



# CANTERBURY TALES AND OTHER POEMS

BY  
GEOFFREY CHAUCER

[14TH CENT.]

**Canterbury Tales And Other Poems By Geoffrey Chaucer.**  
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# THE CANTERBURY TALES

## GENERAL PROLOGUE

Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote  
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,  
And bathed every veyne in swich licour  
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;  
Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth  
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth  
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne  
Hath in the Ram his half cours yronne,  
And smale foweles maken melodye,  
10 That slepen al the nyght with open ye  
(So priketh hem Nature in hir corages),  
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,  
And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes,  
To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes;  
And specially from every shires ende  
Of Engelond to Caunterbury they wende,  
The hooly blisful martir for to seke,  
That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke.  
Bifil that in that seson on a day,  
20 In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay  
Redy to wenden on my pilgrymage  
To Caunterbury with ful devout corage,  
At nyght was come into that hostelrye  
Wel nyne and twenty in a compaignye  
Of sondry folk, by aventure yfalle  
In felaweshipe, and pilgrimes were they alle,  
That toward Caunterbury wolden ryde.  
The chambres and the stables weren wyde,  
And wel we weren esed atte beste.  
30 And shortly, whan the sonne was to reste,  
So hadde I spoken with hem everichon  
That I was of hir felaweshipe anon,  
And made forward erly for to ryse,  
To take oure wey ther as I yow devyse.  
But nathelees, whil I have tyme and space,  
Er that I ferther in this tale pace,  
Me thynketh it acordaunt to resoun  
To telle yow al the condicioun

Of ech of hem, so as it semed me,  
40 And whiche they weren, and of what degree,  
And eek in what array that they were inne;  
And at a knyght than wol I first bigynne.  
A KNYGHT ther was, and that a worthy man,  
That fro the tyme that he first bigan  
To riden out, he loved chivalrie,  
Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisie.  
Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,  
And therto hadde he riden, no man ferre,  
As wel in cristendom as in hethenesse,  
50 And evere honoured for his worthynesse;  
At Alisaundre he was whan it was wonne.  
Ful ofte tyme he hadde the bord bigonne  
Aboven alle nacions in Puce;  
In Lettow hadde he reysed and in Ruce,  
No Cristen man so ofte of his degree.  
In Gernade at the seege eek hadde he be  
Of Algezir, and riden in Belmarye.  
At Lyeys was he and at Satalye,  
Whan they were wonne, and in the Grete See  
60 At many a noble armee hadde he be.  
At mortal batailles hadde he been fiftene,  
And foughten for oure feith at Tramysse  
In lystes thries, and ay slayn his foo.  
This ilke worthy knyght hadde been also  
Somtyme with the lord of Palatye  
Agayn another hethen in Turkye;  
And everemoore he hadde a sovereyn prys.  
And though that he were worthy, he was wys,  
And of his port as meeke as is a mayde.  
70 He nevere yet no vileynye ne sayde  
In al his lyf unto no maner wight.  
He was a verray, parfit gentil knyght.  
But for to tellen yow of his array,  
His hors were goode, but he was nat gay.  
Of fustian he wered a gypon  
Al bismotered with his habergeon,  
For he was late ycome from his viage,  
And wente for to doon his pilgrymage.  
With hym ther was his sone, a yong SQUIER,

80 A lovyere and a lusty bachelor,  
With lokkes crulle as they were leyd in presse.  
Of twenty yeer of age he was, I gesse.  
Of his stature he was of evene lengthe,  
And wonderly delyvere, and of greet strengthe.  
And he hadde been somtyme in chyvachie  
In Flaundres, in Artoys, and Pycardie,  
And born hym weel, as of so litel space,  
In hope to stonden in his lady grace.  
Embrouded was he, as it were a meede  
90 Al ful of fresshe floures, whyte and reede.  
Syngynge he was, or floytynge, al the day;  
He was as fressh as is the month of May.  
Short was his gowne, with sleves longe and wyde.  
Wel koude he sitte on hors and faire ryde.  
He koude songes make and wel endite,  
Juste and eek daunce, and weel purtreye and write.  
So hote he lovede that by nyghtertale  
He sleep namoore than dooth a nyghtyngale.  
Curteis he was, lowely, and servysable,  
100 And carf biforn his fader at the table.  
A YEMAN hadde he and servantz namo  
At that tyme, for hym liste ride so,  
And he was clad in cote and hood of grene.  
A sheef of pecok arwes, bright and kene,  
Under his belt he bar ful thriftily  
(Wel koude he dresse his takel yemanly;  
His arwes drouped noght with fetheres lowe),  
And in his hand he baar a myghty bowe.  
A not heed hadde he, with a broun visage.  
110 Of wodecraft wel koude he al the usage.  
Upon his arm he baar a gay bracer,  
And by his syde a swerd and a bokeler,  
And on that oother syde a gay daggere  
Harneised wel and sharp as point of spere;  
A Cristopher on his brest of silver sheene.  
An horn he bar, the bawdryk was of grene;  
A forster was he, soothly, as I gesse.  
Ther was also a Nonne, a PRIORESSE,  
That of hir smylyng was ful symple and coy;

