it rememb'reth me
Upon my youth, and on my jollity,
It tickleth me about mine heartë-root;
Unto this day it doth mine heartë boot,¹⁹²⁰
That I have had my world as in my time.
But age, alas! that all will envenime,¹⁹²¹
Hath me bereft my beauty and my pith:¹⁹²²
Let go; farewell; the devil go therewith.
The flour is gon, there is no more to tell,
The bran, as I best may, now must I sell.
But yet to be right merry will I fand.¹⁹²³
Now forth to tell you of my fourth husband,
I say, I in my heart had great despite,
That he of any other had delight;
But he was quit,¹⁹²⁴ by God and by Saint Joce:¹⁹²⁵

I made for him of the same wood a cross;
Not of my body in no foul mannere,
But certainly I madë folk such cheer,
That in his owen grease I made him fry
For anger, and for very jealousý.
By God, in earth I was his purgatory,
For which I hope his soul may be in glory.
For, God it wot, he sat full oft and sung,
When that his shoe full bitterly him wrung.¹⁹²⁶
There was no wight, save God and he, that wist
In many wise how sore I did him twist.
He died when I came from Jerusalem,
And lies in grave under the roodë beam:¹⁹²⁷
Although his tomb is not so curious
As was the sepulchre of Darius,
Which that Apelles wrought so subtilely.
It is but waste to bury them preciously.
Let him fare well, God give his soulë rest,
He is now in his grave and in his chest.

Now of my fifthë husband will I tell:
God let his soul never come into hell.
And yet was he to me the mostë shrew;¹⁹²⁸
That feel I on my ribbës all by rew,¹⁹²⁹
And ever shall, until mine ending day.
But in our bed he was so fresh and gay,
And therewithal so well he could me glose,¹⁹³⁰
When that he wouldë have my *bellë chose*,
Though he had beaten me on every bone,
Yet could he win again my love anon.
I trow, I lov'd him better, for that he
Was of his love so dangerous¹⁹³¹ to me.
We women have, if that I shall not lie,
In this mattër a quaintë fantasy.
Whatever thing we may not lightly have,
Thereafter will we cry all day and crave.
Forbid us thing, and that desirë we;

Press on us fast, and thennë will we flee.
With danger¹⁹³² utter we all our chaffare;¹⁹³³
Great press at market maketh dearë ware,
And too great cheap is held at little price;
This knoweth every woman that is wise.
My fifthë husband, God his soulë bless,
Which that I took for love and no richëss,
He some time was a clerk of Oxenford,¹⁹³⁴
And had left school, and went at home to board
With my gossip, dwelling in ourë town:
God have her soul, her name was Alisoun.
She knew my heart, and all my privity,
Bet than our parish priest, so may I thé.¹⁹³⁵
To her betrayed I my counsel all;
For had my husband pissed on a wall,
Or done a thing that should have cost his life,
To her, and to another worthy wife,
And to my niece, which that I loved well,
I would have told his counsel every deal.¹⁹³⁶
And so I did full often, God it wot,
That made his face full often red and hot
For very shame, and blam'd himself, for he
Had told to me so great a privity.¹⁹³⁷
And so befell that onës in a Lent
(So oftentimes I to my gossip went,
For ever yet I loved to be gay,
And for to walk in March, April, and May
From house to house, to hearë sundry tales),
That Jenkin clerk, and my gossíp, Dame Ales,
And I myself, into the fieldës went.
Mine husband was at London all that Lent;
I had the better leisure for to play,
And for to see, and eke for to be sey¹⁹³⁸
Of lusty folk; what wist I where my grace¹⁹³⁹
Was shapen¹⁹⁴⁰ for to be, or in what place?
Therefore made I my visitatións

To vigilies,¹⁹⁴¹ and to processions,
To preachings eke, and to these pilgrimages,
To plays of miracles, and marriages,
And weared upon me gay scarlet gites.¹⁹⁴²
These wormes, nor these mothes, nor these mites
On my apparel fret¹⁹⁴³ them never a deal¹⁹⁴⁴
And know'st thou why? for they were used¹⁹⁴⁵ well.
Now will I tell forth what happen'd me:
I say, that in the fieldes walked we,
Till truly we had such dalliance,
This clerk and I, that of my purveyance¹⁹⁴⁶
I spake to him, and told him how that he,
If I were widow, should wedd me.
For certainly, I say for no bobance,¹⁹⁴⁷
Yet was I never without purveyance¹⁹⁴⁸
Of marriage, nor of other thinges eke:
I hold a mouse's wit not worth a leek,
That hath but one hole for to start to,¹⁹⁴⁹
And if that fail, then is all y-do.¹⁹⁵⁰
[I bare him on hand¹⁹⁵¹ he had enchanted me
(My dame taught me that subtilty);
And eke I said, I mette¹⁹⁵² of him all night,
He would have slain me, as I lay upright,
And all my bed was full of very blood;
But yet I hop'd that he should do me good;
For blood betoken'd gold, as me was taught.
And all was false, I dream'd of him right naught,
But as I follow'd aye my dame's lore,
As well of that as of other things more.]
But now, sir, let me see, what shall I sayn?
Aha! by God, I have my tale again.
When that my fourth husband was on bier,
I wept algate¹⁹⁵³ and made a sorry cheer,¹⁹⁵⁴
As wives must, for it is the usage;
And with my kerchief covered my visage;

But, for I was provided with a make,¹⁹⁵⁵
I wept but little, that I undertake.¹⁹⁵⁶
To churchë was mine husband borne a-morrow
With neighëbours that for him madë sorrow,
And Jenkin, ourë clerk, was one of tho:¹⁹⁵⁷
As help me God, when that I saw him go
After the bier, methought he had a pair
Of leggës and of feet so clean and fair,
That all my heart I gave unto his hold.¹⁹⁵⁸
He was, I trow, a twenty winter old,
And I was forty, if I shall say sooth,
But yet I had always a coltë's tooth.
Gat-toothed¹⁹⁵⁹ I was, and that became me well,
I had the print of Saintë Venus' seal.
[As help me God, I was a lusty one,
And fair, and rich, and young, and well begone:¹⁹⁶⁰
For certes I am all venerian
In feeling, and my heart is martian;¹⁹⁶¹
Venus me gave my lust and liquorishness,
And Mars gave me my sturdy hardiness.]
Mine ascendant was Taure,¹⁹⁶² and Mars therein:
Alas, alas, that ever love was sin!
I follow'd aye mine inclinaciön
By virtue of my constellaciön:
That made me that I couldë not withdraw
My chamber of Venus from a good felláw.
[Yet have I Martë's mark upon my face,
And also in another privy place.
For God so wisly¹⁹⁶³ be my salvaciön,
I loved never by discretión,
But ever follow'd mine own appetite,
All¹⁹⁶⁴ were he short, or long, or black, or white,
I took no keep,¹⁹⁶⁵ so that he liked me,
How poor he was, neither of what degree.]
What should I say? but that at the month's end
This jolly clerk Jenkin, that was so hend,¹⁹⁶⁶

Had wedded me with great solemnity,
And to him gave I all the land and fee
That ever was me given therebefore:
But afterward repented me full sore.
He wouldë suffer nothing of my list.¹⁹⁶⁷
By God, he smote me onës with his fist,
For that I rent out of his book a leaf,
That of the stroke mine earë wax'd all deaf.
Stubborn I was, as is a lioness,
And of my tongue a very jangleress,¹⁹⁶⁸
And walk I would, as I had done beforne,
From house to house, although he had it sworn:¹⁹⁶⁹
For which he oftentimes wouldë preach,
And me of oldë Roman gestës¹⁹⁷⁰ teach.
How that Sulpitius Gallus left his wife,
And her forsook for term of all his,
For nought but open-headed¹⁹⁷¹ he her say¹⁹⁷²
Looking out at his door upon a day.
Another Roman¹⁹⁷³ told he me by name,
That, for his wife was at a summer game
Without his knowing, he forsook her eke.
And then would he upon his Bible seek
That ilkë¹⁹⁷⁴ proverb of Ecclesiast,
Where he commandeth, and forbiddeth fast,
Man shall not suffer his wife go roll about.
Then would he say right thus withoutë doubt:
*"Whoso that buildeth his house all of sallows,¹⁹⁷⁵
And pricketh his blind horse over the fallows,
And suff'reth his wife to go seekë hallows,¹⁹⁷⁶
Is worthy to be hanged on the gallows."*
But all for nought; I settë not a haw¹⁹⁷⁷
Of his provérbs, nor of his oldë saw;
Nor would I not of him corrected be.
I hate them that my vices tellë me,
And so do more of us (God wot) than I.
This made him wood¹⁹⁷⁸ with me all utterly;

I wouldë not forbear¹⁹⁷⁹ him in no case.
Now will I say you sooth, by Saint Thomas,
Why that I rent out of his book a leaf,
For which he smote me, so that I was deaf.
He had a book, that gladly night and day
For his disport he would it read alway;
He call'd it Valerie,¹⁹⁸⁰ and Theophrast,
And with that book he laugh'd alway full fast.
And eke there was a clerk sometime at Rome,
A cardinal, that hightë Saint Jerome,
That made a book against Jovinian,
Which book was there; and eke Tertullian,
Chrysippus, Trotula, and Heloïse,
That was an abbess not far from Paris;
And eke the Parables¹⁹⁸¹ of Solomon,
Ovidë's *Art*,¹⁹⁸² and bourdës¹⁹⁸³ many one;
And allë these were bound in one volume.
And every night and day was his custume
(When he had leisure and vacatiön
From other worldly occupatiön)
To readen in this book of wicked wives.
He knew of them more legends and more lives
Than be of goodë wivës in the Bible.
For, trust me well, it is an impossíble
That any clerk will speakë good of wives,
(But if¹⁹⁸⁴ it be of holy saintës' lives)
Nor of none other woman never the mo'.
Who painted the liön, tell it me, who?
By God, if women haddë written stories,
As clerkës have within their oratóries,
They would have writ of men more wickedness
Than all the mark of Adam¹⁹⁸⁵ may redress.
The children of Mercury and of Venus,¹⁹⁸⁶
Be in their working full contrarious.
Mercury loveth wisdom and sciénce,
And Venus loveth riot and dispence.¹⁹⁸⁷

And for their diverse dispositiön,
Each falls in other's exaltatiön.¹⁹⁸⁸
As thus, God wot, Mercúry is desolate
In Pisces, where Venus is exaltáte,
And Venus falls where Mercury is raised.
Therefore no woman by no clerk is praised.
The clerk, when he is old, and may not do
Of Venus' works not worth his oldë shoe,
Then sits he down, and writes in his dotage,
That women cannot keep their marriáge.
But now to purpose, why I toldë thee
That I was beaten for a book, pardie.

Upon a night Jenkin, that was our sire,¹⁹⁸⁹
Read on his book, as he sat by the fire,
Of Eva first, that for her wickedness
Was all mankind brought into wretchedness,
For which that Jesus Christ himself was slain,
That bought us with his heartë-blood again.
Lo here express of women may ye find
That woman was the loss of all mankind.
Then read he me how Samson lost his hairs
Sleeping, his leman cut them with her shears,
Through whichë treason lost he both his eyen.
Then read he me, if that I shall not lien,
Of Hercules, and of his Dejanire,
That caused him to set himself on fire.
Nothing forgot he of the care and woe
That Socrates had with his wivës two;
How Xantippe cast piss upon his head.
This silly man sat still, as he were dead,
He wip'd his head, and no more durst he sayn,
But, "Ere the thunder stint¹⁹⁹⁰ there cometh rain."
Of Phasiphaë, that was queen of Crete,
For shrewedness¹⁹⁹¹ he thought the talë sweet.
Fy, speak no more, it is a grisly thing,
Of her horrible lust and her likíng.
Of Clytemnestra, for her lechery

That falsely made her husband for to die,
He read it with full good devoti3n.
He told me eke, for what ocasi3n
Amphiorax at Thebes lost his life:
My husband had a legend of his wife
Eryphil3, that for an ouche¹⁹⁹² of gold
Had privily unto the Greek3s told,
Where that her husband hid him in a place,
For which he had at Thebes sorry grace.
Of Luna told he me, and of Lucie;
They both3 made their husbands for to die,
That one for love, that other was for hate.
Luna her husband on an ev'ning late
Empoison'd had, for that she was his foe:
Lucia liquorish lov'd her husband so,
That, for he should always upon her think,
She gave him such a manner¹⁹⁹³ lov3-drink,
That he was dead before it were the morrow:
And thus alगत3¹⁹⁹⁴ husbands hadd3 sorrow.
Then told he me how one Latumeus
Complained to his fellow Arius
That in his garden growed such a tree,
On which he said how that his wiv3s three
Hanged themselves for heart dispiteous.
"O leve¹⁹⁹⁵ brother," quoth this Arius,
"Give me a plant of thilk3¹⁹⁹⁶ blessed tree,
And in my garden planted shall it be."
Of later date of wiv3s hath he read,
That some have slain their husbands in their bed,
And let their lechour dight them all the night,
While that the corpse lay on the floor upright:
And some have driven nails into their brain,
While that they slept, and thus they have them slain:
Some have them given poison in their drink:
He spake more harm than heart3 may bethink.
And therewithal he knew of more prov3rbs,

Than in this world there groweth grass or herbs.
“Better (quoth he) thine habitation
Be with a lion, or a foul dragón,
Than with a woman using for to chide.
Better (quoth he) high in the roof abide,
Than with an angry woman in the house,
They be so wicked and contrarioús:
They hatë that their husbands loven aye.”
He said, “A woman cast her shame away
When she cast off her smock;” and farthermo’,
“A fair woman, but¹⁹⁹⁷ she be chaste also,
Is like a gold ring in a sowë’s nose.”
Who couldë ween,¹⁹⁹⁸ or who couldë suppose
The woe that in mine heart was, and the pine?¹⁹⁹⁹
And when I saw that he would never fine²⁰⁰⁰
To readen on this cursed book all night,
All suddenly three leavës have I plight²⁰⁰¹
Out of his book, right as he read, and eke
I with my fist so took him on the cheek,
That in our fire he backward fell adown.
And he up start, as doth a wood líón,
And with his fist he smote me on the head,
That on the floor I lay as I were dead.
And when he saw how still that there I lay,
He was aghast, and would have fled away,
Till at the last out of my swoon I braid,²⁰⁰²
“Oh, hast thou slain me, thou false thief?” I said,
“And for my land thus hast thou murder’d me?
Ere I be dead, yet will I kissë thee.”
And near he came, and kneeled fair adown,
And saidë, “Dearë sister Alisoun,
As help me God, I shall thee never smite:
That I have done it is thyself to wite,²⁰⁰³
Forgive it me, and that I thee beseek.”²⁰⁰⁴
And yet eftsoons²⁰⁰⁵ I hit him on the cheek,
And saidë, “Thief, thus much am I awreak.”²⁰⁰⁶

Now will I die, I may no longer speak.”

But at the last, with muchë care and woe
We fell accorded²⁰⁰⁷ by ourselvës two:
He gave me all the bridle in mine hand
To have the governance of house and land,
And of his tongue, and of his hand also.
I made him burn his book anon right tho.²⁰⁰⁸
And when that I had gotten unto me
By mast’ry all the sovereignëty,
And that he said, “Mine owen truë wife,
Do as thee list,²⁰⁰⁹ the term of all thy life,
Keep thine honoúr, and eke keep mine estate;”
After that day we never had debate.
God help me so, I was to him as kind
As any wife from Denmark unto Ind,
And also true, and so was he to me:
I pray to God that sits in majesty
So bless his soulë, for his mercy dear.
Now will I say my tale, if ye will hear.—

The Friar laugh’d when he had heard all this:
“Now, Dame,” quoth he, “so have I joy and bliss,
This is a long preamble of a tale.”

And when the Sompnour heard the Friar gale,²⁰¹⁰
“Lo,” quoth this Sompnour, “Goddë’s armës two,
A friar will intermete²⁰¹¹ him evermo’:
Lo, goodë men, a fly and eke a frere
Will fall in ev’ry dish and eke mattére.

What speak’st thou of perambulatioún?²⁰¹²
What? amble or trot; or peace, or go sit down:

Thou lettest²⁰¹³ our disport in this mattére.”

“Yea, wilt thou so, Sir Sompnour?” quoth the Frere;
“Now by my faith I shall, ere that I go,
Tell of a Sompnour such a tale or two,
That all the folk shall laughen in this place.”

“Now do, else, Friar, I beshrew²⁰¹⁴ thy face,”
Quoth this Sompnour; “and I beshrewë me,

But if²⁰¹⁵ I tellë talës two or three
Of friars, ere I come to Sittingbourne,
That I shall make thine heartë for to mourn:
For well I wot thy patience is gone.”
Our Hostë criëd, “Peace, and that anon;”
And saidë, “Let the woman tell her tale.
Ye fare²⁰¹⁶ as folk that drunken be of ale.
Do, Dame, tell forth your tale, and that is best.”
“All ready, sir,” quoth she, “right as you lest,²⁰¹⁷
If I have licence of this worthy Frere.”
“Yes, Dame,” quoth he, “tell forth, and I will hear.”

THE TALE²⁰¹⁸

In oldë dayës of the king Arthoúr,
Of which that Britons speakë great honoúr,
All was this land full fill’d of faërie;²⁰¹⁹
The Elf-queen, with her jolly company,
Danced full oft in many a green mead.
This was the old opinion, as I read;
I speak of many hundred years ago;
But now can no man see none elvës mo’,
For now the great charity and prayéres
Of limitours,²⁰²⁰ and other holy freres,
That search every land and ev’ry stream,
As thick as motës in the sunnë-beam,
Blessing halls, chambers, kitchenës, and bowers,
Cities and burghës, castles high and towers,
Thorpës²⁰²¹ and barnës, shepens²⁰²² and dairies,
This makes that there be now no faëries:
For there as²⁰²³ wont to walkë was an elf,

There walketh now the limitour himself,
In undermelës²⁰²⁴ and in morrownings,
And saith his matins and his holy things,
As he goes in his limitatioún.²⁰²⁵
Women may now go safely up and down,
In every bush, and under every tree;
There is none other incubus²⁰²⁶ but he;
And he will do to them no dishonoúr.

And so befell it, that this king Arthoúr
Had in his house a lusty bachelér,
That on a day came riding from rivér:²⁰²⁷
And happen'd, that, alone as she was born,
He saw a maiden walking him beforne,
Of which maiden anon, maugré²⁰²⁸ her head,
By very force he reft her maidenhead:
For which oppressiún was such clamour,
And such pursuit unto the king Arthoúr,
That damned²⁰²⁹ was this knight for to be dead
By course of law, and should have lost his head;
(Paráventure such²⁰³⁰ was the statute tho),²⁰³¹
But that the queen and other ladies mo'
So long they prayed the king of his grace,
Till he his life him granted in the place,
And gave him to the queen, all at her will
To choose whether she would him save or spill.²⁰³²
The queen thanked the king with all her might;
And, after this, thus spake she to the knight,
When that she saw her time upon a day.
"Thou standest yet," quoth she, "in such array,²⁰³³
That of thy life yet hast thou no surety;
I grant thee life, if thou canst tell to me
What thing is it that women most desiren:
Beware, and keep thy neck-bone from the iron.²⁰³⁴
And if thou canst not tell it me anon,
Yet will I give thee leavë for to gon
A twelvemonth and a day, to seek and lear²⁰³⁵

An answer suffisant²⁰³⁶ in this mattére.
And surety will I have, ere that thou pace,²⁰³⁷
Thy body for to yelden in this place.”
Woe was the knight, and sorrowfully siked;²⁰³⁸
But what? he might not do all as him liked.
And at the last he chose him for to wend,²⁰³⁹
And come again, right at the yearë’s end,
With such answér as God would him purvey:²⁰⁴⁰
And took his leave, and wended forth his way.
He sought in ev’ry house and ev’ry place,
Where as he hoped for to findë grace,
To learnë what thing women love the most:
But he could not arrive in any coast,
Where as he mightë find in this mattére
Two creatures accordíng in fere.²⁰⁴¹
Some said that women loved best richéss,
Some said honoúr, and some said jolliness,
Some rich array, and some said lust²⁰⁴² a-bed,
And oft time to be widow and be wed.
Some said, that we are in our heart most eased
When that we are y-flatter’d and y-praised.
He went full nigh the sooth,²⁰⁴³ I will not lie;
A man shall win us best with flattery;
And with attendance, and with business
Be we y-liméd,²⁰⁴⁴ bothë more and less.
And some men said that we do love the best
For to be free, and do right as us lest,²⁰⁴⁵
And that no man reprove us of our vice,
But say that we are wise, and nothing nice,²⁰⁴⁶
For truly there is none among us all,
If any wight will claw us on the gall,²⁰⁴⁷
That will not kick, for that he saith us sooth:
Assay,²⁰⁴⁸ and he shall find it, that so do’th.
For be we never so vicioús within,
We will be held both wise and clean of sin.

And some men said, that great delight have we
For to be held stable and eke secré,²⁰⁴⁹
And in one purpose steadfastly to dwell,
And not bewray a thing that men us tell.
But that tale is not worth a rakë-stele.²⁰⁵⁰
Pardie, we women cannë nothing hele,²⁰⁵¹
Witness on Midas; will ye hear the tale?
Ovid, amongës other thingës smale,²⁰⁵²
Saith, Midas had, under his longë hairs,
Growing upon his head two ass's ears;
The whichë vice he hid, as best he might,
Full subtly from every man's sight,
That, save his wife, there knew of it no mo';
He lov'd her most, and trusted her also;
He prayed her, that to no creature
She wouldë tellen of his disfigüre.²⁰⁵³
She swore him, nay, for all the world to win,
She would not do that villainy or sin,
To make her husband have so foul a name:
She would not tell it for her owen shame.
But natheless her thoughtë that she died,
That she so longë should a counsel hide;
Her thought it swell'd so sore about her heart,
That needës must some word from her astart;
And, since she durst not tell it unto man,
Down to a marish fast thereby she ran,
Till she came there, her heart was all afire:
And, as a bittern bumbles²⁰⁵⁴ in the mire,
She laid her mouth unto the water down.
"Bewray me not, thou water, with thy soun',"²⁰⁵⁵
Quoth she, "to thee I tell it, and no mo',
Mine husband hath long ass's earës two!
Now is mine heart all whole; now is it out;
I might no longer keep it, out of doubt."
Here may ye see, though we a time abide,
Yet out it must, we can no counsel hide.

The remnant of the tale, if ye will hear,
Read in Ovíd, and there ye may it lear.²⁰⁵⁶
This knight, of whom my tale is specially,
When that he saw he might not come thereby—
That is to say, what women love the most—
Within his breast full sorrowful was his ghost.²⁰⁵⁷
But home he went, for he might not sojourn,
The day was come, that homeward he must turn.
And in his way it happen'd him to ride,
In all his care,²⁰⁵⁸ under a forest side,
Where as he saw upon a dancë go
Of ladies four-and-twenty, and yet mo',
Toward this ilkë²⁰⁵⁹ dance he drew full yern,²⁰⁶⁰
The hope that he some wisdom there should learn;
But certainly, ere he came fully there,
Y-vanish'd was this dance, he knew not where;
No creaturë saw he that bare life,
Save on the green he sitting saw a wife—
A fouler wight there may no man devise.²⁰⁶¹
Against²⁰⁶² this knight this old wife gan to rise,
And said, "Sir Knight, hereforth²⁰⁶³ lieth no way.
Tell me what ye are seeking, by your fay.²⁰⁶⁴
Paráventure it may the better be:
These oldë folk know muchë thing," quoth she.
"My levë²⁰⁶⁵ mother," quoth this knight, "certáin,
I am but dead, but if²⁰⁶⁶ that I can sayn
What thing it is that women most desire:
Could ye me wiss,²⁰⁶⁷ I would well quite your hire."²⁰⁶⁸
"Plight me thy troth here in mine hand," quoth she,
"The nextë thing that I require of thee
Thou shalt it do, if it be in thy might,
And I will tell it thee ere it be night."
"Have here my trothë," quoth the knight; "I grant."
"Thennë," quoth she, "I dare me well avaunt,²⁰⁶⁹
Thy life is safe, for I will stand thereby,
Upon my life the queen will say as I:

Let see, which is the proudest of them all,
That wears either a kerchief or a caul,
That dare say nay to that I shall you teach.
Let us go forth withoutē longer speech.”

Then rownd she a pistel²⁰⁷⁰ in his ear,
And bade him to be glad, and have no fear.

When they were come unto the court, this knight
Said, he had held his day, as he had hight,²⁰⁷¹
And ready was his answer, as he said.

Full many a noble wife, and many a maid,
And many a widow, for that they be wise—

The queen herself sitting as a justice—
Assembled be, his answer for to hear,
And afterward this knight was bid appear.

To every wight commanded was silence,
And that the knight should tell in audience,
What thing that worldly women love the best.

This knight he stood not still, as doth a beast,
But to this question anon answer'd

With manly voice, that all the court it heard,
“My liegē lady, generally,” quoth he,

“Women desire to have the sovereignty
As well over their husband as their love,
And for to be in mast'ry him above.

This is your most desire, though ye me kill,
Do as you list, I am here at your will.”

In all the court there was no wife nor maid,
Nor widow, that contraried what he said,
But said, he worthy was to have his life.

And with that word up start that oldē wife
Which that the knight saw sitting on the green.

“Mercy,” quoth she, “my sovereign lady queen,
Ere that your court departē, do me right.

I taughtē this answer unto this knight,
For which he plighted me his trothē there,

The firstē thing I would of him requere,
He would it do, if it lay in his might.

Before this court then pray I thee, Sir Knight,"
Quoth she, "that thou me take unto thy wife,
For well thou know'st that I have kept²⁰⁷² thy life.

If I say false, say nay, upon thy fay."²⁰⁷³

This knight answer'd, "Alas, and well-away!

I know right well that such was my behest.²⁰⁷⁴

For Goddë's lovë choose a new request:

Take all my good, and let my body go."

"Nay, then," quoth she, "I shrew²⁰⁷⁵ us bothë two,
For though that I be old, and foul, and poor,

I n'ould²⁰⁷⁶ for all the metal nor the ore,

That under earth is grave,²⁰⁷⁷ or lies above,

But if thy wife I were and eke thy love."

"My love?" quoth he, "nay, my damnation,

Alas! that any of my natiön

Should ever so foul disparáged be."

But all for nought; the end is this, that he

Constrained was, that needs he must her wed,

And take this oldë wife, and go to bed.

Now wouldë some men say paráventure,²⁰⁷⁸

That for my negligence I do no cure²⁰⁷⁹

To tell you all the joy and all th' array

That at the feast was made that ilkë²⁰⁸⁰ day.

To which thing shortly answeren I shall:

I say there was no joy nor feast at all,

There was but heaviness and muchë sorrow:

For privily he wed her on the morrow;

And all day after hid him as an owl,

So woe was him, his wifë look'd so foul.

Great was the woe the knight had in his thought

When he was with his wife to bed y-brought;

He wallow'd, and he turned to and fro.

This oldë wife lay smiling evermo',

And said, "Dear husband, *benedicite*,

Fares every knight thus with his wife as ye?

Is this the law of king Arthoúré's house?

Is every knight of his thus dangerous?²⁰⁸¹
I am your owen love, and eke your wife,
I am she, which that saved hath your life,
And certes yet did I you ne'er unright.
Why fare ye thus with me this firstë night?
Ye farë like a man had lost his wit.
What is my guilt? for God's love tell me it,
And it shall be amended, if I may."
"Amended!" quoth this knight; "alas, nay, nay,
It will not be amended, never mo';
Thou art so loathly, and so old also,
And thereto²⁰⁸² comest of so low a kind,
That little wonder though I wallow and wind;²⁰⁸³
So wouldë God, mine heartë wouldë brest!"²⁰⁸⁴
"Is this," quoth she, "the cause of your unrest?"
"Yea, certainly," quoth he; "no wonder is."
"Now, Sir," quoth she, "I could amend all this,
If that me list, ere it were dayës three,
So well ye mightë bear you unto me."²⁰⁸⁵
But, for ye speaken of such gentleness
As is descended out of old richëss,
That therefore shallë ye be gentlemen;
Such arrogancy is not worth a hen.²⁰⁸⁶
Look who that is most virtuous alway,
Prive and apert,²⁰⁸⁷ and most intendeth aye
To do the gentle deedës that he can;
And take him for the greatest gentleman.
Christ will,²⁰⁸⁸ we claim of him our gentleness,
Not of our elders²⁰⁸⁹ for their old richëss.
For though they gave us all their heritage,
For which we claim to be of high parage,²⁰⁹⁰
Yet may they not bequeathë, for no thing,
To none of us, their virtuous living
That made them gentlemen called to be,
And bade us follow them in such degree.
Well can the wisë poet of Florence,

That hightë Dante, speak of this senténce:²⁰⁹¹
Lo, in such manner²⁰⁹² rhyme is Dante's tale.
'Full seld' upriseth by his branches smale
Prowess of man, for God of his goodness
Wills that we claim of him our gentleness;'²⁰⁹³
For of our elders may we nothing claim
But temp'ral things that man may hurt and maim.
Eke every wight knows this as well as I,
If gentleness were planted naturally
Unto a certain lineage down the line,
Prive and apert, then would they never fine²⁰⁹⁴
To do of gentleness the fair office;
Then might they do no villainy nor vice.
Take fire, and bear it to the darkest house
Betwixt this and the mount of Caucasus,
And let men shut the doorës, and go thenne,²⁰⁹⁵
Yet will the fire as fair and lightë brenne²⁰⁹⁶
As twenty thousand men might it behold;
Its office natural aye will it hold—²⁰⁹⁷
On peril of my life—till that it die.
Here may ye see well how that gentery²⁰⁹⁸
Is not annexed to possession,
Since folk do not their operation
Alway, as doth the fire, lo, in its kind.²⁰⁹⁹
For, God it wot, men may full often find
A lordë's son do shame and villainy.
And he that will have price²¹⁰⁰ of his gent'ry,
For²¹⁰¹ he was boren of a gentle house,
And had his elders noble and virtuoús,
And will himselfë do no gentle deedës,
Nor follow his gentle ancestry, that dead is,
He is not gentle, be he duke or earl;
For villain sinful deedës make a churl.
For gentleness is but the renomée²¹⁰²
Of thine ancéstors, for their high bounté,²¹⁰³

Which is a strangë thing to thy persón:
Thy gentleness cometh from God alone.
Then comes our very²¹⁰⁴ gentleness of grace;
It was no thing bequeath'd us with our place.
Think how noble, as saith Valerius,
Was thilkë²¹⁰⁵ Tullius Hostilius,
That out of povert' rose to high nobless.
Read in Senec, and read eke in Boece,
There shall ye see express, that it no drede²¹⁰⁶ is,
That he is gentle that doth gentle deedës.
And therefore, levë²¹⁰⁷ husband, I conclude,
Albeit that mine ancestors were rude,
Yet may the highë God—and so hope I—
Grant me His grace to live virtuously:
Then am I gentle when that I begin
To live virtuously, and waivë²¹⁰⁸ sin.

“And whereas ye of povert' me reprove,²¹⁰⁹
The highë God, on whom that we believe,
In wilful povert' chose to lead his life:
And certes, every man, maiden, or wife
May understand that Jesus, heaven's king,
Ne would not choose a virtuous living.
Glad povert'²¹¹⁰ is an honest thing, certáin;
This will Senec and other clerkës²¹¹¹ sayn.
Whoso that holds him paid of²¹¹² his povért',
I hold him rich, though he hath not a shirt.
He that covéteth is a poorë wight
For he would have what is not in his might.
But he that nought hath, nor covéteth t' have,
Is rich, although ye hold him but a knave.²¹¹³
Very povért' is sinnë, properly.²¹¹⁴
Juvenal saith of povert' merrily:
The poorë man, when he goes by the way,
Before the thievës he may sing and play.²¹¹⁵
Povért' is hateful good;²¹¹⁶ and, as I guess,

A full great bringer out of business;²¹¹⁷
A great amender eke of sapience
To him that taketh it in patience.
Povert' is this, although it seem elenge,²¹¹⁸
Possession that no wight will challenge.
Povert' full often, when a man is low,
Makes him his God and eke himself to know:
Povert' a spectacle is,²¹¹⁹ as thinketh me,
Through which he may his very²¹²⁰ friendës see.
And, therefore, Sir, since that I you not grieve,
Of my povert' no morë me reprove.

“Now, Sir, of eldë²¹²¹ ye reprovë me:
And certes, Sir, though none authority²¹²²
Were in no book, ye gentles of honoúr
Say, that men should an oldë wight honoúr,
And call him father, for your gentleness;
And authors shall I finden, as I guess.
Now there ye say that I am foul and old,
Then dread ye not to be a cokëwold.²¹²³
For filth, and eldë, all so may I thé,²¹²⁴
Be greatë wardens upon chastity.
But natheless, since I know your delight,
I shall fulfil your wordly appetite.
Choose now,” quoth she, “one of these thingës tway,
To have me foul and old till that I dey,²¹²⁵
And be to you a truë humble wife,
And never you displease in all my life:
Or ellës will ye have me young and fair,
And take your áventure of the repair²¹²⁶
That shall be to your house because of me—
Or in some other place, it may well be?
Now choose yourselfë whether that you liketh.”

This knight adviseth²¹²⁷ him, and sore he siketh,²¹²⁸
But at the last he said in this mannére;
“My lady and my love, and wife so dear,
I put me in your wisë governance,

Choose for yourself which may be most pleasance
And most honoúr to you and me also;
I do no force²¹²⁹ the whether of the two:
For as you liketh, it sufficeth me.”
“Then have I got the mastery,” quoth she,
“Since I may choose and govern as me lest.”²¹³⁰
“Yea, certes wife,” quoth he, “I hold it best.”
“Kiss me,” quoth she, “we are no longer wroth,²¹³¹
For by my troth I will be to you both;
This is to say, yea, bothë fair and good.
I pray to God that I may stervë wood,²¹³²
But²¹³³ I to you be all so good and true,
As ever was wife since the world was new;
And but²¹³⁴ I be to-morrow as fair to seen,
As any lady, emperess or queen,
That is betwixt the East and eke the West,
Do with my life and death right as you lest.²¹³⁵
Cast up the curtain, and look how it is.”
And when the knight saw verily all this,
That she so fair was, and so young thereto,
For joy he hent²¹³⁶ her in his armës two:
His heartë bathed in a bath of bliss,
A thousand times on row²¹³⁷ he gan her kiss:
And she obeyed him in every thing
That mightë do him pleasance or liking.
And thus they live unto their livës’ end
In perfect joy; and Jesus Christ us send
Husbandës meek and young, and fresh in bed,
And grace to overlive them that we wed.
And eke I pray Jesus to short their lives,
That will not be govèrned by their wives.
And old and angry niggards of dispence,²¹³⁸
God send them soon a very pestilence!

THE FRIAR'S TALE

THE PROLOGUE²¹³⁹

This worthy limitour, this noble Frere,
He made always a manner louring cheer²¹⁴⁰
Upon the Sompnour; but for honesty²¹⁴¹
No villain word as yet to him spake he:
But at the last he said unto the Wife:
“Damē,” quoth he, “God give you right good life,
Ye have here touched, all so may I thé,²¹⁴²
In school matter a greatē difficulty.
Ye have said muchē thing right well, I say;
But, Damē, here as we ride by the way,
Us needeth not but for to speak of game,
And leave authorities, in Goddē’s name,
To preaching, and to school eke of clergy.
But if it like unto this company,
I will you of a Sompnour tell a game;
Pardie, ye may well knowē by the name,
That of a Sompnour may no good be said;
I pray that none of you be evil paid;²¹⁴³
A Sompnour is a runner up and down
With mandements²¹⁴⁴ for fornicatioun,
And is y-beat at every townē’s end.”

Then spake our Host; "Ah, sir, ye should be hend²¹⁴⁵
And courteous, as a man of your estate;
In company we will have no debate:
Tell us your tale, and let the Sompnour be."
"Nay," quoth the Sompnour, "let him say by me
What so him list; when it comes to my lot,
By God, I shall him quiten²¹⁴⁶ every groat!
I shall him tellë what a great honoúr
It is to be a flattering limitour
And his office I shall him tell y-wis."²¹⁴⁷
Our Host answered, "Peace, no more of this."
And afterward he said unto the frere,
"Tell forth your tale, mine owen master dear."

THE TALE

Whilom²¹⁴⁸ there was dwelling in my country
An archdeacon, a man of high degree,
That boldëly did executiön,
In punishing of fornicatiön,
Of witchëcraft, and eke of bawdery,
Of defamation, and adultery,
Of churchë-reevës,²¹⁴⁹ and of testaments,
Of contracts, and of lack of sacraments,
And eke of many another manner²¹⁵⁰ crime,
Which needeth not rehearsen at this time,
Of usury, and simony also;
But, certes, lechours did he greatest woe;
They shouldë singen, if that they were hent;²¹⁵¹
And smallë tithers²¹⁵² werë foul y-shent,²¹⁵³
If any person would on them complain;

There might astert them no pecunial pain.²¹⁵⁴
For smallë tithës, and small offering,
He made the people piteously to sing;
For ere the bishop caught them with his crook,
They weren in the archëdeacon's book;
Then had he, through his jurisdiction,
Power to do on them correction.

He had a Sompnour ready to his hand,
A slier boy was none in Engleland;
For subtley he had his espaille,²¹⁵⁵
That taught him well where it might aught avail.
He couldë spare of lechours one or two,
To teachë him to four and twenty mo'.
For—though this Sompnour wood²¹⁵⁶ be as a hare—
To tell his harlotry I will not spare,
For we be out of their correction,
They have of us no jurisdiction,
Ne never shall have, term of all their lives.

"Peter; so be the women of the stives,"²¹⁵⁷
Quoth this Sompnour, "y-put out of our cure."²¹⁵⁸
"Peace, with mischance and with misáventure,"
Our Hostë said, "and let him tell his tale.
Now tellë forth, and let the Sompnour gale,²¹⁵⁹
Nor sparë not, mine owen master dear."

This falsë thief, the Sompnour (quoth the Frere),
Had always bawdës ready to his hand,
As any hawk to lure in Engleland,
That told him all the secrets that they knew—
For their acquaintance was not come of new;
They were his approvers²¹⁶⁰ privily.
He took himself at great profit thereby:
His master knew not always what he wan.²¹⁶¹
Withoutë mandement, a lewëd²¹⁶² man
He could summon, on pain of Christë's curse,
And they were inly glad to fill his purse,
And make him greatë feastës at the nale.²¹⁶³

And right as Judas haddë purses smale,²¹⁶⁴
And was a thief, right such a thief was he,
His master had but half his duëty.²¹⁶⁵
He was (if I shall givë him his laud)
A thief, and eke a Sompnour, and a bawd.
And he had wenches at his retinue,
That whether that Sir Robert or Sir Hugh,
Or Jack, or Ralph, or whoso that it were
That lay by them, they told it in his ear.
Thus were the wench and he of one assent;
And he would fetch a feigned mandement,
And to the chapter summon them both two,
And pill²¹⁶⁶ the man, and let the wenchë go.
Then would he say, "Friend, I shall for thy sake
Do strike thee²¹⁶⁷ out of ourë letters blake;²¹⁶⁸
Thee thar²¹⁶⁹ no more as in this case travail;
I am thy friend where I may thee avail."
Certain he knew of bribers many mo'
Than possible is to tell in yearës two:
For in this world is no dog for the bow,²¹⁷⁰
That can a hurt deer from a wholë know,
Bet²¹⁷¹ than this Sompnour knew a sly lechour,
Or an adult'rer, or a paramour:
And, for that was the fruit of all his rent,
Therefore on it he set all his intent.
And so befell, that once upon a day.
This Sompnour, waiting ever on his prey,
Rode forth to summon a widow, an old ribibe,²¹⁷²
Feigning a cause, for he would have a bribe.
And happen'd that he saw before him ride
A gay yeoman under a forest side:
A bow he bare, and arrows bright and keen,
He had upon a courtepy²¹⁷³ of green,
A hat upon his head with fringes blake.
"Sir," quoth this Sompnour, "hail, and well o'ertake."
"Welcome," quoth he, "and every good felláw;

Whither ridest thou under this green shaw?"²¹⁷⁴
Said this yeoman; "wilt thou far to-day?"
This Sompnour answer'd him, and said, "Nay.
Here fast by," quoth he, "is mine intent
To ride, for to raise up a rent,
That longeth to my lord's duty."
"Ah! art thou then a bailiff?" "Yea," quoth he.
He durst not for very filth and shame
Say that he was a Sompnour, for the name.
"*De par dieux*,"²¹⁷⁵ quoth this yeoman, "levé²¹⁷⁶ brother,
Thou art a bailiff, and I am another.
I am unknownen, as in this country.
Of thine acquaintance I will pray thee,
And eke of brotherhood, if that thee list."²¹⁷⁷
I have gold and silver lying in my chest;
If that thee hap to come into our shire,
All shall be thine, right as thou wilt desire."
"*Grand mercy*,"²¹⁷⁸ quoth this Sompnour, "by my faith."
Each in the other's hand his troth lay'th,
For to be sworn brethren till they dey."²¹⁷⁹
In dalliance they ride forth and play.

This Sompnour, which that was as full of jangles,²¹⁸⁰
As full of venom be those wariangles,²¹⁸¹
And ev'r inquiring upon every thing,
"Brother," quoth he, "where is now your dwelling,
Another day if that I should you seech?"²¹⁸²
This yeoman him answered in soft speech;
"Brother," quoth he, "far in the North country,"²¹⁸³
Where as I hope some time I shall thee see.
Ere we depart I shall thee so well wiss,²¹⁸⁴
That of mine house shalt thou never miss."
"Now, brother," quoth this Sompnour, "I you pray,
Teach me, while that we ride by the way,
(Since that ye be a bailiff as am I,
Some subtilty, and tell me faithfully
For mine office how that I most may win.

And sparë not²¹⁸⁵ for conscience or for sin,
 But, as my brother, tell me how do ye."
 "Now by my trothë, brother mine," said he,
 "As I shall tell to thee a faithful tale:
 My wages be full strait and eke full smale;
 My lord is hard to me and dangerous,²¹⁸⁶
 And mine offíce is full laborious;
 And therefore by extortión I live,
 Forsooth I take all that men will me give.
 Algate²¹⁸⁷ by sleightë, or by violence,
 From year to year I win all my dispence;
 I can no better tell thee faithfully."
 "Now certes," quoth this Sompnour, "so fare²¹⁸⁸ I;
 I sparë not to takë, God it wot,
 But if²¹⁸⁹ it be too heavy or too hot.
 What I may get in counsel privily,
 No manner conscience of that have I.
 N'ere²¹⁹⁰ mine extortión, I might not live,
 For of such japës²¹⁹¹ will I not be shrive.²¹⁹²
 Stomach nor consciencë know I none;
 I shrew²¹⁹³ these shriftë-fathers²¹⁹⁴ every one.
 Well be we met, by God and by St. Jame.
 But, levë brother, tell me then thy name,"
 Quoth this Sompnour. Right in this meanë while
 This yeoman gan a little for to smile.
 "Brother," quoth he, "wilt thou that I thee tell?
 I am a fiend, my dwelling is in hell,
 And here I ride about my purchasing,
 To know where men will give me any thing.
 My purchase is th' effect of all my rent.²¹⁹⁵
 Look how thou ridest for the same intent
 To winnë good, thou reckest never how,
 Right so fare I, for ridë will I now
 Into the worldë's endë for a prey."
 "Ah," quoth this Sompnour, "*benedicite!* what say y'?
 I weened²¹⁹⁶ ye were a yeoman trulý.

Ye have a mannë's shape as well as I.
Have ye then a figúre determinate
In hellë, where ye be in your estate?"²¹⁹⁷
"Nay, certainly," quoth he, "there have we none,
But when us liketh we can take us one,
Or ellës make you seem²¹⁹⁸ that we be shape
Sometimë like a man, or like an ape;
Or like an angel can I ride or go;
It is no wondrous thing though it be so,
A lousy juggler can deceivë thee,
And pardie, yet can²¹⁹⁹ I more craft²²⁰⁰ than he."
"Why," quoth the Sompnour, "ride ye then or gon
In sundry shapes and not always in one?"
"For we," quoth he, "will us in such form make,
As most is able our prey for to take."
"What maketh you to have all this labouúr?"
"Full many a causë, levë Sir Sompnoúr,"
Saidë this fiend. "But all thing hath a time;
The day is short and it is passed prime,
And yet have I won nothing in this day;
I will intend²²⁰¹ to winning, if I may,
And not intend our thingës to declare:
For, brother mine, thy wit is all too bare
To understand, although I told them thee.
But for²²⁰² thou askest why labouürë we:
For sometimes we be Goddë's instruments
And meanës to do his commandëments,
When that him list, upon his creatures,
In divers acts and in divers figúres:
Withoutë him we have no might, certain,
If that him list to standë thereagain.²²⁰³
And sometimes, at our prayer, have we leave
Only the body, not the soul, to grieve:
Witness on Job, whom that we did full woe,
And sometimes have we might on both the two—
This is to say, on soul and body eke,

And sometimes be we suffer'd for to seek
Upon a man, and do his soul unrest
And not his body, and all is for the best,
When he withstandeth our temptatiön,
It is a cause of his salvatiön,
Albeit that it was not our intent
He should be safe, but that we would him hent. [2204](#)
And sometimes be we servants unto man,
As to the archbishop Saint Dunstan,
And to th' apostle servant eke was I."
"Yet tell me," quoth this Sompnour, "faithfully,
Make ye you newë bodies thus alway
Of th' elements?" The fiend answered, "Nay:
Sometimes we feign, and sometimes we arise
With deadë bodies, in full sundry wise,
And speak as reas'nably, and fair, and well,
As to the Pythoness [2205](#) did Samuel:
And yet will some men say it was not he.
I do no force of [2206](#) your divinity.
But one thing warn I thee, I will not jape, [2207](#)
Thou wilt alगतës [2208](#) weet [2209](#) how we be shape:
Thou shalt hereafterward, my brother dear,
Come, where thee needeth not of me to lear. [2210](#)
For thou shalt by thine own experience
Conne in a chair to rede of this senténce, [2211](#)
Better than Virgil, while he was alive,
Or Dante also. [2212](#) Now let us ride blive, [2213](#)
For I will holdë company with thee,
Till it be so that thou forsakë me."
"Nay," quoth this Sompnour, "that shall ne'er betide.
I am a yeoman, that is known full wide;
My trothë will I hold, as in this case;
For though thou wert the devil Satanas,
My trothë will I hold to thee, my brother,
As I have sworn, and each of us to other,
For to be truë brethren in this case,

And both we go abouten our purchase.²²¹⁴
Take thou thy part, what that men will thee give,
And I shall mine, thus may we bothë live.
And if that any of us have more than other,
Let him be true, and part it with his brother.”
“I grantë,” quoth the devil, “by my fay.”
And with that word they rodë forth their way,
And right at th’ ent’ring of the townë’s end,
To which this Sompnour shope²²¹⁵ him for to wend,²²¹⁶
They saw a cart, that charged was with hay,
Which that a carter drove forth on his way.
Deep was the way, for which the cartë stood:
The carter smote, and cried as he were wood,²²¹⁷
“Heit Scot! heit Brok! what, spare ye for the stones?
The fiend (quoth he) you fetch body and bones,
As farforthly²²¹⁸ as ever ye were foal’d,
So muchë woe as I have with you tholed.²²¹⁹
The devil have all, horses, and cart, and hay.”
The Sompnour said, “Here shall we have a prey;”
And near the fiend he drew, as nought ne were,²²²⁰
Full privily, and rowned²²²¹ in his ear:
“Hearken, my brother, hearken, by thy faith,
Hearest thou not, how that the carter saith?
Hent²²²² it anon, for he hath giv’n it thee,
Both hay and cart, and eke his capels²²²³ three.”
“Nay,” quoth the devil, “God wot, never a deal,²²²⁴
It is not his intent, trust thou me well;
Ask him thyself, if thou not trowest²²²⁵ me,
Or ellës stint²²²⁶ a while and thou shalt see.”
The carter thwack’d his horses on the croup,
And they began to drawen and to stoop.
“Heit now,” quoth he; “there, Jesus Christ you bless,
And all his handiwork, both more and less!
That was well twight,²²²⁷ mine owen liart,²²²⁸ boy,
I pray God save thy body, and Saint Loy!

Now is my cart out of the slough, pardie."

"Lo, brother," quoth the fiend, "what told I thee?

Here may ye see, mine owen dearë brother,

The churl spake one thing, but he thought another.

Let us go forth abouten our voyáge;

Here win I nothing upon this carriáge."

When that they came somewhat out of the town,
This Sompnour to his brother gan to rown;

"Brother," quoth he, "here wons²²²⁹ an old rebeck,²²³⁰

That had almost as lief to lose her neck.

As for to give a penny of her good.

I will have twelvecence, though that she be wood,²²³¹

Or I will summon her to our office;

And yet, God wot, of her know I no vice.

But for thou canst not, as in this countrý,

Winnë thy cost, take here example of me."

This Sompnour clapped at the widow's gate:

"Come out," he said, "thou oldë very trate;²²³²

I trow thou hast some friar or priest with thee."

"Who clappeth?" said this wife; "*ben'dicite*,

God save you, Sir, what is your sweetë will?"

"I have," quoth he, "of summons here a bill.

Up²²³³ pain of cursing, lookë that thou be

To-morrow before our archdeacon's knee,

To answer to the court of certain things."

"Now Lord," quoth she, "Christ Jesus, king of kings,

So wis1y²²³⁴ helpë me, as I not may.²²³⁵

I have been sick, and that full many a day.

I may not go so far," quoth she, "nor ride,

But I be dead, so pricketh²²³⁶ it my side.

May I not ask a libel, Sir Sompnoúr,

And answer there by my procúratoúr

To such thing as men would apposë²²³⁷ me?"

"Yes," quoth this Sompnour, "pay anon, let see,

Twelvecence to me, and I will thee acquit.

I shall no profit have thereby but lit:²²³⁸

My master hath the profit and not I.
Come off, and let me ridë hastily;
Give me twelvenpence, I may no longer tarry.”
“Twelvenpence!” quoth she; “now lady Saintë Mary
So wisly²²³⁹ help me out of care and sin,
This widë world though that I should it win,
Ne have I not twelvenpence within my hold.
Ye know full well that I am poor and old;
Kithë your almës²²⁴⁰ upon me poor wretch.”
“Nay then,” quoth he, “the foulë fiend me fetch,
If I excuse thee, though thou should’st be spilt.”²²⁴¹
“Alas!” quoth she, “God wot, I have no guilt.”
“Pay me,” quoth he, “or, by the sweet Saint Anne,
As I will bear away thy newë pan
For debtë, which thou owest me of old—
When that thou madest thine husbánd cuckóld—
I paid at home for thy correctiún.”
“Thou liest,” quoth she, “by my salvatiún;
Never was I ere now, widow or wife,
Summon’d unto your court in all my life;
Nor never I was but of my body true.
Unto the devil rough and black of hue
Give I thy body and my pan also.”
And when the devil heard her cursë so
Upon her knees, he said in this mannére;
“Now, Mabily, mine owen mother dear,
Is this your will in earnest that ye say?”
“The devil,” quoth she, “so fetch him ere he dey,²²⁴²
And pan and all, but²²⁴³ he will him repent.”
“Nay, oldë stoat,²²⁴⁴ that is not mine intent,”
Quoth this Sompnour, “for to repentë me
For any thing that I have had of thee;
I would I had thy smock and every cloth.”
“Now, brother,” quoth the devil, “be not wroth;
Thy body and this pan be mine by right.
Thou shalt with me to hellë yet tonight,

Where thou shalt knowen of our privity²²⁴⁵
More than a master of divinity.”

And with that word the foulë fiend him hent.²²⁴⁶
Body and soul, he with the devil went,
Where as the Sompnours have their heritage;
And God, that makëd after his imáge
Mankindë, save and guide us all and some,
And let this Sompnour a good man become.
Lordings, I could have told you (quoth this Frere),
Had I had leisure for this Sompnour here,
After the text of Christ, and Paul, and John,
And of our other doctors many a one,
Such painës, that your heartës might agrise,²²⁴⁷
Albeit so, that no tongue may devise—²²⁴⁸
Though that I might a thousand winters tell—
The pains of thilkë²²⁴⁹ cursed house of hell.
But for to keep us from that cursed place
Wake we, and pray we Jesus, of his grace,
So keep us from the tempter, Satanas.
Hearken this word, beware as in this case.
The lion sits in his await²²⁵⁰ alway
To slay the innocent, if that he may.
Disposen aye your heartës to withstond
The fiend that would you makë thrall and bond;
He may not temptë you over your might,
For Christ will be your champion and your knight;
And pray, that this our Sompnour him repent
Of his misdeeds ere that the fiend him hent.²²⁵¹

THE SOMPNOUR'S TALE

THE PROLOGUE

The Sompnour in his stirrups high he stood,
Upon this Friar his heartë was so wood,²²⁵²
That like an aspen leaf he quoke²²⁵³ for ire:
“Lordings,” quoth he, “but one thing I desire;
I you beseech, that of your courtesy,
Since ye have heard this falsë Friar lie,
As suffer me I may my talë tell.
This Friar boasteth that he knoweth hell,
And, God it wot, that is but little wonder,
Friars and fiends be but little asunder.
For, pardie, ye have often time heard tell,
How that a friar ravish’d was to hell
In spirit onës by a visioún,
And, as an angel led him up and down,
To shew him all the painës that there were,
In all the place saw he not a frere;
Of other folk he saw enough in woe.
Unto the angel spake the friar tho;²²⁵⁴
‘Now, Sir,’ quoth he, ‘have friars such a grace,
That none of them shall come into this place?’
‘Yes’ quoth the angel; ‘many a millioún.’
And unto Satanas he led him down.

‘And now hath Satanas,’ said he, ‘a tail
Broader than of a carrack²²⁵⁵ is the sail.
Hold up thy tail, thou Satanas,’ quoth he,
‘Shew forth thine erse, and let the friar see
Where is the nest of friars in this place.’
And less than half a furlong way of space,²²⁵⁶
Right so as bees swarmen out of a hive,
Out of the devil’s erse there gan to drive
A twenty thousand friars on a rout.²²⁵⁷
And throughout hell they swarmed all about,
And came again, as fast as they may gon,
And in his erse they creeped every one:
He clapt his tail again, and lay full still.
This friar, when he looked had his fill
Upon the torments of that sorry place,
His spirit God restored of his grace
Into his body again, and he awoke;
But natheless for fearë yet he quoke,
So was the devil’s erse aye in his mind;
That is his heritage, of very kind.²²⁵⁸
God save you allë, save this cursed Frere;
My prologue will I end in this mannère.

THE TALE

Lordings, there is in Yorkshire, as I guess,
A marshy country callëd Holderness,
In which there went a limitour about
To preach, and eke to beg, it is no doubt.
And so befell that on a day this frere
Had preached at a church in his mannère,

And speciállly, above every thing,
Excited he the people in his preaching
To trentals, [2259](#) and to give, for Goddë's sake,
Wherewith men mightë holy houses make,
There as divinë service is honoúr'd,
Not there as it is wasted and devoúr'd,
Nor where it needeth not for to be given,
As to possessioners, [2260](#) that may liven,
Thanked be God, in wealth and abundánce.
"Trentals," said he, "deliver from penánce
Their friendës' soulës, as well old as young,
Yea, when that they be hastily y-sung—
Not for to hold a priest jolly and gay,
He singeth not but one mass in a day.
Deliver out," quoth he, "anon the souls.
Full hard it is, with flesh-hook or with owls
To be y-clawed, or to burn or bake: [2261](#)
Now speed you hastily, for Christë's sake."
And when this friar had said all his intent,
With *qui cum patre* [2262](#) forth his way he went,
When folk in church had giv'n him what them lest; [2263](#)
He went his way, no longer would he rest,
With scrip and tipped staff, y-tucked high: [2264](#)
In every house he gan to pore [2265](#) and pry,
And begged meal and cheese, or ellës corn.
His fellow had a staff tipped with horn,
A pair of tables [2266](#) all of ivory,
And a pointel [2267](#) y-polish'd fetisly, [2268](#)
And wrote alway the namës, as he stood,
Of all the folk that gave them any good,
Askauncë [2269](#) that he wouldë for them pray.
"Give us a bushel wheat, or malt, or rey, [2270](#)
A Goddë's kichel, [2271](#) or a trip [2272](#) of cheese,
Or ellës what you list, we may not chese; [2273](#)
A Goddë's halfpenny, or a mass penny;

Or give us of your brawn, if ye have any;
A dagon²²⁷⁴ of your blanket, levë dame,
Our sister dear—lo, here I write your name—
Bacon or beef, or such thing as ye find.”

A sturdy harlot²²⁷⁵ went them aye behind,
That was their hostë’s man, and bare a sack,
And what men gave them, laid it on his back.

And when that he was out at door, anon
He planed away the namës every one,
That he before had written in his tables:

He served them with nifles²²⁷⁶ and with fables.—

“Nay, there thou liest, thou Sompnour,” quoth the Frere.
“Peace,” quoth our Host, “for Christë’s mother dear;
Tell forth thy tale, and spare it not at all.”

“So thrive I,” quoth this Sompnour, “so I shall.”—

So long he went from house to house, till he
Came to a house, where he was wont to be
Refreshed more than in a hundred places.
Sick lay the husband man, whose that the place is,
Bedrid upon a couchë low he lay:

“*Deus hic*,”²²⁷⁷ quoth he; “O Thomas friend, good day,”
Said this friár, all courteously and soft.

“Thomas,” quoth he, “God yield it you,”²²⁷⁸ full oft
Have I upon this bench fared full well,
Here have I eaten many a merry meal.”

And from the bench he drove away the cat,
And laid adown his potent²²⁷⁹ and his hat,
And eke his scrip, and sat himself adown:
His fellow was y-walked into town

Forth with his knave,²²⁸⁰ into that hostelry
Where as he shopë²²⁸¹ him that night to lie.

“O dearë master,” quoth this sickë man,
“How have ye fared since that March began?
I saw you not this fortënight and more.”

“God wot,” quoth he, “labour’d have I full sore;
And specially for thy salvatiön

Have I said many a precious orison,
And for mine other friendës, God them bless.
I have this day been at your church at mess,^{[2282](#)}
And said sermón after my simple wit,
Not all after the text of Holy Writ;
For it is hard to you, as I suppose,
And therefore will I teach you aye the glose.^{[2283](#)}
Glosing is a full glorious thing certáin,
For letter slayeth, as we clerkës^{[2284](#)} sayn.
There have I taught them to be charitable,
And spend their good where it is reasonable.
And there I saw our damë; where is she?”
“Yonder I trow that in the yard she be,”
Saidë this man; “and she will come anon.”
“Hey master, welcome be ye by Saint John,”
Saidë this wife; “how fare ye heartily?”
This friar riseth up full courteously,
And her embraceth in his armës narrow,^{[2285](#)}
And kiss’th her sweet, and chirketh as a sparrow
With his lippës: “Damë,” quoth he, “right well,
As he that is your servant every deal.^{[2286](#)}
Thanked be God, that gave you soul and life,
Yet saw I not this day so fair a wife
In all the churchë, God so savë me,”
“Yea, God amend defaultës, Sir,” quoth she;
“Algatës^{[2287](#)} welcome be ye, by my fay.”
“*Grand mercy*, Dame; that have I found alway.
But of your greatë goodness, by your leave,
I wouldë pray you that ye not you grieve,
I will with Thomas speak a little throw.^{[2288](#)}
These curates be so negligent and slow
To gropë tenderly a conscience.
In shrift^{[2289](#)} and preaching is my diligence
And study in Peter’s wordës and in Paul’s;
I walk and fishë Christian mennë’s souls,
To yield our Lord Jesus his proper rent;

To spread his word is allë mine intent.”
“Now by your faith, O dearë Sir,” quoth she,
“Chide him right well, for saintë charity.
He is aye angry as is a pismire,
Though that he have all that he can desire,
Though I him wrie²²⁹⁰ at night, and make him warm,
And ov’r him lay my leg and eke mine arm,
He groaneth as our boar that lies in sty:
Other disport of him right none have I,
I may not please him in no manner case.”²²⁹¹
“O Thomas, *je vous dis*, Thomas, Thomas,
This maketh the fiend,²²⁹² this must be amended.
Ire is a thing that high God hath defended,²²⁹³
And thereof will I speak a word or two.”
“Now, master,” quoth the wife, “ere that I go,
What will ye dine? I will go thereabout.”
“Now, Damë,” quoth he, “*je vous dis sans doute*,
Had I not of a capon but the liver,
And of your whitë bread not but a shiver,²²⁹⁴
And after that a roasted piggë’s head,
(But I would that for me no beast were dead,)
Then had I with you homely suffisánce.
I am a man of little sustenánce.
My spirit hath its fost’ring in the Bible.
My body is aye so ready and penible²²⁹⁵
To wakë,²²⁹⁶ that my stomach is destroy’d.
I pray you, Dame, that ye be not annoy’d,
Though I so friendly you my counsel shew;
By God, I would have told it but to few.”
“Now, Sir,” quoth she, “but one word ere I go;
My child is dead within these weekës two,
Soon after that ye went out of this town.”
“His death saw I by revelatióun,”
Said this friar, “at home in our dortour.”²²⁹⁷
I dare well say, that less than half an hour
After his death, I saw him borne to bliss

In minë vision, so God me wiss. [2298](#)
So did our sexton, and our fermerere, [2299](#)
That have been truë friars fifty year—
They may now, God be thanked of his love,
Makë their jubilee, and walk above. [2300](#)
And up I rose, and all our convent eke,
With many a tearë trilling on my cheek,
Withoutë noise or clattering of bells,
“Te Deum” was our song, and nothing else,
Save that to Christ I bade an orison,
Thanking him of my revelatiön.
For, Sir and Damë, trustë me right well,
Our orisons be more effectuel,
And more we see of Christë’s secret things,
Than borel folk, [2301](#) although that they be kings.
We live in povert’, and in abstinence,
And borel folk in riches and dispence
Of meat and drink, and in their foul delight.
We have this worldë’s lust [2302](#) all in despight [2303](#)
Lazar and Dives lived diversely,
And diverse guerdon haddë they thereby.
Whoso will pray, he must fast and be clean,
And fat his soul, and keep his body lean.
We fare as saith th’ apostle; cloth [2304](#) and food
Suffice us, although they be not full good.
The cleanness and the fasting of us freres
Maketh that Christ accepteth our prayéres.
Lo, Moses forty days and forty night
Fasted, ere that the high God full of might
Spake with him in the mountain of Sinái:
With empty womb of fasting many a day
Received he the lawë, that was writ
With Goddë’s finger; and Eli, [2305](#) well ye wit, [2306](#)
In Mount Horeb, ere he had any speech
With highë God, that is our livës’ leech, [2307](#)
He fasted long, and was in contemplance.

Aaron, that had the temple in governáncē,
And eke the other priestēs every one,
Into the temple when they shouldē gon
To prayē for the people, and do service,
They wouldē drinken in no manner wise
No drinkē, which that might them drunken make,
But there in abstinencē pray and wake, [2308](#)
Lest that they diēd: take heed what I say—
But [2309](#) they be sober that for the people pray—
Ware that, I say—no more: for it sufficeth.
Our Lord Jesus, as Holy Writ deviseth, [2310](#)
Gave us example of fasting and prayéres:
Therefore we mendicants, we sely [2311](#) freres,
Be wedded to povert' and continence,
To charity, humbless, and abstinence,
To persecutiún for righteousness,
To weeping, misericorde, [2312](#) and to cleannéss.
And therefore may ye see that our prayéres
(I speak of us, we mendicants, we freres),
Be to the highē God more acceptable
Than yourēs, with your feastēs at your table.
From Paradise first, if I shall not lie,
Was man out chased for his gluttony,
And chaste was man in Paradise certáin.
But hark now, Thomas, what I shall thee sayn;
I have no text of it, as I suppose,
But I shall find it in a manner glose; [2313](#)
That speciálly our sweet Lord Jesus
Spake this of friars, when he saidē thus,
'Blessed be they that poor in spirit be.'
And so forth all the gospel may ye see,
Whether it be liker our professiún,
Or theirs that swimmen in possessiún;
Fy on their pomp, and on their gluttony,
And on their lewēdness! I them defy.
Me thinketh they be like Jovinian, [2314](#)

Fat as a whale, and walking as a swan;
All vinolent as bottle in the spence;²³¹⁵
Their prayer is of full great reverence;
When they for soulès say the Psalm of David,
Lo, 'Buf' they say, *Cor meum eructavit*.²³¹⁶
Who follow Christë's gospel and his lore²³¹⁷
But we, that humble be, and chaste, and pore,²³¹⁸
Workers of Goddë's word, not auditoúrs?²³¹⁹
Therefore right as a hawk upon a sours²³²⁰
Up springs into the air, right so prayéres
Of charitable and chaste busy freres
Makë their sours to Goddë's earès two.
Thomas, Thomas, so may I ride or go,
And by that lord that callèd is Saint Ive,
N'ere thou our brother, shouldest thou not thrive;²³²¹
In our chapíter pray we day and night
To Christ, that he thee sendë health and might,
Thy body for to wieldë hastily."²³²²

"God wot," quoth he, "nothing thereof feel I;
So help me Christ, as I in fewë years
Have spendèd upon divers manner freres²³²³
Full many a pound, yet fare I ne'er the bet;²³²⁴
Certain my good have I almost beset:²³²⁵
Farewell my gold, for it is all ago."²³²⁶

The friar answér'd, "O Thomas, dost thou so?
What needest thou diversë friars to seech?²³²⁷
What needeth him that hath a perfect leech,
To seeken other leeches in the town?
Your inconstánce is your confusioún.
Hold ye then me, or ellès our convént,
To prayë for you insufficiént?
Thomas, that jape²³²⁸ it is not worth a mite;
Your malady is for we have too lite.²³²⁹
Ah, give that convent half a quarter oats;
And give that convent four and twenty groats;

And give that friar a penny, and let him go!
Nay, nay, Thomas, it may no thing be so.
What is a farthing worth parted on twelve?
Lo, each thing that is oned²³³⁰ in himselve
Is morë strong than when it is y-scatter'd.
Thomas, of me thou shalt not be y-flatter'd,
Thou wouldest have our labour all for nought.
The highë God, that all this world hath wrought,
Saith, that the workman worthy is his hire.
Thomas, nought of your treasure I desire
As for myself, but that all our convént
To pray for you is aye so diligent:
And for to buildë Christë's owen church.
Thomas, if ye will learnë for to wirch,²³³¹
Of building up of churches may ye find
If it be good, in Thomas' life of Ind.
Ye lie here full of anger and of ire,
With which the devil sets your heart on fire,
And chidë here this holy innocent
Your wife, that is so meek and patiënt.
And therefore trow²³³² me, Thomas, if thee lest,²³³³
Ne strive not with thy wife, as for the best.
And bear this word away now, by thy faith,
Touching such thing, lo, what the wise man saith:
'Within thy housë be thou no lión;
To thy subjécts do none oppressión;
Nor make thou thine acquaintance for to flee.'
And yet, Thomas, eftsoonës²³³⁴ charge I thee,
Beware from ire that in thy bosom sleeps,
Ware from the serpent, that so slily creeps
Under the grass, and stingeth subtilly.
Beware, my son, and hearken patiently,
That twenty thousand men have lost their lives
For striving with their lemans²³³⁵ and their wives.
Now since ye have so holy and meek a wife,
What needeth you, Thomas, to makë strife?

There is, y-wis,²³³⁶ no serpent so cruél,
When men tread on his tail nor half so fell,²³³⁷
As woman is, when she hath caught an ire;
Very²³³⁸ vengeance is then all her desire.
Ire is a sin, one of the greatë seven,²³³⁹
Abominable to the God of heaven,
And to himself it is destructiön.
This every lewëd²³⁴⁰ vicar and parsón
Can say, how ire engenders homicide;
Ire is in sooth th' executor²³⁴¹ of pride.
I could of ire you say so muchë sorrow,
My tale shouldë last until to-morrow.
And therefore pray I God both day and night,
An irous²³⁴² man God send him little might.
It is great harm, and certes great pity
To set an irous man in high degree.

“Whilom²³⁴³ there was an irous potestatë,²³⁴⁴
As saith Senec, that during his estate²³⁴⁵
Upon a day out rodë knightës two;
And, as fortunë would that it were so,
The one of them came home, the other not.
Anon the knight before the judge is brought,
That saidë thus; ‘Thou hast thy fellow slain,
For which I doom thee to the death certáin.’
And to another knight commanded he;
‘Go, lead him to the death, I chargë thee.’
And happened, as they went by the way
Toward the placë where as he should dey,²³⁴⁶
The knight came, which men weened²³⁴⁷ had been dead.
Then thoughtë they it was the bestë rede²³⁴⁸
To lead them both unto the judge again.
They saidë, ‘Lord, the knight hath not y-slain
His fellow; here he standeth whole alive.’
‘Ye shall be dead,’ quoth he, ‘so may I thrive,
That is to say, both one, and two, and three.’
And to the firstë knight right thus spake he:

'I damned thee, thou must algate²³⁴⁹ be dead:
And thou also must needës lose thine head,
For thou the cause art why thy fellow dieth.'
And to the thirdë knight right thus he sayeth,
'Thou hast not done that I commanded thee.'
And thus he did do slay them²³⁵⁰ allë three.
Irous Cambyses was eke dronkelew,²³⁵¹
And aye delighted him to be a shrew.²³⁵²
And so befell, a lord of his meinie,²³⁵³
That loved virtuous morality,
Said on a day betwixt them two right thus:
'A lord is lost, if he be vicious.
[An irous man is like a frantic beast,
In which there is of wisdom none arrest;]²³⁵⁴
And drunkenness is eke a foul record
Of any man, and namely²³⁵⁵ of a lord.
There is full many an eye and many an ear
Awaiting on²³⁵⁶ a lord, he knows not where.
For Goddë's love, drink more attemperly:²³⁵⁷
Wine maketh man to losë wretchedly
His mind, and eke his limbës every one.'
'The réverse shalt thou see,' quoth he, 'anon,
And prove it by thine own experience,
That winë doth to folk no such offence.
There is no wine bereaveth me my might
Of hand, nor foot, nor of mine eyen sight.'
And for despite he drankë muchë more
A hundred part²³⁵⁸ than he had done before,
And right anon this cursed irous wretch
This knightë's sonë let²³⁵⁹ before him fetch,
Commanding him he should before him stand:
And suddenly he took his bow in hand,
And up the string he pulled to his ear,
And with an arrow slew the child right there.
'Now whether have I a sicker²³⁶⁰ hand or non?'²³⁶¹
Quoth he; 'Is all my might and mind agone?

Hath wine bereaved me mine eyen sight?
Why should I tell the answer of the knight?
His son was slain, there is no more to say.
Beware therefore with lordës how ye play,²³⁶²
Sing *Placebo*;²³⁶³ and I shall if I can,
But if²³⁶⁴ it be unto a poorë man:
To a poor man men should his vices tell,
But not t' a lord, though he should go to hell.
Lo, irous Cyrus, thilkë²³⁶⁵ Persian,
How he destroy'd the river of Gisen,²³⁶⁶
For that a horse of his was drowned therein,
When that he wentë Babylon to win:
He madë that the river was so small,
That women mightë wade it over all.²³⁶⁷
Lo, what said he, that so well teachë can,
'Be thou no fellow to an irous man,
Nor with no wood²³⁶⁸ man walkë by the way,
Lest thee repent;' I will no farther say.

"Now, Thomas, levë²³⁶⁹ brother, leave thine ire,
Thou shalt me find as just as is as squire;
Hold not the devil's knife aye at thine heart;
Thine anger doth thee all too sorë smart;²³⁷⁰
But shew to me all thy confessiön."

"Nay," quoth the sickë man, "by Saint Simón
I have been shriven²³⁷¹ this day of my curáte;
I have him told all wholly mine estate.
Needeth no more to speak of it, saith he,
But if me list of mine humility."

"Give me then of thy good to make our cloister,"
Quoth he, "for many a mussel and many an oyster,
When other men have been full well at ease,
Hath been our food, our cloister for to rese:²³⁷²
And yet, God wot, unneth²³⁷³ the foundement²³⁷⁴
Performed is, nor of our pavëment
Is not a tilë yet within our wones:²³⁷⁵

By God, we owë forty pound for stones.
Now help, Thomas, for him that harrow'd hell, [2376](#)
For ellës must we ourë bookës sell,
And if ye lack our predicatiön,
Then goes this world all to destructiön.
For whoso from this world would us bereave,
So God me save, Thomas, by your leave,
He would bereave out of this world the sun.
For who can teach and worken as we conne? [2377](#)
And that is not of little time (quoth he),
But since Elijah was, and Elisée, [2378](#)
Have friars been, that find I of record,
In charity, y-thanked be our Lord.
Now, Thomas, help for saintë charity."
And down anon he set him on his knee.

The sick man waxed well nigh wood [2379](#) for ire,
He wouldë that the friar had been afire
With his falsë dissimulatiön.
"Such thing as is in my possessiön,"
Quoth he, "that may I give you and none other:
Ye say me thus, how that I am your brother."
"Yea, certes," quoth this friar, "yea, trustë well;
I took our Dame the letter of our seal" [2380](#)
"Now well," quoth he, "and somewhat shall I give
Unto your holy convent while I live;
And in thine hand thou shalt it have anon,
On this conditiön, and other none,
That thou depart [2381](#) it so, my dearë brother,
That every friar have as much as other:
This shalt thou swear on thy professiön,
Withoutë fraud or cavillatiön." [2382](#)
"I swear it," quoth the friar, "upon my faith."
And therewithal his hand in his he lay'th;
"Lo here my faith, in me shall be no lack."
"Then put thine hand adown right by my back,"
Saidë this man, "and gropë well behind,

Beneath my buttock, therë thou shalt find
A thing, that I have hid in privy.”
“Ah,” thought this friar, “that shall go with me.”
And down his hand he launched to the clift,
In hopë for to findë there a gift.
And when this sickë man feltë this frere
About his tailë groping there and here,
Amid his hand he let the friar a fart;
There is no capel²³⁸³ drawing in a cart,
That might have let a fart of such a soun’.
The friar up start, as doth a wood²³⁸⁴ liouín:
“Ah, falsë churl,” quoth he, “for Goddë’s bones,
This hast thou in despite done for the nones:²³⁸⁵
Thou shalt abie²³⁸⁶ this fart, if that I may.”
His meinie,²³⁸⁷ which that heard of this affray,
Came leaping in, and chased out the frere,
And forth he went with a full angry cheer²³⁸⁸
And fetch’d his fellow, there as lay his store:
He looked as it were a wildë boar,
And groundë with his teeth, so was he wroth.
A sturdy pace down to the court he go’th,
Where as there wonn’d²³⁸⁹ a man of great honoúr,
To whom that he was always confessoúr:
This worthy man was lord of that villáge.
This friar came, as he were in a rage,
Where as this lord sat eating at his board:
Unnethës²³⁹⁰ might the friar speak one word,
Till at the last he saidë, “God you see.”²³⁹¹
This lord gan look, and said, “*Ben’dicite!*
What? Friar John, what manner world is this?
I see well that there something is amiss;
Ye look as though the wood were full of thievës.
Sit down anon, and tell me what your grieve²³⁹² is,
And it shall be amended, if I may.”
“I have,” quoth he, “had a despote to-day,
God yieldë you,²³⁹³ adown in your villáge,

That in this world is none so poor a page,
That would not have abominatióún
Of that I have received in your town:
And yet ne grieveth me nothing so sore,
As that the oldë churl, with lookës hoar,
Blasphemed hath our holy convent eke.”
“Now, master,” quoth this lord, “I you beseek”—
“No master, Sir,” quoth he, “but servitoúr,
Though I have had in schoolë that honoúr.
God liketh not, that men us Rabbi call,
Neither in market, nor in your large hall.”
“No force,”²³⁹⁴ quoth he; “but tell me all your grief.”
“Sir,” quoth this friar, “an odious mischíef
This day betid²³⁹⁵ is to mine order and me,
And so *par consequence* to each degree
Of holy churchë, God amend it soon.”
“Sir,” quoth the lord, “ye know what is to doon:²³⁹⁶
Distemp’r you not,²³⁹⁷ ye be my confessoúr.
Ye be the salt of th’ earth, and the savóúr;
For Goddë’s love your patiénce now hold;
Tell me your grief.” And he anon him told
As ye have heard before, ye know well what.
The lady of the house aye stillë sat,
Till she had heardë what the friar said.
“Hey, Goddë’s mother;” quoth she, “blissful maid,
Is there ought ellës? tell me faithfully.”
“Madame,” quoth he, “how thinketh you thereby?”
“How thinketh me?” quoth she; “so God me speed,
I say, a churl hath done a churlish deed,
What should I say? God let him never thé;²³⁹⁸
His sickë head is full of vanity;
I hold him in a manner phrenesy.”²³⁹⁹
“Madame,” quoth he, “by God, I shall not lie,
But I in other wise may be awreke,²⁴⁰⁰
I shall defame him ov’r all there²⁴⁰¹ I speak;
This falsë blasphemóúr, that charged me

To partë that will not departed be,
To every man alikë, with mischance.”

The lord sat still, as he were in a trance,
And in his heart he rolled up and down,
“How had this churl imaginatioun
To shewë such a problem to the frere.
Never ere now heard I of such mattére;
I trow²⁴⁰² the Devil put it in his mind.
In all arsmetrik²⁴⁰³ shall there no man find,
Before this day, of such a questiún.
Who shouldë make a demonstratiún,
That every man should have alike his part
As of the sound and savour of a fart?
O nice²⁴⁰⁴ proudë churl, I shrew²⁴⁰⁵ his face.
Lo, Sirës,” quoth the lord, “with hardë grace,²⁴⁰⁶
Who ever heard of such a thing ere now?
To every man alikë? tell me how.
It is impossible, it may not be.
Hey nicë²⁴⁰⁷ churl, God let him never thé.²⁴⁰⁸
The rumbling of a fart, and every soun’,
Is but of air reverberatioun,
And ever wasteth lite and lite²⁴⁰⁹ away;
There is no man can deemen,²⁴¹⁰ by my fay,
If that it were departed²⁴¹¹ equally.
What? lo, my churl, lo yet how shrewedly²⁴¹²
Unto my confessoúr to-day he spake;
I hold him certain a demoniac.
Now eat your meat, and let the churl go play,
Let him go hang himself a devil way!”

Now stood the lordë’s squiër at the board,
That carv’d his meat, and heardë word by word
Of all this thing, which that I have you said.
“My lord,” quoth he, “be ye not evil paid,²⁴¹³
I couldë tellë, for a gownë-cloth,²⁴¹⁴
To you, Sir Friar, so that ye be not wroth,
How that this fart should even²⁴¹⁵ dealed be

Among your convent, if it liked thee.”
“Tell,” quoth the lord, “and thou shalt have anon
A gownë-cloth, by God and by Saint John.”
“My lord,” quoth he, “when that the weather is fair,
Withoutë wind, or perturbíng of air,
Let²⁴¹⁶ bring a cart-wheel here into this hall,
But lookë that it have its spokës all;
Twelve spokës hath a cart-wheel commonly;
And bring me then twelve friars, know ye why?
For thirteen is a convent as I guess;²⁴¹⁷
Your confessór here, for his worthiness,
Shall perform up²⁴¹⁸ the number of his convént.
Then shall they kneel adown by one assent,
And to each spokë’s end, in this mannére,
Full sadly²⁴¹⁹ lay his nosë shall a frere;
Your noble confessór there, God him save,
Shall hold his nose upright under the nave.
Then shall this churl, with belly stiff and tought²⁴²⁰
As any tabour,²⁴²¹ hither be y-brought;
And set him on the wheel right of this cart
Upon the nave, and make him let a fart,
And ye shall see, on peril of my life,
By very proof that is demonstrative,
That equally the sound of it will wend,²⁴²²
And eke the stink, unto the spokës’ end,
Save that this worthy man, your confessoúr
(Because he is a man of great honoúr),
Shall have the firstë fruit, as reason is;
The noble uságe of friars yet it is,
The worthy men of them shall first be served,
And certainly he hath it well deserved;
He hath to-day taught us so muchë good
With preaching in the pulpit where he stood,
That I may vouchësafe, I say for me,
He had the firstë smell of fartës three;
And so would all his brethren hardily;

He beareth him so fair and holily.”

The lord, the lady, and each man, save the frere,

Saidë, that Jankin spake in this mattére

As well as Euclid, or as Ptolemy.

Touching the churl, they said that subtilty

And high wit made him speaken as he spake;

He is no fool, nor no demoniac.

And Jankin hath y-won a newë gown;

My tale is done, we are almost at town.

THE CLERK'S TALE

THE PROLOGUE

“Sir Clerk of Oxenford,” our Hostë said,
“Ye ride as still and coy, as doth a maid
That were new spoused, sitting at the board:
This day I heard not of your tongue a word.
I trow ye study about some sophime;[2423](#)
But Solomon saith, every thing hath time.
For Goddë’s sake, be of better cheer,[2424](#)
It is no timë for to study here.
Tell us some merry talë, by your fay;[2425](#)
For what man that is entered in a play,
He needës must unto that play assent.
But preachë not, as friars do in Lent,
To make us for our oldë sinnës weep,
Nor that thy talë make us not to sleep.
Tell us some merry thing of áventures.
Your terms, your colourës, and your figúres,
Keep them in store, till so be ye indite
High style, as when that men to kingës write.
Speakë so plain at this time, I you pray,
That we may understandë what ye say.”
This worthy Clerk benignëly answér’d;

“Hostë,” quoth he, “I am under your yerd,²⁴²⁶
Ye have of us as now the governáncë,
And therefore would I do you obeisáncë,
As far as reason asketh, hardily.²⁴²⁷
I will you tell a talë, which that I
Learn’d at Padova of a worthy clerk,
As proved by his wordës and his werk.
He is now dead, and nailed in his chest,
I pray to God to give his soul good rest.
Francis Petrarç’, the laureate poët,²⁴²⁸
Hightë²⁴²⁹ this clerk, whose rhetoric so sweet
Illumin’d all Itále of poetry,
As Linian²⁴³⁰ did of philosophy,
Or law, or other art particulére:
But death, that will not suffer us dwell here
But as it were a twinkling of an eye,
Them both hath slain, and allë we shall die.
“But forth to tellen of this worthy man,
That taughtë me this tale, as I began,
I say that first he with high style inditeth
(Ere he the body of his talë writeth)
A proem, in the which describeth he
Piedmont, and of Saluces²⁴³¹ the countrý,
And speaketh of the Pennine hillës high,
That be the bounds of all West Lombardy:
And of Mount Vesulus in special,
Where as the Po out of a wellë small
Taketh his firstë springing and his source,
That eastward aye increaseth in his course
T’ Emilia-ward,²⁴³² to Ferraro, and Veníce,
The which a long thing werë to devise.²⁴³³
And truëly, as to my judgëment,
Me thinketh it a thing impertinent,²⁴³⁴
Save that he would conveyë his mattére:
But this is the tale, which that ye shall hear.”

THE TALE²⁴³⁵

PARS PRIMA

There is, right at the west side of Itále,
Down at the root of Vesulus²⁴³⁶ the cold,
A lusty²⁴³⁷ plain, abundant of vitáille;
There many a town and tow'r thou may'st behold,
That founded were in time of fathers old,
And many another délectáble sight;
And Saluces this noble country hight.

A marquis whilom lord was of that land,
As were his worthy elders²⁴³⁸ him before,
And obedient, aye ready to his hand,
Were all his lieges, bothë less and more:
Thus in delight he liv'd, and had done yore,²⁴³⁹
Belov'd and drad,²⁴⁴⁰ through favour of fortune,
Both of his lordës and of his commúne.²⁴⁴¹

Therewith he was, to speak of lineage,
The gentilest y-born of Lombardy,
A fair persón, and strong, and young of age,
And full of honour and of courtesy:
Discreet enough his country for to gie,²⁴⁴²
Saving in some things that he was to blame;
And Walter was this youngë lordë's name.

I blame him thus, that he consider'd not
In timë coming what might him betide,
But on his present lust²⁴⁴³ was all his thought,
And for to hawk and hunt on every side;
Well nigh all other carës let he slide,
And eke he would (that was the worst of all)
Weddë no wife for aught that might befall.

Only that point his people bare so sore,
That flockmel²⁴⁴⁴ on a day to him they went,
And one of them, that wisest was of lore
(Or ellës that the lord would best assent
That he should tell him what the people meant,
Or ellës could he well shew such mattére),
He to the marquis said as ye shall hear.

“O noble Marquis! your humanity
Assureth us and gives us hardiness,
As oft as time is of necessity,
That we to you may tell our heaviness:
Acceptë, Lord, now of your gentleness,
What we with piteous heart unto you plain,²⁴⁴⁵
And let your ears my voicë not disdain.

“All²⁴⁴⁶ have I nought to do in this mattére
More than another man hath in this place,
Yet forasmuch as ye, my Lord so dear,
Have always shewed me favour and grace,
I dare the better ask of you a space
Of audience, to shewen our request,
And ye, my Lord, to do right as you lest.²⁴⁴⁷

“For certes, Lord, so well us likë you
And all your work, and ev’r have done, that we
Ne couldë not ourselves devisë how
We mightë live in more felicity:
Save one thing, Lord, if that your will it be,
That for to be a wedded man you lest;
Then were your people in sovereign heart’s rest.²⁴⁴⁸

“Bowë your neck under the blissful yoke
Of sovereignty, and not of servíce,
Which that men call espousal or wedlóck:
And thinkë, Lord, among your thoughtës wise,
How that our dayës pass in sundry wise;
For though we sleep, or wake, or roam, or ride,
Aye fleeth time, it will no man abide.

“And though your greenë youthë flow’r as yet,

In creepeth age always as still as stone,
And death menaceth every age, and smit²⁴⁴⁹
In each estate, for there escapeth none:
And all so certain as we know each one
That we shall die, as uncertáin we all
Be of that day when death shall on us fall.

“Acceptë then of us the true intent,²⁴⁵⁰
That never yet refused yourë hest,²⁴⁵¹
And we will, Lord, if that ye will assent,
Choose you a wife, in short time at the lest,²⁴⁵²
Born of the gentilest and of the best
Of all this land, so that it ought to seem
Honour to God and you, as we can deem.

“Deliver us out of all this busy dread,²⁴⁵³
And take a wife, for highë Goddë’s sake:
For if it so befell, as God forbid,
That through your death your lineage should slake,²⁴⁵⁴
And that a strange successor shouldë take
Your heritage, oh! woe were us on live:²⁴⁵⁵
Wherefore we pray you hastily to wive.”

Their meekë prayer and their piteous cheer
Made the marquis for to have pity.

“Ye will,” quoth he, “mine owen people dear,
To that I ne’er ere²⁴⁵⁶ thought constrainë me.
I me rejoiced of my liberty,
That seldom time is found in marriáge;
Where I was free, I must be in serváge!²⁴⁵⁷

“But natheless I see your true intent,
And trust upon your wit, and have done aye:
Wherefore of my free will I will assent
To weddë me, as soon as e’er I may.
But whereas ye have proffer’d me to-day
To choosë me a wife, I you release
That choice, and pray you of that proffer cease.

“For God it wot, that children often been
Unlike their worthy elders them before,

Bounté²⁴⁵⁸ comes all of God, not of the strene²⁴⁵⁹
Of which they be engender'd and y-bore:
I trust in Goddë's bounté, and therefore
My marriage, and mine estate and rest,
I him betake;²⁴⁶⁰ he may do as him lest.

“Let me alone in choosing of my wife;
That charge upon my back I will endure:
But I you pray, and charge upon your life,
That what wife that I take, ye me assure
To worship²⁴⁶¹ her, while that her life may dure,
In word and work both here and ellëswhere,
As she an emperorë's daughter were.

“And farthermore this shall ye swear, that ye
Against my choice shall never grudge²⁴⁶² nor strive.
For since I shall forego my liberty
At your request, as ever may I thrive,
Where as mine heart is set, there will I wive
And but²⁴⁶³ ye will assent in such mannére,
I pray you speak no more of this mattére.”

With heartly will they sworn and assent'
To all this thing, there said not one wight nay:
Beseeching him of grace, ere that they went,
That he would grantë them a certain day
Of his espousal, soon as e'er he may,
For yet always the people somewhat dread²⁴⁶⁴
Lest that the marquis wouldë no wife wed.

He granted them a day, such as him lest,
On which he would be wedded sickerly,²⁴⁶⁵
And said he did all this at their request;
And they with humble heart full buxomly,²⁴⁶⁶
Kneeling upon their knees full reverently,
Him thanked all; and thus they have an end
Of their intent, and home again they wend.

And hereupon he to his officers
Commanded for the feastë to purvey.²⁴⁶⁷
And to his privy knightës and squiërs

Such charge he gave, as him list on them lay:
And they to his commandement obey,
And each of them doth all his diligence
To do unto the feast all reverence.

PARS SECUNDA

Not far from thilkē²⁴⁶⁸ palace honourable,
Where as this marquis shope²⁴⁶⁹ his marriage,
There stood a thorp,²⁴⁷⁰ of sightē délectable,
In which the poorē folk of that villāge
Haddē their beastēs and their harbourage,²⁴⁷¹
And of their labour took their sustenance,
After the earthē gave them ábundānce.

Among this poorē folk there dwelt a man
Which that was holden poorest of them all;
But highē God sometimēs sendē can
His grace unto a little ox's stall;
Janicola men of that thorp him call.
A daughter had he, fair enough to sight,
And Griseldis this youngē maiden hight.

But for to speak of virtuous beauty,
Then was she one the fairest under sun:
Full poorēly y-foster'd up was she;
No likerous lust²⁴⁷² was in her heart y-run;
Well offer of the well than of the tun²⁴⁷³
She drank, and, for²⁴⁷⁴ she wouldē virtue please,
She knew well labour, but no idle ease.

But though this maiden tender were of age;
Yet in the breast of her virginity
There was inclos'd a sad and ripe corāge;²⁴⁷⁵
And in great reverence and charity
Her oldē poorē father foster'd she.

A few sheep, spinning, on the field she kept,
She wouldë not be idle till she slept.

And when she homeward camë, she would bring
Wortës, [2476](#) and other herbës, timës oft,
The which she shred and seeth'd for her living,
And made her bed full hard, and nothing soft:
And aye she kept her father's life on loft [2477](#).
With ev'ry obeisánce and diligence,
That child may do to father's reverence.

Upon Griselda, this poor creatúre,
Full often sithes [2478](#) this marquis set his eye,
As he on hunting rode, paráventure: [2479](#)
And when it fell that he might her espy,
He not with wanton looking of follý
His eyen cast on her, but in sad [2480](#) wise
Upon her cheer [2481](#) he would him oft advise; [2482](#)

Commending in his heart her womanhead,
And eke her virtue, passing any wight
Of so young age, as well in cheer as deed.
For though the people have no great insight
In virtue, he considered full right
Her bounté, [2483](#) and disposed that he would
Wed only her, if ever wed he should.

The day of wedding came, but no wight can
Tellë what woman that it shouldë be;
For which marvail wonder'd many a man,
And saidë, when they were in privy,
"Will not our lord yet leave his vanity?
Will he not wed? Alas, alas the while!
Why will he thus himself and us beguile?"

But natheless this marquis had done [2484](#) make
Of gemmës, set in gold and in azúre,
Brooches and ringës, for Griselda's sake,
And of her clothing took he the measúre
Of a maiden like unto her statúre,
And eke of other ornamentës all

That unto such a wedding shouldë fall.²⁴⁸⁵

The time of undern²⁴⁸⁶ of the samë day
Approached, that this wedding shouldë be,
And all the palace put was in array,
Both hall and chamber, each in its degree,
Houses of office stuffed with plenty
There may'st thou see of dainteous vitaille,
That may be found, as far as lasts Itále.

This royal marquis, richëly array'd,
Lordës and ladies in his company,
The which unto the feastë werë pray'd,
And of his retinue the bach'lerý,
With many a sound of sundry melody,
Unto the village, of the which I told,
In this array the right way did they hold.

Griseld' of this (God wot) full innocent,
That for her shapen²⁴⁸⁷ was all this array,
To fetchë water at a well is went,
And home she came as soon as e'er she may.
For well she had heard say, that on that day
The marquis shouldë wed, and, if she might,
She fain would have seen somewhat of that sight.

She thought, "I will with other maidens stand,
That be my fellows, in our door, and see
The marchioness; and therefore will I fand²⁴⁸⁸
To do at home, as soon as it may be,
The labour which belongeth unto me,
And then I may at leisure her behold,
If she this way unto the castle hold."

And as she would over the threshold gon,
The marquis came and gan for her to call,
And she set down her water-pot anon
Beside the threshold, in an ox's stall,
And down upon her knees she gan to fall,
And with sad²⁴⁸⁹ countenancë kneeled still,
Till she had heard what was the lordë's will.

The thoughtful marquis spake unto the maid
Full soberly, and said in this mannere:

“Where is your father, Griseldis?” he said.

And she with reverence, in humble cheer,²⁴⁹⁰

Answered, “Lord, he is all ready here.”

And in she went withoutë longer let,²⁴⁹¹

And to the marquis she her father fet.²⁴⁹²

He by the hand then took the poorë man,

And saidë thus, when he him had aside:

“Janicola, I neither may nor can

Longer the pleasance of mine heartë hide;

If that thou vouchësafe, whatso betide,

Thy daughter will I take, ere that I wend,²⁴⁹³

As for my wife, unto her lifë’s end.

“Thou lovest me, that know I well certáin,

And art my faithful liegëman y-bore,²⁴⁹⁴

And all that liketh me, I dare well sayn

It liketh thee; and specially therefore

Tell me that point, that I have said before—

If that thou wilt unto this purpose draw,

To takë me as for thy son-in-law.”

This sudden case²⁴⁹⁵ the man astonied so,

That red he wax’d, abash’d,²⁴⁹⁶ and all quaking

He stood; unnethës²⁴⁹⁷ said he wordës mo’,

But only thus; “Lord,” quoth he, “my willing

Is as ye will, nor against your liking

I will no thing, mine owen lord so dear;

Right as you list governë this mattére.”

“Then will I,” quoth the marquis softëly,

“That in thy chamber I, and thou, and she,

Have a collatiön;²⁴⁹⁸ and know’st thou why?

For I will ask her, if her will it be

To be my wife, and rule her after me:

And all this shall be done in thy presénce,

I will not speak out of thine audience.”²⁴⁹⁹

And in the chamber while they were about

The treaty, which ye shall hereafter hear,
The people came into the house without,
And wonder'd them in how honést mannére
And tenderly she kept her father dear;
But utterly Griseldis wonder might,
For never erst²⁵⁰⁰ ne saw she such a sight.

No wonder is though that she be astoned,²⁵⁰¹
To see so great a guest come in that place,
She never was to no such guestës woned;²⁵⁰²
For which she looked with full palë face.
But shortly forth this matter for to chase,²⁵⁰³
These are the wordës that the marquis said
To this benignë, very,²⁵⁰⁴ faithful maid.

"Griseld'," he said, "ye shall well understand,
It liketh to your father and to me
That I you wed, and eke it may so stand,
As I suppose ye will that it so be:
But these demandës ask I first," quoth he,
"Since that it shall be done in hasty wise;
Will ye assent, or ellës you advise?"²⁵⁰⁵

"I say this, be ye ready with good heart
To all my lust,²⁵⁰⁶ and that I freely may,
As me best thinketh, do²⁵⁰⁷ you laugh or smart,
And never ye to grudgë,²⁵⁰⁸ night nor day,
And eke when I say Yea, ye say not Nay,
Neither by word, nor frowning countenance?
Swear this, and here I swear our álliance."

Wond'ring upon this word, quaking for dread,
She saidë; "Lord, indigne and unworthy
Am I to this honoúr that ye me bede,²⁵⁰⁹
But as ye will yourself, right so will I:
And here I swear, that never willingly
In word or thought I will you disobey,
For to be dead; though me were loth to dey."²⁵¹⁰

"This is enough, Griselda mine," quoth he.
And forth he went with a full sober cheer,

Out at the door, and after then came she,
And to the people he said in this mannere:
“This is my wife,” quoth he, “that standeth here.
Honoúrë her, and love her, I you pray,
Whoso me loves; there is no more to say.”

And, for that nothing of her oldë gear
She shouldë bring into his house, he bade
That women should despoilë²⁵¹¹ her right there;
Of which these ladies werë nothing glad
To handle her clothës wherein she was clad:
But natheless this maiden bright of hue
From foot to head they clothed have all new.

Her hairës have they comb’d that lay untress’d²⁵¹²
Full rudëly, and with their fingers small
A crown upon her head they havë dress’d,
And set her full of nouches²⁵¹³ great and small:
Of her array why should I make a tale?
Unneth²⁵¹⁴ the people her knew for her fairnéss,
When she transmuted was in such richéss.

The marquis hath her spoused with a ring
Brought for the samë cause, and then her set
Upon a horse snow-white, and well ambling,
And to his palace, ere he longer let²⁵¹⁵
With joyful people, that her led and met,
Conveyed her; and thus the day they spend
In revel, till the sunnë gan descend.

And, shortly forth this talë for to chase,
I say, that to this newë marchioness
God hath such favour sent her of his grace,
That it ne seemed not by likeliness
That she was born and fed in rudëness—
As in a cot, or in an ox’s stall—
But nourish’d in an emperorë’s hall.

To every wight she waxen²⁵¹⁶ is so dear
And worshipful, that folk where she was born,
That from her birthë knew her year by year,

Unnethës trowed²⁵¹⁷ they, but durst have sworn,
That to Janicol' of whom I spake before,
She was not daughter, for by conjectúre
Them thought she was another creatúre.

For though that ever virtuous was she,
She was increased in such excellence
Of thewës²⁵¹⁸ good, y-set in high bounté,
And so discreet, and fair of eloquence,
So benign, and so digne²⁵¹⁹ of reverence,
And couldë so the people's heart embrace,
That each her lov'd that looked on her face.

Not only of Saluces in the town
Published was the bounté of her name,
But eke besides in many a regioún;
If one said well, another said the same:
So spread of herë high bounté the fame,
That men and women, young as well as old,
Went to Saluces, her for to behold.

Thus Walter lowly—nay, but royally—
Wedded with fortunate honesteté,²⁵²⁰
In Goddë's peace lived full easily
At home, and outward grace enough had he:
And, for he saw that under low degree
Was honest virtue hid, the people him held
A prudent man, and that is seen full seld'.²⁵²¹

Not only this Griseldis through her wit
Couth all the feat²⁵²² of wifely homeliness,
But eke, when that the case required it,
The common profit couldë she redress:²⁵²³
There n'as discord, rancoúr, nor heaviness
In all the land, that she could not appease,
And wisely bring them all in rest and ease.

Though that her husband absent were or non,²⁵²⁴
If gentlemen or other of that country,
Were wroth,²⁵²⁵ she wouldë bringë them at one,
So wise and ripë wordës haddë she,

And judgëment of so great equity,
That she from heaven sent was, as men wend,²⁵²⁶
People to save, and every wrong t'amend
Not longë time after that this Griseld'
Was wedded, she a daughter had y-bore;
All she had lever²⁵²⁷ borne a knavë²⁵²⁸ child,
Glad was the marquis and his folk therefore;
For, though a maiden child came all before,
She may unto a knavë child attain
By likelihood, since she is not barrén.

PARS TERTIA

There fell, as falleth many timës mo',
When that his child had sucked but a throw,²⁵²⁹
This marquis in his heartë longed so
To tempt his wife, her sadness²⁵³⁰ for to know,
That he might not out of his heartë throw
This marvellous desire his wife t'assay;²⁵³¹
Needless,²⁵³² God wot, he thought her to affray.²⁵³³

He had assayed her anough before,
And found her ever good; what needed it
Her for to tempt, and always more and more?
Though some men praise it for a subtle wit,
But as for me, I say that evil it sit²⁵³⁴
T' assay a wife when that it is no need,
And puttë her in anguish and in dread.

For which this marquis wrought in this mannère:
He came at night alone there as she lay,
With sternë face and with full troubled cheer,
And saidë thus; "Griseld'," quoth he "that day
That I you took out of your poor array,
And put you in estate of high noblëss,

Ye have it not forgotten, as I guess.

“I say, Griseld’, this present dignity,
In which that I have put you, as I trow²⁵³⁵
Maketh you not forgetful for to be
That I you took in poor estate full low,
For any weal you must yourselfe know.
Take heed of every word that I you say,
There is no wight that hears it but we tway.²⁵³⁶

“Ye know yourself well how that ye came here
Into this house, it is not long ago;
And though to me ye be right lefe²⁵³⁷ and dear,
Unto my gentles²⁵³⁸ ye be nothing so:
They say, to them it is great shame and woe
For to be subject, and be in servage,
To thee, that born art of small lineage.

“And namely²⁵³⁹ since thy daughter was y-bore
These wordes have they spoken doubtless;
But I desire, as I have done before,
To live my life with them in rest and peace:
I may not in this case be reckess;
I must do with thy daughter for the best,
Not as I would, but as my gentles lest.²⁵⁴⁰

“And yet, God wot, this is full loth²⁵⁴¹ to me:
But natheless withoute your weeting²⁵⁴²
I will nought do; but this will I,” quoth he,
“That ye to me assenten in this thing.
Shew now your patience in your working,
That ye me hight²⁵⁴³ and swore in your village
The day that maked was our marriage.”

When she had heard all this, she not amev’d²⁵⁴⁴
Neither in word, in cheer, nor countenance
(For, as it seemed, she was not aggriev’d);
She said; “Lord, all lies in your pleasance,
My child and I, with hearty obeisance
Be yourës all, and ye may save or spill²⁵⁴⁵
Your owen thing: work then after your will.

“There may no thing, so God my soulë save,
Likë to²⁵⁴⁶ you, that may displeasë me:
Nor I desire nothing for to have,
Nor dreadë for to lose, save only ye:
This will is in mine heart, and aye shall be,
No length of time, nor death, may this deface,
Nor change my corage²⁵⁴⁷ to another place.”

Glad was the marquis for her answering,
But yet he feigned as he were not so;
All dreary was his cheer and his looking
When that he should out of the chamber go.
Soon after this, a furlong way or two,²⁵⁴⁸
He privily hath told all his intent
Unto a man, and to his wife him sent.

A manner sergeant²⁵⁴⁹ was this private man,²⁵⁵⁰
The which he faithful often founden had
In thingës great, and eke such folk well can
Do executiön in thingës bad:
The lord knew well, that he him loved and drad.²⁵⁵¹
And when this sergeant knew his lordë’s will,
Into the chamber stalked he full still.

“Madam,” he said, “ye must forgive it me,
Though I do thing to which I am constrain’d;
Ye be so wise, that right well knowë ye
That lordës’ hestës may not be y-feign’d;²⁵⁵²
They may well be bewailed and complain’d,
But men must needs unto their lust²⁵⁵³ obey;
And so will I, there is no more to say.

“This child I am commanded for to take.”
And spake no more, but out the child he hent²⁵⁵⁴
Dispiteously,²⁵⁵⁵ and gan a cheer to make²⁵⁵⁶
As though he would have slain it ere he went.
Griseldis must all suffer and consent:
And as a lamb she sat there meek and still,
And let this cruel sergeant do his will.

Suspicious²⁵⁵⁷ was the diffame²⁵⁵⁸ of this man,

Suspect his face, suspect his word also,
Suspect the time in which he this began:
Alas! her daughter, that she loved so,
She weened²⁵⁵⁹ he would have it slain right tho,²⁵⁶⁰
But natheless she neither wept nor siked,²⁵⁶¹
Conforming her to what the marquis liked.

But at the last to speakë she began,
And meekly she unto the sergeant pray'd,
So as he was a worthy gentle man,
That she might kiss her child, ere that it died:
And in her barme²⁵⁶² this little child she laid,
With full sad face, and gan the child to bless,²⁵⁶³
And lulled it, and after gan it kiss.

And thus she said in her benignë voice:
“Farewell, my child, I shall thee never see;
But since I have thee marked with the cross,
Of that father y-blessed may'st thou be
That for us died upon a cross of tree:
Thy soul, my little child, I him betake,²⁵⁶⁴
For this night shalt thou dien for my sake.”

I trow²⁵⁶⁵ that to a norice²⁵⁶⁶ in this case
It had been hard this ruthë²⁵⁶⁷ for to see:
Well might a mother then have cried, “Alas!”
But natheless so sad steadfást was she,
That she endured all adversity,
And to the sergeant meekëly she said,
“Have here again your little youngë maid.
“Go now,” quoth she, “and do my lord's behest.
And one thing would I pray you of your grace,
But if²⁵⁶⁸ my lord forbade you at the least,
Bury this little body in some place,
That neither beasts nor birdës it arace.”²⁵⁶⁹
But he no word would to that purpose say,
But took the child and went upon his way.

The sergeant came unto his lord again,
And of Griselda's words and of her cheer²⁵⁷⁰

He told him point for point, in short and plain,
And him presented with his daughter dear.
Somewhat this lord had ruth in his mannère,
But natheless his purpose held he still,
As lordës do, when they will have their will;
And bade this sergeant that he privily
Shouldë the child full softly wind and wrap,
With allë circumstances tenderly,
And carry it in a coffer, or in lap;
But, upon pain his head off for to swap,²⁵⁷¹
That no man shouldë know of his intent,
Nor whence he came, nor whither that he went;
But at Bologna, to his sister dear,
That at that time of Panic'²⁵⁷² was Countéss,
He should it take, and shew her this mattere,
Beseeching her to do her business
This child to foster in all gentleness,
And whosë child it was he bade her hide
From every wight, for aught that might betide.
The sergeant went, and hath fulfill'd this thing.
But to the marquis now returnë we;
For now went he full fast imagining
If by his wifë's cheer he mightë see,
Or by her wordës apperceive, that she
Were changed; but he never could her find,
But ever-in-one²⁵⁷³ alikë sad²⁵⁷⁴ and kind.
As glad, as humble, as busy in servíce,
And eke in love, as she was wont to be,
Was she to him, in every manner wise;²⁵⁷⁵
And of her daughter not a word spake she;
No accident for no adversity²⁵⁷⁶
Was seen in her, nor e'er her daughter's name
She named, or in earnest or in game.

PARS QUARTA

In this estate there passed be four year
Ere she with childē was; but, as God wo'ld,
A knavē²⁵⁷⁷ child she bare by this Waltére,
Full gracious and fair for to behold;
And when that folk it to his father told,
Not only he, but all his country, merry
Were for this child, and God they thank and hery.²⁵⁷⁸

When it was two year old, and from the breast
Departed²⁵⁷⁹ of the norice, on a day
This marquis caughtē yet another lest²⁵⁸⁰
To tempt his wife yet farther, if he may.
Oh! needless was she tempted in assay;²⁵⁸¹
But wedded men not connen no measúre,²⁵⁸²
When that they find a patient creatúre.

“Wife,” quoth the marquis, “ye have heard ere this
My people sickly bear²⁵⁸³ our marriáge;
And namely²⁵⁸⁴ since my son y-boren is,
Now is it worse than ever in all our age:
The murmur slays mine heart and my coráge,
For to mine ears cometh the voice so smart,²⁵⁸⁵
That it well nigh destroyed hath mine heart.

“Now say they thus, ‘When Walter is y-gone,
Then shall the blood of Janicol’ succeed,
And be our lord, for other have we none.’
Such wordēs say my people, out of drede.²⁵⁸⁶
Well ought I of such murmur takē heed,
For certainly I dread all such senténce,²⁵⁸⁷
Though they not plainen in mine audiéce.²⁵⁸⁸

“I wouldē live in peace, if that I might;
Wherefore I am disposed utterly,
As I his sister served ere²⁵⁸⁹ by night,
Right so think I to serve him privily.
This warn I you, that ye not suddenly
Out of yourself for no woe should outraie;²⁵⁹⁰
Be patient, and thereof I you pray.”

“I have,” quoth she, “said thus, and ever shall,
I will no thing, nor n’ill no thing, certáin,
But as you list; not grieveth me at all
Though that my daughter and my son be slain
At your commandèment; that is to sayn,
I have not had no part of children twain,
But first sicknéss, and after woe and pain.

“Ye be my lord, do with your owen thing
Right as you list, and ask no rede²⁵⁹¹ of me:
For, as I left at home all my clothing
When I came first to you, right so,” quoth she,
“Left I my will and all my liberty,
And took your clothing: wherefore I you pray,
Do your pleasánc, I will your lust²⁵⁹² obey.

“And, certes, if I haddë prescience
Your will to know, ere ye your lust²⁵⁹³ me told,
I would it do withoutë negligence:
But, now I know your lust, and what ye wo’ld,
All your pleasancë firm and stable I hold;
For, wist I that my death might do you ease,
Right gladly would I dien you to please.

“Death may not makë no comparisoún
Unto your love.” And when this marquis say²⁵⁹⁴
The constance of his wife, he cast adown
His eyen two, and wonder’d how she may
In patience suffer all this array;
And forth he went with dreary countenance;
But to his heart it was full great pleasánc.

This ugly sergeant, in the samë wise
That he her daughter caught, right so hath he
(Or worse, if men can any worse devise,)
Y-hent²⁵⁹⁵ her son, that full was of beauty:
And ever-in-one²⁵⁹⁶ so patient was she,
That she no cheerë made of heaviness,
But kiss’d her son, and after gan him bless.

Save this she prayed him, if that he might,

Her little son he would in earthë grave,²⁵⁹⁷
His tender limbës, delicate to sight,
From fowlës and from beastës for to save.
But she none answer of him mightë have;
He went his way, as him nothing ne raught,²⁵⁹⁸
But to Bologna tenderly it brought.

The marquis wonder'd ever longer more
Upon her patience; and, if that he
Not haddë soothly knowen therebefore
That perfectly her children loved she,
He would have ween'd²⁵⁹⁹ that of some subtilty,
And of malíce, or for cruel coráge,²⁶⁰⁰
She haddë suffer'd this with sad²⁶⁰¹ viságe.

But well he knew, that, next himself, certáin
She lov'd her children best in every wise.
But now of women would I askë fain,
If these assayës mightë not suffice?
What could a sturdy²⁶⁰² husband more devise
To prove her wifhood and her steadfastness,
And he continuing ev'r in sturdiness?

But there be folk of such conditiún,
That, when they have a certain purpose take,
They cannot stint²⁶⁰³ of their intentiún,
But, right as they were bound unto a stake,
They will not of their firstë purpose slake:²⁶⁰⁴
Right so this marquis fully hath purpós'd
To tempt his wife, as he was first dispos'd.

He waited, if by word or countenance
That she to him was changed of coráge:²⁶⁰⁵
But never could he findë variance,
She was aye one in heart and in viságe,
And aye the farther that she was in age,
The morë true (if that it were possíble)
She was to him in love, and more penible.²⁶⁰⁶

For which it seemed thus, that of them two
There was but one will; for, as Walter lest,²⁶⁰⁷

The same pleasáncë was her lust also;
And, God be thanked, all fell for the best.
She shewed well, for no worldly unrest,
A wife as of herself no thingë should
Will, in effect, but as her husband would.

The sland'r of Walter wondrous widë sprad,
That of a cruel heart he wickedly,
For²⁶⁰⁸ he a poorë woman wedded had,
Had murder'd both his children privily:
Such murmur was among them commonly.
No wonder is: for to the people's ear
There came no word, but that they murder'd were.

For which, whereas his people therebefore
Had lov'd him well, the sland'r of his diffame²⁶⁰⁹
Made them that they him hated therëfore.
To be a murd'rer is a hateful name.
But natheless, for earnest or for game,
He of his cruel purpose would not stent;²⁶¹⁰
To tempt his wife was set all his intent.

When that his daughter twelve year was of age,
He to the Court of Rome, in subtle wise
Informed of his will, sent his messáge,²⁶¹¹
Commanding him such bullës to devise
As to his cruel purpose may suffice,
How that the Popë, for his people's rest,
Bade him to wed another, if him lest.²⁶¹²

I say he bade they shouldë counterfeit
The Pope's bullës, making mentión
That he had leave his firstë wife to lete,²⁶¹³
As by the Popë's dispensatiön,
To stintë²⁶¹⁴ rancour and dissensiön
Betwixt his people and him: thus spake the bull,
The which they havë published at full.

The rudë people, as no wonder is,
Weened²⁶¹⁵ full well that it had been right so:
But, when these tidings came to Griseldis.

I deemë that her heart was full of woe;

But she, alikë sad²⁶¹⁶ for evermo',

Disposed was, this humble creatúre,

Th' adversity of fortune all t' endure;

Abiding ever his lust and his pleasánce,

To whom that she was given, heart and all,

As to her very worldly suffisance.²⁶¹⁷

But, shortly if this story tell I shall,

The marquis written hath in special

A letter, in which he shewed his intent,

And secretly it to Bologna sent.

To th' earl of Panico, which haddë tho²⁶¹⁸

Wedded his sister, pray'd he specially

To bringë home again his children two

In honourable estate all openly:

But one thing he him prayed utterly,

That he to no wight, though men would inquire,

Shouldë not tell whose children that they were,

But say, the maiden should y-wedded be

Unto the marquis of Salúce anon.

And as this earl was prayed, so did he,

For, at day set, he on his way is gone

Toward Salúce, and lordës many a one

In rich array, this maiden for to guide—

Her youngë brother riding her beside.

Arrayed was toward²⁶¹⁹ her marriáge

This freshë maiden, full of gemmës clear;

Her brother, which that seven year was of age,

Arrayed eke full fresh in his mannére:

And thus, in great nobléss, and with glad cheer,

Toward Saluces shaping their journéy,

From day to day they rode upon their way.

PARS QUINTA

Among all this, [2620](#) after his wick' uságe,
The marquis, yet his wife to temptë more
To the uttermost proof of her coráge,
Fully to have experience and lore [2621](#)
If that she were as steadfast as before,
He on a day, in open audience,
Full boisterously said her this sentéce:

“Certes, Griseld', I had enough pleasánce
To have you to my wife, for your goodness,
And for your truth, and for your obeisánce,
Not for your lineage, nor for your richéss;
But now know I, in very soothfastness,
That in great lordship, if I well advise,
There is great servitude in sundry wise.

“I may not do as every ploughman may:
My people me constraineth for to take
Another wife, and cryeth day by day;
And eke the Popë, rancour for to slake,
Consenteth it, that dare I undertake:
And truëly, thus much I will you say,
My newë wife is coming by the way.

“Be strong of heart, and void anon [2622](#) her place;
And thilkë [2623](#) dower that ye brought to me,
Take it again, I grant it of my grace.
Returnë to your father's house,” quoth he;
“No man may always have prosperity;
With even heart I rede [2624](#) you to endure
The stroke of fortune or of áventúre.”

And she again answér'd in patience:
“My Lord,” quoth she, “I know, and knew alway,
How that betwixtë your magnificence
And my povert' no wight nor can nor may
Make comparison, it is no nay; [2625](#)
I held me never digne [2626](#) in no mannére
To be your wife, nor yet your chamberére. [2627](#)

“And in this house, where ye me lady made,

(The highë God take I for my witness,
And all so wisly²⁶²⁸ he my soulë glade),
I never held me lady nor mistress,
But humble servant to your worthiness,
And ever shall, while that my life may dure,
Aboven every worldly creatúre.

“That ye so long, of your benignity,
Have holden me in honour and nobley,²⁶²⁹
Where as I was not worthy for to be,
That thank I God and you, to whom I pray
Foryield²⁶³⁰ it you; there is no more to say:
Unto my father gladly will I wend,²⁶³¹
And with him dwell, unto my lifë’s end,

“Where I was foster’d as a child full small,
Till I be dead my life there will I lead,
A widow clean in body, heart, and all.
For since I gave to you my maidenhead,
And am your truë wife, it is no dread,²⁶³²
God shieldë²⁶³³ such a lordë’s wife to take
Another man to husband or to make.²⁶³⁴

“And of your newë wife, God of his grace
So grant you weal and all prosperity:
For I will gladly yield to her my place,
In which that I was blissful wont to be.
For since it liketh you, my Lord,” quoth she,
“That whilom weren all mine heartë’s rest,
That I shall go, I will go when you lest.

“But whereas ye me proffer such dowaire
As I first brought, it is well in my mind,
It was my wretched clothës, nothing fair,
The which to me were hard now for to find.
O goodë God! how gentle and how kind
Ye seemed by your speech and your viságe,
The day that maked was our marriáge!

“But sooth is said—algate²⁶³⁵ I find it true,
For in effect it proved is on me—

Love is not old as when that it is new.
But certes, Lord, for no adversity,
To dien in this case, it shall not be
That e'er in word or work I shall repent
That I you gave mine heart in whole intent.

“My Lord, ye know that in my father's place
Ye did me strip out of my poorë weed,²⁶³⁶
And richëly ye clad me of your grace;
To you brought I nought ellës, out of dread,
But faith, and nakedness, and maidenhead;
And here again your clothing I restore,
And eke your wedding ring for evermore.

“The remnant of your jewels ready be
Within your chamber, I dare safely sayn:
Naked out of my father's house,” quoth she,
“I came, and naked I must turn again.
All your pleasance would I follow fain:²⁶³⁷
But yet I hope it be not your intent
That smockless²⁶³⁸ I out of your palace went.

“Ye could not do so dishonést²⁶³⁹ a thing,
That thilkë²⁶⁴⁰ womb, in which your children lay,
Shouldë before the people, in my walking,
Be seen all bare: and therefore I you pray,
Let me not like a worm go by the way:
Remember you, mine owen Lord so dear,
I was your wife, though I unworthy were.

“Wherefore, in guerdon²⁶⁴¹ of my maidenhead,
Which that I brought and not again I bear,
As vouchësafe to give me to my meed²⁶⁴²
But such a smock as I was wont to wear,
That I therewith may wrie²⁶⁴³ the womb of her
That was your wife: and here I take my leave
Of you, mine owen Lord, lest I you grieve.”

“The smock,” quoth he, “that thou hast on thy back,
Let it be still, and bear it forth with thee.”
But well unnethës²⁶⁴⁴ thilkë word he spake,

But went his way for ruth and for pity.
Before the folk herself stripped she,
And in her smock, with foot and head all bare,
Toward her father's house forth is she fare.²⁶⁴⁵

The folk her follow'd weeping on her way,
And fortune aye they cursed as they gon:²⁶⁴⁶
But she from weeping kept her eyen drey,²⁶⁴⁷
Nor in this timē wordē spake she none.
Her father, that this tiding heard anon,
Cursed the day and timē, that natúre
Shope²⁶⁴⁸ him to be a living creatúre.

For, out of doubt, this oldē poorē man
Was ever in suspéct of her marriáge:
For ever deem'd he, since it first began,
That when the lord fulfill'd had his coráge,²⁶⁴⁹
He wouldē think it were a disparáge²⁶⁵⁰
To his estate, so low for to alight,
And voidē²⁶⁵¹ her as soon as e'er he might.

Against²⁶⁵² his daughter hastily went he
(For he by noise of folk knew her coming),
And with her oldē coat, as it might be,
He cover'd her, full sorrowfully weepíng:
But on her body might he it not bring,²⁶⁵³
For rudē was the cloth, and more of age
By dayēs fele²⁶⁵⁴ than at her marriáge.

Thus with her father for a certain space
Dwelled this flow'r of wifely patience,
That neither by her words nor by her face,
Before the folk nor eke in their absence,
Ne shewed she that her was done offence,
Nor of her high estate no rémembráncē
Ne haddē she, as by²⁶⁵⁵ her countenance.

No wonder is, for in her great estate
Her ghost²⁶⁵⁶ was ever in plein²⁶⁵⁷ humility;
No tender mouth, no heartē delicate,
No pomp, and no semblánt of royalty;

But full of patient benignity,
Discreet and prideless, aye honourable,
And to her husband ever meek and stable.
Men speak of Job, and most for his humbleness,
As clerkës, when them list, can well indite,
Namely²⁶⁵⁸ of men; but, as in soothfastness,
Though clerkës praise women but a lite,²⁶⁵⁹
There can no man in humbleness him acquite
As women can, nor can be half so true
As women be, but it be fall of new.²⁶⁶⁰

PARS SEXTA

From Bologn' is the earl of Panic' come,
Of which the fame up sprang to more and less;
And to the people's ears all and some
Was known eke, that a newë marchioness
He with him brought, in such pomp and richness
That never was there seen with man's eye
So noble array in all West Lombardy.

The marquis, which that shope²⁶⁶¹ and knew all this,
Ere that the earl was come, sent his message²⁶⁶²
For thilke poorë sely²⁶⁶³ Griseldis;
And she, with humble heart and glad visage,
Nor with no swelling thought in her corage,²⁶⁶⁴
Came at his hest,²⁶⁶⁵ and on her knees her set,
And reverently and wisely she him greet.²⁶⁶⁶

"Griseld'," quoth he, "my will is utterly,
This maiden, that shall wedded be to me,
Received be to-morrow as royally
As it possible is in my house to be;
And eke that every wight in his degree
Have his estate²⁶⁶⁷ in sitting and service,

And in high pleasance, as I can devise.

“I have no women sufficient, certáin,
The chambers to array in ordinance
After my lust;²⁶⁶⁸ and therefore would I fain
That thine were all such manner governance:
Thou knowest eke of old all my pleasáncē;
Though thine array be bad, and ill besey,²⁶⁶⁹
Do thou thy dévoir at the leastē way.”²⁶⁷⁰

“Not only, Lord, that I am glad,” quoth she,
“To do your lust, but I desire also
You for to serve and please in my degree,
Withoutē fainting, and shall evermo’:
Nor ever for no weal, nor for no woe,
Ne shall the ghost²⁶⁷¹ within mine heartē stent²⁶⁷²
To love you best with all my true intent.”

And with that word she gan the house to dight,²⁶⁷³
And tables for to set, and beds to make,
And pained her²⁶⁷⁴ to do all that she might,
Praying the chamberéres for Goddē’s sake
To hasten them, and fastē sweep and shake,
And she the most servíceable of all
Hath ev’ry chamber arrayed, and his hall.

Abouten undern²⁶⁷⁵ gan the earl alight,
That with him brought these noble children tway;
For which the people ran to see the sight
Of their array, so richēly besey;²⁶⁷⁶
And then at erst²⁶⁷⁷ amongēs them they say,
That Walter was no fool, though that him lest²⁶⁷⁸
To change his wife; for it was for the best.

For she is fairer, as they deemen²⁶⁷⁹ all,
Than is Griseld’, and more tender of age,
And fairer fruit between them shouldē fall,
And morē pleasant, for her high lineage:
Her brother eke so fair was of viságe,
That them to see the people hath caught pleasáncē,
Commending now the marquis’ governance.

“O stormy people, unsad²⁶⁸⁰ and ev’r untrue,
And undiscreet, and changing as a vane,
Delighting ev’r in rumour that is new,
For like the moon so waxë ye and wane:
Aye full of clapping, dear enough a jane,²⁶⁸¹
Your doom²⁶⁸² is false, your constance evil preveth,²⁶⁸³
A full great fool is he that you believeth.”

Thus saidë the sad²⁶⁸⁴ folk in that city,
When that the people gazed up and down;
For they were glad, right for the novelty,
To have a newë lady of their town.
No more of this now make I mentioún,
But to Griseld’ again I will me dress,
And tell her constancy and business.

Full busy was Griseld’ in ev’ry thing
That to the feastë was appertinent;
Right nought was she abash’d²⁶⁸⁵ of her clothing,
Though it were rude, and somedeal eke to-rent;²⁶⁸⁶
But with glad cheer unto the gate she went
With other folk, to greet the marchioness,
And after that did forth her business.

With so glad cheer his guestës she receiv’d
And so conningly²⁶⁸⁷ each in his degree,
That no defaultë no man apperceiv’d,
But aye they wonder’d what she mightë be
That in so poor array was for to see,
And couldë²⁶⁸⁸ such honoúr and reverence;
And worthily they praisë her prudence.

In all this meanë whilë she not stent²⁶⁸⁹
This maid, and eke her brother, to commend
With all her heart in full benign intent,
So well, that no man could her praise amend:
But at the last, when that these lordës wend²⁶⁹⁰
To sittë down to meat, he gan to call
Griseld’, as she was busy in the hall.

“Griseld’,” quoth he, as it were in his play,

“How liketh thee my wife, and her beauty?”

“Right well, my Lord,” quoth she, “for, in good fay, [2691](#)

A fairer saw I never none than she:

I pray to God give you prosperity;

And so I hope, that he will to you send

Pleasance enough unto your livës’ end.

“One thing beseech I you, and warn also,

That ye not prickë with no tórmenting

This tender maiden, as ye have done mo: [2692](#)

For she is foster’d in her nourishing

More tenderly, and, to my supposing,

She mightë not adversity endure

As could a poorë foster’d creatúre.”

And when this Walter saw her patience,

Her gladdë cheer, and no malíce at all,

And [2693](#) he so often had her done offence,

And she aye sad [2694](#) and constant as a wall,

Continuing ev’r her innocence o’er all,

The sturdy marquis gan his heartë dress [2695](#)

To rue upon her wifely steadfastness.

“This is enough, Griselda mine,” quoth he,

“Be now no more aghast, nor evil paid, [2696](#)

I have thy faith and thy benignity

As well as ever woman was, assay’d,

In great estate and poorëly array’d:

Now know I, dearë wife, thy steadfastness;”

And her in arms he took, and gan to kiss.

And she for wonder took of it no keep; [2697](#)

She heardë not what thing he to her said:

She far’d as she had start out of a sleep,

Till she out of her mazedness abraid. [2698](#)

“Griseld’,” quoth he, “by God that for us died,

Thou art my wifë, none other I have,

Nor ever had, as God my soulë save.

“This is thy daughter, which thou hast suppos’d

To be my wife; that other faithfully

Shall be mine heir, as I have aye dispos'd;
Thou bare them of thy body truëly:
At Bologna kept I them privily:
Take them again, for now may'st thou not say
That thou hast lorn²⁶⁹⁹ none of thy children tway.

“And folk, that otherwise have said of me,
I warn them well, that I have done this deed
For no malíce, nor for no cruelty,
But to assay in thee thy womanhead:
And not to slay my children (God forbid),
But for to keep them privily and still,
Till I thy purpose knew, and all thy will.”

When she this heard, in swoon adown she falleth
For piteous joy; and after her swooning,
She both her youngë children to her calleth,
And in her armës piteously weeping
Embraced them, and tenderly kissing,
Full like a mother, with her saltë tears
She bathed both their visage and their hairs.

O, what a piteous thing it was to see
Her swooning, and her humble voice to hear!
“*Grand mercy*, Lord, God thank it you,” quoth she,
That ye have saved me my children dear;
Now reck²⁷⁰⁰ I never to be dead right here;
Since I stand in your love, and in your grace,
No force of²⁷⁰¹ death, nor when my spirit pace.²⁷⁰²

“O tender, O dear, O young children mine,
Your woeful mother weened steadfastly²⁷⁰³
That cruel houndës, or some foul vermíne,
Had eaten you; but God of his mercy,
And your benignë father tenderly
Have done you keep:”²⁷⁰⁴ and in that samë stound,²⁷⁰⁵
All suddenly she swapt²⁷⁰⁶ down to the ground.

And in her swoon so sadly²⁷⁰⁷ holdeth she
Her children two, when she gan them embrace,
That with great sleight²⁷⁰⁸ and great difficulty

The children from her arm they can arace,²⁷⁰⁹
O! many a tear on many a piteous face
Down ran of them that stoodë her beside,
Unneth²⁷¹⁰ aboutë her might they abide.

Walter her gladdeth, and her sorrow slaketh:²⁷¹¹
She riseth up abashed²⁷¹² from her trance,
And every wight her joy and feastë maketh,
Till she hath caught again her countenance.
Walter her doth so faithfully pleasánce,
That it was dainty for to see the cheer
Betwixt them two, since they be met in fere.²⁷¹³

The ladies, when that they their timë sey,²⁷¹⁴
Have taken her, and into chamber gone,
And stripped her out of her rude array,
And in a cloth of gold that brightly shone,
And with a crown of many a richë stone
Upon her head, they into hall her brought:
And there she was honouëred as her ought.

Thus had this piteous day a blissful end;
For every man and woman did his might
This day in mirth and revel to dispend,
Till on the welkin²⁷¹⁵ shone the starrës bright:
For more solémn in every mannë's sight
This feastë was, and greater of costage,²⁷¹⁶
Than was the revel of her marriáge.

Full many a year in high prosperity
Lived these two in concord and in rest;
And richëly his daughter married he
Unto a lord, one of the worthiest
Of all Itále; and then in peace and rest
His wifë's father in his court he kept,
Till that the soul out of his body crept.

His son succeeded in his heritage,
In rest and peace, after his father's day:
And fortunate was eke in marriáge,
All²⁷¹⁷ he put not his wife in great assay:

This world is not so strong, it is no nay,²⁷¹⁸
As it hath been in oldë timës yore;
And hearken what this author saith, therefore;

This story is said,²⁷¹⁹ not for that wivës should
Follow Griselda in humility,
For it were importáble²⁷²⁰ though they would;
But for that every wight in his degree
Shouldë be constant in adversity,
As was Griselda; therefore Petrarch writeth
This story, which with high style he inditeth.

For, since a woman was so patient
Unto a mortal man, well more we ought
Receiven all in gree²⁷²¹ that God us sent.
For great skill is he proved that he wrought:²⁷²²
But he tempteth no man that he hath bought,
As saith Saint James, if ye his 'pistle read;
He proveth folk all day, it is no dread.²⁷²³

And suffereth us, for our exercise,
With sharpë scourges of adversity
Full often to be beat in sundry wise;
Not for to know our will, for certes he,
Ere we were born, knew all our fraïlty;
And for our best is all his governance;
Let us then live in virtuous sufferance.

But one word, lordings, hearken, ere I go:
It were full hard to findë now-a-days
In all a town Griseldas three or two:
For, if that they were put to such assays,
The gold of them hath now so bad allays²⁷²⁴
With brass, that though the coin be fair at eye,²⁷²⁵
It wouldë rather break in two than ply.²⁷²⁶

For which here, for the Wifë's love of Bath—
Whose life and all her sex may God maintain
In high mast'ry, and ellës were it scath—²⁷²⁷
I will, with lusty heartë fresh and green,
Say you a song to gladden you, I ween:

And let us stint of earnestful mattére.
Hearken my song, that saith in this mannére.

L'ENVOY OF CHAUCER

“Griseld’ is dead, and eke her patience,
And both at once are buried in Itále:
For which I cry in open audience,
No wedded man so hardy be t’ assail
His wifë’s patience, in trust to find
Griselda’s, for in certain he shall fail.

“O noble wivës, full of high prudence,
Let no humility your tonguës nail:
Nor let no clerk have cause or diligence
To write of you a story of such marvail,
As of Griselda patient and kind,
Lest Chichëvache²⁷²⁸ you swallow in her entrail.

“Follow Echo, that holdeth no silence,
But ever answereth at the countertail;²⁷²⁹
Be not bedaffed²⁷³⁰ for your innocence,
But sharply take on you the governail;²⁷³¹
Imprintë well this lesson in your mind,
For common profit, since it may avail.

“Ye archiwivës,²⁷³² stand aye at defence,
Since ye be strong as is a great camail,²⁷³³
Nor suffer not that men do you offence.
And slender wivës, feeble in battail,
Be eager as a tiger yond in Ind;
Aye clapping as a mill, I you counsail.

“Nor dread them not, nor do them reverence;
For though thine husband armed be in mail,
The arrows of thy crabbed eloquence
Shall pierce his breast, and eke his aventail;²⁷³⁴

In jealousy I rede²⁷³⁵ eke thou him bind,
And thou shalt make him couch²⁷³⁶ as doth a quail.
“If thou be fair, where folk be in preséncé
Shew thou thy visage and thine apparail:
If thou be foul, be free of thy dispence;
To get thee friendës aye do thy travail:
Be aye of cheer as light as leaf on lind,²⁷³⁷
And let him care, and weep, and wring, and wail.”

THE MERCHANT'S TALE

THE PROLOGUE²⁷³⁸

“Weeping and wailing, care and other sorrow,
I have enough, on even and on morrow,”
Quoth the Merchánt, “and so have other mo’,
That wedded be; I trow²⁷³⁹ that it be so;
For well I wot it fareth so by me.
I have a wife, the worstë that may be,
For though the fiend to her y-coupled were,
She would him overmatch, I dare well swear:
Why should I you rehearse in speciál
Her high malíce? she is a shrew at all.²⁷⁴⁰
There is a long and largë difference
Betwixt Griselda’s greatë patience,
And of my wife the passing cruelty.
Were I unbounden, all so may I thé,²⁷⁴¹
I wouldë never eft²⁷⁴² come in the snare.
We wedded men live in sorrow and care;
Assay it whoso will, and he shall find
That I say sooth, by Saint Thomas of Ind,
As for the morë part; I say not all—
God shieldë²⁷⁴³ that it shouldë so befall.
Ah! good Sir Host, I have y-wedded be

These moneths two, and morë not, pardie;
And yet I trow²⁷⁴⁴ that he that all his life
Wifeless hath been, though that men would him rive
Into the heartë, could in no mannere
Tellë so much sorrów, as I you here
Could tellen of my wifë's cursedness."²⁷⁴⁵
 "Now," quoth our Host, "Merchánt, so God you bless,
Since ye so muchë knowen of that art,
Full heartily I pray you tell us part."
"Gladly," quoth he; "but of mine owen sore,
For sorry heart, I tellë may no more."

THE TALE²⁷⁴⁶

Whilom there was dwelling in Lombardy
A worthy knight, that born was at Pavie,
In which he liv'd in great prosperity;
And forty years a wifeless man was he,
And follow'd aye his bodily delight
On women, where as was his appetite,
As do these foolës that be seculeres.²⁷⁴⁷
And, when that he was passed sixty years,
Were it for holiness, or for dotáge,
I cannot say, but such a great coráge²⁷⁴⁸
Haddë this knight to be a wedded man,
That day and night he did all that he can
To espy where that he might wedded be;
Praying our Lord to grantë him, that he
Mightë once knowen of that blissful life
That is betwixt a husband and his wife,
And for to live under that holy bond

With which God firstē man and woman bond.
“None other life,” said he, “is worth a bean;
For wedlock is so easy, and so clean,
That in this world it is a paradise.”
Thus said this oldē knight, that was so wise.
And certainly, as sooth²⁷⁴⁹ as God is king,
To take a wife it is a glorious thing,
And namely²⁷⁵⁰ when a man is old and hoar,
Then is a wife the fruit of his treasór;
Then should he take a young wife and a fair,
On which he might engender him an heir,
And lead his life in joy and in solace;²⁷⁵¹
Whereas these bachelors singen “Alas!”
When that they find any adversity
In love, which is but childish vanity.
And truēly it sits²⁷⁵² well to be so,
That bachelors have often pain and woe:
On brittle ground they build, and brittleness
They findē, when they weenē sickness:²⁷⁵³
They live but as a bird or as a beast,
In liberty, and under no arrest;²⁷⁵⁴
Whereas a wedded man in his estate
Liveth a life blissful and ordinate,
Under the yoke of marriáge y-bound;
Well may his heart in joy and bliss abound.
For who can be so buxom²⁷⁵⁵ as a wife?
Who is so true, and eke so áttentive
To keep²⁷⁵⁶ him, sick and whole, as is his make?²⁷⁵⁷
For weal or woe she will him not forsake:
She is not weary him to love and serve,
Though that he lie bedrid until he sterve.²⁷⁵⁸
And yet some clerkēs say it is not so;
Of which he, Theophrast, is one of tho:²⁷⁵⁹
What force²⁷⁶⁰ though Theophrast list for to lie?
“Takē no wife,” quoth he, “for husbandry,²⁷⁶¹
As for to spare in household thy dispence;

A truë servant doth more diligence
Thy good to keep, than doth thine owen wife,
For she will claim a half part all her life.
And if that thou be sick, so God me save,
Thy very friendës, or a truë knave, [2762](#)
Will keep thee bet [2763](#) than she, that waiteth aye
After [2764](#) thy good, and hath done many a day.”
This sentence, and a hundred timës worse,
Writeth this man, there God his bonës curse.
But take no keep [2765](#) of all such vanity,
Defy [2766](#) Theóphrast, and hearken to me.

A wife is Goddë's giftë verily;
All other manner giftës hardily, [2767](#)
As landës, rentës, pasture, or commúne, [2768](#)
Or mebles, [2769](#) all be giftës of fortúne,
That passen as a shadow on the wall:
But dread [2770](#) thou not, if plainly speak I shall,
A wife will last, and in thine house endure,
Well longer than thee list, paráventure. [2771](#)
Marriage is a full great sacrament;
He which that hath no wife, I hold him shent; [2772](#)
He liveth helpless, and all desolate
(I speak of folk in secular estate): [2773](#)
And hearken why—I say not this for nought—
That woman is for mannë's help y-wrought.
The highë God, when he had Adam maked,
And saw him all alonë belly naked,
God of his greatë goodness saidë then,
Let us now make a help unto this man
Like to himself; and then he made him Eve.
Here may ye see, and hereby may ye preve, [2774](#)
That a wife is man s help and his comfórt,
His paradise terrestre and his disport.
So buxom [2775](#) and so virtuous is she,
They mustë needës live in unity;

One flesh they be, and one blood, as I guess,
With but one heart in weal and in distress.
A wife? Ah! Saint Marý, *ben'dicite*,
How might a man have any adversity
That hath a wife? certes I cannot say
The bliss the which that is betwixt them tway,
There may no tongue it tell, or heartë think.
If he be poor, she helpeth him to swink;²⁷⁷⁶
She keeps his good, and wasteth never a deal;²⁷⁷⁷
All that her husband list, her liketh²⁷⁷⁸ well;
She saith not onës Nay, when he saith Yea;
“Do this,” saith he; “All ready, Sir,” saith she.
O blissful order, wedlock precioús!
Thou art so merry, and eke so virtuous,
And so commended and approved eke,
That every man that holds him worth a leek
Upon his barë knees ought all his life
To thank his God, that him hath sent a wife;
Or ellës pray to God him for to send
A wife, to last unto his lifë's end.
For then his life is set in sickness,²⁷⁷⁹
He may not be deceived, as I guess,
So that he work after his wifë's rede;²⁷⁸⁰
Then may he boldëly bear up his head,
They be so true, and therewithal so wise.
For which, if thou wilt worken as the wise,
Do alway so as women will thee rede.²⁷⁸¹

Lo how that Jacob, as these clerkës read,
By good counsel of his mother Rebecc'
Boundë the kiddë's skin about his neck;
For which his father's benison²⁷⁸² he wan.
Lo Judith, as the story tellë can,
By good counsel she Goddë's people kept,
And slew him, Holofernes, while he slept.
Lo Abigail, by good counsél, how she
Saved her husband Nabal, when that he

Should have been slain. And lo, Esther also
By counsel good deliver'd out of woe
The people of God, and made him, Mardoché,
Of Assuere enhanced²⁷⁸³ for to be.
There is nothing in gree superlative²⁷⁸⁴
(As saith Senec) above a humble wife.
Suffer thy wifë's tongue, as Cato bit;²⁷⁸⁵
She shall command, and thou shalt suffer it,
And yet she will obey of courtesy.
A wife is keeper of thine husbandry:
Well may the sickë man bewail and weep,
There as there is no wife the house to keep.
I warnë thee, if wisely thou wilt wirch,²⁷⁸⁶
Love well thy wife, as Christ loveth his church:
Thou lov'st thyself, if thou lovest thy wife.
No man hateth his flesh, but in his life
He fost'reth it; and therefore bid I thee
Cherish thy wife, or thou shalt never thé.²⁷⁸⁷
Husband and wife, what so men jape or play,²⁷⁸⁸
Of worldly folk holdë the sicker²⁷⁸⁹ way;
They be so knit there may no harm betide,
And namëly²⁷⁹⁰ upon the wifë's side.
For which this January, of whom I told,
Consider'd hath within his dayës old,
The lusty life, the virtuous quiët,
That is in marriágë honey-sweet.
And for his friends upon a day he sent
To tell them the effect of his intent.
With facë sad,²⁷⁹¹ his tale he hath them told:
He saidë, "Friendës, I am hoar and old,
And almost (God wot) on my pittë's²⁷⁹² brink,
Upon my soulë somewhat must I think.
I have my body foolishly dispended,
Blessed be God that it shall be amended;
For I will be certáin a wedded man,
And that anon in all the haste I can,

Unto some maiden, fair and tender of age;
I pray you shapë²⁷⁹³ for my marriage
All suddenly, for I will not abide:
And I will fond²⁷⁹⁴ to éspy, on my side,
To whom I may be wedded hastily.
But forasmuch as ye be more than I,
Ye shallë rather²⁷⁹⁵ such a thing espy
Than I, and where me best were to ally.
But one thing warn I you, my friendës dear,
I will none old wife have in no mannère:
She shall not passë sixteen year certáin.
Old fish and youngë flesh would I have fain.
Better,” quoth he, “a pike than a pickerel,²⁷⁹⁶
And better than old beef is tender veal.
I will no woman thirty year of age,
It is but beanëstraw and great foráge.
And eke these oldë widows (God it wot)
They connë²⁷⁹⁷ so much craft on Wadë’s boat,²⁷⁹⁸
So muchë brookë harm²⁷⁹⁹ when that them lest,²⁸⁰⁰
That with them should I never live in rest.
For sundry schoolës makë subtle clerkës;
Woman of many schoolës half a clerk is.
But certainly a young thing men may guy,²⁸⁰¹
Right as men may warm wax with handës ply.²⁸⁰²
Wherefore I say you plainly in a clause,
I will none old wife have, right for this cause.
For if so were I haddë such mischance,
That I in her could havë no pleasance,
Then should I lead my life in avoutrie,²⁸⁰³
And go straight to the devil when I die.
Nor children should I none upon her gotten:
Yet were me lever²⁸⁰⁴ houndës had me eaten
Than that mine heritagë shouldë fall
In strangë hands: and this I tell you all.
I doubtë not I know the causë why
Men shouldë wed: and farthermore know I

There speaketh many a man of marriage
That knows no more of it than doth my page,
For what causes a man should take a wife.
If he ne may not livë chaste his life,
Take him a wife with great devotiön,
Because of lawful procreatiön
Of children, to th' honoür of God above,
And not only for paramour or love;
And for they shouldë lechery eschew,
And yield their debtë when that it is due:
Or for that each of them should help the other
In mischief, [2805](#) as a sister shall the brother,
And live in chastity full holily.
But, Sirës, by your leave, that am not I,
For, God be thanked, I dare make avaunt, [2806](#)
I feel my limbës stark [2807](#) and suffisant
To do all that a man belongeth to:
I wot myselfë best what I may do.
Though I be hoar, I fare as doth a tree,
That blossoms ere the fruit y-waxen [2808](#) be;
The blossomy tree is neither dry nor dead;
I feel me now here hoar but on my head.
Mine heart and all my limbës are as green
As laurel through the year is for to seen. [2809](#)
And, since that ye have heard all mine intent,
I pray you to my will ye would assent."
Diversë men diversëly him told
Of marriage many examples old;
Some blamed it, some praised it, certáin;
But at the lastë, shortly for to sayn
(As all day [2810](#) falleth altercatiön
Betwixtë friends in disputatiön),
There fell a strife betwixt his brethren two,
Of which that one was callëd Placebo,
Justinus soothly callëd was that other.
Placebo said; "O January, brother,

Full little need have ye, my lord so dear,
Counsel to ask of any that is here:
But that ye be so full of sapience,
That you not liketh, for your high prudéce,
To waivë²⁸¹¹ from the word of Solomon.
This word said he unto us every one;
Work allë thing by counsel—thus said he—
And thenñe shalt thou not repentë thee.
But though that Solomon spake such a word,
Mine owen dearë brother and my lord,
So wisly²⁸¹² God my soulë bring at rest,
I hold your owen counsel is the best.
For, brother mine, take of me this motive;²⁸¹³
I have now been a court-man all my life,
And, God it wot, though I unworthy be,
I havë standen in full great degree
Aboutë lordës of full high estate;
Yet had I ne'er with none of them debate;
I never them contráried truëly.
I know well that my lord can²⁸¹⁴ more than I;
What that he saith I hold it firm and stable,
I say the same, or else a thing sembláble.
A full great fool is any counsellor
That serveth any lord of high honoúr,
That dare presume, or onës thinken it;
That his counsel should pass his lordë's wit.
Nay, lordës be no foolës by my fay.
Ye have yourselfë shewed here to-day
So high sentéce,²⁸¹⁵ so holily and well,
That I consent, and cónfirm every deal²⁸¹⁶
Your wordës all, and your opinioún.
By God, there is no man in all this town
Nor in Itále, could better have y-said:
Christ holds him of this counsel well apaid.²⁸¹⁷
And truëly it is a high couráge
Of any man that stopen²⁸¹⁸ is in age,

To take a young wife, by my father's kin;
Your heartë hangeth on a jolly pin.
Do now in this matter right as you lest,
For finally I hold it for the best."

Justinus, that aye stillë sat and heard,
Right in this wise to Placebo answér'd.
"Now, brother mine, be patient I pray,
Since ye have said, and hearken what I say.
Senec, among his other wordës wise,
Saith, that a man ought him right well advise, [2819](#)
To whom he gives his hand or his chattél.
And since I ought advisë me right well
To whom I give my good away from me,
Well more I ought advisë me, pardie,
To whom I give my body: for alway
I warn you well it is no childë's play
To take a wife without advisëment.
Men must inquire (this is mine assent)
Whe'er she be wise, or sober, or dronkelew, [2820](#)
Or proud, or any other ways a shrew,
A chidester, [2821](#) or a waster of thy good,
Or rich or poor; or else a man is wood. [2822](#)
Albeit so, that no man findë shall
None in this world, that trotteth whole in all, [2823](#)
No man, nor beast, such as men can devise, [2824](#)
But nathehess it ought enough suffice
With any wife, if so were that she had
More goodë thewës [2825](#) than her vices bad:
And all this asketh leisure to inquére.
For, God it wot, I have wept many a tear
Full privily, since I have had a wife.
Praise whoso will a wedded mannë's life,
Certes, I find in it but cost and care,
And observánces of all blisses bare.
And yet, God wot, my neighëbours about,
And namëly [2826](#) of women many a rout, [2827](#)

Say that I have the mostë steadfast wife,
And eke the meekest one, that beareth life.
But I know best where wringeth²⁸²⁸ me my shoe,
Ye may for me right as you likë do.
Advise you, ye be a man of age,
How that ye enter into marriage;
And namely²⁸²⁹ with a young wife and a fair.
By him that made water, fire, earth, air,
The youngest man that is in all this rout²⁸³⁰
Is busy enough to bringen it about
To have his wife alone, trustë me:
Ye shall not please her fully yearës three,
This is to say, to do her full pleasánce.
A wife asketh full many an observánce.
I pray you that ye be not evil apaid.”²⁸³¹

“Well,” quoth this January, “and hast thou said?
Straw for thy Senec, and for thy provérbs,
I countë not a pannier full of herbs
Of schoolë termës; wiser men than thou,
As thou hast heard, assented here right now
To my purpose: Placebo, what say ye?”

“I say it is a cursed²⁸³² man,” quoth he,
“That letteth²⁸³³ matrimony, sickerly.”
And with that word they rise up suddenly,
And be assented fully, that he should
Be wedded when him list, and where he would.

High fantasy and curious business
From day to day gan in the soul impress²⁸³⁴
Of January about his marriage
Many a fair shape, and many a fair visage
There passed through his heartë night by night.
As whoso took a mirror polish’d bright,
And set it in a common market-place,
Then should he see many a figure pace
By his mirrór; and in the samë wise
Gan January in his thought devise

Of maidens, which that dweltë him beside:
He wistë not where that he might abide.²⁸³⁵
For if that one had beauty in her face,
Another stood so in the people's grace
For her sadness²⁸³⁶ and her benignity,
That of the people greatest voice had she:
And some were rich and had a baddë name.
But natheless, betwixt earnest and game,
He at the last appointed him on one,
And let all others from his heartë gon,
And chose her of his own authority;
For love is blind all day, and may not see.
And when that he was into bed y-brought,
He pourtray'd in his heart and in his thought
Her freshë beauty, and her agë tender,
Her middle small, her armës long and slender,
Her wisë governance, her gentleness,
Her womanly bearing, and her sadnéss.²⁸³⁷
And when that he on her was condescended,²⁸³⁸
He thought his choicë might not be amended;
For when that he himself concluded had,
He thought each other mannë's wit so bad,
That impossíble it werë to reply
Against his choice; this was his fantasy.
His friendës sent he to, at his instánce,
And prayed them to do him that pleasánce,
That hastily they would unto him come;
He would abridge their labour all and some:
Needed no more for them to go nor ride,²⁸³⁹
He was appointed where he would abide.²⁸⁴⁰
Placebo came, and eke his friendës soon,
And alderfirst²⁸⁴¹ he bade them all a boon,²⁸⁴²
That none of them no arguments would make
Against the purpose that he had y-take:
Which purpose was pleasánt to God, said he,
And very ground of his prosperity.

He said, there was a maiden in the town,
Which that of beauty haddë great renown;
All²⁸⁴³ were it so she were of small degree,
Sufficed him her youth and her beauty;
Which maid, he said, he would have to his wife,
To lead in ease and holiness his life;
And thanked God, that he might have her all,
That no wight with his blissë partë²⁸⁴⁴ shall;
And prayed them to labour in this need,
And shape that he failë not to speed:
For then, he said, his spirit was at ease.
“Then is,” quoth he, “nothing may me displease,
Save one thing pricketh in my conscience,
The which I will rehearse in your preséncé.
I have,” quoth he, “heard said, full yore²⁸⁴⁵ ago,
There may no man have perfect blisses two,
This is to say, on earth and eke in heaven.
For though he keep him from the sinnës seven,
And eke from every branch of thilkë tree,²⁸⁴⁶
Yet is there so perfect felicity,
And so great ease and lust,²⁸⁴⁷ in marriáge,
That ev’r I am aghast,²⁸⁴⁸ now in mine age
That I shall head now so merry a life,
So delicate, withoutë woe or strife,
That I shall have mine heav’n on earthë here.
For since that very heav’n is bought so dear,
With tribulatió and great penáncé,
How should I then, living in such pleasáncé
As allë wedded men do with their wivës,
Come to the bliss where Christ etern on live is?²⁸⁴⁹
This is my dread;²⁸⁵⁰ and ye, my brethren tway,
Assoilë²⁸⁵¹ me this question, I you pray.”
Justinus, which that hated his follý,
Answér’d anon right in his japery;²⁸⁵²
And, for he would his longë tale abridge,
He wouldë no authority²⁸⁵³ allege,

But saidë; “Sir, so there be none obstácle
Other than this, God of his high mirácle,
And of his mercy, may so for you wirch, [2854](#)
That, ere ye have your rights of holy church,
Ye may repent of wedded mannë’s life,
In which ye say there is no woe nor strife:
And ellës God forbid, but if [2855](#) he sent
A wedded man his grace him to repent
Well often, rather than a single man.
And therefore, Sir, the bestë rede I can, [2856](#)
Despair you not, but have in your memóry,
Paráventure she may be your purgatóry;
She may be Goddë’s means, and Goddë’s whip;
And then your soul shall up to heaven skip
Swifter than doth an arrow from a bow.
I hope to God hereafter ye shall know
That there is none so great felicity
In marriáge, nor ever more shall be,
That you shall let [2857](#) of your salvatióñ;
So that ye use, as skill is and reasón,
The lustës [2858](#) of your wife attemperly, [2859](#)
And that ye please her not too amorously,
And that ye keep you eke from other sin.
My tale is done, for my wit is but thin.
Be not aghast [2860](#) hereof, my brother dear,
But let us waden out of this mattére,
The Wife of Bath, if ye have understand,
Of marriáge, which ye have now in hand,
Declared hath full well in little space;
Fare ye now well, God have you in his grace.”

And with this word this Justin’ and his brother
Have ta’en their leave, and each of them of other.
And when they saw that it must needës be,
They wroughtë so, by sleight and wise treatý,
That she, this maiden, which that Maius hight, [2861](#)
As hastily as ever that she might,

Shall wedded be unto this Januáry.
I trow it were too longë you to tarry,
If I told you of every script and band²⁸⁶²
By which she was feoffed in his hand;
Or for to reckon of her rich array.
But finally y-comen is the day
That to the churchë bothë be they went,
For to receive the holy sacrament,
Forth came the priest, with stole about his neck,
And bade her be like Sarah and Rebecc'
In wisdom and in truth of marriáge;
And said his orisons, as is uságe,
And crouched²⁸⁶³ them, and bade²⁸⁶⁴ God should them bless,
And made all sicker²⁸⁶⁵ enough with holiness.

Thus be they wedded with solemnity;
And at the feastë sat both he and she,
With other worthy folk, upon the dais.
All full of joy and bliss is the paláce,
And full of instruments, and of vitáille,
The mostë dainteous²⁸⁶⁶ of all Itále.
Before them stood such instruments of soun',
That Orpheus, nor of Thebes Amphioún,
Ne madë never such a melody.
At every course came in loud minstrelsy,
That never Joab trumped for to hear,
Nor he, Theodomas, yet half so clear
At Thebes, when the city was in doubt.
Bacchus the wine them skinked²⁸⁶⁷ all about.
And Venus laughed upon every wight
(For January was become her knight,
And wouldë both assayë his couráge
In liberty, and eke in marriáge),
And with her firebrand in her hand about
Danced before the bride and all the rout.
And certainly I dare right well say this,
Hyméneus, that god of wedding is,

Saw never his life so merry a wedded man.
Hold thou thy peace, thou poet Marcian,²⁸⁶⁸
That writest us that ilk²⁸⁶⁹ wedding merry
Of her Philology and him Mercúry,
And of the songës that the Muses sung;
Too small is both thy pen, and eke thy tongue,
For to describen of this marriage.
When tender youth hath wedded stooping age,
There is such mirth that it may not be writ;
Assay it yourëself, then may ye wit²⁸⁷⁰
If that I lie or no in this mattére.

Maius, that sat with so benign a cheer,²⁸⁷¹
Her to behold it seemed faërie;
Queen Esther never look'd with such an eye
On Assuere, so meek a look had she;
I may you not devise all her beauty;
But thus much of her beauty tell I may,
That she was hike the bright morrow of May
Full filled of all beauty and pleasánce.
This January is ravish'd in a trance,
At every time he looked in her face;
But in his heart he gan her to menace,
That he that night in armës would her strain
Harder than ever Paris did Heléne.
But natheless yet had he great pity
That thilkë night offendë her must he,
And thought, "Alas, O tender creatúre,
Now wouldë God ye mightë well endure
All my couráge, it is so sharp and keen;
I am aghast²⁸⁷² ye shall it not sustene.
But God forbid that I did all my might.
Now wouldë God that it were waxen night,
And that the night would lasten evermo'.
I would that all this people were y-go."²⁸⁷³
And finally he did all his laboúr,
As he best mightë, saving his honoúr,

To haste them from the meat in subtle wise.

The timē came that reason was to rise;
And after that men dance, and drinkē fast,
And spices all about the house they cast,
And full of joy and bliss is every man,
All but a squire, that hightē Damian,
Who carv'd before the knight full many a day;
He was so ravish'd on his lady May,
That for the very pain he was nigh wood;²⁸⁷⁴
Almost he swelt²⁸⁷⁵ and swooned where he stood,
So sore had Venus hurt him with her brand,
As that she bare it dancing in her hand.
And to his bed he went him hastily;
No more of him as at this time speak I;
But there I let him weep enough and plain,²⁸⁷⁶
Till freshē May will rue upon his pain.
O perilous fire, that in the bedstraw breedeth!
O foe familiar,²⁸⁷⁷ that his service bedeth!²⁸⁷⁸
O servant traitor, O false homely hewe,²⁸⁷⁹
Like to the adder in bosom shy untrue,
God shield us allē from your acquaintánce!
O January, drunken in pleasánce
Of marriage, see how thy Damian,
Thine owen squier and thy boren²⁸⁸⁰ man,
Intendeth for to do thee villainy:²⁸⁸¹
God grantē thee thine homely foe²⁸⁸² t' espy.
For in this world is no worse pestilence
Than homely foe, all day in thy preséce.

Performed hath the sun his arc diurn,²⁸⁸³
No longer may the body of him sojourn
On the horizon, in that latitude:
Night with his mantle, that is dark and rude,
Gan overspread the hemisphere about:
For which departed is this lusty rout²⁸⁸⁴
From January, with thank on every side.
Home to their houses lustily they ride,

Where as they do their thingës as them lest,
And when they see their time they go to rest.
Soon after that this hasty²⁸⁸⁵ Januáry
Will go to bed, he will no longer tarry.
He drankë hippocras, clarre,²⁸⁸⁶ and vernage²⁸⁸⁷
Of spices hot, to increase his couráge;
And many a lectuary had he full fine,
Such as the cursed monk Dan Constantine²⁸⁸⁸
Hath written in his book *de Coitu*;
To eat them all he would nothing eschew:
And to his privy friendës thus said he:
“For Goddë’s love, as soon as it may be,
Let voiden all this house in courteous wise.”
And they have done right as he will devise.
Men drinken, and the travers²⁸⁸⁹ draw anon;
The bride is brought to bed as still as stone;
And when the bed was with the priest y-bless’d,
Out of the chamber every wight him dress’d,
And January hath fast in arms y-take
His freshë May, his paradise, his make.²⁸⁹⁰
He lulled her, he kissed her full oft;
With thickë bristles of his beard unsoft,
Like to the skin of houndfish,²⁸⁹¹ sharp as brere²⁸⁹²
(For he was shav’n all new in his mannére),
He rubbed her upon her tender face,
And saidë thus; “Alas! I must trespace
To you, my spouse, and you greatly offend,
Ere timë come that I will down descend.
But natheless consider this,” quoth he,
“There is no workman, whatsoe’er he be,
That may both workë well and hastily:
This will be done at leisure perfectly.
It is no force²⁸⁹³ how longë that we play;
In true wedlock coupled be we tway;
And blessed be the yoke that we be in,
For in our actës may there be no sin.

A man may do no sinnë with his wife,
Nor hurt himselfë with his owen knife;
For we have leave to play us by the law.”

Thus labour'd he, till that the day gan daw,
And then he took a sop in fine clarré,
And upright in his beddë then sat he.
And after that he sang full loud and clear,
And kiss'd his wife, and madë wanton cheer.
He was all coltish, full of ragerie²⁸⁹⁴
And full of jargon as a flecked pie.
The slackë skin about his neckë shaked,
While that he sang, so chanted he and craked.²⁸⁹⁵
But God wot what that May thought in her heart,
When she him saw up sitting in his shirt
In his nightcap, and with his neckë lean:
She praised not his playing worth a bean.
Then said he thus; “My restë will I take
Now day is come, I may no longer wake;
And down he laid his head and slept till prime.
And afterward, when that he saw his time,
Up rosë January, but freshë May
Heldë her chamber till the fourthë day,
As usage is of wivës for the best.
For every labour some time must have rest,
Or ellës longë may he not endure;
This is to say, no life of creature,
Be it of fish, or bird, or beast, or man.

Now will I speak of woeful Damian,
That languisheth for love, as ye shall hear;
Therefore I speak to him in this mannére.
I say. “O silly Damian, alas!
Answér to this demand, as in this case,
How shalt thou to thy lady, freshë May,
Tellë thy woe? She will alway say nay;
Eke if thou speak, she will thy woe bewray;²⁸⁹⁶
God be thine help, I can no better say.
This sickë Damian in Venus' fire

So burned that he diëd for desire;
For which he put his life in áventure,²⁸⁹⁷
No longer might he in this wise endure;
But privily a penner²⁸⁹⁸ gan he borrow,
And in a letter wrote he all his sorrow,
In manner of a cómplaint or a lay,
Unto his fairë freshë lady May.
And in a purse of silk, hung on his shirt,
He hath it put, and laid it at his heart.

The moonë, that at noon was thilkë²⁸⁹⁹ day
That January had wedded freshë May,
In ten of Taure, was into Cancer glided;²⁹⁰⁰
So long had Maius in her chamber abided,
As custom is unto these nobles all.
A bridë shall not eaten in the hall
Till dayës four, or three days at the least,
Y-passed be; then let her go to feast.
The fourthë day complete from noon to noon,
When that the highë massë was y-done,
In hallë sat this January, and May,
As fresh as is the brightë summer's day.
And so befell, how that this goodë man
Remember'd him upon this Damian.
And saidë; "Saint Marý, how may this be,
That Damian attendeth not to me?
Is he aye sick? or how may this betide?"
His squiërs, which that stoodë there beside,
Excused him, because of his sickness,
Which letted²⁹⁰¹ him to do his business:
None other causë mightë make him tarry.
"That me forthinketh,"²⁹⁰² quoth this January,
"He is a gentle squiër, by my truth;
If that he died, it were great harm and ruth.
He is as wise, as díscreet, and secré,²⁹⁰³
As any man I know of his degree,
And thereto manly and eke serviceáble,

And for to be a thrifty man right able.
But after meat, as soon as ever I may
I will myself visit him, and eke May,
To do him all the comfort that I can.”
And for that word him blessed every man,
That of his bounty and his gentleness
He wouldë so comfórten in sickness
His squiër, for it was a gentle deed.
“Dame,” quoth this January, “take good heed,
At after meat, ye with your women all
(When that ye be in chamb’r out of this hall),
That all ye go to see this Damian:
Do him disport, he is a gentle man;
And tellë him that I will him visíte,
Have I nothing but rested me a lite:[2904](#)
And speed you fastë, for I will abide
Till that ye sleepë fastë by my side.”
And with that word he gan unto him call
A squiër, that was marshal of his hall,
And told him certain thingës that he wo’ld.
This freshë May hath straight her way y-hold,
With all her women, unto Damian.
Down by his beddë’s sidë sat she than,[2905](#)
Comfórting him as goodly as she may.
This Damian, when that his time he say,[2906](#)
In secret wise his purse, and eke his bill,
In which that he y-written had his will,
Hath put into her hand withoutë more,
Save that he sighed wondrous deep and sore,
And softëly to her right thus said he:
“Mercy, and that ye not discover me:
For I am dead if that this thing be kid.”[2907](#)
The pursë hath she in her bosom hid,
And went her way; ye get no more of me;
But unto January come is she,
That on his beddë’s sidë sat full soft.
He took her, and he kissed her full oft,

And laid him down to sleep, and that anon.
She feigned her as that she mustë gon
There as ye know that every wight must need;
And when she of this bill had taken heed,
She rent it all to cloutës²⁹⁰⁸ at the last,
And in the privy softëly it cast.
Who studieth²⁹⁰⁹ now but fairë freshë May?
Adown by oldë January she lay,
That sleptë, till the cough had him awaked:
Anon he pray'd her strippë her all naked,
He would of her, he said, have some pleasánce;
And said her clothës did him incumbránce.
And she obey'd him, be her lefe or loth.²⁹¹⁰
But, lest that precious²⁹¹¹ folk be with me wroth,
How that he wrought I dare not to you tell,
Or whether she thought it paradise or hell;
But there I let them worken in their wise
Till evensong ring, and they must arise.
Were it by destiny, or áventure,
Were it by influence, or by natúre,
Or constellation, that in such estate
The heaven stood at that time fortunate
As for to put a bill of Venus' works
(For allë thing hath time, as say these clerks),
To any woman for to get her love,
I cannot say; but greatë God above,
That knoweth that none act is causëless,
He deem²⁹¹² of all, for I will hold my peace.
But sooth is this, how that this freshë May
Hath taken such impressiön that day
Of pity on this sickë Damian,
That from her heartë she not drivë can
The remembráncë for to do him ease.²⁹¹³
“Certain,” thought she, “whom that this thing displease
I reckë not, for here I him assure,
To love him best of any creature,

Though he no morë haddë than his shirt.”
Lo, pity runneth soon in gentle heart.
Here may ye see, how excellent franchise²⁹¹⁴
In women is when they them narrow advise.²⁹¹⁵
Some tyrant is—as there be many a one—
That hath a heart as hard as any stone,
Which would have let him sterven²⁹¹⁶ in the place
Well rather than have granted him her grace;
And then rejoicen in her cruel pride.
And reckon not to be a homicide.
This gentle May, full filled of pity,
Right of her hand a letter maked she,
In which she granted him her very grace;
There lacked nought, but only day and place,
Where that she might unto his lust suffice:
For it shall be right as he will devise.
And when she saw her time upon a day
To visit this Damían went this May,
And subtilly this letter down she thrust
Under his pillow, read it if him lust.
She took him by the hand, and hard him twist’
So secretly, that no wight of it wist,
And bade him be all whole; and forth she went
To January, when he for her sent.
Up rosë Damian the nextë morrow,
All passed was his sickness and his sorrow.
He combed him, he proined²⁹¹⁷ him and picked,
He did all that unto his lady liked;
And eke to January he went as low
As ever did a doggë for the bow.²⁹¹⁸
He is so pleasant unto every man
(For craft is all, whoso that do it can),
Every wight is fain to speak him good;
And fully in his lady’s grace he stood.
Thus leave I Damian about his need,
And in my talë forth I will proceed.

Some clerkës²⁹¹⁹ holdë that felicity
Stands in delight; and therefore certain he,
This noble January, with all his might
In honest wise as longeth to a knight,
Shope²⁹²⁰ him to livë full deliciously:
His housing, his array, as honestly²⁹²¹
To his degree was made as a king's.
Amongës other of his honest things
He had a garden wallëd all with stone;
So fair a garden wot I nowhere none.
For out of doubt I verily suppose
That he that wrote the Romance of the Rose²⁹²²
Could not of it the beauty well devise;²⁹²³
Nor Priapus²⁹²⁴ mightë not well suffice,
Though he be god of gardens, for to tell
The beauty of the garden, and the well²⁹²⁵
That stood under a laurel always green.
Full often time he, Pluto, and his queen
Proserpina, and all their faërie,
Disported them and madë melody
About that well, and danced, as men told.
This noble knight, this January old,
Such dainty²⁹²⁶ had in it to walk and play,
That he would suffer no wight to bear the key,
Save he himself, for of the small wickët
He bare always of silver a clikët,²⁹²⁷
With which, when that him list, he it unshet.²⁹²⁸
And when that he would pay his wifë's debt,
In summer season, thither would he go,
And May his wife, and no wight but they two;
And thingës which that were not done in bed,
He in the garden them perform'd and sped.
And in this wisë many a merry day
Lived this January and fresh May,
But worldly joy may not always endure
To January, nor to no creatúre.

O sudden hap! O thou fortune unstable!
Like to the scorpíon so deceiváble,²⁹²⁹
That fhatt'rest with thy head when thou wilt sting;
Thy tail is death, through thine envenoming.
O brittle joy! O sweetë poison quaint!²⁹³⁰
O monster, that so subtilly canst paint
Thy giftës, under hue of steadfastness,
That thou deceivest bothë more and less!²⁹³¹
Why hast thou January thus deceiv'd,
That haddest him for thy full friend receiv'd?
And now thou hast bereft him both his eyen,
For sorrow of which desireth he to dien.
Alas! this noble January free,
Amid his lust²⁹³² and his prosperity
Is waxen blind, and that all suddenly.
He weeped and he wailed piteously;
And therewithal the fire of jealousy
(Lest that his wife should fall in some follý)
So burnt his heartë, that he wouldë fain,
That some man bothë him and her had slain;
For neither after his death, nor in his life,
Ne would he that she were no love nor wife,
But ever live as widow in clothës black,
Sole as the turtle that hath lost her make.²⁹³³
But at the last, after a month or tway,
His sorrow gan assuagë, sooth to say.
For, when he wist it might none other be,
He patiently took his adversity:
Save out of doubtë he may not foregon
That he was jealous evermore-in-one:²⁹³⁴
Which jealousy was so outrageoús,
That neither in hall, nor in none other house,
Nor in none other place never the mo'
He wouldë suffer her to ride or go,
But if²⁹³⁵ that he had hand on her alway.
For which full often weptë freshë May,

That loved Damian so burningly
That she must either dien suddenly,
Or ellës she must have him as her lest:²⁹³⁶
She waited²⁹³⁷ when her heartë wouldë brest.²⁹³⁸
Upon that other sidë Damian
Becomen is the sorrowfullest man
That ever was; for neither night nor day
He mightë speak a word to freshë May,
As to his purpose, of no such mattére,
But if²⁹³⁹ that January must it hear,
That had a hand upon her evermo'.
But natheless, by writing to and fro,
And privy signës, wist he what she meant,
And she knew eke the fine²⁹⁴⁰ of his intent.

O January, what might it thee avail,
Though thou might see as far as shippës sail?
For as good is it blind deceiv'd to be,
As be deceived when a man may see.
Lo, Argus, which that had a hundred eyen,
For all that ever he could pore or pryen,
Yet was he blent;²⁹⁴¹ and, God wot, so be mo',
That weenë wisly²⁹⁴² that it be not so:
Pass over is an ease, I say no more.
This freshë May, of which I spakë yore,
In warm wax hath imprinted the clikét²⁹⁴³
That January bare of the small wickét
By which into his garden oft he went;
And Damian, that knew all her intent,
The cliket counterfeited privily;
There is no more to say, but hastily
Some wonder by this cliket shall betide,
Which ye shall hearen, if ye will abide.

O noble Ovid, sooth say'st thou, God wot,
What sleight is it, if love be long and hot,
That he'll not find it out in some mannére?
By Pyramus and Thisbe may men lear;²⁹⁴⁴

Though they were kept full long and strait o'er all,
They be accorded,²⁹⁴⁵ rowning²⁹⁴⁶ through a wall,
Where no wight could have found out such a sleight.
But now to purpose; ere that dayës eight
Were passed of the month of July, fill²⁹⁴⁷
That January caught so great a will,
Through egging²⁹⁴⁸ of his wife, him for to play
In his gardén, and no wight but they tway,
That in a morning to this May said he:
"Rise up, my wife, my love, my lady free;
The turtle's voice is heard, mine owen sweet;
The winter is gone, with all his rainës weet.²⁹⁴⁹
Come forth now with thine eyen columbine.²⁹⁵⁰
Well fairer be thy breasts than any wine.
The garden is enclosed all about;
Come forth, my whitë spouse; for, out of doubt,
Thou hast me wounded in mine heart, O wife:
No spot in thee was e'er in all thy life.
Come forth, and let us taken our disport;
I choose thee for my wife and my comfort."
Such oldë lewëd wordës used he.
On Damian a signë madë she,
That he should go beforë with his cliket.
This Damian then hath opened the wicket,
And in he start, and that in such mannére
That no wight might him either see or hear;
And still he sat under a bush. Anon
This January, as blind as is a stone,
With Maius in his hand, and no wight mo',
Into this freshë garden is y-go,
And clapped to the wicket suddenly.
"Now, wife," quoth he, "here is but thou and I;
Thou art the creature that I bestë love:
For, by that Lord that sits in heav'n above,
Lever²⁹⁵¹ I had to dien on a knife,
Than thee offendë, dearë truë wife.

For Goddë's sakë, think how I thee chees,²⁹⁵²
Not for no covetisë²⁹⁵³ doubtëless,
But only for the love I had to thee.
And though that I be old, and may not see,
Be to me true, and I will tell you why.
Certes three thingës shall ye win thereby:
First, love of Christ, and to yourself honoúr,
And all mine heritagë, town and tow'r.
I give it you, make charters as you lest;
This shall be done to-morrow ere sun rest,
So wisely²⁹⁵⁴ God my soulë bring to bliss!
I pray you, on this covenant me kiss.
And though that I be jealous, wite²⁹⁵⁵ me not;
Ye be so deep imprinted in my thought,
That when that I consider your beauty,
And therewithal th' unlikely²⁹⁵⁶ eld of me,
I may not, certes, though I shouldë die,
Forbear to be out of your company,
For very love; this is withoutë doubt:
Now kiss me, wife, and let us roam about."

This freshë May, when she these wordës heard,
Benignëly to January answér'd;
But first and forward she began to weep:
"I have," quoth she, "a soulë for to keep
As well as ye, and also mine honoúr,
And of my wifehood thilkë tender flow'r
Which that I have assured in your hond,
When that the priest to you my body bond:
Wherefore I will answer in this mannére,
With leave of you mine owen lord so dear.
I pray to God, that never dawn the day
That I ne sterve,²⁹⁵⁷ as foul as woman may,
If e'er I do unto my kin that shame,
Or ellës I impairë so my name,
That I be false; and if I do that lack,
Do²⁹⁵⁸ strippë me, and put me in a sack,

And in the nextë river do²⁹⁵⁹ me drench:²⁹⁶⁰

I am a gentle woman, and no wench.

Why speak ye thus? but men be e'er untrue,

And women have reproof of you aye new.

Ye know none other dalliance, I believe,

But speak to us of untrust and reprove."²⁹⁶¹

And with that word she saw where Damian

Sat in the bush, and coughë she began;

And with her finger signë madë she,

That Damian should climb upon a tree

That charged was with fruit; and up he went:

For verily he knew all her intent,

And every signë that she couldë make,

Better than January her own make.²⁹⁶²

For in a letter she had told him all

Of this mattër, how that he workë shall.

And thus I leave him sitting in the perry,²⁹⁶³

And January and May roaming full merry.

Bright was the day, and blue the firmament;

Phoebus of gold his streamës down had sent

To gladden every flow'r with his warmnéss;

He was that time in Geminis, I guess,

But little from his declinatió

Of Cancer, Jovë's exaltatió.

And so befell, in that bright morning-tide,

That in the garden, on the farther side,

Pluto, that is the king of Faërie,

And many a lady in his company

Following his wife, the queen Proserpina—

Which that he ravished out of Ethna,²⁹⁶⁴

While that she gather'd flowers in the mead

(In Claudian ye may the story read,

How in his grisly chariot he her fet)—²⁹⁶⁵

This king of Faërie adown him set

Upon a bank of turfës fresh and green,

And right anon thus said he to his queen.

“My wife,” quoth he, “there may no wight say nay—[2966](#)
Experience so proves it every day—
The treason which that woman doth to man.
Ten hundred thousand stories tell I can
Notáble of your untruth and brittleness.[2967](#)
O Solomon, richest of all richéss,
Full fill’d of sapience and worldly glory,
Full worthy be thy wordës of memóry
To every wight that wit and reason can.[2968](#)
Thus praised he yet the bounté[2969](#) of man:
‘Among a thousand men yet found I one,
But of all women found I never none.’[2970](#)
Thus said this king, that knew your wickedness;
And Jesus, *Filius* Sirach,[2971](#) as I guess,
He spake of you but seldom reveréce.
A wildë fire and córrupt pestilence
So fall upon your bodies yet tonight!
Ne see ye not this honourable knight?
Because, alas! that he is blind and old,
His owen man shall makë him cuckóld.
Lo, where he sits, the lechour, in the tree.
Now will I granten, of my majesty,
Unto this oldë blindë worthy knight,
That he shall have again his eyen sight,
When that his wife will do him villainy;
Then shall be knowen all her harlotry,
Both in reproof of her and other mo’.”
“Yea, Sir,” quoth Proserpine, “and will ye so?
Now by my mother Ceres’ soul I swear
That I shall give her suffisant answér,
And allë women after, for her sake;
That though they be in any guilt y-take,
With facë bold they shall themselves excuse,
And bear them down that wouldë them accuse.
For lack of answer, none of them shall dien.
All[2972](#) had ye seen a thing with both your eyen,

Yet shall we visage it²⁹⁷³ so hardily,
And weep, and swear, and chidë subtilly,
That ye shall be as lewëd²⁹⁷⁴ as be geese.
What recketh me of your authorities?
I wot well that this Jew, this Solomon,
Found of us women foolës many one:
But though that he foundë no good womán,
Yet there hath found many another man
Women full good, and true, and virtuoús;
Witness on them that dwelt in Christë's house;
With martyrdom they proved their constánce.
The Roman gestës²⁹⁷⁵ makë remembránce
Of many a very truë wife also.
But, Sirë, be not wroth, albeit so,
Though that he said he found no good womán,
I pray you take the sentence²⁹⁷⁶ of the man:
He meant thus, that in sovereign bounté²⁹⁷⁷
Is none but God, no, neither he nor she.²⁹⁷⁸
Hey, for the very God that is but one,
Why makë ye so much of Solomon?
What though he made a temple, Goddë's house?
What though he werë rich and glorioús?
So made he eke a temple of false goddës;
How might he do a thing that more forbode²⁹⁷⁹ is?
Pardie, as fair as ye his name emplaster,²⁹⁸⁰
He was a lechour, and an idolaster,²⁹⁸¹
And in his eld he very²⁹⁸² God forsook.
And if that God had not (as saith the book)
Spared him for his father's sake, he should
Have lost his regnë²⁹⁸³ rather²⁹⁸⁴ than he would.
I settë not, of²⁹⁸⁵ all the villainy
That he of women wrote, a butterfly.
I am a woman, needës must I speak,
Or ellës swell until mine heartë break.
For since he said that we be jangleresses,²⁹⁸⁶

As ever may I brook²⁹⁸⁷ whole my tresses,
I shall not spare for no courtesy
To speak him harm, that said us villainy.”
“Dame,” quoth this Pluto, “be no longer wroth;
I give it up: but, since I swore mine oath
That I would grant to him his sight again,
My word shall stand, that warn I you certáin:
I am a king, it sits²⁹⁸⁸ me not to lie.”
“And I,” quoth she, “am queen of Faërie.
Her answer she shall have, I undertake,
Let us no morë wordës of it make.
Forsooth, I will no longer you contráry.”

Now let us turn again to January,
That in the garden with his fairë May
Singeth well merrier than the popinjay:²⁹⁸⁹
“You love I best, and shall, and other none.”
So long about the alleys is he gone,
Till he was comë to that ilkë perry,²⁹⁹⁰
Where as this Damian sattë full merry
On high, among the freshë leavës green.
This freshë May, that is so bright and sheen,
Gan for to sigh, and said, “Alas my side!
Now, Sir,” quoth she, “for aught that may betide,
I must have of the pearës that I see,
Or I must die, so sorë longeth me
To eaten of the smallë pearës green;
Help, for her love that is of heaven queen!
I tell you well, a woman in my plight
May have to fruit so great an appetite,
That she may dien, but²⁹⁹¹ she of it have.”
“Alas!” quoth he, “that I had here a knave²⁹⁹²
That couldë climb; alas! alas!” quoth he,
“For I am blind.” “Yea, Sir, no force,”²⁹⁹³ quoth she;
“But would ye vouchësafe, for Goddë’s sake,
The perry in your armës for to take
(For well I wot that ye mistrustë me),

Then would I climbë well enough," quoth she,
"So I my foot might set upon your back."

"Certes," said he, "therein shall be no lack,
Might I you helpë with mine heartë's blood."

He stooped down, and on his back she stood,
And caught her by a twist,²⁹⁹⁴ and up she go'th.
(Ladies, I pray you that ye be not wroth,
I cannot glose,²⁹⁹⁵ I am a rudë man):

And suddenly anon this Damian
Gan pullen up the smock, and in he throng.²⁹⁹⁶
And when that Pluto saw this greatë wrong,
To January he gave again his sight,
And made him see as well as ever he might.
And when he thus had caught his sight again,
Was never man of anything so fain:
But on his wife his thought was evermo'.

Up to the tree he cast his eyen two,
And saw how Damian his wife had dress'd,
In such mannëre, it may not be express'd,
But if²⁹⁹⁷ I wouldë speak uncourteously.
And up he gave a roaring and a cry,
As doth the mother when the child shall die;
"Out! help! alas! harow!" he gan to cry;
"O strongë, lady, stowre!²⁹⁹⁸ what doest thou?"

And she answered: "Sir, what aileth you?
Have patience and reason in your mind,
I have you help'd on both your eyen blind.
On peril of my soul, I shall not lien,
As me was taught to helpë with your eyen,
Was nothing better for to make you see,
Than struggle with a man upon a tree:
God wot, I did it in full good intent."
"Struggle!" quoth he, "yea, algate in it went.
God give you both one shamë's death to dien!
He swived thee; I saw it with mine eyen;
And ellës be I hanged by the halse."²⁹⁹⁹

“Then is,” quoth she, “my medicine all false;
For certainly, if that ye mightë see,
Ye would not say these wordës unto me.

Ye have some glimpsing,³⁰⁰⁰ and no perfect sight.”

“I see,” quoth he, “as well as ever I might,
(Thanked be God!) with both mine eyen two,
And by my faith me thought he did thee so.”

“Ye maze, ye mazë,³⁰⁰¹ goodë Sir,” quoth she;

“This thank have I for I have made you see:

Alas!” quoth she, “that e’er I was so kind.”

“Now, Dame,” quoth he, “let all pass out of mind;

Come down, my lefe,³⁰⁰² and if I have missaid,

God help me so, as I am evil apaid.³⁰⁰³

But, by my father’s soul, I ween’d have seen

How that this Damian had by thee lain,

And that thy smock had lain upon his breast.”

“Yea, Sir,” quoth she, “ye may ween as ye lest:³⁰⁰⁴

But, Sir, a man that wakes out of his sleep,

He may not suddenly well takë keep³⁰⁰⁵

Upon a thing, nor see it perfectly,

Till that he be adawed³⁰⁰⁶ verily.

Right so a man, that long hath blind y-be,

He may not suddenly so well y-see,

First when his sight is newë come again,

As he that hath a day or two y-seen.

Till that your sight establish’d be a while,

There may full many a sightë you beguile.

Beware, I pray you, for, by heaven’s king,

Full many a man weeneth to see a thing,

And it is all another than it seemeth;

He which that misconceiveth oft misdeemeth.”³⁰⁰⁷

And with that word she leapt down from the tree.

This January, who is glad but he?

He kissed her, and clipped³⁰⁰⁸ her full oft,

And on her womb he stroked her full soft;

And to his palace home he hath her lad.³⁰⁰⁹

Now, goodë men, I pray you to be glad.
Thus endeth here my tale of Januáry,
God bless us, and his mother, Saintë Mary.

THE SQUIRE'S TALE

THE PROLOGUE

“Hey! Goddë’s mercy!” said our Hostë tho,³⁰¹⁰
“Now such a wife I pray God keep me fro’.
Lo, suchë sleightës and subtilities
In women be; for aye as busy as bees
Are they us silly men for to deceive,
And from the soothë³⁰¹¹ will they ever weive,³⁰¹²
As this Merchantë’s tale it proveth well.
But natheless, as true as any steel,
I have a wife, though that she poorë be;
But of her tongue a labbing³⁰¹³ shrew is she;
And yet³⁰¹⁴ she hath a heap of vices mo’.
Thereof no force;³⁰¹⁵ let all such thingës go.
But wit³⁰¹⁶ ye what? in counsel³⁰¹⁷ be it said,
Me rueth sore I am unto her tied;
For, an’³⁰¹⁸ I shouldë reckon every vice
Which that she hath, y-wis³⁰¹⁹ I were too nice;³⁰²⁰
And causë why, it should reported be
And told her by some of this company
(By whom, it needeth not for to declare,
Since women connen utter such chaffäre),³⁰²¹
And eke my wit sufficeth not thereto

To tellen all; wherefore my tale is do.³⁰²²
Squiër, come near, if it your willë be,
And say somewhat of love, for certes ye
Connë thereon³⁰²³ as much as any man.”
“Nay, Sir,” quoth he; “but such thing as I can,
With hearty will—for I will not rebel
Against your lust,³⁰²⁴—a tale will I tell.
Have me excused if I speak amiss;
My will is good; and lo, my tale is this.”

THE TALE³⁰²⁵

PARS PRIMA

At Sarra, in the land of Tartary,
There dwelt a king that warrayed³⁰²⁶ Russie,
Through which there died many a doughty man;
This noble king was called Cambuscan,³⁰²⁷
Which in his time was of so great renown,
That there was nowhere in no regioún
So excellent a lord in allë thing:
Him lacked nought that longeth to a king,
As of the sect of which that he was born.
He kept his law to which he was y-sworn,
And thereto³⁰²⁸ he was hardy, wise, and rich,
And piteous and just, always y-lich;³⁰²⁹
True of his word, benign and honouráble;
Of his coráge as any centre stable;³⁰³⁰
Young, fresh, and strong, in armës desiroús

As any bachelor of all his house.
A fair persón he was, and fortunate,
And kept alway so well his royal estate,
That there was nowhere such another man.
This noble king, this Tartar Cambuscan,
Haddë two sons by Elfeta his wife,
Of which the eldest hightë Algarsife,
The other was y-callëd Camballó.
A daughter had this worthy king also,
That youngest was, and hightë Canacé:
But for to tellë you all her beauty,
It lies not in my tongue, nor my conníng;³⁰³¹
I dare not undertake so high a thing:
Mine English eke is insufficient,
It mustë be a rhetor³⁰³² excellent,
That couth his colours longing for that art,³⁰³³
If he should her describen any part;
I am none such, I must speak as I can.

And so befell, that when this Cambuscan
Had twenty winters borne his diadem,
As he was wont from year to year, I deem,
He let the feast of his nativity
Do cryë,³⁰³⁴ throughout Sarra his city,
The last Idus of March, after the year.
Phoebus the sun full jolly was and clear,
For he was nigh his exaltatió
In Martë's face, and in his mansión³⁰³⁵
In Aries, the choleric hot sign:
Full lusty³⁰³⁶ was the weather and benign;
For which the fowls against the sunnë sheen,³⁰³⁷
What for the season and the youngë green,
Full loudë sangë their affectiós:
Them seemed to have got protectiós
Against the sword of winter keen and cold.
This Cambuscan, of which I have you told,
In royal vesture, sat upon his dais,

With diadem, full high in his palace;
And held his feast so solemn and so rich,
That in this worldë was there none it lich.³⁰³⁸
Of which if I should tell all the array,
Then would it occupy a summer's day;
And eke it needeth not for to devise³⁰³⁹
At every course the order of servíce.
I will not tellen of their strangë sewes,³⁰⁴⁰
Nor of their swannës, nor their heronsews.³⁰⁴¹
Eke in that land, as tellë knightës old,
There is some meat that is full dainty hold,
That in this land men reck of³⁰⁴² it full small:
There is no man that may reporten all.
I will not tarry you, for it is prime,
And for it is no fruit, but loss of time;
Unto my purpose³⁰⁴³ I will have recourse.
And so befell that, after the third course,
While that this king sat thus in his nobley,³⁰⁴⁴
Hearing his ministrelës their thingës play
Before him at his board deliciously,
In at the hallë door all suddenly
There came a knight upon a steed of brass,
And in his hand a broad mirrór of glass;
Upon his thumb he had of gold a ring,
And by his side a naked sword hanging:
And up he rode unto the highë board.
In all the hall was there not spoke a word,
For marvel of this knight; him to behold
Full busily they waited,³⁰⁴⁵ young and old.

This strangë knight, that came thus suddenly,
All armed, save his head, full richëly,
Saluted king, and queen, and lordës all,
By order as they satten in the hall,
With so high reverence and óbserváncé,
As well in speech as in his countenáncé,
That Gawain³⁰⁴⁶ with his oldë courtesý,

Though he were come again out of Faerie,
Him couldë not amendë with a word.³⁰⁴⁷
And after this, before the highë board,
He with a manly voice said his messáge,
After the form used in his languáge,
Withoutë vice³⁰⁴⁸ of syllable or letter.
And, for his talë shouldë seem the better,
Accordant to his wordës was his cheer,³⁰⁴⁹
As teacheth art of speech them that it lear.³⁰⁵⁰
Albeit that I cannot sound his style,
Nor cannot climb over so high a stile,
Yet say I this, as to commúne intent,³⁰⁵¹
Thus much amounteth³⁰⁵² all that ever he meant,
If it so be that I have it in mind.

He said; "The king of Araby and Ind,
My liegë lord, on this solemnë day
Saluteth you as he best can and may,
And sendeth you, in honour of your feast,
By me, that am all ready at your hest,³⁰⁵³
This steed of brass, that easily and well
Can in the space of one day naturel
(This is to say, in four-and-twenty hours),
Whereso you list, in drought or else in show'rs,
Bearë your body into every place
To which your heartë willeth for to pace,³⁰⁵⁴
Withoutë wem³⁰⁵⁵ of you, through foul or fair.
Or if you list to fly as high in air
As doth an eagle, when him list to soar,
This samë steed shall bear you evermore
Withoutë harm, till ye be where you lest³⁰⁵⁶
(Though that ye sleepen on his back, or rest),
And turn again, with writhing³⁰⁵⁷ of a pin.
He that it wrought, he couldë³⁰⁵⁸ many a gin;³⁰⁵⁹
He waited³⁰⁶⁰ in any a constellatiön,
Ere he had done this operatiön,

And knew full many a seal³⁰⁶¹ and many a bond.
This mirror eke, that I have in mine hond,
Hath such a might, that men may in it see
When there shall fall any adversity
Unto your realm, or to yourself also,
And openly who is your friend or foe.
And over all this, if any lady bright
Hath set her heart on any manner wight,
If he be false, she shall his treason see,
His newë love, and all his subtlety,
So openly that there shall nothing hide.
Wherefore, against this lusty summer-tide,
This mirror, and this ring that ye may see,
He hath sent to my lady Canacé,
Your excellentë daughter that is here.
The virtue of this ring, if ye will hear,
Is this, that if her list it for to wear
Upon her thumb, or in her purse it bear,
There is no fowl that flyeth under heaven,
That she shall not well understand his steven,³⁰⁶²
And know his meaning openly and plain,
And answer him in his languáge again:
And every grass that groweth upon root
She shall eke know, to whom it will do boot,³⁰⁶³
All be his woundës ne'er so deep and wide.
This naked sword, that hangeth by my side,
Such virtue hath, that what man that it smite,
Throughout his armour it will carve and bite,
Were it as thick as is a branched oak:
And what man is y-wounded with the stroke
Shall ne'er be whole, till that you list, of grace,
To stroke him with the flat in thilkë³⁰⁶⁴ place
Where he is hurt; this is as much to sayn,
Ye mustë with the flattë sword again
Stroke him upon the wound, and it will close.
This is the very sooth, withoutë glose,³⁰⁶⁵

It faileth not, while it is in your hold.”

And when this knight had thus his talë told,
He rode out of the hall, and down he light.
His steedë, which that shone as sunnë bright,
Stood in the court as still as any stone.
The knight is to his chamber led anon,
And is unarmed, and to meat y-set.³⁰⁶⁶

These presents be full richëly y-fet—³⁰⁶⁷
This is to say, the sword and the mirroúr—
And borne anon into the highë tow’r,
With certain officers ordain’d therefor;
And unto Canacé the ring is bore
Solemnëly, where she sat at the table;
But sickerly, withouten any fable,
The horse of brass, that may not be remued.³⁰⁶⁸
It stood as it were to the ground y-glued;
There may no man out of the place it drive
For no engíne of windlass or polive;³⁰⁶⁹
And causë why, for they can not the craft;³⁰⁷⁰
And therefore in the place they have it laft,
Till that the knight hath taught them the mannére
To voidë³⁰⁷¹ him, as ye shall after hear.

Great was the press, that swarmed to and fro
To gauren³⁰⁷² on this horse that stoodë so:
For it so high was, and so broad and long,
So well proportioned for to be strong,
Right as it were a steed of Lombardy;
Therewith so horsely, and so quick of eye,
As it a gentle Poileis³⁰⁷³ courser were:
For certes, from his tail unto his ear
Nature nor art ne could him not amend
In no degree, as all the people wend.³⁰⁷⁴
But evermore their mostë wonder was
How that it couldë go, and was of brass;
It was of Faerie, as the people seem’d.
Diverse folk diversëly they deem’d;

As many heads, as many wittës been.
They murmured, as doth a swarm of been,³⁰⁷⁵
And madë skills³⁰⁷⁶ after their fantasies,
Rehearsing of the oldë poetries,
And said that it was like the Pegasé,³⁰⁷⁷
The horse that haddë wingës for to flee;
Or else it was the Greekë's horse Sinon,³⁰⁷⁸
That broughtë Troyë to destruction,
As men may in the oldë gestës³⁰⁷⁹ read.
"Mine heart," quoth one, "is evermore in dread;
I trow some men of armës be therein,
That shapë them³⁰⁸⁰ this city for to win:
It were right good that all such thing were know."
Another rownd³⁰⁸¹ to his fellow low,
And said, "He lies; for it is rather like
An ápparëncë made by some magíc,
As jugglers playen at these feastës great."
Of sundry doubts they jangle thus and treat.
As lewëd³⁰⁸² people deemë commonly
Of thingës that be made more subtilly
Than they can in their lew'dness comprehend;
They deemë gladly to the badder end.³⁰⁸³
And some of them wonder'd on the mirróúr,
That borne was up into the master tow'r,³⁰⁸⁴
How men might in it suchë thingës see.
Another answér'd and said, it might well be
Naturallý by composition
Of angles, and of sly reflection;
And saidë that in Rome was such a one.
They speak of Alhazen and Vitellon,³⁰⁸⁵
And Aristotle, that wrote in their lives
Of quaintë³⁰⁸⁶ mirrors, and of próspectives,
As knowë they that have their bookës heard.
And other folk have wonder'd on the swerd,
That wouldë piercë throughout every thing;
And fell in speech of Telephus the king,

And of Achilles for his quaintë spear,
For he could with it bothë heal and dere,³⁰⁸⁷
Right in such wise as men may with the swerd
Of which right now ye have yourselvës heard.
They spake of sundry hard'ning of metál,
And spake of medicínës therewithal,
And how, and when, it shouldë harden'd be,
Which is unknownen algate³⁰⁸⁸ unto me.
Then spakë they of Canacée's ring,
And saiden all, that such a wondrous thing
Of craft of ringës heard they never none,
Save that he, Moses, and King Solomon,
Hadden a name of conning³⁰⁸⁹ in such art.
Thus said the people, and drew them apart.
Put natheless some saidë that it was
Wonder to maken of fern ashes glass,
And yet is glass nought like ashes of fern;
But, for³⁰⁹⁰ they have y-knownen it so ferne,³⁰⁹¹
Therefore ceaseth their jangling and their wonder.
As sorë wonder some on cause of thunder,
On ebb and flood, on gossamer and mist,
And on all thing, till that the cause is wist.³⁰⁹²
Thus jangle they, and deemen and devise,
Till that the king gan from his board arise.
Phoebus had left the angle meridional,
And yet ascending was the beast royál,
The gentle Lion, with his Aldrian,³⁰⁹³
When that this Tartar king, this Cambuscan,
Rose from the board, there as he sat full high:
Before him went the loudë minstrelsy,
Till he came to his chamber of parëments,³⁰⁹⁴
There as they sounded diverse instruments,
That it was like a heaven for to hear.
Now danced lusty Venus' children dear:
For in the Fish³⁰⁹⁵ their lady sat full high,
And looked on them with a friendly eye.

This noble king is set upon his throne;
This strangë knight is fetched to him full sone,³⁰⁹⁶
And on the dance he goes with Canacé.
Here is the revel and the jollity,
That is not able a dull man to devise:³⁰⁹⁷
He must have knowen love and his servíce,
And been a feastly³⁰⁹⁸ man, as fresh as May,
That shouldë you devisë such array.
Who couldë tellë you the form of dances
So úncouth,³⁰⁹⁹ and so freshë countenances,³¹⁰⁰
Such subtle lookings and dissimulances,
For dread of jealous men's appérceivíngs?
No man but Launcelot,³¹⁰¹ and he is dead.
Therefore I pass o'er all this lustihead;³¹⁰²
I say no more, but in this jolliness
I leave them, till to supper men them dress.
The steward bids the spices for to hie³¹⁰³
And eke the wine, in all this melody;
The ushers and the squiërs be y-gone,
The spices and the wine is come anon;
They eat and drink, and when this hath an end,
Unto the temple, as reason was, they wend;
The service done, they suppen all by day.
What needeth you rehearsë their array?
Each man wot well, that at a kingë's feast
Is plenty, to the most³¹⁰⁴ and to the least,
And dainties more than be in my knowíng.
At after supper went this noble king
To see the horse of brass, with all a rout
Of lordës and of ladies him about.
Such wond'ring was there on this horse of brass,
That, since the greatë siege of Troyë was,
There as men wonder'd on a horse also,
Ne'er was there such a wond'ring as was tho.³¹⁰⁵
But finally the king asked the knight
The virtue of this courser, and the might,

And prayed him to tell his governance.³¹⁰⁶
The horse anon began to trip and dance,
When that the knight laid hand upon his rein,
And saidë, “Sir, there is no more to sayn,
But when you list to riden anywhere,
Ye mustë trill³¹⁰⁷ a pin, stands in his ear,
Which I shall tellë you betwixt us two;
Ye mustë name him to what place also,
Or to what country that you list to ride.
And when ye comë where you list abide,
Bid him descend, and trill another pin
(For therein lies th’ effect of all the gin³¹⁰⁸),
And he will down descend and do your will,
And in that place he will abidë still;
Though all the world had the contráry swore,
He shall not thence be throwen nor be bore.
Or, if you list to bid him thennës gon,
Trill this pin, and he will vanísh anon
Out of the sight of every manner wight,
And come again, be it by day or night,
When that you list to clepë³¹⁰⁹ him again
In such a guise, as I shall to you sayn
Betwixtë you and me, and that full soon.
Ride³¹¹⁰ when you list, there is no more to do’n.”

Informed when the king was of the knight,
And had conceived in his wit aright
The manner and the form of all this thing,
Full glad and blithe, this noble doughty king
Repaired to his revel as befor.
The bridle is into the tower borne,
And kept among his jewels lefe³¹¹¹ and dear;
The horse vanish’d, I n’ot³¹¹² in what mannére,
Out of their sight; ye get no more of me:
But thus I leave in lust and jollity
This Cambuscan his lordës feasting,³¹¹³
Until well nigh the day began to spring.

PARS SECUNDA

The norice³¹¹⁴ of digestión, the sleep,
Gan on them wink, and bade them takë keep,³¹¹⁵
That muchë mirth and labour will have rest:
And with a gaping³¹¹⁶ mouth he all them kest,³¹¹⁷
And said, that it was timë to lie down,
For blood was in his dominatióun:
“Cherish the blood,³¹¹⁸ natúrë’s friend,” quoth he.
They thanked him gaping, by two and three;
And every wight gan draw him to his rest;
As sleep them bade, they took it for the best.
Their dreamës shall not now be told for me;
Full are their headës of fumosity,³¹¹⁹
That caused dreams of which there is no charge.³¹²⁰
They sleptë till that, it was primë large,³¹²¹
The mostë part, but³¹²² it was Canacé;
She was full measuráble,³¹²³ as women be.
For of her father had she ta’en her leave,
To go to rest, soon after it was eve;
Her listë not appalled³¹²⁴ for to be,
Nor on the morrow unfeastly for to see;³¹²⁵
And slept her firstë sleep, and then awoke.
For such a joy she in her heartë took
Both of her quaintë³¹²⁶ a ring and her mirroúr,
That twenty times she changed her colóur;
And in her sleep, right for th’ impressión
Of her mirrór, she had a visión.
Wherefore, ere that the sunnë gan up glide,
She call’d upon her mistress’³¹²⁷ her beside,
And saidë, that her listë for to rise.
These oldë women, that be gladly wise,
As are her mistresses, answér’d anon,
And said; “Madamë, whither will ye gon

Thus early? for the folk be all in rest.”
“I will,” quoth she, “arisë, for me lest
No longer for to sleep, and walk about.”
Her mistresses call’d women a great rout,
And up they rosë, well a ten or twelve;
Up rosë freshë Canacé herself,
As ruddy and bright as is the youngë sun
That in the Ram is four degrees y-run;
No higher was he, when she ready was;
And forth she walked easily a pace,
Array’d after the lusty³¹²⁸ season swoot,³¹²⁹
Lightëly for to play, and walk on foot,
Nought but with five or six of her meinie;³¹³⁰
And in a trench³¹³¹ forth in the park went she.
The vapour, which up from the earthë glode,³¹³²
Made the sun to seem ruddy and broad:
But, natheless, it was so fair a sight
That it made all their heartës for to light,³¹³³
What for the season and the morrowning,
And for the fowlës that she heardë sing.
For right anon she wistë³¹³⁴ what they meant
Right by their song, and knew all their intent.
The knottë,³¹³⁵ why that every tale is told,
If it be tarried³¹³⁶ till the lust³¹³⁷ be cold
Of them that have it hearken’d after yore,³¹³⁸
The savour passeth ever longer more,
For fulsomness of the prolixity:
And by that samë reason thinketh me
I should unto the knottë condescend,
And maken of her walking soon an end.

Amid a tree fordry,³¹³⁹ as white as chalk,
As Canacé was playing in her walk,
There sat a falcon o’er her head full high,
That with a piteous voice so gan to cry;
That all the wood resounded of her cry,
And beat she had herself so piteously

With both her wingës, till the reddë blood
Ran endëlong³¹⁴⁰ the tree, there as she stood.
And ever-in-one³¹⁴¹ alway she cried and shrigh^t,³¹⁴²
And with her beak herselfë she so pigh^t,³¹⁴³
That there is no tiger, nor cruel beast,
That dwelleth either in wood or in forëst;
But would have wept, if that he weepë could,
For sorrow of her, she shriek'd alway so loud.
For there was never yet no man alive,
If that he could a falcon well describe;³¹⁴⁴
That heard of such another of fairnéss
As well of plumage, as of gentleness,
Of shape, of all that mightë reckon'd be.
A falcon peregrinë seemed she,
Of fremdë³¹⁴⁵ land; and ever as she stood
She swooned now and now for lack of blood,
Till well-nigh is she fallen from the tree.

 This fairë kingë's daughter Canacé,
That on her finger bare the quaintë³¹⁴⁶ ring,
Through which she understood well every thing
That any fowl may in his leden³¹⁴⁷ sayn,
And could him answer in his leden again,
Hath understoodë what this falcon said,
And well-nigh for the ruth³¹⁴⁸ almost she died;
And to the tree she went, full hastily,
And on this falcon looked piteously,
And held her lap abroad, for well she wist
The falcon mustë fallë from the twist³¹⁴⁹
When that she swooned next, for lack of blood.
A longë while to waitë her she stood,
Till at the last she apake in this mannëre
Unto the hawk, as ye shall after hear.
"What is the cause, if it be for to tell,
That ye be in this furial³¹⁵⁰ pain of hell?"
Quoth Canacé unto this hawk above;
"Is this for sorrow of death, or loss of love?

For, as I trow,³¹⁵¹ these be the causes two,
That causë most a gentle heartë woe.
Of other harm it needeth not to speak.
For ye yourself upon yourself awreak;³¹⁵²
Which proveth well, that either ire or dread³¹⁵³
Must be occasion of your cruel deed,
Since that I see none other wight you chase.
For love of God, as do yourselfë grace,³¹⁵⁴
Or what may be your help? for, west nor east,
I never saw ere now no bird nor beast
That fared with himself so piteously.
Ye slay me with your sorrow verily,
I have of you so great compassioun.
For Goddë's love come from the tree adown;
And, as I am a kingë's daughter true,
If that I verily the causes knew
Of your disease,³¹⁵⁵ if it lay in my might,
I would amend it, ere that it were night,
So wisly³¹⁵⁶ help me the great God of kind.³¹⁵⁷
And herbës shall I right enoughë find,
To healë with your hurtës hastily.”
Then shriek'd this falcon yet more piteously
Than ever she did, and fell to ground anon,
And lay aswoon, as dead as lies a stone,
Till Canacé had in her lap her take,
Unto that time she gan of swoon awake:
And, after that she out of swoon abraid,³¹⁵⁸
Right in her hawkë's leden thus she said:
“That pity runneth soon in gentle heart
(Feeling his simil'tude in painë's smart),
Is proved every day, as men may see,
As well by work as by authority;³¹⁵⁹
For gentle heartë kitheth³¹⁶⁰ gentleness.
I see well, that ye have on my distress
Compassioun, my fairë Canacé,
Of very womanly benignity

That nature in your principles hath set.
But for no hopë for to fare the bet,³¹⁶¹
But for t' obey unto your heartë free,
And for to make others aware by me,
As by the whelp chastis'd³¹⁶² is the lión,
Right for that cause and that conclusión,
While that I have a leisure and a space,
Mine harm I will confessen ere I pace."³¹⁶³
And ever while the one her sorrow told,
The other wept, as she to water wo'ld,³¹⁶⁴
Till that the falcon bade her to be still,
And with a sigh right thus she said her till:³¹⁶⁵
"Where I was bred (alas that ilkë³¹⁶⁶ day!)
And foster'd in a rock of marble gray
So tenderly, that nothing ailed me,
I wistë not what was adversity,
Till I could flee full high under the sky.
Then dwell'd a tercëlet³¹⁶⁷ me fastë by,
That seem'd a well of allë gentleness;
All were he³¹⁶⁸ full of treason and falsenëss,
It was so wrapped under humble cheer,³¹⁶⁹
And under hue of truth, in such mannére,
Under pleasánce, and under busy pain,
That no wight weened that he couldë feign,
So deep in grain he dyed his colóurs.
Right as a serpent hides him under flow'rs,
Till he may see his timë for to bite,
Right so this god of lovë's hypocrite
Did so his ceremonies and obeisánces,
And kept in semblance all his óbservánces,
That sounden unto³¹⁷⁰ gentleness of love.
As on a tomb is all the fair above,
And under is the corpse, which that ye wot,
Such was this hypocrite, both cold and hot;
And in this wise he served his intent,
That, save the fiend, none wistë what he meant:

Till he so long had weeped and complain'd,
And many a year his service to me feign'd,
Till that mine heart, too piteous and too nice,³¹⁷¹
All innocent of his crowned malíce,
Forfeared of his death,³¹⁷² as thoughtë me,
Upon his oathës and his surëty
Granted him love, on this conditioún,
That evermore mine honour and renown
Were saved, bothë privy and apert;³¹⁷³
This is to say, that, after his desert,
I gave him all my heart and all my thought
(God wot, and he, that other wayës nought³¹⁷⁴),
And took his heart in change of mine for aye.
But sooth is said, gone since many a day,
A true wight and a thiefë think not one.³¹⁷⁵
And when he saw the thing so far y-gone,
That I had granted him fully my love,
In such a wise as I have said above,
And given him my truë heart as free
As he swore that he gave his heart to me,
Anon this tiger, full of doubleness,
Fell on his knees with so great humbleness,
With so high reverence, as by his cheer,³¹⁷⁶
So like a gentle lover in mannëre,
So ravish'd, as it seemed, for the joy,
That never Jason, nor París of Troy—
Jason? certes, nor ever other man,
Since Lamech was, that alderfirst³¹⁷⁷ began
To lovë two, as writë folk beforñ,
Nor ever since the firstë man was born,
Couldë no man, by twenty thousand part,
Counterfeit the sophimës³¹⁷⁸ of his art;
Nor worthy were t' unbuckle his galoche,³¹⁷⁹
Where doubleness of feigning should approach,
Nor could so thank a wight, as he did me.
His manner was a heaven for to see

To any woman, were she ne'er so wise;
So painted he and kempt,³¹⁸⁰ at point devise,³¹⁸¹
As well his wordës as his countenance.
And I so lov'd him for his obeisance,
And for the truth I deemed in his heart,
That, if so were that any thing him smart,³¹⁸²
All were it ne'er so lite,³¹⁸³ and I it wist,
Methought I felt death at my heartë twist.
And shortly, so farforth this thing is went,³¹⁸⁴
That my will was his willë's instrument;
That is to say, my will obey'd his will
In allë thing, as far as reason fill,³¹⁸⁵
Keeping the boundës of my worship ever;
And never had I thing so lefe, or lever,³¹⁸⁶
As him, God wot, nor never shall no mo'.