120 Hire gretteste ooth was but by Seinte Loy;  
And she was cleped madame Eglentyne.  
Ful weel she soong the service dyvyne,  
Entuned in hir nose ful semely;  
And Frenssh she spak ful faire and fetisly,  
After the scole of Stratford atte Bowe,  
For Frenssh of Parys was to hire unknowe.  
At mete wel ytaught was she with alle;  
She leet no morsel from hir lippes falle,  
Ne wette hir fynghes in hir sauce depe;  
130 Wel koude she carie a morsel and wel kepe  
That no drope ne fille upon hire brest.  
In curteisie was set ful muchel hir lest.  
Hir over-lippe wyped she so clene  
That in hir coppe ther was no ferthyng sene  
Of grece, whan she dronken hadde hir draughte.  
Ful semely after hir mete she raughte.  
And sikerly she was of greet desport,  
And ful plesaunt, and amyable of port,  
And peyned hire to countrefete cheere  
140 Of court, and to been estatlich of manere,  
And to ben holden digne of reverence.  
But for to speken of hire conscience,  
She was so charitable and so pitous  
She wolde wepe, if that she saugh a mous  
Kaught in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde.  
Of smale houndes hadde she that she fedde  
With rosted flessch, or milk and wastel-breed.  
But soore wepte she if oon of hem were deed,  
Or if men smoot it with a yerde smerte;  
150 And al was conscience and tendre herte.  
Ful semyly hir wympul pynched was,  
Hir nose tretys, hir eyen greye as glas,  
Hir mouth ful smal, and therto softe and reed.  
But sikerly she hadde a fair forheed;  
It was almoost a spanne brood, I trowe;  
For, hardily, she was nat undergrowe.  
Ful fetys was hir cloke, as I was war.  
Of smal coral aboute hire arm she bar  
A peire of bedes, gauded al with grene,  
160 And theron heng a brooch of gold ful sheene,  
On which ther was first write a crowned A,

And after Amor vincit omnia.  
 Another NONNE with hire hadde she,  
 That was hir chapeleyne, and preestes thre.  
 A MONK ther was, a fair for the maistrie,  
 An outridere, that lovede venerie,  
 A manly man, to been an abbot able.  
 Ful many a deyntee hors hadde he in stable,  
 And whan he rood, men myghte his brydel heere  
 170 Gynglen in a whistlynge wynd als cleere  
 And eek as loude as dooth the chapel belle  
 Ther as this lord was kepere of the celle.  
 The reule of Seint Maure or of Seint Beneit --  
 By cause that it was old and somdel streit  
 This ilke Monk leet olde thynges pace,  
 And heeld after the newe world the space.  
 He yaf nat of that text a pulled hen,  
 That seith that hunters ben nat hooly men,  
 Ne that a monk, whan he is recchelees,  
 180 Is likned til a fissh that is waterlees --  
 This is to seyn, a monk out of his cloystre.  
 But thilke text heeld he nat worth an oystre;  
 And I seyde his opinion was good.  
 What sholde he studie and make hymselfen wood,  
 Upon a book in cloystre alwey to poure,  
 Or swynken with his handes, and laboure,  
 As Austyn bit? How shal the world be served?  
 Lat Austyn have his swynk to hym reserved!  
 Therefore he was a prikasour aright:  
 190 Grehoundes he hadde as swift as fowel in flight;  
 Of prikyng and of huntyng for the hare  
 Was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare.  
 I seigh his sleeves purfiled at the hond  
 With grys, and that the fyneste of a lond;  
 And for to festne his hood under his chyn,  
 He hadde of gold ywroght a ful curious pyn;  
 A love-knotte in the gretter ende ther was.  
 His heed was balled, that shoon as any glas,  
 And eek his face, as he hadde been enoynt.  
 200 He was a lord ful fat and in good poynt;  
 His eyen stepe, and rolynge in his heed,  
 That stemed as a forneys of a leed;  
 His bootes souple, his hors in greet estaat.