"This lasted longer than a year or two,
That I supposed of him naught but good.
But finally, thus at the last it stood,
That fortune wouldë that he mustë twin³¹⁸⁷
Out of that placë which that I was in.
Whe'er³¹⁸⁸ me was woe, it is no questiön;
I cannot make of it description.
For one thing dare I tellë boldëly,
I know what is the pain of death thereby;
Such harm I felt, for he might not byleve.³¹⁸⁹
So on a day of me he took his leave,
So sorrowful eke, that I ween'd verily,
That he had felt as muchë harm as I,
When that I heard him speak, and saw his hue.
But natheless, I thought he was so true,
And eke that he repairë should again
Within a little whilë, sooth to sayn,
And reason would eke that he mustë go
For his honoúr, as often happ'neth so,
That I made virtue of necessity,
And took it well, since that it mustë be.

As I best might, I hid from him my sorrow,
And took him by the hand, Saint John to borrow,³¹⁹⁰
And said him thus; 'Lo, I am yourës all;
Be such as I have been to you, and shall.'
What he answer'd, it needs not to rehearse;
Who can say bet³¹⁹¹ than he, who can do worse?
When he had all well said, then had he done.
Therefore behoveth him a full long spoon,
That shall eat with a fiend; thus heard I say.
So at the last he mustë forth his way,
And forth he flew, till he came where him lest.
When it came him to purpose for to rest,
I trow that he had thilkë text in mind,
That allë thing repairing to his kind
Gladdeth himself;³¹⁹² thus say men, as I guess;
Men love of [proper] kind newfangleness,³¹⁹³
As birdës do, that men in cages feed.
For though thou night and day take of them heed,
And strew their cagë fair and soft as silk,
And give them sugar, honey, bread, and milk,
Yet, right anon as that his door is up,³¹⁹⁴
He with his feet will spurnë down his cup,
And to the wood he will, and wormës eat;
So newëfangle be they of their meat,
And love novelties, of proper kind;
No gentleness of bloodë may them bind.
So far'd this tercëlet, alas the day!
Though he were gentle born, and fresh, and gay,
And goodly for to see, and humble, and free,
He saw upon a time a kitë flee,
And suddenly he loved this kite so,
That all his love is clean from me y-go:
And hath his trothë falsed in this wise.
Thus hath the kite my love in her servíce,
And I am lorn³¹⁹⁵ withoutë remedy."

And with that word this falcon gan to cry,

And swooned eft³¹⁹⁶ in Canacée's barme.³¹⁹⁷
Great was the sorrow, for that hawk's harm,
That Canacé and all her women made;
They wist not how they might the falcon glade.³¹⁹⁸
But Canacé home bare her in her lap,
And softly in plasters gan her wrap,
There as she with her beak had hurt herself.
Now cannot Canacé but herbës delve
Out of the ground, and makë salvës new
Of herbës precioús and fine of hue,
To healë with this hawk; from day to night
She did her business, and all her might.
And by her beddë's head she made a mew,³¹⁹⁹
And cover'd it with velouettës blue,³²⁰⁰
In sign of truth that is in woman seen;
And all without the mew is painted green,
In which were painted all these falsë fowls,
As be these tidifes,³²⁰¹ tercëlets, and owls;
And piës, on them for to cry and chide,
Right for despite were painted them beside.
Thus leave I Canacé her hawk keeping.
I will no more as now speak of her ring,
Till it come eft³²⁰² to purpose for to sayn
How that this falcon got her love again
Repentant, as the story telleth us,
By mediatiön of Camballus,
The kingë's son of which that I you told.
But hencëforth I will my process hold
To speak of áventures, and of batailles,
That yet was never heard so great marvailles.
First I will tellë you of Cambuscan,
That in his timë many a city wan;
And after will I speak of Algarsife,
How he won Theodora to his wife,
For whom full oft in great péril he was,
N' had he³²⁰³ been holpen by the horse of brass.

And after will I speak of Camballó, [3204](#)
That fought in listës with the brethren two
For Canacé, ere that he might her win;
And where I left I will again begin.

:

THE FRANKLIN'S TALE

THE PROLOGUE³²⁰⁵

“In faith, Squiër, thou hast thee well acquit,
And gentilly; I praisë well thy wit,”
Quoth the Franklin; “considering thy youthë
So feelingly thou speak’st, Sir, I aloue³²⁰⁶ thee,
As to my doom,³²⁰⁷ there is none that is here
Of eloquencë that shall be thy peer,
If that thou live; God give thee goodë chance,
And in virtúe send thee continuáncë,
For of thy speaking I have great daintý.³²⁰⁸
I have a son, and, by the Trinity;
It were me lever³²⁰⁹ than twenty pound worth land,
Though it right now were fallen in my hand,
He were a man of such discretión
As that ye be: fy on possession,
But if³²¹⁰ a man be virtuous withal.
I have my sonë snibbed,³²¹¹ and yet shall,
For he to virtue listeth not t’ intend,³²¹²
But for to play at dice, and to dispend,
And lose all that he hath, is his uságe;
And he had lever talkë with a page,
Than to commune with any gentle wight,

There he might learen gentillesse aright."

"Straw for your gentillesse!" quoth our Host.

"What? Frankëlin, pardie, Sir, well thou wost³²¹³

That each of you must tellen at the least

A tale or two, or breakë his behest."³²¹⁴

"That know I well, Sir," quoth the Frankëlin;

"I pray you havë me not in disdain,

Though I to this man speak a word or two."

"Tell on thy tale, withoutë wordës mo'."

"Gladly, Sir Host," quoth he, "I will obey

Unto your will; now hearken what I say;

I will you not contráry in no wise,

As far as that my wittës may suffice.

I pray to God that it may pleasë you,

Then wot I well that it is good enow.

"These oldë gentle Bretons, in their days,

Of divers áventúrës madë lays,³²¹⁵

Rhymeden in their firstë Breton tongue;

Which layës with their instruments they sung,

Or ellës readë them for their pleasáncë;

And one of them have I in remembráncë,

Which I shall say with good will as I can.

But, Sirs, because I am a borel³²¹⁶ man,

At my beginning first I you beseech

Have me excused of my rudë speech.

I learned never rhetoric, certáin;

Thing that I speak, it must be bare and plain.

I slept never on the mount of Parnassó,

Nor learned Marcus Tullius Cicero.

Coloúrës know I none, withoutë dread,³²¹⁷

But such coloúrs as growen in the mead,

Or ellës such as men dye with or paint;

Coloúrs of rhetoric be to me quaint;³²¹⁸

My spirit feeleth not of such mattére.

But, if you list, my talë shall ye hear."

THE TALE

In Armoric', that called is Bretagne,
There was a knight, that lov'd and did his pain³²¹⁹
To serve a lady in his bestë wise;
And many a labour, many a great emprise,
He for his lady wrought, ere she were won:
For she was one the fairest under sun,
And eke thereto come of so high kindréd,
That well unnethës³²²⁰ durst this knight, for dread,
Tell her his woe, his pain, and his distress.
But, at the last, she for his worthiness,
And namëly³²²¹ for his meek obeisánce,
Hath such a pity caught of his penánce,³²²²
That privily she fell of his accord
To take him for her husband and her lord
(Of such lordship as men have o'er their wives);
And, for to lead the more in bliss their lives,
Of his free will he swore her as a knight,
That never in all his life he day nor night
Should take upon himself no mastery
Against her will, nor kithe³²²³ her jealousy,
But her obey, and follow her will in all,
As any lover to his lady shall;
Save that the name of sovereignëty
That would he have, for shame of his degree.
She thanked him, and with full great humblëss
She saidë; "Sir, since of your gentleness
Ye proffer me to have so large a reign,
Ne wouldë God never betwixt us twain,
As in my guilt, were either war or strife:³²²⁴
Sir, I will be your humble truë wife,
Have here my troth, till that my heartë brest."³²²⁵

Thus be they both in quiet and in rest.

For one thing, Sirës, safely dare I say,
That friends ever each other must obey,
If they will longë hold in company.
Love will not be constrain'd by mastery.
When mast'ry comes, the god of love anon
Beateth³²²⁶ his wings, and, farewell, he is gone.
Love is a thing as any spirit free.

Women of kind³²²⁷ desirë liberty,
And not to be constrained as a thrall;³²²⁸
And so do men, if soothly I say shall.
Look who that is most patiént in love,
He is at his advantage all above.³²²⁹
Patience is a high virtúe certáin,
For it vanquísheth, as these clerkës sayn,
Thingës that rigour never should attain.
For every word men may not chide or plain.

Learnë to suffer, or, so may I go,³²³⁰
Ye shall it learn whether ye will or no.
For in this world certáin no wight there is,
That he not doth or saith sometimes amiss.

Ire, or sicknéss, or constellatióin,³²³¹
Wine, woe, or changing of complexiún,
Causeth full oft to do amiss or spoken:
On every wrong a man may not be wroken.³²³²

After³²³³ the timë must be temperance
To every wight that can of³²³⁴ governance.
And therefore hath this worthy wisë knight
(To live in easë) suff'rance her behight;³²³⁵
And she to him full wisly³²³⁶ gan to swear
That never should there be default in her.
Here may men see a humble wife accord;
Thus hath she ta'en her servant and her lord,
Servant in love, and lord in marriáge.
Then was he both in lordship and servage?
Servage? nay, but in lordship all above,

Since he had both his lady and his love:
His lady certes, and his wife also,
The which that law of love accordeth to.
And when he was in this prosperity,
Home with his wife he went to his country,
Not far from Penmark,³²³⁷ where his dwelling was,
And there he liv'd in bliss and in solace.³²³⁸
Who couldë tell, but³²³⁹ he had wedded be,
The joy, the ease, and the prosperity,
That is betwixt a husband and his wife?
A year and more lasted this blissful life,
Till that this knight, of whom I spakë thus,
That of Cairrud³²⁴⁰ was call'd Arviragus,
Shope³²⁴¹ him to go and dwell a year or twain
In Engleland, that call'd was eke Britáin,
To seek in armës worship and honoúr
(For all his lust³²⁴² he set in such laboúr);
And dwelled there two years; the book saith thus.

Now will I stint³²⁴³ of this Arviragus,
And speak I will of Dorigen his wife,
That lov'd her husband as her heartë's life.
For his abséncë weepeth she and siketh,³²⁴⁴
As do these noble wivës when them liketh;
She mourneth, waketh, waileth, fasteth, plaineth;
Desire of his préséncë her so distraineth,
That all this widë world she set at nought.
Her friendës, which that knew her heavy thought,
Comfórtë her in all that ever they may;
They preachë her, they tell her night and day,
That causëless she slays herself, alas!
And every comfort possible in this case
They do to her, with all their business,³²⁴⁵
And all to make her leave her heaviness.
By process, as ye knowen every one,
Men may so longë graven in a stone,
Till some figúre therein imprinted be:

So long have they comforted her, till she
Received hath, by hope and by reason,
Th' imprinting of their consolation,
Through which her great sorrow gan assuage;
She may not always duren in such rage.
And eke Arviragus, in all this care,
Hath sent his letters home of his welfare,
And that he will come hastily again,
Or ellës had this sorrow her hearty-slain.
Her friendës saw her sorrow gin to slake,³²⁴⁶
And prayed her on knees for Goddë's sake
To come and roamen in their company,
Away to drive her darkë fantasy;
And finally she granted that request,
For well she saw that it was for the best.

Now stood her castle fastë by the sea,
And often with her friendës walked she,
Her to disport upon the bank on high,
There as many a ship and bargë sigh,³²⁴⁷
Sailing their courses, where them list to go.
But then was that a parcel³²⁴⁸ of her woe,
For to herself full oft, "Alas!" said she,
"Is there no ship, of so many as I see,
Will bringë home my lord? then were my heart
All warish'd³²⁴⁹ of this bitter painë's smart."
Another timë would she sit and think,
And cast her eyen downward from the brink;
But when she saw the grisly rockës blake,³²⁵⁰
For very fear so would her heartë quake,
That on her feet she might her not sustene:
Then would she sit adown upon the green,
And piteously into the sea behold,³²⁵¹
And say right thus, with careful sikës³²⁵² cold:
"Eternal God! that through thy purveyánce
Leadest this world by certain governance,
In idle,³²⁵³ as men say, ye nothing make;

But, Lord, these grisly fiendly rockës blake,
That seem rather a foul confusión
Of work, than any fair creatiön
Of such a perfect wisë God and stable,
Why have ye wrought this work unreasonáble?
For by this work, north, south, or west, or east,
There is not foster'd man, nor bird, nor beast:
It doth no good, to my wit, but annoyeth.³²⁵⁴
See ye not, Lord, how mankind it destroyeth?
A hundred thousand bodies of mankind
Have rockës slain, all be they not in mind;³²⁵⁵
Which mankind is so fair part of thy work,
Thou madest it like to thine owen mark.³²⁵⁶
Then seemed it ye had a great cherté³²⁵⁷
Toward mankind; but how then may it be
That ye such meanës make it to destroy?
Which meanës do no good, but ever annoy.
I wot well, clerkës will say as them lest,³²⁵⁸
By arguments, that all is for the best,
Although I can the causes not y-know;
But thilkë³²⁵⁹ God that made the wind to blow,
As keep my lord, this is my conclusiön:
To clerks leave I all disputatiön:
But would to God that all these rockës blake
Were sunken into hellë for his sake!
These rockës slay mine heartë for the fear.”
Thus would she say, with many a piteous tear.
Her friendës saw that it was no disport
To roamë by the sea, but discomfört,
And shope them for to playë somewhere else.
They leadë her by rivers and by wells,
And eke in other places delectábles;
They dancen, and they play at chess and tables.
So on a day, right in the morning-tide,
Unto a garden that was there beside,
In which that they had made their ordinance³²⁶⁰

Of victual, and of other purveyánce,
They go and play them all the longë day:
And this was on the sixth morrow of May,
Which May had painted with his softë show'rs
This garden full of leavës and of flow'rs:
And craft of mannë's hand so curiously
Arrayed had this garden truëly,
That never was there garden of such price, ³²⁶¹
But if it were the very Paradise.
Th' odoúr of flowers, and the freshë sight,
Would havë makëd any heartë light
That e'er was born, but if ³²⁶² too great sicknéss
Or too great sorrow held it in distress;
So full it was of beauty and pleasánce.
And after dinner they began to dance
And sing also, save Dorigen alone,
Who made alway her cómplaint and her moan,
For she saw not him on the dancë go
That was her husband, and her love also;
But natheless she must a time abide,
And with good hopë let her sorrow slide.
Upon this dance, amongë other men,
Danced a squiër before Dorigen,
That fresher was, and jollier of array,
As to my doom, ³²⁶³ than is the month of May.
He sang and danced, passing any man
That is or was since that the world began;
Therewith he was, if men should him describe,
One of the bestë faring ³²⁶⁴ men alive,
Young, strong, and virtuous, and rich, and wise,
And well belov'd, and holden in great price. ³²⁶⁵
And, shortly if the sooth I tellë shall,
Unweeting ³²⁶⁶ of this Dorigen at all,
This lusty squiër, servant to Venús,
Which that y-called was Aurelius,
Had lov'd her best of any creatúre

Two year and more, as was his áventúre;³²⁶⁷
 But never durst he tell her his grievánce;
 Withoutë cup he drank all his penánce.
 He was despaired, nothing durst he say,
 Save in his songës somewhat would he wray³²⁶⁸
 His woe, as in a general cómplainíng;
 He said, he lov'd, and was belov'd nothing.
 Of suchë matter made he many lays,
 Songës, complaintës, roundels, virëlays;³²⁶⁹
 How that he durstë not his sorrow tell,
 But languished, as doth a Fury in hell;
 And die he must, he said, as did Echo
 For Narcissus, that durst not tell her woe.
 In other manner than ye hear me say,
 He durstë not to her his woe bewray,
 Save that paráventure sometimes at dances,
 Where youngë folkë keep their óbservánces,
 It may well be he looked on her face
 In such a wise, as man that asketh grace,
 But nothing wistë she of his intent.
 Nath'less it happen'd, ere they thennës³²⁷⁰ went,
 Because that he was her neighëbour,
 And was a man of worship and honoúr,
 And she had knowen him of timë yore,³²⁷¹
 They fell in speech, and forth aye more and more
 Unto his purpose drew Aurelius;
 And when he saw his time, he saidë thus:
 "Madam," quoth he, "by God that this world made,
 So that I wist it might your heartë glade,³²⁷²
 I would, that day that your Arviragus
 Went over sea, that I, Aurelius,
 Had gone where I should never come again;
 For well I wot my service is in vain.
 My guerdon³²⁷³ is but bursting of mine heart.
 Madamë, rue upon my painë's smart,
 For with a word ye may me slay or save.

Here at your feet God would that I were grave.³²⁷⁴

I havē now no leisure more to say:

Have mercy, sweet, or you will do me dey.”³²⁷⁵

She gan to look upon Aurelius;

“Is this your will,” quoth she, “and say ye thus?

Ne’er erst,”³²⁷⁶ quoth she, “I wistē what ye meant:

But now, Aurelius, I know your intent.

By thilkē³²⁷⁷ God that gave me soul and life,

Never shall I be an untruē wife

In word nor work, as far as I have wit;

I will be his to whom that I am knit;

Take this for final answer as of me.”

But after that in play³²⁷⁸ thus saidē she.

“Aurelius,” quoth she, “by high God above,

Yet will I grantē you to be your love

(Since I you see so piteously complain);

Lookē, what day that endēlong³²⁷⁹ Bretāgne

Ye remove all the rockēs, stone by stone,

That they not lettē³²⁸⁰ ship nor boat to gon,

I say, when ye have made this coast so clean

Of rockēs, that there is no stonē seen,

Then will I love you best of any man;

Have here my troth, in all that ever I can;

For well I wot that it shall ne’er betide.

Let such follý out of your heartē glide.

What dainty³²⁸¹ should a man have in his life

For to go love another mannē’s wife,

That hath her body when that ever him liketh?”

Aurelius full often sorē siketh;³²⁸²

“Is there none other grace in you?” quoth he,

“No, by that Lord,” quoth she, “that maked me.”

Woe was Aurelius when that he this heard,

And with a sorrowful heart he thus answér’d.

“Madame,” quoth he, “this were an impossíble.

Then must I die of sudden death horríble.”

And with that word he turned him anon.

Then came her other friends many a one,
And in the alleys roamed up and down,
And nothing wist of this conclusión,
But suddenly began to revel new,
Till that the brightë sun had lost his hue,
For th' horizón had reft the sun his light
(This is as much to say as it was night);
And home they go in mirth and in solace;
Save only wretch'd Aurelius, alas!
He to his house is gone with sorrowful heart.
He said, he may not from his death astart. [3283](#)
Him seemed, that he felt his heartë cold.
Up to the heav'n his handës gan he hold,
And on his kneës bare he set him down.
And in his raving said his orisoún. [3284](#)
For very woe out of his wit he braid; [3285](#)
He wist not what he spake, but thus he said;
With piteous heart his plaint hath he begun
Unto the gods, and first unto the Sun.
He said; "Apollo God and governoúr
Of every plantë, herbë, tree, and flow'r,
That giv'st, after thy declinación,
To each of them his time and his seasón,
As thine herberow [3286](#) changeth low and high;
Lord Phoebus! cast thy merciableness [3287](#) eye
On wretch'd Aurelius, which that am but lorn. [3288](#)
Lo, lord, my lady hath my death y-sworn,
Withoutë guilt, but [3289](#) thy benignity
Upon my deadly heart have some pity.
For well I wot, Lord Phoebus, if you lest, [3290](#)
Ye may me helpë, save my lady, best.
Now vouchësafe, that I may you devise [3291](#)
How that I may be holp, [3292](#) and in what wise.
Your blissful sister, Lucina the sheen, [3293](#)
That of the sea is chief goddëss and queen—
Though Neptunus have deity in the sea,

Yet emperess abovë him is she;—
Ye know well, lord, that, right as her desire
Is to be quick'd³²⁹⁴ and lighted of your fire,
For which she followeth you full busily,
Right so the sea desireth naturally
To follow her, as she that is goddëss
Both in the sea and rivers more and less.
Wherefore, Lord Phoebus, this is my request,
Do this mirácle, or do³²⁹⁵ mine heartë brest;³²⁹⁶
That now, next at this oppositiún,
Which in the sign shall be of the Liún,
As prayë her so great a flood to bring,
That five fathóm at least it overspring
The highest rock in Armoric' Bretágne,
And let this flood endure yearës twain:
Then certes to my lady may I say,
“Holdë your hest,³²⁹⁷ the rockës be away.”
Lord Phoebus, this mirácle do for me,
Pray her she go no faster course than ye;
I say this, “pray your sister that she go
No faster course than ye these yearës two:
Then shall she be even at full alway,
And spring-flood lastë bothë night and day.
And but she³²⁹⁸ vouchësafe in such mannére
To grantë me my sov'reign lady dear,
Pray her to sink every rock adown
Into her owen darkë regioún
Under the ground, where Pluto dwelleth in
Or nevermore shall I my lady win.
Thy temple in Delphos will I barefoot seek.
Lord Phoebus! see the tearës on my cheek
And on my pain have some compassioún.”
And with that word in sorrow he fell down,
And longë time he lay forth in a trance.
His brother, which that knew of his penáncë,³²⁹⁹
Up caught him, and to bed he hath him brought,

Despaired in this torment and this thought
Let I this woeful creatürë lie;
Choose he for me whe'er³³⁰⁰ he will live or die.
Arviragus with health and great honoúr
(As he that was of chivalry the flow'r)
Is comë home, and other worthy men.
Oh, blissful art thou now, thou Dorigen!
Thou hast thy lusty husband in thine arms,
The freshë knight, the worthy man of arms,
That loveth thee as his own heartë's life:
Nothing list him to be imaginatif³³⁰¹
If any wight had spoke, while he was out,
To her of love; he had of that no doubt;³³⁰²
He not intended³³⁰³ to no such mattére,
But danced, jousted, and made merry cheer.
And thus in joy and bliss I let them dwell,
And of the sick Aurelius will I tell.
In languor and in torment furious
Two year and more lay wretch'd Aurelius,
Ere any foot on earth he mightë gon;
Nor comfort in this timë had he none,
Save of his brother, which that was a clerk.³³⁰⁴
He knew of all this woe and all this work;
For to none other creatüre certáin
Of this matter he durst no wordë sayn;
Under his breast he bare it more secré
Than e'er did Pamphilus for Galatee.³³⁰⁵
His breast was whole withoutë for to seen,
But in his heart aye was the arrow keen,
And well ye know that of a sursanure³³⁰⁶
In surgery is perilous the cure,
But³³⁰⁷ men might touch the arrow or come thereby.
His brother wept and wailed privily,
Till at the last him fell in rémembránce,
That while he was at Orleans³³⁰⁸ in France—
As youngë clerkës, that be likerous³³⁰⁹

To readen artës that be curious,
Seeken in every halk and every hern³³¹⁰
Particular sciénces for to learn—
He him remember'd, that upon a day
At Orleans in study a book he say³³¹¹
Of magic natural, which his felláw,
That was that time a bachelor of law,
All³³¹² were he there to learn another craft,
Had privily upon his desk y-laft;
Which book spake much of operatións
Touching the eight and-twenty mansiósns
That longë to the Moon, and such follý
As in our dayës is not worth a fly;
For holy church's faith, in our believe,³³¹³
Us suff'reth none illusión to grieve.
And when this book was in his rémembránce,
Anon for joy his heart began to dance,
And to himself he saidë privily;
“My brother shall be warish'd³³¹⁴ hastily:
For I am sicker³³¹⁵ that there be sciénces,
By which men makë divers apparences,
Such as these subtle tregetourës³³¹⁶ play.
For oft at feastës have I well heard say,
That tregetours, within a hallë large,
Have made come in a water and a barge,
And in the hallë rowen up and down.
Sometimes hath seemed come a grim liouín,
And sometimes flowers spring as in a mead;
Sometimes a vine, and grapës white and red;
Sometimes a castle all of lime and stone;
And, when them liked, voided³³¹⁷ it anon:
Thus seemed it to every mannë's sight.
Now then conclude I thus; if that I might
At Orleans some oldë fellow find,
That hath these Moonë's mansiósns in mind,
Or other magic natural above,

He should well make my brother have his love.
For with an áppearánce a clerk³³¹⁸ may make,
To mannë's sight, that all the rockës blake
Of Brétagne werë voided³³¹⁹ every one,
And shippës by the brinkë come and gon,
And in such form endure a day or two;
Then were my brother warish'd³³²⁰ of his woe,
Then must she needës holdë her behest,³³²¹
Or ellës he shall shame her at the least."
Why should I make a longer tale of this?
Unto his brother's bed he comen is,
And such comfórt he gave him, for to gon
To Orleans, that he upstart anon,
And on his way forth-ward then is he fare,³³²²
In hope for to be lissed³³²³ of his care.

When they were come almost to that city,
But if it were³³²⁴ a two furlong or three,
A young clerk roaming by himself they met,
Which that in Latin thriftily³³²⁵ them gret.³³²⁶
And after that he said a wondrous thing;
"I know," quoth he, "the cause of your comíng;"
And ere they farther any footë went,
He told them all that was in their intent.
The Breton clerk him asked of felláws
The which he haddë known in oldë daws,³³²⁷
And he answér'd him that they deadë were,
For which he wept full often many a tear.
Down off his horse Aurelius light anon,
And forth with this magician is be gone
Home to his house, and made him well at ease;
Them lacked no vitáil that might them please.
So well-array'd a house as there was one,
Aurelius in his life saw never none.
He shewed him, ere they went to suppére,
Forestës, parkës, full of wildë deer.
There saw he hartës with their hornës high,

The greatest that were ever seen with eye.
He saw of them an hundred slain with hounds,
And some with arrows bleed of bitter wounds.
He saw, when voided³³²⁸ were the wildë deer,
These falconers upon a fair rivére,
That with their hawkës have the heron slain.
Then saw he knightës jousting in a plain.
And after this he did him such pleasáncé,
That he him shew'd his lady on a dance,
In which himselfë danced, as him thought.
And when this master, that this magic wrought,
Saw it was time, he clapp'd his handës two,
And farewell, all the revel is y-go.³³²⁹
And yet remov'd they never out of the house,
While they saw all the sightës marvellóús;
But in his study, where his bookës be,
They sattë still, and no wight but they three.

To him this master called his squiër,
And said him thus, "May we go to suppér?
Almost an hour it is, I undertake,
Since I you bade our supper for to make,
When that these worthy men wentë with me
Into my study, where my bookës be."
"Sir," quoth this squiër, "when it liketh you.
It is all ready, though ye will right now."
"Go we then sup," quoth he, "as for the best;
These amorous folk some time must have rest."
At after supper fell they in treatý
What summë should this master's guerdon be,
To remove all the rockës of Bretágne,
And eke from Gironde³³³⁰ to the mouth of Seine.
He made it strange,³³³¹ and swore, so God him save,
Less than a thousand pound he would not have,
Nor gladly for that sum he would not gon.³³³²
Aurelius with blissful heart anon
Answered thus; "Fie on a thousand pound!

This widë world, which that men say is round,
I would it give, if I were lord of it.

This bargain is full-driv'n, for we be knit;³³³³

Ye shall be payed truly by my troth.

But lookë, for no negligence or sloth,

Ye tarry us here no longer than to-morrow."

"Nay," quoth the clerk, "have here my faith to borrow."³³³⁴

To bed is gone Aurelius when him lest,

And well-nigh all that night he had his rest,

What for his labour, and his hope of bliss,

His woeful heart of penance had a liss.³³³⁵

Upon the morrow, when that it was day,

Unto Bretágne they took the rightë way,

Aurelius and this magicián beside,

And be descended where they would abide:

And this was, as the bookës me remember,

The coldë frosty season of December.

Phoebus wax'd old, and huëd like latoun,³³³⁶

That in his hotë declinatioún

Shone as the burned gold, with streamës³³³⁷ bright;

But now in Capricorn adown he light,

Where as he shone full pale, I dare well sayn.

The bitter frostës, with the sleet and rain,

Destroyed have the green in every yard.³³³⁸

Janus sits by the fire with double beard,

And drinketh of his bugle horn the wine:

Before him stands the brawn of tusked swine,

And "nowel"³³³⁹ crieth every lusty man.

Aurelius, in all that ev'r he can,

Did to his master cheer and reverence,

And prayed him to do his diligence

To bringë him out of his painë's smart,

Or with a sword that he would slit his heart.

This subtle clerk such ruth³³⁴⁰ had on this man,

That night and day he sped him, that he can,

To wait a time of his conclusiún;

This is to say, to make illusion,
By such an áppearánce of jugglery
(I know no termës of astrology),
That she and every wight should ween and say,
That of Bretágne the rockës were away,
Or else they werë sunken under ground.
So at the last he hath a timë found
To make his japës³³⁴¹ and his wretchedness
Of such a superstitious cursedness.³³⁴²
His tables Toletanës³³⁴³ forth he brought,
Full well corrected, that there lacked nought,
Neither his collect, nor his expanse years,
Neither his rootës, nor his other gears,
As be his centres, and his arguments,
And his proportional conveniënts
For his equatións in everything.
And by his eightë spheres in his working,
He knew full well how far Alnath³³⁴⁴ was shove
From the head of that fix'd Aries above,
That in the ninthë sphere consider'd is.
Full subtilly he calcul'd all this.
When he had found his firstë mansión,
He knew the remnant by proportiön;
And knew the rising of his moonë well,
And in whose face, and term, and every deal;
And knew full well the moonë's mansión
Accordant to his operatiön;
And knew also his other observánces,
For such illusion's and such meschances,³³⁴⁵
As heathen folk used in thilkë days.
For which no longer made he delays;
But through his magic, for a day or tway,³³⁴⁶
It seemed all the rockës were away.

Aurelius, which yet despaired is
Whe'er³³⁴⁷ he shall have his love, or fare amiss,
Awaited night and day on this miracle:

And when he knew that there was none obstácle,
That voided³³⁴⁸ were these rockës every one,
Down at his master's feet he fell anon,
And said; "I, woeful wretch'd Aurelius,
Thank you, my Lord, and lady mine Venús,
That me have holpen from my carës cold."
And to the temple his way forth hath he hold',
Where as he knew he should his lady see.
And when he saw his time, anon right he
With dreadful³³⁴⁹ heart and with full humble cheer³³⁵⁰
Saluteth hath his sovereign lady dear.
"My rightful Lady," quoth this woeful man,
"Whom I most dread, and love as I best can,
And lothest were of all this world displease,
Were 't not that I for you have such disease,³³⁵¹
That I must die here at your foot anon,
Nought would I tell how me is woebegone.
But certes either must I die or plain;³³⁵²
Ye slay me guiltëless for very pain.
But of my death though that ye have no ruth,
Advise you, ere that ye break your truth:
Repentë you, for thilkë God above,
Ere ye me slay because that I you love.
For, Madame, well ye wot what ye have hight;³³⁵³
Not that I challenge anything of right
Of you, my sovereign lady, but of grace:
But in a garden yond', in such a place,
Ye wot right well what ye behightë me,
And in mine hand your trothë plighted ye,
To love me best; God wot ye saidë so,
Albeit that I unworthy am thereto;
Madame, I speak it for th' honoúr of you,
More than to save my heartë's life right now;
I have done so as ye commanded me,
And if ye vouchësafe, ye may go see.
Do as you list, have your behest in mind,

For, quick or dead, right there ye shall me find;
In you lies all to do³³⁵⁴ me live or dey;³³⁵⁵
But well I wot the rockës be away.”

He took his leave, and she astonish'd stood;
In all her face was not one drop of blood:
She never ween'd t' have come in such a trap.
“Alas!” quoth she, “that ever this should hap!
For ween'd I ne'er, by possibility,
That such a monster or marvâil might be;
It is against the process of natûre.”
And home she went a sorrowful creatûre;
For very fear unnethës³³⁵⁶ may she go.
She weeped, wailed, all a day or two,
And swooned, that it ruthë was to see:
But why it was, to no wight toldë she,
For out of town was gone Arviragus.
But to herself she spake, and saidë thus,
With facë pale, and full sorrowful cheer,
In her complaint, as ye shall after hear.

“Alas!” quoth she, “on thee, Fortúne, I plain,³³⁵⁷
That unaware hast me wrapped in thy chain,
From which to scapë, wot I no succoúr,
Save only death, or ellës dishonoúr;
One of these two behoveth me to choose.
But natheless, yet had I lever³³⁵⁸ lose
My life, than of my body havë shame,
Or know myselfë false, or lose my name;
And with my death I may be quit y-wis.³³⁵⁹
Hath there not many a noble wife, ere this,
And many a maiden, slain herself, alas!
Rather than with her body do trespass?
Yes, certes; lo, these stories bear witnëss.³³⁶⁰
When thirty tyrants full of cursedness³³⁶¹
Had slain Phidon in Athens at the feast,
They cómmanded his daughters to arrest,
And bringë them before them, in despite,

All naked, to fulfil their foul delight;
And in their father's blood they made them dance
Upon the pavement—God give them mischance.
For which these woeful maidens, full of dread,
Rather than they would lose their maidenhead,
They privily be start³³⁶² into a well,
And drowned themselves, as the bookës tell.
They of Messenë let inquire and seek
Of Lacedaemon fifty maidens eke,
On which they wouldë do their lechery:
But there was none of all that company
That was not slain, and with a glad intent
Chose rather for to die, than to assent
To be oppressed³³⁶³ of her maidenhead.
Why should I then to dien be in dread?
Lo, eke the tyrant Aristoclides,
That lov'd a maiden hight Stimphalides,
When that her father slain was on a night,
Unto Diana's temple went she right,
And hent³³⁶⁴ the image in her handës two,
From which imáge she wouldë never go;
No wight her handës might off it arace,³³⁶⁵
Till she was slain right in the selfë³³⁶⁶ place.
Now since that maidens haddë such despite
To be defouled with man's foul delight,
Well ought a wife rather herself to slé,³³⁶⁷
Than be defouled, as it thinketh me.
What shall I say of Hasdrubalë's wife,
That at Carthage bereft herself of life?
For, when she saw the Romans win the town,
She took her children all, and skipt adown
Into the fire, and rather chose to die,
Than any Roman did her villainý.
Hath not Lucretia slain herself, alas!
At Romë, when that she oppressed³³⁶⁸ was
Of Tarquin? for her thought it was a shame

To livë, when she haddë lost her name.
The seven maidens of Milesie also
Have slain themselves for very dread and woe,
Rather than folk of Gaul them should oppress.
More than a thousand stories, as I guess,
Could I now tell as touching this mattére.
When Abradate was slain, his wife so dear³³⁶⁹
Herselfë slew, and let her blood to glide
In Abradatë's woundës, deep and wide,
And said, 'My body at the leastë way
There shall no wight defoul, if that I may.'
Why should I more examples hereof sayn?
Since that so many have themselvës slain,
Well rather than they would defouled be,
I will conclude that it is bet³³⁷⁰ for me
To slay myself, than be defouled thus.
I will be true unto Arviragus,
Or ellës slay myself in some mannére,
As did Demotionë's daughter dear,
Because she wouldë not defouled be.
O Sedasus, it is full great pity
To readë how thy daughters died, alas!
That slew themselves for suchë manner cas.³³⁷¹
As great a pity was it, or well more,
The Theban maiden, that for Nicanór
Herselfë slew, right for such manner woe.
Another Theban maiden did right so;
For one of Macedon had her oppress'd,
She with her death her maidenhead redress'd.³³⁷²
What shall I say of Niceratus' wife,
That for such case bereft herself her life?
How true was eke to Alcibiades
His love, that for to dien rather chese,³³⁷³
Than for to suffer his body unburied be?
Lo, what a wife was Alcesté?" quoth she.
"What saith Homér of good Penelope?

All Greecë knoweth of her chastity.
Pardie, of Laodamía is written thus,
That when at Troy was slain Protesilaus,³³⁷⁴
No longer would she live after his day.
The same of noble Porcia tell I may;
Withoutë Brutus couldë she not live,
To whom she did all whole her heartë give.³³⁷⁵
The perfect wifehood of Artemisie³³⁷⁶
Honoúred is throughout all Barbarie.
O Teuta³³⁷⁷ queen, thy wifely chastity
To allë wivës may a mirror be.”³³⁷⁸

Thus plained Dorigen a day or tway,
Purposing ever that she wouldë dey;³³⁷⁹
But natheless upon the thirdë night
Home came Arviragus, the worthy knight,
And asked her why that she wept so sore.
And she gan weepen ever longer more.
“Alas,” quoth she, “that ever I was born!
Thus have I said,” quoth she; “thus have I sworn.”
And told him all, as ye have heard before:
It needeth not rehearse it you no more.
This husband with glad cheer,³³⁸⁰ in friendly wise,
Answér’d and said, as I shall you devise.³³⁸¹
“Is there aught ellës, Dorigen, but this?”
“Nay, nay,” quoth she, “God help me so, as wis³³⁸²
This is too much, an’³³⁸³ it were Goddë’s will.”
“Yea, wife,” quoth he, “let sleepë what is still,
It may be well par’venture yet to-day.
Ye shall your trothë holdë, by my fay.
For, God so wisly³³⁸⁴ have mercý on me,
I had well lever sticked for to be,³³⁸⁵
For very lovë which I to you have,
But if ye should your trothë keep and save.
Truth is the highest thing that man may keep.”
But with that word he burst anon to weep,
And said; “I you forbid, on pain of death,

That never, while you lasteth life or breath,
To no wight tell ye this misáventúre;
As I may best, I will my woe endure,
Nor make no countenance of heaviness,
That folk of you may deemë harm, or guess.”
And forth he call’d a squiër and a maid.
“Go forth anon with Dorigen,” he said,
“And bringë her to such a place anon.”
They take their leave, and on their way they gon:
But they not wistë why she thither went;
He would to no wight tellë his intent.

This squiër, which that hight Aurelius,
On Dorigen that was so amorous,
Of áventúré happen’d her to meet
Amid the town, right in the quickest³³⁸⁶ street,
As she was bound³³⁸⁷ to go the way forthright
Toward the garden, there as she had hight.³³⁸⁸
And he was to the garden-ward also;
For well he spiëd when she wouldë go
Out of her house, to any manner place;
But thus they met, of áventúre or grace,
And he saluted her with glad intent,
And asked of her whitherward she went.
And she answered, half as she were mad,
“Unto the garden, as my husband bade,
My trothë for to hold, alas! alas!”
Aurelius gan to wonder on this case,
And in his heart had great compassiön
Of her, and of her lamentatiön,
And of Arviragus, the worthy knight,
That bade her hold all that she haddë hight;
So loth him was his wife should break her truth
And in his heart he caught of it great ruth,³³⁸⁹
Considering the best on every side,
That from his lust yet were him lever³³⁹⁰ abide,
Than do so high a churlish wretchedness³³⁹¹

Against franchise,³³⁹² and allë gentleness;
For which in fewë words he saidë thus;
“Madame, say to your lord Arviragus,
That since I see the greatë gentleness
Of him, and eke I see well your distress,
That him were lever³³⁹³ have shame (and that were ruth³³⁹⁴)
Than ye to me should breakë thus your truth,
I had well lever aye to suffer woe,
Than to depart³³⁹⁵ the love betwixt you two.
I you release, Madame, into your hond,
Quit ev’ry surëment³³⁹⁶ and ev’ry bond,
That ye have made to me as herebeforn,
Since thilkë timë that ye werë born.
Have here my truth, I shall you ne’er reprove³³⁹⁷
Of no behest;³³⁹⁸ and here I take my leave,
As of the truest and the bestë wife
That ever yet I knew in all my life.
But every wife beware of her behest;
On Dorigen remember at the least.
Thus can a squiër do a gentle deed,
As well as can a knight, withoutë drede.”³³⁹⁹

She thanked him upon her kneës bare,
And home unto her husband is she fare,³⁴⁰⁰
And told him all, as ye have heardë said;
And, trustë me, he was so well apaid,³⁴⁰¹
That it were impossíble me to write.
Why should I longer of this case indite?
Arviragus and Dorigen his wife
In sov’rein blissë leddë forth their life;
Ne’er after was there anger them between;
He cherish’d her as though she were a queen,
And she was to him true for evermore;
Of these two folk ye get of me no more.

Aurelius, that his cost had all forlorn,³⁴⁰²
Cursed the time that ever he was born.
“Alas!” quoth he, “alas that I behight³⁴⁰³

Of pured³⁴⁰⁴ gold a thousand pound of weight
To this philosopher! how shall I do?
I see no more, but that I am fordo.³⁴⁰⁵
Mine heritagë must I needës sell,
And be a beggar; here I will not dwell,
And shamen all my kindred in this place,
But³⁴⁰⁶ I of him may gettë better grace.
But natheless I will of him assay
At certain dayës year by year to pay,
And thank him of his greatë courtesy.
My trothë will I keep, I will not lie.”
With heartë sore he went unto his coffer,
And broughtë gold unto this philosópher,
The value of five hundred pound, I guess,
And him beseeched, of his gentleness,
To grant him dayës of³⁴⁰⁷ the remenant;
And said; “Master, I dare well make avaunt,
I failed never of my truth as yet.
For sickerly my debtë shall be quit
Towardës you how so that e’er I fare
To go a-begging in my kirtle bare:
But would ye vouchësafe, upon suretý,
Two year, or three, for to respitë me,
Then were I well, for ellës must I sell
Mine heritage; there is no more to tell.”

This philosópher soberly³⁴⁰⁸ answér’d,
And saidë thus, when he these wordës heard;
“Have I not holden covenant to thee?”
“Yes, certes, well and truëly,” quoth he.
“Hast thou not had thy lady as thee liked?”
“No, no,” quoth he, and sorrowfully siked.³⁴⁰⁹
“What was the causë? tell me if thou can.”
Aurelius his tale anon began,
And told him all as ye have heard before,
It needeth not to you rehearse it more.
He said, “Arviragus of gentleness

Had lever³⁴¹⁰ die in sorrow and distress,
Than that his wife were of her trothë false.”
The sorrow of Dorigen he told him als’,³⁴¹¹
How loth her was to be a wicked wife,
And that she lever had lost that day her life;
And that her troth she swore through innocéce;
She ne’er erst³⁴¹² had heard speak of apparence;³⁴¹³
That made me have of her so great pity,
And right as freely as he sent her to me,
As freely sent I her to him again:
This is all and some, there is no more to sayn.
The philosópher answer’d; “Levë³⁴¹⁴ brother,
Evereach of you did gently to the other;
Thou art a squiër, and he is a knight,
But God forbiddë, for his blissful might,
But if a clerk could do a gentle deed
As well as any of you, it is no drede.³⁴¹⁵
Sir, I releasë thee thy thousand pound,
As thou right now were crept out of the ground,
Nor ever ere now haddest knowen me.
For, Sir, I will not take a penny of thee
For all my craft, nor naught for my travail;³⁴¹⁶
Thou hast y-payèd well for my vitáille;
It is enough; and farewell, have good day.”
And took his horse, and forth he went his way.
Lordings, this question would I askë now,
Which was the mostë free,³⁴¹⁷ as thinketh you?
Now tellë me, ere that ye farther wend.
I can³⁴¹⁸ no more, my tale is at an end.

THE DOCTOR'S TALE

THE PROLOGUE³⁴¹⁹

["Yea, let that passë," quoth our Host, "as now.
Sir Doctor of Physík, I prayë you,
Tell us a tale of some honést mattére."
"It shall be done, if that ye will it hear,"
Said this Doctór; and his tale gan anon.
"Now, good men," quoth he, "hearken everyone."]

THE TALE

There was, as telleth Titus Livius,³⁴²⁰
A knight, that called was Virginius,
Full filled of honoúr and worthiness,
And strong of friendës, and of great richëss.
This knight one daughter haddë by his wife;
No children had he more in all his life.
Fair was this maid in excellent beautý
Aboven ev'ry wight that man may see:

For nature had with sov'reign diligence
Y-formed her in so great excellence,
As though she wouldë say, "Lo, I, Natúre,
Thus can I form and paint a creatúre,
When that me list; who can me counterfeit?
Pygmalion? not though he aye forge and beat,
Or grave or paintë: for I dare well sayn,
Apelles, Zeuxis, shouldë work in vain,
Either to grave, or paint, or forge, or beat,
If they presumed me to counterfeit.
For he that is the former principal,
Hath madë me his vicar-general
To form and painten earthly creatúrës
Right as me list, and all thing in my cure³⁴²¹ is,
Under the moonë, that may wane and wax.
And for my work right nothing will I ax;³⁴²²
My lord and I be full of one accord.
I made her to the worship³⁴²³ of my lord;
So do I all mine other creatúres,
What colour that they have, or what figúres."
Thus seemeth me that Nature wouldë say.
This maiden was of age twelve year and tway,
In which that Nature haddë such delight.
For right as she can paint a lily white,
And red a rose, right with such paintúre
She painted had this noble creatúre,
Ere she was born, upon her limbës free,
Where as by right such colours shouldë be:
And Phoebus dyed had her tresses great,
Like to the streamës³⁴²⁴ of his burned heat.
And if that excellent was her beauty,
A thousand-fold more virtuous was she.
In her there lacked no condition,
That is to praise, as by discretión.
As well in ghost³⁴²⁵ as body chaste was she:
For which she flower'd in virginity,

With all humility and abstinence,
With allë temperance and patience,
With measure³⁴²⁶ eke of bearing and array.
Discreet she was in answering alway,
Though she were wise as Pallas, dare I sayn;
Her faconde³⁴²⁷ eke full womanly and plain,
No counterfeited termës haddë she
To seemë wise; but after her degree
She spake, and all her wordës more and less
Sounding in virtue and in gentleness.
Shamefast she was in maiden's shamefastness,
Constant in heart, and ever in business³⁴²⁸
To drive her out of idle sluggardy:
Bacchus had of her mouth right no mast'ry.
For wine and slothë³⁴²⁹ do Venús increase,
As men in fire will casten oil and grease.
And of her owen virtue, unconstrain'd,
She had herself full often sick y-feign'd,
For that she wouldë flee the company,
Where likely was to treaten of follý,
As is at feasts, at revels, and at dances,
That be occasiõns of dalliánces.
Such thingës makë children for to be
Too soonë ripe and bold, as men may see,
Which is full perilous, and hath been yore;³⁴³⁰
For all too soonë may she learnë lore
Of boldëness, when that she is a wife.

And ye mistrësses,³⁴³¹ in your oldë life
That lordës' daughters have in governánce,
Takë not of my wordës displeasánce:
Thinkë that ye be set in governings
Of lordës' daughters only for two things;
Either for ye have kept your honesty,
Or else for ye have fallen in frailty
And knowë well enough the oldë dance,
And have forsaken fully such meschance³⁴³²

For evermore; therefore, for Christë's sake,
To teach them virtue look that ye not slake.³⁴³³
A thief of venison, that hath forlaft³⁴³⁴
His lik'rousness,³⁴³⁵ and all his oldë craft,
Can keep a forest best of any man;
Now keep them well, for if ye will ye can.
Look well, that ye unto no vice assent,
Lest ye be damned for your wick'³⁴³⁶ intent,
For whoso doth, a traitor is certáin;
And takë keep³⁴³⁷ of that I shall you sayn;
Of allë treason, sov'reign pestilence
Is when a wight betrayeth innocence.
Ye fathers, and ye mothers eke also,
Though ye have children, be it one or mo',
Yours is the charge of all their surveyance,³⁴³⁸
While that they be under your governance.
Beware, that by example of your living,
Or by your negligence in chastising,
That they not perish for I dare well say,
If that they do, ye shall it dear abeye.³⁴³⁹
Under a shepherd soft and negligent
The wolf hath many a sheep and lamb to-rent.
Sufficë this example now as here,
For I must turn again to my mattére.

This maid, of which I tell my tale express,
She kept herself, her needed no mistréss;
For in her living maidens mightë read,
As in a book, ev'ry good word and deed
That longeth to a maiden virtuous;
She was so prudent and so bounteous.
For which the fame out sprang on every side
Both of her beauty and her bounté³⁴⁴⁰ wide:
That through the land they praised her each one
That loved virtue, save envý alone,
That sorry is of other mannë's weal,
And glad is of his sorrow and unheal³⁴⁴¹—

The Doctor maketh this descriptioun.³⁴⁴²—
This maiden on a day went in the town
Toward a temple, with her mother dear,
As is of youngë maidens the mannere.
Now was there then a justice in that town,
That governor was of that regioún:
And so befell, this judge his eyen cast
Upon this maid, avising³⁴⁴³ her full fast,
As she came forth by where this judgë stood;
Anon his heartë changed and his mood,
So was he caught with beauty of this maid
And to himself full privily he said,
“This maiden shall be mine for any man.”
Anon the fiend into his heartë ran,
And taught him suddenly, that he by sleight
This maiden to his purpose winnë might.
For certes, by no force, nor by no meed,³⁴⁴⁴
Him thought he was not able for to speed;
For she was strong of friendës, and eke she
Confirmed was in such sov’reign bounté,
That well he wist he might her never win,
As for to make her with her body sin.
For which, with great deliberatioun,
He sent after a clerk³⁴⁴⁵ was in the town,
The which he knew for subtle and for bold.
This judge unto this clerk his talë told
In secret wise, and made him to assure
He shouldë tell it to no creatúre,
And if he did, he shouldë lose his head.
And when assented was this cursed rede,³⁴⁴⁶
Glad was the judge, and made him greatë cheer,
And gave him giftës precioús and dear.
When shapen³⁴⁴⁷ was all their conspiracy
From point to point, how that his lechery
Performed shouldë be full subtilly,
As ye shall hear it after openly,

Home went this clerk, that hightē Claudius.
This falsē judge, that hightē Appius—
(So was his namē, for it is no fable,
But knowen for a storial³⁴⁴⁸ thing notáble;
The sentence³⁴⁴⁹ of it sooth³⁴⁵⁰ is out of doubt);—
This falsē judgē went now fast about
To hasten his delight all that he may.
And so befell, soon after on a day,
This falsē judge, as telleth us the story,
As he was wont, sat in his consistóry,
And gave his doomes³⁴⁵¹ upon sundry case’;
This falsē clerk came forth a full great pace,³⁴⁵²
And saidē; “Lord, if that it be your will,
As do me right upon this piteous bill,³⁴⁵³
In which I plain upon Virginus.
And if that he will say it is not thus,
I will it prove, and findē good witnéss,
That sooth is what my billē will express.”
The judge answér’d, “Of this, in his absénce,
I may not give definitive senténce.
Let do³⁴⁵⁴ him call, and I will gladly hear;
Thou shalt have allē right, and no wrong here.”

Virginus came to weet³⁴⁵⁵ the judgē’s will,
And right anon was read this cursed bill;
The sentence of it was as ye shall hear:
“To you, my lord, Sir Appius so clear,
Sheweth your poorē servant Claudius,
How that a knight callēd Virginus,
Against the law, against all equity,
Holdeth, express against the will of me,
My servant, which that is my thrall³⁴⁵⁶ by right,
Which from my house was stolen on a night,
While that she was full young; I will it preve³⁴⁵⁷
By witness, lord, so that it you not grieve;³⁴⁵⁸
She is his daughter not, what so he say.
Wherefore to you, my lord the judge, I pray,

Yield me my thrall, if that it be your will.”
Lo, this was all the sentence of the bill.
Virginus gan upon the clerk behold;
But hastily, ere he his talë told,
And would have proved it, as should a knight,
And eke by witnessing of many a wight,
That all was false that said his adversary,
This cursed³⁴⁵⁹ judgë would no longer tarry,
Nor hear a word more of Virginus,
But gave his judgëment, and saidë thus:

“I deem³⁴⁶⁰ anon this clerk his servant have;
Thou shalt no longer in thy house her save.
Go, bring her forth, and put her in our ward;
The clerk shall have his thrall: thus I award.”

And when this worthy knight, Virginus,
Through sentence of this justice Appius,
Mustë by force his dearë daughter give
Unto the judge, in lechery to live,
He went him home, and sat him in his hall,
And let anon his dearë daughter call;
And with a facë dead as ashes cold
Upon her humble face he gan behold,
With father’s pity sticking³⁴⁶¹ through his heart,
All³⁴⁶² would he from his purpose not convert.³⁴⁶³
“Daughter,” quoth he, “Virginia by name,
There be two wayës, either death or shame,
That thou must suffer—alas that I was bore!
For never thou deservedest wherefore
To dien with a sword or with a knife,
O dearë daughter, ender of my life,
Whom I have foster’d up with such pleasánce
That thou were ne’er out of my remembrance;
O daughter, which that art my lastë woe,
And in this life my lastë joy also,
O gem of chastity, in patiënce
Take thou thy death, for this is my sentéce:
For love and not for hate thou must be dead;

My piteous hand must smiten off thine head.

Alas, that ever Appius thee say!³⁴⁶⁴

Thus hath he falsely judged thee to-day.”

And told her all the case, as ye before

Have heard; it needeth not to tell it more.

“O mercy, dearë father,” quoth the maid.

And with that word she both her armës laid

About his neck, as she was wont to do,

(The tearës burst out of her eyen two),

And said, “O goodë father, shall I die?

Is there no grace? is there no remedý?”

“No, certes, dearë daughter mine,” quoth he.

“Then give me leisure, father mine,” quoth she,

“My death for to complain³⁴⁶⁵ a little space:

For, pardie, Jephthah gave his daughter grace

For to complain, ere he her slew, alas!³⁴⁶⁶

And, God it wot, nothing was her trespáß,³⁴⁶⁷

But for she ran her father first to see,

To welcome him with great solemnity.”

And with that word she fell aswoon anon;

And after, when her swooning was y-gone,

She rose up, and unto her father said:

“Blessed be God, that I shall die a maid.

Give me my death, ere that I havë shame;

Do with your child your will, in Goddë’s name.”

And with that word she prayed him full oft

That with his sword he wouldë smite her soft;

And with that word, aswoon again she fell.

Her father, with full sorrowful heart and fell,³⁴⁶⁸

Her head off smote, and by the top it hent,³⁴⁶⁹

And to the judge he went it to present,

As he sat yet in doom³⁴⁷⁰ in consistóry.

And when the judge it saw, as saith the story,

He bade to take him, and to hang him fast.

But right anon a thousand people in thrast³⁴⁷¹

To save the knight, for ruth and for pity,

For knowen was the false iniquity.
The people anon had súspect³⁴⁷² in this thing,
By manner of the clerkë's challengíng,
That it was by th' assent of Appius;
They wistë well that he was lecherous.
For which unto this Appius they gon,
And cast him in a prison right anon,
Where as he slew himself: and Claudius,
That servant was unto this Appius,
Was doomed for to hang upon a tree;
But that Virginius, of his pity,
So prayed for him, that he was exil'd;
And ellës certes had he been beguil'd;³⁴⁷³
The remenant were hanged, more and less,
That were consenting to this cursedness.³⁴⁷⁴

Here men may see how sin hath his meríte;³⁴⁷⁵
Beware, for no man knows how God will smite
In no degree, nor in which manner wise
The worm of consciéncë may agrise
Of³⁴⁷⁶ wicked life, though it so privy be,
That no man knows thereof, save God and he;
For be he lewëd man or ellës lear'd,³⁴⁷⁷
He knows not how soon he shall be afear'd;
Therefore I redë³⁴⁷⁸ you this counsel take,
Forsakë sin, ere sinnë you forsake.

THE PARDONER'S TALE

THE PROLOGUE

Our Hostë gan to swear as he were wood;³⁴⁷⁹
“Harow!” quoth he, “by nailës and by blood,³⁴⁸⁰
This was a cursed thief, a false justice.
As shameful death as heartë can devise
Come to these judges and their advoca’s.³⁴⁸¹
Algate³⁴⁸² this sely³⁴⁸³ maid is slain, alas!
Alas! too dearë bought³⁴⁸⁴ she her beauty.
Wherefore I say, that all day man may see
That giftës of fortune and of nature
Be cause of death to many a creature.
Her beauty was her death, I dare well sayn;
Alas! so piteously as she was slain.
[Of bothë giftës, that I speak of now,
Men have full often morë harm than prow.³⁴⁸⁵]
But truëly, mine owen master dear,
This was a piteous talë for to hear;
But natheless, pass over; ’tis no force.³⁴⁸⁶
I pray to God to save thy gentle corse,³⁴⁸⁷
And eke thine urinals, and thy jordans,
Thine Hippocras, and eke thy Galliens,³⁴⁸⁸
And every boist³⁴⁸⁹ full of thy lectuary,

God bless them, and our lady Saintë Mary.
 So may I thé,³⁴⁹⁰ thou art a proper man,
 And like a prelate, by Saint Ronian;
 Said I not well? Can I not speak in term?³⁴⁹¹
 But well I wot thou dost³⁴⁹² mine heart to erme,³⁴⁹³
 That I have almost caught a cardiacle:³⁴⁹⁴
 By *corpus Domini*, but³⁴⁹⁵ I have triacle,³⁴⁹⁶
 Or else a draught of moist and corny³⁴⁹⁷ ale,
 Or but³⁴⁹⁸ I hear anon a merry tale,
 Mine heart is brost³⁴⁹⁹ for pity of this maid.
 Thou *bel ami*, thou Pardoner,” he said,
 “Tell us some mirth of japës³⁵⁰⁰ right anon.”
 “It shall be done,” quoth he, “by Saint Ronion.
 But first,” quoth he, “here at this alëstake³⁵⁰¹
 I will both drink, and biten on a cake.”
 But right anon the gentles gan to cry,
 “Nay, let him tell us of no ribaldry.
 Tell us some moral thing, that we may lear³⁵⁰²
 Some wit,³⁵⁰³ and thennë will we gladly hear.”
 “I grant y-wis,”³⁵⁰⁴ quoth he; “but I must think
 Upon some honest thing while that I drink.”

THE TALE³⁵⁰⁵

Lordings (quoth he), in churchë when I preach,
 I painë me³⁵⁰⁶ to have an hautein³⁵⁰⁷ speech,
 And ring it out, as round as doth a bell,
 For I know all by rotë that I tell.
 My theme is always one, and ever was;
*Radix malorum est cupiditas.*³⁵⁰⁸

First I pronouncë whencë that I come,
And then my bullës shew I all and some;
Our liegë lordë's seal on my patént,
That shew I first, my body to warrent,³⁵⁰⁹
That no man be so hardy, priest nor clerk,
Me to disturb of Christë's holy werk.
And after that then tell I forth my tales.
Bullës of popës, and of cardinales,
Of patriarchs, and of bishóps I shew,
And in Latín I speak a wordës few,
To savour with my prediciatión,
And for to stir men to devotiún
Then show I forth my longë crystal stones,
Y-crammed fall of cloutës³⁵¹⁰ and of bones;
Relics they be, as weenë they³⁵¹¹ each one.
Then have I in latoun³⁵¹² a shoulder-bone
Which that was of a holy Jewë's sheep.
“Good men,” say I, “take of my wordës keep;³⁵¹³
If that this bone be wash'd in any well,
If cow, or calf, or sheep, or oxë swell,
That any worm hath eat, or worm y-stung,
Take water of that well, and wash his tongue,
And it is whole anon; and farthermore
Of pockës, and of scab, and every sore
Shall every sheep be whole, that of this well
Drinketh a draught; take keep³⁵¹⁴ of that I tell.
“If that the goodman, that the beastës oweth,³⁵¹⁵
Will every week, ere that the cock him croweth,
Fasting, y-drinken of this well a draught,
As thilkë holy Jew our elders taught,
His beastës and his store shall multiply.
And, Sirs, also it healeth jealousy;
For though a man be fall'n in jealous rage,
Let make with this water his pottáge,
And never shall he more his wife mistrust,³⁵¹⁶
Though he the sooth of her defaultë wist;

All³⁵¹⁷ had she taken priestës two or three.
Here is a mittain³⁵¹⁸ eke, that ye may see;
He that his hand will put in this mittain,
He shall have multiplying of his grain,
When he hath sowed, be it wheat or oats,
So that he offer pence, or ellës groats.
And, men and women, one thing warn I you;
If any wight be in this churchë now
That hath done sin horrible, so that he
Dare not for shame of it y-shriven³⁵¹⁹ be;
Or any woman, be she young or old,
That hath y-made her husband cokëwold,³⁵²⁰
Such folk shall have no power nor no grace
To offer to my relics in this place.
And whoso findeth him out of such blame,
He will come up and offer in God's name;
And I assoil him by the authority
Which that by bull y-granted was to me."

By this gaud³⁵²¹ have I wonnë year by year
A hundred marks, since I was pardonére.
I standë like a clerk in my pulpit,
And when the lewëd³⁵²² people down is set,
I preachë so as ye have heard before,
And tellë them a hundred japës³⁵²³ more.
Then pain I me to stretchë forth my neck,
And east and west upon the people I beck,
As doth a dovë, sitting on a bern;³⁵²⁴
My handës and my tonguë go so yern,³⁵²⁵
That it is joy to see my business.
Of avarice and of such cursedness³⁵²⁶
Is all my preaching, for to make them free
To give their pence, and namely³⁵²⁷ unto me.
For mine intent is not but for to win,
And nothing for correction of sin.
I reckë never, when that they be buried,
Though that their soulës go a blackburied.³⁵²⁸

For certes many a predication
Cometh oft-time of evil intention;³⁵²⁹
Some for pleasance of folk, and flattery,
To be advanced by hypocrisy;
And some for vainglory, and some for hate.
For, when I dare not otherwise debate,
Then will I sting him with my tongue smart³⁵³⁰
In preaching, so that he shall not astart³⁵³¹
To be defamed falsely, if that he
Hath trespass'd³⁵³² to my brethren or to me.
For, though I tell not his proper name,
Men shall well know that it is the same
By signes, and by other circumstances.
Thus quite I³⁵³³ folk that do us displeasances:
Thus spit I out my venom, under hue
Of holiness, to seem holy and true.
But, shortly mine intent I will devise,
I preach of nothing but of covetise.
Therefore my theme is yet, and ever was—
Radix malorum est cupiditas.
Thus can I preach against the same vice
Which that I use, and that is avarice.
But though myself be guilty in that sin,
Yet can I maken other folk to twin³⁵³⁴
From avarice, and sore them repent.
But that is not my principal intent;
I preach nothing but for covetise.
Of this matter it ought enough suffice.
Then tell I them examples many a one,
Of old stories long time gone;
For lewed³⁵³⁵ people love tales old;
Such things can they well report and hold.
What? trow ye, that whiles I may preach
And winne gold and silver for³⁵³⁶ I teach,
That I will live in povert' wilfully?
Nay, nay, I thought it never truly.

For I will preach and beg in sundry lands;
I will not do no labour with mine hands,
Nor makë baskets for to live thereby,
Because I will not beggen idly.
I will none of the apostles counterfeit;³⁵³⁷
I will have money, wool, and cheese, and wheat,
All³⁵³⁸ were it given of the poorest page,
Or of the poorest widow in a villáge:
All³⁵³⁹ should her children stervë³⁵⁴⁰ for famíne.
Nay, I will drink the liquor of the vine,
And have a jolly wench in every town.
But hearken, lordings, in conclusioún;
Your liking is, that I shall tell a tale
Now I have drunk a draught of corny ale,
By God, I hope I shall you tell a thing
That shall by reason be to your líking;
For though myself be a full vicious man,
A moral tale yet I you tellë can,
Which I am wont to preachë, for to win.
Now hold your peace, my tale I will begin.

In Flanders whilom was a company
Of youngë folkës, that haunted follý,
As riot, hazard, stewës, and tavérns;
Where as with lutës, harpës, and gitérns,³⁵⁴¹
They dance and play at dice both day and night,
And eat also, and drink over their might;
Through which they do the devil sacrifice
Within the devil's temple, in cursed wise,
By superfluity abomináble.
Their oathës be so great and so damnáble,
That it is grisly³⁵⁴² for to hear them swear.
Our blissful Lordë's body they to-tear;³⁵⁴³
Them thought the Jewës rent him not enough;
And each of them at other's sinnë lough.³⁵⁴⁴
And right anon in comë tombesteres³⁵⁴⁵

Fetis³⁵⁴⁶ and small, and youngë fruitesteres.³⁵⁴⁷
Singers with harpës, baudës,³⁵⁴⁸ waferers,³⁵⁴⁹
Which be the very devil's officers,
To kindle and blow the fire of lechery,
That is annexed unto gluttony.
The Holy Writ take I to my witnëss,
That luxury is in wine and drunkenness.³⁵⁵⁰
Lo, how that drunken Lot unkindëly³⁵⁵¹
Lay by his daughters two unwittingly,
So drunk he was he knew not what he wrought.
Heródes, who so well the stories sought,³⁵⁵²
When he of wine replete was at his feast,
Right at his owen table gave his hest³⁵⁵³
To slay the Baptist John full guiltëless.
Seneca saith a good word, doubtëless:
He saith he can no differencë find
Betwixt a man that is out of his mind,
And a man whichë that is drunkelew:³⁵⁵⁴
But that woodnéss,³⁵⁵⁵ y-fallen in a shrew,³⁵⁵⁶
Persevereth longer than drunkenness.
O gluttony, full of all cursedness;
O cause first of our confusiún,
Original of our damnatiún,
Till Christ had bought us with his blood again!
Lookë, how dearë, shortly for to sayn,
Abought³⁵⁵⁷ was first this cursed villainy:
Corrupt was all this world for gluttony.
Adam our father, and his wife also,
From Paradise, to labour and to woe,
Were driven for that vice, it is no dread.³⁵⁵⁸
For while that Adam fasted, as I read,
He was in Paradise; and when that he
Ate of the fruit defended³⁵⁵⁹ of the tree,
Anon he was cast out to woe and pain.
O gluttony! well ought us on thee plain.
Oh! wist a man how many maladies

Follow of éxcess and of gluttonies,
He wouldë be the morë measuráble³⁵⁶⁰
Of his dietë, sitting at his table.
Alas! the shortë throat, the tender mouth,
Maketh that east and west, and north and south,
In earth, in air, in water, men do swink³⁵⁶¹
To get a glutton dainty meat and drink.
Of this mattére, O Paul! well canst thou treat
Meat unto womb, and womb eke unto meat,
Shall God destroyë both, as Paulus saith.³⁵⁶²
Alas! a foul thing is it, by my faith,
To say this word, and fouler is the deed,
When man so drinketh of the white and red,³⁵⁶³
That of his throat he maketh his privý
Through thilkë cursed superfluity
The apostle saith,³⁵⁶⁴ weeping full piteously,
There walk many, of which you told have I—
I say it now weeping with piteous voice—
That they be enemies of Christë's crois;³⁵⁶⁵
Of which the end is death; womb is their God.
O womb, O belly, stinking is thy cod,³⁵⁶⁶
Full fill'd of dung and of corruptioún;
At either end of thee foul is the soun'.
How great labouúr and cost is thee to find!³⁵⁶⁷
These cookës how they stamp, and strain, and grind,
And turnë substance into accident,
To fúlfil all thy likerous talent!
Out of the hardë bonës knockë they
The marrow, for they castë naught away
That may go through the gullet soft and swoot³⁵⁶⁸
Of spicery and leaves, of bark and root,
Shall be his sauce y-maked by delight,
To make him have a newer appetite.
But, certes, he that haunteth such delices
Is dead while that he liveth in those vices.
A lecherous thing is wine, and drunkenness

Is full of striving and of wretchedness.
O drunken man! disfigur'd is thy face,³⁵⁶⁹
Sour is thy breath, foul art thou to embrace:
And through thy drunken nose sowneth the soun',
As though thou saidest aye, Samsoún! Samsoún!
And yet, God wot, Samson drank never wine.
Thou fallest as it were a stuck swine;
Thy tongue is lost, and all thine honest cure;³⁵⁷⁰
For drunkenness is very sepulture
Of mannë's wit and his discretión.
In whom that drink hath domination,
He can no counsel keep, it is no dread.³⁵⁷¹
Now keep you from the white and from the red,
And namely³⁵⁷² from the whitë wine of Lepe,³⁵⁷³
That is to sell in Fish Street³⁵⁷⁴ and in Cheap.
This wine of Spainë creepeth subtilly
In other winës growing fastë by,
Of which there riseth such fumosity,
That when a man hath drunken draughtës three,
And weeneth that he be at home in Cheap,
He is in Spain, right at the town of Lepe,
Not at the Róchelle, nor at Bourdeaux town;
And thennë will he say, Samsoún! Samsoún!
But hearken, lordings, one word, I you pray,
That all the sov'reign actës, dare I say,
Of victories in the Old Testament,
Through very God that is omnipotent,
Were done in abstinence and in prayére:
Look in the Bible, and there ye may it lear.³⁵⁷⁵
Look, Attila, the greatë conqueror,
Died in his sleep,³⁵⁷⁶ with shame and dishonór,
Bleeding aye at his nose in drunkenness:
A captain should aye live in soberness.
And o'er all this, advisë³⁵⁷⁷ you right well
What was commanded unto Lemuel;
Not Samuel, but Lemuel, say I.

Readë the Bible,³⁵⁷⁸ and find it expressly
Of wine giving to them that have justice.
No more of this, for it may well suffice.

And, now that I have spoke of gluttony,
Now will I you defendë hazardry.³⁵⁷⁹
Hazard is very mother of leasings,³⁵⁸⁰
And of deceit, and cursed forswearings:
Blasphem' of Christ, manslaughter, and waste also
Of chattel³⁵⁸¹ and of time; and furthermo'
It is reprove,³⁵⁸² and contrar' of honoúr,
For to be held a common hazardoúr.
And ever the higher he is of estate,
The morë he is holden desolate.³⁵⁸³
If that a princë usë hazardry,
In allë governance and policy
He is, as by common opinión,
Y-hold the less in reputatión.

Chilon, that was a wise ambassador,
Was sent to Corinth with full great honór
From Lacedaemon,³⁵⁸⁴ to make álliáncë;
And when he came, it happen'd him, by chance,
That all the greatest that were of that land,
Y-playing attë hazard he them fand.
For which, as soon as that it mightë be,
He stole him home again to his countrý.
And saidë there, "I will not lose my name,
Nor will I take on me so great diffame,³⁵⁸⁵
You to ally unto no hazardors.³⁵⁸⁶
Sendë some other wise ambassadors,
For, by my troth, me werë lever³⁵⁸⁷ die,
Than I should you to hazardors ally.
For ye, that be so glorious in honoúrs,
Shall not ally you to no hazardoúrs,
As by my will, nor as by my treatý."
This wisë philosópher thus said he.
Look eke how to the King Demetrius

The King of Parthes, as the book saith us,
Sent him a pair of dice of gold in scorn,
For he had used hazard therebeforn:
For which he held his glory and renown
At no valúe or reputatioun.

Lordës may finden other manner play
Honest enough to drive the day away.

Now will I speak of oathës false and great
A word or two, as oldë bookës treat.

Great swearing is a thing abomináble,
And false swearing is morë reprováble.

The highë God forbade swearing at all;

Witness on Matthew:[3588](#) but in special

Of swearing saith the holy Jeremie,[3589](#)

Thou shalt swear sooth thine oathës, and not lie:

And swear in doom,[3590](#) and eke in righteousness;

But idle swearing is a cursedness.[3591](#)

Behold and see, there in the firstë table

Of highë Goddë's hestës[3592](#) honouráble,

How that the second best of him is this,

Take not my name in idle[3593](#) or amiss.

Lo, rather[3594](#) he forbiddeth such swearíng,

Than homicide, or many a cursed thing;

I say that as by order thus it standeth;

This knoweth he that his hests understandeth,

How that the second hest of God is that.

And farthermore, I will thee tell all plat,[3595](#)

That vengeance shall not partë from his house,

That of his oathës is outrageoús.

“By Goddë's precious heart, and by his nails,[3596](#)

And by the blood of Christ, that is in Hailes,[3597](#)

Seven is my chance, and thine is cinque and trey:

By Goddë's armës, if thou falsely play,

This dagger shall throughout thine heartë go.”

This fruit comes of the bicched[3598](#) bonës two,

Forswearing, ire, falseness, and homicide.

Now, for the love of Christ that for us died,
Leavë your oathës, bothë great and smale.
But, Sirs, now will I ell you forth my tale.

These riotoúrës three, of which I tell,
Long erst than³⁵⁹⁹ primë rang of any bell,
Were set them in a tavern for to drink;
And as they sat, they heard a bellë clink
Before a corpse, was carried to the grave.
That one of them gan callë to his knave,³⁶⁰⁰
“Go bet,”³⁶⁰¹ quoth he, “and askë readily
What corpse is this, that passeth here forth by;
And look that thou report his namë well.”
“Sir,” quoth the boy, “it needeth never a deal;³⁶⁰²
It was me told ere ye came here two hours;
He was, pardie, an old fellów of yours,
And suddenly he was y-slain tonight;
Fordrunk³⁶⁰³ as he sat on his bench upright,
There came a privy thief, men clepë Death,
That in this country all the people slay’th,
And with his spear he smote his heart in two,
And went his way withoutë wordës mo’.
He hath a thousand slain this pestilence;
And, master, ere you come in his presénce,
Me thinketh that it were full necessary
For to beware of such an adversary;
Be ready for to meet him evermore.
Thus taughtë me my dame; I say no more.”
“By Saintë Mary,” said the tavernére,
“The child saith sooth, for he hath slain this year,
Hence ov’r a mile, within a great villáge,
Both man and woman, child, and hind, and page;
I trow his habitation be there;
To be advised³⁶⁰⁴ great wisdóm it were,
Ere³⁶⁰⁵ that he did a man a dishonour.”
“Yea, Goddë’s armës,” quoth this riotoúr,
“Is it such peril with him for to meet?”

I shall him seek, by stile and eke by street.
I make a vow, by Goddë's dignë³⁶⁰⁶ bones.
Hearken, fellóws, we three be allë ones:³⁶⁰⁷
Let each of us hold up his hand to other,
And each of us become the other's brother,
And we will slay this falsë traitor Death;
He shall be slain, he that so many slay'th,
By Goddë's dignity, ere it be night."

Together have these three their trothë plight
To live and die each one of them for other
As though he were his owen boren³⁶⁰⁸ brother.
And up they start, all drunken, in this rage,
And forth they go towárdës that villáge
Of which the taverner had spoke beforne,
And many a grisly³⁶⁰⁹ oathë have they sworn,
And Christë's blessed body they to-rent;³⁶¹⁰
"Death shall be dead, if that we may him hent."³⁶¹¹
When they had gone not fully half a mile,
Right as they would have trodden o'er a stile,
An old man and a poorë with them met.
This oldë man full meekëly them gret,³⁶¹²
And saidë thus; "Now, lordës, God you see!"³⁶¹³
The proudest of these riotoúrës three
Answér'd again; "What? churl, with sorry grace,
Why art thou all forwrapped³⁶¹⁴ save thy face?
Why livest thou so long in so great age?"
This oldë man gan look on his viságe,
And saidë thus; "For that I cannot find
A man, though that I walked unto Ind,
Neither in city, nor in no villáge,
That wouldë change his youthë for mine age;
And therefore must I have mine agë still
As longë time as it is Goddë's will.
And Death, alas! he will not have my life.
Thus walk I like a restëless caitífe,³⁶¹⁵
And on the ground, which is my mother's gate,

I knockë with my staff, early and late,
And say to her, 'Leve³⁶¹⁶ mother, let me in.
Lo, how I wanë, flesh, and blood, and skin;
Alas! when shall my bonës be at rest?
Mother, with you I wouldë change my chest,
That in my chamber longë time hath be,
Yea, for an hairy clout to wrap in me.'³⁶¹⁷
But yet to me she will not do that grace,
For which fall pale and welked³⁶¹⁸ is my face.
But, Sirs, to you it is no courtesy
To speak unto an old man villainy,
But³⁶¹⁹ he trespass in word or else in deed.
In Holy Writ ye may yourselvës read;
'Against³⁶²⁰ an old man, hoar upon his head,
Ye should arisë:' therefore I you rede,³⁶²¹
Ne do unto an old man no harm now,
No morë than ye would a man did you
In age, if that ye may so long abide.
And God be with you, whether ye go or ride.
I must go thither as I have to go."

"Nay, oldë churl, by God thou shalt not so,"
Saidë this other hazardor anon;
"Thou partest not so lightly, by Saint John.
Thou spakest right now of that traitor Death,
That in this country all our friendës slay'th;
Have here my troth, as thou art his espy;³⁶²²
Tell where he is, or thou shalt it abie,³⁶²³
By God and by the holy sacrament;
For soothly thou art one of his assent
To slay us youngë folk, thou falsë thief."
"Now, Sirs," quoth he, "if it be you so lief³⁶²⁴
To findë Death, turn up this crooked way,
For in that grove I left him, by my fay,
Under a tree, and there he will abide;
Nor for your boast he will him nothing hide.
See ye that oak? right there ye shall him find.

God savë you, that bought again mankind,
And you amend!" Thus said this oldë man;
And evereach of these riotoúrës ran,
Till they came to the tree, and there they found
Of florins fine, of gold y-coined round,
Well nigh a seven bushels, as them thought.
No longer as then after Death they sought;
But each of them so glad was of the sight,
For that the florins were so fair and bright,
That down they sat them by the precious hoard.
The youngest of them spake the firstë word:
 "Brethren," quoth he, "take keep what I shall say;
My wit is great, though that I bourde³⁶²⁵ and play.
This treasure hath Fortúne unto us given
In mirth and jollity our life to liven;
And lightly as it comes, so will we spend.
Hey! Goddë's precious dignity! who wend³⁶²⁶
To-day that we should have so fair a grace?
But might this gold he carried from this place
Home to my house, or ellës unto yours
(For well I wot that all this gold is ours),
Then werë we in high felicity.
But truëly by day it may not be;
Men wouldë say that we were thievës strong,
And for our owen treasure do us hong.³⁶²⁷
This treasure mustë carried be by night,
As wisely and as slily as it might.
Wherefore I rede,³⁶²⁸ that cut³⁶²⁹ among us all
We draw, and let see where the cut will fall:
And he that hath the cut, with heartë blithe
Shall run unto the town, and that full swithe,³⁶³⁰
And bring us bread and wine full privily:
And two of us shall keepë subtilly
This treasure well: and if he will not tarry,
When it is night, we will this treasure carry,
By one assent, where as us thinketh best."

Then one of them the cut brought in his fist,
And bade them draw, and look where it would fall;
And it fell on the youngest of them all;
And forth toward the town he went anon.
And all so soon as that he was y-gone,
The one of them spake thus unto the other;
“Thou knowest well that thou art my sworn brother,
Thy profit³⁶³¹ will I tell thee right anon.
Thou knowest well that our fellów is gone,
And here is gold, and that full great plenty,
That shall departed³⁶³² he among us three.
But natheless, if I could shape³⁶³³ it so
That it departed were among us two,
Had I not done a friendë’s turn to thee?”
Th’ other answór’d, “I n’ot³⁶³⁴ how that may be;
He knows well that the gold is with us tway.
What shall we do? what shall we to him say?”
“Shall it be counsel?”³⁶³⁵ said the firstë shrew;³⁶³⁶
“And I shall tell to thee in wordës few
What we shall do, and bring it well about.”
“I grantë,” quoth the other, “out of doubt,
That by my truth I will thee not bewray.”
“Now,” quoth the first, “thou know’st well we be tway,
And two of us shall stronger be than one.
Look, when that he is set,³⁶³⁷ thou right anon
Arise, as though thou wouldest with him play;
And I shall rive him through the sidës tway,
While that thou strugglest with him as in game;
And with thy dagger look thou do the same.
And then shall all this gold departed be,
My dearë friend, betwixtë thee and me:
Then may we both our lustës³⁶³⁸ all fulfil,
And play at dice right at our owen will.”
And thus accorded³⁶³⁹ be these shrewës³⁶⁴⁰ tway
To slay the third, as ye have heard me say.
The youngest, which that wentë to the town,

Full oft in heart he rolled up and down
The beauty of these florins new and bright.
“O Lord!” quoth he, “if so were that I might
Have all this treasure to myself alone,
There is no man that lives under the throne
Of God, that shouldë have so merry as I.”
And at the last the fiend our enemy
Put in his thought, that he should poison buy,
With which he mightë slay his fellows twy.³⁶⁴¹
For why, the fiend found him in such living,³⁶⁴²
That he had leave to sorrow him to bring.
For this was utterly his full intent
To slay them both, and never to repent.
And forth he went, no longer would he tarry,
Into the town to an apothecáry,
And prayed him that he him wouldë sell
Some poison, that he might his rattës quell,³⁶⁴³
And eke there was a polecat in his haw,³⁶⁴⁴
That, as he said, his capons had y-slaw:³⁶⁴⁵
And fain he would him wreak,³⁶⁴⁶ if that he might,
Of vermin that destroyed him by night.
Th’ apothecary answer’d, “Thou shalt have
A thing, as wisely³⁶⁴⁷ God my soulë save,
In all this world there is no creatúre
That eat or drank hath of this cónfectúre,
Not but the mountance³⁶⁴⁸ of a corn of wheat,
That he shall not his life anon forlete;³⁶⁴⁹
Yea, sterve³⁶⁵⁰ he shall, and that in lessë while
Than thou wilt go apace³⁶⁵¹ nought but a mile:
This poison is so strong and violent.”
This cursed man hath in his hand y-hent³⁶⁵²
This poison in a box, and swift he ran
Into the nextë street, unto a man,
And borrow’d of him largë bottles three;
And in the two the poison poured he;
The third he keptë clean for his own drink,

For all the night he shope him³⁶⁵³ for to swink³⁶⁵⁴
In carrying off the gold out of that place.
And when this riotoúr, with sorry grace,
Had fill'd with wine his greatë bottles three,
To his fellóws again repaired he.

What needeth it thereof to sermon³⁶⁵⁵ more?
For, right as they had cast³⁶⁵⁶ his death before,
Right so they have him slain, and that anon.
And when that this was done, thus spake the one;
“Now let us sit and drink, and make us merry,
And afterward we will his body bury.”

And with that word it happen'd him *par cas*³⁶⁵⁷
To take the bottle where the poison was,
And drank, and gave his fellow drink also,
For which anon they sterved³⁶⁵⁸ both the two.
But certes I suppose that Avicen

Wrote never in no canon, nor no fen,³⁶⁵⁹
More wondrous signës of empoisoníng,
Than had these wretches two ere their ending.
Thus ended be these homicidës two,
And eke the false empoisoner also.

O cursed sin, full of all cursedness!
O trait'rous homicide! O wickedness!
O glutt'ny, luxury, and hazardry!
Thou blasphemer of Christ with villany,³⁶⁶⁰
And oathës great, of usage and of pride!
Alas! mankindë, how may it betide,
That to thy Creatór, which that thee wrought,
And with his precious heartë-blood thee bought,
Thou art so false and so unkind,³⁶⁶¹ alas!

Now, good men, God forgive you your trespáss,
And ware³⁶⁶² you from the sin of avaríce.
Mine holy pardon may you all waríce,³⁶⁶³
So that ye offer nobles or sterlings,³⁶⁶⁴
Or ellës silver brooches, spoons, or rings.
Bowë your head under this holy bull.

Come up, ye wives, and offer of your will;
Your names I enter in my roll anon;
Into the bliss of heaven shall ye gon;
I you assoil³⁶⁶⁵ by minë high powére,
You that will offer, as clean and eke as clear
As ye were born. Lo, Sirës, thus I preach;
And Jesus Christ, that is our soulës' leech,³⁶⁶⁶
So grantë you his pardon to receive;
For that is best, I will not deceive.

But, Sirs, one word forgot I in my tale;
I have relícs and pardon in my mail,
As fair as any man in Engleland,
Which were me given by the Popë's hand.
If any of you will of devotiön
Offer, and have mine absolutiön,
Come forth anon, and kneelë here adown,
And meekëly receivë my pardoún.
Or ellës takë pardon, as ye wend,³⁶⁶⁷
All new and fresh at every townë's end,
So that ye offer, always new and new,
Nobles or pence which that be good and true.
'Tis an honoúr to evereach that is here,
That ye have a suffisant pardonére
T' assoilë³⁶⁶⁸ you in country as ye ride,
For áventürës which that may betide.
Paráventure there may fall one or two
Down of his horse, and break his neck in two.
Look, what a surety is it to you all,
That I am in your fellowship y-fall,
That may assoil you bothë more and lass,³⁶⁶⁹
When that the soul shall from the body pass.
I redë³⁶⁷⁰ that our Hostë shall begin,
For he is most enveloped in sin.
Come forth, Sir Host, and offer first anon,
And thou shalt kiss; the relics every one,
Yea, for a groat; unbuckle anon thy purse.

“Nay, nay,” quoth he, “then have I Christë’s curse!
Let be,” quoth he, “it shall not be, so thé ’ch.³⁶⁷¹
Thou wouldest make me kiss thine oldë breech,
And swear it were a relic of a saint,
Though it were with thy fundament depaint’.
But, by the cross which that Saint Helen fand,³⁶⁷²
I would I had thy coilons in mine hand,
Instead of relics, or of sanctuary.
Let cut them off, I will thee help them carry;
They shall be shrined in a hoggë’s tord.”
The Pardoner answered not one word;
So wroth he was, no wordë would he say.
“Now,” quoth our Host, “I will no longer play
With thee, nor with none other angry man.”
But right anon the worthy Knight began
(When that he saw that all the people lough³⁶⁷³),
“No more of this, for it is right enough.
Sir Pardoner, be merry and glad of cheer;
And ye, Sir Host, that be to me so dear,
I pray you that ye kiss the Pardoner;
And, Pardoner, I pray thee draw thee ner,³⁶⁷⁴
And as we diddë, let us laugh and play.”
Anon they kiss’d, and rodë forth their way.

THE SHIPMAN'S TALE³⁶⁷⁵

THE PROLOGUE

Our Host upon his stirrups stood anon,
And saidë; "Good men, hearken every one,
This was a thrifty³⁶⁷⁶ talë for the nones.
Sir Parish Priest," quoth he, "for Goddë's bones,
Tell us a tale, as was thy forword yore:³⁶⁷⁷
I see well that ye learned men in lore
Can³⁶⁷⁸ muchë good, by Goddë's dignity."
The Parson him answér'd, "*Ben'dicite!*
What ails the man, so sinfully to swear?"
Our Host answér'd, "O Jankin, be ye there?
Now, good men," quoth our Host, "hearken to me.
I smell a Lollard³⁶⁷⁹ in the wind," quoth he.
"Abide, for Goddë's dignë³⁶⁸⁰ passiön,
For we shall have a predication:
This Lollard here will preachen us somewhat."
"Nay, by my father's soul, that shall he not,
Saidë the Shipman; "Here shall he not preach,
He shall no gospel glosë³⁶⁸¹ here nor teach.
We all believe in the great God," quoth he.
"He wouldë sowë some difficultý,
Or springë cockle³⁶⁸² in our cleanë corn.

And therefore, Host, I warnë thee befor,
My jolly body shall a talë tell,
And I shall clinkë you so merry a bell,
That I shall waken all this company;
But it shall not be of philosophy,
Nor of physíc, nor termës quaint of law;
There is but little Latin in my maw.”³⁶⁸³

THE TALE

A Merchant whilom dwell’d at Saint Deníse,
That richë was, for which men held him wise.
A wife he had of excellent beauty,
And companiable and revellous³⁶⁸⁴ was she,
Which is a thing that causeth more dispence
Than worth is all the cheer and reverence
That men them do at feastës and at dances.
Such salutións and countenánces
Passen, as doth the shadow on the wall;
Put woe is him that payë must for all.
The sely³⁶⁸⁵ husband algate³⁶⁸⁶ he must pay,
He must us³⁶⁸⁷ clothe and he must us array
All for his owen worship richëly:
In which array we dancë jollily.
And if that he may not, paráventure,
Or ellës list not such dispence endure,
But thinketh it is wasted and y-lost,
Then must another payë for our cost,
Or lend us gold, and that is perilous.
This noble merchant held a noble house;
For which he had all day so great repair,³⁶⁸⁸

For his largesse, and for his wife was fair,
That wonder is; but hearken to my tale.
Amongës all these guestës great and smale,
There was a monk, a fair man and a bold,
I trow a thirty winter he was old,
That ever-in-one³⁶⁸⁹ was drawing to that place.
This youngë monk, that was so fair of face,
Acquainted was so with this goodë man,
Since that their firstë knowledgë began,
That in his house as familiár was he
As it is possible any friend to be.
And, for as muchel as this goodë man,
And eke this monk of which that I began,
Were both the two y-born in one villáge,
The monk him claimed, as for cousinage,³⁶⁹⁰
And he again him said not oncë nay,
But was as glad thereof as fowl of day;
For to his heart it was a great pleasánce.
Thus be they knit with etern' allíance,
And each of them gan other to assure
Of brotherhood while that their life may dure.
Free was Dan³⁶⁹¹ John, and namely³⁶⁹² of dispence,
As in that house, and full of diligence
To do pleasánce, and also great costáge;³⁶⁹³
He not forgot to give the leastë page
In all that house; but, after their degree,
He gave the lord, and sithen³⁶⁹⁴ his meinie,³⁶⁹⁵
When that he came, some manner honest thing;
For which they were as glad of his comíng
As fowl is fain when that the sun upriseth.
No more of this as now, for it sufficeth.

But so befell, this merchant on a day
Shope³⁶⁹⁶ him to makë ready his array
Toward the town of Bruges for to fare,
To buyë there a portiön of ware;³⁶⁹⁷
For which he hath to Paris sent anon

A messenger, and prayed hath Dan John
That he should come to Saint Denís, and play³⁶⁹⁸
With him, and with his wife, a day or tway,
Ere he to Bruges went, in allë wise.
This noble monk, of which I you devise,³⁶⁹⁹
Had of his abbot, as him list, licence,
(Because he was a man of high prudence,
And eke an officer out for to ride,
To see their granges and their barnës wide);³⁷⁰⁰
And unto Saint Denis he came anon.
Who was so welcome as my lord Dan John,
Our dearë cousin, full of courtesy?
With him he brought a jub³⁷⁰¹ of malvesie,³⁷⁰²
And eke another full of fine vernage,³⁷⁰³
And volatile,³⁷⁰⁴ as aye was his uságe:
And thus I let them eat, and drink, and play,
This merchant and this monk, a day or tway.
The thirdë day the merchant up ariseth,
And on his needës sadly him adviseth;³⁷⁰⁵
And up into his countour-house³⁷⁰⁶ went he,
To reckon with himself as well may be,
Of thilkë³⁷⁰⁷ year, how that it with him stood,
And how that he dispended bad his good,
And if that he increased were or non.
His bookës and his baggës many a one
He laid before him on his counting-board.
Full richë was his treasure and his hoard;
For which full fast his countour door he shet;
And eke he would that no man should him let³⁷⁰⁸
Of his accountës, for the meanë time:
And thus he sat, till it was passed prime.
Dan John was risen in the morn also,
And in the garden walked to and fro,
And had his thingës said full courteously.
The good wife came walking full privily
Into the garden, where he walked soft,

And him saluted, as she had done oft;
A maiden child came in her company,
Which as her list she might govérn and gie,³⁷⁰⁹
For yet under the yardë³⁷¹⁰ was the maid.
“O dearë cousin mine, Dan John,” she said,
“What aileth you so rath³⁷¹¹ for to arise?”
“Niecë,” quoth he, “it ought enough suffice
Five hourës for to sleep upon a night;
But³⁷¹² it were for an old appalled³⁷¹³ wight,
As be these wedded men, that lie and dare,³⁷¹⁴
As in a formë sits a weary hare,
Allë forstraught³⁷¹⁵ with houndës great and smale;
But, dearë niecë, why be ye so pale?
I trowë certes that our goodë man
Hath you so laboured, since this night began,
That you were need to restë hastily.”
And with that word he laugh’d full merrily,
And of his owen thought he wax’d all red.
This fairë wife gan for to shake her head,
And saidë thus; “Yea, God wot all,” quoth she.
“Nay, cousin mine, it stands not so with me;
For by that God, that gave me soul and life,
In all the realm of France is there no wife
That lessë lust hath to that sorry play;
For I may sing alas and well-away!
That I was born; but to no wight,” quoth she,
“Dare I not tell how that it stands with me.
Wherefore I think out of this land to wend,
Or ellës of myself to make an end,
So full am I of dread and eke of care.”

This monk began upon this wife to stare,
And said, “Alas! my niecë, God forbid
That ye for any sorrow, or any dread,
Fordo³⁷¹⁶ yourself: but tellë me your grief,
Paráventure I may, in your mischíef,³⁷¹⁷
Counsel or help; and therefore tellë me

All your annoy, for it shall be secré.
For on my portos³⁷¹⁸ here I make an oath,
That never in my life, for lief nor loth,³⁷¹⁹
Ne shall I of no counsel you bewray.”
“The same again to you,” quoth she, “I say.
By God and by this portos I you swear,
Though men me woulden all in pieces tear,
Ne shall I never, for³⁷²⁰ to go to hell,
Bewray one word of thing that ye me tell,
For no cousinage, nor alliáncé,
But verily for love and affiáncé.”³⁷²¹
Thus be they sworn, and thereupon they kiss’d,
And each of them told other what them list.
“Cousin,” quoth she, “if that I haddë space,
As I have none, and namely³⁷²² in this place,
Then would I tell a legend of my life,
What I have suffer’d since I was a wife
With mine husbánd, all³⁷²³ be he your cousin.
“Nay,” quoth this monk, “by God and Saint Martín,
He is no morë cousin unto me,
Than is the leaf that hangeth on the tree;
I call him so, by Saint Denis of France,
To have the morë cause of áacquaintáncé
Of you, which I have loved specially
Aboven allë women sickerly,³⁷²⁴
This swear I you on my professioún;³⁷²⁵
Tell me your grief, lest that he come adown,
And hasten you, and go away anon.”
“My dearë love,” quoth she, “O my Dan John,
Full lief³⁷²⁶ were me this counsel for to hide,
But out it must, I may no more abide.
My husband is to me the worstë man
That ever was since that the world began;
But since I am a wife, it sits³⁷²⁷ not me
To tellë no wight of our privity,
Neither in bed, nor in none other place:

God shield³⁷²⁸ I shouldë tell it for his grace;
A wifë shall not say of her husbánd
But all honoúr, as I can understand;
Save unto you thus much I tellë shall;
As help me God, he is nought worth at all,
In no degree, the value of a fly.
But yet me grieveth most his niggardý.³⁷²⁹
And well ye wot, that women naturally
Desire thingës six, as well as I.
They wouldë that their husbands shouldë be
Hardy,³⁷³⁰ and wise, and rich, and thereto free,
And buxom³⁷³¹ to his wife, and fresh in bed.
But, by that ilkë³⁷³² Lord that for us bled,
For his honoúr myself for to array,
On Sunday next I mustë needës pay
A hundred francs, or ellës am I lorn.³⁷³³
Yet were me lever³⁷³⁴ that I were unborn,
Than me were done slander or villainý.
And if mine husband eke might it espy,
I were but lost; and therefore I you pray,
Lend me this sum, or ellës must I dey.³⁷³⁵
Dan John, I say, lend me these hundred francs;
Pardie, I will not failë you, my thanks,³⁷³⁶
If that you list to do that I you pray;
For at a certain day I will you pay,
And do to you what pleasance and servíce
That I may do, right as you list devise.
And but³⁷³⁷ I do, God take on me vengeánce,
As foul as e'er had Ganilion³⁷³⁸ of France.”

This gentle monk answér'd in this mannére;
“Now truëly, mine owen lady dear,
I have,” quoth he, “on you so greatë ruth,³⁷³⁹
That I you swear, and plightë you my truth,
That when your husband is to Flanders fare,³⁷⁴⁰
I will deliver you out of this care,

For I will bringë you a hundred francs.”
And with that word he caught her by the flanks,
And her embraced hard, and kissed her oft.
“Go now your way,” quoth he, “all still and soft,
And let us dine as soon as that ye may,
For by my calinder ’tis prime of day;
Go now, and be as true as I shall be.”
“Now ellës God forbiddë, Sir,” quoth she;
And forth she went, as jolly as a pie,
And bade the cookës that they should them hie,³⁷⁴¹
So that men mightë dine, and that anon.
Up to her husband is this wifë gone,
And knocked at his contour boldëly.
“*Qui est la?*”³⁷⁴² quoth he. “Peter! it am I,”
Quoth she; “What, Sir, how longë all will ye fast?
How longë time will ye reckon and cast
Your summës, and your bookës, and your things?
The devil have part of all such reckonings!
Ye have enough, pardie, of Goddë’s sond.”³⁷⁴³
Come down to-day, and let your baggës stond.
Ne be ye not ashamed, that Dan John
Shall fasting all this day elengë³⁷⁴⁴ gon?
What? let us hear a mass, and go we dine.”
“Wife,” quoth this man, “little canst thou divine
The curious businessë that we have;
For of us chapmen, all so God me save,
And by that lord that cleped is Saint Ive,
Scarcely amongës twenty, ten shall thrive
Continually, lasting unto our age.
We may well makë cheer and good viságe,
And drivë forth the world as it may be,
And keepen our estate in privity,
Till we be dead, or ellës that we play
A pilgrimage, or go out of the way.
And therefore have I great necessity
Upon this quaint³⁷⁴⁵ world to advisë³⁷⁴⁶ me.

For evermore must we stand in dread
Of hap and fortune in our chapmanhead.³⁷⁴⁷
To Flanders will I go to-morrow at day,
And come again as soon as e'er I may:
For which, my dearë wife, I thee beseeke
As be to every wight buxom³⁷⁴⁸ and meek,
And for to keep our good be curious,
And honestly governë well our house.
Thou hast enough, in every manner wise,
That to a thrifty household may suffice.
Thee lacketh none array, nor no vitail;
Of silver in thy purse thou shalt not fail."

And with that word his contour door he shet,³⁷⁴⁹
And down he went; no longer would he let;³⁷⁵⁰
And hastily a mass was therë said,
And speedily the tables werë laid,
And to the dinner fastë they them sped,
And richëly this monk the chapman fed.
And after dinner Dan John soberly
This chapman took apart, and privily
He said him thus: "Cousin, it standeth so,
That, well I see, to Bruges ye will go;
God and Saint Austin speedë you and guide.
I pray you, cousin, wisely that ye ride:
Governë you also of your diët
Attemperly,³⁷⁵¹ and namely³⁷⁵² in this heat.
Betwixt us two needeth no strangë fare;³⁷⁵³
Farewell, couśín, God shieldë you from care.
If any thing there be, by day or night,
If it lie in my power and my might,
That ye me will command in any wise,
It shall be done, right as ye will devise.
But one thing ere ye go, if it may be;
I wouldë pray you for to lend to me
A hundred frankës, for a week or twy,
For certain beastës that I mustë buy,

To storë with³⁷⁵⁴ a placë that is ours
(God help me so, I would that it were yours);
I shall not failë surely of my day,
Not for a thousand francs, a milë way.
But let this thing be secret, I you pray;
For yet tonight these beastës must I buy.
And fare now well, mine owen cousin dear;
*Grand mercy*³⁷⁵⁵ of your cost and of your cheer.”

This noble merchant gentilly³⁷⁵⁶ anon
Answér'd and said, “O cousin mine, Dan John,
Now sickerly this is a small request:
My gold is yourës, when that it you lest,
And not only my gold, but my chaffare;³⁷⁵⁷
Take what you list, God shieldë that ye spare.³⁷⁵⁸
But one thing is, ye know it well enow
Of chapmen, that their money is their plough.
We may creancë³⁷⁵⁹ while we have a name,
But goldless for to be it is no game.
Pay it again when it lies in your ease;
After my might full fain would I you please.”

These hundred frankës set he forth anon,
And privily he took them to Dan John;
No wight in all this world wist of this loan,
Saving the merchant and Dan John alone.
They drink, and speak, and roam a while, and play,
Till that Dan John rode unto his abbay.
The morrow came, and forth this merchant rideth
To Flanders-ward, his prentice well him guideth,
Till he came unto Bruges merrily.
Now went this merchant fast and busily
About his need, and buyed and creanced;
He neither played at the dice, nor danced;
But as a merchant, shortly for to tell,
He led his life; and there I let him dwell.

The Sunday next³⁷⁶⁰ the merchant was y-gone,
To Saint Denís y-comen is Dan John,

With crown and beard all fresh and newly shave,
In all the house was not so little a knave,³⁷⁶¹
Nor no wight ellës that was not full fain
For that my lord Dan John was come again.
And shortly to the point right for to gon,
The fairë wife accorded with Dan John,
That for these hundred francs he should all night
Havë her in his armës bolt upright;
And this accord performed was in deed.
In mirth all night a busy life they lead,
Till it was day, that Dan John went his way,
And bade the meinie³⁷⁶² “Farewell; have good day.”
For none of them, nor no wight in the town,
Had of Dan John right no suspicioún;
And forth he rodë home to his abbay,
Or where him list; no more of him I say.

The merchant, when that ended was the fair,
To Saint Denís he gan for to repair,
And with his wife he madë feast and cheer,
And toldë her that chaffare³⁷⁶³ was so dear,
That needës must he make a chevisance;³⁷⁶⁴
For he was bound in a recognisance
To payë twenty thousand shields³⁷⁶⁵ anon.
For which this merchant is to Paris gone,
To borrow of certain friendës that he had
A certain francs, and some with him he lad.³⁷⁶⁶
And when that he was come into the town,
For great cherté³⁷⁶⁷ and great affectioún
Unto Dan John he wentë first to play;
Not for to borrow of him no monéy,
Bat for to weet³⁷⁶⁸ and see of his welfare,
And for to tellë him of his chaffare,
As friendës do, when they be met in fere.³⁷⁶⁹
Dan John him madë feast and merry cheer;
And he him told again full specially,
How he had well y-bought and graciously

(Thanked be God) all whole his merchandise;
Save that he must, in allë manner wise,
Maken a chevisance, as for his best;
And then he shouldë be in joy and rest.
Dan John answered, "Certes, I am fain³⁷⁷⁰
That ye in health be comë home again:
And if that I were rich, as have I bliss,
Of twenty thousand shields should ye not miss,
For ye so kindëly the other day
Lentë me gold, and as I can and may
I thankë you, by God and by Saint Jame.
But natheless I took unto our Dame,
Your wife at home, the samë gold again,
Upon your bench; she wot it well, certáin,
By certain tokens that I can her tell
Now, by your leave, I may no longer dwell;
Our abbot will out of this town anon,
And in his company I mustë gon.
Greet well our Dame, mine owen niecë sweet,
And farewell, dearë cousin, till we meet."

This merchant, which that was full ware and wise,
Creanced hath, and paid eke in París
To certain Lombards ready in their hond
The sum of gold, and got of them his bond,
And home he went, merry as a popinjay.
For well he knew he stood in such array
That needës must he win in that voyáge³⁷⁷¹
A thousand francs, above all his costáge.³⁷⁷²
His wife full ready met him at the gate,
As she was wont of old uságe algate;³⁷⁷³
And all that night in mirthë they beset;³⁷⁷⁴
For he was rich, and clearly out of debt.
When it was day, the merchant gan embrace
His wife all new, and kiss'd her in her face,
And up he went, and maked it full tough.
"No more," quoth she, "by God ye have enough;"

And wantonly again with him she play'd,
Till at the last this merchant to her said.
"By God," quoth he, "I am a little wroth
With you, my wife, although it be me loth;
And wot ye why? by God, as that I guess,
That ye have made a manner strangeness³⁷⁷⁵
Betwixtē me and my cousín, Dan John.
Ye should have warned me, ere I had gone,
That he you had a hundred frankēs paid
By ready token; he had him evil apaid³⁷⁷⁶
For that I to him spake of chevisance,³⁷⁷⁷
(He seemed so as by his countenance);
But natheless, by God of heaven king,
I thoughtē not to ask of him no thing.
I pray thee, wife, do thou no morē so.
Tell me alway, ere that I from thee go,
If any debtor hath in mine absēnce
Y-paid thee, lest through thy negligence
I might him ask a thing that he hath paid."

This wife was not afeared nor afraid,
But boldēly she said, and that anon;
"Mary! I defy that false monk Dan John,
I keep³⁷⁷⁸ not of his tokens never a deal:³⁷⁷⁹
He took me certain gold, I wot it well.—
What? evil thedom³⁷⁸⁰ on his monkē's snout!—
For, God it wot, I ween'd withoutē doubt
That he had given it me, because of you,
To do therewith mine honour and my prow,³⁷⁸¹
For cousinage, and eke for *bellē* cheer
That he hath had full oftentimē here.
But since I see I stand in such disjoint,³⁷⁸²
I will answér you shortly to the point.
Ye have more slackē debtors than am I;
For I will pay you well and readily,
From day to day, and if so be I fail,
I am your wife, score it upon my tail,

And I shall pay as soon as ever I may.
For, by my troth, I have on mine array,
And not in waste, bestow'd it every deal.
And, for I have bestowed it so well,
For your honoúr, for Goddë's sake I say,
As be not wroth, but let us laugh and play.
Ye shall my jolly body have to wed;³⁷⁸³
By God, I will not pay you but in bed;
Forgive it me, mine owen spousë dear;
Turn hitherward, and makë better cheer."
The merchant saw none other remedy;
And for to chide, it were but a follý,
Since that the thing might not amended be.
"Now, wife," he said, "and I forgive it thee;
But by thy lifë be no more so large;³⁷⁸⁴
Keep better my good, this give I thee in charge."
Thus endeth now my tale; and God us send
Taling enough, until our livës' end!

THE PRIORESS'S TALE

THE PROLOGUE

“Well said, by *corpus Domini*,” quoth our Host;
“Now longë may’st thou sailë by the coast,
Thou gentle Master, gentle Marinére.
God give the monk a thousand last quad year!³⁷⁸⁵
Aha! fellows, beware of such a jape.³⁷⁸⁶
The monk put in the mannë’s hood an ape,³⁷⁸⁷
And in his wifë’s eke, by Saint Austin.
Drawë no monkës more into your inn.
But now pass over, and let us seek about,
Who shall now tellë first of all this rout
Another tale;” and with that word he said,
As courteously as it had been a maid;
“My Lady Prioressë, by your leave,
So that I wist I shouldë you not grieve,³⁷⁸⁸
I wouldë deemë³⁷⁸⁹ that ye tellë should
A talë next, if so were that ye would.
Now will ye vouchësafe, my lady dear?”
“Gladly,” quoth she; and said as ye shall hear.

THE TALE³⁷⁹⁰

O Lord our Lord! thy name how marvellous
Is in this largë world y-spread!³⁷⁹¹ (quoth she)
For not only thy laudë³⁷⁹² precious
Performed is by men of high degree,
But by the mouth of children thy bounté
Performed is, for on the breast sucking
Sometimës showë they thy herying.³⁷⁹³

Wherefore in laud, as I best can or may
Of thee, and of the whitë lily flow'r
Which that thee bare, and is a maid alway,
To tell a story I will do my laboúr;
Not that I may increasë her honoúr,
For she herselven is honoúr and root
Of bounté,³⁷⁹⁴ next her son, and soulës' boot.³⁷⁹⁵

O mother maid, O maid and mother free!³⁷⁹⁶
O bush unburnt, burning in Moses' sight,
That ravished'st down from the deity,
Through thy humbless, the ghost that in thee light;³⁷⁹⁷
Of whose virtúe, when he thine heartë light,³⁷⁹⁸
Conceived was the Father's sapience;
Help me to tell it to thy reverence.

Lady! thy bounty, thy magnificence,
Thy virtue, and thy great humility,
There may no tongue express in no science:
For sometimes, Lady! ere men pray to thee,
Thou go'st before, of thy benignity,
And gettest us the light, through thy prayére,
To guiden us unto thy son so dear.

My conning³⁷⁹⁹ is so weak, O blissful queen,
For to declarë thy great worthiness,
That I not may the weight of it sustene;

But as a child of twelvemonth old, or less,
That can unnethës³⁸⁰⁰ any word express,
Right so fare I; and therefore, I you pray,
Guidë my song that I shall of you say.

There was in Asia, in a great city,
Amongës Christian folk, a Jewery,³⁸⁰¹
Sustained by a lord of that countrý,
For foul usure, and lucre of villainy,
Hateful to Christ, and to his company;
And through the street men mightë ride and wend,³⁸⁰²
For it was free, and open at each end.

A little school of Christian folk there stood
Down at the farther end, in which there were
Children an heap y-come of Christian blood,
That learned in that schoolë year by year
Such manner doctrine as men used there;
This is to say, to singen and to read,
As smallë children do in their childhood.

Among these children was a widow's son,
A little clergion,³⁸⁰³ seven year of age,
That day by day to scholay was his won,³⁸⁰⁴
And eke also, whereso he saw th' image
Of Christë's mother, had he in uságe,
As him was taught, to kneel adown, and say
Ave Maria, as he went by the way.

Thus had this widow her little son y-taught
Our blissful Lady, Christë's mother dear,
To worship aye, and he forgot it not;
For sely³⁸⁰⁵ child will always soonë lear.³⁸⁰⁶
But aye when I remember on this mattére,
Saint Nicholas³⁸⁰⁷ stands ever in my presence;
For he so young to Christ did reverence.

This little child his little book learning,
As he sat in the school at his primére,
He *Alma redemptoris*³⁸⁰⁸ heardë sing,

As children learned their antiphonere;³⁸⁰⁹
And as he durst, he drew him nere and nere,³⁸¹⁰
And hearken'd aye the wordës and the note,
Till he the firstë verse knew all by rote.

Nought wist he what this Latin was to say,³⁸¹¹
For he so young and tender was of age;
But on a day his fellow gan he pray
To éxpound him this song in his languáge,
Or tell him why this song was in uságe:
This pray'd he him to construe and declare,
Full oftentime upon his kneës bare.

His fellow, which that elder was than he,
Answér'd him thus: "This song, I have heard say,
Was maked of our blissful Lady free,
Her to salute, and ekë her to pray
To be our help and succour when we dey.³⁸¹²
I can no more expound in this mattére:
I learnë song, I know but small grammére."

"And is this song y-made in reverence
Of Christë's mother?" said this innocent;
"Now certes I will do my diligence
To conne³⁸¹³ it all, ere Christëmas be went;
Though that I for my primer shall be shent,³⁸¹⁴
And shall be beaten thriës in an hour,
I will it conne, our Lady to honoúr."

His fellow taught him homeward³⁸¹⁵ privily
From day to day, till he coud³⁸¹⁶ it by rote,
And then he sang it well and boldëly
From word to word according with the note;
Twice in a day it passed through his throat;
To schoolë-ward, and homeward when he went;
On Christ's mother was set all his intent.

As I have said, throughout the Jewery,
This little child, as he came to and fro,
Full merrily then would he sing and cry,
O Alma redemptoris, evermo';

The sweetness hath his heartë pierced so
Of Christë's mother, that to her to pray
He cannot stint³⁸¹⁷ of singing by the way.

Our firstë foe, the serpent Satanas,
That hath in Jewës' heart his waspë's nest,
Upswell'd and said, "O Hebrew people, alas!
Is this to you a thing that is honést,³⁸¹⁸
That such a boy shall walken as him lest
In your despite, and sing of such senténce,
Which is against your lawë's reverence?"

From thencëforth the Jewës have conspired
This innocent out of the world to chase;
A homicidë thereto have they hired,
That in an alley had a privy place,
And, as the child gan forth by for to pace,
This cursed Jew him hent,³⁸¹⁹ and held him fast,
And cut his throat, and in a pit him cast.

I say that in a wardrobe³⁸²⁰ they him threw,
Where as the Jewës purged their entrail.
O cursed folk! O Herodës all new!
What may your evil intentë you avail?
Murder will out, certáin it will not fail,
And namely³⁸²¹ where th' honoúr of God shall spread;
The blood out crieth on your cursed deed.

O martyr souted³⁸²² to virginity,
Now may'st thou sing, and follow ever-in-one³⁸²³
The whitë Lamb celestial (quoth she),
Of which the great Evangelist Saint John
In Patmos wrote, which saith that they that gon
Before this Lamb, and sing a song all new,
That never fleshly woman they ne knew.³⁸²⁴

This poorë widow waited all that night
After her little child, but he came not;
For which, as soon as it was dayë's light,
With facë pale, in dread and busy thought,
She hath at school and ellëswhere him sought,

Till finally she gan so far espy,
That he was last seen in the Jewerý.

With mother's pity in her breast enclosed,
She went, as she were half out of her mind,
To every placë, where she hath supposed
By likelihood her little child to find:
And ever on Christ's mother meek and kind
She cried, and at the lastë thus she wrought,
Among the cursed Jewës she him sought.

She freined, ³⁸²⁵ and she prayed piteously
To every Jew that dwelled in that place,
To tell her, if her childë went thereby;
They saidë, "Nay;" but Jesus of his grace
Gave in her thought, within a little space,
That in that place after her son she cried,
Where he was cast into a pit beside.

O greatë God, that pérformest thy laud
By mouth of innocents, lo here thy might!
This gem of chastity, this emeraud, ³⁸²⁶
And eke of martyrdom the ruby bright,
Where he with throat y-carven ³⁸²⁷ lay upright,
He *Alma redemptoris* gan to sing
So loud, that all the place began to ring.

The Christian folk, that through the streetë went,
In camë, for to wonder on this thing:
And hastily they for the provost sent.
He came anon withoutë tarrying,
And heried ³⁸²⁸ Christ, that is of heaven king,
And eke his mother, honour of mankind;
And after that the Jewës let ³⁸²⁹ he bind.

With torment, and with shameful death each one
The provost did ³⁸³⁰ these Jewës for to sterve ³⁸³¹
That of this murder wist, and that anon;
He wouldë no such cursedness observe; ³⁸³²
Evil shall have that evil will deserve;
Therefore with horses wild he did them draw,

The child, with piteous lamentatiön,
Was taken up, singing his song alway:
And with honoúr and great processión,
They carry him unto the next abbay.
His mother swooning by the bierë lay;
Unnethës³⁸³³ might the people that were there
This newë Rachel bringë from his bier.

This abbot, which that was a holy man,
As monkës be, or ellës ought to be,
This youngë child to conjure he began,
And said; “O dearë child! I halsë³⁸₃₅ thee,
In virtue of the holy Trinity;
Tell me what is thy cause for to sing,
Since that thy throat is cut, to my seemíng.”

“This well^{[3838](#)} of mercy, Christë’s mother sweet,
I loved alway, after my conning:^{[3839](#)}
And when that I my lifë should forlete,^{[3840](#)}
To me she came, and bade me for to sing
This anthem verily in my dying,
As ye have heard; and, when that I had sung,
Me thought she laid a grain upon my tongue.

“Wherefore I sing, and sing I must certáin,
In honour of that blissful maiden free,
Till from my tongue off taken is the grain.
And after that thus saidë she to me;
‘My little child, then will I fetchë thee,
When that the grain is from thy tonguë take:
Be not aghast,³⁸⁴¹ I will thee not forsake.’”

This holy monk, this abbot him mean I,
His tongue out caught, and took away the grain;
And he gave up the ghost full softëly.
And when this abbot had this wonder seen,
His saltë tearës trickled down as rain:
And groff³⁸⁴² he fell all flat upon the ground,
And still he lay, as he had been y-bound.

The convent³⁸⁴³ lay eke on the pavëment
Weeping, and herying³⁸⁴⁴ Christ’s mother dear.
And after that they rose, and forth they went,
And took away this martyr from his bier,
And in a tomb of marble stonës clear
Enclosed they his little body sweet;
Where he is now, God lene³⁸⁴⁵ us for to meet.

O youngë Hugh of Lincoln!³⁸⁴⁶ slain also
With cursed Jewës—as it is notáble,
For it is but a little while ago—
Pray eke for us, we sinful folk unstable,
That, of his mercy, God so merciáble³⁸⁴⁷
On us his greatë mercy multiply,
For reverence of his mother Marý.

CHAUCER'S TALE OF SIR THOPAS

THE PROLOGUE³⁸⁴⁸

When said was this miracle, every man
As sober³⁸⁴⁹ was, that wonder was to see,
Till that our Host to jape³⁸⁵⁰ he began,
And then at erst³⁸⁵¹ he looked upon me,
And saidē thus; "What man art thou?" quoth he;
"Thou lookest as thou wouldest find an hare,
For ever on the ground I see thee stare.

"Approchē near, and look up merrily.
Now ware you, Sirs, and let this man have place.
He in the waist is shapen as well as I;³⁸⁵²
This were a puppet in an arm t' embrace
For any woman small and fair of face.
He seemeth elvish³⁸⁵³ by his countenance,
For unto no wight doth he dalliance.

"Say now somewhat, since other folk have said;
Tell us a tale of mirth, and that anon."

"Hostē," quoth I, "be not evil apaid,³⁸⁵⁴

For other talē certes can³⁸⁵⁵ I none,
But of a rhyme I learned yore³⁸⁵⁶ agone."

"Yea, that is good," quoth he; "now shall we hear
Some dainty thing, me thinketh by thy cheer."³⁸⁵⁷

THE TALE³⁸⁵⁸

Listen, lordings, in good intent,
And I will tell you *verament*³⁸⁵⁹
Of mirth and of solas,³⁸⁶⁰
All of a knight was fair and gent,³⁸⁶¹
In battle and in tournament,
His name was Sir Thopas.
Y-born he was in far countrý,
In Flanders, all beyond the sea,
At Popering³⁸⁶² in the place;
His father was a man full free,
And lord he was of that countrý,
As it was Goddë's grace.
Sir Thopas was a doughty swain,
White was his face as paindemain,³⁸⁶³
His lippës red as rose.
His rode³⁸⁶⁴ is like scarlét in grain,
And I you tell in good certáin
He had a seemly nose.
His hair, his beard, was like saffroún,
That to his girdle reach'd adown,
His shoes of cordëwane:³⁸⁶⁵
Of Bruges were his hosen brown;
His robë was of ciclatoún,³⁸⁶⁶
That costë many a jane.³⁸⁶⁷
He couldë hunt at the wild deer,
And ride on hawking for rivière³⁸⁶⁸
With gray goshawk on hand:
Thereto he was a good archére,
Of wrestling was there none his peer,
Where any ram³⁸⁶⁹ should stand.
Full many a maiden bright in bow'r

They mourned for him *par amour*,
When them were better sleep;
But he was chaste, and no lechoúr,
And sweet as is the bramble flow'r
That beareth the red heep.³⁸⁷⁰
And so it fell upon a day,
For sooth as I you tellë may,
Sir Thopas would out ride;
He worth³⁸⁷¹ upon his steedë gray,
And in his hand a launcëgay,³⁸⁷²
A long sword by his side.
He pricked through a fair forést,
Wherein is many a wildë beast,
Yea, bothë buck and hare;
And as he pricked north and east,
I tell it you, him had almest
Betid³⁸⁷³ a sorry care.
There sprangë herbës great and small,
The liquorice and the setëwall,³⁸⁷⁴
And many a clove-gilofre,³⁸⁷⁵
And nutëmeg to put in ale,
Whether it be moist³⁸⁷⁶ or stale,
Or for to lay in coffer.
The birdës sang, it is no nay,
The sperhawk³⁸⁷⁷ and the popinjay,
That joy it was to hear;
The throstle-cock made eke his lay,
The woodë-dove upon the spray
She sang full loud and clear.
Sir Thopas fell in love-longíng
All when he heard the throstle sing,
And prick'd as he were wood;³⁸⁷⁸
His fairë steed in his pricking
So sweated, that men might him wring,
His sidës were all blood.
Sir Thopas eke so weary was

For pricking on the softë grass,
So fierce was his coráge,³⁸⁷⁹
That down he laid him in that place,
To makë his steed some solace,
And gave him good foráge.
“Ah, Saint Marý, *ben'dicite*,
What aileth thilkë³⁸⁸⁰ love at me
To bindë me so sore?
Me dreamed all this night, pardie,
An elf-queen shall my leman³⁸⁸¹ be,
And sleep under my gore.³⁸⁸²
An elf-queen will I love, y-wis,³⁸⁸³
For in this world no woman is
Worthy to be my make
In town;
All other women I forsake,
And to an elf-queen I me take
By dale and eke by down.”
Into his saddle he clomb anon,
And pricked over stile and stone
An elf-queen for to spy,
Till he so long had ridden and gone,
That he found in a privy wonne³⁸⁸⁴
The country of Faerý,
So wild;
For in that country was there none
That to him durstë ride or gon,
Neither wife nor child.
Till that there came a great giaunt,
His namë was Sir Oliphaunt,³⁸⁸⁵
A perilous man of deed;
He saidë, “Child,³⁸⁸⁶ by Termagaunt,³⁸⁸⁷
But if³⁸⁸⁸ thou prick out of mine haunt,
Anon I slay thy steed
With mace.
Here is the Queen of Faëry,

With harp, and pipe, and symphony,
Dwelling in this place.”
The Child said, “All so may I thé, ³⁸⁸⁹
To-morrow will I meetë thee,
When I have mine armór;
And yet I hope, *par ma fay*,
That thou shalt with this launcëgay
Abyen³⁸⁹⁰ it full sore;
Thy maw³⁸⁹¹
Shall I pierce, if I may,
Ere it be fully prime of day,
For here thou shalt be slaw.”³⁸⁹²
Sir Thopas drew aback full fast;
This giant at him stonës cast
Out of a fell staff sling:
But fair escaped Child Thopas,
And all it was through Goddë’s grace,
And through his fair bearing.
Yet listen, lordings, to my tale,
Merrier than the nightingale,
For now I will you rown,³⁸⁹³
How Sir Thopas, with sidës smale,
Pricking over hill and dale,
Is come again to town.
His merry men commanded he
To makë him both game and glee;
For needës must he fight
With a giánt with headës three,
For paramour and jollity
Of one that shone full bright.
“Do³⁸⁹⁴ come,” he saidë, “my minstráles
And gestours³⁸⁹⁵ for to tellë tales.
Anon in mine armíng,
Of rómances that be royáls,³⁸⁹⁶
Of popës and of cardinals,
And eke of love-longíng.”

They fetch'd him first the sweetë wine,
And mead eke in a maseline,[3897](#)
And royal spicery;
Of ginger-bread that was full fine,
And liquorice and eke cumin,
With sugar that is trie.[3898](#)
He diddë,[3899](#) next his whitë lere,[3900](#)
Of cloth of lakë[3901](#) fine and clear,
A breech and eke a shirt;
And next his shirt an haketon,[3902](#)
And over that an habergeon,[3903](#)
For piercing of his heart;
And over that a fine hauberk,[3904](#)
Was all y-wrought of Jewës'[3905](#) werk,
Full strong it was of plate;
And over that his coat-armoúr,[3906](#)
As white as is the lily flow'r,
In which he would debate.[3907](#)
His shield was all of gold so red,
And therein was a boarë's head,
A charboucle[3908](#) beside;
And there he swore on ale and bread,
How that the giant should be dead,
Betide whatso betide.
His jambeaux[3909](#) were of cuirboully,[3910](#)
His swordë's sheath of ivory,
His helm of latoun[3911](#) bright,
His saddle was of rewel[3912](#) bone,
His bridle as the sunnë shone,
Or as the moonëlight.
His spearë was of fine cypress,
That bodeth war, and nothing peace;
The head full sharp y-ground.
His steedë was all dapple gray,
It went an amble in the way

Full softely and round
In land.

Lo, Lordës mine, here is a fytt;³⁹¹³
If ye will any more of it,
To tell it will I fand.³⁹¹⁴

Now hold your mouth for charity,
Bothë knight and lady free,
And hearken to my spell;³⁹¹⁵
Of battle and of chivalry,
Of ladies' love and druerie,³⁹¹⁶
Anon I will you tell.

Men speak of rómances of price³⁹¹⁷
Of Horn Child, and of Ipotis,
Of Bevis, and Sir Guy,³⁹¹⁸
Of Sir Libeux,³⁹¹⁹ and Pleindamour,
But Sir Thopas, he bears the flow'r
Of royal chivalry.

His goodë steed he all bestrode,
And forth upon his way he glode,³⁹²⁰
As sparkle out of brand;³⁹²¹
Upon his crest he bare a tow'r,
And therein stick'd a lily flow'r;

God shield his corse from shand!³⁹²²
And, for he was a knight aantroús,³⁹²³
He wouldë sleepen in none house,
But liggen³⁹²⁴ in his hood,
His brightë helm was his wangér,³⁹²⁵
And by him baited his destrér³⁹²⁶

Of herbës fine and good.
Himself drank water of the well,
As did the knight Sir Percivel,³⁹²⁷
So worthy under weed;
Till on a day—

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CHAUCER'S TALE OF MELIBOEUS

THE PROLOGUE

“No more of this, for Goddē’s dignity!”
Quoth ourē Hostē; “for thou makest me
So weary of thy very lewēdness,³⁹²⁸
That, all so wisly³⁹²⁹ God my soulē bless,
Mine earēs achē for thy drafty³⁹³⁰ speech.
Now such a rhyme the devil I betече:³⁹³¹
This may well be rhyme doggerel,” quoth he.
“Why so?” quoth I; “why wilt thou lettē³⁹³² me
More of my tale than any other man,
Since that it is the best rhyme that I can?”
“By God!” quoth he, “for, plainly at one word,
Thy drafty rhyming is not worth a tord:
Thou dost naught ellēs but dispendest³⁹³³ time.
Sir, at one word, thou shalt no longer rhyme.
Let see whe’er³⁹³⁴ thou canst tellen aught in gest,³⁹³⁵
Or tell in prosē somewhat, at the least,
In which there be some mirth or some doctríne.”³⁹³⁶
“Gladly,” quoth I, “by Goddē’s sweetē pine,³⁹³⁷
I will you tell a little thing in prose,
That oughtē likē you,³⁹³⁸ as I suppose,

Or else certés ye be too dangerous.³⁹³⁹
It is a moral talë virtuous,
All be it³⁹⁴⁰ told sometimes in sundry wise
By sundry folk, as I shall you devise.
As thus, ye wot that ev'ry Evangelist,
That telleth us the pain³⁹⁴¹ of Jesus Christ,
He saith not all thing as his fellow doth;
But natheless their sentence is all soth,³⁹⁴²
And all accorden as in their senténce,³⁹⁴³
All be there in their telling differénce;
For some of them say more, and some say less,
When they his piteous passiön express;
I mean of Mark and Matthew, Luke and John;
But doubtëless their sentence is all one.
Therefore, lordingës all, I you beseech,
If that ye think I vary in my speech,
As thus, though that I tellë some deal more
Of proverbës, than ye have heard before
Comprehended in this little treatise here,
T' enforcë with³⁹⁴⁴ the effect of my mattére,
And though I not the same wordës say
As ye have heard, yet to you all I pray
Blame me not; for as in my senténce
Shall ye nowhere findë no differénce
From the senténce of thilkë³⁹⁴⁵ treatise lite,³⁹⁴⁶
After the which this merry tale I write.
And therefore hearken to what I shall say,
And let me tellen all my tale, I pray."

THE TALE³⁹⁴⁷

A young man called Meliboeus, mighty and rich, begat upon his wife, that callèd was Prudence, a daughter which that callèd was Sophia. Upon a day befell, that he for his disport went into the fields him to play. His wife and eke his daughter hath he left within his house, of which the doors were fast shut. Three of his old foes have it espied, and set ladders to the walls of his house, and by the windows be entered, and beaten his wife, and wounded his daughter with five mortal wounds, in five sundry places; that is to say, in her feet, in her hands, in her ears, in her nose, and in her mouth; and left her for dead, and went away. When Meliboeus returned was into his house, and saw all this mischief, he, like a man mad, rending his clothes, gan weep and cry. Prudence his wife, as farforth as she durst, besought him of his weeping for to stint: but not forthy³⁹⁴⁸ he gan to weep and cry ever longer the more.

This noble wife Prudence remembered her upon the sentence of Ovid, in his book that callèd is the “Remedy of Love,”³⁹⁴⁹ where he saith: He is a fool that disturbeth the mother to weep in the death of her child, till she have wept her fill, as for a certain time; and then shall a man do his diligence with amiable words her to recomfort and pray her of her weeping for to stint.³⁹⁵⁰ For which reason this noble wife Prudence suffered her husband for to weep and cry, as for a certain space; and when she saw her time, she said to him in this wise: “Alas! my lord,” quoth she, “why make ye yourself for to be like a fool? For sooth it appertaineth not to a wise man to make such a sorrow. Your daughter, with the grace of God, shall warish³⁹⁵¹ and escape. And all³⁹⁵² were it so that she right now were dead, ye ought not for her death yourself to destroy. Seneca saith, ‘The wise man shall not take too great discomfort for the death of his children, but certes he should suffer it in patience, as well as he abideth the death of his own proper person.’”

Meliboeus answered anon and said: “What man,” quoth he, “should of his weeping stint, that hath so great a cause to weep? Jesus Christ, our Lord, himself wept for the death of Lazarus his friend.” Prudence answered, “Certes, well I wot, attempered³⁹⁵³ weeping is nothing defended³⁹⁵⁴ to him that sorrowful is, among folk in sorrow but it is rather granted him to weep. The Apostle Paul unto

the Romans writeth, 'Man shall rejoice with them that make joy, and weep with such folk as weep.' But though temperate weeping be granted, outrageous weeping certes is defended. Measure of weeping should be conserved,³⁹⁵⁵ after the lore³⁹⁵⁶ that teacheth us Seneca. 'When that thy friend is dead,' quoth he, 'let not thine eyes too moist be of tears, nor too much dry: although the tears come to thine eyes, let them not fall. And when thou hast forgone³⁹⁵⁷ thy friend, do diligence to get again another friend: and this is more wisdom than to weep for thy friend which that thou hast lorn,³⁹⁵⁸ for therein is no boot.'³⁹⁵⁹ And therefore if ye govern you by sapience, put away sorrow out of your heart. Remember you that Jesus Sirach saith, 'A man that is joyous and glad in heart, it him conserveth flourishing in his age: but soothly a sorrowful heart maketh his bones dry.' He said eke thus, 'that sorrow in heart slayth full many a man.' Solomon saith 'that right as moths in the sheep's fleece annoy³⁹⁶⁰ to the clothes, and the small worms to the tree, right so annoyeth sorrow to the heart of man.' Wherefore us ought as well in the death of our children, as in the loss of our goods temporal, have patience. Remember you upon the patient Job, when he had lost his children and his temporal substance, and in his body endured and received full many a grievous tribulation, yet said he thus: 'Our Lord hath given it to me, our Lord hath bereft it me; right as our Lord would, right so be it done; blessed be the name of our Lord.'

To these foresaid things answered Meliboeus unto his wife Prudence: "All thy words," quoth he, "be true, and thereto³⁹⁶¹ profitable, but truly mine heart is troubled with this sorrow so grievously, that I know not what to do." "Let call," quoth Prudence, "thy true friends all, and thy lineage, which be wise, and tell to them your case, and hearken what they say in counselling, and govern you after their sentence."³⁹⁶² Solomon saith, 'Work all things by counsel, and thou shall never repent.' Then, by counsel of his wife Prudence, this Meliboeus let call³⁹⁶³ a great congregation of folk, as surgeons, physicians, old folk and young, and some of his old enemies reconciled (as by their semblance) to his love and to his grace; and therewithal there come some of his neighbours, that did him reverence more for dread than for love, as happeneth oft. There

come also full many subtle flatterers, and wise advocates learned in the law. And when these folk together assembled were, this Meliboeus in sorrowful wise showed them his case, and by the manner of his speech it seemed that in heart he bare a cruel ire, ready to do vengeance upon his foes, and suddenly desired that the war should begin, but nevertheless yet asked he their counsel in this matter. A surgeon, by licence and assent of such as were wise, up rose, and to Meliboeus said as ye may hear. "Sir," quoth he, "as to us surgeons appertaineth, that we do to every wight the best that we can, where as we be withholden,³⁹⁶⁴ and to our patient that we do no damage; wherefore it happeneth many a time and oft, that when two men have wounded each other, one same surgeon healeth them both; wherefore unto our art it is not pertinent to nurse war, nor parties to support.³⁹⁶⁵ But certes, as to the warishing³⁹⁶⁶ of your daughter, albeit so that perilously she be wounded, we shall do so attentive business from day to night, that, with the grace of God, she shall be whole and sound, as soon as is possible." Almost right in the same wise the physicians answered, save that they said a few words more: that right as maladies be cured by their contraries, right so shall man warish war [by peace]. His neighbours full of envy, his feigned friends that seemed reconciled, and his flatterers, made semblance of weeping, and impaired and aggregated much of this matter,³⁹⁶⁷ in praising greatly Meliboeus of might, of power, of riches, and of friends, despising the power of his adversaries: and said utterly, that he anon should wreak him on his foes, and begin war.

Up rose then an advocate that was wise, by leave and by counsel of other that were wise, and said, "Lordings, the need³⁹⁶⁸ for which we be assembled in this place, is a full heavy thing, and an high matter, because of the wrong and of the wickedness that hath been done, and eke by reason of the great damages that in time coming be possible to fall for the same cause, and eke by reason of the great riches and power of the parties both; for which reasons, it were a full great peril to err in this matter. Wherefore, Meliboeus, this is our sentence;³⁹⁶⁹ we counsel you, above all things, that right anon thou do thy diligence in keeping of thy body, in such a wise that thou want no espy³⁹⁷⁰ nor watch thy body to save. And after that, we

counsel that in thine house thou set sufficient garrison, so that they may as well thy body as thy house defend. But, certes, to move war or suddenly to do vengeance, we may not deem³⁹⁷¹ in so little time that it were profitable. Wherefore we ask leisure and space to have deliberation in this case to deem; for the common proverb saith thus; 'He that soon deemeth soon shall repent.' And eke men say, that that judge is wise, that soon understandeth a matter, and judgeth by leisure. For albeit so that all tarrying be annoying, algates³⁹⁷² it is no reproof³⁹⁷³ in giving of judgement, nor in vengeance taking, when it is sufficient and, reasonable. And that shewed our Lord Jesus Christ by example; for when that the woman that was taken in adultery was brought in his presence to know what should be done with her person, albeit that he wist well himself what he would answer, yet would he not answer suddenly, but he would have deliberation, and in the ground he wrote twice. And by these causes we ask deliberation and we shall then by the grace of God counsel the thing that shall be profitable."

Up started then the young folk anon at once, and the most part of that company have scorned these old wise men and begun to make noise and said, "Right as while that iron is hot men should smite, right so men should wreak their wrongs while that they be fresh and new:" and with loud voice they cried. "War! War!" Up rose then one of these old wise, and with his hand made countenance³⁹⁷⁴ that men should hold them still, and give him audience. "Lordings," quoth he, "there is full many a man that crieth, 'War! war!' that wot full little what war amounteth. War at his beginning hath so great an entering and so large, that every wight may enter when him liketh, and lightly³⁹⁷⁵ find war: but certes what end shall fall thereof it is not light to know. For soothly when war is once begun, there is full many a child unborn of his mother, that shall sterve³⁹⁷⁶ young by cause of that war, or else live in sorrow and die in wretchedness; and therefore, ere that any war be begun, men must have great counsel and great deliberation." And when this old man weened³⁹⁷⁷ to enforce his tale by reasons, well-nigh all at once began they to rise for to break his tale, and bid him full oft his words abridge. For soothly he that preacheth to them that list not hear his words, his

sermon them annoyeth. For Jesus Sirach saith, that music in weeping is a noyous³⁹⁷⁸ thing. This is to say, as much availeth to speak before folk to whom his speech annoyeth, as to sing before him that weepeth. And when this wise man saw that him wanted audience, all shamefast he sat him down again. For Solomon saith, “Where as thou mayest have no audience, enforce thee not to speak.” “I see well,” quoth this wise man, “that the common proverb is sooth, that good counsel wanteth, when it is most need.” Yet³⁹⁷⁹ had this Meliboeus in his council many folk, that privily in his ear counselled him certain thing, and counselled him the contrary in general audience. When Meliboeus had heard that the greatest part of his council were accorded³⁹⁸⁰ that he should make war, anon he consented to their counselling, and fully affirmed their sentence.³⁹⁸¹

[Dame Prudence, seeing her husband’s resolution thus taken, in full humble wise, when she saw her time, begins to counsel him against war, by a warning against haste in requital of either good or evil. Meliboeus tells her that he will not work by her counsel, because he should be held a fool if he rejected for her advice the opinion of so many wise men; because all women are bad; because it would seem that he had given her the mastery over him; and because she could not keep his secret, if he resolved to follow her advice. To these reasons Prudence answers that it is no folly to change counsel when things, or men’s judgements of them, change—especially to alter a resolution taken on the impulse of a great multitude of folk, where every man crieth and clattereth what him liketh; that if all women had been wicked, Jesus Christ would never have descended to be born of a woman, nor have showed himself first to a woman after his resurrection and that when Solomon said he had found no good woman, he meant that God alone was supremely good;³⁹⁸² that her husband would not seem to give her the mastery by following her counsel, for he had his own free choice in following or rejecting it; and that he knew well and had often tested her great silence, patience, and secrecy. And whereas he had quoted a saying, that in wicked counsel women vanquish men, she reminds him that she would counsel him against doing a wickedness on which he had set his mind, and cites instances to

show that many women have been and yet are full good, and their counsel wholesome and profitable. Lastly, she quotes the words of God himself, when he was about to make woman as an help meet for man; and promises that, if her husband will trust her counsel, she will restore to him his daughter whole and sound, and make him have honour in this case. Meliboeus answers that because of his wife's sweet words, and also because he has proved and assayed her great wisdom and her great truth, he will govern him by her counsel in all things. Thus encouraged, Prudence enters on a long discourse, full of learned citations, regarding the manner in which counsellors should be chosen and consulted, and the times and reasons for changing a counsel. First, God must be besought for guidance. Then a man must well examine his own thoughts, of such things as he holds to be best for his own profit; driving out of his heart anger, covetousness, and hastiness, which perturb and pervert the judgement. Then he must keep his counsel secret, unless confiding it to another shall be more profitable; but, in so confiding it, he shall say nothing to bias the mind of the counsellor toward flattery or subserviency. After that he should consider his friends and his enemies, choosing of the former such as be most faithful and wise, and eldest and most approved in counselling; and even of these only a few. Then he must eschew the counselling of fools, of flatterers, of his old enemies that be reconciled, of servants who bear him great reverence and fear, of folk that be drunken and can hide no counsel, of such as counsel one thing privily and the contrary openly; and of young folk, for their counselling is not ripe. Then, in examining his counsel, he must truly tell his tale; he must consider whether the thing he proposes to do be reasonable, within his power, and acceptable to the more part and the better part of his counsellors; he must look at the things that may follow from that counselling, choosing the best and waiving all besides; he must consider the root whence the matter of his counsel is engendered, what fruits it may bear, and from what causes they be sprung. And having thus examined his counsel and approved it by many wise folk and old, he shall consider if he may perform it and make of it a good end; if he be in doubt, he shall choose rather to suffer than to begin; but otherwise he shall prosecute his resolution steadfastly till the

enterprise be at an end. As to changing his counsel, a man may do so without reproach, if the cause cease, or when a new case betides, or if he find that by error or otherwise harm or damage may result, or if his counsel be dishonest or come of dishonest cause, or if it be impossible or may not properly be kept; and he must take it for a general rule, that every counsel which is affirmed so strongly, that it may not be changed for any condition that may betide, that counsel is wicked. Meliboeus, admitting that his wife had spoken well and suitably as to counsellors and counsel in general, prays her to tell him in especial what she thinks of the counsellors whom they have chosen in their present need. Prudence replies that his counsel in this case could not properly be called a counselling, but a movement of folly; and points out that he has erred in sundry wise against the rules which he had just laid down. Granting that he has erred, Meliboeus says that he is all ready to change his counsel right as she will devise; for, as the proverb runs, to do sin is human, but to persevere long in sin is work of the Devil. Prudence then minutely recites, analyses, and criticises the counsel given to her husband in the assembly of his friends. She commends the advice of the physicians and surgeons, and urges that they should be well rewarded for their noble speech and their services in healing Sophia; and she asks Meliboeus how he understands their proposition that one contrary must be cured by another contrary. Meliboeus answers, that he should do vengeance on his enemies, who had done him wrong. Prudence, however, insists that vengeance is not the contrary of vengeance, nor wrong of wrong, but the like; and that wickedness should be healed by goodness, discord by accord, war by peace. She proceeds to deal with the counsel of the lawyers and wise folk that advised Meliboeus to take prudent measures for the security of his body and of his house. First, she would have her husband pray for the protection and aid of Christ; then commit the keeping of his person to his true friends; then suspect and avoid all strange folk, and liars, and such people as she had already warned him against; then beware of presuming on his strength, or the weakness of his adversary, and neglecting to guard his person—for every wise man dreadeth his enemy; then he should evermore be on the watch against ambush and all espial, even in what seems a place of safety;

though he should not be so cowardly, as to fear where is no cause for dread; yet he should dread to be poisoned, and therefore shun scorners, and fly their words as venom. As to the fortification of his house, she points out that towers and great edifices are costly and laborious, yet useless unless defended by true friends that be old and wise; and the greatest and strongest garrison that a rich man may have, as well to keep his person as his goods, is, that he be beloved by his subjects and by his neighbours. Warmly approving the counsel that in all this business Meliboeus should proceed with great diligence and deliberation, Prudence goes on to examine the advice given by his neighbours that do him reverence without love, his old enemies reconciled, his flatterers that counselled him certain things privily and openly counselled him the contrary, and the young folk that counselled him to avenge himself and make war at once. She reminds him that he stands alone against three powerful enemies, whose kindred are numerous and close, while his are fewer and remote in relationship; that only the judge who has jurisdiction in a case may take sudden vengeance on any man; that her husband's power does not accord with his desire; and that, if he did take vengeance, it would only breed fresh wrongs and contests. As to the causes of the wrong done to him, she holds that God, the causer of all things, has permitted him to suffer because he has drunk so much honey³⁹⁸³ of sweet temporal riches, and delights, and honours of this world, that he is drunken, and has forgotten Jesus Christ his Saviour; the three enemies of mankind, the flesh, the fiend, and the world, have entered his heart by the windows of his body, and wounded his soul in five places—that is to say, the deadly sins that have entered into his heart by the five senses; and in the same manner Christ has suffered his three enemies to enter his house by the windows, and wound his daughter in the five places before specified. Meliboeus demurs, that if his wife's objections prevailed, vengeance would never be taken, and thence great mischiefs would arise; but Prudence replies that the taking of vengeance lies with the judges, to whom the private individual must have recourse. Meliboeus declares that such vengeance does not please him, and that, as Fortune has nourished and helped him from his childhood, he will now assay her, trusting, with God's help, that

she will aid him to avenge his shame. Prudence warns him against trusting to Fortune, all the less because she has hitherto favoured him, for just on that account she is the more likely to fail him; and she calls on him to leave his vengeance with the Sovereign Judge, that avengeth all villainies and wrongs. Meliboeus argues that if he refrains from taking vengeance he will invite his enemies to do him further wrong, and he will be put and held over low; but Prudence contends that such a result can be brought about only by the neglect of the judges, not by the patience of the individual. Supposing that he had leave to avenge himself, she repeats that he is not strong enough, and quotes the common saw, that it is madness for a man to strive with a stronger than himself, peril to strive with one of equal strength, and folly to strive with a weaker. But, considering his own defaults and demerits—remembering the patience of Christ and the undeserved tribulations of the saints, the brevity of this life with all its trouble and sorrow, the discredit thrown on the wisdom and training of a man who cannot bear wrong with patience—he should refrain wholly from taking vengeance. Meliboeus submits that he is not at all a perfect man, and his heart will never be at peace until he is avenged; and that as his enemies disregarded the peril when they attacked him, so he might, without reproach, incur some peril in attacking them in return, even though he did a great excess in avenging one wrong by another. Prudence strongly deprecates all outrage or excess; but Meliboeus insists that he cannot see that it might greatly harm him though he took a vengeance, for he is richer and mightier than his enemies, and all things obey money. Prudence thereupon launches into a long dissertation on the advantages of riches, the evils of poverty, the means by which wealth should be gathered, and the manner in which it should be used; and concludes by counselling her husband not to move war and battle through trust in his riches, for they suffice not to maintain war, the battle is not always to the strong or the numerous, and the perils of conflict are many. Meliboeus then curtly asks her for her counsel how he shall do in this need; and she answers that certainly she counsels him to agree with his adversaries and have peace with them. Meliboeus on this cries out that plainly she loves not his honour or his worship, in counselling him to go and humble himself before his enemies, crying

mercy to them that, having done him so grievous wrong, ask him not to be reconciled. Then Prudence, making semblance of wrath, retorts that she loves his honour and profit as she loves her own, and ever has done; she cites the Scriptures in support of her counsel to seek peace; and says she will leave him to his own courses, for she knows well he is so stubborn, that he will do nothing for her. Meliboeus then relents; admits that he is angry and cannot judge aright; and puts himself wholly in her hands, promising to do just as she desires, and admitting that he is the more held to love and praise her, if she reproves him of his folly.]

Then Dame Prudence discovered all her counsel and her will unto him, and said: "I counsel you," quoth she, "above all things, that ye make peace between God and you, and be reconciled unto Him and to his grace; for, as I have said to you herebefore, God hath suffered you to have this tribulation and disease³⁹⁸⁴ for your sins; and if ye do as I say you, God will send your adversaries unto you, and make them fall at your feet, ready to do your will and your commandment. For Solomon saith, 'When the condition of man is pleasant and liking to God, he changeth the hearts of the man's adversaries, and constraineth them to beseech him of peace of grace.' And I pray you let me speak with your adversaries in privy place, for they shall not know it is by your will or your assent; and then, when I know their will and their intent, I may counsel you the more surely." "Dame," quoth Meliboeus, "do your will and your liking, for I put me wholly in your disposition and ordinance."

Then Dame Prudence, when she saw the goodwill of her husband, deliberated and took advice in herself, thinking how she might bring this need³⁹⁸⁵ unto a good end. And when she saw her time, she sent for these adversaries to come into her into a privy place, and showed wisely into them the great goods that come of peace, and the great harms and perils that be in war; and said to them, in goodly manner, how that they ought have great repentance of the injuries and wrongs that they had done to Meliboeus her Lord, and unto her and her daughter. And when they heard the goodly words of Dame Prudence, then they were surprised and ravished, and had so great joy of her, that wonder was to tell. "Ah lady!" quoth they, "ye have showed unto us the blessing of sweetness, after the saying of David

the prophet; for the reconciling which we be not worthy to have in no manner, but we ought require it with great contrition and humility, ye of your great goodness have presented unto us. Now see we well, that the science and conning³⁹⁸⁶ of Solomon is full true; for he saith, that sweet words multiply and increase friends, and make shrews³⁹⁸⁷ to be debonair³⁹⁸⁸ and meek. Certes we put our deed, and all our matter and cause, all wholly in your goodwill, and be ready to obey unto the speech and commandment of my lord Meliboeus. And therefore, dear and benign lady, we pray you and beseech you as meekly as we can and may, that it like unto your great goodness to fulfil in deed your goodly words. For we consider and acknowledge that we have offended and grieved my lord Meliboeus out of measure, so far forth that we be not of power to make him amends; and therefore we oblige and bind us and our friends to do all his will and his commandment. But peradventure he hath such heaviness and such wrath to usward, because of our offence, that he will enjoin us such a pain³⁹⁸⁹ as we may not bear nor sustain; and therefore, noble lady, we beseech to your womanly pity to take such advisement³⁹⁹⁰ in this need, that we, nor our friends, be not disinherited and destroyed through our folly.”

“Certes,” quoth Prudence, “it is an hard thing, and right perilous, that a man put him all utterly in the arbitration and judgement and in the might and power of his enemy. For Solomon saith, ‘Believe me, and give credence to that that I shall say: to thy son, to thy wife, to thy friend, nor to thy brother, give thou never might nor mastery over thy body, while thou livest.’ Now, since he defendeth³⁹⁹¹ that a man should not give to his brother, nor to his friend, the might of his body, by a stronger reason he defendeth and forbiddeth a man to give himself to his enemy. And nevertheless, I counsel you that ye mistrust not my lord: for I wot well and know verily, that he is debonair and meek, large, courteous and nothing desirous nor envious of good nor riches: for there is nothing in this world that he desireth save only worship and honour. Furthermore I know well, and am right sure, that he shall nothing do in this need without counsel of me; and I shall so work in this case, that by the grace of our Lord God ye shall be reconciled unto us.”

Then said they with one voice, "Worshipful lady, we put us and our goods all fully in your will and disposition, and be ready to come, what day that it like unto your nobleness to limit us or assign us, for to make our obligation and bond, as strong as it liketh unto your goodness, that we may fulfil the will of you and of my lord Meliboeus."

When Dame Prudence had heard the answer of these men, she bade them go again privily, and she returned to her lord Meliboeus, and told him how she found his adversaries full repentant, acknowledging full lowly their sins and trespasses, and how they were ready to suffer all pain, requiring and praying him of mercy and pity. Then said Meliboeus, "He is well worthy to have pardon and forgiveness of his sin, that excuseth not his sin, but acknowledgeth, and repenteth him, asking indulgence. For Seneca saith, 'There is the remission and forgiveness, where the confession is; for confession is neighbour to innocence.' And therefore I assent and confirm me to have peace, but it is good that we do naught without the assent and will of our friends." Then was Prudence right glad and joyful, and said, "Certes, Sir, ye be well and goodly advised; for right as by the counsel, assent, and help of your friends ye have been stirred to avenge you and make war, right so without their counsel shall ye not accord you, nor have peace with your adversaries. For the law saith, 'There is nothing so good by way of kind,³⁹⁹² as a thing to be unbound by him that it was bound.'"

And then Dame Prudence, without delay or tarrying, sent anon her messengers for their kin and for their old friends, which were true and wise; and told them by order, in the presence of Meliboeus, all this matter, as it is above expressed and declared; and prayed them that they would give their advice and counsel what were best to do in this need. And when Meliboeus' friends had taken their advice and deliberation of the foresaid matter, and had examined it by great business and great diligence, they gave full counsel for to have peace and rest, and that Meliboeus should with good heart receive his adversaries to forgiveness and mercy. And when Dame Prudence had heard the assent of her lord Meliboeus, and the counsel of his friends, accord with her will and her intention, she was wondrous glad in her heart, and said: "There is an old proverb that

saith, 'The goodness that thou mayest do this day, do it, and abide not nor delay it not till to-morrow:' and therefore I counsel you that ye send your messengers, such as be discreet and wise, unto your adversaries, telling them on your behalf, that if they will treat of peace and of accord, that they shape³⁹⁹³ them, without delay or tarrying, to come unto us." Which thing performed was indeed. And when these trespassers and repenting folk of their follies, that is to say, the adversaries of Meliboeus, had heard what these messengers said unto them, they were right glad and joyful, and answered full meekly and benignly, yielding graces and thanks to their lord Meliboeus, and to all his company; and shaped them without delay to go with the messengers, and obey to the commandment of their lord Meliboeus. And right anon they took their way to the court of Meliboeus, and took with them some of their true friends, to make faith for them, and for to be their borrows.³⁹⁹⁴

And when they were come to the presence of Meliboeus, he said to them these words; "It stands thus," quoth Meliboeus, "and sooth it is, that ye causeless, and without skill and reason, have done great injuries and wrongs to me, and to my wife Prudence, and to my daughter also; for ye have entered into my house by violence, and have done such outrage, that all men know well that ye have deserved the death: and therefore will I know and weet of you, whether ye will put the punishing and chastising, and the vengeance of this outrage, in the will of me and of my wife, or ye will not?" Then the wisest of them three answered for them all, and said; "Sir," quoth he, "we know well, that we be I unworthy to come to the court of so great a lord and so worthy as ye be, for we have so greatly mistaken us, and have offended and aguilt³⁹⁹⁵ in such wise against your high lordship, that truly we have deserved the death. But yet for the great goodness and debonairte³⁹⁹⁶ that all the world witnesseth of your person, we submit us to the excellence and benignity of your gracious lordship, and be ready to obey to all your commandments, beseeching you, that of your merciable³⁹⁹⁷ pity ye will consider our great repentance and low submission, and grant us forgiveness of our outrageous trespass and offence; for well we know, that your liberal grace and mercy stretch them farther into goodness, than do

our outrageous guilt and trespass into wickedness; albeit that cursedly³⁹⁹⁸ and damnably we have aguilt³⁹⁹⁹ against your high lordship.” Then Meliboeus took them up from the ground full benignly, and received their obligations and their bonds, by their oaths upon their pledges and borrows,⁴⁰⁰⁰ and assigned them a certain day to return unto his court for to receive and accept sentence and judgement, that Meliboeus would command to be done on them, by the causes aforesaid; which things ordained, every man returned home to his house.

And when that Dame Prudence saw her time she freined⁴⁰⁰¹ and asked her lord Meliboeus, what vengeance he thought to take of his adversaries. To which Meliboeus answered, and said; “Certes,” quoth he, “I think and purpose me fully to disinherit them of all that ever they have, and for to put them in exile for evermore.” “Certes,” quoth Dame Prudence, “this were a cruel sentence, and much against reason. For ye be rich enough, and have no need of other men’s goods; and ye might lightly⁴⁰⁰² in this wise get you a covetous name, which is a vicious thing, and ought to be eschewed of every good man: for, after the saying of the Apostle, covetousness is root of all harms. And therefore it were better for you to lose much good of your own, than for to take of their good in this manner. For better it is to lose good with worship,⁴⁰⁰³ than to win good with villainy and shame. And every man ought to do his diligence and his business to get him a good name. And yet⁴⁰⁰⁴ shall he not only busy him in keeping his good name, but he shall also enforce him alway to do some thing by which he may renew his good name; for it is written, that the old good los⁴⁰⁰⁵ of a man is soon gone and passed, when it is not renewed. And as touching that ye say, that ye will exile your adversaries, that thinketh ye much against reason, and out of measure,⁴⁰⁰⁶ considered the power that they have given you upon themselves. And it is written, that he is worthy to lose his privilege, that misuseth the might and the power that is given him. And I set case⁴⁰⁰⁷ ye might enjoin them that pain by right and by law (which I trow ye may not do), I say, ye might not put it to execution peradventure, and then it were like to return to the war, as it was before. And therefore if ye will that men do you obeisance, ye must

deem⁴⁰⁰⁸ more courteously, that is to say, ye must give more easy sentences and judgements. For it is written, 'He that most courteously commandeth, to him men most obey.' And therefore I pray you, that in this necessity and in this need ye cast you⁴⁰⁰⁹ to overcome your heart. For Seneca saith, that he that overcometh his heart, overcometh twice. And Tullius saith, 'There is nothing so commendable in a great lord, as when he is debonair and meek, and appeaseth him lightly.'⁴⁰¹⁰ And I pray you, that ye will now forbear to do vengeance, in such a manner, that your good name may be kept and conserved, and that men may have cause and matter to praise you of pity and of mercy; and that ye have no cause to repent you of thing that ye do. For Seneca saith, 'He overcometh in an evil manner, that repenteth him of his victory.' Wherefore I pray you let mercy be in your heart, to the effect and intent that God Almighty have mercy upon you in his last judgement; for Saint James saith in his Epistle, 'Judgement without mercy shall be done to him, that hath no mercy of another wight.'"

When Meliboeus had heard the great skills⁴⁰¹¹ and reasons of Dame Prudence, and her wise information and teaching, his heart gan incline to the will of his wife, considering her true intent, he conformed him anon and assented fully to work after her counsel, and thanked God, of whom proceedeth all goodness and all virtue, that him sent a wife of so great discretion. And when the day came that his adversaries should appear in his presence, he spake to them full goodly, and said in this wise; "Albeit so, that of your pride and high presumption and folly, an of your negligence and unconning,⁴⁰¹² ye have misborne⁴⁰¹³ you, and trespassed⁴⁰¹⁴ unto me, yet forasmuch as I see and behold your great humility, and that ye be sorry and repentant of your guilts, it constraineth me to do you grace and mercy. Wherefore I receive you into my grace, and forgive you utterly all the offences, injuries, and wrongs, that ye have done against me and mine, to this effect and to this end, that God of his endless mercy will at the time of our dying forgive us our guilts, that we have trespassed to him in this wretched world; for doubtless, if we be sorry and repentant of the sins and guilts which we have trespassed in the sight of our Lord God, he is so free and so

merciable,⁴⁰¹⁵ that he will forgive us our guilts, and bring us to the bliss that never hath end.” Amen.

THE MONK'S TALE

THE PROLOGUE

When ended was my tale of Melibee,
And of Prudence and her benignity,
Our Hostë said, "As I am faithful man,
And by the precious *corpus Madrian*,⁴⁰¹⁶
I had lever⁴⁰¹⁷ than a barrel of ale,
That goodë lefe⁴⁰¹⁸ my wife had heard this tale;
For she is no thing of such patience
As was this Meliboeus' wife Prudence.
By Goddë's bonës! when I beat my knaves
She bringeth me the greatë clubbed staves,
And crieth, 'Slay the doggës every one,
And break of them both back and ev'ry bone.'
And if that any neighëbour of mine
Will not in church unto my wife incline,⁴⁰¹⁹
Or be so hardy to her to trespass,⁴⁰²⁰
When she comes home she rampeth⁴⁰²¹ in my face,
And crieth, 'Falsë coward, wreak⁴⁰²² thy wife:
By *corpus Domini*, I will have thy knife,
And thou shalt have my distaff, and go spin.'
From day till night right thus she will begin.
'Alas!' she saith, 'that ever I was shape⁴⁰²³

To wed a milksop, or a coward ape,
That will be overlad⁴⁰²⁴ with every wight!
Thou darest not stand by thy wifë's right.'

“This is my life, but if⁴⁰²⁵ that I will fight;
And out at door anon I must me dight,⁴⁰²⁶
Or ellës I am lost, but if that I
Be, like a wildë lion, fool-hardý.
I wot well she will do⁴⁰²⁷ me slay some day
Some neighëbour and thennë go my way;⁴⁰²⁸
For I am perilous with knife in hand,
Albeit that I dare not her withstand;
For she is big in armës, by my faith!
That shall he find, that her misdoth or saith.⁴⁰²⁹
But let us pass away from this mattére.
My lord the Monk,” quoth he, “be merry of cheer,
For ye shall tell a talë truëly.
Lo, Rochester stands here fastë by.
Ride forth, mine owen lord, break not our game.
But by my troth I cannot tell your name;
Whether shall I call you my lord Dan John,
Or Dan Thomas, or ellës Dan Albion?
Of what house be ye, by your father's kin?
I vow to God, thou hast a full fair skin;
It is a gentle pasture where thou go'st;
Thou art not like a penant⁴⁰³⁰ or a ghost.
Upon my faith thou art some officer,
Some worthy sexton, or some cellarer.
For by my father's soul, as to my dome,⁴⁰³¹
Thou art a master when thou art at home;
No poorë cloisterer, nor no novíce,
But a govérnor, both wily and wise,
And therewithal, of brawnës⁴⁰³² and of bones,
A right well-faring person for the nonce.
I pray to God give him confusión
That first thee brought into religiön.
Thou would'st have been a treadëfowl⁴⁰³³ aright;

Hadst thou as greatë leave, as thou hast might,
To perform all thy lust in engendrure,
Thou hadst begotten many a creatúre.
Alas! why wearest thou so wide a cope?⁴⁰³⁴
God give me sorrow, but, an'⁴⁰³⁵ I were pope,
Not only thou, but every mighty man,
Though he were shorn full high upon his pan,⁴⁰³⁶
Should have a wife; for all this world is lorn;⁴⁰³⁷
Religión hath ta'en up all the corn
Of treading, and we borel⁴⁰³⁸ men be shrimps:⁴⁰³⁹
Of feeble trees there comë wretched imps.⁴⁰⁴⁰
This maketh that our heirës be so slender
And feeble, that they may not well engender.
This maketh that our wives will assay
Religious folk, for they may better pay
Of Venus' payëmentës than may we:
God wot, no lushëburghës⁴⁰⁴¹ payë ye.
But be not wroth, my lord, though that I play;
Full oft in game a sooth have I heard say."

 This worthy Monk took all in patiënce,
And said, "I will do all my diligence,
As far as souneth unto honesty,⁴⁰⁴²
To tellë you a tale, or two or three.
And if you list to hearken hitherward,
I will you say the life of Saint Edward;
Or ellës first tragédies I will tell,
Of which I have an hundred in my cell.
Tragédy is to say⁴⁰⁴³ a certain story,
As oldë bookës maken us memóry,
Of him that stood in great prosperity,
And is y-fallen out of high degree
In misery, and endeth wretchedly.
And they be versifiëd commonly
Of six feet, which men call hexámetron;
In prose eke be indited many a one,
And eke in metre, in many a sundry wise.

Lo, this declaring ought enough suffice.
Now hearken, if ye likë for to hear.
But first I you beseech in this mattére,
Though I by order tellë not these things,
Be it of popës, emperors, or kings,
After their ages, [4044](#) as men written find,
But tell them some before and some behind,
As it now cometh to my remembrance,
Have me excused of mine ignorance.”

THE TALE [4045](#)

I will bewail, in manner of tragédy,
The harm of them that stood in high degree,
And fellë so, that there was no remédy
To bring them out of their adversity.
For, certain, when that Fortune list to flee,
There may no man the course of her wheel hold:
Let no man trust in blind prosperity;
Beware by these examples true and old.

At LUCIFER, though he an angel were,
And not a man, at him I will begin.
For though Fortúnë may no angel dere, [4046](#)
From high degree yet fell he for his sin
Down into hell, where as he yet is in.
O Lucifer! brightest of angels all,
Now art thou Satanas, that may'st not twin [4047](#)
Out of the misery in which thou art fall.

Lo ADAM, in the field of Damascene [4048](#)
With Goddë's owen finger wrought was he,

And not begotten of man's sperm unclean;
And welt⁴⁰⁴⁹ all Paradise saving one tree:
Had never worldly man so high degree
As Adam, till he for misgovernance⁴⁰⁵⁰
Was driven out of his prosperity
To labour, and to hell, and to mischance.

Lo SAMPSON, which that was annunciate
By the angel, long ere his nativity;⁴⁰⁵¹
And was to God Almighty consecrate,
And stood in nobless while that he might see;
Was never such another as was he,
To speak of strength, and thereto hardiness;⁴⁰⁵²
But to his wivës told he his secré,
Through which he slew himself for wretchedness.

Sampson, this noble and mighty champión,
Withoutë weapon, save his handës tway,
He slew and all to-rentë⁴⁰⁵³ the lión,
Toward his wedding walking by the way.
His falsë wife could him so please, and pray,
Till she his counsel knew; and she, untrue,
Unto his foes his counsel gan bewray,
And him forsook, and took another new.

Three hundred foxes Sampson took for ire,
And all their tailës he together band,
And set the foxes' tailës all on fire,
For he in every tail had knit a brand,
And they burnt all the cornës of that lend,
And all their olivères⁴⁰⁵⁴ and vinës eke.
A thousand men he slew eke with his hand,
And had no weapon but an ass's cheek.

When they were slain, so thirsted him, that he
Was well-nigh lorn,⁴⁰⁵⁵ for which he gan to pray
That God would on his pain have some pity,
And send him drink, or ellës must he die;
And of this ass's check, that was so dry,

Out of a wang-tooth⁴⁰⁵⁶ sprang anon a well,
Of which, he drank enough, shortly to say.
Thus help'd him God, as *Judicum*⁴⁰⁵⁷ can tell.

By very force, at Gaza, on a night,
Maugré the Philistines of that city,
The gatës of the town he hath up plight,⁴⁰⁵⁸
And on his back y-carried them hath he
High on an hill, where as men might them see.
O noble mighty Sampson, lefe⁴⁰⁵⁹ and dear,
Hadst thou not told to women thy secré,
In all this world there had not been thy peer.

This Sampson never cider drank nor wine,
Nor on his head came razor none nor shear,
By precept of the messenger divine;
For all his strengthës in his hairës were;
And fully twenty winters, year by year,
He had of Israel the governance;
But soonë shall he weepë many a tear,
For women shall him bringë to mischance.

Unto his leman⁴⁰⁶⁰ Dalila⁴⁰⁶¹ he told,
That in his hairës all his strengthë lay;
And falsely to his foemen she him sold,
And sleeping in her barme⁴⁰⁶² upon a day
She made to clip or shear his hair away,
And made his foemen all his craft espion.
And when they foundë him in this array,
They bound him fast, and put out both his eyen.

But, ere his hair was clipped or y-shave,
There was no bond with which men might him bind;
But now is he in prison in a cave,
Where as they made him at the quernë⁴⁰⁶³ grind.
O noble Sampson, strongest of mankind!
O whilom judge in glory and richëss!
Now may'st thou weepë with thine eyen blind,
Since thou from weal art fall'n to wretchedness.

Th' end of this caitiff⁴⁰⁶⁴ was as I shall say;

His foemen made a feast upon a day,
And made him as their fool before them play;
And this was in a temple of great array.
But at the last he made a foul affray,
For he two pillars shook, and made them fall,
And down fell temple and all, and there it lay,
And slew himself and eke his foemen all;

This is to say, the princes every one;
And eke three thousand bodies were there slain
With falling of the great temple of stone.
Of Sampson now will I no morë sayn;
Beware by this example old and plain,
That no man tell his counsel to his wife
Of such thing as he would have secret fain,
If that it touch his limbës or his life.

Of HERCULES the sov'reign conqueroúr
Singë his workës' land and high renown;
For in his time of strength he bare the flow'r.
He slew and reft the skin of the lioún
He of the Centaurs laid the boast adown;
He Harpies⁴⁰⁶⁵ slew, the cruel birdës fell;
He golden apples reft from the dragón
He drew out Cerberus the hound of hell.

He slew the cruel tyrant Busirus.⁴⁰⁶⁶
And made his horse to fret⁴⁰⁶⁷ him flesh and bone;
He slew the fiery serpent venomous;
Of Achelous' two hornës brake he one.
And he slew Cacus in a cave of stone;
He slew the giant Antaeus the strong;
He slew the grisly boar, and that anon;
And bare the heav'n upon his neckë long.⁴⁰⁶⁸

Was never wight, since that the world began,
That slew so many monsters as did he;
Throughout the widë world his namë ran,
What for his strength, and for his high bounté;
And every realmë went he for to see;

He was so strong that no man might him let;
At both the worldë's ends, as saith Trophee,⁴⁰⁶⁹
Instead of boundës he a pillar set.

A leman had this noble champión,
That hightë Dejanira, fresh as May;
And, as these clerkës makë mentión,
She hath him sent a shirtë fresh and gay;
Alas! this shirt, alas and well-away!
Envenomed was subtilly withal,
That ere that he had worn it half a day,
It made his flesh all from his bonës fall.

But natheless some clerkës her excuse
By one, that hightë Nessus, that it maked;
Be as he may, I will not her accuse;
But on his back this shirt he wore all naked,
Till that his flesh was for the venom blaked.⁴⁰⁷⁰
And when he saw none other remedy,
In hotë coals he hath himselfë raked,
For with no venom deigned he to die.

Thus starf⁴⁰⁷¹ this worthy mighty Hercules.
Lo, who may trust on Fortune any throw?⁴⁰⁷²
For him that followeth all this world of pres,⁴⁰⁷³
Ere he be ware, is often laid full low;
Full wise is he that can himselfë know.
Beware, for when that Fortune list to glose
Then waiteth she her man to overthrow,
By such a way as he would least suppose.

The mighty throne, the precious treasór,
The glorious sceptre, and royal majesty,
That had the king NABUCHODONOSOR
With tongue unnethës⁴⁰⁷⁴ may described be.
He twice won Jerusalem the city,
The vessels of the temple he with him lad;⁴⁰⁷⁵
At Babylonë was his sov'reign see,⁴⁰⁷⁶
In which his glory and delight he had.

The fairest children of the blood royál
Of Israel he did do⁴⁰⁷⁷ geld anon,
And maked each of them to be his thrall.⁴⁰⁷⁸
Amongës others Daniel was one,
That was the wisest child of every one;
For he the dreamës of the king expounded,
Where in Chaldaea clerkë was there none
That wistë to what fine⁴⁰⁷⁹ his dreamës sounded.

This proudë king let make a statue of gold
Sixty cubitës long, and seven in bread',
To which imaginë bothë young and old
Commanded he to lout,⁴⁰⁸⁰ and have in dread,
Or in a furnace, full of flamës red,
He should be burnt that wouldë not obey:
But never would assentë to that deed
Daniel, nor his youngë fellows tway.

This king of kingës proud was and elate;
He ween'd⁴⁰⁸¹ that God, that sits in majesty,
Mightë him not bereave of his estate;
But suddenly he lost his dignity,
And like a beast he seemed for to be,
And ate hay as an ox, and lay thereout
In rain, with wildë beastës walked he,
Till certain time was y-come about.

And like an eagle's feathers wax'd his hairs,
His nailës like a birdë's clawës were,
Till God released him at certain years,
And gave him wit; and then with many a tear
He thanked God, and ever his life in fear
Was he to do amiss, or more trespass:
And till that time he laid was on his bier,
He knew that God was full of might and grace.

His sonë, which that hightë BALTHASAR,
That held the regne⁴⁰⁸² after his father's day,
He by his father couldë not beware,
For proud he was of heart and of array;

And eke an idolaster was he aye.
His high estate assured⁴⁰⁸³ him in pride;
But Fortune cast him down, and there he lay,
And suddenly his regnë gan divide.

A feast he made unto his lordës all
Upon a time, and made them blithë be,
And then his officérës gan he call;
“Go, bringë forth the vessels,” saidë he,
“Which that my father in his prosperity
Out of the temple of Jerusalem reft,
And to our highë goddës thankë we
Of honour, that our elders⁴⁰⁸⁴ with us left.”

His wife, his lordës, and his concubines
Aye drankë, while their appetites did last,
Out of these noble vessels sundry wines.
And on a wall this king his eyen cast,
And saw an hand, armless, that wrote full fast;
For fear of which he quaked, and sighed sore.
This hand, that Balthasar so sore aghast,⁴⁰⁸⁵
Wrote *Mane, tekel, phares*, and no more.

In all that land magician was there none
That could expoundë what this letter meant.
But Daniel expounded it anon,
And said, “O King, God to thy father lent
Glory and honour, regnë, treasure, rent;⁴⁰⁸⁶
And he was proud, and nothing God he drad;⁴⁰⁸⁷
And therefore God great wreche⁴⁰⁸⁸ upon him sent,
And him bereft the regnë that he had.

“He was cast out of mannë’s company;
With asses was his habitación;
And ate hay, as a beast, in wet and dry,
Till that he knew by grace and by reasón
That God of heaven hath domination
O’er every regne, and every creatúre;
And then had God of him compassión,
And him restor’d his regne and his figúre.

“Eke thou, that art his son, art proud also,
And knowest all these thingës verily;
And art rebel to God, and art his foe.
Thou drankest of his vessels boldëly;
Thy wife eke, and thy wenches, sinfully
Drank of the samë vessels sundry winës,
And heried⁴⁰⁸⁹ falsë goddës cursedly;⁴⁰⁹⁰
Therefore to thee y-shapen⁴⁰⁹¹ full great pine⁴⁰⁹² is.

“This hand was sent from God, that on the wall
Wrote *Mane, tekel, phares*, trustë me;
Thy reign is done; thou weighest naught at all;
Divided is thy regne, and it shall be
To Medës and to Persians giv’n,” quoth he.
And thilkë samë night this king was slaw;⁴⁰⁹³
And Darius occupied his degree,
Though he thereto had neither right nor law.

Lordings, example hereby may ye take,
How that in lordship⁴⁰⁹⁴ is no sickness;⁴⁰⁹⁵
For when that Fortune will a man forsake,
She bears away his regne and his richëss,
And eke his friendës bothë more and less.
For what man that hath friendës through fortúne,
Mishap will make them enemies, I guess;
This proverb is full sooth, and full commúne.

ZENOBIÁ, of Palmyrie the queen,⁴⁰⁹⁶
As writë Persians of her nobléss,
So worthy was in armës, and so keen,
That no wight passed her in hardiness,
Nor in lineage, nor other gentleness.⁴⁰⁹⁷
Of the king’s blood of Perse⁴⁰⁹⁸ is she descended;
I say not that she haddë most fairnéss,
But of her shape she might not be amended.

From her childhood I findë that she fled
Office of woman, and to woods she went,
And many a wildë hartë’s blood she shed

With arrows broad that she against them sent;
She was so swift, that she anon them hent.⁴⁰⁹⁹
And when that she was older, she would kill
Lions, leopárds, and bearës all to-rent,
And in her armës wield them at her will.

She durst the wildë beastës' dennës seek,
And runnen in the mountains all the night,
And sleep under a bush; and she could eke
Wrestle by very force and very might
With any young man, were he ne'er so wight;⁴¹⁰⁰
There mightë nothing in her armës stond.
She kept her maidenhood from every wight,
To no man deigned she for to be bond.

But at the last her friendës have her married
To Odenate,⁴¹⁰¹ a prince of that countrý;
All were it so, that she them longë tarried.
And ye shall understandë how that he
Haddë such fantasies as haddë she;
But natheless, when they were knit in fere,⁴¹⁰²
They liv'd in joy, and in felicity,
For each of them had other lefe⁴¹⁰³ and dear.

Save one thing, that she never would assent,
By no way, that he shouldë by her lie
But onës, for it was her plain intent
To have a child, the world to multiply;
And all so soon as that she might espy
That she was not with childë by that deed,
Then would she suffer him do his fantasy
Eftsoon,⁴¹⁰⁴ and not but onës, out of dread.⁴¹⁰⁵

And if she were with child at thilkë cast,
No morë should he playë thilkë game
Till fully forty dayës werë past;
Then would she once suffer him do the same.
All⁴¹⁰⁶ were this Odenatus wild or tame,
He got no more of her; for thus she said,
It was to wivës lechery and shame

In other case⁴¹⁰⁷ if that men with them play'd.

Two sonës, by this Odenate had she,
The which she kept in virtue and lettrure.⁴¹⁰⁸
But now unto our talë turnë we;
I say, so worshipful a creatúre,
And wise therewith, and largë with measúre,⁴¹⁰⁹
So penible⁴¹¹⁰ in the war, and courteous eke,
Nor more labour might in war endure,
Was none, though all this worldë men should seek.

Her rich array it mightë not be told,
As well in vessel⁴¹¹¹ as in her clothíng:
She was all clad in pierrie⁴¹¹² and in gold,
And eke she leftë not,⁴¹¹³ for no huntíng,
To have of sundry tonguës full knowíng,
When that she leisure had, and for t' intend⁴¹¹⁴
To learnë bookës was all her líkíng,
How she in virtue might her life dispend.

And, shortly of this story for to treat,
So doughty was her husband and eke she,
That they conquered many regnës great
In th' Orient, with many a fair city
Appertinent unto the majesty
Of Rome, and with strong handë held them fast,
Nor ever might their foemen do⁴¹¹⁵ them flee,
Aye while that Odenatus' dayës last'.

Her battles, whoso list them for to read,
Against Sapor the king,⁴¹¹⁶ and other mo',
And how that all this process fell in deed,
Why she conquér'd, and what title thereto,
And after of her mischief⁴¹¹⁷ and her woe,
How that she was besieged and y-take,
Let him unto my master Petrarch go,
That writes enough of this, I undertake.

When Odenate was dead, she mightily
The regnë held, and with her proper hand
Against her foes she fought so cruelly,

That there n'as⁴¹¹⁸ king nor prince in all that land,
That was not glad, if be that gracë fand
That she would not upon his land warray;⁴¹¹⁹
With her they maden álliáncë by bond,
To be in peace, and let her ride and play.

The emperor of Romë, Claudius,
Nor, him before, the Roman Gallien,
Durstë never be so courageoús,
Nor no Armenian, nor Egyptien,
Nor Syrian, nor no Arabien,
Within the fieldë durstë with her fight,
Lest that she would them with her handës slén,⁴¹²⁰
Or with her meinie⁴¹²¹ puttë them to flight.

In kingës' habit went her sonës two,
As heirës of their father's regnës all;
And Herëmanno and Timolaó
Their namës were, as Persians them call
But aye Fortúne hath in her honey gall;
This mighty queenë may no while endure;
Fortune out of her regnë made her fall
To wretchedness and to misádvéntúre.

Aurelian, when that the governáncë
Of Romë came into his handës tway,⁴¹²²
He shope⁴¹²³ upon this queen to do vengeance;
And with his legións he took his way
Toward Zenobie, and, shortly for to say,
He made her flee, and at the last her hent,⁴¹²⁴
And fetter'd her, and eke her children tway,
And won the land, and home to Rome he went.

Amongës other thingës that he wan,
Her car, that was with gold wrought and pierrie,
This greatë Roman, this Aurelian
Hath with him led, for that men should it see.
Before in his triumphë walked she
With giltë chains upon her neck hangíng;
Crowned she was, as after⁴¹²⁵ her degree,

And full of pierrie charged⁴¹²⁶ her clothíng.

Alas, Fortúnë! she that whilom was
Dreadful to kingës and to emperoúrs,
Now galeth⁴¹²⁷ all the people on her, alas!
And she that helmed was in starkë stowres,⁴¹²⁸
And won by forcë townës strong and tow'rs,
Shall on her head now wear a vitremite;⁴¹²⁹
And she that bare the sceptre full of flow'rs
Shall bear a distaff, her cost for to quite.⁴¹³⁰

Although that NERO were so vicious
As any fiend that lies full low adown,
Yet he, as telleth us Suetonius,⁴¹³¹
This widë world had in subjection,
Both East and West, South and Septentrioun.
Of rubies, sapphires, and of pearlës white
Were all his clothes embroider'd up and down,
For he in gemmës greatly gan delight.

More delicate, more pompous of array,
More proud, was never emperor than he;
That ilkë cloth⁴¹³² that he had worn one day,
After that time he would it never see;
Nettës of gold thread had he great plenty,
To fish in Tiber, when him list to play;
His lustës were as law, in his degree,
For Fortune as his friend would him obey.

He Romë burnt for his délicacy;⁴¹³³
The senators he slew upon a day,
To hearë how that men would weep and cry;
And slew his brother, and by his sister lay.
His mother made he in piteous array;
For he her wombë slittë, to behold
Where he conceived was; so well-away!
That he so little of his mother told.⁴¹³⁴

No tear out of his eyen for that sight
Came; but he said, a fair woman was she.

Great wonder is, how that he could or might
Be doomësman⁴¹³⁵ of her deadë beautý:
The wine to bringë him commanded he,
And drank anon; none other woe he made,
When might is joined unto cruelty,
Alas! too deepë will the venom wade.

In youth a master had this emperour,
To teachë him lettrure⁴¹³⁶ and courtesy;
For of morality he was the flow'r,
As in his timë, but if⁴¹³⁷ bookës lie.
And while this master had of him mast'rý,
He made him so conning and so souple,⁴¹³⁸
That longë time it was ere tyranný,
Or any vicë, durst in him uncouple.⁴¹³⁹

This Seneca, of which that I devise,⁴¹⁴⁰
Because Nero had of him suchë dread,
For he from vices would him aye chastise
Discreetly, as by word, and not by deed;
“Sir,” he would say, “an emperor must need
Be virtuous, and hatë tyranny.”
For which he made him in a bath to bleed
On both his armës, till he mustë die.

This Nero had eke of a custumance⁴¹⁴¹
In youth against his master for to rise;⁴¹⁴²
Which afterward he thought a great grieváncë;
Therefore he made him dien in this wise.
But natheless this Seneca the wise
Chose in a bath to die in this mannëre,
Rather than have another tormentise;⁴¹⁴³
And thus hath Nero slain his master dear.

Now fell it so, that Fortune list no longer
The highë pride of Nero to cherice;⁴¹⁴⁴
For though he werë strong, yet was she stronger.
She thoughtë thus; “By God, I am too nice⁴¹⁴⁵
To set a man, that is full fill'd of vice,
In high degree, and emperor him call!

By God, out of his seat I will him trice!⁴¹⁴⁶
When he least weeneth,⁴¹⁴⁷ soonest shall he fall.”

The people rose upon him on a night,
For his default; and when he it espied,
Out of his doors anon he hath him dight⁴¹⁴⁸
Alone, and where he ween'd t' have been allied,⁴¹⁴⁹
He knocked fast, and aye the more he cried
The faster shuttë they their doorës all;
Then wist he well he had himself misgied,⁴¹⁵⁰
And went his way, no longer durst he call.

The people cried and rumbled up and down,
That with his earës heard he how they said;
“Where is this falsë tyrant, this Neroún?”
For fear almost out of his wit he braid,⁴¹⁵¹
And to his goddës piteously he pray'd
For succour, but it mightë not betide;
For dread of this he thoughtë that died,
And ran into a garden him to hide.

And in this garden found he churlës tway,
That sattë by a firë great and red;
And to these churlës two he gan to pray
To slay him, and to girden⁴¹⁵² off his head,
That to his body, when that he were dead,
Were no despitë done for his defame.⁴¹⁵³
Himself he slew, he coud no better rede;⁴¹⁵⁴
Of which Fortúnë laugh'd and haddë game.⁴¹⁵⁵

Was never capitain under a king,
That regnës more put in subjection,
Nor stronger was in field of allë thing
As in his time, nor greater of renown,
Nor more pompous in high presumptioun,
Than HOLOFERNES, whom Fortúne aye kiss'd
So lik'rously, and led him up and down,
Till that his head was off ere that he wist.

Not only that this world had of him awe,

For losing of richéss and liberty;
But he made every man reny his law.⁴¹⁵⁶
Nabuchodónosór was God, said he;
None other Goddë should honoured be.
Against his hest⁴¹⁵⁷ there dare no wight trespase,
Save in Bethulia, a strong city,
Where Eliáchim priest was of that place.

But take keep⁴¹⁵⁸ of the death of Holofern;
Amid his host he drunken lay at night
Within his tentë, large as is a bern;⁴¹⁵⁹
And yet, for all his pomp and all his might,
Judith, a woman, as he lay upright
Sleeping, his head off smote, and from his tent
Full privily she stole from every wight,
And with his head unto her town she went.

What needeth it of king ANTIOCHUS⁴¹⁶⁰
To tell his high and royal majesty,
His great pride, and his workës venomous?
For such another was there none as he;
Readë what that he was in Maccabee.
And read the proudë wordës that he said,
And why he fell from his prosperity,
And in an hill how wretchedly he died.

Fortúne him had enhanced so in pride,
That verily he ween'd he might attain
Unto the starrës upon every side,
And in a balance weighen each mountáin,
And all the floodës of the sea restrain.
And Goddë's people had he most in hate;
Them would he slay in torment and in pain,
Weening that God might not his pride abate.

And for that Nicanor and Timothee
With Jewës werë vanquish'd mightily,⁴¹⁶¹
Unto the Jewës such an hate had he,
That he bade graith his car⁴¹⁶² full hastily,

And swore and saidë full dispiteously,
Unto Jerusalem he would eftsoon, [4163](#)
To wreak his ire on it full cruelly
But of his purpose was he let [4164](#) full soon.

God for his menace him so sorë smote,
With invisíble wound incurable,
That in his guttës carf it so and bote, [4165](#)
Till that his painës were importable; [4166](#)
And certainly the wreche [4167](#) was reasonable,
For many a mannë's guttës did he pain;
But from his purpose, curs'd [4168](#) and damnable,
For all his smart he would him not restrain;

But bade anon apparailë [4169](#) his host.
And suddenly, ere he was of it ware,
God daunted all his pride, and all his boast;
For he so sorë fell out of his chare, [4170](#)
That it his limbës and his skin to-tare,
So that he neither mightë go nor ride;
But in a chairë men about him bare,
Allë forbruised bothë back and side.

The wreche [4171](#) of God him smote so cruelly,
That through his body wicked wormës crept,
And therewithal he stank so horribly
That none of all his meinie [4172](#) that him kept,
Whether so that he woke or ellës slept,
Ne mightë not of him the stink endure.
In this mischíef he wailed and eke wept,
And knew God Lord of every creatúre.

To all his host, and to himself also,
Full wlatson [4173](#) was the stink of his carráin; [4174](#)
No mannë might him bearë to and fro.
And in this stink, and this horríble pain,
He starf [4175](#) full wretchedly in a mountáin.
Thus hath this robber, and this homicide,
That many a mannë made to weep and plain,

Such guerdon⁴¹⁷⁶ as belongeth unto pride.

The story of ALEXANDER is so commúne,
That ev'ry wight that hath discretioún
Hath heard somewhat or all of his fortúne.
This widë world, as in conclusioún,⁴¹⁷⁷
He won by strength; or, for his high renown,
They werë glad for peace to him to send.
The pride and boast of man he laid adown,
Whereso he came, unto the worldë's end.

Comparison yet⁴¹⁷⁸ never might be maked
Between him and another conqueroúr;
For all this world for dread of him had quaked;
He was of knighthood and of freedom flow'r:
Fortúne him made the heir of her honoúr.
Save wine and women, nothing might assuage
His high intent in armës and laboúr,
So was he full of leonine couráge.

What praise were it to him, though I you told
Of Darius, and a hundred thousand mo',
Of kingës, princes, dukes, and earlës bold,
Which he conquér'd, and brought them into woe?
I say, as far as man may ride or go,
The world was his, why should I more devise?⁴¹⁷⁹
For, though I wrote or told you evermo',
Of his knighthood it mightë not suffice.

Twelve years he reigned, as saith Maccabee;
Philippe's son of Macedon he was,
That first was king in Greecë the country.
O worthy gentle⁴¹⁸⁰ Alexander, alas
That ever should thee fallë such a case!
Empoison'd of thine owen folk thou were;
Thy six⁴¹⁸¹ Fortúne hath turn'd into an ace,
And yet for thee she weptë never a tear.

Who shall me givë tearës to complain
The death of gentilëss, and of franchise,⁴¹⁸²

That all this worldë had in his demaine, [4183](#)
And yet he thought it mightë not suffice,
So full was his coráge [4184](#) of high emprise?
Alas! who shall me helpë to indite
Falsë Fortúne, and poison to despise?
The whichë two of all this woe I wite. [4185](#)

By wisdom, manhood, and by great labouír,
From humbleness to royal majesty
Up rose he, JULIUS the Conqueroúr,
That won all th' Occident, [4186](#) by land and sea,
By strength of hand or ellës by treatý,
And unto Romë made them tributáry;
And since [4187](#) of Rome the emperor was he,
Till that Fortúnë wax'd his adversáry.

O mighty Caesar, that in Thessaly
Against POMPEIUS, father thine in law, [4188](#)
That of th' Oriént had all the chivalry,
As far as that the day begins to daw,
That through thy knighthood hast them take and slaw, [4189](#)
Save fewë folk that with Pompeius fled;
Through which thou put all th' Orient in awe;
Thankë Fortúnë that so well thee sped.

But now a little while I will bewail
This Pompeius, this noble governór
Of Romë, which that fled at this battaile;
I say, one of his men, a false traitór,
His head off smote, to winnë him favór
Of Julius, and him the head he brought;
Alas! Pompey, of th' Orient conquerór,
That Fortune unto such a fine [4190](#) thee brought!

To Rome again repaired Julius,
With his triumphë laureate full high;
But on a time Brutus and Cassius,
That ever had of his estate envý,
Full privily have made conspirácý

Against this Julius in subtle wise
And cast⁴¹⁹¹ the place in which he shouldë die,
With bodëkins,⁴¹⁹² as I shall you devise.⁴¹⁹³

This Julius to the Capitólë went
Upon a day, as he was wont to gon;
And in the Capitol anon him hent⁴¹⁹⁴
This falsë Brutus, and his other fone,
And sticked him with bodëkins anon
With many a wound, and thus they let him lie.
But never groan'd he at no stroke but one,
Or else at two, but if⁴¹⁹⁵ the story lie.

So manly was this Julius of heart,
And so well lov'd estatey honesty,⁴¹⁹⁶
That, though his deadly woundës sorë smert,⁴¹⁹⁷
His mantle o'er his hippës castë he,
That no man shouldë see his privity
And as he lay a-dying in a trance,
And wistë verily that dead was he,
Of honesty yet had he remembráncë.

Lucan, to thee this story I recommend,
And to Sueton', and Valerie also,
That of this story writë word and end;⁴¹⁹⁸
How that to these great conquerórës two
Fortune was first a friend, and since⁴¹⁹⁹ a foe.
No mannë trust upon her favour long,
But have her in await⁴²⁰⁰ for evermo';
Witness on all these conquerórës strong.

The richë CROESUS, whilom king of Lyde—
Of which Croesus Cyrus him sorë drad—⁴²⁰¹
Yet was he caught amiddës all his pride,
And to be burnt men to the fire him lad;⁴²⁰²
But such a rain down from the welkin shad,⁴²⁰³
That slew the fire, and made him to escape:
But to beware no gracë yet he had,
Till fortune on the gallows made him gape.

When he escaped was, he could not stint⁴²⁰⁴
For to begin a newë war again;
He weened well, for⁴²⁰⁵ that Fortúne him sent
Such hap, that he escaped through the rain,
That of his foes he mightë not be slain.
And eke a sweven⁴²⁰⁶ on a night he mette,⁴²⁰⁷
Of which he was so proud, and eke so fain,⁴²⁰⁸
That he in vengeance all his heartë set.

Upon a tree he was set, as he thought,
Where Jupiter him wash'd, both back and side,
And Phoebus eke a fair towél him brought
To dry him with; and therefore wax'd his pride.
And to his daughter that stood him beside,
Which he knew in high science to abound,
He bade her tell him what it signified;
And she his dream began right thus expound.

"The tree," quoth she, "the gallows is to mean,
And Jupiter betokens snow and rain,
And Phoebus, with his towel clear and clean,
These be the sunnë's streamës,⁴²⁰⁹ sooth to sayn;
Thou shalt y-hangeth be, father, certáin;
Rain shall thee wash, and sunnë shall thee dry."
Thus warned him full plat and eke full plain
His daughter, which that called was Phaníe.

And hanged was Croesus the proudë king;
His royal thronë might him not avail.
Tragédy is none other manner thing,
Nor can in singing crien nor bewail,
But for that Fortune all day will assail
With unware stroke the regnës⁴²¹⁰ that be proud:
For when men trustë her, then will she fail,
And cover her bright facë with a cloud.

O noble, O worthy PEDRO,⁴²¹¹ glory OF SPAIN,
Whom Fortune held so high in majesty,
Well oughtë men thy piteous death complain.

Out of thy land thy brother made thee flee,
And after, at a siege, by subtlety,
Thou wert betray'd, and led unto his tent,
Where as he with his owen hand slew thee,
Succeeding in thy regne and in thy rent. [4212](#)

The field of snow, with th' eagle of black therein,
Caught with the lion, red-colour'd as the glede, [4213](#)
He brew'd this cursedness, [4214](#) and all this sin;
The wicked nest was worker of this deed;
Not Charlès' Oliver, [4215](#) that took aye heed
Of truth and honour, but of Armorike
Ganilion Oliver, corrupt for meed,
Broughtë this worthy king in such a brike. [4216](#)

O worthy PETRO, King of CYPRE, [4217](#) also,
That Alexandre won by high mast'ry,
Full many a heathen wroughtest thou full woe,
Of which thine owen lieges had envý;
And, for no thing but for thy chivalry,
They in thy bed have slain thee by the morrow;
Thus can Fortúne her wheel govérn and gie, [4218](#)
And out of joy bringë men into sorrow.

Of Milan greatë BARNABO VISCOUNT,
God of delight, and scourge of Lombardy,
Why should I not thine infortúne account, [4219](#)
Since in estate thou clomben wert so high?
Thy brother's son, that was thy double allý,
For he thy nephew was and son-in-law,
Within his prison madë thee to die,
But why, nor how, n'ot [4220](#) I that thou were slaw. [4221](#)

Of th' Earl HUGOLIN OF PISE the languoúr [4222](#)
There may no tonguë tellë for pity.
But little out of Pisa stands a tow'r,
In whichë tow'r in prison put was he,

Aud with him be his little children three;
The eldest scarcely five years was of age;
Alas! Fortune, it was great cruelty
Such birdes for to put in such a cage.

Damned was he to die in that prisón;
For Roger, which that bishop was of Pise,
Had on him made a false suggestiún,
Through which the people gan upon him rise,
And put him in prisón, in such a wise
As ye have heard; and meat and drink he had
So small, that well unneth⁴²²³ it might suffice,
And therewithal it was full poor and bad.

And on a day befell, that in that hour
When that his meatë wont was to be brought,
The jailor shut the doorës of the tow'r;
He heard it right well, but he spakë nought.
And in his heart anon there fell a thought,
That they for hunger wouldë do him dien;⁴²²⁴
“Alas!” quoth he, “alas that I was wrought!”⁴²²⁵
Therewith the tearës fellë from his eyen.

His youngest son, that three years was of age,
Unto him said, “Father, why do ye weep?
When will the jailor bringen our pottáge?
Is there no morsel bread that ye do keep?
I am so hungry, that I may not sleep.
Now wouldë God that I might sleepen ever!
Then should not hunger in my wombë creep;
There is no thing, save bread, that one were lever.”⁴²²⁶

Thus day by day this child begun to cry,
Till in his father’s barme⁴²²⁷ adown he lay,
And saidë, “Farewell, father, I must die;”
And kiss’d his father, and died the samë day.
And when the woeful father did it sey,⁴²²⁸
For woe his armës two he gan to bite,
And said, “Alas! Fortune, and well-away!
To thy false wheel my woe all may I wite.”⁴²²⁹

His children ween'd⁴²³⁰ that it for hunger was
That he his armēs gnaw'd, and not for woe,
And saidē, “Father, do not so, alas!
But rather eat the flesh upon us two.
Our flesh thou gave us, our flesh take us fro',
And eat enough;” right thus they to him said.
And after that, within a day or two,
They laid them in his lap adown, and died.

Himself, despaired, eke for hunger starf.⁴²³¹
Thus ended is this Earl of Pise;
From high estate Fortúne away him carf.⁴²³²
Of this tragédy it ought enough suffice
Whoso will hear it in a longer wise,⁴²³³
Readē the greatē poet of Itále,
That Dante hight, for he can it devise⁴²³⁴
From point to point, not one word will he fail.

THE NUN'S PRIEST'S TALE

THE PROLOGUE

“Ho!” quoth the Knight, “good sir, no more of this;
That ye have said is right enough, y-wis,⁴²³⁵
And muchë more; for little heaviness
Is right enough to muchë folk, I guess.
I say for me, it is a great disease,⁴²³⁶
Where as men have been in great wealth and ease,
To hearen of their sudden fall, alas!
And the contráry is joy and great solas,⁴²³⁷
As when a man hath been in poor estate,
And climbeth up, and waxeth fortunate,
And there abideth in prosperity;
Such thing is gladsome, as it thinketh me,
And of such thing were goodly for to tell.”

“Yea,” quoth our Hostë, “by Saint Paulë’s bell.
Ye say right sooth; this monk hath clapped⁴²³⁸ loud;
He spake how Fortune cover’d with a cloud
I wot not what, and als’ of a tragédy
Right now ye heard: and pardie no remédy
It is for to bewailë, nor complain
That that is done, and also it is pain,
As ye have said, to hear of heaviness.

Sir Monk, no more of this, so God you bless;
Your tale annoyeth all this company;
Such talking is not worth a butterfly,
For therein is there no sport nor game;
Therefore, Sir Monkë, Dan Piers by your name,
I pray you heart'ly, tell us somewhat else,
For sickerly, n'ere clinking of your bells,⁴²³⁹
That on your bridle hang on every side,
By heaven's king, that for us allë died,
I should ere this have fallen down for sleep,
Although the slough had been never so deep;
Then had your talë been all told in vain.
For certainly, as thesë clerkës sayn,
Where as a man may have no audience,
Nought helpeth it to tellë his sentence.
And well I wot the substance is in me,
If anything shall well reported be.

Sir, say somewhat of hunting,⁴²⁴⁰ I you pray."

"Nay," quoth the Monk, "I have no lust to play;⁴²⁴¹
Now let another tell, as I have told."

Then spake our Host with rudë speech and bold,
And said unto the Nunnë's Priest anon,

"Come near, thou Priest, come hither, thou Sir John,⁴²⁴²
Tell us such thing as may our heartës glade.⁴²⁴³

Be blithe, although thou ride upon a jade.
What though thine horse be bothë foul and lean?
If he will serve thee, reck thou not a bean;
Look that thine heart be merry evermo'."

"Yes, Host," quoth he, "so may I ride or go,
But⁴²⁴⁴ I be merry, y-wis I will be blamed."

And right anon his tale he hath attamed;⁴²⁴⁵

And thus he said unto us every one,
This sweetë priest, this goodly man, Sir John.

THE TALE⁴²⁴⁶

A poor widow, somedeal y-stept⁴²⁴⁷ in age,
Was whilom dwelling in a poor cottáge,
Beside a grovë, standing in a dale.
This widow, of which I tellë you my tale,
Since thilkë day that she was last a wife,
In patiënce led a full simple life,
For little was her chattel and her rent.⁴²⁴⁸
By husbandry⁴²⁴⁹ of such as God her sent,
She found⁴²⁵⁰ herself, and eke her daughters two.
Three largë sowës had she, and no mo';
Three kine, and eke a sheep that hightë Mall.
Full sooty was her bow'r,⁴²⁵¹ and eke her hall,
In which she ate full many a slender meal.
Of poignant saucë knew she never a deal.⁴²⁵²
No dainty morsel passed through her throat;
Her diet was accordant to her cote.⁴²⁵³
Repletión her madë never sick;
Attemper⁴²⁵⁴ diet was all her physíc,
And exercise, and heartë's suffisance.⁴²⁵⁵
The goutë let her nothing⁴²⁵⁶ for to dance,
Nor apoplexy shentë⁴²⁵⁷ not her head.
No winë drank she, neither white nor red:
Her board was served most with white and black,
Milk and brown bread, in which she found no lack,
Seind⁴²⁵⁸ bacon, and sometimes an egg or tway;
For she was as it were a manner dey.⁴²⁵⁹
A yard⁴²⁶⁰ she had, enclosed all about
With stickës, and a dryë ditch without,
In which she had a cock, hight Chanticleer;
In all the land of crowing n'as⁴²⁶¹ his peer.⁴²⁶²

His voice was merrier than the merry orgón,⁴²⁶³
On massë days that in the churches gon.
Well sickerer⁴²⁶⁴ was his crowing in his lodge,
Than is a clock, or an abbáy horloge.⁴²⁶⁵
By nature he knew each ascensioún
Of th' equinoctial in thilkë town;
For when degrees fíftenë were ascended,
Then crew he, that it might not be amended.
His comb was redder than the fine corál,
Embattell'd⁴²⁶⁶ as it were a castle wall.
His bill was black, and as the jet it shone;
Like azure were his leggës and his tone;⁴²⁶⁷
His nailës whiter than the lily flow'r,
And like the burnish'd gold was his colóur,
This gentle cock had in his governánce
Sev'n hennës, for to do all his pleasánce,
Which were his sisters and his paramours,
And wondrous like to him as of colóurs.
Of which the fairest-hued in the throat
Was called Damosellë Partelote,
Courteous she was, discreet, and debonair,
And cómpaniáble,⁴²⁶⁸ and bare herself so fair,
Sincë the day that she sev'n night was old,
That truëly she had the heart in hold
Of Chanticleer, locked in every lith;⁴²⁶⁹
He lov'd her so, that well was him therewith.
But such a joy it was to hear them sing,
When that the brightë sunnë gan to spring,
In sweet accord, "My lefe⁴²⁷⁰ is fare⁴²⁷¹ in land."⁴²⁷²
For, at that time, as I have understand,
Beastës and birdës couldë speak and sing.
And so befell, that in a dawëning,
As Chanticleer among his wivës all
Sat on his perchë, that was in the hall,
And next him sat this fairë Partelote,
This Chanticleer gan groanen in his throat,

As man that in his dream is dretched⁴²⁷³ sore,
And when that Partelote thus heard him roar,
She was aghast,⁴²⁷⁴ and saidë, “Heartë dear,
What aileth you to groan in this mannère?
Ye be a very sleeper, fy for shame!”
And he answer’d and saidë thus; “Madame,
I pray you that ye take it not agrief;⁴²⁷⁵
By God, me mette⁴²⁷⁶ I was in such mischíef,⁴²⁷⁷
Right now, that yet mine heart is sore affright’.
Now God,” quoth he, “my sweven⁴²⁷⁸ read aright,
And keep my body out of foul prisoún.
Me mette,⁴²⁷⁹ how that I roamed up and down
Within our yard, where as I saw a beast
Was like an hound, and would have made arrest⁴²⁸⁰
Upon my body, and would have had me dead.
His colour was betwixt yellow and red;
And tipped was his tail, and both his ears,
With black, unlike the remnant of his hairs.
His snout was small, with glowing eyen tway;
Yet of his look almost for fear I dey;⁴²⁸¹
This caused me my groaning, doubtëless.”

“Away,”⁴²⁸² quoth she, “fy on you, heartëless!⁴²⁸³
Alas!” quoth she, “for, by that God above!
Now have ye lost my heart and all my love;
I cannot love a coward, by my faith.
For certes, what so any woman saith,
We all desiren, if it mightë be,
To have husbandës hardy, wise, and free,
And secret, and no niggard nor no fool,
Nor him that is aghast⁴²⁸⁴ of every tool,⁴²⁸⁵
Nor no avantour,⁴²⁸⁶ by that God above!
How durstë ye for shame say to your love
That anything might makë you afear’d?
Have ye no mannë’s heart, and have a beard?
Alas! and can ye be aghast of swevenës?⁴²⁸⁷
Nothing but vanity, God wot, in sweven is,

Swevens engender of⁴²⁸⁸ repletións,
And oft of fume, and of complexiós,
When humours be too abundant in a wight.
Certes this dream, which ye have mette tonight,
Cometh of the great supefluity
Of yourë redë *cholera*,⁴²⁸⁹ pardie,
Which causeth folk to dreaden in their dreams
Of arrows, and of fire with redë beams,
Of redë beastës, that they will them bite,
Of conteke,⁴²⁹⁰ and of whelpës great and lite;⁴²⁹¹
Right as the humour of meláncholy
Causeth full many a man in sleep to cry,
For fear of bullës, or of bearës blake,
Or ellës that black devils will them take,
Of other humours could I tell also,
That workë many a man in sleep much woe;
That I will pass as lightly as I can.
Lo, Cato, which that was so wise a man,
Said he not thus, ‘Ne do no force of⁴²⁹² dreams,’
Now, Sir,” quoth she, “when we fly from these beams,⁴²⁹³
For Goddë’s love, as take some laxatife;
On peril of my soul, and of my life,
I counsel you the best, I will not lie,
That both of choler, and meláncholy,
Ye purgë you; and, for ye shall not tarry,
Though in this town is no apothecáry,
I shall myself two herbës teachë you,
That shall be for your health, and for your prow;⁴²⁹⁴
And in our yard the herbës shall I find,
The which have of their property by kind⁴²⁹⁵
To purgë you beneath, and eke above.
Sirë, forget not this for Goddë’s love;
Ye be full cholerick of complexión;
Ware that the sun, in his ascensión,
You findë not replete of humours hot;
And if it do, I dare well lay a groat,

That ye shall have a fever tertiane,
Or else an ague, that may be your bane,
A day or two ye shall have digestives
Of wormës, ere ye take your laxatives,
Of laurel, centaury,⁴²⁹⁶ and fumeterére,⁴²⁹⁷
Or else of elder-berry, that groweth there,
Of catapuce,⁴²⁹⁸ or of the gaitre-berries,⁴²⁹⁹
Or herb ivy growing in our yard, that merry is:
Pick them right as they grow, and eat them in,
Be merry, husband, for your father's kin;
Dreadë no dream; I can say you no more."