Now certainly he was a fair prelaat;  
 He was nat pale as a forpyned goost.  
 A fat swan loved he best of any roost.  
 His palfrey was as broun as is a berye.  
 A FRERE ther was, a wantowne and a merye,  
 A lymytour, a ful solempne man.  
 210 In alle the ordres foure is noon that kan  
 So muchel of daliaunce and fair langage.  
 He hadde maad ful many a mariage  
 Of yonge wommen at his owene cost.  
 Unto his ordre he was a noble post.  
 Ful wel biloved and famulier was he  
 With frankeleyns over al in his contree,  
 And eek with worthy wommen of the toun;  
 For he hadde power of confessioun,  
 As seyde hymself, moore than a curat,  
 220 For of his ordre he was licenciат.  
 Ful swetely herde he confessioun,  
 And plesaunt was his absolucioun:  
 He was an esy man to yeve penaunce,  
 Ther as he wiste to have a good pitaunce.  
 For unto a povre ordre for to yive  
 Is signe that a man is wel yshryve;  
 For if he yaf, he dorste make avaunt,  
 He wiste that a man was repentaunt;  
 For many a man so hard is of his herte,  
 230 He may nat wepe, althogh hym soore smerte.  
 Therfore in stede of wepyng and preyer  
 Men moote yeve silver to the povre freres.  
 His tyet was ay farsed ful of knyves

And pynnes, for to yeven faire wyves.  
 And certainly he hadde a murie note:  
 Wel koude he synge and pleyen on a rote;  
 Of yeddynges he baar outrely the pris.  
 His nekke whit was as the flour-de-lys;  
 Therto he strong was as a champioun.  
 240 He knew the tavernes wel in every toun  
 And everich hostiler and tappestere  
 Bet than a lazar or a beggestere,  
 For unto swich a worthy man as he

Acorded nat, as by his facultee,  
 To have with sike lazars aqueyntaunce.  
 It is nat honest; it may nat avaunce,  
 For to deelen with no swich poraille,  
 But al with riche and selleres of vitaille.  
 And over al, ther as profit sholde arise,  
 250 Curteis he was and lowely of servyse;  
 Ther nas no man nowher so vertuous.  
 He was the beste beggere in his hous;  
 [And yaf a certeyn ferme for the graunt;  
 Noon of his bretheren cam ther in his haunt;]  
 For thogh a wydwe hadde noght a sho,  
 So plesaunt was his "In principio,"  
 Yet wolde he have a ferthyng, er he wente.  
 His purchas was wel bettre than his rente.  
 And rage he koude, as it were right a whelp.  
 In love-dayes ther koude he muchel help,  
 For ther he was nat lyk a cloysterer  
 260 With a thredbare cope, as is a povre scoler,  
 But he was lyk a maister or a pope.  
 Of double worstede was his semycope,  
 That rounded as a belle out of the presse.  
 Somwhat he lipped, for his wantownesse,  
 To make his Englissh sweete upon his tonge;  
 And in his harpyng, whan that he hadde songe,  
 His eyen twynkled in his heed aryght  
 As doon the sterres in the frosty nyght.  
 This worthy lymytour was cleped Huberd.  
 270 A MERCHANT was ther with a forked berd,  
 In mottelee, and hye on horse he sat;  
 Upon his heed a Flaundryssh bever hat,  
 His bootes clasped faire and fetisly.  
 His resons he spak ful solempnely,  
 Sownynge alwey th' encrees of his wynnyng.  
 He wolde the see were kept for any thyng  
 Bitwixe Middelburgh and Orewelle.  
 Wel koude he in eschaunge sheeldes selle.  
 This worthy man ful wel his wit bisette:  
 280 Ther wiste no wight that he was in dette,  
 So estatly was he of his governaunce  
 With his bargaynes and with his chevyssaunce.  
 For sothe he was a worthy man with alle,