"Madame," quoth he, "*grand mercy* of your lore,
But natheless, as touching Dan Catoún,
That hath of wisdom such a great renown,
Though that he bade no dreamës for to dread,
By God, men may in oldë bookës read
Of many a man more of authority
Than ever Cato was, so may I thé,⁴³⁰⁰
That all the reversë say of his senténcé,⁴³⁰¹
And have well founden by experience
That dreamës be significatións
As well of joy, as tribulatións
That folk enduren in this life présent.
There needeth make of this no argument;
The very prevë⁴³⁰² sheweth it indeed.
One of the greatest authors that men read⁴³⁰³
Saith thus, that whilom two fellówës went
On pilgrimage in a full good intent;
And happen'd so, they came into a town
Where there was such a congregatióún
Of people, and eke so strait of herbergage,⁴³⁰⁴
That they found not as much as one cottáge
In which they bothë might y-lodged be:
Wherefore they musten of necessity,
As for that night, departë company;
And each of them went to his hostelry,⁴³⁰⁵

And took his lodging as it wouldë fall.
The one of them was lodged in a stall,
Far in a yard, with oxen of the plough;
That other man was lodged well enow,
As was his áventúre, or his fortúne,
That us govérneth all, as in commúne.
And so befell, that, long ere it were day,
This man mette⁴³⁰⁶ in his bed, there as he lay,
How that his fellow gan upon him call,
And said, 'Alas! for in an ox's stall
This night shall I be murder'd, where I lie.
Now help me, dearë brother, or I die;
In allë hastë come to me,' he said.
This man out of his sleep for fear abraid;⁴³⁰⁷
But when that he was wak'd out of his sleep,
He turned him, and took of this no keep;
He thought his dream was but a vanity.
Thus twiës in his sleeping dreamed he,
And at the thirdë time yet⁴³⁰⁸ his felláw
Came, as he thought, and said, 'I am now slaw;⁴³⁰⁹
Behold my bloody woundës, deep and wide.
Arise up early, in the morning, tide,
And at the west gate of the town,' quoth he,
'A cartë full of dung there shalt: thou see,
In which my body is hid privily.
Do thilkë cart arroste⁴³¹⁰ boldëly.
My gold caused my murder, sooth to sayn.'
And told him every point how he was slain,
With a full piteous face, and pale of hue.
"And, trustë well, his dream he found full true;
For on the morrow, as soon as it was day,
To his fellówë's inn he took his way;
And when that he came to this ox's stall,
After his fellow he began to call.
The hostelére answered him anon,
And saidë, 'Sir, your fellow is y-gone,

As soon as day he went out of the town.’
This man gan fallen in suspicioún,
Rememb’ring on his dreamës that he mette,⁴³¹¹
And forth he went, no longer would he let,⁴³¹²
Unto the west gate of the town, and fand
A dung cart, as it went for to dung land,
That was arrayed in the samë wise
As ye have heard the deadë man devise;⁴³¹³
And with an hardy heart he gan to cry,
‘Vengeance and justice of this felony:
My fellow murder’d in this samë night
And in this cart he lies, gaping upright.
I cry out on the ministers,’ quoth he.
‘That shouldë keep and rule this city;
Harow! alas! here lies my fellow slain.’
What should I more unto this talë sayn?
The people out start, and cast the cart to ground
And in the middle of the dung they found
The deadë man, that murder’d was all new.
O blissful God! that art so good and true,
Lo, how that thou bewray’st murder alway.
Murder will out, that see we day by day.
Murder is so wlatson⁴³¹⁴ and abominable
To God, that is so just and reasonable,
That he will not suffer it heled⁴³¹⁵ be;
Though it abide a year, or two, or three,
Murder will out, this is my conclusioún,
And right anon, the ministers of the town
Have hent⁴³¹⁶ the carter, and so sore him pined,⁴³¹⁷
And eke the hostelére so sore engined,⁴³¹⁸
That they beknew⁴³¹⁹ their wickedness anon,
And werë hanged by the neckë bone.
“Here may ye see that dreamës be to dread.
And certes in the samë book I read,
Right in the nextë chapter after this
(I gabbë⁴³²⁰ not, so have I joy and bliss),

Two men that would have passed over sea,
For certain cause, into a far country,
If that the wind not haddë been contráry,
That made them in a city for to tarry,
That stood full merry upon an haven side;
But on a day, against the eventide,
The wind gan change, and blew right as them lest.⁴³²¹
Jolly and glad they wentë to their rest,
And castë⁴³²² them full early for to sail.
But to the one man fell a great marvail
That one of them, in sleeping as he lay,
He mette⁴³²³ a wondrous dream, against the day:
He thought a man stood by his beddë's side,
And him commanded that he should abide;
And said him thus; 'If thou to-morrow wend,⁴³²⁴
Thou shalt be drown'd; my tale is at an end.'
He woke, and told his follow what he mette,
And prayed him his voyage for to let;⁴³²⁵
As for that day, he pray'd him to abide.
His fellow, that lay by his beddë's side,
Gan for to laugh, and scorned him full fast.
'No dream,' quoth he, 'may so my heart aghast,⁴³²⁶
That I will lettë for to do my things.⁴³²⁷
I settë not a straw by thy dreamíngs,
For swevens⁴³²⁸ be but vanities and japes.⁴³²⁹
Men dream all day of owlës and of apes,
And eke of many a mazë⁴³³⁰ therewithal;
Men dream of thing that never was, nor shall.
But since I see, that thou wilt here abide,
And thus forslöthë⁴³³¹ wilfully thy tide,⁴³³²
God wot, it rueth me;⁴³³³ and have good day.'
And thus he took his leave, and went his way.
But, ere that he had half his coursë sail'd,
I know not why, nor what mischance it ail'd,
But casually⁴³³⁴ the ship's bottom rent,
And ship and man under the water went,

In sight of other shippës there beside
That with him sailed at the samë tide.⁴³³⁵
“And therefore, fairë Partelote so dear,
By such examples oldë may’st thou lear,⁴³³⁶
That no man shouldë be too reckëless
Of dreamës, for I say thee doubtëless,
That many a dream full sore is for to dread.
Lo, in the life of Saint Kenelm⁴³³⁷ I read,
That was Kenulphus’ son, the noble king
Of Mercenrike,⁴³³⁸ how Kenelm mette a thing.
A little ere he was murder’d on a day,
His murder in his visión he say.⁴³³⁹
His norice⁴³⁴⁰ him expounded every deal⁴³⁴¹
His sweven, and bade him to keep⁴³⁴² him well
For treason; but he was but seven years old,
And therefore little talë hath he told⁴³⁴³
Of any dream, so holy was his heart.
By God, I haddë lever than my shirt
That ye had read his legend, as have I.
Dame Partelote, I say you truëly,
Macrobius, that wrote the visión
In Afric’ of the worthy Scipion,⁴³⁴⁴
Affirmeth dreamës, and saith that they be
‘Warnings of thingës that men after see.
And furthermore, I pray you lookë well
In the Old Testament, of Daniél,
If he held dreamës any vanity.
Read eke of Joseph, and there shall ye see
Whether dreams be sometimes (I say not all)
Warnings of thingës that shall after fall.
Look of Egypt the king, Dan Pharaóh,
His baker and his buteler also,
Whether they feltë none effect⁴³⁴⁵ in dreams.
Whoso will seek the acts of sundry remes⁴³⁴⁶
May read of dreamës many a wondrous thing.
Lo Croesus, which that was of Lydia king,

Mette he not that he sat upon a tree,
 Which signified he shouldë hanged be?⁴³⁴⁷
 Lo here, Andromachë, Hectorë's wife,
 That day that Hector shouldë lose his life,
 She dreamed on the samë night beforne,
 How that the life of Hector should be lorn,⁴³⁴⁸
 If thilkë day he went into battaile;
 She warned him, but it might not avail;
 He wentë forth to fightë natheless,
 And was y-slain anon of Achillës.
 But thilkë tale is all too long to tell;
 And eke it is nigh day, I may not dwell.
 Shortly I say, as for conclusiön,
 That I shall have of this avisiön
 Adversity; and I say furthermore,
 That I ne tell of laxatives no store,⁴³⁴⁹
 For they be venomous, I wot it well;
 I them defy,⁴³⁵⁰ I love them never a del.⁴³⁵¹
 "But let us speak of mirth, and stint⁴³⁵² all this;
 Madamë Partelote, so have I bliss,
 Of one thing God hath sent me largë⁴³⁵³ grace;
 For when I see the beauty of your face,
 Ye be so scarlet-hued about your eyen,
 I maketh all my dreadë for to dien,
 For, all so sicker⁴³⁵⁴ as *In principio*,⁴³⁵⁵
Mulier est hominis confusio.⁴³⁵⁶
 (Madam, the sentence⁴³⁵⁷ of this Latin is,
 Woman is mannë's joy and mannë's bliss.)
 For when I feel at night your softë side—
 Albeit that I may not on you ride,
 For that our perch is made so narrow, alas!—
 I am so full of joy and of solas,⁴³⁵⁸
 That I defy both sweven and eke dream."
 And with that word he flew down from the beam,
 For it was day, and eke his hennës all;
 And with a chuck he gan them for to call,

For he had found a corn, lay in the yard.
Royal he was, he was no more afear'd;
He feather'd Partelotë twenty time,
And as oft trode her, ere that it was prime.
He looked as it were a grim lióún,
And on his toes he roamed up and down;
He deigned not to set his feet to ground;
He chucked, when he had a corn y-found,
And to him rannë then his wivës all.
Thus royal, as a prince is in his hall,
Leave I this Chanticleer in his pastúre;
And after will I tell his áventúre.

When that the month in which the world began,
That hightë March, when God first maked man,
Was cómplete, and y-passed were also,
Sincë March ended, thirty days and two,
Befell that Chanticleer in all his pride,
His seven wivës walking him beside,
Cast up his eyen to the brightë sun,
That in the sign of Taurus had y-run
Twenty degrees and one, and somewhat more;
He knew by kind,⁴³⁵⁹ and by none other lore,⁴³⁶⁰
That it was prime, and crew with blissful steven.⁴³⁶¹
"The sun," he said, "is clomben up in heaven
Twenty degrees and one, and more y-wis.⁴³⁶²
Madamë Partelote, my worldë's bliss,
Hearken these blissful birdës how they sing,
And see the freshë flowers how they spring;
Full is mine heart of revel and solace."
But suddenly him fell a sorrowful case;⁴³⁶³
For ever the latter end of joy is woe:
God wot that worldly joy is soon y-go:
And, if a rhetor⁴³⁶⁴ couldë fair indite,
He in a chronicle might it safely write,
As for a sov'reign notability.⁴³⁶⁵
Now every wise man, let him hearken me;

This story is all as true, I undertake,
As is the book of Launcelot du Lake,
That women hold in full great reverence.
Now will I turn again to my sentence.

A col-fox, ⁴³⁶⁶ full of sly iniquity,
That in the grove had wonned ⁴³⁶⁷ yearës three,
By high imaginatiön forecast,
The samë night thorough the hedges brast ⁴³⁶⁸
Into the yard, where Chanticleer the fair

And in a bed of wortës ⁴³⁶⁹ still he lay,
Till it was passed undern ⁴³⁷⁰ of the day,
Waiting his time on Chanticleer to fall:
As gladly do these homicidës all,
That in awaitë lie to murder men.
O falsë murd'rer! Rouking ⁴³⁷¹ in thy den!
O new Iscariot, new Ganilion! ⁴³⁷²
O false dissimuler, O Greek Sinón, ⁴³⁷³
That broughtest Troy all utterly to sorrow!
O Chanticleer! accursed be the morrow
That thou into thy yard flew from the beams; ⁴³⁷⁴
Thou wert full well y-warned by thy dreams
That thilkë day was perilous to thee.
But what that God forewot ⁴³⁷⁵ must needës be,
After th' opinion of certain clerkës.
Witness on him that any perfect clerk is,
That in school is great altercatiön
In this matter, and great disputatiön,
And hath been of an hundred thousand men.
But I ne cannot boult it to the bren, ⁴³⁷⁶
As can the holy doctor Augustine,
Or Boece, or the bishop Bradwardine, ⁴³⁷⁷
Whether that Goddë's worthy foreweeting ⁴³⁷⁸
Straineth me needly ⁴³⁷⁹ for to do a thing
(Needly call I simple necessity),

Or ellës if free choice be granted me
To do that samë thing, or do it not,
Though God forewot⁴³⁸⁰ it ere that it was wrought;
Or if his weeting⁴³⁸¹ straineth⁴³⁸² never a deal,⁴³⁸³
But by necessity conditionel.
I will not have to do of such mattére;
My tale is of a cock, as ye may hear,
That took his counsel of his wife, with sorrow,
To walken in the yard upon the morrow
That he had mette the dream, as I you told.
Womanë's counsels be full often cold;⁴³⁸⁴
Womanë's counsel brought us first to woe,
And made Adám from Paradise to go,
There as he was full merry and well at case.
But, for I n'ot⁴³⁸⁵ to whom I might displease
If I counsél of women wouldë blame,
Pass over, for I said it in my game.⁴³⁸⁶
Read authors, where they treat of such mattére,
And what they say of women ye may hear.
These be the cockë's wordës, and not mine;
I can no harm of no woman divine.⁴³⁸⁷
Fair in the sand, to bathe⁴³⁸⁸ her merrily,
Lies Partelote, and all her sisters by,
Against the sun, and Chanticleer so free
Sang merrier than the mermaid in the sea;
For Physiologus saith sickerly,⁴³⁸⁹
How that they singë well and merrily.⁴³⁹⁰
And so befell that, as he cast his eye
Among the wortës,⁴³⁹¹ on a butterfly,
He was ware of this fox that lay full low.
Nothing ne list him thennë⁴³⁹² for to crow,
But cried anon "Cock! cock!" and up he start,
As man that was affrayed in his heart.
For naturally a beast desireth flee
From his contráry,⁴³⁹³ if be may it see,

Though he ne'er erst⁴³⁹⁴ had soon it with his eye
This Chanticleer, when he gan him espy,
He would have fled, but that the fox anon
Said, "Gentle Sir, alas! why will ye gon?
Be ye afraid of me that am your friend?
Now, certes, I were worse than any fiend,
If I to you would harm or villainy.
I am not come your counsel to espy.
But truëly the cause of my comíng
Was only for to hearken how ye sing;
For truëly ye have as merry a steven,⁴³⁹⁵
As any angel hath that is in heaven;
Therewith ye have of music more feeling,
Than had Boece, or any that can sing.
My lord your father (God his soulë bless)
And eke your mother of her gentleness,
Have in mine housë been, to my great ease:⁴³⁹⁶
And certes, Sir, full fain would I you please.
But, for men speak of singing, I will say,
So may I brookë⁴³⁹⁷ well mine eyen tway,
Save you, I heardë never man so sing
As did your father in the morrowning.
Certes it was of heart all that he sung.
And, for to make his voice the morë strong,
He would so pain him,⁴³⁹⁸ that with both his eyen
He mustë wink, so loud he wouldë cryen,
And standen on his tiptoes therewithal,
And stretchë forth his neckë long and small.
And eke he was of such discretión,
That there was no man, in no región,
That him in song or wisdom mightë pass.
I have well read in Dan Burnel the Ass,⁴³⁹⁹
Among his verse, how that there was a cock
That, for⁴⁴⁰⁰ a priestë's son gave him a knock
Upon his leg, while he was young and nice,⁴⁴⁰¹
He made him for to lose his benefice.

But certain there is no comparisón
Betwixt the wisdom and discretión
Of yourë father, and his subtilty.
Now singë, Sir, for saintë charity,
Let see, can ye your father counterfeit?"

This Chanticleer his wings began to beat,
As man that could not his treasón espy,
So was he ravish'd with his flattery.
Alas! ye lordës, many a false flattour⁴⁴⁰²
Is in your court, and many a losengeour,⁴⁴⁰³
That pleasë you well morë, by my faith,
Than he that soothfastness⁴⁴⁰⁴ unto you saith.
Read in Ecclesiast of flattery;
Beware, ye lordës, of their treachery.
This Chanticleer stood high upon his toes,
Stretching his neck, and held his eyen close,
And gan to crowë loudë for the nonce:⁴⁴⁰⁵
And Dan Russel⁴⁴⁰⁶ the fox start up at once,
And by the gorgat hentë⁴⁴⁰⁷ Chanticleer,
And on his back toward the wood him bare.
For yet was there no man that him pursu'd.
O destiny, that may'st not be eschew'd!⁴⁴⁰⁸
Alas, that Chanticleer flew from the beams!
Alas, his wifë raughtë⁴⁴⁰⁹ nought of dreams!
And on a Friday fell all this mischance.
O Venus, that art goddess of pleasánce,
Since that thy servant was this Chanticleer
And in thy service did all his powére,
More for delight, than the world to multiply,
Why wilt thou suffer him on thy day to die?
O Gaufrid, dearë master sovereign,
That, when thy worthy king Richárd was slain⁴⁴¹⁰
With shot, complainedest his death so sore,
Why n' had I now thy sentence and thy lore,
The Friday for to chiden, as did ye?
(For on a Friday, soothly, slain was he),

Then would I shew you how that I could plain
For Chanticleer's dread, and for his pain.

Certes such cry nor lamentation
Was ne'er of ladies made, when Ilión
Was won, and Pyrrhus⁴⁴¹¹ with his straight sword,
When he had hent king Priam by the beard,
And slain him (as saith us *Eneidos*),
As maden all the hennës in the close,⁴⁴¹²
When they had seen of Chanticleer the sight.
But sov'reignly⁴⁴¹³ Dame Partelotë shrigh, ⁴⁴¹⁴
Full louder than did Hasdrubalë's wife,
When that her husband haddë lost his life,
And that the Romans had y-burnt Cartháge;
She was so full of torment and of rage,
That wilfully into the fire she start,
And burnt herselfë with a steadfast heart.
O woeful hennës! right so criëd ye,
As, when that Nero burned the city
Of Romë, cried the senatorës' wives,
For that their husbands losten all their lives;
Withoutë guilt this Nero hath them slain.

Now will I turn unto my tale again;
The sely⁴⁴¹⁵ widow, and her daughters two,
Heardë these hennës cry and makë woe,
And at the doors out started they anon,
And saw the fox toward the wood is gone,
And bare upon his back the cock away:
They criëd, "Out! harow! and well-away!
Aha! the fox!" and after him they ran,
And eke with stavës many another man
Ran Coll our dog, and Talbot, and Garlánd;
And Malkin, with her distaff in her hand
Ran cow and calf, and eke the very hoggës,
So fear'd they were for barking of the doggës,
And shouting of the men and women eke.
They rannë so, them thought their hearts would break.
They yelled as the fiendës do in hell;

The duckës criëd as men would them quell;⁴⁴¹⁶
The geese for fearë flewën o'er the trees,
Out of the hivë came the swarm of bees,
So hideous was the noise, *ben'dicite!*
Certes he, Jackë Straw,⁴⁴¹⁷ and his meinie,⁴⁴¹⁸
Ne madë never shoutës half so shrill,
When that they woulden any Fleming kill,
As thilkë day was made upon the fox.
Of brass they broughtë beamës⁴⁴¹⁹ and of box,
Of horn and bone, in which they blew and pooped,⁴⁴²⁰
And therewithal they shrieked and they hooped;
It seemed as the heaven shouldë fall.

Now, goodë men, I pray you hearken all;
Lo, how Fortúnë turneth suddenly
The hope and pride eke of her enemy.
This cock, that lay upon the fox's back,
In all his dread unto the fox he spake,
And saidë, "Sir, if that I were as ye,
Yet would I say (as wisly⁴⁴²¹ God help me),
'Turn ye again, ye proudë churlës all;⁴⁴²²
A very pestilence upon you fall.
Now am I come unto the woodë's side,
Maugré your head, the cock shall here abide;
I will him eat, in faith, and that anon.'"
The fox answér'd, "In faith it shall be done:"
And, as he spake the word, all suddenly
The cock brake from his mouth deliverly,⁴⁴²³
And high upon a tree he flew anon.
And when the fox saw that the cock was gone,
"Alas!" quoth he, "O Chanticleer, alas!
I have," quoth he, "y-done to you trespass,⁴⁴²⁴
Inasmuch as I maked you afear'd,
When I you hent,⁴⁴²⁵ and brought out of your yard;
But, Sir, I did it in no wick' intent;
Come down, and I shall tell you what I meant.
I shall say sooth to you, God help me so."

“Nay then,” quoth he, “I shrew⁴⁴²⁶ us both the two,
And first I shrew myself, both blood and bones,
If thou beguile me oftener than once.
Thou shalt no more through thy flattery
Do⁴⁴²⁷ me to sing and winkë with mine eye;
For he that winketh when he shouldë see,
All wilfully, God let him never thé.”⁴⁴²⁸
“Nay,” quoth the fox; “but God give him mischance
That is so indiscreet of governánce,
That jangleth⁴⁴²⁹ when that he should hold his peace.”

Lo, what it is for to be reckëless
And negligent, and trust on flattery.
But ye that holdë this tale a follý,
As of a fox, or of a cock or hen,
Take the morality thereof, good men.
For Saint Paul saith, That all that written is,
To our doctríne⁴⁴³⁰ it written is y-wis.⁴⁴³¹
Take the fruit, and let the chaff be still.

Now goodë God, if that it be thy will,
As saith my Lord,⁴⁴³² so make us all good men;
And bring us all to thy high bliss. Amen.

“Sir Nunnë’s Priest,” our Hostë said anon,
“Y-blessed be thy breech, and every stone;
This was a merry tale of Chanticleer.
But by my truth, if thou wert seculére,⁴⁴³³
Thou wouldest be a treadëfowl⁴⁴³⁴ aright;
For if thou have couráge as thou hast might,
Thee werë need of hennës, as I ween,
Yea more than seven timës seventeen.
See, whatë brawnës⁴⁴³⁵ hath this gentle priest,
So great a neck, and such a largë breast!
He looketh as a sperhawk with his eyen;
Him needeth not his colour for to dyen
With Brazil, nor with grain of Portugale.
But, Sirë, fairë fall you for your tale.”

And, after that, he with full merry cheer
Said to another, as ye shallë hear.[4436](#)

:

THE SECOND NUN'S TALE⁴⁴³⁷

The minister and norice⁴⁴³⁸ unto vices,
Which that men call in English idleness,
The porter at the gate is of delices;⁴⁴³⁹
T' eschew, and by her contrar' her oppress—
That is to say, by lawful business⁴⁴⁴⁰—
Well oughte we to do our all intent,⁴⁴⁴¹
Lest that the fiend through idleness us hent.⁴⁴⁴²

For he, that with his thousand cordēs sly
Continually us waiteth to beclap,⁴⁴⁴³
When he may man in idleness espy,
He can so lightly catch him in his trap,
Till that a man be hent right by the lappe,⁴⁴⁴⁴
He is not ware the fiend hath him in hand;
Well ought we work, and idleness withstand.

And though men dreaded never for to die,
Yet see men well by reason, doubtēless,
That idleness is root of sluggardý,
Of which there cometh never good increase;
And see that sloth them holdeth in a leas,⁴⁴⁴⁵
Only to sleep, and for to eat and drink,
And to devouren all that others swink.⁴⁴⁴⁶

And, for to put us from such idleness,
That cause is of so great confusión,
I have here done my faithful business,
After the Legend, in translatiön

Right of thy glorious life and passi3n—
Thou with thy garland wrought of rose and lily,
Thee mean I, maid and martyr, Saint Cecílie.

And thou, thou art the flow'r of virgins all,
Of whom that Bernard list so well to write, [4447](#).
To thee at my beginning first I call;
Thou comfort of us wretches, do me indite
Thy maiden's death, that won through her mérite
Th' eternal life, and o'er the fiend vict3ry,
As man may after readen in her story.

Thou maid and mother, daughter of thy Son,
Thou well of mercy, sinful soul's cure,
In whom that God of bounté chose to won; [4448](#)
Thou humble and high o'er every créature,
Thou nobilest, so far forth our natúre, [4449](#)
That no disdain the Maker had of kind, [4450](#)
His Son in blood and flesh to clothe and wind. [4451](#)

Within the cloister of thy blissful sid's
Took mann's shape th' eternal love and peace,
That of the trin's compass [4452](#) Lord and guide is;
Whom earth, and sea, and heav'n, out of release, [4453](#)
Aye hery; [4454](#) and thou, Virgin wemm'less, [4455](#)
Bare of thy body, and dweltest maiden pure,
The Creat3r of every créature.

Assembled is in thee magnificence [4456](#)
With mercy, goodness, and with such pity,
That thou, that art the sun of excellence,
Not only helpst them that pray to thee,
But oftentime, of thy benignity,
Full freely, ere that men thine help beseech,
Thou go'st before, and art their liv's leech. [4457](#)

Now help, thou meek and blissful fair's maid,
Me, flem'd [4458](#) wretch, in this desért of gall;
Think on the woman Canané'e that said
That whelp's eat some of the crumb's all
That from their Lord's table be y-fall; [4459](#)

And though that I, unworthy son of Eve, [4460](#)

Be sinful, yet acceptë my believe. [4461](#)

And, for that faith is dead withoutë werkës,

For to workë give me wit and space,

That I be quit from thennes that most derk is; [4462](#)

O thou, that art so fair and full of grace,

Be thou mine advocate in that high place,

Where as withouten end is sung Osanne,

Thou Christë's mother, daughter dear of Anne.

And of thy light my soul in prison light,

That troubled is by the contagiön

Of my bodý, and also by the weight

Of earthly lust and false affectiön;

O hav'n of refuge, O salvatiön

Of them that be in sorrow and distress,

Now help, for to my work I will me dress.

Yet pray I you, that readë what I write, [4463](#)

Forgive me that I do no diligence

This ilkë [4464](#) story subtilly t' indite.

For both have I the wordës and senténcé

Of him that at the saintë's reverence

The story wrote, and follow her légend;

And pray you that you will my work amend.

First will I you the name of Saint Cecílie

Expound, as men may in her story see.

It is to say in English, Heaven's lily, [4465](#)

For purë chasteness of virginity;

Or, for she whiteness had of honesty, [4466](#)

And green of consciéncé, and of good fame

The sweetë savour, Lilie was her name.

Or Cecilie is to say, the way of blind; [4467](#)

For she example was by good teachíng;

Or else Cecilie, as I written find,

Is joined by a manner conjoiníng

Of heaven and *Lia*, [4468](#) and herein figuríng

The heaven is set for thought of holiness,

And *Lia* for her lasting business.

Cecilie may eke be said in this mannère,
Wanting of blindness, for her greatë light
Of sapience, and for her thewës⁴⁴⁶⁹ clear.
Or ellës, lo, this maiden's name bright
Of heaven and *Leos* comes, for which by right
Men might her well the heaven of people call,
Example of good and wisë workës all;

For *Leos* people⁴⁴⁷⁰ in English is to say;⁴⁴⁷¹
And right as men may in the heaven see
The sun and moon, and starrës every way,
Right so men ghostly,⁴⁴⁷² in this maiden free,
Sawen of faith the magnanimity,
And eke the clearness whole of sapience,
And sundry workës bright of excellence.

And right so as these philosóphers write,
That heav'n is swift and round, and eke burning,
Right so was fairë Cecilíe the white
Full swift and busy in every good working,
And round and whole⁴⁴⁷³ in good persévering,
And burning ever in charity full bright;
Now have I you declared what she hight.⁴⁴⁷⁴

This maiden bright Cecile, as her life saith,
Was come of Romans, and of noble kind,
And from her cradle foster'd in the faith
Of Christ, and bare his Gospel in her mind:
She never ceased, as I written find,
Of her prayére, and God to love and dread,
Beseeching him to keep her maidenhead.

And when this maiden should unto a man
Y-wedded be, that was full young of age,
Which that y-called was Valerian,
And comë was the day of marriáge,
She, full devout and humble in her coráge,⁴⁴⁷⁵
Under her robe of gold, that sat full fair,
Had next her flesh y-clad her in an hair.⁴⁴⁷⁶

And while the organs madë melody,
To God alone thus in her heart sang she;
“O Lord, my soul and eke my body gie⁴⁴⁷⁷
Unwemmed, ⁴⁴⁷⁸ lest that I confounded be.”
And, for his love that died upon the tree,
Every second or third day she fast’,
Aye bidding⁴⁴⁷⁹ in her orisons full fast.

The night came, and to beddë must she gon
With her husbánd, as it is the mannère;
And privily she said to him anon;
“O sweet and well-beloved spousë dear,
There is a counsel, ⁴⁴⁸⁰ an’⁴⁴⁸¹ ye will it hear,
Which that right fain I would unto you say,
So that ye swear ye will it not bewray.”

Valerian gan fast unto her swear
That for no case nor thing that mightë be,
He never should to none bewrayen her;
And then at erst⁴⁴⁸² thus to him saidë she;
“I have an angel which that loveth me,
That with great love, whether I wake or sleep,
Is ready aye my body for to keep;

“And if that he may feelen, out of dread, ⁴⁴⁸³
That ye me touch or love in villainy,
He right anon will slay you with the deed,
And in your youthë thus ye shouldë die.
And if that ye in cleanë love me gie, ⁴⁴⁸⁴
He will you love as me, for your cleanness,
And shew to you his joy and his brightnéss.”

Valerian, corrected as God wo’ld,
Answer’d again, “If I shall trustë thee,
Let me that angel see, and him behold;
And if that it a very angel be,
Then will I do as thou hast prayed me;
And if thou love another man, forsooth
Right with this sword then will I slay you both.”

Cecile answér’d anon right in this wise;

“If that you list, the angel shall ye see,
So that ye trow⁴⁴⁸⁵ Of Christ, and you baptise;
Go forth to Via Appia,” quoth she,
That from this town⁴⁴⁸⁶ stands but milës three,
And to the poorë folkës that there dwell
Say them right thus, as that I shall you tell.

“Tell them, that I, Cecile, you to them sent
To shewë you the good Urban the old,
For secret needës,⁴⁴⁸⁷ and for good intent;
And when that ye Saint Urban have behold,
Tell him the wordës which I to you told;
And when that he hath purged you from sin,
Then shall ye see that angel ere ye twin.”⁴⁴⁸⁸

Valerian is to the placë gone;
And, right as he was taught by her learning,
He found this holy old Urban anon
Among the saintës’ burials louting;⁴⁴⁸⁹
And he anon, withoutë tarrying,
Did his messáge, and when that he it told,
Urban for joy his handës gan uphold.

The tearës from his eyen let he fall;
“Almighty Lord, O Jesus Christ,” quoth he,
“Sower of chaste counsél, herd⁴⁴⁹⁰ of us all;
The fruit of thilk⁴⁴⁹¹ seed of chastity
That thou hast sown in Cecile, take to thee:
Lo, like a busy bee, withoutë guile,
Thee serveth aye thine owen thrall⁴⁴⁹² Cicile.

“For thilkë spousë, that she took but new,⁴⁴⁹³
Full like a fierce lión, she sendeth here,
As meek as e’er was any lamb to ewe.”
And with that word anon there gan appear
An old man, clad in whitë clothës clear,
That had a book with letters of gold in hand,
And gan before Valerian to stand.

Valerian, as dead, fell down for dread,
When he him saw; and he up hent⁴⁴⁹⁴ him tho,⁴⁴⁹⁵

And on his book right thus he gan to read;
“One Lord, one faith, one God withoutë mo’,
One Christendom, one Father of all alsó,
Aboven all, and over all everywhere.”

These wordës all with gold y-written were.

When this was read, then said this oldë man,
“Believ’st thou this or no? say yea or nay.”

“I believe all this,” quoth Valerian,

“For soother⁴⁴⁹⁶ thing than this, I dare well say,
Under the Heaven no wight thinkë may.”

Then vanish’d the old man, he wist not where;
And Pope Urban him christened right there.

Valerian went home, and found Cecílie
Within his chamber with an angel stand;
This angel had of roses and of lily

Coronës⁴⁴⁹⁷ two, the which he bare in hand,
And first to Cecile, as I understand,
He gave the one, and after gan he take
The other to Valerian her make.⁴⁴⁹⁸

“With body clean, and with unwemmed⁴⁴⁹⁹ thought,
Keep aye well these coronës two,” quoth he;

“From Paradise to you I have them brought,
Nor ever morë shall they rotten⁴⁵⁰⁰ be,
Nor lose their sweetë savour, trustë me,
Nor ever wight shall see them with his eye,
But⁴⁵⁰¹ he be chaste, and hatë villainy.

“And thou, Valerian, for thou so soon
Assented hast to good counsél, also
Say what thee list, and thou shalt have thy boon.”⁴⁵⁰²

“I have a brother,” quoth Valerian tho,⁴⁵⁰³

“That in this world I love no man so;
I pray you that my brother may have grace
To know the truth, as I do in this place.”

The angel said, “God liketh thy request,
And bothë, with the palm of martyrdom,
Ye shallë come unto this blissful rest.”

And, with that word, Tiburce his brother came.

And when that he the savour undernome⁴⁵⁰⁴

Which that the roses and the lilies cast,

Within his heart he gan to wonder fast;

And said; "I wonder, this time of the year,

Whencë that sweetë savour cometh so

Of rose and lilies, that I smellë here;

For though I had them in mine handës two,

The savour might in me no deeper go;

The sweetë smell, that in my heart I find,

Hath changed me all in another kind."⁴⁵⁰⁵

Valerian said, "Two crownës here have we,

Snow-white and rosë-red, that shinë clear,

Which that thine eyen have no might to see;

And, as thou smellest them through my prayére,

So shalt thou see them, levë⁴⁵⁰⁶ brother dear,

If it so be thou wilt withoutë sloth

Believe aright, and know the very troth."⁴⁵⁰⁷

Tiburce answered, "Say'st thou this to me

In soothness, or in dreamë hear I this?"

"In dreamës," quoth Valerian, "have we be

Unto this timë, brother mine, y-wis:⁴⁵⁰⁸

But now at erst⁴⁵⁰⁹ in truth our dwelling is."

"How know'st thou this," quoth Tiburce; "in what wise?"

Quoth Valerián, "That shall I thee devise."⁴⁵¹⁰

"The angel of God hath me the truth y-taught,

Which thou shalt see, if that thou wilt reny⁴⁵¹¹

The idols, and be clean, and ellës nought."

[⁴⁵¹²And of the miracle of these crownës tway

Saint Ambrose in his preface list to say;

Solemnëly this noble doctor dear

Commendeth it, and saith in this mannére:

"The palm of martyrdom for to receive,

Saint Cecilie, full filled of God's gift,

The world and eke her chamber gan to weive,⁴⁵¹³

Witness Tiburce's and Cecilie's shrift,⁴⁵¹⁴

To which God of his bounty wouldë shift⁴⁵¹⁵

Coronës two, of flowers well smelling,

And made his angel them the crownës bring.

“The maid hath brought these men to bliss above;

The world hath wist what it is worth, certáin,

Devotiön of chastity to love.”]

Then showed him Cecilie all open and plain,

That idols all are but a thing in vain,

For they be dumb, and thereto⁴⁵¹⁶ they be deave;⁴⁵¹⁷

And charged him his idols for to leave.

“Whoso that trow’th⁴⁵¹⁸ not this, a beast he is,”

Quoth this Tiburce, “if that I shall not lie.”

And she gan kiss his breast when she heard this,

And was full glad he could the truth espy:

“This day I takë thee for mine ally.”⁴⁵¹⁹

Saidë this blissful fairë maiden dear;

And after that she said as ye may hear.

“Lo, right so as the love of Christ,” quoth she,

“Made me thy brother’s wife, right in that wise

Anon for mine allý here take I thee,

Since that thou wilt thine idolës despise.

Go with thy brother now and thee baptise,

And make thee clean, so that thou may’st behold

The angel’s face, of which thy brother told.”

Tiburce answér’d, and saidë, “Brother dear,

First tell me whither I shall, and to what man?”

“To whom?” quoth he, “come forth with goodë cheer,

I will thee lead unto the Pope Urbán.”

“To Urban? brother mine Valerián,”

Quoth then Tiburce; “wilt thou me thither lead?

Me thinketh that it were a wondrous deed.

“Meanest thou not that Urban,” quoth he tho,⁴⁵²⁰

“That is so often damned to be dead,

And wons⁴⁵²¹ in halkës⁴⁵²² always to and fro,

And dare not onës puttë forth his head?

Men should him brennen⁴⁵²³ in a fire so red,

If he were found, or if men might him spy:
And us also, to bear him company.

“And while we seekë that Divinity
That is y-hid in heaven privily,
Algatë⁴⁵²⁴ burnt in this world should we be.”
To whom Cecilie answer’d boldëly;

“Men mightë dreadë well and skilfully⁴⁵²⁵
This life to lose, mine owen dearë brother,
If this were living only, and none other.

“But there is better life in other place,
That never shall be lostë, dread thee nought;
Which Goddë’s Son us toldë through his grace,
That Father’s Son which allë thingës wrought;
And all that wrought is with a skilful⁴⁵²⁶ thought,
The Ghost,⁴⁵²⁷ that from the Father gan proceed,
Hath souled⁴⁵²⁸ them, withouten any drede.⁴⁵²⁹

“By word and by mirácle, high God’s Son,
When he was in this world, declared here,
That there is other life where men may won.”⁴⁵³⁰
To whom answer’d Tiburce, “O sister dear,
Saidest thou not right now in this mannëre,
There was but one God, Lord in soothfastness,⁴⁵³¹
And now of three how may’st thou bear witness?”

“That shall I tell,” quoth she, “ere that I go.
Right as a man hath sapiénces three,
Memory, engine,⁴⁵³² and intellect also,
So in one being of divinity
Three personës there mayë right well be.”

Then gan she him full busily to preach
Of Christë’s coming, and his painës teach,

And many pointës of his passiön;
How Goddë’s Son in this world was withhold⁴⁵³³
To do mankindë plein⁴⁵³⁴ remissión,
That was y-bound in sin and carës cold.⁴⁵³⁵
All this thing she unto Tiburcë told,
And after that Tiburce, in good intent,

With Valerián to Pope Urban he went;

That thanked God, and with glad heart and light

He christen'd him, and made him in that place

Perféc in his learning, and Goddë's knight.

And after this Tiburcë got such grace,

That every day he saw in time and space

Th' angel of God, and every manner boon⁴⁵³⁶

That be God asked, it was sped⁴⁵³⁷ full soon.

It were full hard by order for to sayn

How many wonders Jesus for them wrought.

But at the last, to tellë short and plain,

The sergeants of the town of Rome them sought,

And them before Almach the Prefect brought,

Which them appos'd,⁴⁵³⁸ and knew all their intent,

And to th' imáge of Jupiter them sent;

And said, "Whoso will not do sacrifice,

Swap⁴⁵³⁹ off his head, this is my sentence here."

Anon these martyrs, that I you devise,⁴⁵⁴⁰

One Maximus, that was an officére

Of the preféc's, and his corniculére,⁴⁵⁴¹

Them hent,⁴⁵⁴² and when he forth the saintës lad,⁴⁵⁴³

Himself he wept for pity that he had.

When Maximus had heard the saintës' lore,⁴⁵⁴⁴

He got him of the tormentorës leave,

And led them to his house withoutë more;

And with their preaching, ere that it were eve,

They gonnen⁴⁵⁴⁵ from the tórmentors to reave,⁴⁵⁴⁶

And from Maxim', and from his folk each one,

The falsë faith, to trow⁴⁵⁴⁷ in God alone.

Cecilia came, when it was waxen night,

With priestës, that them christen'd all in fere;⁴⁵⁴⁸

And afterward, when day was waxen light,

Cecile them said with a full steadfast cheer,⁴⁵⁴⁹

"Now, Christë's owen knightës lefe⁴⁵⁵⁰ and dear,

Cast all away the workës of darknéss,

And armë you in armour of brightnéss.

Ye have forsooth y-done a great battaile;
Your course is done,⁴⁵⁵¹ your faith have ye conserved;
Go to the crown of life that may not fail;
The rightful Judgë, which that ye have served,
Shall give it you, as ye have it deserved.”

And when this thing was said, as I devise,⁴⁵⁵²
Men led them forth to do the sacrifice.

But when they were unto the placë brought,
To tellë shortly the conclusiön,
They would incense nor sacrifice right nought.
But on their knees they settë them adown,
With humble heart and sad⁴⁵⁵³ devotiön,
And lostë both their headës in the place,⁴⁵⁵⁴
Their soulës wentë to the King of grace.

This Maximus, that saw this thing betide,
With piteous tearës told it anon right,
That he their soulës saw to heaven glide
With angels, full of clearness and of light;
And with his word converted many a wight.
For which Almachius did him to-beat⁴⁵⁵⁵
With whip of lead, till he his life gan lete.⁴⁵⁵⁶

Cecile him took, and buried him anon
By Tiburce and Valerian softëly,
Within their burying-place, under the stone.
And after this Almachius hastily
Bade his ministers fetchen openly
Cecile, so that she might in his preséncé
Do sacrifice, and Jupiter incense.⁴⁵⁵⁷

But they, converted at her wisë lore,⁴⁵⁵⁸
Weptë full sore, and gavë full credéncé
Unto her word, and criëd more and more;
“Christ, Goddë’s Son, withoutë difference,
Is very God, this is all our senténcé,⁴⁵⁵⁹
That hath so good a servant him to serve:
Thus with one voice we trowë,⁴⁵⁶⁰ though we sterve.”⁴⁵⁶¹

Almachius, that heard of this doíng,
Bade fetch Cecilie, that he might her see;
And alderfirst, [4562](#) lo, this was his asking;
“What manner woman artë thou?” quoth he.
“I am a gentle woman born,” quoth she.
“I askë thee,” quoth he, “though it thee grieve,
Of thy religion and of thy believe.”

“Ye have begun your question foolishly,”
Quoth she, “that wouldest two answers conclude
In one demand? ye askë lewëdly.” [4563](#)
Almach answer’d to that similitude,
“Of whencë comes thine answering so rude?”
“Of whencë?” quoth she, when that she was freined, [4564](#)
“Of conscience, and of good faith unfeigned.”

Almachius saidë; “Takest thou no heed
Of my power?” and she him answer’d this;
“Your might,” quoth she, “full little is to dread;
For every mortal mannë’s power is
But like a bladder full of wind, y-wis; [4565](#)
For with a needle’s point, when it is blow’,
May all the boast of it be laid full low.”

“Full wrongfully begunnest thou,” quoth he,
“And yet in wrong is thy perséverance.
Know’st thou not how our mighty princes free
Have thus commanded and made ordinance,
That every Christian wight shall have penance, [4566](#)
But if that he his Christendom withsay, [4567](#)
And go all quit, if he will it renay?” [4568](#)

“Your princes erren, as your nobley [4569](#) doth,”
Quoth then Cecile, “and with a wood [4570](#) sentence [4571](#)
Ye make us guilty, and it is not sooth: [4572](#)
For ye that knowë well our innocence,
Forasmuch as we do aye reverence
To Christ, and for we bear a Christian name,
Ye put on us a crime and eke a blame.

“But we that knowë thilkë namë so

For virtuous, we may it not withsay.”
Almach answered, “Choose one of these two,
Do sacrifice, or Christendom renay,
That thou may’st now escapë by that way.”
At which the holy blissful fairë maid
Gan for to laugh, and to the judgë said;
 “O judge, confused in thy nicety,⁴⁵⁷³
Wouldest thou that I rény innocence?
To makë me a wicked wight,” quoth she,
“Lo, he dissimuleth⁴⁵⁷⁴ here in audience;
He stareth and woodeth⁴⁵⁷⁵ in his advertence.”⁴⁵⁷⁶
To whom Almachius said, “Unsely⁴⁵⁷⁷ wretch,
Knowest thou not how far my might may stretch?
 “Have not our mighty princes to me given
Yea bothë power and eke authority
To makë folk to dien or to liven?
Why speakest thou so proudly then to me?”
“I speakë not but steadfastly,” quoth she,
Not proudly, for I say, as for my side,
We hatë deadly⁴⁵⁷⁸ thilkë vice of pride.
 “And, if thou dreadë not a sooth⁴⁵⁷⁹ to hear,
Then will I shew all openly by right,
That thou hast made a full great leasing⁴⁵⁸⁰ here.
Thou say’st thy princes have thee given might
Both for to slay and for to quick⁴⁵⁸¹ a wight—
Thou that may’st not but only life bereave;
Thou hast none other power nor no leave.
 “But thou may’st say, thy princes have thee maked
Minister of death; for if thou speak of mo’,
Thou liest; for thy power is full naked.”
“Do away⁴⁵⁸² thy boldness,” said Almachius tho,⁴⁵⁸³
“And sacrifice to our gods, ere thou go.
I reckë not what wrong that thou me proffer,
For I can suffer it as a philosópher.
 “But those wrongës may I not endure,
That thou speak’st of our goddës here,” quoth he.

Cecile answer'd, "O nicë⁴⁵⁸⁴ creatúre,
Thou saidest no word, since thou spake to me,
That I knew not therewith thy nicety,⁴⁵⁸⁵
And that thou wert in every manner wise⁴⁵⁸⁶
A lewëd⁴⁵⁸⁷ officer, a vain justíce.

"There lacketh nothing to thine outward eyen
That thou art blind; for thing that we see all
That it is stone, that men may well espyen,
That ilkë⁴⁵⁸⁸ stone a god thou wilt it call.
I rede⁴⁵⁸⁹ thee let thine hand upon it fall,
And taste⁴⁵⁹⁰ it well, and stone thou shalt it find;
Since that thou see'st not with thine eyen blind.

"It is a shamë that the people shall
So scornë thee, and laugh at thy follý;
For commonly men wot it well over all,⁴⁵⁹¹
That mighty God is in his heaven high;
And these imáges, well may'st thou espy,
To thee nor to themselves may not profíte,
For in effect they be not worth a mite."

These wordës and such others saidë she,
And he wax'd wroth, and bade men should her lead
Home to her house; "And in her house," quoth he,
"Burn her right in a bath, with flamës red."
And as he bade, right so was done the deed;
For in a bath they gan her fastë shetten,⁴⁵⁹²
And night and day great fire they under betten.⁴⁵⁹³

The longë night, and eke a day also,
For all the fire, and eke the bathë's heat,
She sat all cold, and felt of it no woe,
It made her not one droppë for to sweat;
But in that bath her lifë she must lete.⁴⁵⁹⁴
For he, Almachius, with full wick' intent,
To slay her in the bath his sondë⁴⁵⁹⁵ sent.

Three strokës in the neck he smote her tho,⁴⁵⁹⁶
The tórmentor,⁴⁵⁹⁷ but for no manner chance

He might not smite her fairë neck in two:
And, for there was that time an ordinance
That no man shouldë do man such penáncë,⁴⁵⁹⁸
The fourthë stroke to smitë, soft or sore,
This tórmentor he durstë do no more;

But half dead, with her neckë carven⁴⁵⁹⁹ there
He let her lie, and on his way is went.
The Christian folk, which that about her were,
With sheetës have the blood full fair y-hent;⁴⁶⁰⁰
Three dayës lived she in this tormént,
And never ceased them the faith to teach,
That she had foster'd them, she gan to preach.

And them she gave her mebles⁴⁶⁰¹ and her thing,
And to the Pope Urban betook⁴⁶⁰² them tho;⁴⁶⁰³
And said, "I askë this of heaven's king,
To have respite three dayës and no mo',
To recommend to you, ere that I go,
These soulës, lo; and that I might do wirch⁴⁶⁰⁴
Here of mine house perpetually a church."

Saint Urban, with his deacons, privily
The body fetch'd, and buried it by night
Among his other saintës honestly;⁴⁶⁰⁵
Her house the church of Saint Cecilie hight;⁴⁶⁰⁶
Saint Urban hallow'd it, as he well might;
In which unto this day, in noble wise,
Men do to Christ and to his saint servíce.

THE CANON'S YEOMAN'S TALE⁴⁶⁰⁷

THE PROLOGUE

When ended was the life of Saint Cecile,
Ere we had ridden fully fivë mile,⁴⁶⁰⁸
At Boughton-under-Blee us gan o'ertake
A man, that clothed was in clothës black,
And underneath he wore a white surplíce.
His hackenay,⁴⁶⁰⁹ which was all pomely-gris,⁴⁶¹⁰
So sweated, that it wonder was to see;
It seem'd as he had pricked⁴⁶¹¹ milës three.
The horse eke that his yeoman rode upon
So sweated, that unnethës⁴⁶¹² might he gon.
About the peytrel⁴⁶¹³ stood the foam full high;
He was of foam, as flecked⁴⁶¹⁴ as a pie.
A mailë twyfold⁴⁶¹⁵ on his crupper lay;
It seemed that he carried little array;
All light for summer rode this worthy man.
And in my heart to wonder I began
What that he was, till that I understood
How that his cloak was sewed to his hood;
For which, when I had long advised⁴⁶¹⁶ me,
I deemed him some Canon for to be.
His hat hung at his back down by a lace,⁴⁶¹⁷

For he had ridden more than trot or pace;
He haddë pricked like as he were wood.⁴⁶¹⁸
A clote-leaf⁴⁶¹⁹ he had laid under his hood,
For sweat, and for to keep his head from heat.
But it was joyë for to see him sweat;
His forehead dropped as a stillatory⁴⁶²⁰
Were full of plantain or of paritory.⁴⁶²¹
And when that he was come, he gan to cry,
“God save,” quoth he, “this jolly company.
Fast have I pricked,” quoth he, “for your sake,
Be causë that I would you overtake,
To riden in this merry company.”
His Yeoman was eke full of courtesy,
And saidë, “Sirs, now in the morning tide
Out of your hostelry I saw you ride,
And warned here my lord and sovereign,
Which that to ridë with you is full fain,
For his disport; he loveth dalliance.”
“Friend, for thy warning God give thee good chance,”⁴⁶²²
Said ourë Host; “certain it wouldë seem
Thy lord were wise, and so I may well deem;
He is full jocund also, dare I lay;
Can he aught tell a merry tale or tway,
With which he gladden may this company?”
“Who, Sir? my lord? Yea, Sir, withoutë lie,
He can⁴⁶²³ of mirth and eke of jollity
Not but⁴⁶²⁴ enough; also, Sir, trustë me,
An’⁴⁶²⁵ ye him knew all so well as do I,
Ye would wonder how well and craftily
He couldë work, and that in sundry wise.
He hath take on him many a great emprise,
Which were full hard for any that is here
To bring about, but⁴⁶²⁶ they of him it lear.⁴⁶²⁷
As homely as he rides amongës you,
If ye him knew, it would be for your prow:⁴⁶²⁸
Ye wouldë not forego his áacquaintáncë

For muchë good, I dare lay in balance
All that I have in my possessiön.
He is a man of high discretión.
I warn you well, he is a passing⁴⁶²⁹ man.”
“Well,” quoth our Host, “I pray thee tell me than,
Is he a clerk,⁴⁶³⁰ or no? Tell what he is.”
“Nay, he is greater than a clerk, y-wis,”⁴⁶³¹
Saidë this Yeoman; “and, in wordës few,
Host, of his craft somewhat I will you shew.
I say, my lord can⁴⁶³² such a subtletý
(But all his craft ye may not weet⁴⁶³³ of me,
And somewhat help I yet to his working),
That all the ground on which we be ridíng
Till that we come to Canterbury town,
He could all cleanë turnen up so down,
And pave it all of silver and of gold.”

And when this Yeoman had this talë told
Unto our Host, he said; “*Ben’dicite!*
This thing is wonder marvellous to me,
Since that thy lord is of so high prudéce,
Because of which men should him reverence,
That of his worship⁴⁶³⁴ recketh he so lite;⁴⁶³⁵
His overest slop⁴⁶³⁶ it is not worth a mite
As in effect to him, so may I go;⁴⁶³⁷
It is all baudy⁴⁶³⁸ and to-tore also.
Why is thy lord so sluttish, I thee pray,
And is of power better clothes to bey,⁴⁶³⁹
If that his deed accordeth with thy speech?
Tellë me that, and that I thee beseech.”
“Why?” quoth this Yeoman, “whereto ask ye me?
God help me so, for he shall never thé⁴⁶⁴⁰
(But I will not avowë⁴⁶⁴¹ that I say,
And therefore keep it secret, I you pray);
He is too wise, in faith, as I believe.
Thing that is overdone, it will not preve⁴⁶⁴²

Aright, as clerkës say; it is a vice;
Wherefore in that I hold him lew'd⁴⁶⁴³ and nice.⁴⁶⁴⁴
For when a man hath over great a wit,
Full oft him happens to misusen it;
So doth my lord, and that me grieveth sore.
God it amend; I can say now no more."

"Thereof no force,⁴⁶⁴⁵ good Yeoman," quoth our Host;
"Since of the conning⁴⁶⁴⁶ of thy lord, thou know'st,
Tell how he doth, I pray thee heartily,
Since that be is so crafty and so sly.⁴⁶⁴⁷
Where dwellë ye, if it to tellë be?"
"In the suburbës of a town," quoth he,
"Lurking in hernës⁴⁶⁴⁸ and in lanës blind,
Where as these robbers and these thieves by kind⁴⁶⁴⁹
Holdë their privy fearful residence,
As they that darë not show their preséncé,
So farë we, if I shall say the soothë."⁴⁶⁵⁰
"Yet," quoth our Hostë, "let me talkë tó thee;
Why art thou so discolour'd of thy face?"
"Peter!"⁴⁶⁵¹ quoth he, "God give it hardë grace,⁴⁶⁵²
I am so us'd the hotë fire to blow,
That it hath changed my colóur, I trow;
I am not wont in no mirrór to pry,
But swinkë⁴⁶⁵³ sore, and learn to multiply.⁴⁶⁵⁴
We blunder⁴⁶⁵⁵ ever, and poren⁴⁶⁵⁶ in the fire,
And, for all that, we fail of our desire;
For ever we lack our conclusión.
To muchë folk we do⁴⁶⁵⁷ illusiún,
And borrow gold, be it a pound or two,
Or ten or twelve, or many summës mo',
And make them weenen,⁴⁶⁵⁸ at the leastë way,
That of a poundë we can makë tway.
Yet is it false; and aye we have good hope
It for to do, and after it we grope:⁴⁶⁵⁹
But that sciéncé is so far us befor,

That we may not, although we had it sworn,
It overtake, it slides away so fast;
It will us makë beggars at the last."

While this Yeomán was thus in his talking,
This Canon drew him near, and heard all thing
Which this Yeomán spake, for suspición
Of mennë's speech ever had this Canón:
For Cato saith, that he that guilty is,
Deemeth all things be spoken of him y-wis;⁴⁶⁶⁰
Because of that he gan so nigh to draw
To his Yeomán, that he heard all his saw;⁴⁶⁶¹
And thus he said unto his Yeoman tho;⁴⁶⁶²
"Hold thou thy peace, and speak no wordës mo':
For if thou do, thou shalt it dear abie.⁴⁶⁶³
Thou slanderest me here in this companý,
And eke discoverest that thou shouldest hide."
"Yea," quoth our Host, "tell on, whatso betide;
Of all his threatening reck not a mite."
"In faith," quoth he, "no more do I but lite."⁴⁶⁶⁴
And when this Canon saw it would not be
But his Yeoman would tell his privity,
He fled away for very sorrow and shame.

"Ah!" quoth the Yeoman, "here shall rise a game;⁴⁶⁶⁵
All that I can anon I will you tell,
Since he is gone; the foulë fiend him quell!⁴⁶⁶⁶
For ne'er hereafter will I with him meet,
For penny nor for pound, I you behete.⁴⁶⁶⁷
He that me broughtë first unto that game,
Ere that he die, sorrow have he and shame.
For it is earnest⁴⁶⁶⁸ to me, by my faith;
That feel I well, what so any man saith;
And yet for all my smart, and all my grief,
For all my sorrow, labour, and mischíef,⁴⁶⁶⁹
I couldë never leave it in no wise.
Now would to God my wittë might suffice
To tellen all that longeth to that art!

But natheless yet will I tellë part;
Since that my lord is gone, I will not spare;
Such thing as that I know, I will declare.”

THE TALE⁴⁶⁷⁰

With this Canón I dwelt have seven year,
And of his science am I ne’er the near;⁴⁶⁷¹
All that I had I havë lost thereby,
And, God wot, so have many more than I.
Where I was wont to be right fresh and gay
Of clothing, and of other good array
Now may I wear an hose upon mine head;
And where my colour was both fresh and red,
Now is it wan, and of a leaden hue
(Whoso it useth, sore shall he it rue);
And of my swink⁴⁶⁷² yet bleared is mine eye;⁴⁶⁷³
Lo what advantage is to multiply!
That sliding⁴⁶⁷⁴ science hath me made so bare,
That I have no good,⁴⁶⁷⁵ where that ever I fare;
And yet I am indebted so thereby
Of gold, that I have borrow’d truëly,
That, while I live, I shall it quitë⁴⁶⁷⁶ never;
Let every man beware by me for ever.
What manner man that casteth⁴⁶⁷⁷ him thereto,
If he continue, I hold his thrift y-do;⁴⁶⁷⁸
So help me God, thereby shall he not win,
But empty his purse, and make his wittës thin.
And when he, through his madness and follý,
Hath lost his owen good through jupartie,⁴⁶⁷⁹
Then he exciteth other men thereto,

To lose their good as he himself hath do'.
For unto shrewës⁴⁶⁸⁰ joy it is and ease
To have their fellows in pain and disease.⁴⁶⁸¹
Thus was I onës learned of a clerk;
Of that no charge;⁴⁶⁸² I will speak of our work.

When we be there as we shall exercise
Our elvish⁴⁶⁸³ craft, we seemë wonder wise,
Our termës be so clerstial and quaint.⁴⁶⁸⁴
I blow the fire till that mine heartë faint.
Why should I tellen each proportiön
Of thingës, whichë that we work upon,
As on five or six ounces, may well be,
Of silver, or some other quantity?
And busy me to tellë you the names,
As orpiment, burnt bonës, iron squames,⁴⁶⁸⁵
That into powder grounden be full small?
And in an earthen pot how put is all,
And, salt y-put in, and also peppére,
Before these powders that I speak of here,
And well y-cover'd with a lamp of glass?
And of much other thing which that there was?
And of the pots and glasses engluting,⁴⁶⁸⁶
That of the air might passen out no thing?
And of the easy⁴⁶⁸⁷ fire, and smart⁴⁶⁸⁸ also,
Which that was made? and of the care and woe
That we had in our matters súblimíng,
And in amalgaming, and calciníng
Of quicksilver, called mercúry crude?
For all our sleightës we can not conclude.
Our orpiment, and súblim'd mercurý,
Our ground litharge⁴⁶⁸⁹ eke on the porphyry,
Of each of these of ounces a certáin,⁴⁶⁹⁰
Not helpeth us, our labour is in vain.
Nor neither our spiríts' ascensioún,
Nor our matters that lie all fix'd adown,
May in our working nothing us avail;

For lost is all our labour and traváil,
And all the cost, a twenty devil way,
Is lost also, which we upon it lay.

There is also full many another thing
That is unto our craft appertainíng,
Though I by order them not rehearsë can,
Because that I am a lewëd⁴⁶⁹¹ man;
Yet will I tell them as they come to mind,
Although I cannot set them in their kind,
As bol-armoniac, verdigris, boráce;
And sundry vessels made of earth and glass;
Our urinalës, and our descensories,⁴⁶⁹²
Phials, and crosets,⁴⁶⁹³ and sublímatories,
Cucurbitës,⁴⁶⁹⁴ and álembikës⁴⁶⁹⁵ eke,
And other suchë, dear enough a leek,⁴⁶⁹⁶
It needeth not for to rehearse them all.
Waters rubifying, and bullës' gall,
Arsenic, sal-armoniac, and brimstóne,
And herbës could I tell eke many a one,
As egremoine,⁴⁶⁹⁷ valerian, and lunáry,⁴⁶⁹⁸
And other such, if that me list to tarry;
Our lampës burning bothë night and day,
To bring about our craft if that we may;
Our furnace eke of calcinatióñ,
And of waters albificatióñ,
Unslaked lime, chalk, and glair of an ey,⁴⁶⁹⁹
Powders divërse, ashes, dung, piss, and clay,
Seared pokettes,⁴⁷⁰⁰ saltpetre, and vitriol;
And divers firës made of wood and coal;
Sal-tartar, alkali, salt preparáte,
And combust matters, and coaguláte;
Clay made with horse and mannë's hair, and oil
Of tartar, alum, glass, barm, wort, argoil,⁴⁷⁰¹
Rosalgär,⁴⁷⁰² and other matters imbibing;
And eke of our mattërs encorporing,⁴⁷⁰³
And of our silver citrinatióñ,⁴⁷⁰⁴

Our cémentíng, and fermentatíón,
Our ingots,⁴⁷⁰⁵ tests, and many thingës mo'.
I will you tell, as was me taught also,
The fourë spirits, and the bodies seven,
By order, as oft I heard my lord them neven.⁴⁷⁰⁶
The first spirit Quicksílvér called is;
The second Orpiment; the third, y-wis,
Sal-Armoniac, and the fourth Brimstóne.
The bodies sev'n eke, lo them here anon.
Sol gold is, and Luna silvér we threpe;⁴⁷⁰⁷
Mars iron, Mercury quícksilver we clepe;⁴⁷⁰⁸
Saturnus lead, and Jupiter is tin,
And Venus copper, by my father's kin.

This cursed craft whoso will exercise,
He shall no good have that him may suffice;
For all the good he spendeth thereabout,
He losë shall, thereof have I no doubt.
Whoso that list to utter⁴⁷⁰⁹ his follý,
Let him come forth and learn to multiply:
And every man that hath aught in his coffer,
Let him appear, and wax a philosópher;
Ascauncë⁴⁷¹⁰ that craft is so light to lear.⁴⁷¹¹
Nay, nay, God wot, all be he monk or frere,
Priest or canón, or any other wight;
Though he sit at his book both day and night;
In learning of this elvish nicë⁴⁷¹² lore,
All is in vain; and pardie muchë more,
Is to learn a lew'd⁴⁷¹³ man this subtletý;
Fie! speak not thereof, for it will not be.
And conne he letterure,⁴⁷¹⁴ or conne he none,
As in effect, he shall it find all one;
For bothë two, by my salvatíón,
Concluden in multiplicatíón⁴⁷¹⁵
Alikë well, when they have all y-do;
This is to say, they failë bothë two.
Yet forgot I to makë rehearsále

Of waters corrosive, and of limáile,⁴⁷¹⁶
And of bodies' mollificati3n,
And also of their indurati3n,
Oil3s, ablutions, met3l fusible,
To tellen all, would passen any Bible
That owhere⁴⁷¹⁷ is; wherefore, as for the best,
Of all these nam3s now will I me rest;
For, as I trow, I have you told enough
To raise a fiend, all look he ne'er so rough.⁴⁷¹⁸
 Ah! nay, let be; the philos3pher's stone,
Elixir call'd, we seek3 fast each one;
For had we him, then were we sicker⁴⁷¹⁹ enow;
But unto God of heaven I make avow,⁴⁷²⁰
For all our craft, when we have all y-do,
And all our sleight, he will not come us to.
He hath y-made us spend3 much3 good,
For sorrow of which almost we waxed wood,⁴⁷²¹
But that good hop3 creeped in our heart,
Supposing ever, though we sor3 smart,
To be relieved by him afterward.
Such s3pposing and hope is sharp and hard.
I warn you well it is to seek3n ever.
That future *temps*⁴⁷²² hath mad3 men dissever,
In trust thereof, from all that ever they had,
Yet of that art they cannot wax3 sad,⁴⁷²³
For unto them it is a bitter sweet;
So seemeth it; for had they but a sheet
Which that they might3 wrap them in at night,
And a bratt⁴⁷²⁴ to walk in by day3light,
They would them sell, and spend it on this craft;
They cannot stint,⁴⁷²⁵ until no thing be laft.
And evermore, wherever that they gon,
Men may them know3 by smell of brimst3ne;
For all the world they stinken as a goat;
Their savour is so rammish and so hot,
That though a man a mil3 from them be,

The savour will infect him, trustë me.
Lo, thus by smelling and threadbare array,
If that men list, this folk they knowë may.
And if a man will ask them privily,
Why they be clothed so unthrifty, [4726](#)
They right anon will rownen [4727](#) in his ear,
And sayen, if that they espied were,
Men would them slay, because of their sciënce:
Lo, thus these folk betrayen innocence!

Pass over this; I go my tale unto.
Ere that the pot be on the fire y-do [4728](#)
Of metals, with a certain quantity
My lord them tempers, [4729](#) and no man but he
(Now he is gone, I dare say boldëly);
For as men say, he can do craftily,
Algate [4730](#) I wot well he hath such a name,
And yet full oft he runneth into blame;
And know ye how? full oft it happ'neth so,
The pot to-breaks, and farewell! all is go'. [4731](#)
These metals be of so great violence,
Our wallës may not make them résistence,
But if [4732](#) they werë wrought of lime and stone;
They piercë so, that through the wall they gon;
And some of them sink down into the ground
(Thus have we lost by timës many a pound),
And some are scatter'd all the floor about;
Some leap into the roof withoutë doubt.
Though that the fiend not in our sight him shew,
I trowë that he be with us, that shrew; [4733](#)
In hellë, where that he is lord and sire,
Is there no morë woe, rancour, nor ire.
When that our pot is broke, as I have said,
Every man chides, and holds him evil apaid. [4734](#)
Some said it was long on [4735](#) the fire-makíng;
Some saidë nay, it was on the blowíng
(Then was I fear'd, for that was mine offíce);

“Straw!” quoth the third, “ye be lewëd and nice,⁴⁷³⁶
It was not temper’d⁴⁷³⁷ as it ought to be.”

“Nay,” quoth the fourthë, “stint⁴⁷³⁸ and hearken me;
Because our fire was not y-made of beech,
That is the cause, and other none, so thé ’ch.⁴⁷³⁹
I cannot tell whereon it was along,
But well I wot great strife is us among.”

“What?” quoth my lord, “there is no more to do’n,
Of these périls I will beware eftsoon.⁴⁷⁴⁰

I am right sicker⁴⁷⁴¹ that the pot was crazed.⁴⁷⁴²

Be as be may, be ye no thing amazed.⁴⁷⁴³

As usage is, let sweep the floor as swithe;⁴⁷⁴⁴

Pluck up your heartës and be glad and blithe.”

The mullok⁴⁷⁴⁵ on a heap y-sweeped was,

And on the floor y-cast a canëvas,

And all this mullok in a sieve y-throw,

And sifted, and y-picked many a throw.⁴⁷⁴⁶

“Pardie,” quoth one, “somewhat of our métal

Yet is there here, though that we have not all.

And though this thing mishapped hath as now,⁴⁷⁴⁷

Another time it may be well enow.

We mustë put our good in ádvëntúre;⁴⁷⁴⁸

A merchant, pardie, may not aye endure,

Trustë me well, in his prosperity:

Sometimes his good is drenched⁴⁷⁴⁹ in the sea,

And sometimes comes it safe unto the land.”

“Peace,” quoth my lord; “the next time I will fand⁴⁷⁵⁰

To bring our craft all in another plight,⁴⁷⁵¹

And but I do, Sirs, let me have the wite;⁴⁷⁵²

There was default in somewhat, well I wot.”

Another said, the fire was over hot.

But be it hot or cold, I dare say this,

That we concluden evermore amiss;

We fail alway of that which we would have;

And in our madness evermore we rave.

And when we be together every one,
Every man seemeth a Solomon.
But all thing, which that shineth as the gold,
It is not gold, as I have heard it told;
Nor every apple that is fair at eye,
It is not good, what so men clap⁴⁷⁵³ or cry.
Right so, lo, fareth it amongës us.
He that the wisest seemeth, by Jesús,
Is most fool, when it cometh to the prefe;⁴⁷⁵⁴
And he that seemeth truest, is a thief.
That shall ye know, ere that I from you wend;
By that I of my tale have made an end.

There was a canon of religioún
Amongës us, would ínfect all a town,
Though it as great were as was Ninevéh,
Rome, Alisandre,⁴⁷⁵⁵ Troy, or other three.
His sleightës⁴⁷⁵⁶ and his infinite falsenëss
There couldë no man writen, as I guess,
Though that he mightë live a thousand year;
In all this world of falseness n'is⁴⁷⁵⁷ his peer.
For in his termës he will him so wind,
And speak his wordës in so sly a kind,
When he commúnë shall with any wight,
That he will make him doat⁴⁷⁵⁸ anon aright,
But⁴⁷⁵⁹ it a fiendë be, as himself is.
Full many a man hath he beguil'd ere this,
And will, if that he may live any while;
And yet men go and ride many a mile
Him for to seek, and have his ácqúaintáncë,
Not knowing of his falsë governáncë.⁴⁷⁶⁰
And if you list to give me audiéncë,
I will it tellë here in your préséncë.
But, worshipful canóns religioús,
Ne deemë not that I slander your house,
Although that my tale of a canon be.
Of every order some shrew is,⁴⁷⁶¹ pardie;

And God forbid that all a company
Should rue a singular⁴⁷⁶² mannë's folly.
To slander you is no thing mine intent;
But to correct that is amiss I meant.
This talë was not only told for you,
But eke for other more; ye wot well how
That amongës Christë's apostlës twelve
There was no traitor but Judas himselve;
Then why should all the remenant have blame,
That guiltless were? By you I say the same.
Save only this, if ye will hearken me,
If any Judas in your convent be,
Removë him betimës, I you rede,⁴⁷⁶³
If shame or loss may causen any dread.
And be no thing displeased, I you pray;
But in this casë hearken what I say.

In London was a priest, an annualére,⁴⁷⁶⁴
That therein dwelled haddë many a year,
Which was so pleasant and so serviceáble
Unto the wife, where as he was at table,
That she would suffer him no thing to pay
For board nor clothing, went he ne'er so gay;
And spending silver had he right enow;
Thereof no force;⁴⁷⁶⁵ will proceed as now,
And tellë forth my tale of the canón,
That brought this priestë to confusión.
This falsë canon came upon a day
Unto the priestë's chamber, where he lay,
Beseeching him to lend him a certáin
Of gold, and he would quit it him again.
"Lend me a mark," quoth he, "but dayës three,
And at my day I will it quitë thee.
And if it so be that thou find me false,
Another day hang me up by the halse."⁴⁷⁶⁶
This priest him took a mark, and that as swithe,⁴⁷⁶⁷
And this canón him thanked often sithe,⁴⁷⁶⁸

And took his leave, and wentë forth his way;
And at the thirdë day brought his monéy;
And to the priest he took his gold again,
Whereof this priest was wondrous glad and fain.⁴⁷⁶⁹

“Certes,” quoth he, “nothing annoyeth me⁴⁷⁷⁰
To lend a man a noble, or two, or three,
Or what thing were in my possessiön,
When he so true is of conditiön,
That in no wise he breakë will his day;
To such a man I never can say nay.”

“What,” quoth this canon, “should I be untrue?
Nay, that were thing y-fallen all of new.⁴⁷⁷¹

Truth is a thing that I will ever keep,
Unto the day in which that I shall creep
Into my grave; and ellës God forbid;
Believë this as sicker⁴⁷⁷² as your creed.
God thank I, and in good time be it said,
That there was never man yet evil apaid⁴⁷⁷³

For gold nor silver that he to me lent,
Nor ever falsehood in mine heart I meant.

And Sir,” quoth he, “now of my privity,
Since ye so goodly have been unto me,
And kithed⁴⁷⁷⁴ to me so great gentleness,
Somewhat, to quitë with your kindëness,
I will you shew, and if you list to lear,⁴⁷⁷⁵
I will you teachë plainly the mannére
How I can worken in philosophý.

Takë good heed, ye shall well see at eye⁴⁷⁷⁶
That I will do a mas’try ere I go.”

“Yea,” quoth the priest; “yea, Sir, and will ye so?
Mary! thereof I pray you heartily.”

“At your commandëment, Sir, truëly,”
Quoth the canön, “and ellës God forbid.”

Lo, how this thiefë could his service bedè!⁴⁷⁷⁷

Full sooth it is that such proffér’d servíce
Stinketh, as witnessë these oldë wise;⁴⁷⁷⁸

And that full soon I will it verify
In this canón, root of all treachery,
That evermore delight had and gladnéss
(Such fiendly thoughtës in his heart impress⁴⁷⁷⁹)
How Christë's people he may to mischief bring.
God keep us from his false dissimulíng!
What wistë this priest with whom that he dealt?
Nor of his harm comíng he nothing felt.
O sely⁴⁷⁸⁰ priest, O sely innocent!
With covetíse anon thou shalt be blent;⁴⁷⁸¹
O gracëless, full blind is thy conceit!
For nothing art thou ware of the deceit
Which that this fox y-shapen⁴⁷⁸² hath to thee;
His wily wrenches⁴⁷⁸³ thou not mayest flee.
Wherefore, to go to the conclusiún
That referreth to thy confusiún,
Unhappy man, anon I will me hie⁴⁷⁸⁴
To tellë thine unwit⁴⁷⁸⁵ and thy folly,
And eke the falseness of that other wretch,
As farforth as that my conníng⁴⁷⁸⁶ will stretch.
This canon was my lord, ye wouldë ween;⁴⁷⁸⁷
Sir Host, in faith, and by the heaven's queen,
It was another canon, and not he,
That can⁴⁷⁸⁸ an hundred fold more subtletý.
He hath betrayed folkës many a time;
Of his falsenëss it doleth⁴⁷⁸⁹ me to rhyme.
And ever, when I speak of his falsehéad,
For shame of him my cheekës waxë red;
Algatës⁴⁷⁹⁰ they beginnë for to glow,
For redness have I none, right well I know,
In my visagë; for fumës divérse
Of metals, which ye have me heard rehearse,
Consumed have and wasted my rednéss.
Now take heed of this canon's cursedness.⁴⁷⁹¹
"Sir," quoth he to the priest, "let your man gon

For quicksilver, that we it had anon;
And let him bringen ounces two or three;
And when he comes, as fastë shall ye see
A wondrous thing, which ye saw ne'er ere this."
"Sir," quoth the priest, "it shall be done, y-wis."⁴⁷⁹²
He bade his servant fetchë him this thing,
And he all ready was at his biddíng,
And went him forth, and came anon again
With this quicksilver, shortly for to sayn;
And took these ounces three to the canoún;
And he them laidë well and fair adown,
And bade the servant coalës for to bring,
That he anon might go to his workíng.
The coalës right anon weren y-fet,⁴⁷⁹³
And this canón y-took a crossëlet⁴⁷⁹⁴
Out of his bosom, and shew'd to the priest.
"This instrument," quoth he, "which that thou seest,
Take in thine hand, and put thyself therein
Of this quicksilver an ounce, and here begin,
In the name of Christ, to wax a philosópher.
There be full few, which that I wouldë proffer
To shewë them thus much of my sciéncë;
For here shall ye see by experiéncë
That this quicksilver I will mortify,⁴⁷⁹⁵
Right in your sight anon withoutë lie,
And make it as good silver, and as fine,
As there is any in your purse, or mine,
Or ellëswhere; and make it malleáble;
And ellës holdë me false and unable
Amongë folk for ever to appear.
I have a powder here that cost me dear,
Shall make all good, for it is cause of all
My conning,⁴⁷⁹⁶ which that I you shewë shall.
Voidë⁴⁷⁹⁷ your man, and let him be thereout;
And shut the doorë, while we be about
Our privity, that no man us espy,

While that we work in this philosophy.”

All, as he bade, fulfilled was in deed.

This ilkë servant right anon out yede, [4798](#)

And his master y-shut the door anon,

And to their labour speedily they gon.

This priest, at this cursed canón’s biddíng,

Upon the fire anon he set this thing,

And blew the fire, and busied him full fast.

And this canón into the croslet cast

A powder, I know not whereof it was

Y-made, either of chalk, either of glass,

Or somewhat ellës, was not worth a fly,

To blinden with [4799](#) this priest; and bade him hie [4800](#)

The coalës for to couchen [4801](#) all above

The croslet; “for, in token I thee love,”

Quoth this canón, “thine owen handës two

Shall work all thing that herë shall be do’.” [4802](#)

“*Grand mercy*,” [4803](#) quoth the priest, and was full glad,

And couch’d the coalës as the canon bade.

And while he busy was, this fiendly wretch,

This false canón (the foulë fiend him fetch),

Out of his bosom took a beechen coal,

In which full subtilly was made a hole,

And therein put was of silver limáile [4804](#)

An ounce, and stopped was withoutë fail

The hole with wax, to keep the limaile in.

And understandë, that this falsë gin [4805](#)

Was not made there, but it was made before;

And other thingës I shall tell you more,

Hereafterward, which that he with him brought;

Ere he came there, him to beguile he thought,

And so he did, ere that they went atwin; [4806](#)

Till he had turned him, could he not blin. [4807](#)

It doleth [4808](#) me, when that I of him speak;

On his falsehóod fain would I me awreak, [4809](#)

If I wist how, but he is here and there;

He is so variant, [4810](#) he abides nowhere.

But takë heed, Sirs, now for Goddë's love.

He took his coal, of which I spake above,

And in his hand he bare it privily,

And while the priestë couched busily

The coalës, as I toldë you ere this,

This canon saidë, "Friend, ye do amiss;

This is not couched as it ought to be,

But soon I shall amenden it," quoth he.

"Now let me meddle therewith but a while,

For of you have I pity, by Saint Gile.

Ye be right hot, I see well how ye sweat;

Have here a cloth, and wipe away the wet."

And whilë that the priestë wip'd his face,

This canon took his coal—with sorry grace [4811](#)—

And layed it above on the midwárd

Of the croslet, and blew well afterward,

Till that the coals begannë fast to brenn. [4812](#)

"Now give us drinkë," quoth this canon then,

"And swithe [4813](#) all shall be well, I undertake.

Sittë we down, and let us merry make."

And whennë that this canon's beechen coal

Was burnt, all the limáile out of the hole

Into the crossëlet anon fell down;

And so it mustë needës, by reasoún,

Since it above so even couched [4814](#) was;

But thereof wist the priest no thing, alas!

He deemed all the coals alikë good,

For of the sleight he nothing understood.

And when this alchemister saw his time,

"Rise up, Sir Priest," quoth he, "and stand by me;

And, for I wot well ingot [4815](#) have ye none,

Go, walkë forth, and bring me a chalk stone;

For I will make it of the samë shape

That is an ingot, if I may have hap.

Bring eke with you a bowl, or else a pan,

Full of wáter, and ye shall well see than⁴⁸¹⁶
How that our business shall hap and preve.⁴⁸¹⁷
And yet, for ye shall have no misbelieve⁴⁸¹⁸
Nor wrong conceit of me, in your absénce,
I willë not be out of your présénce,
But go with you, and come with you again.”
The chamber-doorë, shortly for to sayn,
They opened and shut, and went their way,
And forth with them they carried the key;
And came again without any delay.
Why should I tarry all the longë day?
He took the chalk, and shap’d it in the wise
Of an ingot, as I shall you devise;⁴⁸¹⁹
I say, he took out of his owen sleeve
A teine⁴⁸²⁰ of silver (evil may he cheve!⁴⁸²¹)
Which that ne was but a just ounce of weight.
And takë heed now of his cursed sleight;
He shap’d his ingot, in length and in brede⁴⁸²²
Of this teinë, withouten any drede,⁴⁸²³
So slily, that the priest it not espied;
And in his sleeve again he gan it hide;
And from the fire he took up his mattére,
And in th’ ingot put it with merry cheer;⁴⁸²⁴
And in the water-vessel he it cast,
When that him list, and bade the priest as fast
Look what there is; “Put in thine hand and grope;⁴⁸²⁵
There shalt thou findë silver, as I hope.”
What, devil of hellë! should it ellës be?
Shaving of silver, silver is, pardie.
He put his hand in, and took up a teine⁴⁸²⁶
Of silver fine; and glad in every vein
Was this priest, when he saw that it was so.
“Goddë’s blessing, and his mother’s also,
And allë hallows’,⁴⁸²⁷ have ye, Sir Canón!”
Saidë this priest, “and I their malison⁴⁸²⁸

But, an'⁴⁸²⁹ ye vouchësafe to teachë me
This noble craft and this subtilty,
I will be yours in all that ever I may."

Quoth the canón, "Yet will I make assay⁴⁸³⁰
The second time, that ye may takë heed,
And be expert of this, and, in your need,
Another day assay in mine absénce
This discipline, and this crafty sciéncé.
Let take another ounce," quoth he tho,⁴⁸³¹
"Of quicksilver, withoutë wordës mo',
And do therewith as ye have done ere this
With that other, which that now silver is."

The priest him busied, all that e'er he can,
To do as this canón, this cursed man,
Commanded him, and fast he blew the fire
For to come to th' effect of his desire.
And this canón right in the meanëwhile
All ready was this priest eft⁴⁸³² to beguile,
and, for a countenance,⁴⁸³³ in his handë bare
An hollow stickë (take keep⁴⁸³⁴ and beware);
In th' end of which an ounce and no more
Of silver limaile put was, as before
Was in his coal, and stopped with wax well
For to keep in his limaile every deal.⁴⁸³⁵
And while this priest was in his business,
This canon with his stickë gan him dress⁴⁸³⁶
To him anon, and his powder cast in,
As he did erst⁴⁸³⁷ (the devil out of his skin
Him turn, I pray to God, for his falsehéad,
For he was ever false in thought and deed),
And with his stick, above the crossëlet,
That was ordained with that falsë get,⁴⁸³⁸
He stirr'd the coalës, till relentë gan
The wax against the fire, as every man,
But he a fool be, knows well it must need.
And all that in the stickë was out yede,⁴⁸³⁹

And in the croslet hastily⁴⁸⁴⁰ it fell.
Now, goodë Sirs, what will ye bet⁴⁸⁴¹ than well?
When that this priest was thus beguil'd again,
Supposing naught but truthë, sooth to sayn,
He was so glad, that I can not express
In no mannère his mirth and his gladnéss;
And to the canon he proffer'd eftsoon⁴⁸⁴²
Body and good. "Yea," quoth the canon soon,
"Though poor I be, crafty⁴⁸⁴³ thou shalt me find;
I warn thee well, yet is there more behind.
Is any copper here within?" said he.
"Yea, Sir," the priestë said, "I trow there be."
"Ellës go buy us some, and that as swithë.⁴⁸⁴⁴
Now, goodë Sir, go forth thy way and hie⁴⁸⁴⁵ thee."
He went his way, and with the copper came,
And this canón it in his handës name,⁴⁸⁴⁶
And of that copper weighed out an ounce.
Too simple is my tonguë to pronounce,
As minister of my wit, the doubleness
Of this canon, root of all cursedness.
He friendly seem'd to them that knew him not;
But he was fiendly, both in work and thought.
It wearieth me to tell of his falsenëss;
And natheless yet will I it express,
To that intent men may beware thereby,
And for none other causë truëly.
He put this copper in the crossëlet,
And on the fire as swithe⁴⁸⁴⁷ he hath it set,
And cast in powder, and made the priest to blow,
And in his working for to stoopë low,
As he did erst,⁴⁸⁴⁸ and all was but a jape;⁴⁸⁴⁹
Right as him list the priest he made his ape.⁴⁸⁵⁰
And afterward in the ingot he it cast,
And in the pan he put it at the last
Of water, and in he put his own hand;
And in his sleeve, as ye beforëhand

Heardë me tell, he had a silver teine,⁴⁸⁵¹
He silly took it out, this cursed heine⁴⁸⁵²
(Unweeting⁴⁸⁵³ this priest of his falsë craft),
And in the pannë's bottom he it laft.⁴⁸⁵⁴
And in the water rumbleth to and fro,
And wondrous privily took up alsó
The copper teine (not knowing thilkë priest),
And hid it, and him hentë⁴⁸⁵⁵ by the breast,
And to him spake, and thus said in his game;
“Stoop now adown; by God, ye be to blame;
Helpë me now, as I did you whilëre;⁴⁸⁵⁶
Put in your hand, and lookë what is there.”

 This priest took up this silver teine anon;
And thennë said the canon, “Let us gon,
With these three teinës which that we have wrought,
To some goldsmith, and weet if they be aught:⁴⁸⁵⁷
For, by my faith, I would not for my hood
But if⁴⁸⁵⁸ they werë silver fine and good,
And that as swithe⁴⁸⁵⁹ well proved shall it be.”
Unto the goldsmith with these teinës three
They went anon, and put them in assay⁴⁸⁶⁰
To fire and hammer; might no man say nay,
But that they weren as they ought to be.
This sotted⁴⁸⁶¹ priest, who gladder was than he?
Was never bird gladder against the day;
Nor nightingale in the season of May
Was never none, that better list to sing;
Nor lady lustier in carolling,
Or for to speak of love and womanhead;
Nor knight in arms to do a hardy deed,
To standen in grace of his lady dear,
Than had this priest this craftë for to lear;
And to the canon thus he spake and said;
“For love of God, that for us allë died,
And as I may deserve it unto you,
What shall this réceipt costë? tell me now.”

“By our Lady,” quoth this canon, “it is dear.
I warn you well, that, save I and a frere,
In Engleland there can no man it make.”
“No force,”⁴⁸⁶² quoth he; “now, Sir, for Goddë’s sake,
What shall I pay? tellë me, I you pray.”
“Y-wis,”⁴⁸⁶³ quoth he, “it is full dear, I say.
Sir, at one word, if that you list it have,
Ye shall pay forty pound, so God me save;
And n’ere⁴⁸⁶⁴ the friendship that ye did ere this
To me, ye shouldë payë more, y-wis.”
This priest the sum of forty pound anon
Of nobles fet,⁴⁸⁶⁵ and took them every one
To this canón, for this ilkë receipt.
All his working was but fraud and deceit.
“Sir Priest,” he said, “I keep⁴⁸⁶⁶ to have no los⁴⁸⁶⁷
Of my craft, for I would it were kept close;
And as ye lovë me, keep it secré:
For if men knewen all my subtletý,
By God, they wouldë have so great envý
To me, because of my philosophý,
I should be dead, there were no other way.”
“God it forbid,” quoth the priest, “what ye say.
Yet had I lever⁴⁸⁶⁸ spenden all the good
Which that I have (and ellës were I wood⁴⁸⁶⁹),
Than that ye shouldë fall in such mischíef.”
“For your good will, Sir, have ye right good prefe,”⁴⁸⁷⁰
Quoth the canon; “and farewell, *grand mercý*.”⁴⁸⁷¹
He went his way, and never the priest him sey⁴⁸⁷²
After that day; and when that this priest should
Maken assay, at such time as he would,
Of this receipt, farewell! it would not be.
Lo, thus bejaped⁴⁸⁷³ and beguil’d was he;
Thus madë he⁴⁸⁷⁴ his introduction
To bringë folk to their destruction.
Consider, Sirs, how that in each estate
Betwixtë men and gold there is debate,

So farforth that unnethës is there none.⁴⁸⁷⁵
This multiplying blint⁴⁸⁷⁶ so many a one,
That in good faith I trowë that it be
The causë greatest of such scarcity.
These philosóphers speak so mistily
In this craft, that men cannot come thereby,
For any wit that men have how-a-days.
They may well chatter, as do thesë jays,
And in their termës set their lust and pain,⁴⁸⁷⁷
But to their purpose shall they ne'er attain.
A man may lightly⁴⁸⁷⁸ learn, if he have aught,
To multiply, and bring his good to naught.
Lo, such a lucre⁴⁸⁷⁹ is in this lusty⁴⁸⁸⁰ game;
A mannë's mirth it will turn all to grame,⁴⁸⁸¹
And empty also great and heavy purses,
And makë folkë for to purchase curses
Of them that have thereto their good y-lent.
Oh, fy for shamë! they that have been brent,⁴⁸⁸²
Alas! can they not flee the firë's heat?
Ye that it use, I rede⁴⁸⁸³ that ye it lete,⁴⁸⁸⁴
Lest ye lose all; for better than never is late;
Never to thrivë, were too long a date.
Though ye prowl aye, ye shall it never find;
Ye be as bold as is Bayard the blind,
That blunders forth, and peril casteth none,⁴⁸⁸⁵
He is as bold to run against a stone,
As for to go beside it in the way:
So farë ye that multiply, I say.
If that your eyen cannot see aright,
Look that your mindë lackë not his sight.
For though you look never so broad, and stare,
Ye shall not win a mite on that chaffare,⁴⁸⁸⁶
But wasten all that ye may rape and renn.⁴⁸⁸⁷
Withdraw the fire, lest it too fastë brenn;⁴⁸⁸⁸
Meddle no morë with that art, I mean;

For if ye do, your thrift⁴⁸⁸⁹ is gone full clean.
And right as swithe⁴⁸⁹⁰ I will you tellë here
What philosóphers say in this mattére.

Lo, thus saith Arnold of the newë town,⁴⁸⁹¹
As his Rosáry maketh mentioún,
He saith right thus, withouten any lie;
“There may no man mercúry mortify,
But⁴⁸⁹² it be with his brother’s knowledging.”
Lo, how that he, which firstë said this thing,
Of philosóphers father was, Hermés;⁴⁸⁹³
He saith, how that the dragon doubtëless
He dieth not, but if that he be slain
With his brother. And this is for to sayn,
By the dragón, Mercúry, and none other,
He understood, and Brimstone by his brother,
That out of Sol and Luna were y-draw.⁴⁸⁹⁴
“And therefore,” said he, “take heed to my saw.⁴⁸⁹⁵
Let no man busy him this art to seech,⁴⁸⁹⁶
But if⁴⁸⁹⁷ that he th’ intentión and speech
Of philosóphers understandë can;
And if he do, he is a lewëd⁴⁸⁹⁸ man.
For this sciéce and this conning,”⁴⁸⁹⁹ quoth he,
“Is of the secret of secrets⁴⁹⁰⁰ pardie.”

Also there was a disciple of Plató,
That on a timë said his master to,
As his book, Senior,⁴⁹⁰¹ will bear witnéss,
And this was his demand in soothfastness:
“Tell me the name of thilkë⁴⁹⁰² privy stone.”
And Plato answer’d unto him anon;
“Takë the stone that Titanos men name.”
“Which is that?” quoth he. “Magnesia is the same,”
Saidë Plató. “Yea, Sir, and is it thus?
This is *ignotum per ignotius*.⁴⁹⁰³
What is Magnesia, good Sir, I pray?”
“It is a water that is made, I say,

Of th' elementës fourë," quoth Plató.
"Tell me the rootë, good Sir," quoth he tho,[4904](#)
"Of that watér, if that it be your will."
"Nay, nay," quoth Plato, "certain that I n'ill.[4905](#)
The philosóphers sworn were every one,
That they should not discover it to none,
Nor in no book it write in no mannére;
For unto God it is so lefe[4906](#) and dear,
That he will not that it discover'd be,
But where it liketh to his deity
Man for to inspire, and eke for to defend[4907](#)
Whom that he liketh; lo, this is the end."
Then thus conclude I, since that God of heaven
Will not that thesë philosóphers neven[4908](#)
How that a man shall come unto this stone,
I rede[4909](#) as for the best to let it gon.
For whoso maketh God his adversáry,
As for to work any thing in contráry
Of his will, certes never shall he thrive,
Though that he multiply term of his live.[4910](#)
And there a point,[4911](#) for ended is my tale.
God send ev'ry good man boot of his bale.[4912](#)

THE MANCIPLE'S TALE

THE PROLOGUE

Weet⁴⁹¹³ ye not where there stands a little town,
Which that y-called is Bob-up-and-down,⁴⁹¹⁴
Under the Blee, in Canterbury way?
There gan our Hostë for to jape and play,
And saidë, "Sirs, what? Dun is in the mire."⁴⁹¹⁵
Is there no man, for prayer nor for hire,
That will awaken our fellów behind?
A thief him might full lightly⁴⁹¹⁶ rob and bind.
See how he nappeth, see, for cockë's bones,
As he would fallë from his horse at ones.
Is that a Cook of London,⁴⁹¹⁷ with mischance?
Do⁴⁹¹⁸ him come forth, he knoweth his penánce;
For he shall tell a talë, by my fay,⁴⁹¹⁹
Although it be not worth a bottle hay.
Awake, thou Cook," quoth he; "God give thee sorrow!
What aileth thee to sleepë by the morrow?"⁴⁹²⁰
Hast thou had fleas all night, or art drunk?
Or had thou with some quean all night y-swunk,⁴⁹²¹
So that thou mayest not hold up thine head?"
The Cook, that was full pale and nothing red,
Said to Host, "So God my soulë bless,

As there is fall'n on me such heaviness,
I know not why, that me were lever⁴⁹²² sleep,
Than the best gallon wine that is in Cheap."
"Well," quoth the Manciple, "if it may do ease
To thee, Sir Cook, and to no wight displease
Which that here rideth in this company,
And that our Host will of his courtesy,
I will as now excuse thee of thy tale;
For in good faith thy visage is full pale:
Thine eyen dazë,⁴⁹²³ soothly as me thinketh,
And well I wot, thy breath full sourë stinketh,
That sheweth well thou art not well disposed;
Of me certáin thou shalt not be y-glosed.⁴⁹²⁴
See how he yawneth, lo, this drunken wight,
As though he would us swallow anon right.
Hold close thy mouth, man, by thy father's kin;
The devil of hellë set his foot therein!
Thy cursed breath infectë will us all:
Fy! stinking swine, fy! foul may thee befall.
Ah! takë heed, Sirs, of this lusty man.
Now, sweetë Sir, will ye joust at the fan?⁴⁹²⁵
Thereto, me thinketh, ye be well y-shape.
I trow that ye have drunken wine of ape,⁴⁹²⁶
And that is when men playë with a straw."

And with this speech the Cook waxed all wraw,⁴⁹²⁷
And on the Manciple he gan nod fast
For lack of speech; and down his horse him cast,
Where as he lay, till that men him up took.
This was a fair chevachie⁴⁹²⁸ of a cook:
Alas! that he had held him by his ladle!
And ere that he again were in the saddle
There was great shoving bothë to and fro
To lift him up, and muchë care and woe,
So unwieldy was this silly paled ghost.
And to the Manciple then spake our Host:
"Because that drink hath domination

Upon this man, by my salvati3n
I trow he lew3dly⁴⁹²⁹ will tell his tale.
For were it wine, or old or moisty⁴⁹³⁰ ale,
That he hath drunk, he speaketh in his nose,
And sneezeth fast, and eke he hath the pose.⁴⁹³¹
He also hath to do more than enough
To keep him on his capel⁴⁹³² out of the slough;
And if he fall from off his capel eftsoon,⁴⁹³³
Then shall we all3 have enough to do'n
In lifting up his heavy drunken corse.
Tell on thy tale, of him make I no force.⁴⁹³⁴
But yet, Manciple, in faith thou art too nice⁴⁹³⁵
Thus openly to reprove him of his vice;
Another day he will par3avent3re
Reclaim3 thee, and bring thee to the lure;⁴⁹³⁶
I mean, he speak3 will of small3 things,
As for to pinchen at⁴⁹³⁷ thy reckonings,
That were not honest, if it came to prefe."⁴⁹³⁸
 Quoth the Manciple, "That were a great misch3ef;
So might he lightly bring me in the snare.
Yet had I lever⁴⁹³⁹ pay3 for the mare
Which he rides on, than he should with me strive.
I will not wrath3⁴⁹⁴⁰ him, so may I thrive)
That that I spake, I said it in my bourde.⁴⁹⁴¹
And weet ye what? I have here in my gourd
A draught of wine, yea, of a rip3 grape,
And right anon ye shall see a good jape.⁴⁹⁴²
This Cook shall drink thereof, if that I may;
On pain of my life he will not say nay."
And certainly, to tellen as it was,
Of this vess3l the cook drank fast (alas!
What needed it? he drank enough befor),
And when he hadd3 pouped in his horn,⁴⁹⁴³
To the Manciple he took the gourd again.
And of that drink the Cook was wondrous fain,

And thanked him in such wise as he could.

Then gan our Host to laughë wondrous loud,
And said, “I see well it is necessary
Where that we go good drink with us to carry;
For that will turnë rancour and disease⁴⁹⁴⁴
T’ accord and love, and many a wrong appease.
O Bacchus, Bacchus, blessed be thy name,
That so canst turnen earnest into game!
Worship and thank be to thy deity.
Of that mattére ye get no more of me.
Tell on thy tale, Manciple, I thee pray.”
“Well, Sir,” quoth he, “now hearken what I say.”

THE TALE⁴⁹⁴⁵

When Phoebus dwelled here in earth adown,
As oldë bookës makë mentioún,
He was the mostë lusty⁴⁹⁴⁶ bachelér
Of all this world, and eke the best archér.
He slew Python the serpent, as he lay
Sleeping against the sun upon a day;
And many another noble worthy deed
He with his bow wrought, as men mayë read.
Playen he could on every minstrelsy,
And singë, that it was a melody
To hearken of his clearë voice the soun’.
Certes the king of Thebes, Amphioún,
That with his singing walled the city,
Could never singë half so well as he.
Thereto he was the seemliestë man
That is, or was since that the world began;
What needeth it his features to describe?

For in this world is none so fair alive.
He was therewith full fill'd of gentleness,
Of honour, and of perfect worthiness.

 This Phoebus, that was flower of bach'lery,
As well in freedom⁴⁹⁴⁷ as in chivalry,
For his disport, in sign eke of victóry
Of Python, so as telleth us the story,
Was wont to bearen in his hand a bow.
Now had this Phoebus in his house a crow,
Which in a cage he foster'd many a day,
And taught it speaken, as men teach a jay.
White was this crow, as is a snow-white swan,
And counterfeit the speech of every man
He couldë, when he shouldë tell a tale.
Therewith in all this world no nightingale
Ne couldë by an hundred thousand deal⁴⁹⁴⁸
Singë so wondrous merrily and well.
Now had this Phoebus in his house a wife,
Which that he loved morë than his life.
And night and day did ever his diligence
Her for to please, and do her reverence:
Save only, if that I the sooth shall sayn,
Jealous he was, and would have kept her fain.
For him were loth y-japed⁴⁹⁴⁹ for to be;
And so is every wight in such degree;
But all for nought, for it availeth nought.
A good wife, that is clean of work and thought,
Should not be kept in none await⁴⁹⁵⁰ certáin:
And truëly the labour is in vain
To keep a shrewë,⁴⁹⁵¹ for it will not be.
This hold I for a very nicety,⁴⁹⁵²
To spillë⁴⁹⁵³ labour for to keepë wives;
Thus writen oldë clerkës in their lives.
 But now to purpose, as I first began.
This worthy Phoebus did all that he can
To pleasë her, weening, through such pleasánce,

And for his manhood and his governánce,
That no man should have put him from her grace;
But, God it wot, there may no man embrace
As to distraín⁴⁹⁵⁴ a thing, which that natúre
Hath naturally set in a creatúre.
Take any bird, and put it in a cage,
And do all thine intent, and thy coráge,⁴⁹⁵⁵
To foster it tenderly with meat and drink
Of allë dainties that thou canst bethink,
And keep it all so cleanly as thou may;
Although the cage of gold be never so gay,
Yet had this bird, by twenty thousand fold,
Lever⁴⁹⁵⁶ in a forést, both wild and cold,
Go eatë wormës, and such wretchedness.
For ever this bird will do his business
T' escape out of his cage when that he may:
His liberty the bird desireth aye.⁴⁹⁵⁷
Let take a cat, and foster her with milk
And tender flesh, and make her couch of silk,
And let her see a mouse go by the wall,
Anon she weiveth⁴⁹⁵⁸ milk, and flesh, and all,
And every dainty that is in that house,
Such appetite hath she to eat the mouse.
Lo, here hath kind⁴⁹⁵⁹ her dominatin,
And appetite flemeth⁴⁹⁶⁰ discretión.
A she-wolf hath also a villain's kind;⁴⁹⁶¹
The lewedestë wolf that she may find,
Or least of reputation, will she take
In timë when her lust⁴⁹⁶² to have a make.⁴⁹⁶³
All these examples speak I by⁴⁹⁶⁴ these men
That be untrue, and nothing by womén.
For men have ever a lik'rous appetite
On lower things to pérform their delight
Than on their wivës, be they never so fair,
Never so truë, nor so debonair.⁴⁹⁶⁵
Flesh is so newëfangled, with mischance,⁴⁹⁶⁶

That we can in no thinge have pleasance
That souneth⁴⁹⁶⁷ unto virtue any while.

This Phoebus, which that thought upon no guile,
Deceived was for all his jollity;
For under him another haddë she,
A man of little reputatiön,
Nought worth to Phoebus in comparison.
The more harm is; it happens often so,
Of which there cometh muchë harm and woe.
And so befell, when Phoebus was absént,
His wife anon hath for her leman⁴⁹⁶⁸ sent.
Her leman! certes that is a knavish speech.
Forgive it me, and that I you beseech.
The wisë Plato saith, as ye may read,
The word must needs accordë with the deed;
If men shall tellë properly a thing,
The word must cousin be to the working.
I am a boistous⁴⁹⁶⁹ man, right thus I say.
There is no differencë truëly
Betwixt a wife that is of high degree
(If of her body dishonést she be),
And any poorë wench, other than this
(If it so be they workë both amiss),
But, for⁴⁹⁷⁰ the gentle is in estate above,
She shall be call'd his lady and his love;
And, for that other is a poor womán,
She shall be call'd his wench and his lemán:
And God it wot, mine owen dearë brother,
Men lay the one as low as lies the other.
Right so betwixt a titleless tyránt⁴⁹⁷¹
And an outlaw, or else a thief erránt,⁴⁹⁷²
The same I say, there is no differéce
(To Alexander told was this senténce),
But, for the tyrant is of greater might
By force of meinie⁴⁹⁷³ for to slay downright,
And burn both house and home, and make all plain,⁴⁹⁷⁴

Lo, therefore is he call'd a capitáin;
And, for the outlaw hath but small meinie,
And may not do so great an harm as he,
Nor bring a country to so great mischíef,
Men callë him an outlaw or a thief.

But, for I am a man not textuel,⁴⁹⁷⁵

I will not tell of texts never a deal;⁴⁹⁷⁶

I will go to my tale, as I began.

When Phoebus' wife had sent for her lemán,
Anon they wroughten all their lust volage.⁴⁹⁷⁷

This whitë crow, that hung aye in the cage,

Beheld their work, and said never a word;

And when that home was come Phoebus the lord,

This crowë sung, "Cuckoo, cuckoo, cuckoo!"

"What? bird," quoth Phoebus, "what song sing'st thou now?

Wert thou not wont so merrily to sing,

That to my heart it was a réjoicing

To hear thy voice? alas! what song is this?"

"By God," quoth he, "I singë not amiss.

Phoebus," quoth he, "for all thy worthiness,

For all thy beauty, and all thy gentleness,

For all thy song, and all thy minstrelsý,

For all thy waiting,⁴⁹⁷⁸ bleared is thine eye⁴⁹⁷⁹

With one of little reputatión,

Not worth to thee, as in comparison,

The mountance⁴⁹⁸⁰ of a gnat, so may I thrive;

For on thy bed thy wife I saw him swive."

What will ye more? the crow anon him told,

By sadë⁴⁹⁸¹ tokens, and by wordës bold,

How that his wife had done her lechery,

To his great shame and his great villainy;

And told him oft, he saw it with his eyen.

This Phoebus gan awayward for to wrien;⁴⁹⁸²

Him thought his woeful heartë burst in two.