But, sooth to seyn, I noot how men hym calle.  
A CLERK ther was of Oxenford also,  
That unto logyk hadde longe ygo.  
As leene was his hors as is a rake,  
And he nas nat right fat, I undertake,  
But looked holwe, and therto sobrelly.  
290 Ful thredbare was his overeste courtepy,  
For he hadde geten hym yet no benefice,  
Ne was so worldly for to have office.  
For hym was levere have at his beddes heed  
Twenty bookes, clad in blak or reed,  
Of Aristotle and his philosophie  
Than robes riche, or fithele, or gay sautrie.  
But al be that he was a philosopre,  
Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre;  
But al that he myghte of his freendes hente,  
300 On bookes and on lernynge he it spente,  
And bisily gan for the soules preye  
Of hem that yaf hym wherwith to scoleye.  
Of studie took he moost cure and moost heede.  
Noght o word spak he moore than was neede,  
And that was seyde in forme and reverence,  
And short and quyk and ful of hy sentence;  
Sownynge in moral vertu was his speche,  
And gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche.  
A SERGEANT OF THE LAWE, war and wys,  
310 That often hadde been at the Parvys,  
Ther was also, ful riche of excellence.  
Discreet he was and of greet reverence --  
He semed swich, his wordes weren so wise.  
Justice he was ful often in assise,  
By patente and by pleyn commissioun.  
For his science and for his heigh renoun,  
Of fees and robes hadde he many oon.

So greet a purchasour was nowher noon:  
Al was fee symple to hym in effect;  
320 His purchasyng myghte nat been infect.  
Nowher so bisy a man as he ther nas,  
And yet he semed bisier than he was.  
In termes hadde he caas and doomes alle

That from the tyme of kyng William were falle.

Therto he koude endite and make a thyng,

Ther koude no wight pynche at his writyng;

And every statut koude he pleyn by rote.

He rood but hoomly in a medlee cote,

Girt with a ceint of silk, with barres smale;

330 Of his array telle I no lenger tale.

A FRANKELEYN was in his compaignye.

Whit was his berd as is the dayesye;

Of his complexioun he was sangwyn.

Wel loved he by the morwe a sop in wyn;

To lyven in delit was evere his wone,

For he was Epicurus owene sone,

That heeld opinioun that pleyn delit

Was verray felicittee parfit.

An housholdere, and that a greet, was he;

340 Seint Julian he was in his contree.

His breed, his ale, was always after oon;

A bettre envyned man was nowher noon.

Withoute bake mete was nevere his hous,

Of fissh and flessch, and that so plenteuous

It snewed in his hous of mete and drynke;

Of alle deyntees that men koude thynke,

After the sondry sesons of the yeer,

So chaunged he his mete and his soper.

Ful many a fat partrich hadde he in muwe,

350 And many a breem and many a luce in stuwe.

Wo was his cook but if his sauce were

Poynaunt and sharp, and redy al his geere.

His table dormant in his halle alway

Stood redy covered al the longe day.

At sessiouns ther was he lord and sire;

Ful ofte tyme he was knyght of the shire.

An anlaas and a gipser al of silk

Heeng at his girdel, whit as morne milk.

A shirreve hadde he been, and a contour.

360 Was nowher swich a worthy vavasour.

AN HABERDASSHERE and a CARPENTER,

A WEBBE, a DYERE, and a TAPYCER --

And they were clothed alle in o lyveree

Of a solempne and a greet fraternitee.

Ful fressh and newe hir geere apiked was;

Hir knyves were chaped noght with bras  
But al with silver, wroght ful clene and weel,  
Hire girdles and hir pouches everydeel.  
Wel semed ech of hem a fair burgeys  
370 To sitten in a yeldehalle on a deys.  
Everich, for the wisdom that he kan,  
Was shaply for to been an alderman.  
For catel hadde they ynogh and rente,  
And eek hir wyves wolde it wel assente;  
And elles certeyn were they to blame.  
It is ful fair to been ycleped "madame,"  
And goon to vigilies al bifore,  
And have a mantel roialliche ybore.  
A COOK they hadde with hem for the nones  
380 To boille the chiknes with the marybones,  
And poudre-marchant tart and galyngale.  
Wel koude he knowe a draughte of Londoun ale.  
He koude rooste, and sethe, and broille, and frye,  
Maken mortreux, and wel bake a pye.  
But greet harm was it, as it thoughte me,  
That on his shyne a mormal hadde he.  
For blankmanger, that made he with the beste.  
A SHIPMAN was ther, wonynge fer by weste;  
For aught I woot, he was of Dertemouthe.  
390 He rood upon a rouncy, as he kouthe,  
In a gowne of faldyng to the knee.  
A daggere hangynge on a laas hadde he  
Aboute his nekke, under his arm adoun.  
The hoote somer hadde maad his hewe al broun;  
And certainly he was a good felawe.  
Ful many a draughte of wyn had he ydrawe  
Fro Burdeux-ward, whil that the chapman sleep.  
Of nyce conscience took he no keep.  
If that he faught and hadde the hyer hond,  
400 By water he sente hem hoom to every lond.  
But of his craft to rekene wel his tydes,  
His stremes, and his daungers hym bisides,  
His herberwe, and his moone, his lodemenage,  
Ther nas noon swich from Hulle to Cartage.  
Hardy he was and wys to undertake;  
With many a tempest hadde his berd been shake.  
He knew alle the havenes, as they were,