His bow he bent, and set therein a flo,⁴⁹⁸³

And in his ire he hath his wifë slain;

This is th' effect, there is no more to sayn.
For sorrow of which he brake his minstrelsy,
Both harp and lute, gitérn⁴⁹⁸⁴ and psaltery;
And eke he brake his arrows and his bow;
And after that thus spake he to the crow.
"Traitor," quoth he, "with tongue of scorpíón,
Thou hast me brought to my confusión;
Alas that I was wrought!⁴⁹⁸⁵ why n'ere⁴⁹⁸⁶ I dead?
O dearë wife, O gem of lustihead,⁴⁹⁸⁷
That wert to me so sad,⁴⁹⁸⁸ and eke so true,
Now liest thou dead, with facë pale of hue,
Full guiltëless, that durst I swear y-wis!⁴⁹⁸⁹
O rakel⁴⁹⁹⁰ hand, to do so foul amiss!⁴⁹⁹¹
O troubled wit, O irë reckëless,
That unadvised smit'st the guiltëless!
O wantrust,⁴⁹⁹² full of false suspición!
Where was thy wit and thy discretión?
O! every man beware of rakelness,⁴⁹⁹³
Nor trow⁴⁹⁹⁴ no thing withoutë strong witnéss.
Smite not too soon, ere that ye weetë⁴⁹⁹⁵ why,
And be advised⁴⁹⁹⁶ well and sickerly⁴⁹⁹⁷
Ere ye do any executión
Upon your irë⁴⁹⁹⁸ for suspición.
Alas! a thousand folk hath rakel ire
Foulylly fordone, and brought them in the mire.
Alas! for sorrow I will myselfë slé."⁴⁹⁹⁹
And to the crow, "O falsë thief," said he,
"I will thee quite anon thy falsë tale.
Thou sung whilom⁵⁰⁰⁰ like any nightingale,
Now shalt thou, falsë thief, thy song foregon,⁵⁰⁰¹
And eke thy whitë feathers every one,
Nor ever in all thy lifë shalt thou speak;
Thus shall men on a traitor be awreak.⁵⁰⁰²
Thou and thine offspring ever shall be blake,⁵⁰⁰³
Nor ever sweetë noisë shall ye make,

But ever cry against⁵⁰⁰⁴ tempést and rain,
In token that through thee my wife is slain.”
And to the crow he start,⁵⁰⁰⁵ and that anon,
And pull’d his whitë feathers every one,
And made him black, and reft him all his song,
And eke his speech, and out at door him flung
Unto the devil, which I him betake;⁵⁰⁰⁶
And for this causë be all crowës blake.
Lordings, by this ensample, I you pray,
Beware, and takë keep⁵⁰⁰⁷ what that ye say;
Nor tellë never man in all your life
How that another man hath dight his wife;
He will you hatë mortally certáin.
Dan Solomon, as wisë clerkës sayn,
Teacheth a man to keep his tonguë well;
But, as I said, I am not textuel.
But natheless thus taughtë me my dame;
“My son, think on the crow, in Goddë’s name.
My son, keep well thy tongue, and keep thy friend;
A wicked tongue is worse than is a fiend:
My sonë, from a fiend men may them bless.⁵⁰⁰⁸
My son, God of his endëless goodnéss
Wallëd a tongue with teeth, and lippës eke,
For⁵⁰⁰⁹ man should him advisë,⁵⁰¹⁰ what he speak.
My son, full often for too muchë speech
Hath many a man been spilt,⁵⁰¹¹ as clerkës teach;
But for a little speech advisedly
Is no man shent,⁵⁰¹² to speak generally.
My son, thy tonguë shouldest thou restrain
At allë time, but⁵⁰¹³ when thou dost thy pain⁵⁰¹⁴
To speak of God in honour and prayére.
The firstë virtue, son, if thou wilt lear,⁵⁰¹⁵
Is to restrain and keepë well thy tongue;⁵⁰¹⁶
Thus learnë children, when that they be young.
My son, of muchë speaking evil advis’d,
Where lessë speaking had enough suffic’d,

Cometh much harm; thus was me told and taught;
In muchë speechë sinnë wanteth nót.
Wost⁵⁰¹⁷ thou whereof a rakel⁵⁰¹⁸ tonguë serveth?
Right as a sword forcutteth and forcarveth
An arm in two, my dearë son, right so
A tonguë cutteth friendship all in two.
A jangler⁵⁰¹⁹ is to God abomináble.
Read Solomon, so wise and honouráble;
Read David in his Psalms, and read Senec'.
My son, speak not, but with thine head thou beck,⁵⁰²⁰
Dissimule as thou wert⁵⁰²¹ deaf, if that thou hear
A jangler speak of perilous mattére.
The Fleming saith, and learn if that thee lest,⁵⁰²²
That little jangling causeth muchë rest.
My son, if thou no wicked word hast said,
Thee thar not dreadë⁵⁰²³ for to be bewray'd;
But he that hath missaid, I dare well sayn,
He may by no way call his word again.
Thing that is said is said, and forth it go'th,⁵⁰²⁴
Though him repent, or be he ne'er so loth;
He is his thrall,⁵⁰²⁵ to whom that he hath said
A tale, of which he is now evil apaid.⁵⁰²⁶
My son, beware, and be no author new
Of tidings, whether they be false or true;⁵⁰²⁷
Whereso thou come, amongës high or low,
Keep well thy tongue, and think upon the crow."

THE PARSON'S TALE

THE PROLOGUE

By that the Manciple his tale had ended,
The sunnë from the south line was descended
So lowë, that it was not to my sight
Degreës nine-and-twenty as in height.
Four of the clock it was then, as I guess,
For eleven foot, a little more or less,
My shadow was at thilkë time, as there,
Of such feet as my lengthë parted were
In six feet equal of proportion.
Therewith the moonë's exaltatiön, [5028](#)
In meanë [5029](#) Libra, gan alway ascend,
As we were ent'ring at a thorpë's [5030](#) end.
For which our Host, as he was wont to gie, [5031](#)
As in this case, our jolly company,
Said in this wisë; "Lordings every one,
Now lacketh us no morë tales than one.
Fulfill'd is my senténcé and my decree;
I trow that we have heard of each degree. [5032](#)
Almost fulfilled is mine ordinance;
I pray to God so give him right good chance
That telleth us this talë lustily.

Sir Priest," quoth he, "art thou a vicary?⁵⁰³³
Or art thou a Parson? say sooth by thy fay.⁵⁰³⁴
Be what thou be, breakë thou not our play;⁵⁰³⁵
For every man, save thou, hath told his tale.
Unbuckle, and shew us what is in thy mail.⁵⁰³⁶
For truëly me thinketh by thy cheer
Thou shouldest knit up well a great mattére.
Tell us a fable anon, for cockë's bones."

This Parson him answered all at ones;
"Thou gettest fable none y-told for me,
For Paul, that writeth unto Timothy,
Reproveth them that weivë soothfastness,⁵⁰³⁷
And tellë fables, and such wretchedness.
Why should I sowë draff⁵⁰³⁸ out of my fist,
When I may sowë wheat, if that me list?
For which I say, if that you list to hear
Morality and virtuous mattére,
And then that ye will give me audiënce,
I would full fain at Christë's reverëce
Do you pleasáncë lawful, as I can.
But, trustë well, I am a southern man,
I cannot gest,⁵⁰³⁹ rom, ram, ruf,⁵⁰⁴⁰ by my letter;
And, God wot, rhyme hold I but little better.
And therefore if you list, I will not glose,⁵⁰⁴¹
I will you tell a little tale in prose,
To knit up all this feast, and make an end.
And Jesus for his gracë wit me send
To shewë you the way, in this voyáge,
Of thilkë perfect glorious pilgrimage,⁵⁰⁴²
That hight Jerusalem celestiál.
And if ye vouchësafe, anon I shall
Begin upon my tale, for which I pray
Tell your advice,⁵⁰⁴³ I can no better say.
But natheless this meditatiön
I put it aye under correctiön
Of clerkës,⁵⁰⁴⁴ for I am not textuel;

I take but the sentencë, [5045](#) trust me well.
Therefore I make a protestatiún,
That I will standë to correctiún.”

Upon this word we have assented soon;
For, as us seemed, it was for to do’n, [5046](#)
To enden in some virtuous sentence, [5047](#)
And for to give him space and audiéncë;
And bade our Host he shouldë to him say
That allë we to tell his tale him pray.
Our Hostë had the wordës for us all:
“Sir Priest,” quoth he, “now fairë you befall;
Say what you list, and we shall gladly hear.”
And with that word he said in this mannére;
“Tellë,” quoth he, “your meditatioún,
But hasten you, the sunnë will adown.
Be fructuous, [5048](#) and that in little space;
And to do well God sendë you his grace.”

THE TALE [5049](#)

[The Parson begins his “little treatise” (which, if given at length, would extend to about thirty of these pages, and which cannot by any stretch of courtesy or fancy be said to merit the title of a “Tale”) in these words:—]

Our sweet Lord God of Heaven, that no man will perish, but will that we come all to the knowledge of him, and to the blissful life that is perdurable, [5050](#) admonishes us by the prophet Jeremiah, that saith in this wise: “Stand upon the ways, and see and ask of old paths, that is to say, of old sentences, which is the good way, and walk in that way, and ye shall find refreshing for your souls,” [5051](#) etc. Many be the spiritual ways that lead folk to our Lord Jesus Christ, and to

the reign of glory; of which ways there is a full noble way, and full convenable, which may not fail to man nor to woman, that through sin hath misgone from the right way of Jerusalem celestial; and this way is called penitence. Of which men should gladly hearken and inquire with all their hearts, to wit what is penitence, and whence it is called penitence, and in what manner, and in how many manners, be the actions or workings of penitence, and how many species there be of penitences, and what things appertain and behove to penitence, and what things disturb penitence.

[Penitence is described, on the authority of Saints Ambrose, Isidore, and Gregory, as the bewailing of sin that has been wrought, with the purpose never again to do that thing, or any other thing which a man should bewail; for weeping and not ceasing to do the sin will not avail—though it is to be hoped that after every time that a man falls, be it ever so often, he may find grace to arise through penitence. And repentant folk that leave their sin ere sin leave them, are accounted by Holy Church sure of their salvation, even though the repentance be at the last hour. There are three actions of penitence; that a man be baptized after he has sinned; that he do no deadly sin after receiving baptism; and that he fall into no venial sins from day to day. “Thereof saith St. Augustine, that penitence of good and humble folk is the penitence of every day.” The species of penitence are three: solemn, when a man is openly expelled from Holy Church in Lent, or is compelled by Holy Church to do open penance for an open sin openly talked of in the country; common penance, enjoined by priests in certain cases, as to go on pilgrimage naked or barefoot; and privy penance, which men do daily for private sins, of which they confess privately and receive private penance. To very perfect penitence are behoveful and necessary three things: contrition of heart, confession of mouth, and satisfaction; which are fruitful penitence against delight in thinking, reckless speech, and wicked sinful works.

Penitence may be likened to a tree, having its root in contrition, biding itself in the heart as a tree-root does in the earth; out of this root springs a stalk, that bears branches and leaves of confession, and fruit of satisfaction. Of this root also springs a seed of grace, which is mother of all security, and this seed is eager and hot; and

the grace of this seed springs of God, through remembrance on the day of judgment and on the pains of hell. The heat of this seed is the love of God, and the desire of everlasting joy; and this heat draws the heart of man to God, and makes him hate his sin. Penance is the tree of life to them that receive it. In penance or contrition man shall understand four things: what is contrition; what are the causes that move a man to contrition; how he should be contrite; and what contrition availeth to the soul. Contrition is the heavy and grievous sorrow that a man receiveth in his heart for his sins, with earnest purpose to confess and do penance, and never more to sin. Six causes ought to move a man to contrition: 1. He should remember him of his sins; 2. He should reflect that sin putteth a man in great thralldom, and all the greater the higher is the estate from which he falls; 3. He should dread the day of doom and the horrible pains of hell; 4. The sorrowful remembrance of the good deeds that man hath omitted to do here on earth, and also the good that he hath lost, ought to make him have contrition; 5. So also ought the remembrance of the passion that our Lord Jesus Christ suffered for our sins; 6. And so ought the hope of three things, that is to say, forgiveness of sin, the gift of grace to do well, and the glory of heaven with which God shall reward man for his good deeds.—All these points the Parson illustrates and enforces at length; waxing especially eloquent under the third head, and plainly setting forth the sternly realistic notions regarding future punishments that were entertained in the time of Chaucer:⁵⁰⁵²—]

Certes, all the sorrow that a man might make from the beginning of the world, is but a little thing, at retard of⁵⁰⁵³ the sorrow of hell. The cause why that Job calleth hell the land of darkness;⁵⁰⁵⁴ understand, that he calleth it land or earth, for it is stable and never shall fail, and dark, for he that is in hell hath default⁵⁰⁵⁵ of light natural; for certes the dark light, that shall come out of the fire that ever shall burn, shall turn them all to pain that be in hell, for it sheweth them the horrible devils that them torment. Covered with the darkness of death; that is to say, that he that is in hell shall have default of the sight of God; for certes the sight of God is the life perdurable.⁵⁰⁵⁶ The darkness of death, be the sins that the wretched

man hath done, which that disturb⁵⁰⁵⁷ him to see the face of God, right as a dark cloud doth between us and the sun. Land of misease, because there be three manner of defaults against three things that folk of this world have in this present life; that is to say, honours, delights, and riches. Against honour have they in hell shame and confusion: for well ye wot, that men call honour the reverence that man doth to man; but in hell is no honour nor reverence; for certes no more reverence shall be done there to a king than to a knave.⁵⁰⁵⁸ For which God saith by the prophet Jeremiah; "The folk that me despise shall be in despite." Honour is also called great lordship. There shall no wight serve other, but of harm and torment. Honour is also called great dignity and highness; but in hell shall they be all fortrodden⁵⁰⁵⁹ of devils. As God saith, "The horrible devils shall go and come upon the heads of damned folk;" and this is, forasmuch as the higher that they were in this present life, the more shall they be abated⁵⁰⁶⁰ and defouled in hell. Against the riches of this world shall they have misease⁵⁰⁶¹ of poverty, and this poverty shall be in four things: in default⁵⁰⁶² of treasure; of which David saith, "The rich folk that embraced and oned⁵⁰⁶³ all their heart to treasure of this world, shall sleep in the sleeping of death, and nothing shall they find in their hands of all their treasure." And moreover, the misease of hell shall be in default of meat and drink. For God saith thus by Moses, "They shall be wasted with hunger, and the birds of hell shall devour them with bitter death, and the gall of the dragon shall be their drink, and the venom of the dragon their morsels." And furthermore, their misease shall be in default of clothing, for they shall be naked in body, as of clothing, save the fire in which they burn, and other filths; and naked shall they be in soul, of all manner virtues, which that is the clothing of the soul. Where be then the gay robes, and the soft sheets, and the fine shirts? Lo, what saith of them the prophet Isaiah, that under them shall be strewed moths, and their covertures shall be of worms of hell. And furthermore, their misease shall be in default of friends, for he is not poor that hath good friends: but there is no friend; for neither God nor any good creature shall be friend to them, and evereach of them shall hate other with deadly hate. The Sons and the daughters shall rebel against father and mother, and

kindred against kindred, and chide and despise each other, both day and night, as God saith by the prophet Micah. And the loving children, that whom loved so fleshly each other, would each of them eat the other if they might. For how should they love together in the pains of hell, when they hated each other in the prosperity of this life? For trust well, their fleshly love was deadly hate; as saith the prophet David; "Whoso loveth wickedness, he hateth his own soul:" and whoso hateth his own soul, certes he may love none other wight in no manner: and therefore in hell is no solace nor no friendship, but ever the more kindreds that be in hell, the more cursing, the more chiding, and the more deadly hate there is among them. And furthermore, they shall have default of all manner delights; for certes delights be after the appetites of the five wits;⁵⁰⁶⁴ as sight, hearing, smelling, savouring,⁵⁰⁶⁵ and touching. But in hell their sight shall be full of darkness and of smoke, and their eyes full of tears; and their hearing full of waimenting⁵⁰⁶⁶ and grinting⁵⁰⁶⁷ of teeth, as saith Jesus Christ; their nostrils shall be full of stinking; and, as saith Isaiah the prophet, their savouring⁵⁰⁶⁸ shall be full of bitter gall; and touching of all their body shall be covered with fire that never shall quench, and with worms that never shall die, as God saith by the mouth of Isaiah. And forasmuch as they shall not ween⁵⁰⁶⁹ that they may die for pain, and by death flee from pain, that may they understand in the word of Job, that saith, "There is the shadow of death." Certes a shadow hath the likeness of the thing of which it is shadowed, but the shadow is not the same thing of which it is shadowed: right so fareth the pain of hell; it is like death, for the horrible anguish; and why? for it paineth them ever as though they should die anon; but certes they shall not die. For, as saith Saint Gregory, "To wretched caitiffs shall be given death without death, and end without end, and default without failing; for their death shall always live, and their end shall evermore begin, and their default shall never fail." And therefore saith Saint John the Evangelist, "They shall follow death, and they shall not find him, and they shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them." And eke Job saith, that in hell is no order of rule. And albeit that God hath created all things in right order, and nothing without order, but all things be ordered and

numbered, yet nevertheless they that be damned be not in order, nor hold no order. For the earth shall bear them no fruit (for, as the prophet David saith, “God shall destroy the fruit of the earth, as for them”); nor water shall give them no moisture, nor the air no refreshing, nor the fire no light. For as saith Saint Basil, “The burning of the fire of this world shall God give in hell to them that be damned, but the light and the clearness shall be given in heaven to his children; right as the good man giveth flesh to his children, and bones to his hounds.” And for they shall have no hope to escape, saith Job at last, that there shall horror and grisly dread dwell without end. Horror is always dread of harm that is to come, and this dread shall ever dwell in the hearts of them that be damned. And therefore have they lost all their hope for seven causes. First, for God that is their judge shall be without mercy to them; nor they may not please him; nor none of his hallows;⁵⁰⁷⁰ nor they may give nothing for their ransom; nor they have no voice to speak to him; nor they may not flee from pain; nor they have no goodness in them that they may shew to deliver them from pain.

[Under the fourth head, of good works, the Parson says:—]

The courteous Lord Jesus Christ will that no good work be lost, for in somewhat it shall avail. But forasmuch as the good works that men do while they be in good life be all amortised⁵⁰⁷¹ by sin following, and also since all the good works that men do while they be in deadly sin be utterly dead, as for to have the life perdurable, well may that man that no good works doth, sing that new French song, *J’ai tout perdu—mon temps et mon labour*. For certes, sin bereaveth a man both the goodness of nature, and eke the goodness of grace. For soothly the grace of the Holy Ghost fareth like fire, that may not be idle; for fire faileth anon as it forleteth⁵⁰⁷² its working, and right so grace faileth anon as it forleteth its working. Then loseth the sinful man the goodness of glory, that only is behight⁵⁰⁷³ to good men that labour and work. Well may he be sorry then, that oweth all his life to God, as long as he hath lived, and also as long as he shall live, that no goodness hath to pay with his debt to God, to whom he oweth all his life: for trust well he shall give account, as saith Saint Bernard, of all the goods that have been given him in his present life, and how he hath them dispended,

insomuch that there shall not perish an hair of his head, nor a moment of an hour shall not perish of his time, that he shall not give thereof a reckoning.

[Having treated of the causes, the Parson comes to the manner, of contrition—which should be universal and total, not merely of outward deeds of sin, but also of wicked delights and thoughts and words; “for certes Almighty God is all good, and therefore either he forgiveth all, or else right naught.” Further, contrition should be “wonder sorrowful and anguishous,” and also continual, with steadfast purpose of confession and amendment. Lastly, of what contrition availeth, the Parson says, that sometimes it delivereth man from sin; that without it neither confession nor satisfaction is of any worth; that it “destroyeth the prison of hell, and maketh weak and feeble all the strengths of the devils, and restoreth the gifts of the Holy Ghost and of all good virtues, and cleanseth the soul of sin, and delivereth it from the pain of hell, and from the company of the devil, and from the servage of sin, and restoreth it to all goods spiritual, and to the company and communion of Holy Church.” He who should set his intent to these things, would no longer be inclined to sin, but would give his heart and body to the service of Jesus Christ, and thereof do him homage. “For, certes, our Lord Jesus Christ hath spared us so benignly in our follies, that if he had not pity on man’s soul, a sorry song might we all sing.”

The Second Part of the Parson’s Tale or Treatise opens with an explanation of what is confession—which is termed “the second part of penitence, that is, sign of contrition;” whether it ought needs be done or not; and what things be convenable to true confession. Confession is true shewing of sins to the priest, without excusing, hiding, or forwrapping⁵⁰⁷⁴ of anything, and without vaunting of good works. “Also, it is necessary to understand whence that sins spring, and how they increase, and which they be.” From Adam we took original sin; “from him fleshly descended be we all, and engendered of vile and corrupt matter;” and the penalty of Adam’s transgression dwelleth with us as to temptation, which penalty is called concupiscence. “This concupiscence, when it is wrongfully disposed or ordained in a man, it maketh him covet, by covetise of flesh, fleshly sin by sight of his eyes, as to earthly things, and also covetise

of highness by pride of heart.” The Parson proceeds to shew how man is tempted in his flesh to sin; how, after his natural concupiscence, comes suggestion of the devil, that is to say the devil’s bellows, with which he bloweth in man the fire of concupiscence; and how man then bethinketh him whether he will do or no the thing to which he is tempted. If he flame up into pleasure at the thought, and give way, then is he all dead in soul; “and thus is sin accomplished, by temptation, by delight, and by consenting; and then is the sin actual.” Sin is either venial, or deadly; deadly, when a man loves any creature more than Jesus Christ our Creator, venial, if he love Jesus Christ less than he ought. Venial sins diminish man’s love to God more and more, and may in this wise skip into deadly sin; for many small make a great. “And hearken this example: A great wave of the sea cometh sometimes with so great a violence, that it drencheth⁵⁰⁷⁵ the ship: and the same harm do sometimes the small drops, of water that enter through a little crevice in the thurrok,⁵⁰⁷⁶ and in the bottom of the ship, if men be so negligent that they discharge them not betimes. And therefore, although there be difference betwixt these two causes of drenching, algates⁵⁰⁷⁷ the ship is dreint.⁵⁰⁷⁸ Right so fareth it sometimes of deadly sin,” and of venial sins when they multiply in a man so greatly as to make him love worldly things more than God. The Parson then enumerates specially a number of sins which many a man peradventure deems no sins, and confesses them not, and yet nevertheless they are truly sins:—]

This is to say, at every time that a man eateth and drinketh more than sufficeth to the sustenance of his body, in certain he doth sin; eke when he speaketh more than it needeth, he doth sin; eke when he heareth not benignly the complaint of the poor; eke when he is in health of body, and will not fast when other folk fast, without cause reasonable; eke when he sleepeth more than needeth, or when he cometh by that occasion too late to church, or to other works of charity; eke when he useth his wife without sovereign desire of engendrure, to the honour of God, or for the intent to yield his wife his debt of his body; eke when he will not visit the sick, or the prisoner, if he may; eke if he love wife, or child, or other worldly thing, more than reason requireth; eke if he flatter or blandish more

than he ought for any necessity; eke if he minish or withdraw the alms of the poor; eke if he apparail⁵⁰⁷⁹ his meat more deliciously than need is, or eat it too hastily by likerousness;⁵⁰⁸⁰ eke if he talk vanities in the church, or at God's service, or that he be a talker of idle words of folly or villainy, for he shall yield account of them at the day of doom; eke when he behighteth⁵⁰⁸¹ or assureth to do things that he may not perform; eke when that by lightness of folly he missayeth or scorneth his neighbour; eke when he hath any wicked suspicion of thing, that he wot of it no soothfastness: these things, and more without number, be sins, as saith Saint Augustine.

[No earthly man may eschew all venial sins; yet may he refrain him, by the burning love that he hath to our Lord Jesus Christ, and by prayer and confession, and other good works, so that it shall but little grieve. "Furthermore, men may also refrain and put away venial sin, by receiving worthily the precious body of Jesus Christ; by receiving eke of holy water; by almsdeed; by general confession of Confiteor at mass, and at prime, and at compline;⁵⁰⁸² and by blessing of bishops and priests, and by other good works." The Parson then proceeds to weightier matters:—]

Now it is behovely⁵⁰⁸³ to tell which be deadly sins, that is to say, chieftains of sins; forasmuch as all they run in one leash, but in diverse manners. Now be they called chieftains, forasmuch as they be chief, and of them spring all other sins. The root of these sins, then, is pride, the general root of all harms. For of this root spring certain branches: as ire, envy, accidie⁵⁰⁸⁴ or sloth, avarice or covetousness (to common understanding), gluttony, and lechery: and each of these sins hath his branches and his twigs, as shall be declared in their chapters following. And though so be, that no man can tell utterly the number of the twigs, and of the harms that come of pride, yet will I shew a part of them, as ye shall understand. There is inobedience, vaunting, hypocrisy, despite, arrogance, impudence, swelling of heart, insolence, elation, impatience, strife, contumacy, presumption, irreverence, pertinacity, vainglory and many another twig that I cannot tell nor declare...

And yet⁵⁰⁸⁵ there is a privy species of pride that waiteth first to be saluted ere he will salute, all⁵⁰⁸⁶ be he less worthy than that other is;

and eke he waiteth⁵⁰⁸⁷ or desireth to sit or to go above him in the way, or kiss the pax,⁵⁰⁸⁸ or be incensed, or go to offering before his neighbour, and such semblable⁵⁰⁸⁹ things, against his duty peradventure, but that he hath his heart and his intent in such a proud desire to be magnified and honoured before the people. Now be there two manner of prides; the one of them is within the heart of a man, and the other is without. Of which soothly these foresaid things, and more than I have said, appertain to pride that is within the heart of a man and there be other species of pride that be without: but nevertheless, the one of these species of pride is sign of the other, right as the gay levesell⁵⁰⁹⁰ at the tavern is sign of the wine that is in the cellar. And this is in many things: as in speech and countenance, and outrageous array of clothing; for certes, if there had been no sin in clothing, Christ would not so soon have noted and spoken of the clothing of that rich man in the gospel. And Saint Gregory saith, that precious clothing is culpable for the dearth⁵⁰⁹¹ of it, and for its softness, and for its strangeness and disguising, and for the superfluity or for the inordinate scantness of it; alas! may not a man see in our days the sinful costly array of clothing, and namely⁵⁰⁹² in too much superfluity, or else in too disordinate scantness? As to the first sin, in superfluity of clothing, which that maketh it so dear, to the harm of the people, not only the cost of the embroidering, the disguising, indenting or barring, ounding, paling,⁵⁰⁹³ winding, or banding, and semblable⁵⁰⁹⁴ waste of cloth in vanity; but there is also the costly furring⁵⁰⁹⁵ in their gowns, so much punching of chisels to make holes, so much dagging⁵⁰⁹⁶ of shears, with the superfluity in length of the foresaid gowns, trailing in the dung and in the mire, on horse and eke on foot, as well of man as of woman, that all that trailing is verily (as in effect) wasted, consumed, threadbare, and rotten with dung, rather than it is given to the poor, to great damage of the foresaid poor folk, and that in sundry wise: this is to say, the more that cloth is wasted, the more must it cost to the poor people for the scarceness; and furthermore, if so be that they would give such punched and dagged clothing to the poor people, it is not convenient to wear for their estate, nor sufficient to boot⁵⁰⁹⁷ their necessity, to keep them from the distemperance⁵⁰⁹⁸ of

the firmament. Upon the other side, to speak of the horrible disordinate scantness of clothing, as be these cutted slops or hanselines,⁵⁰⁹⁹ that through their shortness cover not the shameful member of man, to wicked intent alas! some of them shew the boss and the shape of the horrible swollen members, that seem like to the malady of hernia, in the wrapping of their hosen, and eke the buttocks of them, that fare as it were the hinder part of a she-ape in the full of the moon. And more over the wretched swollen members that they shew through disguising, in departing⁵¹⁰⁰ of their hosen in white and red, seemeth that half their shameful privy members were flain.⁵¹⁰¹ And if so be that they depart their hosen in other colours, as is white and blue, or white and black, or black and red, and so forth; then seemeth it, by variance of colour, that the half part of their privy members be corrupt by the fire of Saint Anthony, or by canker, or other such mischance. And of the hinder part of their buttocks it is full horrible to see, for certes, in that part of their body where they purge their stinking ordure, that foul part shew they to the people proudly in despite of honesty,⁵¹⁰² which honesty Jesus Christ and his friends observed to shew in his life. Now as of the outrageous array of women, God wot, that though the visages of some of them seem full chaste and debonair,⁵¹⁰³ yet notify they, in their array of attire, likerousness and pride. I say not that honesty⁵¹⁰⁴ in clothing of man or woman unconvenable but, certes, the superfluity or disordinate scarcity of clothing is reprovable. Also the sin of their ornament, or of apparel, as in things that appertain to riding, as in too many delicate horses, that be holden for delight, that be so fair, fat, and costly; and also in many a vicious knave,⁵¹⁰⁵ that is sustained because of them; in curious harness, as in saddles, cruppers, peytrels,⁵¹⁰⁶ and bridles, covered with precious cloth and rich bars and plates of gold and silver. For which God saith by Zechariah the prophet, "I will confound the riders of such horses." These folk take little regard of the riding of God's Son of heaven, and of his harness, when he rode upon an ass, and had no other harness but the poor clothes of his disciples; nor we read not that ever he rode on any other beast. I speak this for the sin of superfluity, and not for reasonable honesty,⁵¹⁰⁷ when reason it requireth. And moreover, certes, pride is greatly notified in

holding of great meinie, ⁵¹⁰⁸ when they be of little profit or of right no profit, and namely ⁵¹⁰⁹ when that meinie is felonous and damageous ⁵¹¹⁰ to the people by hardiness ⁵¹¹¹ of high lordship, or by way of office; for certes, such lords sell then their lordship to the devil of hell, when they sustain the wickedness of their meinie. Or else, when these folk of low degree, as they that hold hostelries, sustain theft of their hostellers, and that is in many manner of deceits: that manner of folk be the flies that follow the honey, or else the hounds that follow the carrion. Such foresaid folk strangle spiritually their lordships; for which thus saith David the prophet, “Wicked death may come unto these lordships, and God give that they may descend into hell adown; for in their houses is iniquity and shrewedness, ⁵¹¹² and not God of heaven.” And certes, but if ⁵¹¹³ they do amendment, right as God gave his benison to Laban by the service of Jacob, and to Pharaoh by the service of Joseph; right so God will give his malison to such lordships as sustain the wickedness of their servants, but ⁵¹¹⁴ they come to amendment. Pride of the table apaireth ⁵¹¹⁵ eke full oft; for, certes, rich men be called to feasts, and poor folk be put away and rebuked; also in excess of divers meats and drinks, and namely ⁵¹¹⁶ such manner bake-meats and dish-meats burning of wild fire, and painted and castled with paper, and semblable ⁵¹¹⁷ waste, so that it is abuse to think. And eke in too great preciousness of vessel, ⁵¹¹⁸ and curiosity of minstrelsy, by which a man is stirred more to the delights of luxury, if so be that he set his heart the less upon our Lord Jesus Christ, certain it is a sin; and certainly the delights might be so great in this case, that a man might lightly ⁵¹¹⁹ fall by them into deadly sin.

[The sins that arise of pride advisedly and habitually are deadly; those that arise by frailty unadvised suddenly, and suddenly withdraw again, though grievous, are not deadly. Pride itself springs sometimes of the goods of nature, sometimes of the goods of fortune, sometimes of the goods of grace; but the Parson, enumerating and examining all these in turn, points out how little security they possess and how little ground for pride they furnish, and goes on to enforce the remedy against pride—which is humility or meekness, a virtue through which a man hath true knowledge of

himself, and holdeth no high esteem of himself in regard of his deserts, considering ever his frailty.]

Now be there three manners⁵¹²⁰ of humility; as humility in heart, and another in the mouth, and the third in works. The humility in the heart is in four manners: the one is, when a man holdeth himself as nought worth before God of heaven; the second is, when he despiseth no other man; the third is, when he reckoneth not though men hold him nought worth; the fourth is, when he is not sorry of his humiliation. Also the humility of mouth is in four things: in temperate speech; in humility of speech; and when he confesseth with his own mouth that he is such as he thinketh that he is in his heart; another is, when he praiseth the bounte⁵¹²¹ of another man and nothing thereof diminisheth. Humility eke in works is in four manners: the first is, when he putteth other men before him; the second is, to choose the lowest place of all; the third is, gladly to assent to good counsel; the fourth is, to stand gladly by the award⁵¹²² of his sovereign, or of him that is higher in degree: certain this is a great work of humility.

[The Parson proceeds to treat of the other cardinal sins, and their remedies: (2.) Envy, with its remedy, the love of God principally and of our neighbours as ourselves: (3.) Anger, with all its fruits in revenge, rancour, hate, discord, manslaughter, blasphemy, swearing, falsehood, flattery, chiding and reproving, scorning, treachery, sowing of strife, doubleness of tongue, betraying of counsel to a man's disgrace, menacing, idle words, jangling, japery or buffoonery, etc.—and its remedy in the virtues called mansuetude, debonairté, or gentleness, and patience or sufferance: (4.) Sloth, or “Accidie,” which comes after the sin of Anger, because Envy blinds the eyes of a man, and Anger troubleth a man, and Sloth maketh him heavy, thoughtful, and peevish. It is opposed to every estate of man—as unfallen, and held to work in praising and adoring God; as sinful, and held to labour in praying for deliverance from sin; and as in the state of grace, and held to works of penitence. It resembles the heavy and sluggish condition of those in hell; it will suffer no hardness and no penance; it prevents any beginning of good works; it causes despair of God's mercy, which is the sin against the Holy Ghost; it induces somnolency and neglect of communion in prayer with God; and it breeds negligence or recklessness, that cares for nothing, and is the

nurse of all mischiefs, if ignorance is their mother. Against Sloth, and these and other branches and fruits of it, the remedy lies in the virtue of fortitude or strength, in its various species of magnanimity or great courage; faith and hope in God and his saints; surety or sickness, when a man fears nothing that can oppose the good works he has under taken; magnificence, when he carries out great works of goodness begun; constancy or stableness of heart; and other incentives to energy and laborious service: (5.) Avarice, or Covetousness, which is the root of all harms, since its votaries are idolaters, oppressors and enslavers of men, deceivers of their equals in business, simoniacs, gamblers, liars, thieves, false swearers, blasphemers, murderers, and sacrilegious. Its remedy lies in compassion and pity largely exercised, and in reasonable liberality—for those who spend on “fool-largesse,” or ostentation of worldly estate and luxury, shall receive the malison that Christ shall give at the day of doom to them that shall be damned: (6.) Gluttony;—of which the Parson treats so briefly that the chapter may be given in full:—]

After Avarice cometh Gluttony, which is express against the commandment of God. Gluttony is unmeasurable appetite to eat or to drink; or else to do in aught to the unmeasurable appetite and disordered covetousness⁵¹²³ to eat or drink. This sin corrupted all this world, as is well shewed in the sin of Adam and of Eve. Look also what saith Saint Paul of gluttony: “Many,” saith he, “go, of which I have oft said to you, and now I say it weeping, that they be enemies of the cross of Christ, of which the end is death, and of which their womb is their God and their glory;” in confusion of them that so savour⁵¹²⁴ earthly things. He that is usant⁵¹²⁵ to this sin of gluttony, he may no sin withstand, he must be in servage⁵¹²⁶ of all vices, for it is the devil’s hoard,⁵¹²⁷ where he hideth him in and resteth. This sin hath many species. The first is drunkenness, that is the horrible sepulture of man’s reason: and therefore when a man is drunken, he hath lost his reason; and this is deadly sin. But soothly, when that a man is not wont to strong drink, and peradventure knoweth not the strength of the drink, or hath feebleness in his head, or hath travailed,⁵¹²⁸ through which he drinketh the more, all⁵¹²⁹ be

he suddenly caught with drink, it is no deadly sin, but venial. The second species of gluttony is, that the spirit of a man waxeth all troubled for drunkenness, and bereaveth a man the discretion of his wit. The third species of gluttony is, when a man devoureth his meat, and hath no rightful manner of eating. The fourth is, when, through the great abundance of his meat, the humours of his body be distempered. The fifth is, forgetfulness by too much drinking, for which a man sometimes forgetteth by the morrow what he did at eve. In other manner be distinct the species of gluttony, after Saint Gregory. The first is, for to eat or drink before time. The second is, when a man getteth him too delicate meat or drink. The third is, when men take too much over measure.⁵¹³⁰ The fourth is curiosity⁵¹³¹ with great intent⁵¹³² to make and apparel⁵¹³³ his meat. The fifth is, for to eat too greedily. These be the five fingers of the devil's hand, by which he draweth folk to the sin.

Against gluttony the remedy is abstinence, as saith Galen; but that I hold not meritorious, if he do it only for the health of his body. Saint Augustine will that abstinence be done for virtue, and with patience. Abstinence, saith he, is little worth, but⁵¹³⁴ if a man have good will thereto, and but it be enforced by patience and by charity, and that men do it for God's sake, and in hope to have the bliss in heaven. The fellows of abstinence be temperance, that holdeth the mean in all things; also shame, that escheweth all dishonesty,⁵¹³⁵ sufficiency, that seeketh no rich meats nor drinks, nor doth no force of⁵¹³⁶ no outrageous apparelling of meat; measure⁵¹³⁷ also, that restraineth by reason the unmeasurable appetite of eating; soberness also, that restraineth the outrage of drink; sparing also, that restraineth the delicate ease to sit long at meat, wherefore some folk stand of their own will to eat, because they will eat at less leisure.

[At great length the Parson then points out the many varieties of the sin of (7.) Lechery, and its remedy in chastity and continence, alike in marriage and in widowhood; also in the abstaining from all such indulgences of eating, drinking, and sleeping as inflame the passions, and from the company of all who may tempt to the sin. Minute guidance is given as to the duty of confessing fully and faithfully the circumstances that attend and may aggravate this sin;

and the Treatise then passes to the consideration of the conditions that are essential to a true and profitable confession of sin in general. First, it must be in sorrowful bitterness of spirit; a condition that has five signs—shamefastness, humility in heart and outward sign, weeping with the bodily eyes or in the heart, disregard of the shame that might curtail or garble confession, and obedience to the penance enjoined. Secondly, true confession must be promptly made, for dread of death, of increase of sinfulness, of forgetfulness of what should be confessed, of Christ's refusal to hear if it be put off to the last day of life; and this condition has four terms; that confession be well pondered beforehand, that the man confessing have comprehended in his mind the number and greatness of his sins and how long he has lain in sin, that he be contrite for and eschew his sins, and that he fear and flee the occasions for that sin to which he is inclined.—What follows under this head is of some interest for the light which it throws on the rigorous government wielded by the Romish Church in those days—]

Also thou shalt shrive thee of all thy sins to one man, and not a parcel⁵¹³⁸ to one man, and a parcel to another; that is to understand, in intent to depart⁵¹³⁹ thy confession for shame or dread; for it is but strangling of thy soul. For certes Jesus Christ is entirely all good, in him is none imperfection, and therefore either he forgiveth all perfectly, or else never a deal.⁵¹⁴⁰ I say not that if thou be assigned to thy penitencer⁵¹⁴¹ for a certain sin, that thou art bound to shew him all the remnant of thy sins, of which thou hast been shriven of thy curate, but if it like thee⁵¹⁴² of thy humility; this is no departing⁵¹⁴³ of shrift. And I say not, where I speak of division of confession, that if thou have license to shrive thee to a discreet and an honest priest, and where thee liketh, and by the license of thy curate, that thou mayest not well shrive thee to him of all thy sins: but let no blot be behind, let no sin be untold as far as thou hast remembrance. And when thou shalt be shriven of thy curate, tell him eke all the sins that thou hast done since thou wert last shriven. This is no wicked intent of division of shrift. Also, very shrift⁵¹⁴⁴ asketh certain conditions. First, that thou shrive thee by thy free will, not constrained, nor for shame of folk, nor for malady,⁵¹⁴⁵ or such things: for it is reason, that

he that trespasseth by his free will, that by his free will he confess his trespass; and that no other man tell his sin but himself; nor he shall not nay nor deny his sin, nor wrath him against the priest for admonishing him to leave his sin. The second condition is, that thy shrift be lawful, that is to say, that thou that shrivest thee, and eke the priest that heareth thy confession, be verily in the faith of Holy Church, and that a man be not despaired of the mercy of Jesus Christ, as Cain and Judas were. And eke a man must accuse himself of his own trespass, and not another: but he shall blame and wite⁵¹⁴⁶ himself of his own malice and of his sin, and none other: but nevertheless, if that another man be occasion or else enticer of his sin, or the estate of the person be such by which his sin is aggravated, or else that he may not plainly shrive him but⁵¹⁴⁷ he tell the person with which he hath sinned, then may he tell, so that his intent be not to backbite the person, but only to declare his confession. Thou shalt not eke make no leasings⁵¹⁴⁸ in thy confession for humility, peradventure, to say that thou hast committed and done such sins of which that thou wert never guilty. For Saint Augustine saith, "If that thou, because of humility, makest a leasing on thyself, though thou were not in sin before, yet art thou then in sin through thy leasing." Thou must also shew thy sin by thine own proper mouth, but⁵¹⁴⁹ thou be dumb, and not by letter; for thou that hast done the sin, thou shalt have the shame of the confession. Thou shalt not paint thy confession with fair and subtle words, to cover the more thy sin; for then beguilest thou thyself, and not the priest; thou must tell it plainly, be it never so foul nor so horrible. Thou shalt eke shrive thee to a priest that is discreet to counsel thee; and eke thou shalt not shrive thee for vainglory, nor for hypocrisy, nor for no cause but only for the doubt⁵¹⁵⁰ of Jesus' Christ and the health of thy soul. Thou shalt not run to the priest all suddenly, to tell him lightly thy sin, as who telleth a jape⁵¹⁵¹ or a tale, but advisedly and with good devotion; and generally shrive thee oft; if thou oft fall, oft arise by confession. And though thou shrive thee oftener than once of sin of which thou hast been shriven, it is more merit; and, as saith Saint Augustine, thou shalt have the more lightly⁵¹⁵² release and grace of God, both of sin and of pain. And

certes, once a year at the least way, it is lawful to be houseled,⁵¹⁵³
for soothly once a year all things in the earth renovelen.⁵¹⁵⁴

[Here ends the Second Part of the Treatise; the Third Part, which contains the practical application of the whole, follows entire, along with the remarkable “Prayer of Chaucer,” as it stands in the Harleian Manuscript:—]

DE TERTIA PARTE POENITENTIOE

Now have I told you of very⁵¹⁵⁵ confession, that is the second part of penitence: The third part of penitence is satisfaction, and that standeth generally in almsdeed and bodily pain. Now be there three manner of almsdeed: contrition of heart, where a man offereth himself to God; the second is, to have pity of the default of his neighbour; the third is, in giving of good counsel and comfort, ghostly and bodily, where men have need, and namely⁵¹⁵⁶ in sustenance of man's food. And take keep⁵¹⁵⁷ that a man hath need of these things generally; he hath need of food, of clothing, and of herberow,⁵¹⁵⁸ he hath need of charitable counsel and visiting in prison and malady, and sepulture of his dead body. And if thou mayest not visit the needful with thy person, visit them by thy message and by thy gifts. These be generally alms or works of charity of them that have temporal riches or discretion in counselling. Of these works shalt thou hear at the day of doom. This alms shouldest thou do of thine own proper things, and hastily,⁵¹⁵⁹ and privily if thou mayest; but nevertheless, if thou mayest not do it privily, thou shalt not forbear to do alms, though men see it, so that it be not done for thank of the world, but only for thank of Jesus Christ. For, as witnesseth Saint Matthew, chap. v, “A city may not be hid that is set on a mountain, nor men light not a lantern and put it under a bushel, but men set it on a candlestick, to light the men in the house; right so shall your light lighten before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father that is in heaven.”

Now as to speak of bodily pain, it is in prayer, in wakings,⁵¹⁶⁰ in fastings, and in virtuous teachings. Of orisons ye shall understand, that orisons or prayers is to say a piteous will of heart, that redresseth it in God, and expresseth it by word outward, to remove harms, and to have things spiritual and durable, and sometimes temporal things. Of which orisons, certes in the orison of the Pater noster hath our Lord Jesus Christ enclosed most things. Certes, it is privileged of three things in its dignity, for which it is more digne⁵¹⁶¹ than any other prayer: for Jesus Christ himself made it: and it is short, for⁵¹⁶² it should be coude the more lightly,⁵¹⁶³ and to withhold⁵¹⁶⁴ it the more easy in heart, and help himself the oftener with this orison; and for a man should be the less weary to say it; and for a man may not excuse him to learn it, it is so short and so easy: and for it comprehendeth in itself all good prayers. The exposition of this holy prayer, that is so excellent and so digne, I betake⁵¹⁶⁵ to these masters of theology; save thus much will I say, when thou prayest that God should forgive thee thy guilts, as thou forgivest them that they guilt to thee, be full well ware that thou be not out of charity. This holy orison aminisheth⁵¹⁶⁶ eke venial sin, and therefore it appertaineth specially to penitence. This prayer must be truly said, and in very faith, and that men pray to God ordinally, discreetly, and devoutly; and always a man shall put his will to be subject to the will of God. This orison must eke be said with great humbleness and full pure, and honestly, and not to the annoyance of any man or woman. It must eke be continued with the works of charity. It availeth against the vices of the soul; for, assaith Saint Jerome, by fasting be saved the vices of the flesh, and by prayer the vices of the soul.

After this thou shalt understand, that bodily pain stands in waking.⁵¹⁶⁷ For Jesus Christ saith "Wake and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Ye shall understand also, that fasting stands in three things: in forbearing of bodily meat and drink, and in forbearing of worldly jollity, and in forbearing of deadly sin; this is to say, that a man shall keep him from deadly sin in all that he may. And thou shalt understand eke, that God ordained fasting; and to fasting appertain four things: largeness⁵¹⁶⁸ to poor folk; gladness of heart spiritual; not

to be angry nor annoyed nor grudge⁵¹⁶⁹ for he fasteth; and also reasonable hour for to eat by measure; that is to say, a man should not eat in untime,⁵¹⁷⁰ nor sit the longer at his meal for⁵¹⁷¹ he fasteth. Then shalt thou understand, that bodily pain standeth in discipline, or teaching, by word, or by writing, or by ensample. Also in wearing of hairs⁵¹⁷² or of stamin,⁵¹⁷³ or of habergeons⁵¹⁷⁴ on their naked flesh for Christ's sake; but ware thee well that such manner penance of thy flesh make not thine heart bitter or angry, nor annoyed of thyself; for better is to cast away thine hair than to cast away the sweetness of our Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore saith Saint Paul, "Clothe you, as they that be chosen of God in heart, of misericorde,⁵¹⁷⁵ debonaire,⁵¹⁷⁶ sufferance,⁵¹⁷⁷ and such manner of clothing," of which Jesus Christ is more apaid⁵¹⁷⁸ than of hairs or of hauberks. Then is discipline eke in knocking of thy breast, in scourging with yards,⁵¹⁷⁹ in kneelings, in tribulations, in suffering patiently wrongs that be done to him, and eke in patient sufferance of maladies, or losing of worldly catel,⁵¹⁸⁰ or of wife, or of child, or of other friends.

Then shalt thou understand which things disturb penance, and this is in four things; that is dread, shame, hope, and wanhope, that is, desperation. And for to speak first of dread, for which he weeneth that he may suffer no penance, thereagainst is remedy for to think that bodily penance is but short and little at the regard of⁵¹⁸¹ the pain of hell, that is so cruel and so long, that it lasteth without end. Now against the shame that a man hath to shrive him, and namely⁵¹⁸² these hypocrites, that would be holden so perfect, that they have no need to shrive them; against that shame should a man think, that by way of reason he that hath not been ashamed to do foul things, certes he ought not to be ashamed to do fair things, and that is confession. A man should eke think, that God seeth and knoweth all thy thoughts, and all thy works; to him may nothing be hid nor covered. Men should eke remember them of the shame that is to come at the day of doom, to them that be not penitent and shriven in this present life; for all the creatures in heaven, and in earth, and in hell, shall see apertly⁵¹⁸³ all that he hideth in this world.

Now for to speak of them that be so negligent and slow to shrive them; that stands in two manners. The one is, that he hopeth to live

long, and to purchase⁵¹⁸⁴ much riches for his delight, and then he will shrive him: and, as he sayeth, he may, as him seemeth, timely enough come to shrift: another is, the surquedrie⁵¹⁸⁵ that he hath in Christ's mercy. Against the first vice, he shall think that our life is in no sickness,⁵¹⁸⁶ and eke that all the riches in this world be in adventure, and pass as a shadow on the wall; and, as saith St. Gregory, that it appertaineth to the great righteousness of God, that never shall the pain stint⁵¹⁸⁷ of them, that never would withdraw them from sin, their thanks,⁵¹⁸⁸ but aye continue in sin; for that perpetual will to do sin shall they have perpetual pain. Wanhope⁵¹⁸⁹ is in two manners.⁵¹⁹⁰ The first wanhope is, in the mercy of God: the other is, that they think they might not long persevere in goodness. The first wanhope cometh of that he deemeth that he sinned so highly and so oft, and so long hath lain in sin, that he shall not be saved. Certes against that cursed wanhope should he think, that the passion of Jesus Christ is more strong for to unbind, than sin is strong for to bind. Against the second wanhope he shall think, that as oft as he falleth, he may arise again by penitence; and though he never so long hath lain in sin, the mercy of Christ is always ready to receive him to mercy. Against the wanhope that he thinketh he should not long persevere in goodness, he shall think that the feebleness of the devil may nothing do, but⁵¹⁹¹ men will suffer him; and eke he shall have strength of the help of God, and of all Holy Church, and of the protection of angels, if him list.

Then shall men understand, what is the fruit of penance; and after the word of Jesus Christ, it is the endless bliss of heaven, where joy hath no contrariety of woe nor of penance nor grievance; there all harms be passed of this present life; there as is the sickness from the pain of hell; there as is the blissful company, that rejoyce them evermore each of the other's joy; there as the body of man, that whilom was foul and dark, is more clear than the sun; there as the body of man that whilom was sick and frail, feeble and mortal, is immortal, and so strong and so whole, that there may nothing apair⁵¹⁹² it; there is neither hunger, nor thirst, nor cold, but every soul replenished with the sight of the perfect knowing of God. This blissful regne⁵¹⁹³ may men purchase by poverty spiritual, and the glory by

lowliness, the plenty of joy by hunger and thirst, the rest by travail, and the life by death and mortification of sin; to which life He us bring, that bought us with his precious blood! Amen.

PRECES DE CHAUCERES⁵¹⁹⁴

Now pray I to you all that hear this little treatise or read it, that if there be anything in it that likes them, that thereof they thank our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom proceedeth all wit and all goodness; and if there be anything that displeaseth them, I pray them also that they arette⁵¹⁹⁵ it to the default of mine unconning,⁵¹⁹⁶ and not to my will, that would fain have said better if I had had conning; for the book saith, all that is written for our doctrine is written. Wherefore I beseech you meekly for the mercy of God that ye pray for me, that God have mercy on me and forgive me my guilts, and namely⁵¹⁹⁷ my translations and of inditing in worldly vanities, which I revoke in my Retractions, as is the Book of Troilus, the Book also of Fame, the Book of Twenty-five Ladies, the Book of the Duchess, the Book of Saint Valentine's Day and of the Parliament of Birds, the Tales of Canterbury, all those that sounen unto sin,⁵¹⁹⁸ the Book of the Lion, and many other books, if they were in my mind or remembrance, and many a song and many a lecherous lay, of the which Christ for his great mercy forgive me the sins. But of the translation of Boece *De Consolatione*, and other books of consolation and of legend of lives of saints, and homilies, and moralities, and devotion, that thank I our Lord Jesus Christ, and his mother, and all the saints in heaven, beseeching them that they from henceforth unto my life's end send me grace to bewail my guilts, and to study to the salvation of my soul, and grant me grace and space of very⁵¹⁹⁹ repentance, penitence, confession, and satisfaction, to do in this present life, through the benign grace of Him that is King of kings and Priest of all priests, that bought us with his precious blood of his heart, so that I may be one of them at the day of doom that shall be saved: *Qui cum*

Patre et Spiritu Sancto vivis et regnas Deus per omnia secula.
Amen.

ENDNOTES 1–500

1. Sweet. ↵
2. Grove forest. ↵
3. Twigs, boughs. ↵
4. Tyrwhitt points out that “the Bull” should be read here, not “the Ram,” which would place the time of the pilgrimage in the end of March; whereas, in the prologue to the “Man of Law’s Tale,” the date is given as the “eight and twenty day of April, that is messenger to May.” ↵
5. Hearts, inclinations. ↵
6. Dante, in the “*Vita Nuova*,” distinguishes three classes of pilgrims: *palmieri*, palmers who go beyond sea to the East, and often bring back staves of palm-wood; *peregrini*, who go the shrine of St. Jago in Galicia; *Romei*, who go to Rome. Sir Walter Scott, however, says that palmers were in the habit of passing from shrine to shrine, living on charity—pilgrims on the other hand, made the journey to any shrine only once, immediately returning to their ordinary avocations. Chaucer uses “palmer” of all pilgrims. ↵
7. The distant saints known, renowned, in sundry lands. “Hallows” survives, in the meaning here given, in All Hallows—All-

Saints'—day. *Couth*, past participle of *conne* to know, exists in *uncouth*. ↵

8. The Tabard—the sign of the inn—was a sleeveless coat, worn by heralds. The name of the inn was, some three centuries after Chaucer, changed to the Talbot. ↵
9. Who had by chance fallen into company. *Y-fall*, *y* is a corruption of the Anglo-Saxon *ge* prefixed to participles of verbs. It is used by Chaucer merely to help the metre. In German, *y-fall*, or *y-falle*, would be *gefallen*, *y-run*, or *y-ronne*, would be *geronnen*. ↵
10. And we were well accommodated with the best. ↵
11. Foreword, covenant, promise. ↵
12. Describe, relate. ↵
13. Farther. ↵
14. Alexandria, in Egypt, captured by Pierre de Lusignan, king of Cyprus, in 1365 but abandoned immediately afterwards. Thirteen years before, the same Prince had taken Satalie, the ancient Attalia, in Anatolia, and in 1367 he won Layas, in Armenia, both places named just below. ↵
15. Been placed at the head of the table, above knights of all nations, in Prussia, whither warriors from all countries were wont to repair, to aid the Teutonic Order in their continual conflicts with their heathen neighbours in “Lettowe” or Lithuania (German, Litthauen), Russia, etc. ↵
16. Journeyed, ridden, made campaigns; German, *reisen*, to travel. ↵
17. Algesiras was taken from the Moorish king of Grenada, in 1344: the Earls of Derby and Salisbury took part in the siege. ↵

18. Belmarie is supposed to have been a Moorish state in Africa; but “Palmyrie” has been suggested as the correct reading. ↵
19. The Great Sea, or the Greek sea, is the Eastern Mediterranean. ↵
20. Tramissene, or Tremessen, is enumerated by Froissart among the Moorish kingdoms in Africa. ↵
21. Ilkë, same; compare the Scottish phrase “of that ilk,”—that is, of the estate which bears the same name as its owner’s title. ↵
22. Palatie, or Palathia, in Anatolia, was a fief held by the Christian knights after the Turkish conquests—the holders paying tribute to the infidel. Our knight had fought with one of those lords against a heathen neighbour. ↵
23. He was held in very high esteem. ↵
24. Nothing unbecoming a gentleman. ↵
25. He wore a short doublet, all soiled by the contact of his coat of mail. ↵
26. Curled. ↵
27. Wonderfully nimble. ↵
28. Engaged in cavalry expeditions or raids into the enemy’s country. ↵
29. Considering the short time he had had. ↵
30. Nighttime. ↵
31. It was the custom for squires of the highest degree to carve at their fathers’ tables. ↵

32. For it pleased him so to ride. ↵
33. Large arrows, with peacocks' feathers. ↵
34. With nut-brown hair; or, round like a nut, the hair being cut short.
↵
35. Knew. ↵
36. Shield for an archer's arm, still called a "bracer," from the French *bras*, arm. ↵
37. A figure of St. Christopher, used as a brooch, and supposed to possess the power of charming away danger. ↵
38. Forester. ↵
39. Certainly. ↵
40. St. Eligius, or Eloy. ↵
41. Called. ↵
42. In seemly fashion. ↵
43. Properly; Chaucer sneers at the debased. Anglo-Norman then taught as French in England. ↵
44. Pleasure. ↵
45. Not the least speck. ↵
46. Reached out her hand. ↵
47. Assuredly she was of a lively disposition. ↵
48. Took pains to assume a courtly air. ↵
49. Worthy; French *digne*. ↵

50. Piteous; full of pity. ↵
51. Bread of finest flour. ↵
52. Staff, rod. ↵
53. Well-formed. ↵
54. Gray eyes appear to have been a mark of female beauty in Chaucer's time. ↵
55. Certainly she was not of low stature. ↵
56. Neat. ↵
57. A string of beads having the drops, or gaudies, green. ↵
58. Fair above all others; "for the mastery" was applied to medicines in the sense of "sovereign" as we now apply it to a remedy. ↵
59. A bold rider, fond of hunting—a proclivity of the monks in those days, that occasioned much complaint and satire. ↵
60. It was fashionable to hang bells on horses' bridles. ↵
61. St. Benedict was the first founder of a spiritual order in the Roman church. Maurus, abbot of Fulda from 822 to 842, did much to reestablish the discipline of the Benedictines on a true Christian basis. ↵
62. Somewhat. ↵
63. Same. ↵
64. He cared nothing for the text. ↵
65. Mad, Scottish *wud*. Felix says to Paul, "Too much learning hath made thee mad." ↵

66. Toil hard. ↵
67. As the rules of St. Augustine prescribe. ↵
68. A right hard rider. ↵
69. Riding. ↵
70. Pleasure. ↵
71. Worked at the edge with a fur called *gris*, or gray. ↵
72. Deep-set. ↵
73. Wasted. ↵
74. A friar with licence or privilege to beg, or exercise other functions, within a certain district: as, “the limitour of Holderness.” ↵
75. Knows, understands. ↵
76. Everywhere; German, *ueberall*. ↵
77. Where he knew that the liberal dole would be given him. ↵
78. Has well made confession. ↵
79. Vaunt, boast. ↵
80. Stuffed. ↵
81. By rote; from memory. ↵
82. A kind of song; from the Saxon *geddian*, to sing. ↵
83. A leper. ↵
84. Offal, refuse; from the French *pourrir*, to rot. ↵

85. In every place where. ↵
86. Was nowhere any man. ↵
87. Rent; that is, he paid a premium for his licence to beg. ↵
88. The first words of Genesis and John, employed in some part of the mass. ↵
89. At meetings appointed for friendly settlement of differences; the business was often followed by sports and feasting. ↵
90. He was of much service. ↵
91. Half or short cloak. ↵
92. Neatly. ↵
93. He would for anything that the sea were guarded. “The old subsidy of tonnage and poundage,” says Tyrwhitt, “was given to the king ‘*pour la sauvgarde et custodie del mer.*’—for the safeguard and keeping of the sea” (12 E. IV C. 3). ↵
94. Middleburg, at the mouth of the Scheldt, in Holland; Orwell, a seaport in Essex. ↵
95. Crowns, so called from the shields stamped on them; French, *écu*; Italian, *scudo*. ↵
96. Employed. ↵
97. In such a dignified way did he manage. ↵
98. Merchandising; conduct of trade; agreement to borrow money. ↵
99. Know not; wot not. ↵

100. Oxford. ↵
101. Had long gone, devoted himself. ↵
102. Thin. ↵
103. Poorly. ↵
104. His uppermost short cloak. ↵
105. Liefer; rather. ↵
106. Obtain. ↵
107. To study, attend school; poor scholars at the universities used then to go about begging for money to maintain them and their studies. ↵
108. The portico of St. Paul's, which lawyers frequented to meet their clients. ↵
109. Full. ↵
110. In suspicion. ↵
111. Judgments. ↵
112. Pick a flaw in what he wrote. ↵
113. Knew. ↵
114. Mixed in colour; French, *mêler*, to mix. ↵
115. Cincture, sash, girdle; usually ornamented with bars or stripes. ↵
116. A large freeholder; a country gentleman. ↵
117. Wont, custom. ↵

118. Full. ➞
119. The patron saint of hospitality, celebrated for supplying his votaries with good lodging and good cheer. ➞
120. Constantly being pressed on one. ➞
121. Stored with wine. ➞
122. In cage; the place behind Whitehall, where the king's hawks were encaged, was called the Mews. ➞
123. Many a pike in his fishpond; in those Catholic days, when much fish was eaten, no gentleman's mansion was complete without a "stew." ➞
124. Unless. ➞
125. Fixed, always ready. ➞
126. A dagger and a purse. ➞
127. Probably a steward or accountant in the county court. ➞
128. A landholder of consequence; holding of a duke, marquis, or earl, and ranking below a baron. ➞
129. Weaver; German, *weber*. ➞
130. Tapestry-maker; French, *tapissier*. ➞
131. Spruce. ➞
132. Mounted. ➞
133. In every part. ➞

134. On the raised platform at the end of the hall, where sat at meat or in judgment those high in authority, rank, or honour; in our days the worthy craftsmen might have been described as “good platform men.” ↵
135. Knew. ↵
136. Fitted. ↵
137. To take precedence over all in going to the evening service of the Church, or to festival meetings, to which it was the fashion to carry rich cloaks or mantles against the homecoming. ↵
138. The nonce, occasion. ↵
139. “*Poudre marchand tart*,” some now unknown ingredient used in cookery; *galingale*, sweet or long rooted cyprus. ↵
140. A rich soup made by stamping flesh in a mortar. ↵
141. Gangrene, ulcer. ↵
142. Not what is now known by the name; one part of it was the brawn of a capon. ↵
143. A seaman who dwelt far to the West. ↵
144. On a hack, as he could. ↵
145. Coarse cloth. ↵
146. Harbourage. ↵
147. Pilotage; from Anglo-Saxon *ladman*, a leader, guide, or pilot; hence “lodestar,” “lodestone.” ↵
148. Make fortunate. ↵

149. Known. ↵
150. Remedy. ↵
151. The authors mentioned here were the chief medical textbooks of the middle ages. The names of Galen and Hippocrates were then usually spelt *Gallien* and *Hypocras* or *Ypocras*. ↵
152. In red and blue. ↵
153. A fine silk stuff. ↵
154. He spent but moderately, keeping the money he had made during the visitation of the plague. ↵
155. Damage; pity. ↵
156. Skill. The west of England, especially around Bath, was the seat of the cloth-manufacture, as were Ypres and Ghent in Flanders. ↵
157. The offering at mass. ↵
158. Headdresses; Chaucer here satirises the fashion of the time, which piled bulky and heavy waddings on ladies' heads. ↵
159. Used in the sense of fresh or new; as in Latin, *mustum* signifies new wine; and Chaucer elsewhere speaks of "moisty ale" as opposed to "old." ↵
160. Now. ↵
161. Bologna in Italy. ↵
162. At the shrine of St. Jago of Compostella in Spain. ↵
163. Knew. ↵

164. Buck-toothed; goat-toothed, to signify her wantonness; or gap-toothed—with gaps between her teeth. ↵
165. Jest, talk. ↵
166. Knew. ↵
167. Work. ↵
168. Oftentimes. ↵
169. He was satisfied with very little. ↵
170. Great and small. ↵
171. Gave. ↵
172. Unlearned. ↵
173. An endowment to sing masses for the soul of the donor. ↵
174. Detained. ↵
175. Severe. ↵
176. Disdainful. ↵
177. But if it were. ↵
178. Reprove; hence our modern *snub*. ↵
179. Nonce, occasion. ↵
180. Double or artificial conscience. ↵
181. Properly a ton; generally, any large quantity. ↵
182. Hard worker. ↵

183. Pain, loss. ↵
184. Ditch, dig. ↵
185. Both of his own labour and his goods. ↵
186. Jacket without sleeves. ↵
187. Wheresoever. ↵
188. The usual prize at wrestling matches. ↵
189. Stub or knot in a tree; it describes a thickset strong man. ↵
190. Head; German, *kopf*. ↵
191. Nostrils; from the Anglo-Saxon, *thirlian*, to pierce; hence the word *drill*, to bore. ↵
192. A babbler and a buffoon; Golias was the founder of a jovial sect called by his name. ↵
193. The proverb says that every honest miller has a thumb of gold; probably Chaucer means that this one was as honest as his brethren. ↵
194. A Manciple—Latin, *manceps*, a purchaser or contractor—was an officer charged with the purchase of victuals for inns of court or colleges. ↵
195. Buyers; French, *acheteurs*. ↵
196. On trust. ↵
197. Always. ↵
198. Purchase. ↵

199. Surpass. [↵](#)
200. Unless he were mad. [↵](#)
201. Outwitted, made a fool of, them all. [↵](#)
202. A land-steward; still called “grieve”—Anglo-Saxon, *gerefa*—in some parts of Scotland. [↵](#)
203. A store-place for grain. [↵](#)
204. Examiner of accounts. [↵](#)
205. Cattle. [↵](#)
206. Hind, servant. [↵](#)
207. His tricks and cheating. [↵](#)
208. In dread. [↵](#)
209. Abode. [↵](#)
210. Also. [↵](#)
211. Mystery; trade, handicraft. [↵](#)
212. For *stod*, a stallion, or steed. [↵](#)
213. Dapple. [↵](#)
214. Was called. [↵](#)
215. Blue-gray, or sky-blue. [↵](#)
216. The hindermost in the troop or procession. [↵](#)
217. Summoner, apparitor, who cited delinquents to appear in ecclesiastical courts. [↵](#)

218. Red or pimply. [↵](#)
219. Scanty. [↵](#)
220. Pustules, weals. [↵](#)
221. Buttons. [↵](#)
222. Call. [↵](#)
223. Search. [↵](#)
224. A cant law-Latin phrase. [↵](#)
225. A low, ribald fellow; the word was used of both sexes; it comes from the Anglo-Saxon verb to hire. [↵](#)
226. "Fleece" a man; "pluck a pigeon." [↵](#)
227. Anywhere. [↵](#)
228. Unless. [↵](#)
229. Absolving. [↵](#)
230. An ecclesiastical writ. [↵](#)
231. Within his jurisdiction he had at his own pleasure the young people (of both sexes) in the diocese. [↵](#)
232. Counsel. [↵](#)
233. The post of an alehouse sign; a May pole. [↵](#)
234. A seller of pardons or indulgences. [↵](#)
235. Sang the bass. [↵](#)
236. Streak, strip. [↵](#)

237. Locks, shreds, little heaps. ↵
238. The new gait, or fashion; *gait* is still used in this sense in some parts of the country. ↵
239. An image of Christ; so called from St. Veronica, who gave the Saviour a napkin to wipe the sweat from His face as He bore the Cross, and received it back with an impression of His countenance upon it. ↵
240. Brimful. ↵
241. Packet, baggage; French, *malle*, a trunk. ↵
242. Pillowcase. ↵
243. Piece. ↵
244. Took hold of him. ↵
245. Copper, latten. ↵
246. Jests. ↵
247. Alderbest, altherbest, allerbest—best of all. ↵
248. An anthem sung while the congregation made the offering. ↵
249. Polish well his tongue; speak smoothly. ↵
250. Apparently another Southwark tavern; Stowe mentions a “Bull” as being near the Tabard. ↵
251. How we bore ourselves—what we did—that same night. ↵
252. Account it not rudeness in me. ↵
253. Let him speak. ↵

254. Although I have. ↵
255. List, pleased. ↵
256. Deep-set. ↵
257. Cheapside, then inhabited by the richest and most prosperous citizens of London. ↵
258. Lodging, inn; French, *herberge*. ↵
259. If. ↵
260. Pleasure. ↵
261. Prepare yourselves, intend. ↵
262. If it please you all. ↵
263. If ye be not merry, smite off. ↵
264. Seek. ↵
265. To make it matter of deliberation; to weigh the proposal carefully. ↵
266. Consideration. ↵
267. Flat. ↵
268. At the cost of you all. ↵
269. More. ↵
270. Fetched. ↵
271. Was the cock to awaken us all. ↵
272. At the second milestone on the old Canterbury road. ↵

273. Know your promise. ↵

274. Draw lots ere ye go farther. ↵

275. Lot (Latin, *sors*), or chance (Latin, *casus*). ↵

276. Since. ↵

277. For the plan and principal incidents of the “Knight’s Tale,” Chaucer was indebted to Boccaccio, who had himself borrowed from some prior poet, chronicler, or romancer. Boccaccio speaks of the story as “very ancient;” and, though that may not be proof of its antiquity, it certainly shows that he took it from an earlier writer. The “Tale” is more or less a paraphrase of Boccaccio’s *Theseida*; but in some points the copy has a distinct dramatic superiority over the original. The *Theseida* contained ten thousand lines; Chaucer has condensed it into less than one-fourth of the number. The “Knight’s Tale” is supposed to have been at first composed as a separate work; it is undetermined whether Chaucer took it direct from the Italian of Boccaccio, or from a French translation. ↵

278. Once on a while; formerly. ↵

279. Was called; from the Anglo-Saxon, *hatan*, to bid or call; German, *heissen*, *heisst*. ↵

280. The “*Royaume des Femmes*”—kingdom of the Amazons. Gower, in the *Confessio Amantis*, styles Penthesilea the “Queen of Feminie.” ↵

281. Mickle, great. ↵

282. If it were not. ↵

283. Won, conquered; German *gewonnen*. ↵

284. To plough; Latin, *arare*. "I have abundant matter for discourse."
The first, and half of the second, of Boccaccio's twelve books
are disposed of in the few lines foregoing. ↵
285. Nor will I hinder any of this company. ↵
286. Where I left off. ↵
287. Prosperity, wealth. ↵
288. Bewailing; German, *wehklagen*. ↵
289. Stint, cease, desist. ↵
290. Seize. ↵
291. Wronged. ↵
292. Aspect, countenance. ↵
293. Pity. ↵
294. Captives or slaves; hence it means generally in wretched
circumstances. ↵
295. That assures no continuance of prosperous estate. ↵
296. Died; German, *sterben*, *starb*. ↵
297. Outrage, insult. ↵
298. Slain. ↵
299. Burnt. ↵
300. Flat on the ground; groveling on the earth. ↵
301. Abased, dejected, consumed away. ↵

302. Raised, took. ↵

303. As far as his power went; all that in him lay. ↵

304. Avenge. ↵

305. Delay. ↵

306. *Ner* or *nerre*, is used as the comparative of *ner*, near, instead of *nerer*. ↵

307. Bright, lovely. ↵

308. Rode. ↵

309. Stamped. ↵

310. The monster, half-man and half-bull, which yearly devoured a tribute of fourteen Athenian youths and maidens, until it was slain by Theseus. ↵

311. Custom. ↵

312. Describe. ↵

313. Lamenting. ↵

314. Burning. ↵

315. List, pleased. ↵

316. Heap; French, *tas*. ↵

317. Of armours and clothing. ↵

318. Pillagers, strippers; French, *pilleurs*. ↵

319. Lying side by side. ↵

320. Armour of the same fashion. ↵

321. Born of two sisters. ↵

322. He would take no ransom. ↵

323. For the rest of his life. ↵

324. Set free. ↵

325. Wot not, know not. ↵

326. Decked, dressed. ↵

327. Sunrise. ↵

328. Mingled. ↵

329. Subtle, well-arranged. ↵

330. The donjon was originally the central tower or “keep” of feudal castles; it was employed to detain prisoners of importance. Hence the modern meaning of the word dungeon. ↵

331. Adjoining. ↵

332. Saw. ↵

333. Chance. ↵

334. Stop, start aside. ↵

335. Imprisonment. ↵

336. Wicked; Saturn, in the old astrology, was a most unpropitious star to be born under. ↵

337. Ruin, destruction. ↵

338. Know not whether. ↵

339. Assuredly, truly. ↵

340. Began to look forth. ↵

341. Unless. ↵

342. Despitefully, angrily. ↵

343. By my faith; Spanish, *fe*; French, *foi*. ↵

344. I am in no humour for jesting. ↵

345. To die in the pain was a proverbial expression in the French, used as an alternative to enforce a resolution or a promise. Edward III, according to Froissart, declared that he would either succeed in the war against France or die in the pain—“*Ou il mourroit en la peine*.” It was the fashion in those times to swear oaths of friendship and brotherhood; and hence, though the fashion has long died out, we still speak of “sworn friends.” ↵

346. Loved, dear; German, *lieber*. ↵

347. Gainsay, deny. ↵

348. Die. ↵

349. Sooner. ↵

350. Even now thou knowest not. ↵

351. Suppose. ↵

352. Know'st. ↵

353. The saying of the old scholar—Boethius, in his treatise *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, which Chaucer translated, and from

which he has freely borrowed in his poetry. The words are

*“Quis legem det amantibus?
Major lex amor est sibi.”*

↵

354. Head. ↵

355. In spite of his head. ↵

356. Whether the woman he loves be. ↵

357. “Perithous” and “Theseus” must, for the metre, be pronounced as words of four and three syllables respectively—the vowels at the end not being diphthongated, but enunciated separately, as if the words were printed “Perithous,” “Theseus.” The same rule applies in such words as *creature* and *conscience*, which are trisyllables. ↵

358. That. ↵

359. Little. ↵

360. Covenant, promise. ↵

361. Moment, short space of time; from Anglo-Saxon, *stund*; akin to which is German, *stunde*, an hour. ↵

362. Counsel. ↵

363. In pledge, pawn. ↵

364. It is shaped, decreed, fixed for me. ↵

365. Chance. ↵

366. Die in despair; in want of hope. ↵

367. Pleasure. [↵](#)

368. Why do men so often complain of God's providence? [↵](#)

369. Household; menials, or servants, etc., dwelling together in a house; from an Anglo-Saxon word meaning a crowd. Compare German, *menge*, multitude. [↵](#)

370. Or *slider*, slippery. [↵](#)

371. Especially I; I for instance. [↵](#)

372. Thought. [↵](#)

373. The very fetters. The Greeks used *καθαρος*, the Romans *purus*, in the same sense. [↵](#)

374. Takest little heed. [↵](#)

375. Manhood, courage. [↵](#)

376. Perish, die. [↵](#)

377. Seized so madly upon his heart. [↵](#)

378. Eternal. [↵](#)

379. Consultation. [↵](#)

380. More by you esteemed. [↵](#)

381. Lie huddled together, sleep. [↵](#)

382. *Par Dieu*—by God. [↵](#)

383. Restrain his desire. [↵](#)

384. Pleasure. [↵](#)

385. Pain, trouble; French, *peine*. ↵
386. Mad. ↵
387. Stint, pause. ↵
388. Little. ↵
389. Knew not. ↵
390. Condition. ↵
391. On peril of his head. ↵
392. In the medieval courts of Love, to which allusion is probably made forty lines before, in the word *parlement*, or *parliament*, questions like that here proposed were seriously discussed. ↵
393. Fainted, died. ↵
394. Bereft, taken away, from him. ↵
395. Became, waxed. ↵
396. Arrow. The phrase is equivalent to our “dry as a bone.” ↵
397. Yellow; old spelling *falwe*, French *fauve*, tawny-coloured. Some editions have “sallow.” ↵
398. Stinted, stopped. ↵
399. Behaviour, fashion, dress; but, by another reading, the word is *gyre*, and means fit, trance—from the Latin, *gyro*, I turn round. ↵
400. Mania, madness. ↵
401. In front of his head in his fantastic cell. “The division of the brain into cells, according to the different sensitive faculties,” says

Mr. Wright, “is very ancient, and is found depicted in medieval manuscripts.” In a manuscript in the Harleian Library, it is stated, “*Certum est in prora cerebri esse fantasiam, in medio rationem discretionis, in puppi memoriam*”—a classification not materially differing from that of modern phrenologists. [↵](#)

402. *Dominus*, Lord; Spanish, *Don*. [↵](#)

403. Rod; the *caduceus*. [↵](#)

404. Heed, notice. [↵](#)

405. Argus was employed by Juno to watch Io with his hundred eyes but he was sent to sleep by the flute of Mercury, who then cut off his head. [↵](#)

406. Go. [↵](#)

407. Fixed, prepared. [↵](#)

408. Die. [↵](#)

409. Lived in lowly fashion. [↵](#)

410. His secret, his private history. [↵](#)

411. Fortune. [↵](#)

412. Nearest; German, *naechste*. [↵](#)

413. Order, direct. [↵](#)

414. Nonce, occasion, purpose. [↵](#)

415. Elevate him in rank. [↵](#)

416. Prudently, discreetly. [↵](#)

417. Led. ↵

418. War. ↵

419. Dear. ↵

420. Little. ↵

421. Pined, wasted away. ↵

422. Whom love so distresses or afflicts. ↵

423. Mad. ↵

424. In truth, I am not the man to do it. ↵

425. Settled, decreed. ↵

426. Hippocras, wine made with spices. ↵

427. Narcotics and opiates, or opium. ↵

428. Close at hand was the day, during which he must cast about, or contrive, or conceal himself. ↵

429. To make war; French *guerroyer*, to molest; hence, perhaps, *to worry*. ↵

430. Beams, rays. ↵

431. Groves. ↵

432. Object. ↵

433. Groves. ↵

434. Shining, bright. ↵

435. Full little believed it. ↵

436. It is an old true saying. ↵
437. To be always of the same demeanour; on his gaurd. ↵
438. Every day men meet at unexpected time. To “set a steven,” is to fix a time, make an appointment. ↵
439. Saying, speech. ↵
440. Roundelay; song coming round again to the words with which it opened. ↵
441. Old fashions. ↵
442. Now in the treetop, now down in the briars. “Crop and root,” top and bottom, is used to express the perfection or totality of anything. ↵
443. Changeful, full of “gears” or humours, inconstant. ↵
444. Changeful, full of “gears” or humours, inconstant. ↵
445. Sigh. ↵
446. Torment. ↵
447. So wretched and enslaved. ↵
448. Avow, acknowledge; German, *bekennen*. ↵
449. Undone, ruined. ↵
450. Burningly. ↵
451. My death was decreed before my shirt ws shaped—that is, before any clothes were made for me, before my birth. ↵
452. The value of a tare or a straw. ↵

453. Or *quook*, from *quake*, as *shook* from *shake*. ↵
454. Mad. ↵
455. Wicked. ↵
456. Caught. ↵
457. Deceived, imposed upon. ↵
458. Escaped. ↵
459. Doubt. ↵
460. Wrathful. ↵
461. Were it not. ↵
462. Despite. ↵
463. Wilt challenge, reclaim, her by combat. ↵
464. Knowledge. ↵
465. Armour, arms. ↵
466. Had pledged his faith. ↵
467. Queen; French, *reine*; Venus is meant. The common reading, however, is *regne*, reign or power. ↵
468. Thanks to him; with his goodwill. ↵
469. Prepared two suits of armour. ↵
470. Contest. ↵
471. Realm, kingdom. ↵

472. Gap, opening. ↵
473. Grovea. ↵
474. When they recognised each other afar off. ↵
475. Thrust. ↵
476. Think. ↵
477. Mad. ↵
478. For anger mad. ↵
479. Providence, foreordination. ↵
480. Again. ↵
481. Eye; intelligence, power. ↵
482. Especially. ↵
483. Torment, destruction. ↵
484. Plain. Compare modern English, lawn, and French, *Landes*—
flat, bare marshy tracts in the south of France. ↵
485. Pleased. ↵
486. Fiercely. ↵
487. In a moment, on a sudden. ↵
488. Manner, kind; German *muster*, sample, model. ↵
489. In the lists, prepared for such single combats between champion
and accuser, etc. ↵
490. Wearied, burdened. ↵

491. Little. ↵
492. Deceived. ↵
493. Fully, unreservedly. ↵
494. Contracted from “the ilke,” the same; that. ↵
495. Doom, judgement; from the Latin, *judicium*. ↵
496. Referring to the ruddy colour of the planet, to which was doubtless due the transference to it of the name of the God of War. In his *Republic*, enumerating the seven planets, Cicero speaks of the propitious and beneficent light of Jupiter: “*Tum (fulgor) rutilis horribilisque terris, quem Martium dicitis*”—“Then the red glow, horrible to the nations, which you say to be that of Mars.” Boccaccio opens the *Theseida* by an invocation to “*rubicondo Marte*.” ↵
497. His anger was appeased. ↵
498. Continually; perhaps another reading, “every one,” is the better. ↵
499. Unpitying, disdainful. ↵
500. Can make no distinction. ↵

ENDNOTES 501–1,000

501. Alike. ↵

502. Gentle, lenient. ↵

503. Aloud; he had just been speaking to himself. ↵

504. Bless ye him. ↵

505. Avail, conquer. ↵

506. Know. ↵

507. “In spite of their eyes.” ↵

508. The best joke of all—the best of the joke. ↵

509. Behaviour. ↵

510. Long ago; years ago. ↵

511. Distress, torment. ↵

512. Lace, leash, noose, snare: from Latin, *laquens*. ↵

513. Injure. ↵

514. Completely. ↵

515. What he asked. ↵

516. Will he, nill he. ↵

517. "He must go whistle." ↵

518. As is decreed, prepared, for him. ↵

519. Reply. ↵

520. Where he pleases. ↵

521. Neither farther nor nearer. ↵

522. Contend for. ↵

523. Promise. ↵

524. May God as surely have mercy on my soul. ↵

525. Opinion. ↵

526. Satisfied. ↵

527. Kind of. ↵

528. Especially. ↵

529. Oftentimes; the Thebans are the rival lovers. ↵

530. Expenditure. ↵

531. Was not. ↵

532. Steps, benches, as in the ancient amphitheatre. ↵

533. Either the building was sixty paces high; or, more probably,
there were sixty of the steps or benches. ↵

534. Hindred. ↵

535. Arithmetic. ↵

536. Painter of figures or portraits. ↵

537. Caused. ↵

538. A great amount, heap. ↵

539. Caused. ↵

540. Describe. ↵

541. Sighs. ↵

542. Lamentings. ↵

543. Falsehoods. ↵

544. The flower turnsol, or girasol, which turns with and seems to watch the sun, as a jealous lover his mistress. ↵

545. The Isle of Venus, Cythera, in the Aegean Sea; now called Cerigo: not, as Chaucer's form of the word might imply, Mount Cithaeron, in the southwest of Boetia, which was appropriated to other deities than Venus—to Jupiter, to Bacchus, and the Muses. ↵

546. Pleasantness. ↵

547. Olden time. ↵

548. Abased into slavery. It need not be said that Chaucer pays slight heed to chronology in this passage, where the deeds of Turnus, the glory of King Solomon, and the fate of Croesus are made memories of the far past in the time of fabulous Theseus, the Minotaur-slayer. ↵

549. Divided power or possession; an old law-term, signifying the maintenance of a person in a lawsuit on the condition of receiving part of the property in dispute, if recovered. ↵
550. Or “guy;” guide, rule. ↵
551. Snare. ↵
552. A kind of dulcimer. ↵
553. Breadth. ↵
554. Interior, chambers. ↵
555. That. ↵
556. Gnarled. ↵
557. Groaning noise. ↵
558. Slope. ↵
559. Such a furious voice. ↵
560. Crossways and lengthways. ↵
561. Thick as a tun. ↵
562. Live coal. ↵
563. The plunderers that followed armies, and gave to war a horror all their own. ↵
564. Stable; Anglo-Saxon, *scypen*; the word “sheppon” still survives in provincial parlance. ↵
565. Contention, discord. ↵
566. Creaking, jarring noise. ↵

567. Hair of the head; the line, perhaps, refers to the deed of Jael. ↵

568. Madness. ↵

569. Outcry. ↵

570. Carrion, corpse. ↵

571. Slashed, cut. ↵

572. Not dead of sickness. ↵

573. The meaning is dubious. We may understand “the dancing ships,” “the ships that hop” on the waves; “steres” being taken as the feminine adjectival termination: or we may, perhaps, read, with one of the manuscripts, “the ships upon the steres”—that is, even as they are being steered, or on the open sea—a more picturesque notion. ↵

574. Devouring; the Germans use *fressen* to mean eating by animals, *essen* by men. ↵

575. Through the misfortune of war. ↵

576. Maker of bows. ↵

577. Stithy, anvil. ↵

578. That. ↵

579. Julius Caesar. ↵

580. Chariot. ↵

581. Mad. ↵

582. Puella and Rubeus were two figures in geomancy, representing two constellations—the one signifying Mars retrograde, the

other Mars direct. ↵

583. In reverence, fear. ↵

584. Or Callisto: daughter of Lycaon, seduced by Jupiter, turned into a bear by Diana, and placed afterwards, with her son, as the Great Bear among the stars. ↵

585. Polestar. ↵

586. Farther; for “farre” or “ferre.” ↵

587. Daphne, daughter of the river-god Peneus, in Thessaly; she was beloved by Apollo, but to avoid his pursuit, she was, at her own prayer, changed into a laurel-tree. ↵

588. Made. ↵

589. Devour. ↵

590. Seated. ↵

591. Quiver. ↵

592. As the goddess of Light, or the goddess who brings to light, Diana—as well as Juno—was invoked by women in childbirth: so Horace, Odes III 22, says:—

*“Montium custos nemorumque, Virgo,
Quae laborantes utero puellas
Ter vocata audis adimisque leto, Diva triformis.”*

↵

593. In every part: *deal* corresponds to the German *theil*, a portion. ↵

594. Cease speaking. ↵

595. Little. ➞

596. Set in array; contest. ➞

597. Surely; German, *sicher*; Scotch, *sikkar*, certain. When Robert Bruce had escaped from England to assume the Scottish crown, he stabbed Comyn before the altar at Dumfries; and, emerging from the church, was asked by his friend Kirkpatrick if he had slain the traitor. "I doubt it," said Bruce. "Doubt," cried Kirkpatrick. "I'll mak sikkar;" and he rushed into the church, and despatched Comyn with repeated thrusts of his dagger. ➞

598. Believed. ➞

599. Since. ➞

600. Never since the world began was there assembled from every part of the earth, in proportion to the smallness of the number, such a brave and noble company of knights. ➞

601. With his goodwill; thanks to his own efforts. ➞

602. Surpassing. ➞

603. Pleasing. ➞

604. Short doublet. ➞

605. Back and front armour. ➞

606. Prussian. ➞

607. Well-grieved; like Homer's *εὐκνημιδες Αἰχαιοί*. ➞

608. Fashion. ➞

609. Combed; the word survives in *unkempt*. ➞

610. Fashion. ↵
611. Age. ↵
612. As thick as a man's arm. ↵
613. Greyhounds, mastiffs; from the Spanish word *alano*, signifying a mastiff. ↵
614. Rings. ↵
615. Retinue, company. ↵
616. Bay horse. ↵
617. Diversified with flourishes or figures. ↵
618. A kind of silk. ↵
619. Trimmed. ↵
620. Brimful, covered with. ↵
621. His curled hair ran down into ringlets. ↵
622. Pale yellow colour. ↵
623. A few freckles sprinkled on his face. ↵
624. Somewhat mixed; German, *mengen*, to mix. ↵
625. Cast about his eyes. ↵
626. Reckon; as we now speak of "casting a sum." ↵
627. All and sundry. ↵
628. The time of early prayers, between six and nine in the morning.
↵

629. Lodged; whence *inn*. ↵

630. Give them pleasure, make them comfortable. ↵

631. Think. ↵

632. Improve. ↵

633. See [note 134](#). ↵

634. Lie. ↵

635. Please. ↵

636. Then. ↵

637. Go. ↵

638. Worthy. ↵

639. In the hour of the day (two hours before daybreak) which after the astrological system that divided the twenty-four among the seven ruling planets, was under the influence of Venus. ↵

640. Demeanour. ↵

641. See [note 545](#). ↵

642. That. ↵

643. Adonis, a beautiful youth beloved of Venus, whose death by the tusk of a boar she deeply mourned. ↵

644. Take pity on. ↵

645. Certainly, truly; German, *gewiss*. ↵

646. Vow, promise. ↵

647. Care not to boast of feats of arms. ↵

648. Praise, esteem for valour. ↵

649. Whether. ↵

650. Make, kindle. ↵

651. Although I tell not now. ↵

652. Understood. ↵

653. Was not immediately vouchsafed. ↵

654. In the third planetary hour; Palamon had gone forth in the hour of Venus, two hours before daybreak; the hour of Mercury intervened; the third hour was that of Luna, or Diana. "Unequal" refers to the astrological division of day and night, whatever their duration, into twelve parts, which of necessity varied in length with the season. ↵

655. Led. ↵

656. Draping; hence the word *smock*; *smokless*, in Chaucer, means naked. ↵

657. Gentle. ↵

658. Except. ↵

659. Pleasure. ↵

660. Do as he will. ↵

661. Of the species of oak which Pliny, in his *Natural History*, calls "cerrus." ↵

662. Statius, the Roman who embodied in the twelve books of his *Thebaid* the ancient legends connected with the war of the seven against Thebes. [↵](#)
663. Knowest. [↵](#)
664. Earned; suffered from. [↵](#)
665. Knowest. [↵](#)
666. Field sports. [↵](#)
667. Diana was Luna in heaven, Diana on earth, and Hecate in hell; hence the direction of the eyes of her statue to “Pluto’s dark region.” Her statue was set up where three ways met, so that with a different face she looked down each of the three; from which she was called Trivia. See the quotation from Horace, [note 592](#). [↵](#)
668. Quenched. [↵](#)
669. Strange. [↵](#)
670. Went out and revived. [↵](#)
671. Cease. [↵](#)
672. Those. [↵](#)
673. Burn. [↵](#)
674. Hence. [↵](#)
675. Quiver. [↵](#)
676. To what does this amount? [↵](#)
677. Nearest. [↵](#)

678. Imploring, pious. ↵
679. Realms. ↵
680. Held. ↵
681. Sending fortune at thy pleasure. ↵
682. Pity my anguish. ↵
683. That. ↵
684. Didst enjoy; Latin, *utor*. ↵
685. Thou wert unlucky. ↵
686. Net, snare; the invisible toils in which Hephaestus caught Ares and the faithless Aphrodite, and exposed them to the “inextinguishable laughter” of Olympus. ↵
687. Lying. ↵
688. Pity. ↵
689. Ignorant, simple. ↵
690. Believe. ↵
691. Causeth. ↵
692. Float, swim. ↵
693. Promise, vouchsafe. ↵
694. Cause. ↵
695. Hang. ↵
696. The offence, indignity. ↵

697. Ended. [↵](#)

698. Arose from the ground. [↵](#)

699. Heaved, lifted. [↵](#)

700. Glad. [↵](#)

701. That concession of Arcite's prayer. [↵](#)

702. Stop. [↵](#)

703. Here, as in "Mars the Red" we have the person of the deity endowed with the supposed quality of the planet called after his name. [↵](#)

704. Age. [↵](#)

705. Experience. [↵](#)

706. Surpass in counsel; outwit. [↵](#)

707. Orbit; the astrologers ascribed great power to Saturn, and predicted "much debate" under his ascendancy; hence it was "against his kind" to compose the heavenly strife. [↵](#)

708. Cottage, cell. [↵](#)

709. Discontent. [↵](#)

710. Full. [↵](#)

711. Contrivances, plots. [↵](#)

712. Promised. [↵](#)

713. Grandfather; French *aieul*. [↵](#)

714. Pleasure. [↵](#)

715. Cease speaking. [↵](#)
716. That. [↵](#)
717. Armour. [↵](#)
718. Train, retinue. [↵](#)
719. Rare. [↵](#)
720. Embroidering. [↵](#)
721. Headpieces, helmets; from the French *teste*, *tete*, head. [↵](#)
722. Trappings. [↵](#)
723. Ornamental garb; French, *parer*, to deck. [↵](#)
724. Rubbing, polishing; Anglo-Saxon *gnidan*, to rub. [↵](#)
725. Thongs; compare *lanyards*. [↵](#)
726. Servants. [↵](#)
727. As close as they can walk. [↵](#)
728. Drums, used in the cavalry; Boccaccio's word is *nachere*. [↵](#)
729. Conversation. [↵](#)
730. Conjecturing. [↵](#)
731. Bald. [↵](#)
732. Double-headed axe; Latin, *bipennis*. [↵](#)
733. Conjecturing. [↵](#)
734. Alike. [↵](#)

735. Fetched, brought. ↵
736. Behest, command. ↵
737. Discourse. ↵
738. “Ho! Ho!” to command attention; like “Oyez,” the call for silence in law-courts or before proclamations. ↵
739. Done. ↵
740. Arrange, contrive. ↵
741. Kind of. ↵
742. Fence, thrust. ↵
743. Defend. ↵
744. In peril of distress. ↵
745. Happen. ↵
746. His equal, match. ↵
747. Sound. ↵
748. In orderly array. ↵
749. Serge, woollen cloth. ↵
750. First quarter, between six and nine a.m. ↵
751. Same, selfsame; German, *derselbe*. ↵
752. Bold demeanour. ↵
753. Equal. ↵

754. Arrange themselves in two ranks and rows. ↵
755. Fraud. ↵
756. Spurring, riding. ↵
757. Steadily. ↵
758. Concave part of the breast, where the lower ribs join the cartilago ensiformis. ↵
759. Strike in pieces; “to” before a verb implies extraordinary violence in the action denoted. ↵
760. Burst, shatter. ↵
761. Push his way; “he” refers impersonally to any of the combatants. ↵
762. Thrusteth. ↵
763. Afterwards taken. ↵
764. Covenant. ↵
765. Caused. ↵
766. Pleased. ↵
767. Those. ↵
768. Twice. ↵
769. Galapha, in Mauritania. ↵
770. Little. ↵
771. See [note 18](#). ↵

772. Mad. ↵

773. Seize, assail. ↵

774. By the bargain, that whoever was brought to the atake, or barrier, should be out of the fight. ↵

775. Fell. ↵

776. Contented. ↵

777. Lord. ↵

778. Keep silence. ↵

779. Rides from end to end. ↵

780. Generally speaking. ↵

781. Countenance, outward show. ↵

782. Stumble. ↵

783. Care. ↵

784. Pitched him on the top. ↵

785. Cut. ↵

786. Quickly; *belive* is still used in Scotland to mean by and by, immediately. ↵

787. Befallen. ↵

788. Discourage. ↵

789. Glad. ↵

790. Although. ↵

791. Especially. ↵
792. Pierced. ↵
793. The herb sage; Latin, *salvia*. ↵
794. Chance, accident. ↵
795. Dragged, hurried. ↵
796. Servants. ↵
797. Imputed to him as no disgrace. ↵
798. Call it cowardice. ↵
799. Caused to be proclaimed. ↵
800. Stop. ↵
801. Prize, merit. ↵
802. Day's journey. ↵
803. Surgical skill. ↵
804. Left in his body. ↵
805. Neither opening veins nor cupping; French, *ventouser*, to cup. ↵
806. Sinew, muscle. ↵
807. Destroyed. ↵
808. Availeth. ↵
809. Work. ↵
810. Church. ↵

811. Spirit. ↵
812. The severance. ↵
813. So surely guide my soul. ↵
814. Humility. ↵
815. Overtaken, overcome. ↵
816. Gone. ↵
817. Grew him. ↵
818. Went whither I cannot tell you, as I was not there. ↵
819. Refrain. Tyrwhitt thinks that Chaucer is sneering at Boccacio's pompous account of the passage of Arcite's soul to heaven. Up to this point, the description of the death-scene is taken literally from the *Theseida*. ↵
820. Diviner; or divine. ↵
821. Guide. ↵
822. Gone. ↵
823. Rank, condition. ↵
824. Care; Latin, *cura*. ↵
825. Deliberates. ↵
826. Selfsame. ↵
827. A funeral pyre. ↵
828. Caused orders straightway to be given. ↵

829. Row. ↵

830. Logs, pieces. ↵

831. Well arranged to burn. ↵

832. Run. ↵

833. With face uncovered. ↵

834. Made by the people who saw him lie in state. ↵

835. With neglected beard, and rough hair strewn with ashes.
“Flotery” is the general reading; but “sluttery” seems to be more
in keeping with the picture of abandonment to grief. ↵

836. Un order that. ↵

837. Turkish. ↵

838. Burnished. ↵

839. Quiver. ↵

840. They ride out slowly—at a foot pace—with sorrowful air. ↵

841. Main street; so Froissart speaks of “*le souverain carrefour*.” ↵

842. Covered, hid; Anglo-Saxon, *wrigan*, to veil. ↵

843. Custom. ↵

844. Preparation. ↵

845. Reached. ↵

846. Stretched. ↵

847. Were called. ↵

848. Aspen. ↵

849. Linden, lime. ↵

850. The forest deities. ↵

851. Dwelt. ↵

852. Terrified. ↵

853. Laid. ↵

854. Straw. ↵

855. Spices. ↵

856. Precious stones; French, *pierreries*. ↵

857. Applied the funeral torch. The “guise” was, among the ancients, for the nearest relative of the deceased to do this, with averted face. ↵

858. Mad. ↵

859. Procession. It was the custom for soldiers to march thrice around the funeral pile of an emperor or general; “on the left hand” is added, in reference to the belief that the left hand was propitious—the Roman augur turning his face southward, and so placing on his left hand the east, whence good omens came. With the Greeks, however, their augurs facing the north, it was just the contrary. The confusion, frequent in classical writers, is complicated here by the fact that Chaucer’s description of the funeral of Arcite is taken from Statius’ *Thebaid*—from a Roman’s account of a Greek solemnity. ↵

860. Watching by the remains of the dead; from Anglo-Saxon, *lice*, a corpse; German, *leichnam*. ↵

861. That. ↵

862. Funeral games. ↵

863. Care. ↵

864. In any danger, contest. ↵

865. Come. ↵

866. Ended. ↵

867. Assembly for consultation. ↵

868. Cases, incidents. ↵

869. Caused. ↵

870. Unknown. ↵

871. In haste. ↵

872. Seated. ↵

873. Waited. ↵

874. He fixed his eyes where it pleased him. ↵

875. Bound. ↵

876. Chaucer here borrows from Boethius, who says:

*“Hanc rerum seriem ligat,
Terras ac pelagus regens,
Et coelo imperitans, amor.”*

↵

877. Pass. ↵

878. Although. ↵
879. Sentiment, opinion. ↵
880. This same. ↵
881. No part or piece. ↵
882. Providence; “He” is the “first mover.” ↵
883. Arranged, ordered. ↵
884. Walk. ↵
885. Dry. ↵
886. Go, disappear. ↵
887. The same. ↵
888. Escape, avoid. ↵
889. Murmurs at. ↵
890. Direct, guide. ↵
891. Certain. ↵
892. Himself. ↵
893. Grown pale, decayed, by old age. ↵
894. Valour, prowess, service. ↵
895. Never a jot, whit. ↵
896. Hurt. ↵
897. Cannot control or amend their desires. ↵

898. Series; string of remarks. ↵
899. Counsel. ↵
900. Have pity. ↵
901. Make display. ↵
902. By God. ↵
903. Believe me. ↵
904. Ought to be rightly directed; *oweth* is the present tense, as *ought* is the past, of *owe*. ↵
905. Health; German, *heil*. ↵
906. Cause of danger, vexation. ↵
907. Recorded. ↵
908. All the gentler members of the company, in especial. ↵
909. Prosper. ↵
910. The budget is opened. ↵
911. Know how. ↵
912. Match, requite. ↵
913. Was all pale with drunkenness. ↵
914. Hardly, with difficulty. ↵
915. Unveil, uncover. ↵
916. Await, give way to. ↵

917. Pilate, an unpopular personage in the mystery-plays of the middle ages, was probably represented as having a gruff, harsh voice. ↵
918. Occasion. ↵
919. Match, requite. ↵
920. Dear. ↵
921. Prudently, civilly. ↵
922. Devil take thee! an oath of impatience. ↵
923. Blame; in Scotland, “to bear the wyte,” is to bear the blame. ↵
924. Befooled him. ↵
925. Hold thy tongue; stop thy noisy talk, which is like the clapper of thy mill. ↵
926. Injure, abuse. ↵
927. Would not. ↵
928. Judge. ↵
929. Abundance. ↵
930. Boorish, rude. ↵
931. Falsify. ↵
932. Historical, true things. ↵
933. Ribald, rough jesting tale. ↵
934. Consider; be advised. ↵

935. Jest, fun. ↵

936. Miser; perhaps from Anglo-Saxon, *gnafan*, to gnaw. ↵

937. Took to boarders. ↵

938. Knew. ↵

939. Determine. ↵

940. Gentle, handsome. ↵

941. Secret, earnest. ↵

942. Neatly decked. ↵

943. Sweet. ↵

944. Valerian, setwall. ↵

945. The book of Ptolemy the astronomer, which formed the canon of astrological science in the middle ages. ↵

946. *Astrelagour*, *astrelabore*; a mathematical instrument for taking the altitude of the sun or stars. ↵

947. *Augrim* is a corruption of algorithm, the Arabian term for numeration; “augrim stones,” therefore were probably marked with numerals, and used as counters. ↵

948. Laid, set. ↵

949. Coarse cloth. ↵

950. The Angel’s salutation to Mary; Luke 1:28. It was the “Ave Maria” of the Catholic Church service. ↵

951. Attending to his friends, and providing for the cost of his lodging. ↵

952. Perhaps. ↵

953. Though Chaucer may have referred to the famous Censor, more probably the reference is merely to the *Moral Distichs*, which go under his name, though written after his time; and in a supplement to which the quoted passage may be found. ↵

954. Age. ↵

955. Slim, neat. ↵

956. Girdle, with silk stripes. ↵

957. Apron; from Anglo-Saxon *barme*, bosom or lap. ↵

958. Loins. ↵

959. Plait, fold. ↵

960. Not the underdress, but the robe or gown. ↵

961. Strings. ↵

962. Headgear, kerchief; from French, *enveloppeur*, to wrap up. ↵

963. Certainly. ↵

964. Lascivious, liquorish. ↵

965. Arched. ↵

966. Pleasant to look upon. ↵

967. Young pear-tree. ↵

968. Brass, latten, in the shape of pearls. ↵

969. Could fancy, think of. ↵

970. Puppet; but chiefly; young wench. ↵

971. The nobles new coined in the Tower, where was the Mint; nobles were gold coins of especial purity and brightness; “*Ex auro nobilissimi, unde nobilis vocatus,*” says Vossius. ↵

972. Shrill, lively; German, *gern*, willingly, cheerfully. ↵

973. Barn. ↵

974. In addition to all this. ↵

975. Romp. ↵

976. Bragget, a sweet drink made of honey, spices, etc. In some parts of the country, a drink made from honeycomb, after the honey is extracted, is still called “bragwort.” ↵

977. Metheglin, mead. ↵

978. Wanton, skittish. ↵

979. Primrose. ↵

980. A fond term, like “my duck”; from Anglo-Saxon, *piga*, a young maid; but Tyrwhitt associates it with the Latin, *ocellus*, little eye, a fondling term, and suggests that the *pigs-eye*, which is very small, was applied in the same sense. Davenport and Butler both use the word “pigsnie,” the first for “darling,” the second literally for “eye”; and Bishop Gardner, “On True Obedience,” in his address to the reader, says: “How softly she was wont to chirpe him under the chin, and kiss him; how prettily she could talk to him (how doth my sweet heart, what saith now pig’s-eye).” ↵

981. Lying. ↵

982. Again. ↵

983. Courteous. ↵

984. Toy; play the rogue. ↵

985. A once well-known abbey near Oxford. ↵

986. Assuredly. ↵

987. Earnest, cruel. ↵

988. My mistress. ↵

989. Die, perish. ↵

990. Travise; a frame in which unruly horses were shod. ↵

991. Faith. ↵

992. Haro! was an old Norman cry for redress or aid. The “*Clameur de Haro*” was lately raised, under peculiar circumstances, as the prelude to a legal protest, in Jersey. ↵

993. Unless. ↵

994. Secret. ↵

995. Ill spent his time. ↵

996. Unless. ↵

997. Whit. ↵

998. Work. ↵

999. Stretched. ↵

000. Head of hair. ↵

ENDNOTES 1,001–1,500

001. Complexion. ↵

002. His shoes were ornamented like the windows of St. Paul's, especially like the old rose-window. ↵

003. Daintily, neatly. ↵

004. A gown girt around the waist. ↵

005. Sky colour. ↵

006. Twig, bush; German, *reis*, a twig; *reisig*, a copse. ↵

007. Then; Chaucer satirises the dancing of Oxford as he did the French of Stratford at Bow. See [note 43](#). ↵

008. Rebeck, a kind of fiddle. ↵

009. Treble. ↵

010. Guitar. ↵

011. Mirth, sport. ↵

012. Gay, licentious girl that served in a tavern. ↵

013. Somewhat squeamish. ↵

014. Burning incense for. ↵
015. Above all. ↵
016. Have soon caught. ↵
017. Jolly, joyous. ↵
018. Stationed himself. ↵
019. Projecting or bow window, whence it was possible shoot at any one approaching the door. ↵
020. Take pity. ↵
021. Chamber. ↵
022. Better. ↵
023. By presents and by agents, pimping, or brokerage. ↵
024. Quavering. ↵
025. A drink made with wine, honey, and spices. ↵
026. Cakes. ↵
027. Red-hot coal. ↵
028. Because she was town-bred, he offered wealth, or money reward, for her love. ↵
029. Parish-clerks, like Absolon, had leading parts in the mysteries or religious plays; Herod was one of these parts, which may have been an object of competition among the amateurs of the period. ↵
030. "May go whistle." ↵

031. Jest. ↵

032. The cunning one near at hand oft makes the loving one afar off to be odious. ↵

033. Mad. ↵

034. Devise a statagem. ↵

035. Knew. ↵

036. Believed. ↵

037. That. ↵

038. Till Sunday evening. ↵

039. Wondered greatly. ↵

040. Afraid, in dread. ↵

041. Heaven forefend! ↵

042. Ticklish, fickle, uncertain. ↵

043. Surely. ↵

044. Work. ↵

045. Servant. ↵

046. Call. ↵

047. Mad. ↵

048. Where. ↵

049. Looked; *keek* is still used in some parts in the sense of *peep*. ↵

050. Same. ↵
051. To bless, cross himself. ↵
052. Saint Frideswide was the patroness of a considerable priory at Oxford, and held there in high repute. ↵
053. Knows. ↵
054. Madness. ↵
055. Secret counsel. ↵
056. Unlearned. ↵
057. Knows no more than his “credo.” ↵
058. Watch, keep watch on. ↵
059. Till he fell into a marl-pit. Plato, in his *Theatetus*, tells this story of Thales; but it has since appeared in many other forms. ↵
060. I am very sorry for. ↵
061. Chidden, rated, for his devotion to study. ↵
062. Heave up the door by a lever beneath. ↵
063. Apply himself. ↵
064. Lock; from the Anglo-Saxon, *haepsian*, to lock, fasten; German, *hespe*. ↵
065. Thought. ↵
066. Caught. ↵
067. Angrily. ↵

068. Protect thee, by signing the sign of the Cross. ↵
069. Witches, who were not of the feminine gender only. ↵
070. In due form. ↵
071. Corners, parts. ↵
072. Dwellest. ↵
073. Forthwith, immediately. ↵
074. Labour. ↵
075. Shut. ↵
076. Loved. ↵
077. Betray. ↵
078. Lost; German, *verloren*. ↵
079. Betray. ↵
080. Mad. ↵
081. Talker. ↵
082. Fond of prating. ↵
083. Wasted or subdued hell: in the middle ages, some very active exploits against the prince of darkness and his powers were ascribed by the monkish tale-tellers to the saviour after he had “descended into Hell.” ↵
084. Mad. ↵
085. Drenched, drowned. ↵

086. Drown. [↵](#)

087. Learned and counsel. [↵](#)

088. Repent. [↵](#)

089. Should perish. [↵](#)

090. Long since. [↵](#)

091. According to the old mysteries, Noah's wife refused to come into the ark, and bade her husband row forth and get him a new wife, because he was leaving her gossips in the town to drown. Shem and his brothers got her shipped by main force; and Noah, coming forward to welcome her, was greeted with a box on the ear. [↵](#)

092. He would have given all his black wethers, if she had had an ark to herself. [↵](#)

093. That. [↵](#)

094. House. [↵](#)

095. Brewing-tub. [↵](#)

096. Slacken, abate. [↵](#)

097. Early forenoon. [↵](#)

098. Servant. [↵](#)

099. Unless thou be out of thy wits. [↵](#)

100. Foresight, providence. [↵](#)

101. Call out. [↵](#)

|102. Same. ↵

|103. Command. ↵

|104. Asunder. ↵

|105. What all the strange contrivance meant. ↵

|106. Pretended to fear that she would die. ↵

|107. Drown. ↵

|108. A dismal countenance. ↵

|109. Groaning. ↵

|110. Rungs and uprights, or sides. ↵

|111. Beams, joists. ↵

|112. Jug, bottle. ↵

|113. His servant and serving-maid. ↵

|114. Business. ↵

|115. Prepared. ↵

|116. As long as it might take to walk a furlong. ↵

|117. *Clum*, like *mum*, a note of silence; but otherwise explained as the humming sound made in repeating prayers; from the Anglo-Saxon, *clumian*, to mutter, speak in an undertone, keep silence.
↵

|118. Eight in the evening, when, by the law of William the Conqueror, all people were, on ringing of a bell, to extinguish fire and

candle, and go to rest; hence the word curfew, from French, *couvre-feu*, cover-fire. ↵

|119. Spirit. ↵

|120. Then he snored, for his head lay awry. ↵

|121. Where. ↵

|122. Matins, or morning song, at three in the morning. ↵

|123. Occasion. ↵

|124. Cloistered monk. ↵

|125. Know not. ↵

|126. Work. ↵

|127. Say certainly. ↵

|128. Sure enough. ↵

|129. Chamber wall; the window, it has been said, projected over the door. ↵

|130. By my faith. ↵

|131. Dreamt. ↵

|132. With exact care. ↵

|133. Grains of Paris, or Paradise; a favourite spice. ↵

|134. Some sweet herb: another reading, however, is “a true love-knot,” which may have been of the nature of a charm. ↵

|135. Reached. ↵

- |136. Low tone. ↵
- |137. Cinnamon. ↵
- |138. Mistress. ↵
- |139. Wherever. ↵
- |140. Faint, swelter; hence *sultry*. ↵
- |141. Certainly. ↵
- |142. Come ba, or kiss, me. ↵
- |143. Twenty devils fly away with thee! ↵
- |144. Better. ↵
- |145. In a low voice. The two lines within brackets are not in most of the editions: they are taken from Urry; whether he supplied them or not, they serve the purpose of a necessary explanation. ↵
- |146. Favour. ↵
- |147. Neither better nor worse befell. ↵
- |148. Every word. ↵
- |149. Requite, pay off, be even with. ↵
- |150. Rubbeth; French, *frotter*. ↵
- |151. Rather. ↵
- |152. Revenged: from *wreak*, *awreak*. ↵
- |153. Deceived, befooled. ↵
- |154. Quenched. ↵

- |155. Cared not a rush: “kers” is the modern *cress*. ↵
- |156. Master. ↵
- |157. Cross. ↵
- |158. Early. ↵
- |159. As applied to a young woman of light manners, this euphemistic phrase has enjoyed a wonderful vitality. ↵
- |160. Urry reads “meritote,” and explains it from Spelman as a game in which children made themselves giddy by whirling on ropes. In French, *virer* means to turn; and the explanation may, therefore, suit either reading. In modern slang parlance, Gerveis would probably have said, “on the rampage,” or “on the swing”—not very far from Spelman’s rendering. ↵
- |161. Recked, cared. ↵
- |162. Gave. ↵
- |163. A proverbial saying: he was playing a deeper game, had more serious business on hand. ↵
- |164. Something to do. ↵
- |165. Bag. ↵
- |166. Handle. ↵
- |167. Before; German, *eher*. ↵
- |168. Dear, love. ↵
- |169. Engraved. ↵
- |170. Improve the jest. ↵

|171. Peal, clap. [↵](#)

|172. Blinded. [↵](#)

|173. Breech. [↵](#)

|174. Thought. [↵](#)

|175. Mad. [↵](#)

|176. Mad. [↵](#)

|177. Found nothing to stop him. [↵](#)

|178. Sill of the door, threshold; French, *seuil*, Latin, *solum*, the ground. [↵](#)

|179. See [note 992](#). [↵](#)

|180. Stare. [↵](#)

|181. Mad. [↵](#)

|182. Terrified. [↵](#)

|183. Peep, look. [↵](#)

|184. Jest. [↵](#)

|185. Dear. [↵](#)

|186. Enjoyed. [↵](#)

|187. Care. [↵](#)

|188. Company. [↵](#)

|189. Were diverted. [↵](#)

190. Left. ↵
191. Murmur. ↵
192. Little. ↵
193. Or “so the ik,” so may I thrive. ↵
194. Match, recompense. ↵
195. Dimming his eye; playing off a joke on him. ↵
196. Age takes away my zest for drollery. ↵
197. Head. ↵
198. Grown mouldy. ↵
199. Medlar. ↵
200. Same. ↵
201. On the ground or in the straw. ↵
202. Dance. ↵
203. Continually. ↵
204. Smoke. “Ev’n in our ashes live their wonted fires.” ↵
205. Glowing coals (of passion). ↵
206. Relate, describe. ↵
207. Covetousness. ↵
208. Unwieldy. ↵
209. A wanton humour, a relish for pleasure. ↵

210. Certainly. ↵

211. The rim of a barrel where the staves project beyond the head. ↵

212. Long. ↵

213. Dotage is all that is left them; that is, they can only dwell fondly, dote, on the past. ↵

214. Cobbler; Scottice, *sutor*; from Latin, *suere*, to sew. ↵

215. Surgeon. “*Ex sutore medicus*” and “*ex sutore nauclerus*”—seaman or pilot—were both proverbial expressions in the Middle Ages. ↵

216. Halfway between prime and tierce; about half-past seven in the morning. ↵

217. Like “set their caps;” see [note 201](#). *Hove* or *houfe*, means “hood;” and the phrase signifies to be even with, outwit. ↵

218. To repel force by force. ↵

219. The illustration of the mote and the beam, from Matthew. ↵

220. The incidents of this tale were much relished in the Middle Ages, and are found under various forms. Boccaccio has told them in the ninth day of his *Decameron*. ↵

221. Cambridge. ↵

222. Prepare. ↵

223. Shoot. ↵

224. Poniard. ↵

225. Dagger. ↵

226. Flat; French *camuse*, snub-nose. ↵
227. Peeled, bald. ↵
228. A brawler, bully, in full or open market. ↵
229. Lay. ↵
230. Suffer the penalty. ↵
231. Called “Disdainful Simkin,” or little Simon. ↵
232. Magpie. ↵
233. Hood, or headgear. ↵
234. Gown or coat; French *jupe*. ↵
235. Use freedom. ↵
236. Unless. ↵
237. Always. ↵
238. So behave themselves. ↵
239. Dirty. ↵
240. Nasty; akin to *dung*. ↵
241. Ill-nature. ↵
242. Scandal, abusive speech. ↵
243. Should not judge her hardly. ↵
244. Nurturing, education. ↵
245. Doy. ↵

246. Because of her beauty. ↵
247. He made it matter of consequence or difficulty. ↵
248. Spent. ↵
249. Toll taken for grinding; custom. ↵
250. Especially. ↵
251. The hall or college at Cambridge with the gallery or upper storey; supposed to have been Clare Hall. ↵
252. Suddenly. ↵
253. Steward; provisioner of the hall. ↵
254. Thought certainly. ↵
255. Ado. ↵
256. Cared the miller not a rush. ↵
257. Talked big. ↵
258. Headstrong, wild-brained; French, *entete*. ↵
259. Short time. ↵
260. Boldly. ↵
261. Take away. ↵
262. Tyrwhitt points to Anstruther, in Fife: Mr. Wright to the Vale of Langstroth, in the West Riding of Yorkshire. Chaucer has given the scholars a dialect that may have belonged to either district, although it more immediately suggests the more northern of the two. ↵

263. Equal. [↵](#)
264. Servant. [↵](#)
265. Expect. [↵](#)
266. Grinders, cheek-teeth; Anglo-Saxon, *wang*, the cheek; German, *wange*. [↵](#)
267. Amusement. [↵](#)
268. Simplicity. [↵](#)
269. Think. [↵](#)
270. See [note 1195](#). [↵](#)
271. Odd little tricks. [↵](#)
272. Bran. [↵](#)
273. In the *Cento Novelle Antiche*, the story is told of a mule, which pretends that his name is written on the bottom of his hind foot. The wolf attempts to read it, the mule kills him with a kick in the forehead; and the fox, looking on, remarks that “every man of letters is not wise.” A similar story is told in “Reynard the Fox.” [↵](#)
274. An arbour; Anglo-Saxon, *lefe-setl*, leafy seat. [↵](#)
275. Business; German, *noth*, necessity. [↵](#)
276. Jested. [↵](#)
277. Lost. [↵](#)
278. Careful watch over the corn. [↵](#)
279. Run. [↵](#)

280. Ill luck, a curse. ↵

281. Swift. ↵

282. Knows. ↵

283. Both; Scottice, *baith*. ↵

284. Horse; French, *cheval*; Italian, *cavallo*, from Latin, *cavallus*. ↵

285. Barn. ↵

286. Fool. ↵

287. Cheat a scholar; French, *faire la barbe*; and Boccaccio uses the proverb in the same sense. ↵

288. Turn. ↵

289. Catch, intercept; Scottice, *kep*. ↵

290. Mockery. ↵

291. Fool. ↵

292. Especially. ↵

293. The bay horse. ↵

294. Found. ↵

295. Proceed on their way. ↵

296. Lodging and entertainment. ↵

297. Payment. ↵

298. Fashion. ↵

299. *Gar* is Scotch for *cause*; some editions read, however, “get us some.” ↵
300. Allure. ↵
301. Blankets, coverlets, made at Chalons. ↵
302. Side by side. ↵
303. Roomier lodging. ↵
304. Drunk, and without his wits about him. ↵
305. Hiccaped. ↵
306. Inarticulate sound accompanying bodily exertion. ↵
307. Catarrh. ↵
308. Jolly. ↵
309. Pitcher, cruse; Anglo-Saxon, *crocca*; German, *krug*; hence *crockery*. ↵
310. Nightshade, *solanum somniferum*, given to cause sleep. ↵
311. Certainly. ↵
312. Heed. ↵
313. Bass; *burden* of a song. It originally means the drone of a bagpipe; French, *bourdon*. ↵
314. Snoring. ↵
315. Evensong in the church service; chorus. ↵
316. Among. ↵

317. Strange. In Scotland, a *ferlie* is an unwonted or remarkable sight. ↵
318. Comes to me. ↵
319. Matter. ↵
320. Enjoy carnally. ↵
321. Some satisfaction, pleasure, has law provided. ↵
322. Have a care. ↵
323. Awaked. ↵
324. Mischief. ↵
325. See [note 1116](#). ↵
326. Wail. ↵
327. Trick, befooling. ↵
328. Adventured. ↵
329. A coward, blockhead. ↵
330. A term of contempt, probably borrowed from the kitchen; a cook, in base Latin, being termed *coquinarius*. Compare French *coquin*, rascal. ↵
331. The cowardly is unlucky; “nothing venture, nothing have;” German, *unselig*, unhappy. ↵
332. Took. ↵
333. Left off. ↵
334. Had no suspicion. ↵

335. Long. ↵

336. Laboured. ↵

337. Health. ↵

338. Sweetheart; the word was used of either sex. ↵

339. Giddy, tottering, with my hard work. ↵

340. Thought. ↵

341. Afraid. ↵

342. Disgrace, do indignity to. ↵

343. The protuberance in the throat, called “Adam’s apple.” ↵

344. Seized. ↵

345. Angrily. ↵

346. Stumbled. ↵

347. While. ↵

348. Woke. ↵

349. A common adjuration at that time; the cross or rood of the priory of Bromholm, in Norfolk, was said to contain part of the real cross and therefore held in high esteem. ↵

350. Apartment. ↵

351. Certainly. ↵

352. Supposed. ↵

353. Nightcap. ↵

354. Nearer and nearer. ↵

355. Bald. ↵

356. Make ready, dress. ↵

357. Every bit. ↵

358. Also. ↵

359. It behoves; from the Anglo-Saxon, *thearflian*, to be obliged. ↵

360. Gain; obtain good. ↵

361. Made myself quits with, paid off. ↵

362. Lodging. ↵

363. A man should take good heed. ↵

364. Since my name was. ↵

365. Better handled. ↵

366. Trick. ↵

367. Stop. ↵

368. An article of cookery. ↵

369. Be not angry with my jesting. ↵

370. True jest no jest. ↵

371. Else we part company. ↵

372. Innkeeper. ↵

373. Assuredly. It may be remembered that each pilgrim was bound to tell two stories; one on the way to Canterbury, the other returning. ↵

374. French, *fit bonne mine*; put on a pleasant countenance. ↵

375. Lively, gay. ↵

376. Shade, grove. ↵

377. Daintily. ↵

378. Cheapside, where jousts were sometimes held, and which was the great scene of city revels and processions. ↵

379. Company of fellows like himself. ↵

380. Made appointment. ↵

381. And, moreover, he spent money liberally in places where he could do so without being observed. ↵

382. Wares, merchandise. ↵

383. Suffer for. ↵

384. Although. ↵

385. Although. ↵

386. Guitar or rebeck. ↵

387. At variance. ↵

388. Although. ↵

389. Rebuked. ↵

390. Certificate of completion of his apprenticeship. ↵

391. Pass, go. ↵
392. Corrupt. ↵
393. What he loved, his desire. ↵
394. Refrain. ↵
395. The precise meaning of the word is unknown, but it is doubtless included in the cant term “pal.” ↵
396. Suck, consume, spend. ↵
397. Comrade. ↵
398. For the sake of appearances. ↵
399. Prostituted herself. ↵
400. The “Cook’s Tale” is unfinished in all the manuscripts; but in some, of minor authority, the Cook is made to break off his tale, because “it is so foul,” and to tell the story of Gamelyn, on which Shakespeare’s *As You Like It* is founded. The story is not Chaucer’s, and is different in metre, and inferior in composition to the *Tales*. It is supposed that Chaucer expunged the “Cook’s Tale” for the same reason that made him on his deathbed lament that he had written so much “ribaldry.” ↵
401. Knowledge. ↵
402. Pulled; the word is an obsolete past tense from *pluck*. ↵
403. Company. ↵
404. Destroys. ↵
405. Doubt. ↵

406. A proverbial saying; which, however, had obtained fresh point from the “Reeve’s Tale,” to which the Host doubtless refers. ↵
407. According to our bargain. ↵
408. Keep your promise. ↵
409. Duty. ↵
410. It is characteristic that the somewhat pompous Sergeant of Law should couch his assent in the semi-barbarous French, then familiar in law procedure. ↵
411. Worthy. ↵
412. Understands but imperfectly. ↵
413. Dear. ↵
414. Made mention of. ↵
415. In the introduction to the poem called “The Dream of Chaucer;” or “The Book of the Duchess.” It relates to the death of Blanche, the wife of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, the poet’s patron, and afterwards his connection by marriage. ↵
416. Now called “The Legend of Good Women.” The names of eight ladies mentioned here are not in the “Legend” as it has come down to us; while those of two ladies in the “legend”—Cleopatra and Philomela—are here omitted. ↵
417. Neck. ↵
418. That wicked. ↵
419. Deliberately, advisedly. ↵
420. Unnatural. ↵

421. Not the Muses, who had their surname from the place near Mount Olympus where the Thracians first worshipped them; but the nine daughters of Pierus, king of Macedonia, whom he called the nine Muses, and who, being conquered in a contest with the genuine sisterhood, were changed into birds. ↵
422. Ovid's. ↵
423. Hawbuck, country lout; the common proverbial phrase, "to put a rogue above a gentleman," may throw light on the reading here, which is difficult. ↵
424. This tale is believed by Tyrwhitt to have been taken, with no material change, from the *Confessio Amantis* of John Gower, who was contemporary with Chaucer, though somewhat his senior. In the prologue, the references to the stories of Canace, and of Apollonius Tyrius, seem to be an attack on Gower, who had given these tales in his book; whence Tyrwhitt concludes that the friendship between the two poets suffered some interruption in the latter part of their lives. Gower was not the inventor of the story, which he found in old French romances, and it is not improbable that Chaucer may have gone to the same source as Gower, though the latter undoubtedly led the way. ↵
425. Expense. ↵
426. Allots amiss. ↵
427. Blamest. ↵
428. Burn in the fire. ↵
429. That same neighbour of thine. ↵
430. Wicked, evil. ↵
431. Point. ↵

432. Two aces. ↵
433. Six-five. ↵
434. Kingdoms. ↵
435. Contention, war. ↵
436. Barren, empty. ↵
437. Grave, steadfast. ↵
438. To distant parts. ↵
439. Wares. ↵
440. Cheap, advantageous. ↵
441. To “have dainty,” is to take pleasure in or esteem a thing. ↵
442. Deal. ↵
443. Determined, prepared. ↵
444. Trading. ↵
445. Lodging. ↵
446. Relate. ↵
447. Save; look on with favour. ↵
448. Childishness, immaturity. ↵
449. Liberality for deeds of charity. ↵
450. To our discourse, tale; French, *propos*. ↵
451. Caused to be laden. ↵

452. Business. [↵](#)
453. Formerly. [↵](#)
454. Prosperity. [↵](#)
455. Favour. [↵](#)
456. Sultan. [↵](#)
457. Inquire. [↵](#)
458. Realms. [↵](#)
459. Learn. [↵](#)
460. Pleasure. [↵](#)
461. Care. [↵](#)
462. That. [↵](#)
463. Doubt. [↵](#)
464. To pass briefly by. [↵](#)
465. Unless. [↵](#)
466. Haste. [↵](#)
467. Contrive. [↵](#)
468. Deception, stratagem. [↵](#)
469. Believe. [↵](#)
470. Willingly. [↵](#)
471. Muhammad. [↵](#)

472. *Peace* rhymed with *lese* and *chese*, the old forms of *lose* and *choose*. ↵

473. Keeping. ↵

474. Muhammadanism. ↵

475. Agreed. ↵

476. Know not. ↵

477. Provision. ↵

478. Prepared. ↵

479. Prepared. ↵

480. Go. ↵

481. With good will, favour. ↵

482. Prepare to set out. ↵

483. Of old. ↵

484. Except. ↵

485. On high. ↵

486. Died. ↵

487. Commands. ↵

488. No matter though I perish. ↵

489. According to Middle Age writers there were two motions of the first heaven; one everything always from east to west above the stars; the other moving the stars against the first motion, from west to east, on two other poles. ↵

490. Pushest together, drivest. [↵](#)

491. The meaning of this word is not known; but “occifer,” murderer, has been suggested instead by Urry, on the authority of a marginal reading on a manuscript. [↵](#)

492. Progress. [↵](#)

493. Thou joinest thyself where thou art rejected, and art declined or departed from the place where thou wert well. The moon portends the fortunes of Constance. [↵](#)

494. Waived, declined. [↵](#)

495. Better. [↵](#)

496. Especially. [↵](#)

497. When the nativity is known. [↵](#)

498. Ignorant. [↵](#)

499. Made an effort. [↵](#)

500. Together. [↵](#)

ENDNOTES 1,501–2,000

501. Forsake. [↵](#)

502. Koran. [↵](#)

503. Promise. [↵](#)

504. Betide, befall. [↵](#)

505. For denying Muhammad our belief. [↵](#)

506. Advice. [↵](#)

507. Endeavour; from Anglo-Saxon, *fandian*, to try. [↵](#)

508. Relate. [↵](#)

509. To embrace Christianity. [↵](#)

510. Little. [↵](#)

511. Requite, match. [↵](#)

512. Sultaness. [↵](#)

513. Bondage. [↵](#)

514. Ruin. [↵](#)

515. Oppose, censure. ↵
516. Renounce her creed, profession. ↵
517. Take; Anglo-Saxon, *fengian*, German, *fangen*. ↵
518. Desire, command. ↵
519. Knew. ↵
520. Message. ↵
521. To meet. ↵
522. Realm. ↵
523. In company. ↵
524. Face. ↵
525. Spirit. ↵
526. Contrived. ↵
527. Cease. ↵
528. Sprinkled. ↵
529. Seizes the end. ↵
530. Security. ↵
531. Unforeseen. ↵
532. Cut into pieces and stabbed at table. ↵
533. Knew. ↵
534. Escaped. ↵

535. Immediately, in haste. [↵](#)
536. Without rudder. [↵](#)
537. Back to Italy. [↵](#)
538. Led, took. [↵](#)
539. Rudder, guide. [↵](#)
540. Blessed, beneficent. [↵](#)
541. Drown. [↵](#)
542. Banisher, driver out. [↵](#)
543. Out of those who in faith wear the crucifix. [↵](#)
544. Morocco; Gibraltar. [↵](#)
545. Expect. [↵](#)
546. Where. [↵](#)
547. Servant. [↵](#)
548. Devoured. [↵](#)
549. Escaped. [↵](#)
550. It pleased. [↵](#)
551. Treacle; remedy, salve. [↵](#)
552. Scholars. [↵](#)
553. Foresight. [↵](#)
554. Slain. [↵](#)

555. The four angels who held the four winds of the earth and to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea (Rev. 7:1, 2). ↵

556. Victuals. ↵

557. Without fail. ↵

558. Abundance. ↵

559. Castle. ↵

560. Name. ↵

561. Thence would it not move for long, at all. ↵

562. Go. ↵

563. Searched. ↵

564. Divide. ↵

565. A kind of bastard Latin. ↵

566. Nevertheless. ↵

567. Search (in the ship). ↵

568. Thanked God for what He had sent. ↵

569. Die. ↵

570. Pity. ↵

571. Assemble. ↵

572. Regions, coasts. ↵

573. Such of the old Britons as were Christians. ↵

574. Were not. ↵

575. Were not. ↵

576. Except. ↵

577. Those. ↵

578. Closed, shut. ↵

579. Was alarmed by that cry. ↵

580. Work. ↵

581. Astonished. ↵

582. What means all this ado. ↵

583. So far, with such effect. ↵

584. Found. ↵

585. Deliberated, contrived. ↵

586. Repay her labour, revenge himself on her. ↵

587. Perish. ↵

588. Unless. ↵

589. Die. ↵

590. Having been long awake. ↵

591. Gone. ↵

592. Cruelly. ↵

593. Describe. ↵

594. To be grieved, to tremble. ↵

595. Distress. ↵

596. Accused her falsely. ↵

597. Been greatly moved by the evidence. ↵

598. Learn. ↵

599. Died. ↵

600. That lieth yet where he was laid. ↵

601. Show. ↵

602. Immediately. ↵

603. Hosanna. ↵

604. Cruelty, wickedness. ↵

605. Led. ↵

606. Bested, situated. ↵

607. Pity. ↵

608. Dread, danger. ↵

609. Consider. ↵

610. Judge. ↵

611. The Gospels. ↵

612. And shall I be silent? ↵

613. Vengeance. ↵

614. Simple, harmless. ↵
615. Compassion. ↵
616. Mate, consort. ↵
617. Straw. ↵
618. Reasonable. ↵
619. Kind of. ↵
620. Little. ↵
621. Male; German, *knabe*, boy. ↵
622. Caused to come forth. ↵
623. The messenger. ↵
624. Promote his own interest. ↵
625. Swiftly. ↵
626. Greets. ↵
627. Times. ↵
628. Pleases. ↵
629. Steadily. ↵
630. Bold, brave. ↵
631. Had by ill-chance become an elf, a witch. ↵
632. The will, sending. ↵
633. By his conversion. ↵

634. Will, pleasure. ↵

635. Preserve. ↵

636. Do. ↵

637. Lost. ↵

638. Aspect. ↵

639. Company. ↵

640. Worthy. ↵

641. Unwomanly woman. ↵

642. Alighted. ↵

643. Glad. ↵

644. Packed, stuffed his belt, stowed away liquor under. ↵

645. Again. ↵

646. Judgement, doom. ↵

647. Kingdom. ↵

648. A fourth of the time. ↵

649. Push. ↵

650. Spirit. ↵

651. Pain, trouble. ↵

652. Contrived. ↵

653. Plan, plot. ↵

654. Nearest. ↵

655. Cruel. ↵

656. Saw. ↵

657. Be destroyed. ↵

658. Die. ↵

659. Strand, shore. ↵

660. They will; whatever Thou sendest. ↵

661. Rudder; guide. ↵

662. Took, drew. ↵

663. Incitement, egging on. ↵

664. Lost. ↵

665. Torn, pierced. ↵

666. By my faith. ↵

667. Maid. ↵

668. Take pity. ↵

669. Sorrowful. ↵

670. Par Dieu; by God. ↵

671. Cruel, stern. ↵

672. Destroyed. ↵

673. Pitiless. ↵

674. Multitude. ↵

675. Doubt. ↵

676. Be needed. ↵

677. Honoured, praised; from Anglo-Saxon, *herian*. Compare German, *herrlich*, glorious, honourable. ↵

678. Provide. ↵

679. Tortured. ↵

680. Confess; German, *bekennen*. ↵

681. Doubt. ↵

682. Allegiance. ↵

683. Decree, command. ↵

684. Land. ↵

685. Again. ↵

686. In danger of perishing. ↵

687. Gaze, stare. ↵

688. Denied our faith. ↵

689. Illicit lover. ↵

690. Would not. ↵

691. Was drowned. ↵

692. Unblemished. ↵

693. Weakness. ↵

694. Destroy. ↵

695. Abashed, overthrown. ↵

696. Devoid. ↵

697. Gibraltar and Ceuta. ↵

698. Resolved, arranged. ↵

699. A short time; as long as a cast of the dice. ↵

700. Caused. ↵

701. Die. ↵

702. To meet him. ↵

703. Courtesy, profession of welcome. ↵

704. The poet here refers to Gower's version of the story. ↵

705. Command. ↵

706. Meal time. ↵

707. Know not. ↵

708. Short time. ↵

709. Rather. ↵

710. Wicked. ↵

711. Point. ↵

712. Could by any chance be she. ↵

713. Sighed. [↵](#)

714. Fast as he could. [↵](#)

715. By my faith. [↵](#)

716. A phantasm, mere fancy. [↵](#)

717. I should be certain. [↵](#)

718. Message, summons. [↵](#)

719. Not easily, with difficulty. [↵](#)

720. Greeted. [↵](#)

721. Saints. [↵](#)

722. Surely. [↵](#)

723. Mourn, complain. [↵](#)

724. Truth is known. [↵](#)

725. Sorrow. [↵](#)

726. Rude, foolish. [↵](#)

727. Guess, know. [↵](#)

728. Prepared. [↵](#)

729. So far as his skill. [↵](#)

730. Make ready. [↵](#)

731. Condemned, doomed. [↵](#)

732. Hinder. [↵](#)

733. *Res gestae*; histories, exploits. [↵](#)

734. Saw. [↵](#)

735. Promise. [↵](#)

736. Disturbance. [↵](#)

737. Judgement, opinion. [↵](#)

738. Snatched. [↵](#)

739. Praises. [↵](#)

740. Times. [↵](#)

741. Among the evidences that Chaucer's great work was left incomplete, is the absence of any link of connection between the "Wife of Bath's" prologue and tale, and what goes before. This deficiency has in some editions caused the Squire's and the "Merchant's Tales" to be interposed between those of the Man of Law and the Wife of Bath; but in "Merchant's Tale" there is internal proof that it was told after the jolly Dame's. Several manuscripts contain verses designed to serve as a connection; but they are evidently not Chaucer's, and it is unnecessary to give them here. Of this prologue, which may fairly be regarded as a distinct autobiographical tale, Tyrwhitt says: "The extraordinary length of it, as well as the vein of pleasantry that runs through it, is very suitable to the character of the speaker. The greatest part must have been of Chaucer's own invention, though one may plainly see that he had been reading the popular invectives against marriage and women in general; such as the 'Roman de la Rose,' '*Valerius ad Rufinum, De non Ducenda Uxore*,' and particularly '*Hieronimus contra Jovinianum*.' St. Jerome, among other things designed to discourage marriage, has inserted in his treatise a long passage from *Liber Aureolus Theophrasti de Nuptiis*." [↵](#)

742. Authorities, written opinions, texts. ↵
743. Lives eternally. ↵
744. Great part of the marriage service used to be performed in the church-porch. ↵
745. Since. ↵
746. Cana. ↵
747. Same. ↵
748. Occasion. ↵
749. That. ↵
750. John 4:13. ↵
751. In my life. ↵
752. Comment, make glosses. ↵
753. As if it were a disgrace. ↵
754. Lord; *dominus*. Another reading is “the wise man, King Solomon.” ↵
755. What special favour or licence. ↵
756. As I understand, as I take it. ↵
757. So well went things with him in his life. ↵
758. On God’s part. ↵
759. Burn. ↵
760. What care I. ↵

761. Evil. [↵](#)

762. Impious, wicked. [↵](#)

763. Know. [↵](#)

764. In any period. [↵](#)

765. Forbade; French, *defendre*, to prohibit. [↵](#)

766. Doubt. [↵](#)

767. A maid. [↵](#)

768. Condemned. [↵](#)

769. Doubt. [↵](#)

770. Sown. [↵](#)

771. Command. [↵](#)

772. The goal; a spear or dart was set up to mark the point of victory.
[↵](#)

773. Except where. [↵](#)

774. Scandal, reproach. [↵](#)

775. Mate, husband. [↵](#)

776. Charge, reproach. [↵](#)

777. Although it were. [↵](#)

778. Frailty. [↵](#)

779. Frailty I call it, unless. [↵](#)

780. Spirit. [↵](#)

781. Condition. [↵](#)

782. “But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.”—2 Tim. 2:20. [↵](#)

783. Appoint, distribute. [↵](#)

784. Fountain. [↵](#)

785. Doctrine. [↵](#)

786. End, purpose. [↵](#)

787. Being. [↵](#)

788. Scholars. [↵](#)

789. Duty. [↵](#)

790. Pleasure. [↵](#)

791. Held bound, obliged. [↵](#)

792. Weapons. [↵](#)

793. Care. [↵](#)

794. Fashioned. [↵](#)

795. Contend. [↵](#)

796. Purified. [↵](#)

797. Mark 6:41, 42. [↵](#)

798. Called us to. [↵](#)

799. Scrupulous, dainty, overnice. [↵](#)
800. Sparing, or difficult, of my favours. [↵](#)
801. I will bear no hindrance. [↵](#)
802. Slave. [↵](#)
803. Whit. [↵](#)
804. Suffer for. [↵](#)
805. Rather. [↵](#)
806. Wait in patience. [↵](#)
807. The instrument of administering torture. [↵](#)
808. That tun. [↵](#)
809. Not to be offended by, not to take to heart. [↵](#)
810. With difficulty. [↵](#)
811. Fulfil the law. [↵](#)
812. By God, in God's name. [↵](#)
813. Labour. [↵](#)
814. Faith. [↵](#)
815. Held it of no account. [↵](#)
816. Cared nothing for, set no value on. [↵](#)
817. Constantly. [↵](#)
818. Care. [↵](#)

819. Unless. ↵

820. At Dunmow prevailed the custom of giving, amid much merry making, a flitch of bacon to the married pair who had lived together for a year without quarrel or regret. The same custom prevailed of old in Bretagne. ↵

821. Happy and fain. ↵

822. Angrily. ↵

823. Make them believe falsely. ↵

824. Unless they have acted unadvisedly. ↵

825. Know. ↵

826. Delude them into believing that the cow is mad—or is made of wood. ↵

827. *Cagnard*, or *Caignard*, a French term of reproach, originally derived from *canis*, a dog. ↵

828. Wheresoever. ↵

829. Good clothing. ↵

830. Whisperest. ↵

831. Buffooneries, tricks. ↵

832. Proof. ↵

833. Expense. ↵

834. Birth, kindred; from Latin, *pario*, I beget. ↵

835. Whoremonger. ↵

836. Everywhere, on all sides. ↵

837. Buy. ↵

838. Mate. ↵

839. Wield, govern. ↵

840. With his good will. ↵

841. Hold. ↵

842. Good-for-nothing. ↵

843. Stroke. ↵

844. Lightning. ↵

845. May. ↵

846. Wedded. ↵

847. Ill-tempered wretch. ↵

848. Proved at various seasons. ↵

849. Raiment. ↵

850. Unless. ↵

851. Unless. ↵

852. Unless. ↵

853. That. ↵

854. Nurse; French, *nourrice*. ↵

855. Chambermaid. ↵

856. Relations. ↵

857. Sorrow on thee! ↵

858. Property. ↵

859. St. Jago of Compostella. ↵

860. Furious. ↵

861. Spite of. ↵

862. Pleases. ↵

863. Alice, Alison. ↵

864. Care. ↵

865. Lord. This and the previous quotation from Ptolemy are due to the Dame's own fancy. ↵

866. Needs, behoves. ↵

867. Forbid. ↵

868. Needs, behoves. ↵

869. Complain. ↵

870. Women should not adorn themselves: see 1 Tim. 2:9. ↵

871. Modesty. ↵

872. House. ↵

873. Caterwauling. ↵

874. Apparel, fine clothes. ↵

875. *Gardecorps*, bodyguard. ↵
876. Unless it please me. ↵
877. Make a jest of him. ↵
878. Thrive. ↵
879. Fourth. ↵
880. Pleasant. ↵
881. Shorten. ↵
882. No other kind of comparisons. ↵
883. Those. ↵
884. Destroy. ↵
885. Made them believe. ↵
886. Pain. ↵
887. Complain. ↵
888. Even though. ↵
889. Ruined. ↵
890. Is ground. ↵
891. Stopped. ↵
892. Quickly. ↵
893. Were never guilty of in their lives. ↵
894. Falsely accuse them. ↵

895. Thought. ↵

896. Affection; from French, *cher*, dear. ↵

897. Adorned; took to himself. ↵

898. Naturally. ↵

899. Complaining. ↵

900. Especially. ↵

901. Folly; French, *niaiserie*. ↵

902. The bacon of Dunmow. ↵

903. Requited, repaid. ↵

904. Furious. ↵

905. Dear. ↵

906. Heed, notice. ↵

907. Kiss; from French, *baiser*. ↵

908. Tender, nice. ↵

909. Unless. ↵

910. Bend, give way. ↵

911. Murmur. ↵

912. Whit. ↵

913. By Saint Peter! a common adjuration, like Marie! from the Virgin's name. ↵

914. Curse. ↵

915. Wantonness. ↵

916. Certainly. ↵

917. Because. ↵

918. Full of wine. ↵

919. Resistance. ↵

920. Good. ↵

921. Poison, embitter. ↵

922. Vigour. ↵

923. Try. ↵

924. Requited. ↵

925. Or Judocus, a saint of Ponthieu, in France. ↵

926. Pinched. “An allusion,” says Mr. Wright, “to the story of the Roman sage who, when blamed for divorcing his wife, said that a shoe might appear outwardly to fit well, but no one but the wearer knew where it pinched.” ↵

927. Cross. ↵

928. Cruel, ill-tempered. ↵

929. In a row. ↵

930. Flatter. ↵

931. Sparing, difficult. ↵

932. Difficulty. [↵](#)
933. Merchandise. [↵](#)
934. A scholar of Oxford. [↵](#)
935. Thrive. [↵](#)
936. Jot. [↵](#)
937. Secret. [↵](#)
938. Seen. [↵](#)
939. Favour. [↵](#)
940. Appointed. [↵](#)
941. Festival-eves. See [note 137](#). [↵](#)
942. Gowns. [↵](#)
943. Fed. [↵](#)
944. Whit. [↵](#)
945. Worn. [↵](#)
946. Foresight. [↵](#)
947. Boasting; Ben Jonson's braggart, in "Every Man in his Humour,"
is named Bobadil. [↵](#)
948. Foresight. [↵](#)
949. A very old proverb in French, German, and Latin. *Starte*, to
escape. [↵](#)
950. Done. [↵](#)

951. Falsely assured him. [↵](#)
952. Dreamed. [↵](#)
953. Always. [↵](#)
954. Countenance. [↵](#)
955. Mate. [↵](#)
956. Promise. [↵](#)
957. Those. [↵](#)
958. Keeping. [↵](#)
959. Gap-toothed; goat-toothed; or cat or separate toothed. See [note 164](#). [↵](#)
960. In a good way. The lines in brackets are only in some of the manuscripts. [↵](#)
961. Under the influence of Mars. [↵](#)
962. Taurus, the Bull. [↵](#)
963. Certainly. [↵](#)
964. Whether. [↵](#)
965. Heed. [↵](#)
966. Handome, courteous. [↵](#)
967. Pleasure. [↵](#)
968. Prater. [↵](#)
969. Had swaorn to prevent it. [↵](#)

970. Stories. [↵](#)
971. Bareheaded. [↵](#)
972. Saw. [↵](#)
973. Sempronius Sophus, of whom Valerius Maximus tells in his sixth book. [↵](#)
974. Same. [↵](#)
975. Willows. [↵](#)
976. Make pilgrimages to shrines of saints. [↵](#)
977. Cared not a straw. [↵](#)
978. Furious. [↵](#)
979. Endure, bear with. [↵](#)
980. The tract of Walter Mapes against marriage, published under the title of “Epistola Valerii ad Rufinum.” [↵](#)
981. Proverbs. [↵](#)
982. “*Ars Amoris*.” [↵](#)
983. Jests. [↵](#)
984. Unless. [↵](#)
985. All who bear the mark of Adam—all men. [↵](#)
986. Those born under the influence of the respective planets. [↵](#)
987. Expense. [↵](#)

988. A planet, according to the old astrologers, was in “exaltation” when in the sign of the Zodiac in which it exerted its strongest influence; the opposite sign, in which it was weakest, was called its “dejection.” Venus being strongest in Pisces, was weakest in Virgo; but in Virgo Mercury was in “exaltation.” [↵](#)

989. Goodman. [↵](#)

990. Ceases. [↵](#)

991. Wickedness. [↵](#)

992. Clasp, collar. [↵](#)

993. Sort of. [↵](#)

994. Always. [↵](#)

995. Dear. [↵](#)

996. That. [↵](#)

997. Except. [↵](#)

998. Think. [↵](#)

999. Pain. [↵](#)

1000. Have done, end. [↵](#)

ENDNOTES 2,001–2,500

!001. Plucked. [↵](#)

!002. Woke. [↵](#)

!003. Blame. [↵](#)

!004. Beseech. [↵](#)

!005. Immediately; again. [↵](#)

!006. Avenged. [↵](#)

!007. Agreed. [↵](#)

!008. Then. [↵](#)

!009. Pleases thee. [↵](#)

!010. Speak, flout; “chaff.” [↵](#)

!011. Interpose; French, *entremettre*. [↵](#)

!012. Preamble. Some editions print “preambulation,” but the word in the text seems meant to show up the ignorance of the clergy, as Chaucer lost no occasion of doing. [↵](#)

!013. Hinderest. [↵](#)

- .014. Curse. [↵](#)
- .015. Unless. [↵](#)
- .016. Behave. [↵](#)
- .017. Please. [↵](#)
- .018. It is not clear whence Chaucer derived this tale. Tyrwhitt thinks it was taken from the story of Florent, in the first book of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*; or perhaps from an older narrative from which Gower himself borrowed. Chaucer has condensed and otherwise improved the fable, especially by laying the scene, not in Sicily, but at the court of our own King Arthur. [↵](#)
- .019. Fairies; French, *feerie*. [↵](#)
- .020. Begging friars. See [note 74](#). [↵](#)
- .021. Villages. Compare German, *dorf*. [↵](#)
- .022. Stables, sheep-pens. [↵](#)
- .023. Where. [↵](#)
- .024. Evening-tides, afternoons; *undern* signifies the evening; and *mele*, corresponds to the German *mal* or *mahl*, time. [↵](#)
- .025. Begging district. [↵](#)
- .026. An evil spirit supposed to do violence to women; a nightmare. [↵](#)
- .027. Where he had been hawking after waterfowl. Froissart says that any one engaged in this sport "*alloit en riviere*." [↵](#)
- .028. Spite of. [↵](#)
- .029. Condemned. [↵](#)

- .030. For as it happened, such. ↵
- .031. Then. ↵
- .032. Execute, destroy. ↵
- .033. In such a position. ↵
- .034. The executioner's axe. ↵
- .035. Learn. ↵
- .036. Satisfactory. ↵
- .037. Go. ↵
- .038. Sighed. ↵
- .039. Depart. ↵
- .040. Provide him with. ↵
- .041. Agreeing together. ↵
- .042. Pleasure. ↵
- .043. Came very near the truth. ↵
- .044. Caught as birds with lime. ↵
- .045. Pleases. ↵
- .046. Foolish; French, *niais*. ↵
- .047. Fret the sore. Compare, "Let the galled jade wince." ↵
- .048. Try. ↵
- .049. Secret, good at keeping confidence. ↵

050. Rake-handle. [↵](#)

051. From Anglo-Saxon, *helan*, to hide, conceal. [↵](#)

052. Small. [↵](#)

053. Deformity, disfigurement. [↵](#)

054. Makes a humming noise. [↵](#)

055. Sound. [↵](#)

056. Learn. [↵](#)

057. Spirit. [↵](#)

058. Trouble, anxiety. [↵](#)

059. Same. [↵](#)

060. Eagerly; German, *gern*. [↵](#)

061. Imagine, tell. [↵](#)

062. To meet. [↵](#)

063. Forth from hence. [↵](#)

064. Faith. [↵](#)

065. Dear. [↵](#)

066. Unless. [↵](#)

067. Instruct; German, *weisen*, to show or counsel. [↵](#)

068. Pay your reward. [↵](#)

069. Boast, affirm. [↵](#)

- .070. Whispered a secret, a lesson. ↵
- .071. Promised. ↵
- .072. Preserved. ↵
- .073. Faith. ↵
- .074. Promise. ↵
- .075. Curse. ↵
- .076. Would not. ↵
- .077. Buried. ↵
- .078. Perhaps. ↵
- .079. Take no pains. ↵
- .080. Same. ↵
- .081. Fastidious, niggardly. ↵
- .082. In addition. ↵
- .083. Writhe, turn about. ↵
- .084. Burst. ↵
- .085. If you could conduct yourself well towards me. ↵
- .086. Is only to be despised. See [note 64](#). ↵
- .087. In private and in public. ↵
- .088. Wills, requires. ↵
- .089. Ancestors. ↵

1090. Birth, descent. ↵
1091. Sentiment. ↵
1092. Kind of. ↵
1093. Dante, *Purgatorio*, VII 121. ↵
1094. Cease. ↵
1095. Thence. ↵
1096. Burn. ↵
1097. It will perform its natural function. ↵
1098. Gentility, nobility. ↵
1099. From its very nature. ↵
1100. Esteem, honour. ↵
1101. Because. ↵
1102. French, *renommée*, renown. ↵
1103. Goodness, worth. ↵
1104. True. ↵
1105. That. ↵
1106. Doubt. ↵
1107. Dear. ↵
1108. Forsake. ↵
1109. Reproach. ↵

2110. Poverty endured with contentment. ↵
2111. Scholars. ↵
2112. Holds himself satisfied with, is content with. ↵
2113. A slave, abject wretch. ↵
2114. Properly, the only true poverty is sin. ↵
2115. "*Cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator*"—"Satires," X 22. ↵
2116. In a fabulous conference between the Emperor Adrian and the philosopher Secundus, reported by Vincent of Beauvais, occurs the passage which Chaucer here paraphrases:—"Quid est *Paupertas? Odibile bonum; sanitas mater; remotio Curarum; sapientiae repertrix; negotium sine damno; possessio absque calumnia; sine sollicitudinae felicitas.*" ↵
2117. Deliverer from care and trouble. ↵
2118. Strange; from French *eloigner*, to remove. ↵
2119. Is a spying-glass, pair of spectacles. ↵
2120. True. ↵
2121. Age. ↵
2122. Text, dictum. ↵
2123. Cuckold. ↵
2124. Thrive. ↵
2125. Die. ↵
2126. Resort. ↵

127. Considered. ↵

128. Sighed. ↵

129. Set no value, care not. ↵

130. Pleases. ↵

131. At variance. ↵

132. Die mad. ↵

133. Unless. ↵

134. Unless. ↵

135. Pleases. ↵

136. Took. ↵

137. In succession. ↵

138. Grudgers of expense. ↵

139. On the “Tale of the Friar,” and that of the “Sompnour” which follows, Tyrwhitt has remarked that they “are well engrafted upon that of the ‘Wife of Bath.’ The ill-humour which shows itself between these two characters is quite natural, as no two professions at that time were at more constant variance. The regular clergy, and particularly the mendicant friars, affected a total exemption from all ecclesiastical jurisdiction, except that of the Pope, which made them exceedingly obnoxious to the bishops and of course to all the inferior officers of the national hierarchy.” Both tales, whatever their origin, are bitter satires on the greed and worldliness of the Romish clergy. ↵

140. A kind of gloomy countenance. ↵

141. Good manners. ↵

142. Thrive. ↵

143. Dissatisfied. ↵

144. Mandates, summonses. ↵

145. Civil, gentle. ↵

146. Pay him off. ↵

147. Assuredly. ↵

148. Once on a time. ↵

149. Churchwardens. ↵

150. Sort of. ↵

151. Caught. ↵

152. People who did not pay their full tithes. Mr. Wright remarks that
“the sermons of the friars in the fourteenth century were most
frequently designed to impress the absolute duty of paying full
tithes and offerings.” ↵

153. Troubled, put to shame. ↵

154. They got off with no mere pecuniary punishment. ↵

155. Espionage. ↵

156. Furious, mad. ↵

157. Stews. ↵

158. Care. ↵

159. Whistle; bawl. ↵

160. Informers. ↵

161. Won. ↵

162. Ignorant. ↵

163. Alehouse; inn-ale, a house for ale. ↵

164. Small. ↵

165. What was owing him. ↵

166. Plunder, pluck. ↵

167. Cause thee to be struck. ↵

168. Black. ↵

169. It is needful. ↵

170. Dog attending a huntsman with bow and arrow. ↵

171. Better. ↵

172. The name of a musical instrument; applied to an old woman because of the shrillness of her voice. ↵

173. Wore a short doublet. ↵

174. Shade. ↵

175. By the gods. ↵

176. Dear. ↵

177. Please. ↵

178. Great thanks. [↵](#)

179. Die. See [note 345](#). [↵](#)

180. Chattering. [↵](#)

181. Butcherbirds; which are very noisy and ravenous, and tear in pieces the birds on which they prey; the thorn on which they do this was said to become poisonous. [↵](#)

182. Seek, visit. [↵](#)

183. Medieval legends located hell in the North. [↵](#)

184. Inform. [↵](#)

185. Conceal nothing from me. [↵](#)

186. Niggardly. [↵](#)

187. Whether. [↵](#)

188. Do. [↵](#)

189. Unless. [↵](#)

190. Were it not for. [↵](#)

191. Tricks. [↵](#)

192. Confessed, shriven. [↵](#)

193. Curse. [↵](#)

194. Confessors. [↵](#)

195. What I can gain in my sole revenue. [↵](#)

196. Thought. [↵](#)

197. At home; in your natural state. ↵
198. Make it seem to you. ↵
199. Know. ↵
200. Skill, cunning. ↵
201. Apply myself. ↵
202. Because. ↵
203. Against it. ↵
204. Catch. ↵
205. The witch, or woman, possessed with a prophesying spirit; from the Greek, *Πνθια*. Chaucer of course refers to the raising of Samuel's spirit by the Witch of Endor. ↵
206. Set no value upon. ↵
207. Jest. ↵
208. Assuredly. ↵
209. Know. ↵
210. Learn. ↵
211. Learn to understand what I have said. ↵
212. Both poets who had in fancy visited Hell. ↵
213. Briskly. ↵
214. Seeking what we may pick up. ↵
215. Shaped, resolved. ↵

216. Go. ↵

217. Mad. ↵

218. As sure. ↵

219. Suffered, endured; *thole* is still used in Scotland in the same sense. ↵

220. As if nothing were the matter. ↵

221. Whispered. ↵

222. Seize. ↵

223. Horses. ↵

224. Whit. ↵

225. Believest. ↵

226. Stop. ↵

227. Pulled; for *twitched*. ↵

228. Gray; elsewhere applied by Chaucer to the hairs of an old man. So Burns, in the “Cotter’s Saturday Night,” speaks of the gray temples of “the sire”—“His lyart haffets wearing thin and bare.”
↵

229. Dwells. ↵

230. Used like “ribibe,”—as a nickname for a shrill old scold. ↵

231. Mad. ↵

232. Trot; a contemptuous term for an old woman who has trotted about much, or who moves with quick short steps. ↵

233. Upon. ↵
234. Surely. ↵
235. Cannot help myself. ↵
236. Paineth. ↵
237. Question me about, lay to my change. ↵
238. Little. ↵
239. Surely. ↵
240. Show your charity. ↵
241. Ruined, put to death. ↵
242. Die. ↵
243. Unless. ↵
244. Polecat. ↵
245. Secrets. ↵
246. Seized. ↵
247. Frighten, horrify. ↵
248. Relate. ↵
249. That. ↵
250. On the watch; French, *aux aguets*. ↵
251. Seize. ↵
252. Furious. ↵

253. Quaked, trembled. ↵

254. Then. ↵

255. A great ship of burden used by the Portuguese; the name is from the Italian, *cargare*, to load. ↵

256. Immediately. ↵

257. In a company, crowd. ↵

258. By his very nature. ↵

259. The money given to the priests for performing thirty masses for the dead, either in succession or on the anniversaries of their death; also the masses themselves, which were very profitable to the clergy. ↵

260. The regular religious orders, who had lands and fixed revenues; while the friars, by their vows, had to depend on voluntary contributions, though their need suggested many modes of evading the prescription. ↵

261. In Chaucer's day the most material notions about the tortures of hell prevailed, and were made the most of by the clergy, who preyed on the affection and fear of the survivors, through the ingenious doctrine of purgatory. Old paintings and illuminations represent the dead as torn by hooks, roasted in fires, boiled in pots, and subjected to many other physical torments. ↵

262. The closing words of the final benediction pronounced at mass. ↵

263. Pleased. ↵

264. With his gown tucked up high. ↵

265. Peer, gaze curiously. ↵

266. Wrighting tablets. ↵

267. A style, or pencil. ↵

268. Daintily. ↵

269. The word now means sideways or asquint; here it means “as if;” and its force is probably to suggest that the second friar, with an ostentatious stealthiness, noted down the names of the liberal, to make them believe that they would be remembered in the holy beggars’ orisons. ↵

270. Rye. ↵

271. Little cake, given for God’s sake. ↵

272. Small piece. ↵

273. Choose. ↵

274. Slip, remnant. ↵

275. Hired servant; from Anglo-Saxon, *hyran*, to hire; the word was commonly applied to males. ↵

276. Trifles, silly tales. ↵

277. God be in this place; the formula of benediction at entering a house. ↵

278. God recompense you therefor. ↵

279. Staff; French, *potence*, crutch, gibbet. ↵

280. Servant. ↵

281. Shaped; purposed. ↵

282. Mass. ↵
283. Comment, gloss. ↵
284. Scholars. ↵
285. Closely. ↵
286. Whit. ↵
287. Always. ↵
288. A little while. ↵
289. Confession. ↵
290. Cover. ↵
291. By any sort of chance. ↵
292. This is the fiend's work. ↵
293. Forbidden. ↵
294. Thin slice. ↵
295. Painstaking. ↵
296. Watch. ↵
297. Dormitory; French, *dortoir*. ↵
298. Direct. ↵
299. Infirmary-keeper. ↵
300. The rules of St. Benedict granted peculiar honours and immunities to monks who had lived fifty years—the jubilee period—in the order. The usual reading of the words ending the

two lines is “loan” or “lone,” and “alone;” but to walk alone does not seem to have been any peculiar privilege of a friar, while the idea of precedence, or higher place at table and in processions, is suggested by the reading in the text. ↵

301. Laymen, people who are not learned; *borel* was a kind of coarse cloth. ↵

302. Pleasure. ↵

303. Contempt. ↵

304. Clothing. ↵

305. Elijah (1 Kings 19). ↵

306. Know. ↵

307. Physician, healer. ↵

308. Watch. ↵

309. Unless. ↵

310. Narrates. ↵

311. Simple, lowly. ↵

312. Compassion. ↵

313. A kind of comment. ↵

314. An emperor Jovinian was famous in the medieval legends for his pride and luxury. ↵

315. Storeroom. ↵

316. Literally, “My heart has belched forth;” in our translation, “My heart is inditing a goodly matter.” (Ps. 45:1.) “Buf” is meant to represent the sound of an eructation, and to show the “great reverence” with which “those in possession,” the monks of the rich monasteries, performed divine service. ↵
317. Doctrine. ↵
318. Poor. ↵
319. Hearers. ↵
320. Upon the *soar*, or rise. ↵
321. If thou wert not of our brotherhood, thou shouldst have no hope of recovery. ↵
322. Soon to be able to move thy body freely. ↵
323. Friars of various sorts. ↵
324. Better. ↵
325. Spent. ↵
326. Gone. ↵
327. Seek, beseech. ↵
328. Trick. ↵
329. Because we have too little. ↵
330. Made one, united. ↵
331. Work. ↵
332. Believe. ↵

333. If it please thee. ↵
334. Again. ↵
335. Mistresses. ↵
336. Certainly. ↵
337. Fierce. ↵
338. Pure; only. ↵
339. The seven cardinal sins. ↵
340. Ignorant. ↵
341. Executioner. ↵
342. Passionate. ↵
343. Once. ↵
344. Chief magistrate or judge; Latin, *potestas*; Italian, *podesta*.
Seneca relates the story of Cornelius Piso; *De Ira*, I 16. ↵
345. Term of office. ↵
346. Die. ↵
347. Thought. ↵
348. Counsel. ↵
349. At all events. ↵
350. Caused them to be slain. ↵
351. A drunkard. ↵

352. Vicious, ill-tempered. ↵

353. Suite. ↵

354. No decree, control. ↵

355. Especially. ↵

356. Watching. ↵

357. Temperately. ↵

358. Times. ↵

359. Caused. ↵

360. Sure. ↵

361. Not. ↵

362. Use freedom. ↵

363. An anthem of the Roman Church, from Psalm 116:9, which in the Vulgate reads, “*Placebo Domino in regione vivorum*”—“I will please the Lord.” ↵

364. Unless. ↵

365. That. ↵

366. Seneca calls it the Gyndes; Sir John Mandeville tells the story of the Euphrates. *Gihon*, was the name of one of the four rivers of Eden (Gen. 2:13). ↵

367. Everywhere. ↵

368. Furious. ↵

369. Dear. ↵

370. Pain. [↵](#)

371. Confessed. [↵](#)

372. Raise, build. [↵](#)

373. Scarcely. [↵](#)

374. Foundation. [↵](#)

375. Habitation. [↵](#)

376. For Christ's sake that ravaged hell; see [note 1083](#). [↵](#)

377. Know how to do. [↵](#)

378. Elisha. [↵](#)

379. Mad. [↵](#)

380. Mr. Wright says that "it was a common practice to grant under the conventual seal to benefactors and others a brotherly participation in the spiritual good works of the convent, and in their expected reward after death." [↵](#)

381. Divide. [↵](#)

382. Quibbling. [↵](#)

383. Horse. [↵](#)

384. Fierce. [↵](#)

385. Purpose. [↵](#)

386. Suffer. [↵](#)

387. Servants. [↵](#)

388. Countenance. ↵
389. Dwelt. ↵
390. With difficulty. ↵
391. Save. ↵
392. Grievance, grief. ↵
393. Reward you. ↵
394. No matter. ↵
395. Befallen. ↵
396. Do. ↵
397. Be not impatient, out of temper. ↵
398. Thrive. ↵
399. Sort of frenzy. ↵
400. Revenged. ↵
401. Speak discreditably of him everywhere. ↵
402. Believe. ↵
403. Arithmetic. ↵
404. Foolish; French, *niais*. ↵
405. Curse. ↵
406. Ill-favour attend him (the churl). ↵
407. Foolish; French, *niais*. ↵

408. Thrive. ↵

409. Little. ↵

410. Judge, decide. ↵

411. Divided. ↵

412. Impiously, wickedly. ↵

413. Displeased. ↵

414. Cloth for a gown. ↵

415. Equally. ↵

416. Cause. ↵

417. The regular number of monks or friars in a convent was fixed at twelve, with a superior, in imitation of the apostles and their Master; and large religious houses were held to consist of so many convents. ↵

418. Complete. ↵

419. Carefully, steadily. ↵

420. Tight. ↵

421. Drum. ↵

422. Go. ↵

423. Sophism. ↵

424. Livelier mien. ↵

425. Faith. ↵

- !426. Rod; as the emblem of government or direction. [↵](#)
- !427. Boldly, truly. [↵](#)
- !428. Francesco Petrarca, born 1304, died 1374; for his Latin epic poem on the career of Scipio, called *Africa*, he was solemnly crowned with the poetic laurel in the Capitol of Rome, on Easter-day of 1341. [↵](#)
- !429. Was called. [↵](#)
- !430. An eminent jurist and philosopher, now almost forgotten, who died four or five years after Petrarch. [↵](#)
- !431. Saluzzo, a district of Savoy; its marquises were celebrated during the Middle Ages. [↵](#)
- !432. The region called Aemilia, across which ran the Via Aemilia—made by M. Aemilius Lepidus, who was consul at Rome BC 187. It continued the Flaminian Way from Ariminum (Rimini) across the Po at Placentia (Piacenza) to Mediolanum (Milan), traversing Cisalpine Gaul. [↵](#)
- !433. Narrate. [↵](#)
- !434. Irrelevant. [↵](#)
- !435. Petrarch, in his Latin romance, *De obedientia et fide uxoria Mythologia*, translated the charming story of “the patient Grizel” from the Italian of Boccaccio’s *Decameron*; and Chaucer has closely followed Petrarch’s translation, made in 1373, the year before that in which he died. The fact that the embassy to Genoa, on which Chaucer was sent, took place in 1372–73, has lent countenance to the opinion that the English poet did actually visit the Italian bard at Padua, and hear the story from his own lips. This, however, is only a probability; for it is a moot point whether the two poets ever met. [↵](#)

436. Monte Viso, a lofty peak at the junction of the Maritime and Cottian Alps; from two springs on its east side rises the Po. ↵

437. Pleasant. ↵

438. Ancestors. ↵

439. Long. ↵

440. Held in reverence. ↵

441. Commonalty. ↵

442. Guide, rule. ↵

443. Pleasure. ↵

444. All in a flock or body. ↵

445. Complain of. ↵

446. Although. ↵

447. As pleaseth you. ↵

448. Completely satisfied, at ease. ↵

449. Smiteth. ↵

450. Mind, desire. ↵

451. Command. ↵

452. Least. ↵

453. Doubt. ↵

454. Cease, become extinct. ↵

455. Alive. ↵

456. Before. ↵

457. Servitude. ↵

458. Goodness. ↵

459. Stock, race. ↵

460. Commend to him. ↵

461. Honour. ↵

462. Murmur. ↵

463. Unless. ↵

464. Were in fear or doubt. ↵

465. Certainly. ↵

466. Obediently; Anglo-Saxon, *bogsom*, old English, *boughsome*, that can be easily bent or bowed; German, *biegsam*, pliant, obedient. ↵

467. Provide. ↵

468. That. ↵

469. Prepared; resolved on. ↵

470. Hamlet. ↵

471. Dwelling. ↵

472. Luxurious pleasure. ↵

473. Of water than of wine. ↵

474. Because. ↵
475. Steadfast and mature spirit. ↵
476. Plants, cabbages. ↵
477. Up, aloft. ↵
478. Times. ↵
479. By chance. ↵
480. Serious. ↵
481. Countenance, demeanour. ↵
482. Consider. ↵
483. Goodness. ↵
484. Caused. ↵
485. Benefit. ↵
486. Afternoon, or evening; see [note 2024](#). ↵
487. Prepared, designed. ↵
488. Strive. ↵
489. Steady. ↵
490. With humble air. ↵
491. Delay. ↵
492. Fetched. ↵
493. Go. ↵

494. Born. [↵](#)

495. Event. [↵](#)

496. Amazed. [↵](#)

497. Scarcely. [↵](#)

498. Conference. [↵](#)

499. Hearing. [↵](#)

500. Before. [↵](#)

ENDNOTES 2,501–3,000

501. Astonished. [↵](#)

502. Accustomed, wont. [↵](#)

503. Push on, pursue. [↵](#)

504. True; French *vraie*. [↵](#)

505. Consider. [↵](#)

506. Pleasure. [↵](#)

507. Cause. [↵](#)

508. Murmur. [↵](#)

509. Offer. [↵](#)

510. Die. [↵](#)

511. Strip. [↵](#)

512. Loose, unplaited. [↵](#)

513. Ornaments of some kind not precisely known; some editions read “ouches,” studs, brooches. [↵](#)

514. Scarcely. [↵](#)

515. Delayed. ↵

516. Grown. ↵

517. Scarcely believed. ↵

518. Qualities. ↵

519. Worthy. ↵

520. Virtue. ↵

521. Seldom. ↵

522. Knew, understood, all the duty of performance. ↵

523. She could well labour for the public advantage. ↵

524. Not. ↵

525. At feud. ↵

526. Weened, imagined. ↵

527. Though she had rather. ↵

528. Male. ↵

529. Little while. ↵

530. Steadfastness, endurance. ↵

531. Try. ↵

532. Causelessly. ↵

533. Alarm, disturb. ↵

534. It ill became him. ↵

535. Believe. ↵

536. Two. ↵

537. Pleasant, loved. ↵

538. Nobles, gentlefolk. ↵

539. Especially. ↵

540. Please. ↵

541. Odious. ↵

542. Knowing. ↵

543. Promised. ↵

544. Changed. ↵

545. Destroy. ↵

546. Be pleasing. ↵

547. Spirit, heart. ↵

548. About as much time as one might take to walk a furlong or two;
a short space. ↵

549. A kind of squire. ↵

550. Confidant, trusty tool. ↵

551. Dreaded. ↵

552. It will not do merely to feign compliance with a lord's commands.
↵

553. Pleasure. ↵

554. Seized. ↵

555. Unpityingly. ↵

556. To make a show, assume an aspect. ↵

557. Ominous. ↵

558. Reputation, evil fame. ↵

559. Thought. ↵

560. Then. ↵

561. Sighed. ↵

562. Lap, bosom. ↵

563. Cross. ↵

564. Commit unto him. ↵

565. Believe. ↵

566. Nurse. ↵

567. Pitiful case, sight. ↵

568. Unless. ↵

569. Tear; French, *arracher*. ↵

570. Demeanour. ↵

571. Strike. ↵

572. Panico. ↵

573. Constantly. ↵

574. Steadfast. ↵
575. Sort of way. ↵
576. No change of humour resulting from her affliction. ↵
577. Male, boy. ↵
578. Praise. ↵
579. Taken, weaned. ↵
580. Was seized by yet another desire. ↵
581. Trial. ↵
582. Know no moderation. ↵
583. Do not regard with pleasure. Compare the Latin phrase, “*aegre ferre*.” ↵
584. Especially. ↵
585. Sorely, painfully. ↵
586. Doubt. ↵
587. Expression of opinion. ↵
588. Complain in my hearing. ↵
589. Before. ↵
590. Become outrageous, rave. ↵
591. Advice. ↵
592. Will. ↵

593. Will. ↵
594. Saw. ↵
595. Seized. ↵
596. Unvaryingly. ↵
597. Bury. ↵
598. Recked, cared. ↵
599. Thought. ↵
600. Disposition. ↵
601. Steadfast, unmoved. ↵
602. Stubborn, stern. ↵
603. Cease. ↵
604. Slacken, abate. ↵
605. Spirit. ↵
606. Devoted, full of painstaking in duty. ↵
607. Pleased. ↵
608. Because. ↵
609. Evil repute, reproach. ↵
610. Desist, stop. ↵
611. Messenger; for French *messenger*. ↵
612. Pleased. ↵

613. Leave. ↵
614. Put an end to. ↵
615. Thought, believed. ↵
616. Steadfast. ↵
617. To the utmost extent of her power. ↵
618. Then. ↵
619. As if for. ↵
620. While all this was going on. ↵
621. Knowledge. ↵
622. Immediately make vacant. ↵
623. That. ↵
624. Counsel. ↵
625. Not to be denied. ↵
626. Worthy. ↵
627. Chambermaid. ↵
628. Surely. ↵
629. Nobility. ↵
630. Recompense, reward. ↵
631. Go. ↵
632. Doubt. ↵

633. Forbid. [↵](#)

634. Mate. [↵](#)

635. At all events. [↵](#)

636. Raiment. [↵](#)

637. Cheerfully. [↵](#)

638. Naked. [↵](#)

639. Dishonourable. [↵](#)

640. That. [↵](#)

641. Reward. [↵](#)

642. Reward. [↵](#)

643. Cover. [↵](#)

644. With difficulty. [↵](#)

645. Gone. [↵](#)

646. Go. [↵](#)

647. Dry. [↵](#)

648. Formed, ordained. [↵](#)

649. Had gratified his inclination. [↵](#)

650. Disparagement. [↵](#)

651. Dismiss, get rid of. [↵](#)

652. To meet. [↵](#)

653. Cause it to meet. ↵
654. Many; German, *viel*. ↵
655. To judge from. ↵
656. Spirit. ↵
657. Full. ↵
658. Particularly. ↵
659. Little. ↵
660. Unless it has lately come to pass. ↵
661. Arranged. ↵
662. Messenger. ↵
663. Innocent. ↵
664. Mind. ↵
665. Command. ↵
666. Greeted. ↵
667. What befits his condition. ↵
668. Pleasure. ↵
669. Poor to look on. ↵
670. In the quickest manner. ↵
671. Spirit. ↵
672. Cease. ↵

- .673. Arrange. ↵
- .674. Took all pains, used every exertion. ↵
- .675. Eventide, or afternoon; though by some *undern* is understood as dinnertime—9 a.m. ↵
- .676. So rich to behold. ↵
- .677. For the first time. ↵
- .678. Pleased. ↵
- .679. Think. ↵
- .680. Variable. ↵
- .681. A small coin of little value. ↵
- .682. Judgement. ↵
- .683. Proveth. ↵
- .684. Sedate. ↵
- .685. Ashamed. ↵
- .686. Torn. ↵
- .687. Cleverly, skilfully. ↵
- .688. Knew, understood how to do. ↵
- .689. Ceased. ↵
- .690. Thought. ↵
- .691. Faith. ↵

692. Me. "This is one of the most licentious corruptions of orthography," says Tyrwhitt, "that I remember to have observed in Chaucer;" but such liberties were common among the European poets of his time, when there was an extreme lack of certainty in orthography. ↵

693. Although. ↵

694. Steadfast. ↵

695. Prepare, incline. ↵

696. Afraid nor displeased. ↵

697. Notice, heed. ↵

698. Awoke. ↵

699. Lost. ↵

700. Care. ↵

701. No matter for. ↵

702. Departs. ↵

703. Believed firmly. ↵

704. Caused you to be preserved. ↵

705. Instant. ↵

706. Fell. ↵

707. Firmly. ↵

708. Art. ↵

709. Pluck away, withdraw. ↵

710. Scarcely. ↵

711. Assuages. ↵

712. Astonished. ↵

713. Together. ↵

714. Saw. ↵

715. Firmament. ↵

716. Expense; sumptuousness. ↵

717. Although. ↵

718. Not to be denied. ↵

719. The fourteen lines that follow are translated almost literally from Petrarch's Latin. ↵

720. Impossible; not to be borne. ↵

721. Goodwill. ↵

722. For it is most reasonable that He should prove or test that which he made. ↵

723. Doubt. ↵

724. Alloys. ↵

725. To view. ↵

726. Bend. ↵

727. Damage, pity. ↵

728. Chichevache, in old popular fable, was a monster that fed on good women, and was always very thin from scarcity of such food; a corresponding monster, Bycorne, fed only on obedient and kind husbands, and was always fat. The origin of the fable was French; but Lydgate has a ballad on the subject.
Chichevache literally means “niggardly” “greedy cow.” ↵
729. Counter-tally or counterfoil; something exactly corresponding. ↵
730. Befooled. ↵
731. Helm. ↵
732. Wives of rank. ↵
733. Camel. ↵
734. Forepart of a helmet, vizor. ↵
735. Advise. ↵
736. Submit, shrink. ↵
737. Linden, lime-tree. ↵
738. Though the manner in which the Merchant takes up the closing words of the Envoy to the “Clerk’s Tale,” and refers to the patience of Griselda, seems to prove beyond doubt that the order of the tales in the text is the right one, yet in some manuscripts of good authority the “Franklin’s Tale” follows the “Clerk’s,” and the “Envoy” is concluded by this stanza:—
- “This worthy Clerk when ended was his tale,
Our Hoste said, and swore by cocke’s bones
‘Me lever were than a barrel of ale
My wife at home had heard this legend once;
This is a gentle tale for the nonce;
As, to my purpose, wiste ye my will.

But thing that will not be, let it be still.’”

In other manuscripts of less authority the Host proceeds, in two similar stanzas, to impose a “Tale” on the Franklin; but Tyrwhitt is probably right in setting them aside as spurious, and in admitting the genuineness of the first only, if it be supposed that Chaucer forgot to cancel it when he had decided on another mode of connecting the “Merchant’s” with the “Clerk’s Tale.” ↵

!739. Believe. ↵

!740. Thoroughly. ↵

!741. So many I thrive! ↵

!742. Again. ↵

!743. Guard, forbid. ↵

!744. Believe. ↵

!745. Wickedness, shrewishness. ↵

!746. If, as is probable, this “Tale” was translated from the French, the original is not now extant. Tyrwhitt remarks that the scene “is laid in Italy, but none of the names, except Damian and Justin, seem to be Italian, but rather made at pleasure; so that I doubt whether the story be really of Italian growth. The adventure of the pear-tree I find in a small collection of Latin fables, written by one Adoiphus, in elegiac verses of his fashion, in the year 1315.... Whatever was the real origin of the ‘Tale,’ the machinery of the fairies, which Chaucer has used so happily, was probably added by himself; and, indeed, I cannot help thinking that his Pluto and Proserpina were the true progenitors of Oberon and Titania; or rather, that they themselves have, once at least, deigned to revisit our poetical system under the latter names.” ↵

747. Of the laity; but perhaps, since the word is of twofold meaning, Chaucer intends a hit at the secular clergy, who, unlike the regular orders, did not live separate from the world, but shared in all its interests and pleasures—all the more easily and freely, that they had not the civil restraint of marriage. ↵

748. Inclination. ↵

749. True. ↵

750. Especially. ↵

751. Mirth, delight. ↵

752. Becomes, befits. ↵

753. Think that there is security. ↵

754. Check, control. ↵

755. Obedient. ↵

756. Care for, attend to. ↵

757. Mate. ↵

758. Die. ↵

759. Those. ↵

760. What matter. ↵

761. Thrift. This and the next eight lines are taken from the *Liber aureolus Theophrasti de nuptiis*, quoted by Hieronymus, *Contra Jovinianum*, and thence again by John of Salisbury. ↵

762. Servant. ↵

763. Better. [↵](#)

764. Waits on, longs to have. [↵](#)

765. Heed, notice. [↵](#)

766. Distrust. [↵](#)

767. Truly. [↵](#)

768. Common land. [↵](#)

769. Movables, furniture, etc.; French, *meubles*. [↵](#)

770. Doubt. [↵](#)

771. Perhaps. [↵](#)

772. Ruined. [↵](#)

773. Who are not of the clergy. [↵](#)

774. Prove. [↵](#)

775. Obedient, complying. [↵](#)

776. Labour. [↵](#)

777. Whit. [↵](#)

778. Pleaseth. [↵](#)

779. Security. [↵](#)

780. Counsel. [↵](#)

781. Counsel. [↵](#)

782. Benediction. [↵](#)

783. Advanced in dignity. ↵

784. To be esteemed in the highest degree. ↵

785. Bade. ↵

786. Work. ↵

787. Thrive. ↵

788. Let men jest and laugh as they will. ↵

789. Sure. ↵

790. Especially. ↵

791. Grave, earnest. ↵

792. Grave's. ↵

793. Arrange, contrive. ↵

794. Try. ↵

795. Sooner. ↵

796. Young pike. ↵

797. Know. ↵

798. "Wade's boat" was called Guingelot; and in it, according to the old romance, the owner underwent a long series of wild adventures, and performed many strange exploits. The romance is lost, and therefore the exact force of the phrase in the text is uncertain; but Mr. Wright seems to be warranted in supposing that Wade's adventures were cited as examples of craft and cunning—that the hero, in fact, was a kind of Northern Ulysses, It is possible that to the same source we may trace the

proverbial phrase, found in Chaucer's "Remedy of Love," to
"bear Wattis pack" signifying to be duped or beguiled. [↵](#)

799. So much mischief can they perform, employ. [↵](#)

800. Pleases. [↵](#)

801. Guide. [↵](#)

802. Bend, mould. [↵](#)

803. Adultery. [↵](#)

804. I would rather. [↵](#)

805. Trouble. [↵](#)

806. Boast. [↵](#)

807. Strong. [↵](#)

808. Grown. [↵](#)

809. See. [↵](#)

810. Constantly, every day. [↵](#)

811. Depart, deviate. [↵](#)

812. Surely. [↵](#)

813. Advice, encouragement. [↵](#)

814. Knows. [↵](#)

815. Judgement, sentiment. [↵](#)

816. In every point. [↵](#)

817. Satisfied. ↵

818. Advanced; past participle of “step.” Elsewhere “y-stepped in age” is used by Chaucer. ↵

819. Consider. ↵

820. Given to drink. ↵

821. A scold. ↵

822. Mad. ↵

823. Sound in every point. ↵

824. Describe, tell. ↵

825. Qualities. ↵

826. Especially. ↵

827. Company. ↵

828. Pinches. ↵

829. Especially. ↵

830. Company. ↵

831. Displeased. ↵

832. Ill-natured, wicked. ↵

833. Hindereth. ↵

834. Imprint themselves. ↵

835. Stay, fix his choice. ↵

836. Sedateness. [↵](#)
837. Sedateness. [↵](#)
838. Had selected her. [↵](#)
839. In quest of a wife for him, as they had promised. [↵](#)
840. He had definitively made his choice. [↵](#)
841. First of all. [↵](#)
842. Asked a favour, made a request. [↵](#)
843. Although. [↵](#)
844. Have a share. [↵](#)
845. Long. [↵](#)
846. That tree of original sin, of which the special sins are the branches. [↵](#)
847. Comfort and pleasure. [↵](#)
848. Alarmed, afraid. [↵](#)
849. Lives eternally. [↵](#)
850. Doubt. [↵](#)
851. Resolve, answer. [↵](#)
852. Mockery, jesting way. [↵](#)
853. Written texts. [↵](#)
854. Work. [↵](#)

855. Unless. ↵
856. This is the best counsel that I know. ↵
857. Hinder. ↵
858. Pleasures. ↵
859. Moderately. ↵
860. Alarmed, afraid. ↵
861. Was named. ↵
862. Writing and bond. ↵
863. Crossed. ↵
864. Prayed that. ↵
865. Secure. ↵
866. Delicate. ↵
867. Poured out; from Anglo-Saxon, *scencan*. ↵
868. Marcius Capella, who wrote a kind of philosophical romance, *De Nuptiis Mercurii et Philologiae*. “Her” and “him,” two lines after, like “he” applied to Theodomas, are prefixed to the proper names for emphasis, according to the Anglo-Saxon usage. ↵
869. That same, that. ↵
870. Know. ↵
871. Countenance. ↵
872. Afraid. ↵

873. Gone away. ↵
874. Mad. ↵
875. Fainted. ↵
876. Bewail. ↵
877. Domestic; belonging to the *familia*, or household. ↵
878. Offers. ↵
879. Domestic servant; from Anglo-Saxon, *hiwa*. Tyrwhitt reads “false of holy hue;” but Mr. Wright has properly restored the reading adopted in the text. ↵
880. Born; owing to January faith and loyalty because born in his household. ↵
881. Dishonour, outrage. ↵
882. Enemy in the household. ↵
883. Diurnal. ↵
884. Pleasant company. ↵
885. Eager. ↵
886. Spiced wine. ↵
887. A wine believed to have come from Crete, although its name—Italian, *Vernaccia*—seems to be derived from Verona. ↵
888. A medical author who wrote about 1080; his works were printed at Basle in 1536. ↵
889. Curtains. ↵

- .890. Mate, consort. [↵](#)
- .891. Dogfish. [↵](#)
- .892. Briar. [↵](#)
- .893. No matter. [↵](#)
- .894. Wantonness. [↵](#)
- .895. Quavered in his singing. [↵](#)
- .896. Discover, betray. [↵](#)
- .897. Risk. [↵](#)
- .898. Writing-case, carried about by clerks or scholars. [↵](#)
- .899. That. [↵](#)
- .900. Nearly all the manuscripts read “in two of Taure;” but Tyrwhitt has shown that, setting out from the second degree of Taurus, the moon, which in the four complete days that Maius spent in her chamber could not have advanced more than fifty-three degrees, would only have been at the twenty-fifth degree of Gemini—whereas, by reading “ten,” she is brought to the third degree of Cancer. [↵](#)
- .901. Hindered. [↵](#)
- .902. Grieves, causes uneasiness. [↵](#)
- .903. Secret, trusty. [↵](#)
- .904. When only I have rested me a little. [↵](#)
- .905. Then. [↵](#)

- .906. Saw. ↵
- .907. Or *kidde*, past participle of “kythe” or “kithe,” to show or discover. ↵
- .908. Fragments. ↵
- .909. Is thoughtful. ↵
- .910. Whether she were willing or reluctant. ↵
- .911. Precise, overnice; French, *precieux*, affected. ↵
- .912. Let him judge. ↵
- .913. To satisfy his desire. ↵
- .914. Generosity. ↵
- .915. Closely consider. ↵
- .916. Die. ↵
- .917. Or “pruned;” carefully trimmed and dressed himself. The word is used in falconry of a hawk when she picks and trims her feathers. ↵
- .918. A dog attending a hunter with the bow. ↵
- .919. Writers, scholars. ↵
- .920. Prepared, arranged. ↵
- .921. Honourably, suitably. ↵
- .922. Which opens with a description of a beautiful garden. ↵
- .923. Tell, describe. ↵

.924. Son of Bacchus and Venus: he was regarded as the promoter of fertility in all agricultural life, vegetable and animal; while not only gardens, but fields, flocks, bees—and even fisheries—were supposed to be under his protection. ↵

.925. Fountain. ↵

.926. Pleasure. ↵

.927. Key. ↵

.928. Unshut, opened. ↵

.929. Deceitful. ↵

.930. Strange. ↵

.931. Both great and small. ↵

.932. Pleasure. ↵

.933. Mate. ↵

.934. He could not cease to be jealous continually. ↵

.935. Unless. ↵

.936. Pleased. ↵

.937. Expected. ↵

.938. Burst. ↵

.939. Unless. ↵

.940. End, aim. ↵

.941. Deceived; by Mercury, see [note 405](#). ↵

.942. Think confidently. [↵](#)

.943. Taken an impression of the key. [↵](#)

.944. Learn. [↵](#)

.945. They exchanged the assurances of their love; came. [↵](#)

.946. Whispering. [↵](#)

.947. It befell, it happened. [↵](#)

.948. Inciting. [↵](#)

.949. Wet. See Song of Solomon, chap. II. [↵](#)

.950. Dove's eyes. [↵](#)

.951. Rather. [↵](#)

.952. Chose. [↵](#)

.953. Covetousness. [↵](#)

.954. Surely. [↵](#)

.955. Blame. [↵](#)

.956. Dissimilar, incompatible. [↵](#)

.957. Die not. [↵](#)

.958. Cause. [↵](#)

.959. Cause. [↵](#)

.960. Drown. [↵](#)

.961. Reproof. [↵](#)

.962. Mate. [↵](#)

.963. Pear-tree. [↵](#)

.964. “That fair field,
 Of Enna, where Proserpine, gath’ring flowers,
 Herself a fairer flow’r, by gloomy Dis
 Was gather’d.”

Milton, Paradise Lost, IV 268.

[↵](#)

.965. Fetched. [↵](#)

.966. Deny. [↵](#)

.967. Inconstancy. [↵](#)

.968. Knows. [↵](#)

.969. Goodness. [↵](#)

.970. See Ecclesiastes 7:28. [↵](#)

.971. Jesus, the son of Sirach, to whom is ascribed one of the books of the Apocrypha—that called the “Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach, or Ecclesiasticus;” in which, especially in the ninth and twenty-fifth chapters, severe cautions are given against women.

[↵](#)

.972. Although. [↵](#)

.973. Confront it, face it out. [↵](#)

.974. Ignorant, confounded. [↵](#)

.975. Histories; such as those of Lucretia, Porcia, etc. [↵](#)

- .976. Opinion, real meaning. ↵
- .977. Perfect goodness. ↵
- .978. Man nor woman. ↵
- .979. Forbidden. ↵
- .980. Plaster over, "whitewash." ↵
- .981. Idolater. ↵
- .982. The true. ↵
- .983. Kingdom. ↵
- .984. Sooner. ↵
- .985. Care not for, value not. ↵
- .986. Praters. ↵
- .987. Enjoy the use of, preserve. ↵
- .988. Becomes, befits. ↵
- .989. Parrot. ↵
- .990. That same pear-tree. ↵
- .991. Unless. ↵
- .992. Servant. ↵
- .993. No matter. ↵
- .994. Twig, bough. ↵
- .995. Mince matters. ↵

.996. At this point, and again some twenty lines below, several verses of a very coarse character had been inserted in later manuscripts; but they are evidently spurious, and are omitted in the best editions. ↵

.997. Unless. ↵

.998. “Store” is the general reading here, but its meaning is not obvious. “Stowre” is found in several manuscripts; it signifies “struggle” or “resist;” and both for its own appropriateness, and for the force which it gives the word “stronge,” the reading in the text seems the better. ↵

.999. Neck. ↵

.000. Glimmering. ↵

ENDNOTES 3,001–3,500

001. Rave, are confused. ↵

002. Dear. ↵

003. Grieved. ↵

004. Think as you please. ↵

005. Notice. ↵

006. Awakened. ↵

007. Who mistakes oft misjudges. ↵

008. Embraced. ↵

009. Led. ↵

010. Then. ↵

011. Truth. ↵

012. Swerve, depart. ↵

013. Blabbering, prating. ↵

014. Moreover. ↵

015. No matter. ↵

016. Know. ↵

017. Secret, confidence. ↵

018. If. ↵

019. Certainly. ↵

020. Foolish. ↵

021. Are adepts at giving circulation to such wares. The Host evidently means that his wife would be sure to hear of his confessions from some female member of the company. ↵

022. Done. ↵

023. Know of it. ↵

024. Pleasure. ↵

025. The “Squire’s Tale” has not been found under any other form among the literary remains of the Middle Ages; and it is unknown from what original it was derived, if from any. The “Tale” is unfinished, not because the conclusion has been lost, but because the author left it so. ↵

026. Made war upon; the Russians and Tartars waged constant hostilities between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries. ↵

027. In the best manuscripts the name is “Cambynskan,” and thus, no doubt, it should strictly be read. But it is a most pardonable offence against literal accuracy to use the word which Milton has made classical, in “Il Penseroso,” speaking of “him that left half-told the story of Cambuscan bold.” Surely the admiration of Milton might well seem to the spirit of Chaucer to condone a much greater transgression on his domain than this verbal

change—which to both eye and ear is an unquestionable improvement on the uncouth original. ↵

028. Moreover, besides. ↵

029. Alike, in even mood. ↵

030. Firm, immovable of spirit. ↵

031. Skill. ↵

032. Orator. ↵

033. Well skilled in using the colours—the word-painting—belonging to his art. ↵

034. Caused his birthday festival to be proclaimed, ordered by proclamation. ↵

035. Aries was the mansion of Mars—to whom “his” applies. Leo was the mansion of the Sun. ↵

036. Pleasant. ↵

037. Bright. ↵

038. Like. ↵

039. Relate. ↵

040. Dishes, or soups. The precise force of the word is uncertain; but it may be connected with *seethe*, to boil, and it seems to describe a dish in which the flesh was served up amid a kind of broth or gravy. The “sewer,” taster or assayer of the viands served at great tables, probably derived his name from the verb to “say” or “assay;” though Tyrwhitt would connect the two words, by taking both from the French, *asseoir*, to place—

making the arrangement of the table the leading duty of the
“sewer,” rather than the testing of the food. ↵

041. Young herons; French, *heronneaux*. ↵

042. Care for. ↵

043. Story, discourse; French, *propos*. ↵

044. Noble, brave array. ↵

045. Watched. ↵

046. Celebrated in medieval romance as the most courteous among
King Arthur’s knights. ↵

047. Could not better him by one word. ↵

048. Fault. ↵

049. Demeanour. ↵

050. Learn. ↵

051. The general sense of meaning. ↵

052. This is the sum of. ↵

053. Command. ↵

054. Pass, go. ↵

055. Hurt, injury. ↵

056. It pleases you. ↵

057. Twisting. ↵

058. Knew. ↵

059. Contrivance; trick; snare. Compare Italian, *inganno*, deception; and our own “engine.” ↵
060. Observed. ↵
061. Mr. Wright remarks that “the making and arrangement of seals was one of the important operations of medieval magic.” ↵
062. Speech, sound. ↵
063. Remedy. ↵
064. The same. ↵
065. Deceit. ↵
066. Seated at table. ↵
067. Fetched. ↵
068. Removed; French, *remuer*, to stir. ↵
069. Pulley. ↵
070. Know not the cunning of the mechanism. ↵
071. Remove. ↵
072. Gaze. ↵
073. Apulian. The horses of Apulia—in old French *Poille*, in Italian *Puglia*—were held in high value. ↵
074. Weened, thought. ↵
075. Bees. ↵
076. Reasons. ↵

077. Pegasus. ↵
078. The wooden horse of the Greek Sinon, introduced into Troy by the stratagem of its maker. ↵
079. Narratives of exploits and adventures. ↵
080. Design, prepare. ↵
081. Whispered. ↵
082. Ignorant. ↵
083. Are ready to think the worst. ↵
084. Chief tower; as, in the “Knight’s Tale,” the principal street is called the “master street.” See [note 841](#). ↵
085. Two writers on optics—the first supposed to have lived about 1100, the other about 1270. Tyrwhitt says that their works were printed at Basle in 1572, under the title *Alhazeni et Vitellonis Opticae*. ↵
086. Curious. ↵
087. Wound. Telephus, a son of Hercules, reigned over Mysia when the Greeks came to besiege Troy, and he sought to prevent their landing. But, by the art of Dionysus, he was made to stumble over a vine, and Achilles wounded him with his spear. The oracle informed Telephus that the hurt could be healed only by him, or by the weapon, that inflicted it; and the king, seeking the Grecian camp, was healed by Achilles with the rust of the charmed spear. ↵
088. However. ↵
089. Had a reputation for knowledge. ↵

090. Because. ↵
091. Before; a corruption of *forne*, from Anglo-Saxon, *foran*. ↵
092. Known. ↵
093. Or Aldebaran; a star in the neck of the constellation Leo. ↵
094. Presence-chamber, or chamber of state, full of splendid furniture and ornaments. The same expression is used in French and Italian. ↵
095. In Pisces, Venus was said to be at her exaltation or greatest power. See [note 1988](#). ↵
096. Soon. ↵
097. Tell, describe. ↵
098. Merry, gay. ↵
099. Unfamiliar, strange; from *conne*, to know. See [note 7](#). ↵
100. The pantomimic gestures of the dance. ↵
101. Arthur's famous knight, so accomplished and courtly, that he was held the very pink of chivalry. ↵
102. Pleasantness. ↵
103. Haste. ↵
104. Greatest. ↵
105. Then. ↵
106. Mode of managing him. ↵
107. Turn; akin to "thirl," "drill." ↵

108. Contrivance. ↵

109. Call. ↵

110. Another reading is “bide,” alight or remain. ↵

111. Cherished. ↵

112. Know not. ↵

113. Entertaining; French, *festoyer*, to feast. ↵

114. Nurse. ↵

115. Heed. ↵

116. Yawning. ↵

117. Kissed. ↵

118. The old physicians held that blood dominated in the human body late at night and in the early morning. Galen says that the domination lasts for seven hours. ↵

119. Fumes of wine rising from the stomach to the head. ↵

120. Which are of no significance. ↵

121. Broad forenoon, dinnertime. ↵

122. Except. ↵

123. Moderate. ↵

124. She did not choose to be made pale. ↵

125. To look sad, depressed. ↵

126. Curious. ↵

127. Tutoressees, governesses. ↵

128. Pleasant. ↵

129. Sweet. ↵

130. Servants, household. ↵

131. A path cut out. ↵

132. Glided. ↵

133. Be lightened, gladdened. ↵

134. Knew. ↵

135. Nucleus, chief matter. ↵

136. Delayed. ↵

137. Inclination, zest. ↵

138. For a long time. ↵

139. Thoroughly dried up. ↵

140. From top to bottom of. ↵

141. Incessantly. ↵

142. Shrieked. ↵

143. Picked, wounded. ↵

144. Describe. ↵

145. Foreign, strange; German, *fremd*; in the northern dialects, *frem*, or *fremmed*, is used in the same sense. ↵

146. Curious. ↵

147. Language, dialect; from Anglo-Saxon, *leden* or *laeden*, a corruption from “Latin.” ↵

148. Pity. ↵

149. Twig, bough. ↵

150. Raging, furious. ↵

151. Believe. ↵

152. Revenge. ↵

153. Fear. ↵

154. Have mercy on yourself. ↵

155. Distress. ↵

156. Surely. ↵

157. Nature. ↵

158. Awoke. ↵

159. By experience as by text or doctrine. ↵

160. Show with. ↵

161. Better. ↵

162. Instructed, corrected. ↵

163. Depart. ↵

164. As if she would dissolve into water. ↵

165. To her. ↵
166. Same. ↵
167. The *tassel*, or male of any species of hawk; so called, according to Cotgrave, because he is one third (“tiers”) smaller than the female. ↵
168. Although he was. ↵
169. Under an aspect, mien, of humility. ↵
170. Are consonant to. ↵
171. Foolish, simple. ↵
172. Greatly afraid lest he should die. ↵
173. Both privately and in public. ↵
174. In no other way, on no other terms. ↵
175. Do not think alike. ↵
176. Mien. ↵
177. First of all. “And Lamech took unto him two wives: the name of the one Adah, and the name of the other Zillah” (Gen. 4:19). ↵
178. Sophistries, beguilements. ↵
179. Shoe; it seems to have been used in France, of a *sabot*, or wooden shoe. The reader cannot fail to recall the same illustration in John 1:27, where the Baptist says of Christ: “He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me; whose shoe’s latchet I am not worthy to unloose.” ↵
180. Combed, studied. ↵

181. With perfect precision. ↵
182. Pained. ↵
183. Little. ↵
184. So far did this go. ↵
185. Fell; allowed. ↵
186. So dear, or dearer. ↵
187. Depart, separate. ↵
188. Whether. ↵
189. Stay; another form is *bleve*; from Anglo-Saxon, *belitan*, to remain. Compare German, *bleiben*. ↵
190. Witness, pledge. ↵
191. Better. ↵
192. This sentiment, as well as the illustration of the bird which follows, is taken from the third book of Boethius, *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, metrum 2. It has thus been rendered in Chaucer's translation: "All things seek aye to their proper course, and all things rejoice on their returning again to their nature." ↵
193. Men, by their own—their very—nature, are fond of novelty, and prone to inconstancy. ↵
194. Immediately on his door being opened. ↵
195. Lost, undone. ↵
196. Again. ↵

197. Lap. [↵](#)

198. Gladden. [↵](#)

199. Cage. [↵](#)

200. Blue velvets. Blue was the colour of truth, as green was that of inconstancy. In John Stowe's additions to Chaucer's works, printed in 1561, there is "A balade whiche Chaucer made against women inconstaunt," of which the refrain is, "In stead of blue, thus may ye wear all green." [↵](#)

201. Supposed to be the titmouse. [↵](#)

202. Again, presently. [↵](#)

203. Had he not. [↵](#)

204. Unless we suppose this to be a namesake of the Camballo who was Canace's brother—which is not at all probable—we must agree with Tyrwhitt that there is a mistake here; which no doubt Chaucer would have rectified, if the tale had not been "left half-told," One manuscript reads "Caballo;" and though not much authority need be given to a difference that may be due to mere omission of the mark of contraction over the "a," there is enough in the text to show that another person than the king's younger son is intended. The Squire promises to tell the adventures that befell each member of Cambuscan's family; and in thorough consistency with this plan, and with the canons of chivalric story, would be "the marriage of Canace to some knight who was first obliged to fight for her with her two brethren; a method of courtship," adds Tyrwhitt, "very consonant to the spirit of ancient chivalry." [↵](#)

205. In the older editions, the verses here given as the prologue were prefixed to the "Merchant's Tale," and put into his mouth. Tyrwhitt was abundantly justified, by the internal evidence

afforded by the lines themselves, in transferring them to their present place. ↵

206. Allow, approve. ↵

207. So far as my judgement goes. ↵

208. Value, esteem. ↵

209. It were dearer to me; I would rather. ↵

210. Unless. ↵

211. Rebuked; “snubbed.” ↵

212. Apply himself. ↵

213. Knowest. ↵

214. Promise. ↵

215. The “Breton Lays” were an important and curious element in the literature of the Middle Ages; they were originally composed in the Armorican language, and the chief collection of them extant was translated into French verse by a poetess calling herself “Marie,” about the middle of the thirteenth century. But though this collection was the most famous, and had doubtless been read by Chaucer, there were other British or Breton lays, and from one of those the “Franklin’s Tale” is taken. Boccaccio has dealt with the same story in the *Decameron* and the *Philocopo*, altering the circumstances to suit the removal of its scene to a southern clime. ↵

216. Rude, unlearned. ↵

217. Doubt. ↵

218. Strange. ↵

219. Devoted himself, strove. ↵
220. Hardly, for fear that she would not entertain his suit. ↵
221. Especially. ↵
222. Suffering, distress. ↵
223. Show. ↵
224. Would to God there may never be war or strife between us,
through my fault. ↵
225. Burst. ↵
226. Perhaps the true reading is “beteth”—prepares, makes ready,
his wings for flight. ↵
227. By nature. ↵
228. Slave. ↵
229. Enjoys the highest advantages of all. ↵
230. Prosper. ↵
231. The influence of the planets. ↵
232. Revenged. ↵
233. According to. ↵
234. Is capable of. ↵
235. Promised. ↵
236. Surely. ↵

237. On the west coast of Brittany, between Brest and L'Orient. The name is composed of two British words, *pen*, mountain, and *mark*, region; it therefore means the mountainous country ↵

238. Delight. ↵

239. Unless. ↵

240. "The red city;" it is not known where it was situated. ↵

241. Prepared, arranged. ↵

242. Pleasure. ↵

243. Cease speaking. ↵

244. Sigheth. ↵

245. Assiduity. ↵

246. To diminish, slacken. ↵

247. Saw. ↵

248. Part. ↵

249. Cured; French, *guérir*, to heal, or recover from sickness. ↵

250. Black. ↵

251. Look out on the sea. ↵

252. Painful sighs. ↵

253. Idly, in vain. ↵

254. Works mischief; from Latin, *nocco*, I hurt. ↵

255. Though they are forgotten. ↵

256. Image. ↵
257. Love, affection; from French, *cher*, dear. ↵
258. Pleaseth. ↵
259. That. ↵
260. Provision, arrangement. ↵
261. So much to be valued or praised. ↵
262. Unless. ↵
263. In my judgement. ↵
264. Unless. ↵
265. Esteem, value. ↵
266. Without the knowledge. ↵
267. Fortune. ↵
268. Betray. ↵
269. Ballads; the *virelai* was an ancient French poem of two rhymes.
↵
270. Thence; from the garden. ↵
271. For a long time. ↵
272. Gladden. ↵
273. Reward. ↵
274. Buried. ↵

- 275. Cause me to die. [↵](#)
- 276. Before. [↵](#)
- 277. That. [↵](#)
- 278. Playfully, in jest. [↵](#)
- 279. From end to end of. [↵](#)
- 280. Prevent. [↵](#)
- 281. Value, pleasure. [↵](#)
- 282. Sigheth. [↵](#)
- 283. Escape. [↵](#)
- 284. Prayer. [↵](#)
- 285. Wandered, went. [↵](#)
- 286. Dwelling, situation. [↵](#)
- 287. Compassionate. [↵](#)
- 288. Undone. [↵](#)
- 289. Unless. [↵](#)
- 290. Pleaseth. [↵](#)
- 291. Tell, explain. [↵](#)
- 292. Helped. [↵](#)
- 293. Diana the bright. See [note 592](#). [↵](#)
- 294. Quickened. [↵](#)

295. Cause. ↵
296. Burst. ↵
297. Promise. ↵
298. If she do not. ↵
299. Distress. ↵
300. Whether. ↵
301. He cared not to fancy. ↵
302. Fear, suspicion. ↵
303. Occupied himself with. ↵
304. Scholar, man in holy orders. ↵
305. In a Latin poem, very popular in Chaucer's time, Pamphilus relates his amour with Galatea, setting out with the idea adopted by our poet in the lines that follow. ↵
306. A wound healed on the surface, but festering beneath. ↵
307. Except. ↵
308. Where there was a celebrated and very famous university, afterwards eclipsed by that of Paris. It was founded by Philip le Bel in 1312. ↵
309. Eager, curious. ↵
310. Every nook and corner. Anglo-Saxon, *healc*, a nook; *hyrn*, a corner. ↵
311. Saw. ↵

312. Though. ↵

313. Belief, creed. ↵

314. Cured. ↵

315. Certain. ↵

316. Tricksters, jugglers. The word is probably derived—in *treget*, deceit or imposture—from the French *trebuchet*, a military machine; since it is evident that much and elaborate machinery must have been employed to produce the effects afterwards described. Another derivation is from the Low Latin, *tricator*, a deceiver. ↵

317. Vanished, removed. ↵

318. Learned man. ↵

319. Vanished, removed. ↵

320. Cured. ↵

321. Keep her promise. ↵

322. Gone. ↵

323. Eased of, released from; another form of “less” or “lessen.” ↵

324. All but. ↵

325. Civilly. ↵

326. Greeted. ↵

327. Days. ↵

328. Gone, removed. ↵

329. Passed away. ↵
330. The river, formed by the union of the Dordogne and Garonne, on which Bourdeaux stands. ↵
331. A matter of difficulty. See [note 1247](#). ↵
332. And even for that sum he would not willingly go to work. ↵
333. Agreed. ↵
334. I pledge my faith on it. ↵
335. Had a respite, relief, from anguish. ↵
336. Coloured like copper or latten. ↵
337. Beams. ↵
338. Courtyard, garden. ↵
339. *Noel*, the French for Christmas—derived from *natalis*, and signifying that on that day Christ was born—came to be used as a festive cry by the people on solemn occasions. ↵
340. Pity. ↵
341. Tricks. ↵
342. Detestable villany. ↵
343. Toledan tables; the astronomical tables composed by order Of Alphonso II, King of Castile, about 1250 and so called because they were adapted to the city of Toledo. ↵
344. “Alnath,” Says Mr. Wright, was “the first star in the horns of Aries, whence the first mansion of the moon is named.” ↵

345. Wicked devices. [↵](#)
346. Another and better reading is “a week or two.” [↵](#)
347. Whether. [↵](#)
348. Removed. [↵](#)
349. Fearful. [↵](#)
350. Mien. [↵](#)
351. Distress, affliction. [↵](#)
352. Bewail. [↵](#)
353. Promised. [↵](#)
354. Cause. [↵](#)
355. Die. [↵](#)
356. Scarcely. [↵](#)
357. Complain. [↵](#)
358. Sooner, rather. [↵](#)
359. I may certainly purchase my exemption. [↵](#)
360. They are all taken from the book of St. Jerome *Contra Jovinianum*, from which the “Wife of Bath” drew so many of her ancient instances. See [note 1741](#). [↵](#)
361. Wickedness. [↵](#)
362. Suddenly leaped. [↵](#)
363. Forcibly bereft. [↵](#)

364. Caught, clasped. ↵

365. Pluck away by force. ↵

366. Same. ↵

367. Slay. ↵

368. Ravished. ↵

369. Panthea. Abradatas, King of Susa, was an ally of the Assyrians against Cyrus; and his wife was taken at the conquest of the Assyrian camp. Struck by the honourable treatment she received at the captors hands, Abradatas joined Cyrus, and fell in battle against his former alhes. His wife, inconsolable at his loss, slew herself immediately. ↵

370. Better. ↵

371. In circumstances of the same kind. ↵

372. Avenged, vindicated. ↵

373. Chose. ↵

374. Her husband. She begged the gods, after his death, that but three hours' converse with him might be allowed her; the request was granted; and when her dead husband, at the expiry of the time, returned to the world of shades, she bore him company. ↵

375. The daughter of Cato of Utica, Porcia married Marcus Brutus, the friend and the assassin of Julius Caesar; when her husband died by his own hand after the battle of Philippi, she committed suicide, it is said, by swallowing live coals—all other means having been removed by her friends. ↵

376. Artemisia, Queen of Caria, who built to her husband Mausolus, the splendid monument which was accounted among the wonders of the world; and who mingled her husband's ashes with her daily drink. "Barbarie" is used in the Greek sense, to designate the non-Hellenic peoples of Asia. ↵

377. Queen of Illyria, who, after her husband's death, made war on and was conquered by the Romans, BC 228. ↵

378. At this point, in some manuscripts, occur the following two lines:—

"The same thing I say of Bilia,
Of Rhodogone and of Valeria."

↵

379. Die. ↵

380. Demeanour. ↵

381. Relate. ↵

382. Assuredly. ↵

383. If. ↵

384. Certainly. ↵

385. I had rather be slain. ↵

386. Readiest. ↵

387. Prepared; going. To "boun" or "bown" is a good old word, whence comes our word "bound," in the sense of "on the way."
↵

388. Promised. ↵

- 389. Pity. ↵
- 390. Rather. ↵
- 391. Rude outrage. ↵
- 392. Generosity. ↵
- 393. Rather. ↵
- 394. Pity. ↵
- 395. Sunder, split up. ↵
- 396. Surety. ↵
- 397. Reproach. ↵
- 398. Of no (breach of) promise. ↵
- 399. Doubt. ↵
- 400. Gone. ↵
- 401. Satisfied. ↵
- 402. Utterly lost. ↵
- 403. Promised. ↵
- 404. Purified, refined. ↵
- 405. Ruined, undone. ↵
- 406. Unless. ↵
- 407. Time to pay up. ↵
- 408. Gravely. ↵

409. Sighed. ↵
410. Rather. ↵
411. Also. ↵
412. Before. ↵
413. Such an ocular deception, or apparition—more properly, disappearance—as the removal of the rocks. ↵
414. Dear. ↵
415. Doubt. ↵
416. Labour, pains. ↵
417. Generous, liberal; the same question is stated at the end of Boccaccio's version of the story in the *Philocopo*, where the queen determines in favour of Aviragus. The question is evidently one of those which it was the fashion to propose for debate in the medieval "courts of love." ↵
418. Know, can tell. ↵
419. The authenticity of the prologue is questionable. It is found in one manuscript only; other manuscripts give other prologues, more plainly not Chaucer's than this; and some manuscripts have merely a colophon to the effect that "Here endeth the 'Franklin's Tale' and beginneth the 'Physician's Tale' without a prologue." The "Tale" itself is the well-known story of Virginia, with several departures from the text of Livy. Chaucer probably followed the "Romance of the Rose" and Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, in both of which the story is found. ↵
420. Livy, Book III cap. 44, et seqq. ↵
421. Care. ↵

422. Ask. ↵
423. Glory. ↵
424. Beams, rays. ↵
425. Mind, spirit. ↵
426. Moderation. ↵
427. Utterance, speech; from Latin, *facundia*, eloquence. ↵
428. Diligent, eager. ↵
429. Other readings are “thought” and “youth.” ↵
430. Of old. ↵
431. Governesses, duennas. ↵
432. Wickedness; French, *mechancete*. ↵
433. Be slack, fail. ↵
434. Forsaken, left. ↵
435. Gluttony. ↵
436. Wicked, evil. ↵
437. Heed. ↵
438. Oversight. ↵
439. Pay for, suffer for. ↵
440. Goodness. ↵
441. Misfortune. ↵

442. This line seems to be a kind of aside thrown in by Chaucer himself. ↵
443. Observing. ↵
444. Bribe, reward. ↵
445. The various readings of this word are “churl,” or “cherl,” in the best manuscripts; “client” in the common editions, and “clerk” supported by two important manuscripts. “Client” would perhaps be the best reading, if it were not awkward for the metre; but between “churl” and “clerk” there can be little doubt that Mr. Wright chose wisely when he preferred the second. ↵
446. Counsel, plot. ↵
447. Arranged. ↵
448. Historical, authentic. ↵
449. Discourse, account. ↵
450. True. ↵
451. Judgments. ↵
452. In haste. ↵
453. Petition. ↵
454. Cause. ↵
455. Know, learn. ↵
456. Slave. ↵
457. Prove. ↵

458. Be not displeased. ↵

459. Villainous. ↵

460. Pronounce, determine. ↵

461. Piercing. ↵

462. Although. ↵

463. Swerve, turn aside. ↵

464. Saw. ↵

465. Bewail. ↵

466. Judges 11:37, 38. “And she said unto her father, Let... me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows. And he said, go.” ↵

467. Offence. ↵

468. Stern, cruel. ↵

469. Took. ↵

470. Judgement. ↵

471. Thrust. ↵

472. Suspicion. ↵

473. “Cast into gaol,” according to Urry’s explanation; though we should probably understand that, if Claudius had not been sent out of the country, his death would have been secretly contrived through private detestation. ↵

474. Villainy. ↵

475. Desert. ↵
476. Cause a man to tremble because of. ↵
477. Illiterate or learned. ↵
478. Advise. ↵
479. Mad. ↵
480. The nails and blood of Christ, by which it was then a fashion to swear. ↵
481. Counsellors; those who aid their undertakings. ↵
482. Nevertheless. ↵
483. Innocent. ↵
484. Paid for, suffered for. ↵
485. Profit. ↵
486. No matter. ↵
487. Body. ↵
488. See [note 151](#). ↵
489. Box; French *boite*, old form *boiste*. ↵
490. Thrive. ↵
491. In set form. ↵
492. Makest. ↵
493. Grieve; from Anglo-Saxon, *earme*, wretched. ↵

494. Heartache; from Greek, *καρδιαλγια*. ↵

495. Unless. ↵

496. A remedy. ↵

497. New and strong, nappy. As to “moist,” see [note 159](#). ↵

498. Unless. ↵

499. Broken, burst. ↵

500. Jokes. ↵

ENDNOTES 3,501–4,000

501. Alehouse sign. ↵

502. Learn. ↵

503. Wisdom, sense. ↵

504. Surely. ↵

505. The outline of this “Tale” is to be found in the *Cento Novelle Antiche*, but the original is now lost. As in the case of the “Wife of Bath’s Tale,” there is a long prologue, but in this case it has been treated as part of the “Tale.” ↵

506. Take pains, make an effort. ↵

507. Loud, lofty; from French, *hautain*. ↵

508. “The love of money is the root of all evil” (1 Tim. 6:10). ↵

509. For the protection of my person. ↵

510. Rags, fragments. ↵

511. As my auditors think. ↵

512. Brass. ↵

513. Heed. ↵

514. Heed. ↵
515. Owneth. ↵
516. Mistrust. ↵
517. Although. ↵
518. Glove, mitten. ↵
519. Confessed. ↵
520. Cuckold. ↵
521. Jest, trick. ↵
522. Ignorant. ↵
523. Jests. ↵
524. Barn. ↵
525. Briskly. ↵
526. Wickedness. ↵
527. Especially. ↵
528. The meaning of this is not very clear, but it is probably a
periphrastic and picturesque way of indicating damnation. ↵
529. Preaching is often inspired by evil motives. ↵
530. Sharply. ↵
531. Escape. ↵
532. Offended. ↵

533. Am I revenged on. ↵
534. Depart. ↵
535. Unlearned. ↵
536. Because. ↵
537. In respect of the poverty enjoined on and practised by them. ↵
538. Although. ↵
539. Although. ↵
540. Die. ↵
541. Guitars. ↵
542. Dreadful; fitted to *agrise* or horrify the listener. ↵
543. See [note 7.59](#). Mr. Wright says: “The common oaths in the Middle Ages were by the different parts of God’s body; and the popular preachers represented that profane swearers tore Christ’s body by their imprecations.” The idea was doubtless borrowed from the passage in Hebrews (6:6), where apostates are said to “crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame.” ↵
544. Laughed. ↵
545. Female dancers or tumblers; from Anglo-Saxon, *tumban*, to dance. ↵
546. Dainty. ↵
547. Fruit-girls. ↵
548. Revellers. ↵

549. Cake-sellers. [↵](#)

550. “Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess.” (Eph. 5:18). [↵](#)

551. Unnaturally. [↵](#)

552. The reference is probably to the diligent inquiries Herod made at the time of Christ’s birth. See Matt. 2:4–8. [↵](#)

553. Command. [↵](#)

554. A drunkard. “Perhaps,” says Tyrwhitt, “Chaucer refers to Epist. LXXXIII, ‘*Extende in plures dies illum ebrii habitum; nunquid de furore dubitabis? nunc quoque non est minor sed brevior.*’” [↵](#)

555. Madness. [↵](#)

556. One evil-tempered. [↵](#)

557. Atoned for. [↵](#)

558. Doubt. [↵](#)

559. Forbidden. St. Jerome, in his book against Jovinian, says that so long as Adam fasted, he was in Paradise; he ate, and he was thrust out. [↵](#)

560. Moderate. [↵](#)

561. Labour. [↵](#)

562. “Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats; but God shall destroy both it and them.” (1 Cor. 6:13). [↵](#)

563. Wine. [↵](#)

564. See Phil. 3:18, 19. [↵](#)

565. Cross; French, *croix*. ↵

566. Bag; Anglo-Saxon, *codde*; hence peas-cod, pin-cod (pincushion), etc. ↵

567. Supply. ↵

568. Sweet. ↵

569. Compare with the lines which follow, the picture of the drunken messenger in the “Man of Law’s Tale,” [here](#). ↵

570. Care. ↵

571. Doubt. ↵

572. Especially. ↵

573. A town near Cadiz, whence a stronger wine than the Gascon vintages afforded was imported to England. French wine was often adulterated with the cheaper and stronger Spanish. ↵

574. Another reading is “Fleet Street.” ↵

575. Learn. ↵

576. He was suffocated in the night by a haemorrhage, brought on by a debauch, when he was preparing a new invasion of Italy, in 453. ↵

577. Consider, bethink. ↵

578. “It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes strong drink; lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted.” Prov. 31:4, 5. ↵

579. Forbid gaming. ↵

580. Lies. [↵](#)

581. Property. [↵](#)

582. Reproach. [↵](#)

583. Undone, worthless. [↵](#)

584. Most manuscripts, evidently in error, have “Stilbon” and “Calidone” for Chilon and Lacedaemon. Chilon was one of the seven sages of Greece, and flourished about BC 590. According to Diogenes Laertius, he died, under the pressure of age and joy, in the arms of his son, who had just been crowned victor at the Olympic games. [↵](#)

585. Reproach. [↵](#)

586. Gamesters. [↵](#)

587. Rather. [↵](#)

588. “Swear not at all;” Christ’s words in Matt. 5:34. [↵](#)

589. Jeremiah 4:2. [↵](#)

590. Judgement. [↵](#)

591. Wickedness. [↵](#)

592. Commandments. [↵](#)

593. In vain. [↵](#)

594. Sooner. [↵](#)

595. Flatly, plainly. [↵](#)

596. The nails that fastened Christ on the cross, which were regarded with superstitious reverence. ↵
597. An abbey in Gloucestershire, where, under the designation of “the blood of Hailes,” a portion of Christ’s blood was preserved. ↵
598. A term of opprobrious reprobation, applied to the dice. ↵
599. Before. ↵
600. Servant. ↵
601. A hunting phrase; apparently its force is, “go beat up the game.” ↵
602. Whit. ↵
603. Completely drunk. ↵
604. Watchful, on one’s guard. ↵
605. Lest, in case. ↵
606. Worthy. ↵
607. At one. ↵
608. Born; a better reading is “sworn.” ↵
609. Dreadful. ↵
610. See [note 3543](#). ↵
611. Catch. ↵
612. Greeted. ↵
613. Preserve, look upon graciously. ↵

614. Closely wrapt up. ↵
615. Miserable wretch. ↵
616. Dear. ↵
617. To wrap myself in. ↵
618. Withered. ↵
619. Except. ↵
620. To meet. ↵
621. Advise. ↵
622. Spy. ↵
623. Suffer for. ↵
624. Desired a thing. ↵
625. Joke, frolic. ↵
626. Weened, thought. ↵
627. Cause us to be hanged. ↵
628. My advice is. ↵
629. Lots. ↵
630. Quickly. ↵
631. What is for thine advantage. ↵
632. Divided. ↵
633. Contrive. ↵

634. Know not. [↵](#)

635. Secret, in confidence. [↵](#)

636. Wicked wretch. [↵](#)

637. Sat down. [↵](#)

638. Pleasures. [↵](#)

639. Agreed. [↵](#)

640. Wicked wretch. [↵](#)

641. Two; German, *zwei*. [↵](#)

642. Leading such a (bad) life. [↵](#)

643. Kill, destroy, his rats. [↵](#)

644. Farmyard, hedge. Compare the French, *haie*. [↵](#)

645. Slain. [↵](#)

646. Revenge. [↵](#)

647. Surery. [↵](#)

648. Amount. [↵](#)

649. Lay down, quit. [↵](#)

650. Die. [↵](#)

651. At a pace, quickly; so, on several occasions, Chaucer speaks of “a furlong,” or one or two furlongs, when he means to denote a brief lapse of time. See [note 1116](#), for an instance. [↵](#)

652. Taken. [↵](#)

653. Purposed. ↵

654. Labour. ↵

655. Talk, discourse. ↵

656. Contrived, plotted. ↵

657. By chance. ↵

658. Died. ↵

659. Avicen, or Avicenna, was among the distinguished physicians of the Arabian school in the eleventh century, and very popular in the Middle Ages. His great work was called *Canon Medicinae*, and was divided into *fens*, *fennes*, or sections. ↵

660. Outrage, impiety. ↵

661. Unnatural. ↵

662. Guard, keep. ↵

663. *Warish*, heal. ↵

664. Sterling money. ↵

665. Absolve. Compare the Scotch law-term *assoilzie*, to acquit. ↵

666. Physician of souls. ↵

667. Go. ↵

668. Absolve. Compare the Scotch law-term *assoilzie*, to acquit. ↵

669. Both great and small. ↵

670. Would counsel. ↵

671. So the ich—so may I thrive. ↵
672. Saint Helen, according to Sir John Mandeville, found the cross of Christ deep below ground, under a rock, where the Jews had hidden it; and she tested the genuineness of the sacred tree, by raising to life a dead man laid upon it. ↵
673. Laughed. ↵
674. Nearer. ↵
675. In this “Tale” Chaucer seems to have followed an old French story, which also formed the groundwork of the first story in the eighth day of the *Decameron*. The prologue here given was transferred by Tyrwhitt from the place, preceding the “Squire’s Tale,” which it had formerly occupied; the “Shipman’s Tale” having no prologue in the best manuscripts. ↵
676. Discreet, profitable. ↵
677. Thy promise formerly. ↵
678. Know, are capable of telling. ↵
679. A contemptuous name for the followers of Wyckliffe; presumably derived from the Latin, *lolium*, tares, as if they were the tares among the Lord’s wheat; so, a few lines below, the Shipman intimates his fear lest the Parson should “spring cockle in our clean corn.” ↵
680. Worthy. ↵
681. Comment upon. ↵
682. Tares, weeds; the *Agrostemma githago* of Linnaeus; perhaps named from the Anglo-Saxon, *ceocan*, because it chokes the corn. ↵

683. Belly. ↵
684. Fond of society and merrymaking. ↵
685. Simple. ↵
686. Always; or, however. ↵
687. So in all the manuscripts and from this and the following lines, it must be inferred that Chaucer had intended to put the “Tale” in the mouth of a female speaker. ↵
688. Resort of visitors. ↵
689. Constantly. ↵
690. Claimed cousinship, kindred, with him. ↵
691. A title bestowed on priests and scholars; from *Dominus*, like the Spanish *Don*. ↵
692. Especially. ↵
693. Liberal outlay. ↵
694. Afterwards. ↵
695. Household, servants. ↵
696. Resolved, arranged. ↵
697. Merchandise. Bruges was in Chaucer’s time the great emporium of European commerce. ↵
698. Enjoy himself. ↵
699. Tell. ↵
700. To inspect and manage the rural property of the monastery. ↵

701. Jar. [↵](#)
702. Malvesie or Malmesy wine derived its name from Malvasia, a region of the Morea near Cape Malea, where it was made, as it also was on Chios and some other Greek islands. As to vernage, see [note 2887](#). [↵](#)
703. Malvesie or Malmesy wine derived its name from Malvasia, a region of the Morea near Cape Malea, where it was made, as it also was on Chios and some other Greek islands. As to vernage, see [note 2887](#). [↵](#)
704. Wild fowl, birds for the table; French, *volatille*, *volaille*. [↵](#)
705. Seriously deliberated on his affairs. [↵](#)
706. Countinghouse; French, *comptoir*. [↵](#)
707. That. [↵](#)
708. Detain from, hinder. [↵](#)
709. Guide. [↵](#)
710. Rod; in pupillage; a phrase properly used of children, but employed by the Clerk in the prologue to his tale. See [note 2426](#). [↵](#)
711. Early. [↵](#)
712. Unless. [↵](#)
713. Pallid, wasted. [↵](#)
714. Stare. [↵](#)
715. Distracted, confounded. [↵](#)

716. Ruin. ↵
717. Distress. ↵
718. Breviary. ↵
719. Willing or unwilling. ↵
720. Though the alternative should be. ↵
721. Confidence, promise. ↵
722. Especially. ↵
723. Although. ↵
724. Assuredly. ↵
725. By my vows of religion. ↵
726. Pleasant. ↵
727. Becomes. ↵
728. Forbid. ↵
729. Stinginess. ↵
730. Brave. ↵
731. Vielding, obedient. ↵
732. Same. ↵
733. Ruined, undone. ↵
734. I would rather. ↵
735. Die. ↵

736. With my goodwill; if I can help it. ↵

737. Unless. ↵

738. Genelon, Ganelon, or Ganilion; one of Charlemagne's officers, whose treachery was the cause of the disastrous defeat of the Christians by the Saracens at Roncevalles; he was torn to pieces by four horses. ↵

739. Pity. ↵

740. Gone. ↵

741. Haste. ↵

742. Who is there? ↵

743. Sending, gifts. ↵

744. From French, *eloigner*, to remove; it may mean either the lonely, cheerless condition of the priest, or the strange behaviour of the merchant in leaving him to himself. ↵

745. Strange. ↵

746. Consider. ↵

747. Trading. ↵

748. Civil, courteous. ↵

749. Shut. ↵

750. Hinder, delay. ↵

751. Moderately. ↵

752. Particularly. ↵

753. Ado, ceremony. ↵
754. With which to store. ↵
755. Great thanks. ↵
756. Handsomely, like a gentleman. ↵
757. Merchandise. ↵
758. God forbid that you should take too little. ↵
759. Obtain credit; French, *créance*, credit. ↵
760. After. ↵
761. Servant-boy. ↵
762. Servants. ↵
763. Merchandise. ↵
764. Raise money by means of a borrowing agreement; from French, *achever*, to finish; the general meaning of the word is a bargain, an agreement. ↵
765. Crowns; French, *écu*. ↵
766. Took. ↵
767. Love. ↵
768. Know. ↵
769. Company. ↵
770. Glad. ↵
771. By his journey to Bruges. ↵

772. Expenses. ↵

773. Always. ↵

774. Spent. ↵

775. A kind of estrangement, coolness. ↵

776. Was displeased. ↵

777. Borrowing. ↵

778. Care. ↵

779. Whit. ↵

780. Thriving, success; from the verb “the,” thrive. ↵

781. Profit, advantage. ↵

782. Danger, awkward position. ↵

783. In pledge. ↵

784. Liberal, lavish. ↵

785. Ever so much evil. *Last* means a load, *quad*, bad; and literally we may read “a thousand weight of bad years.” The Italians use *mal anno* in the same sense. ↵

786. Trick. ↵

787. To put an ape in one’s hood, on one’s head, is to befool or deceive him. ↵

788. Offend. ↵

789. Judge, decide. ↵

790. Tales of the murder of children by Jews were frequent in the Middle Ages, being probably designed to keep up the bitter feeling of the Christians against the Jews. Not a few children were canonised on this account; and the scene of the misdeeds was laid anywhere and everywhere, so that Chaucer could be at no loss for material. [↵](#)
791. Psalms 8:1. "*Domine, dominus noster, quam admirabile est nomen tuum in universa terra.*" [↵](#)
792. Praise. [↵](#)
793. Glory. "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast Thou ordained strength." (Psalms 8:2). [↵](#)
794. Goodness. [↵](#)
795. Help. [↵](#)
796. Bounteous. [↵](#)
797. The spirit that on thee alighted; the Holy Ghost through whose power Christ was conceived. [↵](#)
798. Lightened, gladdened. [↵](#)
799. Skill, ability. [↵](#)
800. Scarcely. [↵](#)
801. A quarter which the Jews were permitted to inhabit; the Old Jewry in London got its name in this way. [↵](#)
802. Go, walk. [↵](#)
803. A young clerk or scholar. [↵](#)
804. To study, go to school, was his wont. [↵](#)

805. Simple, innocent. ↵

806. Learn. ↵

807. Who, even in his swaddling clothes—so says the *Breviarium Romanum*—gave promise of extraordinary virtue and holiness; for, though he sucked freely on other days, on Wednesdays and Fridays he applied to the breast only once, and that not until the evening. ↵

808. “*O Alma Redemptoris Mater*,” the beginning of a hymn to the Virgin. ↵

809. Book of anthems, or psalms, chanted in the choir by alternate verses. ↵

810. Nearer. ↵

811. Meant. ↵

812. Die. ↵

813. Learn; con. ↵

814. Disgraced. ↵

815. On the way home. ↵

816. Knew. ↵

817. Cease. ↵

818. Creditable, becoming. ↵

819. Seized. ↵

820. French, *garderobe*, a privy. ↵

821. Especially. [↵](#)

822. Confirmed; from French, *soulde*; Latin, *solidatus*. [↵](#)

823. Continually. [↵](#)

824. See Revelations 14:3, 4. [↵](#)

825. Asked, inquired; from Anglo-Saxon, *frinan*, *fraegnian*. Compare German, *fragen*. [↵](#)

826. Emerald. [↵](#)

827. Cut. [↵](#)

828. Praised. [↵](#)

829. Caused. [↵](#)

830. Caused. [↵](#)

831. Die. [↵](#)

832. Countenance, overlook. [↵](#)

833. Scarcely. [↵](#)

834. Lasted. [↵](#)

835. Embrace or salute; implore: from Anglo-Saxon *hals*, the neck. [↵](#)

836. In course of nature. [↵](#)

837. Glory. [↵](#)

838. Fountain. [↵](#)

839. Knowledge. [↵](#)

840. Leave. ↵
841. Afraid. ↵
842. Prostrate. See [note 300](#). ↵
843. The monks that composed the convent. See [note 2417](#). ↵
844. Praising. ↵
845. Grant; lend. ↵
846. A boy said to have been slain by the Jews at Lincoln in 1255, according to Matthew Paris. Many popular ballads were made about the event, which the diligence of the Church doubtless kept fresh in mind at Chaucer's day. ↵
847. Merciful. ↵
848. This prologue is interesting, for the picture which it gives of Chaucer himself; riding apart from and indifferent to the rest of the pilgrims, with eyes fixed on the ground, and an *elvish*, morose, or rather self-absorbed air; portly, if not actually stout, in body; and evidently a man out of the common, as the closing words of the Host imply. ↵
849. Serious. ↵
850. Talk lightly. ↵
851. For the first time. ↵
852. Referring to the poet's corpulency. ↵
853. Surly, morose. ↵
854. Dissatisfied. ↵

855. Know. ↵
856. Long. ↵
857. Expression, mien. ↵
858. “The Ryme of Sir Thopas,” as it is generally called, is introduced by Chaucer as a satire on the dull, pompous, and prolix metrical romances then in vogue. It is full of phrases taken from the popular rhymesters in the vein which he holds up to ridicule; if, indeed—though of that there is no evidence—it be not actually part of an old romance which Chaucer selected and reproduced to point his assault on the prevailing taste in literature. ↵
859. Truly. ↵
860. Delight, solace. ↵
861. Gentle. ↵
862. Poppering, or Poppeling, a parish in the marches of Calais of which the famous antiquary Leland was once Rector. ↵
863. Either *pain de matin*, morning bread, or *pain de Maine*, because it was made best in that province; a kind of fine white bread. ↵
864. Or *rudde*; complexion. ↵
865. Cordovan; fine Spanish leather, so called from the name of the city where it was prepared ↵
866. A rich Oriental stuff of silk and gold, of which was made the circular robe of state called a “ciclaton,” from the Latin, *cyclas*. The word is French. ↵
867. A Genoese coin, of small value; in our old statutes called *gallihals*, or galley halfpence. ↵

868. For river-fowl. See [note 2027](#). ↵
869. The usual prize of wrestling contests. See [note 188](#). ↵
870. Fruit of the dog-rose, hip. ↵
871. Mounted. ↵
872. Spear; *azagay* is the name of a Moorish weapon, and the identity of termination is singular. ↵
873. Befallen. ↵
874. Valerian. ↵
875. Clove-gilliflower; *Caryophyllus hortensis*. ↵
876. New. See [note 159](#). ↵
877. Sparrowhawk. ↵
878. Mad. ↵
879. Inclination, spirit. ↵
880. This. ↵
881. Mistress. ↵
882. Shirt, garment. ↵
883. Assuredly. ↵
884. Haunt. ↵
885. Literally, "Sir Elephant;" Sir John Mandeville calls those animals "Olyfautes." ↵
886. Young man. ↵

887. A pagan or Saracen deity, otherwise named Tervagan, and often mentioned in Middle Age literature. His name has passed into our language, to denote a ranter or blusterer, as he was represented to be. ↵

888. Unless. ↵

889. Thrive. ↵

890. Suffer for. ↵

891. Belly. ↵

892. Slain. ↵

893. Whisper. ↵

894. Cause. ↵

895. Tellers of tales of adventure and chivalry. ↵

896. So called because they related to Charlemagne and his family.
↵

897. Drinking-bowl of maple. ↵

898. Tried, refined. ↵

899. Put on, donned. ↵

900. Skin. ↵

901. Fine lawn. ↵

902. Cassock. ↵

903. Sleeves and gorget of mail. ↵

904. Plate-armour. ↵

905. Magicians'. ↵
906. Knight's surcoat. ↵
907. Fight. ↵
908. Carbuncle; French, *escarboucle*; a heraldic device. ↵
909. Boots; from French, *jambe*, the leg. ↵
910. *Cuir boulli*, French, boiled or prepared leather; also used to cover shields, etc. ↵
911. Brass, or latten. ↵
912. No satisfactory explanation has been furnished of this word, used to describe some material from which rich saddles were made. ↵
913. Division of a metrical romance. ↵
914. Try. ↵
915. Tale, discourse, from Anglo-Saxon, *spellian*, to declare, tell a story. ↵
916. Gallantry. ↵
917. Worth, esteem. ↵
918. Sir Bevis of Hampton, and Sir Guy of Warwick, two knights of great renown. ↵
919. One of Arthur's knights, called "Ly beau desconus," "the fair unknown." ↵
920. Glowed, shone as he rode. ↵

921. Torch. [↵](#)
922. Harm. [↵](#)
923. Adventurous. [↵](#)
924. Lie. [↵](#)
925. Pillow; from Anglo-Saxon, *wangere*, because the *wanges*; or cheeks, rested on it. [↵](#)
926. *Destrier*, French, a warhorse; in Latin, *dextrarius*, as if led by the right hand. [↵](#)
927. Sir Percival de Galois, whose adventures were written in more than 60,000 verses by Chretien de Troyes, one of the oldest and best French romancers, in 1191. [↵](#)
928. Illiterates, stupidity. Chaucer crowns the satire on the romanticists by making the very landlord of the Tabard cry out in indignant disgust against the stuff which he had heard recited—the good Host ascribing to sheer ignorance the string of pompous platitudes and prosaic details which Chaucer had uttered. [↵](#)
929. Surely. [↵](#)
930. Worthless, vile; no better than draff or dregs; from the Anglo-Saxon, *drifan* to drive away, expel. [↵](#)
931. Commend to. [↵](#)
932. Prevent. [↵](#)
933. Spendrest, wastest. [↵](#)
934. Whether. [↵](#)

935. By way of narrative. ↵

936. Some amusement or instruction. ↵

937. Suffering. ↵

938. Ought to please you. ↵

939. Fastidious. ↵

940. Although it be. ↵

941. Agony, passion. ↵

942. Sooth, true. ↵

943. Meaning. ↵

944. With which to enforce. ↵

945. That. ↵

946. Little. ↵

947. The “Tale of Meliboeus” is literally translated from a French story, or rather “treatise,” in prose, entitled *Le Livre de Melibee et de Dame Prudence*, of which two manuscripts, both dating from the fifteenth century, are preserved in the British Museum. Tyrwhitt, justly enough, says of it that it is indeed, as Chaucer called it in the prologue, “‘a moral tale virtuous,’ and was probably much esteemed in its time; but, in this age of levity, I doubt some readers will be apt to regret that he did not rather give us the remainder of Sir Thopas.” It has been remarked that in the earlier portion of the “Tale,” as it left the hand of the poet, a number of blank verses were intermixed; though this peculiarity of style, noticeable in any case only in the first 150 or 200 lines, has necessarily all but disappeared by the changes of spelling made in the modern editions. The Editor’s purpose

being to present to the public not *The Canterbury Tales* merely, but “The Poems of Chaucer,” so far as may be consistent with the limits of this volume, he has condensed the long reasonings and learned quotations of Dame Prudence into a mere outline, connecting those portions of the Tale wherein lies so much of story as it actually possesses, and the general reader will probably not regret the sacrifice, made in the view of retaining so far as possible the completeness of the *Tales*, while lessening the intrusion of prose into a volume of poems. The good wife of Meliboeus literally overflows with quotations from David, Solomon, Jesus the Son of Sirach, the Apostles, Ovid, Cicero, Seneca, Cassiodorus, Cato, Petrus Alphonsus—the converted Spanish Jew, of the twelfth century, who wrote the “Disciplina Clericalis”—and other authorities; and in some passages, especially where husband and wife debate the merits or demerits of women, and where Prudence dilates on the evils of poverty, Chaucer only reproduces much that had been said already in the tales that preceded—such as the “Merchant’s” and the “Man of Law’s.” ↵

948. Notwithstanding. ↵

949. *“Quis matrem, nisi mentis inops, in funere nati
Flere vetet? non hoc illa monenda loco.
Cum dederit lacrymas, animumque expleverit
 aegrum,
Ille dolor verbis emoderandus erit.”*
 Ovid, “Remedia Amoris,” 127–131.

↵

950. Cease. ↵

951. Be healed. ↵

952. Although. ↵

953. Moderate. ↵

954. Forbidden. [↵](#)
955. Moderation should be kept or observed. [↵](#)
956. Doctrine. [↵](#)
957. Lost. [↵](#)
958. Lost. [↵](#)
959. Advantage, remedy. [↵](#)
960. Do injury. [↵](#)
961. Also. [↵](#)
962. Opinion. [↵](#)
963. Caused to be summoned. [↵](#)
964. Employed, retained. [↵](#)
965. To take sides in a quarrel. [↵](#)
966. Healing. [↵](#)
967. Made worse and aggravated the matter. [↵](#)
968. Business. [↵](#)
969. Opinion. [↵](#)
970. Observation, looking out. [↵](#)
971. Determine. [↵](#)
972. Nevertheless. [↵](#)
973. Subject for reproach. [↵](#)

974. A sign, gesture. ↵
975. Easily. ↵
976. Die. ↵
977. Thought, intended. ↵
978. Troublesome. ↵
979. Besides, further. ↵
980. Agreed. ↵
981. Opinion, judgement. ↵
982. See the conversation between Pluto and Proserpine, ante, pp. 113 and 114. ↵
983. "Thy name," she says, "is Meliboeus; that is to say, a man that drinketh honey." ↵
984. Distress, trouble. ↵
985. Affair, emergency. ↵
986. Knowledge. ↵
987. The ill-natured or angry. ↵
988. Gentle, courteous. ↵
989. Penalty. ↵
990. Consideration. ↵
991. Forbiddeth. ↵
992. Nature. ↵

993. Prepare. [↵](#)

994. Sureties. [↵](#)

995. Incurred guilt. [↵](#)

996. Courtesy, gentleness. [↵](#)

997. Merciful. [↵](#)

998. Wickedly. [↵](#)

999. Incurred guilt. [↵](#)

1000. Sureties. [↵](#)

ENDNOTES 4,001–4,500

- .001. Inquired. [↵](#)
- .002. Easily. [↵](#)
- .003. Honour. [↵](#)
- .004. Further. [↵](#)
- .005. Reputation; from the past participle of the Anglo-Saxon, *hlisan*, to celebrate. Compare Latin, *laus*. [↵](#)
- .006. Moderation. [↵](#)
- .007. If I assume. [↵](#)
- .008. Decide. [↵](#)
- .009. Endeavour, devise a way. [↵](#)
- .010. Easily. [↵](#)
- .011. Arguments, reasons. [↵](#)
- .012. Ignorance. [↵](#)
- .013. Misbehaved. [↵](#)
- .014. Done injury. [↵](#)

- .015. Merciful. [↵](#)
- .016. The body of St. Maternus, of Treves. [↵](#)
- .017. Rather. [↵](#)
- .018. Dear. [↵](#)
- .019. Bow. [↵](#)
- .020. Bold enough to offend her. [↵](#)
- .021. Leaps, springs. [↵](#)
- .022. Avenge. [↵](#)
- .023. Destined. [↵](#)
- .024. Overborne, imposed upon. [↵](#)
- .025. Unless. [↵](#)
- .026. Betake myself. [↵](#)
- .027. Make. [↵](#)
- .028. Take to flight. [↵](#)
- .029. That does or says anything to displease her. [↵](#)
- .030. One doing penance. [↵](#)
- .031. In my judgement; for *doom*. [↵](#)
- .032. Sinews. [↵](#)
- .033. A cock. [↵](#)
- .034. An ecclesiastcal vestment covering all the body like a cloak. [↵](#)

- .035. It. ↵
- .036. Crown; though he were shorn full high upon his pan: though he were tonsured, as the clergy are. ↵
- .037. Undone, ruined. ↵
- .038. Lay, unlettered. ↵
- .039. Puny, contemptible creatures. ↵
- .040. Shoots, branches; from Anglo-Saxon, *impian*, German, *impfen*, to implant, ingraft. The word is now used in a very restricted sense, to signify the progeny, children, of the devil. ↵
- .041. Base or counterfeit coins; so called because struck at Luxemburg. A great importation of them took place during the reigns of the earlier Edwards, and they caused much annoyance and complaint, till in 1351 it was declared treason to bring them into the country. ↵
- .042. Is in harmony with good manners. ↵
- .043. Means. ↵
- .044. According to the dates at which they lived. ↵
- .045. The “Monk’s Tale” is founded in its main features on Boccaccio’s work, *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium*; but Chaucer has taken the separate stories of which it is composed from different authors, and dealt with them after his own fashion. ↵
- .046. Hurt. ↵
- .047. Depart. ↵
- .048. Boccaccio opens his book with Adam, whose story is told at much greater length than here. Lydgate, in his translation from

Boccaccio, speaks of Adam and Eve as made “of slime of the
erth in Damascene the felde.” [↵](#)

.049. Wielded, had at his command. [↵](#)

.050. Misbehaviour. [↵](#)

.051. Judges 13:3. Boccaccio also tells the story of Samson; but
Chaucer seems, by his quotation a few lines below, to have
taken his version direct from the sacred book. [↵](#)

.052. Courage. [↵](#)

.053. Tore all to pieces. [↵](#)

.054. Olive trees; French, *oliviers*. [↵](#)

.055. Was near to perishing. [↵](#)

.056. Cheek-tooth. [↵](#)

.057. *Liber Judicum*, the Book of Judges; chap. XV. [↵](#)

.058. Plucked, wretched. [↵](#)

.059. Loved. [↵](#)

.060. Mistress. [↵](#)

.061. Chaucer writes it “Dalida.” [↵](#)

.062. Lap. [↵](#)

.063. Mill; from Anglo-Saxon, *cyrran*, to turn, *cweorn*, a mill. [↵](#)

.064. Wretched man. [↵](#)

.065. The Stymphalian Birds, which fed on human flesh. [↵](#)

- .066. Busiris, king of Egypt, was wont to sacrifice all foreigners coming to his dominions. Hercules was seized, bound, and led to the altar by his orders, but the hero broke his bonds and slew the tyrant. ↵
- .067. Devour. ↵
- .068. A long time. The feats of Hercules here recorded are not all these known as the “twelve labours;” for instance, the cleansing of the Augean stables, and the capture of Hippolyte’s girdle are not in this list—other and less famous deeds of the hero taking their place. For this, however, we must accuse not Chaucer, but Boethius, whom he has almost literally translated, though with some change of order. ↵
- .069. One of the manuscripts has a marginal reference to “*Tropheus vates Chaldaeorum*,” but it is not known what author Chaucer meant—unless the reference is to a passage in the “*Filostrato*” of Boccaccio, on which Chaucer founded his “Troilus and Cressida,” and which Lydgate mentions, under the name of “Trophe,” as having been translated by Chaucer. ↵
- .070. Blackened. ↵
- .071. Died. ↵
- .072. For the moment. ↵
- .073. Near; French, *pres*; the meaning seems to be, this nearer, lower world. ↵
- .074. Scarcely. ↵
- .075. Took away. ↵
- .076. Seat. ↵
- .077. Caused. ↵

- .078. Slave. ↵
- .079. End. ↵
- .080. Bow down, do honour. ↵
- .081. Thought. ↵
- .082. Possessed the kingdom. ↵
- .083. Confirmed. ↵
- .084. Forefathers. ↵
- .085. Dismayed. ↵
- .086. Revenue. ↵
- .087. Dreaded. ↵
- .088. Vengeance. ↵
- .089. Praised. ↵
- .090. Impiously. ↵
- .091. Decreed. ↵
- .092. Punishment. ↵
- .093. Slain. ↵
- .094. Power. ↵
- .095. Security. ↵
- .096. Chaucer has taken the story of Zenobia from Boccaccio's work
De Claris Mulieribus. ↵

- .097. Noble qualities. [↵](#)
- .098. Persia. [↵](#)
- .099. Caught. [↵](#)
- .100. Active, nimble. [↵](#)
- .101. Odenatus, who, for his services to the Romans, received from Gallienus the title of “Augustus;” he was assassinated in AD 266—not, it was believed, without the connivance of Zenobia, who succeeded him on the throne. [↵](#)
- .102. Together. [↵](#)
- .103. Loved. [↵](#)
- .104. Again. [↵](#)
- .105. Doubt. [↵](#)
- .106. Whether. [↵](#)
- .107. On other terms, in other wise. [↵](#)
- .108. Learning. [↵](#)
- .109. Bountiful with due moderation. [↵](#)
- ‡110. Laborious. [↵](#)
- ‡111. Plate; French, *vaisselle*. [↵](#)
- ‡112. Precious stones. [↵](#)
- ‡113. Did not neglect. [↵](#)
- ‡114. Apply. [↵](#)

115. Make. ↵

116. Of Persia, who made the Emperor Valerian prisoner, conquered Syria, and was pressing triumphantly westward when he was met and defeated by Odenatus and Zenobia. ↵

117. Misfortune. ↵

118. Was not. ↵

119. Make war. ↵

120. Slay. ↵

121. Troops. ↵

122. In AD 270. ↵

123. Resolved, prepared. ↵

124. Took. ↵

125. According to. ↵

126. Loaded. ↵

127. Yelleth, shouteth. ↵

128. Wore helmet in obstinate battles. ↵

129. The signification of this word, which is spelled in several ways, is not known. Skinner's explanation, "another attire," founded on the spelling *autremite*, is obviously insufficient. ↵

130. To spin for her maintenance. ↵

131. Great part of this "tragedy" of Nero is really borrowed, however, from the "Romance of the Rose." ↵

- .132. Same robe. ↵
- .133. Pleasure. ↵
- .134. So little valued. ↵
- .135. Judge, critic. ↵
- .136. Learning, letters. ↵
- .137. Unless. ↵
- .138. So intelligent and pliable. ↵
- .139. Let itself loose, like a hound released from the leash. ↵
- .140. Tell. ↵
- .141. Habit. ↵
- .142. To rise up in his mater's presence, out of respect. ↵
- .143. Torture. ↵
- .144. Cherish. ↵
- .145. Foolish. ↵
- .146. Thrust; from Anglo-Saxon, *thriccan*. ↵
- .147. Expecteth. ↵
- .148. Betaken himself. ↵
- .149. Regarded with friendship. ↵
- .150. Misguided, misled. ↵
- .151. Went. ↵

- .152. Strike. [↵](#)
- .153. Infamy. [↵](#)
- .154. He knew no counsel; there was no other resource. [↵](#)
- .155. Made merry, was amused by the sport. [↵](#)
- .156. Renounce his religion; so, in the “Man of Law’s Tale,” the Sultanness promises her son that she will “reny her lay;” see [here](#). [↵](#)
- .157. Commandment. [↵](#)
- .158. Notice. [↵](#)
- .159. Barn. [↵](#)
- .160. As the “tragedy” of Holofernes is founded on the book of Judith, so is that of Antiochus on the 2 Maccabees 9. [↵](#)
- .161. By the insurgents under the leadership of Judas Maccabeus; 2 Macc. 8. [↵](#)
- .162. Prepare his chariot. [↵](#)
- .163. Immediately. [↵](#)
- .164. Prevented. [↵](#)
- .165. It so cut and gnawed in his entrails. [↵](#)
- .166. Unendurable. [↵](#)
- .167. Vengeance. [↵](#)
- .168. Impious. [↵](#)
- .169. Prepare. [↵](#)

- .170. Chariot. [↵](#)
- .171. Vengeance. [↵](#)
- .172. Servants. [↵](#)
- .173. Loathsome; from Anglo-Saxon, *wiaetan*, to loathe. [↵](#)
- .174. Body. [↵](#)
- .175. Died. [↵](#)
- .176. Recompense. [↵](#)
- .177. To sum up his career. [↵](#)
- .178. Moreover. [↵](#)
- .179. Tell. [↵](#)
- .180. Noble. [↵](#)
- .181. The highest cast on a dicing-cube; here representing the highest favour of fortune. [↵](#)
- .182. Generosity. [↵](#)
- .183. Government, dominion. [↵](#)
- .184. Spirit. [↵](#)
- .185. Blame. [↵](#)
- .186. West. [↵](#)
- .187. Afterwards. [↵](#)
- .188. He had married his daughter Julia to Caesar; but she died six years before Pompey's final overthrow. [↵](#)

- .189. Slain; at the battle of Pharsalia, BC 48. [↵](#)
- .190. End. [↵](#)
- .191. Arranged. [↵](#)
- .192. Daggers. [↵](#)
- .193. Relate. [↵](#)
- .194. Assailed. [↵](#)
- .195. Unless. [↵](#)
- .196. Dignified propriety. [↵](#)
- .197. Pained him. [↵](#)
- .198. Apparently a corruption of the Anglo-Saxon phrase, "*ord and end*," meaning the whole, the beginning and the end. [↵](#)
- .199. Afterwards. [↵](#)
- .200. Ever be watchful against her. [↵](#)
- .201. At the opening of the story of Croesus, Chaucer has copied from his own translation of Boethius; but the story is mainly taken from the "Romance of the Rose." [↵](#)
- .202. Led. [↵](#)
- .203. Shed, poured. [↵](#)
- .204. Refrain. [↵](#)
- .205. Because. [↵](#)
- .206. Dream. [↵](#)

.207. Dreamed. [↵](#)

.208. Glad. [↵](#)

.209. Rays. [↵](#)

.210. Kingdoms. “This reflection,” says Tyrwhitt, “seems to have been suggested by one which follows soon after the mention of Croesus in the passage just cited from Boethius. ‘What other thing bewail the cryings of tragedies but only the deeds of fortune, that with an awkward stroke, overturneth the realms of great nobley?’”—in some manuscripts the four “tragedies” that follow are placed between those of Zenobia and Nero; but although the general reflection with which the “tragedy” of Croesus closes might most appropriately wind up the whole series, the general chronological arrangement which is observed in the other cases recommends the order followed in the text. Besides, since, like several other tales, the Monk’s tragedies were cut short by the impatience of the auditors, it is more natural that the “Tale” should close abruptly, than by such a rhetorical finish as these lines afford. [↵](#)

!211. Pedro the Cruel, King of Aragon, against whom his brother Henry rebelled. He was by false pretences inveigled into his brother’s tent, and treacherously slain. Mr. Wright has remarked that “the cause of Pedro, though he was no better than a cruel and reckless tyrant, was popular in England from the very circumstance that Prince Edward (the Black Prince) had embarked in it.” [↵](#)

.212. Thy kingdom and revenues. [↵](#)

.213. Burning coal. [↵](#)

.214. Wickedness, villainy. [↵](#)

.215. Not the Oliver of Charlemagne—but a traitorous Oliver of Armorica, corrupted by a bribe. Ganilion was the betrayer of the

Christian army at Roncevalles (see [note 3738](#)); and his name appears to have been for a long time used in France to denote a traitor. Duguesclin, who betrayed Pedro into his brother's tent, seems to be intended by the term "Ganilion Oliver," but if so, Chaucer has mistaken his name, which was Bertrand—perhaps confounding him, as Tyrwhitt suggests, with Oliver du Clisson, another illustrious Breton of those times, who was also Constable of France, after Duguesclin. The arms of the latter are supposed to be described a little above. [↵](#)

.216. Breach, ruin. [↵](#)

.217. Pierre de Lusignan, King of Cyprus, who captured Alexandria in 1363 (see [note 14](#)). He was assassinated in 1369. [↵](#)

.218. Guide. [↵](#)

.219. Reckon. [↵](#)

.220. Know not. [↵](#)

.221. Bernabo Visconti, Duke of Milan, was deposed and imprisoned by his nephew, and died a captive in 1385. His death is the latest historical fact mentioned in the tales; and thus it throws the date of their composition to about the sixtieth year of Chaucer's age. [↵](#)

.222. Agony. [↵](#)

.223. With difficulty. [↵](#)

.224. Cause him to die. [↵](#)

.225. Made, born. [↵](#)

.226. Dearer. [↵](#)

.227. Lap. [↵](#)

- .228. See. [↵](#)
- .229. Blame, impute. [↵](#)
- .230. Thought. [↵](#)
- .231. Died. [↵](#)
- .232. Cut off. [↵](#)
- .233. More at length. [↵](#)
- .234. Relate. The story of Ugolino is told in the 33rd Canto of the *Inferno*. [↵](#)
- .235. Of a surety. [↵](#)
- .236. Source of distress, annoyance. [↵](#)
- .237. Delight, comfort. [↵](#)
- .238. Talked. [↵](#)
- .239. Were it not for the jingling of you bridle-bells. See [note 60](#). [↵](#)
- .240. The request is justified by the description of Monk in the prologue as “an outrider, that loved venery;” see [here](#). [↵](#)
- .241. I have no fondness for jesting. [↵](#)
- .242. On this Tyrwhitt remarks; “I know not how it has happened, that in the principal modern languages, John, or its equivalent, is a name of contempt or at least of slight. So the Italians use *Gianni*, from whence *Zani*; the Spaniards *Juan*, as *Bobo Juan*, a foolish John; the French *Jean*, with various additions; and in English, when we call a man *a John*, we do not mean it as a title of honour.” The title of “Sir” was usually given by courtesy to priests. [↵](#)

- .243. Gladden. ↵
- .244. Unless. ↵
- .245. Commenced, broached. Compare French, *entamer*, to cut the first piece off a joint; thence to begin. ↵
- .246. The “Tale of the Nun’s Priest” is founded on the fifth chapter of an old French metrical “Romance of Renard;” the same story forming one of the fables of Marie, the translator of the Breton Lays. (See [note 3215](#).) Although Dryden was in error when he ascribed the “Tale” to Chaucer’s own invention, still the materials on which he had to operate were out of comparison more trivial than the result. ↵
- .247. Somewhat advanced. ↵
- .248. Her goods and her income. ↵
- .249. Thrifty management. ↵
- .250. Maintained. ↵
- .251. Chamber. ↵
- .252. Whit. ↵
- .253. In keeping with her cottage. ↵
- .254. Moderate. ↵
- .255. Content of heart. ↵
- .256. No wise prevented her. ↵
- .257. Hurt, destroyed. ↵
- .258. Singed. ↵

- .259. Kind of day labourer. Tyrwhitt quotes two statutes of Edward III, in which “deys” are included among the servants employed in agricultural pursuits; the name seems to have originally meant a servant who gave his labour by the day, but afterwards to have been appropriated exclusively to one who superintended or worked in a dairy. [↵](#)
- .260. Courtyard, farmyard. [↵](#)
- .261. Was not. [↵](#)
- .262. Equal. [↵](#)
- .263. Licentiously used for the plural, *organs* or *orgons*, corresponding to the plural verb *gon* in the next line. [↵](#)
- .264. More punctual. [↵](#)
- .265. Clock; French, *horloge*. [↵](#)
- .266. Indented on the upper edge like the battlements of a castle. [↵](#)
- .267. Toes. [↵](#)
- .268. Sociable. [↵](#)
- .269. Limb. [↵](#)
- .270. Love. [↵](#)
- .271. Gone. [↵](#)
- .272. This seems to have been the refrain of some old song, and its precise meaning is uncertain. It corresponds in cadence with the morning salutation of the cock; and may be taken as a greeting to the sun, which is beloved of Chanticleer, and has just come upon the earth—or in the sense of a more local boast, as

vaunting the fairness of his favourite hen above all others in the country round. ↵

.273. Oppressed. ↵

.274. Afraid. ↵

.275. Amiss, in umbrage. ↵

.276. I dreamed. ↵

.277. Peril, trouble. ↵

.278. Dream, vision. ↵

.279. I dreamed. ↵

.280. Seizure. ↵

.281. Die. ↵

.282. *Avoi!* is the word here rendered *Away!* It was frequently used in the French fabliaux, and the Italians employ the word *via!* in the same sense. ↵

.283. Coward. ↵

.284. Frightened. ↵

.285. Rag, clout, trifle. ↵

.286. Braggart. ↵

.287. Dreams. ↵

.288. Are produced by. ↵

.289. Choler, bile. ↵

- .290. Contention. [↵](#)
- .291. Little. [↵](#)
- .292. Attach no consequence to; “*Somnia ne cares*,”—Cato *De Moribus*, l. II, dist. 32. [↵](#)
- .293. The rafters of the hall, on which they were perched. [↵](#)
- .294. Profit, advantage. [↵](#)
- .295. Nature. [↵](#)
- .296. The herb so called because by its virtue the centaur Chiron was healed when the poisoned arrow of Hercules had accidentally wounded his foot. [↵](#)
- .297. The herb “fumitory.” [↵](#)
- .298. Spurge; a plant of purgative qualities. To its name in the text correspond the Italian *catapuzza*, and French *catapuce*—words the origin of which is connected with the effects of the plant. [↵](#)
- .299. Dogwood berries. [↵](#)
- .300. Thrive. [↵](#)
- .301. Opinion. [↵](#)
- .302. Trial, experience. [↵](#)
- .303. Cicero, who in his book *De Divinatione* tells this and the following story, though in contrary order and with many differences. [↵](#)
- .304. Lodging. [↵](#)
- .305. Inn. [↵](#)

- .306. Dreamed. [↵](#)
- .307. Awoke, started. [↵](#)
- .308. Again. [↵](#)
- .309. Slain. [↵](#)
- .310. Cause that cart to be stopped. [↵](#)
- .311. Dreamed. [↵](#)
- .312. Delay. [↵](#)
- .313. Describe. [↵](#)
- .314. Loathsome. [↵](#)
- .315. Or hyllid; from Anglo-Saxon *helan* hid, concealed. [↵](#)
- .316. Seized. [↵](#)
- .317. Tortured. [↵](#)
- .318. Racked. [↵](#)
- .319. Confessed. [↵](#)
- .320. I am not prating idly, or lying. [↵](#)
- .321. As they wish. [↵](#)
- .322. Prepared, resolved. [↵](#)
- .323. Dreamed. [↵](#)
- .324. Depart. [↵](#)
- .325. Delay. [↵](#)

- .326. Dismay. [↵](#)
- .327. Transact my business. [↵](#)
- .328. Dreams. [↵](#)
- .329. Tricks. [↵](#)
- .330. Incoherent, wild imagining. [↵](#)
- .331. Spend or lose in sloth, loiter away. [↵](#)
- .332. Time. [↵](#)
- .333. I am sorry for thee. [↵](#)
- .334. By an accident. [↵](#)
- .335. Time. [↵](#)
- .336. Learn. [↵](#)
- .337. Kenelm succeeded his father as king of the Saxon realm of Mercia in 811, at the age of seven years; but he was slain by his ambitious aunt Quendrada. The place of his burial was miraculously discovered, and he was subsequently elevated to the rank of a saint and martyr. His life is in the English *Golden Legend*. [↵](#)
- .338. The kingdom of Mercia; Anglo-Saxon, Myrcnarice. Compare the second member of the compound in the German, Frankreich, France; Oesterreich, Austria. [↵](#)
- .339. Saw. [↵](#)
- .340. Nurse. [↵](#)
- .341. In all points. [↵](#)

- .342. Guard. [↵](#)
- .343. Little significance has he attached to. [↵](#)
- .344. Cicero (*De Republica*, lib. VI) wrote the Dream of Scipio, in which the Younger relates the appearance of the Elder Africanus, and the counsels and exhortations which the shade addressed to the sleeper. Macrobius wrote an elaborate *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*—a philosophical treatise much studied and relished during the Middle Ages. [↵](#)
- .345. Significance. [↵](#)
- .346. Realms. [↵](#)
- .347. See the “Monk’s Tale,” [here](#). [↵](#)
- .348. Lost. Andromache’s dream will not be found in Homer; It is related in the book of the fictitious Dares Phrygius, the most popular authority during the Middle Ages for the history of the Trojan War. [↵](#)
- .349. Hold laxatives of no value. [↵](#)
- .350. Distrust. [↵](#)
- .351. Not a whit. [↵](#)
- .352. Cease. [↵](#)
- .353. Liberal. [↵](#)
- .354. Certain. [↵](#)
- .355. See [note 88](#). [↵](#)
- .356. This line is taken from the same fabulous conference between the Emperor Adrian and the philosopher Secundus, whence

Chaucer derived some of the arguments in praise of poverty employed in the "Wife of Bath's Tale" proper. See [note 2116](#). The passage transferred to the text is the commencement of a description of woman. "*Quid est mulier? hominis confusio*," etc.

[↵](#)

.357. Meaning. [↵](#)

.358. Delight. [↵](#)

.359. Natural instinct. [↵](#)

.360. Learning. [↵](#)

.361. Voice. [↵](#)

.362. Assuredly. [↵](#)

.363. Casualty. [↵](#)

.364. Rhetorician, orator. [↵](#)

.365. A thing supremely notable. [↵](#)

.366. A blackish fox, so called because of its likeness to coal, according to Skinner; though more probably the prefix has a reproachful meaning, and is in some way connected with the word "cold" as, some forty lines below, it is applied to the prejudicial counsel of women, and as frequently it is used to describe "sighs" and other tokens of grief, and "cares" or "anxieties." [↵](#)

.367. Dwelt. [↵](#)

.368. Burst. [↵](#)

.369. Cabbages. [↵](#)

- .370. In this case, the meaning of “evening” or “afternoon” can hardly be applied to the word, which must be taken to signify some early hour of the forenoon. [↵](#)
- .371. Crouching. [↵](#)
- .372. See [note 3738](#); and [note 4215](#). [↵](#)
- .373. See [note 3078](#). [↵](#)
- .374. Rafters. [↵](#)
- .375. Foreknows. [↵](#)
- .376. Examine the matter thoroughly; a metaphor taken from the sifting of meal, to divide the fine flour from the bran. [↵](#)
- .377. Thomas Bradwardine, Archbishop of Canterbury in the thirteenth century, who wrote a book, *De Causa Dei*, in controversy with Pelagius; and also numerous other treatises, among them some on predestination. [↵](#)
- .378. Foreknowledge. [↵](#)
- .379. Of inevitable necessity. [↵](#)
- .380. Foreknows. [↵](#)
- .381. Knowledge. [↵](#)
- .382. Constrains, necessitates. [↵](#)
- .383. Not at all. [↵](#)
- .384. Mischievous, unwise. [↵](#)
- .385. Know not. [↵](#)

- .386. Jest. ↵
- .387. Conjecture, imagine. ↵
- .388. Bask. ↵
- .389. Certainly. ↵
- .390. In a popular mediaveal Latin treatise by one Theobaldus, entitled *Physiologus de Naturis XII Animalium*, sirens or mermaids are described as skilled in song, and drawing unwary mariners to destruction by the sweetness of their voices. ↵
- .391. Cabbages. ↵
- .392. Then he had no inclination. ↵
- .393. Enemy. ↵
- .394. Never before. ↵
- .395. Voice. ↵
- .396. Satisfaction. ↵
- .397. Enjoy, possess, or use. ↵
- .398. Make such an exertion. ↵
- .399. “Nigellus Wireker,” says Urry’s Glossary, “a monk and precentor of Canterbury, wrote a Latin poem intituled ‘*Speculum Speculorum*,’ dedicated to William Longchamp, Bishop of Ely, and Lord Chancellor; wherein, under the fable of an Ass (which he calls ‘Burnellus’) that desired a longer tail, is represented the folly of such as are not content with their own condition. There is introduced a tale of a cock, who having his leg broke by a priest’s son (called Gundulfus) watched an opportunity to be revenged; which at last presented itself on this occasion: A day

was appointed for Gundulfus's being admitted into holy orders at a place remote from his father's habitation; he therefore orders the servants to call him at first cock-crowing, which the cock overhearing did not crow at all that morning. So Gundulfus overslept himself, and was thereby disappointed of his ordination, the office being quite finished before he came to the place." Wireker's satire was among the most celebrated and popular Latin poems of the Middle Ages. The Ass was probably as Tyrwhitt suggests, called "Burnel" or "Brunel," from his brown colour; as, a little below, a reddish fox is called "Russel." ↵

400. Because. ↵

401. Foolish. ↵

402. Flatterer; French, *flatteur*. ↵

403. Deceiver, cozeners; the word had analogues in the French *losengier*, and the Spanish *lisongero*. It is probably connected with *leasing*, falsehood; which has been derived from Anglo-Saxon *hlisan*, to celebrate—as if it meant the spreading of a false renown. ↵

404. Truth. ↵

405. Occasion. ↵

406. Master Russet; a name given to the fox, from his reddish colour. ↵

407. Seized him by the throat. ↵

408. Escaped. ↵

409. Recked, regarded. ↵

410. Geoffrey de Vinsauf was the author of a well-known medieval treatise on composition in various poetical styles of which he

gave examples. Chaucer's irony is therefore directed against some grandiose and affected lines on the death of Richard I, intended to illustrate the pathetic style, in which Friday is addressed as "O Veneris lachrymosa dies!" ↵

411. *"Priamum altaria ad ipsa trementem
Traxit, et in multo lapsantem sanguine nati
Implicuitque comam laeva, dextraque coruscum
Extulit, ac lateri capulo tenus abdidit ensem.
Haec finis Priami fatorum."*

Virgil, Aeneid, II 550.

↵

412. Yard, enclosure. ↵

413. Above all others. ↵

414. Shrieked. ↵

415. Simple, honest. ↵

416. Kill, destroy. ↵

417. The leader of a Kentish rising, in the reign of Richard II, in 1381, by which the Flemish merchants in London were great sufferers.
↵

418. Followers. ↵

419. Trumpets; Anglo-Saxon, *bema*. ↵

420. Made a popping or tooting sound. ↵

421. Surely. ↵

422. Addressing the pursuers. ↵

423. Nimbly. ↵
424. Offence. ↵
425. Took. ↵
426. Curse. ↵
427. Cause. ↵
428. Thrive. ↵
429. Prateth. ↵
430. For our instruction. See 2 Tim. 3:16. ↵
431. Certainly. ↵
432. A marginal note on a manuscript indicates that some Archbishop of Canterbury is here quoted. ↵
433. A layman. ↵
434. Cock. ↵
435. The brawny parts of the body. ↵
436. The sixteen lines appended to the “Tale of the Nun’s Priest” seem, as Tyrwhitt observes, to commence the prologue to the succeeding “Tale”—but the difficulty is to determine which that “Tale” should be. In earlier editions, the lines formed the opening of the prologue to the “Manciple’s Tale”; but most of the manuscripts acknowledge themselves defective in this part, and give the “Nun’s Tale” after that of the “Nun’s Priest.” In the Harleian manuscript, followed by Mr. Wright, the second “Nun’s Tale,” and the “Canon’s Yeoman’s Tale,” are placed after the “Franklin’s tale”; and the sixteen lines above are not found—the “Manciple’s” prologue coming immediately after the “Amen” of

the “Nun’s Priest.” In two manuscripts, the last line of the sixteen runs thus: “Said unto the Nun as ye shall hear;” and six lines more evidently forged, are given to introduce the “Nun’s Tale.” All this confusion and doubt only strengthen the certainty, and deepen the regret, that *The Canterbury Tales* were left at Chaucer’s, death not merely very imperfect as a whole, but destitute of many finishing touches that would have made them complete so far as the conception had actually been carried into performance. ↵

437. This “Tale” was originally composed by Chaucer as a separate work, and as such it is mentioned in the “Legend of Good Women” under the title of *The Life of Saint Cecile*. Tyrwhitt quotes the line in which the author calls himself an “unworthy son of Eve,” and that in which he says, “Yet pray I you, that reade what I write,” as internal evidence that the insertion of the poem in the *Canterbury Tales* was the result of an afterthought; while the whole tenor of the introduction confirms the belief that Chaucer composed it as a writer or translator—not, dramatically, as a speaker. The story is almost literally translated from the Life of St. Cecilia in the *Legenda Aurea*. ↵

438. Nurse. ↵

439. Delights. ↵

440. Occupation, activity. ↵

441. Endeavour, apply ourselves. ↵

442. Seize. ↵

443. Entangle, bind. ↵

444. Skirt, or lappet, of a garment. ↵

445. Leash, snare; the same as *las*, oftener used by Chaucer. ↵

- .446. For which others labour. [↵](#)
- .447. The nativity and assumption of the Virgin Mary formed the themes of some of St. Bernard's most eloquent sermons. [↵](#)
- .448. Dwell. [↵](#)
- .449. Thou noblest one, as far as our nature admitted. [↵](#)
- .450. Nature. [↵](#)
- .451. Wrap. [↵](#)
- .452. The Trinity. [↵](#)
- .453. Without remission, unceasingly. [↵](#)
- .454. Praise. [↵](#)
- .455. Without blemish. [↵](#)
- .456. Compare with this stanza to the fourth stanza of the "Prioress's Tale," [here](#), the substance of which is the same. [↵](#)
- .457. Healer, saviour. [↵](#)
- .458. Banished, outcast. [↵](#)
- .459. Matthew 15:26, 27. [↵](#)
- .460. See [note 4437](#). [↵](#)
- .461. Faith. [↵](#)
- .462. Delivered from that place where is outer darkness. [↵](#)
- .463. See [note 4437](#). [↵](#)
- .464. Same. [↵](#)

465. Latin, *coeli lilium*. Such punning derivations of proper names were very much in favour in the Middle Ages. The explanations of St. Cecilia's name are literally taken from the prologue to the Latin legend. [↵](#)
466. Purity. [↵](#)
467. Latin, *caeci via*. [↵](#)
468. From "Coelum," and "ligo," I bind. [↵](#)
469. Qualities. [↵](#)
470. Greek, *λαος, ληος*, (Ion.) *λεως* (Att.), the people. [↵](#)
471. Signifies. [↵](#)
472. Spiritually. [↵](#)
473. This passage suggests Horace's description of the wise man, who, among other things, is "*in se ipse totus, teres, atque rotundus*." —Satires, 2, VII 86 [↵](#)
474. Why she had her name. [↵](#)
475. Heart. [↵](#)
476. Garment of haircloth. [↵](#)
477. Guide, keep. [↵](#)
478. Unspotted, blameless. [↵](#)
479. Praying. [↵](#)
480. Secret. [↵](#)
481. If. [↵](#)

482. For the first time. [↵](#)
483. Doubt. [↵](#)
484. Govern, dispose of. [↵](#)
485. Believe. [↵](#)
486. Rome. [↵](#)
487. Business. [↵](#)
488. Depart. [↵](#)
489. Lingering, or lying concealed; the Latin original has “*Inter sepulchra martyrum latiantem.*” [↵](#)
490. Shepherd, keeper. [↵](#)
491. That. [↵](#)
492. Servant, handmaid. [↵](#)
493. But lately, newly. [↵](#)
494. Took, lifted. [↵](#)
495. Then. [↵](#)
496. Truer. [↵](#)
497. Crowns. [↵](#)
498. Mate, husband. [↵](#)
499. Unspotted, blameless. [↵](#)
500. Decayed. [↵](#)

ENDNOTES 4,501–5,000

.501. Unless. [↵](#)

.502. Request. [↵](#)

.503. Then. [↵](#)

.504. Perceived. [↵](#)

.505. Into another being or nature. [↵](#)

.506. Beloved. [↵](#)

.507. Truth. [↵](#)

.508. Verily. [↵](#)

.509. For the first time. [↵](#)

.510. Tell. [↵](#)

.511. Renounce. [↵](#)

.512. The fourteen lines within brackets are supposed to have been originally an interpolation in the Latin legend, from which they are literally translated. They awkwardly interrupt the flow of the narration. [↵](#)

.513. Foresake. [↵](#)

- .514. Confession. ↵
- .515. Allot, appropriate. ↵
- .516. Moreover. ↵
- .517. Deaf. ↵
- .518. Believeth. ↵
- .519. Chosen friend. ↵
- .520. Then. ↵
- .521. Dwelleth. ↵
- .522. Corners. ↵
- .523. Burn. ↵
- .524. Nevertheless. ↵
- .525. Reasonably. ↵
- .526. Reasonable. ↵
- .527. Spirit. ↵
- .528. Endowed them with a soul. ↵
- .529. Doubt. ↵
- .530. Dwell. ↵
- .531. Truth. ↵
- .532. Wit; the devising or constructive faculty; Latin, *ingenium*. ↵
- .533. Employed. ↵

- .534. Full. [↵](#)
- .535. Distressful, wretched. See [note 4366](#). [↵](#)
- .536. Request, favour. [↵](#)
- .537. Granted, successful. [↵](#)
- .538. Questioned. [↵](#)
- .539. Strike. [↵](#)
- .540. Of whom I tell you. [↵](#)
- .541. The secretary or registrar who was charged with publishing the acts, decrees and orders of the prefect. [↵](#)
- .542. Seized. [↵](#)
- .543. Led. [↵](#)
- .544. Doctrine, teaching. [↵](#)
- .545. Began. [↵](#)
- .546. To wrest, root out. [↵](#)
- .547. Believe. [↵](#)
- .548. In a company. [↵](#)
- .549. Mien. [↵](#)
- .550. Beloved. [↵](#)
- .551. See 2 Tim. 4:7, 8; "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith," etc. [↵](#)
- .552. Relate. [↵](#)

.553. Steadfast. [↵](#)

.554. On the spot. [↵](#)

.555. Caused him to be cruelly or fatally beaten; the force of the “to” is intensive. [↵](#)

.556. Quit. [↵](#)

.557. Burn incense to. [↵](#)

.558. Teaching. [↵](#)

.559. Opinion. [↵](#)

.560. Believe. [↵](#)

.561. Die. [↵](#)

.562. First of all. [↵](#)

.563. Ignorantly. [↵](#)

.564. Asked. [↵](#)

.565. Certainly. [↵](#)

.566. Punishment. [↵](#)

.567. Deny. [↵](#)

.568. Renounce. [↵](#)

.569. Nobility. [↵](#)

.570. Mad. [↵](#)

.571. Judgment. [↵](#)

- .572. True. [↵](#)
- .573. Confounded in thy jolly. [↵](#)
- .574. Dissembles. [↵](#)
- .575. Grows mad, furious. [↵](#)
- .576. Thoughts, consideration. [↵](#)
- .577. Unhappy. [↵](#)
- .578. Mortally. [↵](#)
- .579. Truth. [↵](#)
- .580. Falsehood. [↵](#)
- .581. Give life to. [↵](#)
- .582. Cease, have done with. [↵](#)
- .583. Then. [↵](#)
- .584. Foolish. [↵](#)
- .585. Folly. [↵](#)
- .586. Every sort of way. [↵](#)
- .587. Ignorant. [↵](#)
- .588. Very, selfsame. [↵](#)
- .589. Advise. [↵](#)
- .590. Examine, test. [↵](#)
- .591. Everywhere; or, above all things. [↵](#)

- .592. Shut, confine. ↵
- .593. Kindled, applied. ↵
- .594. Leave. ↵
- .595. Message, order. ↵
- .596. Then. ↵
- .597. Executioner. ↵
- .598. Cause such torture, exercise such severity of punishment. ↵
- .599. Mangled, gashed. ↵
- .600. Received, caught up. ↵
- .601. Goods, moveables. ↵
- .602. Commended. ↵
- .603. Then. ↵
- .604. Cause to be established or made. ↵
- .605. Honourably, decorously. ↵
- .606. Is called. ↵
- .607. "The introduction," says Tyrwhitt, "of the 'Canon's Yeoman' to tell a tale at a time when so many of the original characters remain to be called upon, appears a little extraordinary. It should seem that some sudden resentment had determined Chaucer to interrupt the regular course of his work, in order to insert a satire against the alchemists. That their pretended science was much cultivated about this time, and produced its usual evils, may fairly be inferred from the Act, which was passed soon after,

5 H. IV c. IV, to make it felony 'to multiply gold or silver, or to use the art of multiplication.'” Tyrwhitt finds in the prologue some colour for the hypothesis that this “Tale” was intended by Chaucer to begin the return journey from Canterbury; but against this must be set the fact that the Yeoman himself expressly speaks of the distance to Canterbury yet to be ridden.

[↵](#)

.608. From some place which the loss of the Second Nun’s prologue does not enable us to identify. [↵](#)

.609. Nag. [↵](#)

.610. Dapple-gray. [↵](#)

.611. Spurred. [↵](#)

.612. Scarcely. [↵](#)

.613. The breastplate of a horse’s harness; French, *poitrail*. [↵](#)

.614. Spotted. [↵](#)

.615. A double valise; a wallet hanging across the crupper on either side of the horse. [↵](#)

.616. Considered. [↵](#)

.617. Cord. [↵](#)

.618. Mad. [↵](#)

.619. Burdock-leaf. [↵](#)

.620. Still. [↵](#)

.621. Wallflower. [↵](#)

- .622. Fortune. [↵](#)
- .623. Knows. [↵](#)
- .624. Not less than. [↵](#)
- .625. If. [↵](#)
- .626. Unless. [↵](#)
- .627. Learn. [↵](#)
- .628. Advantage. [↵](#)
- .629. Surpassing, extraordinary. [↵](#)
- .630. A scholar, or a man in holy orders. [↵](#)
- .631. Certainly. [↵](#)
- .632. Knows. [↵](#)
- .633. Learn, know. [↵](#)
- .634. Honour, reputation. [↵](#)
- .635. Little. [↵](#)
- .636. Upper garment; breeches. [↵](#)
- .637. Prosper. [↵](#)
- .638. Soiled, slovenly. [↵](#)
- .639. Buy. [↵](#)
- .640. Thrive. [↵](#)
- .641. Own (to him). [↵](#)

- .642. Stand the test or proof. ↵
- .643. Ignorant, stupid. ↵
- .644. Foolish. ↵
- .645. No matter. ↵
- .646. Skill, knowledge. ↵
- .647. Wise. ↵
- .648. Corners. ↵
- .649. Nature. ↵
- .650. Truth. ↵
- .651. By Saint Peter! ↵
- .652. An exclamation of dislike and ill-will; “confound it!” ↵
- .653. Labour. ↵
- .654. Transmute metals, in the attempt to multiply gold and silver by alchemy. ↵
- .655. Toil. ↵
- .656. Pore, peer anxiously. ↵
- .657. Cause. ↵
- .658. Fancy. ↵
- .659. Search, strive. ↵
- .660. Surely. “*Consciūs ipse sibi de se putat omnia dici*”—*De Moribus*, I. I dist. 17. ↵

- .661. Saying. [↵](#)
- .662. Then. [↵](#)
- .663. Pay dear for it. [↵](#)
- .664. Little. [↵](#)
- .665. Some diversion. [↵](#)
- .666. Destroy. [↵](#)
- .667. Promise. [↵](#)
- .668. A serious matter. [↵](#)
- .669. Trouble, injury. [↵](#)
- .670. The “Tale of the Canon’s Yeoman,” like those of the “Wife of Bath” and the “Pardoner,” is made up of two parts; a long general introduction, and the story proper. In the case of the “Wife of Bath,” the interruptions of other pilgrims, and the autobiographical nature of the discourse, recommend the separation of the prologue from the “Tale” proper; but in the other cases the introductory or merely connecting matter ceases wholly where the opening of “The Tale” has been marked in the text. [↵](#)
- .671. Nearer. [↵](#)
- .672. By my labour. [↵](#)
- .673. My sight is grown dim; perhaps the phrase has also the metaphorical sense of being deceived or befooled. [↵](#)
- .674. Slippery, deceptive. [↵](#)
- .675. Property. [↵](#)

- .676. Repay. ↵
- .677. Betaketh; designeth to occupy him in that art. ↵
- .678. His prosperity at an end. ↵
- .679. Jeopardy, hazard. In Froissart's French, *a jeu partie* is used to signify a game or contest in which the chances were exactly equal for both sides. ↵
- .680. Wicked folk. ↵
- .681. Trouble. ↵
- .682. No matter. ↵
- .683. Fantastic, wicked. ↵
- .684. Learned and strange. ↵
- .685. Scales; Latin, *squamae*. ↵
- .686. Cementing, sealing up. ↵
- .687. Slow. ↵
- .688. Quick. ↵
- .689. White lead. ↵
- .690. A certain number or proportion. ↵
- .691. Unlearned. ↵
- .692. Vessels for distillation "*per descensum*;" they were placed under the fire, and the spirit to be extracted was thrown downwards. ↵
- .693. Crucibles; French, *creuset*. ↵

- .694. Retorts; distilling-vessels; so called from their likeness in shape to a gourd—Latin, *cucurbita*. ↵
- .695. Stills, limbecs. ↵
- .696. At the price of, in exchange for, a leek. ↵
- .697. Agrimony. ↵
- .698. Moonwort. ↵
- .699. White of egg, glair; French, *glaire*; German, *ey*, an egg. ↵
- .700. The meaning of this phrase is obscure; but if we take the reading “cered poketts,” from the Harleian manuscript, we are led to the supposition that it signifies receptacles—bags or pokes—prepared with wax for some process. Latin, *cera*, wax. ↵
- .701. Potter’s clay, used for luting or closing vessels in the laboratories of the alchemists; Latin, *argilla*; French, *argile*. ↵
- .702. Flowers of antimony. ↵
- .703. Incorporating. ↵
- .704. Turning to a citrine colour, or yellow, by chemical action; that was the colour which proved the philosopher’s stone. ↵
- .705. Not, as in its modern meaning, the masses of metal shaped by pouring into moulds; but the moulds themselves into which the fused metal was poured. Compare Dutch, *ingieten*, part, *ingehoten*, to infuse; German, *eingiessen*, part, *eingegossen*, to pour in. ↵
- .706. Name. ↵
- .707. Name; from Anglo-Saxon, *threapian*. ↵

- .708. Call. [↵](#)
- .709. Publish, display. [↵](#)
- .710. As if. See [note 2269](#). [↵](#)
- .711. Easy to learn. [↵](#)
- .712. Fantastic foolish. [↵](#)
- .713. Ignorant. [↵](#)
- .714. Know he letters—be he learned. [↵](#)
- .715. Come to the same result in the pursuit of the art of making gold.
[↵](#)
- .716. Metal fillings; French, *limaille*. [↵](#)
- .717. Anywhere. [↵](#)
- .718. Though he look never so grim or fierce. [↵](#)
- .719. Secure. [↵](#)
- .720. Confession. [↵](#)
- .721. Mad. [↵](#)
- .722. Time. [↵](#)
- .723. Repentant. [↵](#)
- .724. Coarse cloak; Anglo-Saxon, *bratt*. The word is still used in Lincolnshire, and some parts of the north, to signify a coarse kind of apron. [↵](#)
- .725. Cease. [↵](#)

- .726. Shabbily. ↵
- .727. Whisper. ↵
- .728. Placed. ↵
- .729. Adjusts the proportions. ↵
- .730. Although. ↵
- .731. Gone, lost. ↵
- .732. Unless. ↵
- .733. Impious wretch. ↵
- .734. Dissatisfied. ↵
- .735. In consequence of; the modern vulgar phrase “all along of,” or
“all along on,” best conveys the force of the words in the text. ↵
- .736. Ignorant and foolish. ↵
- .737. Mixed in due proportions. ↵
- .738. Stop. ↵
- .739. So thé ich—so may I thrive. ↵
- .740. Again; another time. ↵
- .741. Sure. ↵
- .742. Cracked; from French, *écraser*, to crack or crush. ↵
- .743. Confounded. ↵
- .744. Quickly. ↵

- .745. Rubbish. [↵](#)
- .746. Time. [↵](#)
- .747. Has gone amiss at present. [↵](#)
- .748. Risk our property. [↵](#)
- .749. Drowned, sunk. [↵](#)
- .750. Endeavour. [↵](#)
- .751. To bring our enterprise into a better condition—to a better issue.
[↵](#)
- .752. Blame. [↵](#)
- .753. Assert, affirm noisily. [↵](#)
- .754. Proof, test. [↵](#)
- .755. Alexandria. [↵](#)
- .756. Cunning tricks. [↵](#)
- .757. Is not. [↵](#)
- .758. Contract an excessive or foolish fondness for him. [↵](#)
- .759. Except. [↵](#)
- .760. Deceitful conduct. [↵](#)
- .761. There is a black sheep in every flock. [↵](#)
- .762. Individual, single. [↵](#)
- .763. Counsel. [↵](#)

- .764. Employed in singing *annuals* or anniversary masses for the dead, without any cure of souls; the office was such as, in the prologue to the *Tales*, Chaucer praises the Parson for not seeking: Nor “ran unto London, unto Saint Poul’s, to seeke him a chantery for souls.” See [here](#). ↵
- .765. No matter. ↵
- .766. Neck. ↵
- .767. Quickly. ↵
- .768. Times. ↵
- .769. Pleased. ↵
- .770. I am not at all willing. ↵
- .771. A new thing to happen. ↵
- .772. Sure. ↵
- .773. Displeased, dissatisfied. ↵
- .774. Shown. ↵
- .775. Learn. ↵
- .776. With your own eye. ↵
- .777. Offer. ↵
- .778. Those wise folk of old. ↵
- .779. Press their way into his heart. ↵
- .780. Simple. ↵
- .781. Blinded; beguiled. ↵

- .782. Contrived. [↵](#)
- .783. Stratagems, snares. [↵](#)
- .784. Hasten. [↵](#)
- .785. Stupidity. [↵](#)
- .786. Knowledge. [↵](#)
- .787. Imagine. [↵](#)
- .788. Knows. [↵](#)
- .789. Grieveth. [↵](#)
- .790. At least. [↵](#)
- .791. Villainy. [↵](#)
- .792. Certainly. [↵](#)
- .793. Fetched. [↵](#)
- .794. Crucible. [↵](#)
- .795. A chemical phrase, signifying the dissolution of quicksilver in acid. [↵](#)
- .796. Knowledge. [↵](#)
- .797. Send out of the way. [↵](#)
- .798. Went. [↵](#)
- .799. With which to deceive. [↵](#)
- .800. Make haste. [↵](#)

- .801. Lay in order. [↵](#)
- .802. Done. [↵](#)
- .803. Great thanks. [↵](#)
- .804. Filings or dust of silver. [↵](#)
- .805. Contrivance, stratagem. [↵](#)
- .806. Before they separated. [↵](#)
- .807. Cease; from Anglo-Saxon, *blinnan*, to desist. [↵](#)
- .808. Grieveth. [↵](#)
- .809. Revenge myself. [↵](#)
- .810. Changeable, unsettled. [↵](#)
- !811. Evil fortune attend him! [↵](#)
- .812. Burn. [↵](#)
- .813. Quickly. [↵](#)
- .814. Evenly or exactly laid. [↵](#)
- .815. Mould. See [note 4705](#). [↵](#)
- .816. Then. [↵](#)
- .817. Turn out, succeed. [↵](#)
- .818. Mistrust. [↵](#)
- .819. Describe. [↵](#)
- .820. Little piece; the adjective *tiny* is connected with the word. [↵](#)

- .821. Prosper; achieve, end; French, *achever*. ↵
- .822. Breadth. ↵
- .823. Doubt. ↵
- .824. Countenance. ↵
- .825. Search. ↵
- .826. Little piece; the adjective *tiny* is connected with the word. ↵
- .827. That of all the saints. ↵
- .828. Curse. ↵
- .829. Unless, if. ↵
- .830. Trial, experiment. ↵
- .831. Then. ↵
- .832. Again. ↵
- .833. Stratagem. ↵
- .834. Heed. ↵
- .835. Particle. ↵
- .836. Apply. ↵
- .837. Before. ↵
- .838. Provided with that false contrivance. ↵
- .839. Went. ↵
- .840. Quickly. ↵

- .841. Better. ↵
- .842. Forthwith; again. ↵
- .843. Skillful. ↵
- .844. Swiftly. ↵
- .845. Haste. ↵
- .846. Took; from Anglo-Saxon, *niman*, to take. Compare German, *nehmen*, *nahm*. ↵
- .847. Swiftly. ↵
- .848. Before. ↵
- .849. Trick. ↵
- .850. Befooled him. ↵
- .851. Small piece of silver. ↵
- .852. Hind; slave, wretch. ↵
- .853. Unsuspecting. ↵
- .854. Left. ↵
- .855. Took. ↵
- .856. Before, erewhile. ↵
- .857. Of any value. ↵
- .858. Unless. ↵
- .859. Quickly. ↵

- .860. Proof. [↵](#)
- .861. Besotted, stupid. [↵](#)
- .862. No matter. [↵](#)
- .863. Certainly. [↵](#)
- .864. Were it not for. [↵](#)
- .865. Fetched. [↵](#)
- .866. Care. [↵](#)
- .867. Praise, renown. See [note 4005](#). [↵](#)
- .868. Rather. [↵](#)
- .869. Mad. [↵](#)
- .870. Good result of your experiments. [↵](#)
- .871. Great thanks. [↵](#)
- .872. Saw. [↵](#)
- .873. Befooled. [↵](#)
- .874. The false Canon. [↵](#)
- .875. Scarcely is there any (gold). [↵](#)
- .876. Blinds, deceives. [↵](#)
- .877. Pleasure and exertion. [↵](#)
- .878. Easily. [↵](#)
- .879. Gain, profit. [↵](#)

- .880. Pleasant. [↵](#)
- .881. Sorrow; Anglo-Saxon, *gram*; German, *gram*. [↵](#)
- .882. Burnt. [↵](#)
- .883. Advise. [↵](#)
- .884. Leave it—that is, the alchemist’s art. [↵](#)
- .885. Perceives no danger. [↵](#)
- .886. Traffic, commerce. [↵](#)
- .887. Seize and plunder; acquire by hook or by crook. [↵](#)
- .888. Burnt. [↵](#)
- .889. Prosperity. [↵](#)
- .890. Quickly. [↵](#)
- .891. Arnaldus Villanovanus, or Arnold de Villeneuve, was a distinguished French chemist and physician of the fourteenth century; his *Rosarium Philosophorum* was a favourite textbook with the alchemists of the generations that succeeded. [↵](#)
- .892. Except. [↵](#)
- .893. Hermes Trismegistus, counsellor of Osiris, King of Egypt, was credited with the invention of writing and hieroglyphics, the drawing up of the laws of the Egyptians, and the origination of many sciences and arts. The Alexandrian school ascribed to him the mystic learning which it amplified; and the scholars of the Middle Ages regarded with enthusiasm and reverence the works attributed to him—notably a treatise on the philosopher’s stone. [↵](#)

- .894. Drawn, derived. [↵](#)
- .895. Saying. [↵](#)
- .896. Study, explore. [↵](#)
- .897. Except. [↵](#)
- .898. Ignorant, foolish. [↵](#)
- .899. Knowledge. [↵](#)
- .900. *Secreta Secretorum*; a treatise, very popular in the Middle Ages, supposed to contain the sum of Aristotle's instructions to Alexander. Lydgate translated about half of the work, when his labour was interrupted by his death about 1460; and from the same treatise had been taken most of the seventh book of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*. [↵](#)
- .901. Tyrwhitt says that this book was printed in the *Theatrum Chemicum*, under the title, *Senioris Zadith fi. Hamuelis tabula chymica*; and the story here told of Plato and his disciple was there related of Solomon, but with some variations. [↵](#)
- .902. That. [↵](#)
- .903. To explain the unknown by the more unknown. [↵](#)
- .904. Then. [↵](#)
- .905. Will not. [↵](#)
- .906. Precious. [↵](#)
- .907. Protect. [↵](#)
- .908. Name. [↵](#)

.909. Counsel. [↵](#)

.910. Though he pursue the alchemist's art all his days. [↵](#)

.911. An end. [↵](#)

.912. Remedy for his sorrow and trouble. [↵](#)

.913. Know. [↵](#)

.914. Mr. Wright supposes this to be the village of Harbledown, near Canterbury, which is situated on a hill, and near which there are many ups and downs in the road. Like Boughton, where the Canon and his Yeoman overtook the pilgrims, it stood on the skirts of the Kentish forest of Blean or Blee. [↵](#)

.915. A proverbial saying. *Dun* is a name for an ass, derived from his colour. [↵](#)

.916. Easily. [↵](#)

.917. The mention of the Cook here, with no hint that he had already told a story, confirms the indication given by the imperfect condition of his "Tale," that Chaucer intended to suppress the "Tale" altogether, and make him tell a story in some other place. [↵](#)

.918. Make. [↵](#)

.919. Faith. [↵](#)

.920. In the day time. [↵](#)

.921. Laboured. [↵](#)

.922. Preferable. [↵](#)

.923. Are dim. [↵](#)

- .924. Flattered. [↵](#)
- .925. The quintain; called “fan” or “vane,” because it turned round like a weathercock. [↵](#)
- .926. Referring to the classification of wine, according to its effects on a man, given in the old “*Calendrier des Bergiers*,” The man of choleric temperament has “wine of lion;” the sanguine, “wine of ape;” the phlegmatic, “wine of sheep;” the melancholic, “wine of sow.” There is a Rabbinical tradition that, when Noah was planting vines, Satan slaughtered beside them the four animals named; hence the effect of wine in making those who drink it display in turn the characteristics of all the four. [↵](#)
- .927. Wroth. [↵](#)
- .928. Cavalry expedition. [↵](#)
- .929. Stupidly. [↵](#)
- .930. New. See [note 159](#). [↵](#)
- .931. A defluxion or rheum which stops the nose and obstructs the voice. [↵](#)
- .932. Horse. [↵](#)
- .933. Again. [↵](#)
- .934. I take no account. [↵](#)
- .935. Foolish. [↵](#)
- .936. A phrase in hawking—to recall a hawk to the fist; the meaning here is, that the Cook may one day bring the Manciple to account, or pay him off, for the rebuke of his drunkenness. [↵](#)
- .937. Take exception to, pick flaws in. [↵](#)

- .938. Proof, test. [↵](#)
- .939. Rather. [↵](#)
- .940. Provoke. [↵](#)
- .941. Jest. [↵](#)
- .942. Trick. [↵](#)
- .943. Blown into his horn; a metaphor for belching. [↵](#)
- .944. Trouble, annoyance. [↵](#)
- .945. "The fable of 'The Crow,'" says Tyrwhitt, "which is the subject of the 'Manciple's Tale,' has been related by so many authors, from Ovid down to Gower, that it is impossible to say whom Chaucer principally followed. His skill in new dressing an old story was never, perhaps, more successfully exerted." [↵](#)
- .946. Pleasant. [↵](#)
- .947. Generosity. [↵](#)
- .948. Part. [↵](#)
- .949. Tricked, deceived. [↵](#)
- .950. Observation, espionage. [↵](#)
- .951. A contrarious or ill-disposed woman. [↵](#)
- .952. Sheer folly. [↵](#)
- .953. Lose. [↵](#)
- .954. Succeed in constraining. [↵](#)
- .955. All that thy heart prompts. [↵](#)

- .956. Rather. [↵](#)
- .957. See the parallel to this passage in the “Squire’s Tale,” and [note 3192](#). [↵](#)
- .958. Forsaketh. [↵](#)
- .959. Nature. [↵](#)
- .960. Drives out. [↵](#)
- .961. Nature. [↵](#)
- .962. She desires. [↵](#)
- .963. Mate. [↵](#)
- .964. With reference to. [↵](#)
- .965. Gentle, mild. [↵](#)
- .966. Ill luck to it. [↵](#)
- .967. Is consonant to, accords with. [↵](#)
- .968. Unlawful lover. [↵](#)
- .969. Rough-spoken, downright. [↵](#)
- .970. Because. [↵](#)
- .971. Usurper. [↵](#)
- .972. Wandering. [↵](#)
- .973. Followers, people. [↵](#)
- .974. Level. [↵](#)

- .975. Well stored with texts or citations. ↵
- .976. Whit. ↵
- .977. Light or rash pleasure. ↵
- .978. Watching. ↵
- .979. Thou art befooled or betrayed. ↵
- .980. Value. ↵
- .981. Grave, trustworthy. ↵
- .982. To turn aside. ↵
- .983. Arrow; Anglo-Saxon, *fla*. ↵
- .984. Guitar. ↵
- .985. Created. ↵
- .986. Was not. ↵
- .987. Pleasantness. ↵
- .988. Steadfast. ↵
- .989. Certainly. ↵
- .990. Rash, hasty. ↵
- .991. So foully wrong. ↵
- .992. Distrust—want of trust; so *wanhope*, despair—want of hope. ↵
- .993. Rashness. ↵
- .994. Believe. ↵

.995. Know. [↵](#)

.996. Consider. [↵](#)

.997. Surely. [↵](#)

.998. Take any action upon your anger. [↵](#)

.999. Slay. [↵](#)

.1000. Once on a time. [↵](#)

ENDNOTES 5,001–5,199

i001. Lose. [↵](#)

i002. Revenged. [↵](#)

i003. Black. [↵](#)

i004. Before, in warning of. [↵](#)

i005. Sprang. [↵](#)

i006. To whom I commend him. [↵](#)

i007. Heed. [↵](#)

i008. Defend by crossing themselves. [↵](#)

i009. Because. [↵](#)

i010. Consider. [↵](#)

i011. Destroyed. [↵](#)

i012. Ruined. [↵](#)

i013. Except. [↵](#)

i014. Makest thy best effort. [↵](#)

015. Learn. [↵](#)

016. This is quoted in the French “Romance of the Rose,” from Cato *De Moribus*, l. I, dist. 3: “*Virtutem primam esse puta compescere linguam.*” [↵](#)

017. Knowest. [↵](#)

018. Hasty. [↵](#)

019. Prating man. [↵](#)

020. Beckon, make gestures. [↵](#)

021. Feign to be. [↵](#)

022. It please thee. [↵](#)

023. Thou hast no need to fear. [↵](#)

024. “*Semel emissum volat irrevocabile verbum.*”
—Horace, *Epist. I*, 18, 71.

[↵](#)

025. Slave. [↵](#)

026. Which he now regrets. [↵](#)

027. This caution is also from Cato *De Moribus*, l. I, dist. 12: “*Rumoris fuge ne incipias novus auctor haberi.*” [↵](#)

028. Rising. [↵](#)

029. In the middle of. [↵](#)

030. Village’s. [↵](#)

031. Govern. [↵](#)

- i032. From each class or rank in the company. [↵](#)
- i033. Vicar. [↵](#)
- i034. Faith. [↵](#)
- i035. Interrupt. [↵](#)
- i036. Wallet. [↵](#)
- i037. Forsake truth. [↵](#)
- i038. Chaff, refuse. [↵](#)
- i039. Relate stories. [↵](#)
- i040. A contemptuous reference to the alliterative poetry which was at that time very popular, in preference even, it would seem, to rhyme, in the northern parts of the country, where the language was much more barbarous and unpolished than in the south. [↵](#)
- i041. Mince matters, make false pretensions or promises. [↵](#)
- i042. The word is used here to signify the shrine, or destination, to which pilgrimage is made. [↵](#)
- i043. Opinion. [↵](#)
- i044. Scholars. [↵](#)
- i045. Meaning, sense. [↵](#)
- i046. A thing worth doing, that ought to be done. [↵](#)
- i047. Discourse. [↵](#)
- i048. Fruitful; profitable. [↵](#)

i049. The “Parson’s Tale” is believed to be a translation, more or less free, from some treatise on penitence that was in favour about Chaucer’s time. Tyrwhitt says: “I cannot recommend it as a very entertaining or edifying performance at this day; but the reader will please to remember, in excuse both of Chaucer and of his editor, that, considering *The Canterbury Tales* as a great picture of life and manners, the piece would not have been complete if it had not included the religion of the time.” The Editor of the present volume has followed the same plan adopted with regard to “Chaucer’s Tale of Meliboeus,” and mainly for the same reasons. (See [note 3947](#).) An outline of the Parson’s ponderous sermon—for such it is—has been drawn; while those passages have been given in full which more directly illustrate the social and the religious life of the time—such as the picture of hell, the vehement and rather coarse, but, in an antiquarian sense, most curious and valuable attack on the fashionable garb of the day, the catalogue of venial sins, the description of gluttony and its remedy, etc. The brief third or concluding part, which contains the application of the whole, and the “Retraction” or “Prayer” that closes the “Tale” and the entire magnum opus of Chaucer, have been given in full. [↵](#)

i050. Everlasting. [↵](#)

i051. Jeremiah 6:16. [↵](#)

i052. See [note 2261](#). [↵](#)

i053. In comparison with. [↵](#)

i054. Just before, the Parson had cited the words of Job to God (Job 10:20–22), “Suffer, Lord, that I may a while bewail and weep, ere I go without returning to the dark land, covered with the darkness of death; to the land of misease and of darkness, where as is the shadow of death; where as is no order nor ordinance, but grisly dread that ever shall last.” [↵](#)

i055. Is devoid. [↵](#)

i056. Everlasting. [↵](#)

i057. Prevent, interrupt. [↵](#)

i058. Servant. [↵](#)

i059. Trampled under foot. [↵](#)

i060. Abased. [↵](#)

i061. Trouble, torment. [↵](#)

i062. Want. [↵](#)

i063. United. [↵](#)

i064. Senses. [↵](#)

i065. Tasting. [↵](#)

i066. Wailing. [↵](#)

i067. Gnashing, grinding. [↵](#)

i068. Tasting. [↵](#)

i069. Expect. [↵](#)

i070. Saints. [↵](#)

i071. Killed, deadened. [↵](#)

i072. Leaveth. [↵](#)

i073. Promised. [↵](#)

i074. Disguising. [↵](#)

i075. Causes to sink. [↵](#)

- i076. Hold, bilge. [↵](#)
- i077. In any case. [↵](#)
- i078. Sunk. [↵](#)
- i079. Make ready. [↵](#)
- i080. Gluttony. [↵](#)
- i081. Promiseth. [↵](#)
- i082. Evening service of the Church. [↵](#)
- i083. Profitable, necessary. [↵](#)
- i084. Neglectfulness or indifference; from the Greek, *ακηδεια*. [↵](#)
- i085. Moreover. [↵](#)
- i086. Although. [↵](#)
- i087. Expecteth. [↵](#)
- i088. An image which was presented to the people to be kissed, at that part of the mass where the priest said, "*Pax Domini sit semper vobiscum*." The ceremony took the place, for greater convenience, of the "kiss of peace," which clergy and people, at this passage, used to bestow upon each other. [↵](#)
- i089. Like. [↵](#)
- i090. Arbour; bush. [↵](#)
- i091. Dearness. [↵](#)
- i092. Especially. [↵](#)

1093. Three ways of ornamenting clothes with lace, etc.; in barring it was laid on crossways, in ounding it was waved, in paling it was laid on lengthways. ↵

1094. Like. ↵

1095. Lining or edging with fur. ↵

1096. Sitting, slashing. ↵

1097. Help, remedy. ↵

1098. Inclemency. ↵

1099. Breeches. ↵

1100. Dividing. ↵

1101. Flayed. ↵

1102. Decency. ↵

1103. Gentle. ↵

1104. Reasonable and appropriate style. ↵

1105. Servant. ↵

1106. Breastplates. ↵

1107. Seemliness. ↵

1108. Retinue of servants. ↵

1109. Especially. ↵

1110. Violent and harmful. ↵

1111. Arrogance. ↵

5112. Impiety. [↵](#)

5113. Unless. [↵](#)

5114. Unless. [↵](#)

5115. Worketh harm. [↵](#)

5116. Especially. [↵](#)

5117. Like. [↵](#)

5118. Plate. [↵](#)

5119. Easily. [↵](#)

5120. Kinds. [↵](#)

5121. Goodness. [↵](#)

5122. Judgment. [↵](#)

5123. Craving. [↵](#)

5124. Take delight in. [↵](#)

5125. Accustomed, addicted. [↵](#)

5126. Bondage. [↵](#)

5127. Lair, lurking-place. [↵](#)

5128. Laboured. [↵](#)

5129. Although. [↵](#)

5130. Immoderately. [↵](#)

5131. Nicety. [↵](#)

132. Application, pains. ↵

133. Prepare. ↵

134. Unless. ↵

135. Indecency, impropriety. ↵

136. Sets no value on. ↵

137. Moderation. ↵

138. Portion. ↵

139. Divide. ↵

140. Not at all. ↵

141. A priest who enjoined penance in extraordinary cases. ↵

142. Unless thou be pleased. ↵

143. Division. ↵

144. True confession. ↵

145. Sickness. ↵

146. Accuse. ↵

147. Unless. ↵

148. Falsehoods. ↵

149. Unless. ↵

150. Fear. ↵

151. Jest. ↵

152. Easily. [↵](#)

153. To receive the holy sacrament; from Anglo-Saxon, *husel*; Latin, *hostia*, or *hostiola*, the host. [↵](#)

154. Renew themselves. [↵](#)

155. True. [↵](#)

156. Especially. [↵](#)

157. Notice. [↵](#)

158. Lodging. [↵](#)

159. Promptly. [↵](#)

160. Watchings. [↵](#)

161. Worthy. [↵](#)

162. In order that. [↵](#)

163. The more easily conned or learned. [↵](#)

164. Retain. [↵](#)

165. Commit. [↵](#)

166. Lesseneth. [↵](#)

167. Watching. [↵](#)

168. Liberality. [↵](#)

169. Murmur. [↵](#)

170. Out of time. [↵](#)

171. Because. ↵

172. Haircloth. ↵

173. Coarse hempen cloth. ↵

174. It was a frequent penance among the chivalric orders to wear mail shirts next the skin. ↵

175. With compassion. ↵

176. Gentleness. ↵

177. Patience. ↵

178. Better pleased. ↵

179. Rods. ↵

180. Chattels. ↵

181. In comparison with. ↵

182. Especially. ↵

183. Openly. ↵

184. Acquire. ↵

185. Presumption; from old French, *surcuider*, to think arrogantly, be full of conceit. ↵

186. Security. ↵

187. Cease. ↵

188. With their goodwill. ↵

189. Despair. ↵

190. Of two kinds. ↵

191. Unless. ↵

192. Impair, injure. ↵

193. Kingdom. ↵

194. The genuineness and real significance of this “Prayer of Chaucer,” usually called his “Retractation,” have been warmly disputed. On the one hand, it has been declared that the monks forged the retractation, and procured its insertion among the works of the man who had done so much to expose their abuses and ignorance, and to weaken their hold on popular credulity: on the other hand, Chaucer himself at the close of his life, is said to have greatly lamented the ribaldry and the attacks on the clergy which marked especially *The Canterbury Tales*, and to have drawn up a formal retractation of which the “Prayer” is either a copy or an abridgment. The beginning and end of the “Prayer,” as Tyrwhitt points out, are in tone and terms quite appropriate in the mouth of the Parson, while they carry on the subject of which he has been treating; and, despite the fact that Mr. Wright holds the contrary opinion, Tyrwhitt seems to be justified in setting down the “Retractation” as interpolated into the close of the “Parson’s Tale.” Of the circumstances under which the interpolation was made, or the causes by which it was dictated, little or nothing can now be confidently affirmed; but the agreement of the manuscripts and the early editions in giving it, render it impossible to discard it peremptorily as a declaration of prudish or of interested regret, with which Chaucer himself had nothing whatever to do. ↵

195. Impute. ↵

196. Unskillfulness. ↵

197. Especially. ↵

198. Are sinfull, tend towards sin. [↩](#)

199. True. [↩](#)



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