Fro Gootlond to the cape of Fynystere,  
 And every cryke in Britaigne and in Spayne.  
 410 His barge ycleped was the Maudelayne.  
 With us ther was a DOCTOUR OF PHISIK;  
 In al this world ne was ther noon hym lik,  
 To speke of phisik and of surgerye,  
 For he was grounded in astronomye.  
 He kepte his pacient a ful greet deel  
 In houres by his magyk natureel.  
 Wel koude he fortunen the ascendent  
 Of his ymages for his pacient.  
 He knew the cause of everich maladye,  
 420 Were it of hoot, or coold, or moyste, or drye,  
 And where they engendred, and of what humour.  
 He was a verray, parfit praktisour:  
 The cause yknowe, and of his harm the roote,  
 Anon he yaf the sike man his boote.  
 Ful redy hadde he his apothecaries  
 To sende hym drogges and his letuaries,  
 For ech of hem made oother for to wyne --  
 Hir frendshipe nas nat newe to bigynne.  
 Wel knew he the olde Esculapius,  
 430 And Deyscorides, and eek Rufus,  
 Olde Ypocras, Haly, and Galyen,  
 Serapion, Razis, and Avycen,  
 Averrois, Damascien, and Constantyn,  
 Bernard, and Gatesden, and Gilbertyn.  
 Of his diete mesurable was he,  
 For it was of no superfluitee,  
 But of greet norissyng and digestible.  
 His studie was but litel on the Bible.  
 In sangwyn and in pers he clad was al,  
 440 Lyned with taffata and with sendal.  
 And yet he was but esy of dispence;  
 He kepte that he wan in pestilence.  
 For gold in phisik is a cordial,  
 Therefore he lovede gold in special.  
 A good WIF was ther OF biside BATHE,  
 But she was somdel deaf, and that was scathe.  
 Of clooth-makyng she hadde swich an haunt  
 She passed hem of Ypres and of Gaunt.  
 In al the parisshe wif ne was ther noon

450 That to the offrynge bifore hire sholde goon;  
And if ther dide, certeyn so wrooth was she  
That she was out of alle charitee.  
Hir coverchiefs ful fyne weren of ground;  
I dorste swere they weyeden ten pound  
That on a Sonday weren upon hir heed.  
Hir hosen weren of fyn scarlet reed,  
Ful streite yteyd, and shoes ful moyste and newe.  
Boold was hir face, and fair, and reed of hewe.  
She was a worthy womman al hir lyve:  
460 Housbondes at chirche dore she hadde fyve,  
Withouten oother compaignye in youthe --  
But thereof nedeth nat to speke as nowthe.  
And thries hadde she been at Jerusalem;  
She hadde passed many a straunge strem;  
At Rome she hadde been, and at Boloigne,  
In Galice at Seint-Jame, and at Coloigne.  
She koude muchel of wandrynge by the weye.  
Gat-tothed was she, soothly for to seye.  
Upon an amblere esily she sat,  
470 Ywympled wel, and on hir heed an hat  
As brood as is a bokeler or a targe;  
A foot-mantel aboute hir hipes large,  
And on hir feet a paire of spores sharpe.  
In felaweshipe wel koude she laughe and carpe.  
Of remedies of love she knew per chaunce,  
For she koude of that art the olde daunce.  
A good man was ther of religioun,  
And was a povre PERSOUN OF A TOUN,  
But riche he was of hooly thoght and werk.  
480 He was also a lerned man, a clerk,  
That Cristes gospel trewely wolde preche;  
His parisshe devoutly wolde he teche.  
Benygne he was, and wonder diligent,  
And in adversitee ful pacient,  
And swich he was ypreved ofte sithes.  
Ful looth were hym to cursen for his tithes,  
But rather wolde he yeven, out of doute,  
Unto his povre parisshe aboute  
Of his offryng and eek of his substaunce.  
490 He koude in litel thyng have suffisaunce.  
Wyd was his parisshe, and houses fer asonder,

But he ne lefte nat, for reyn ne thonder,  
In siknesse nor in meschief to visite  
The ferreste in his parisshe, muche and lite,  
Upon his feet, and in his hand a staf.  
This noble ensample to his sheep he yaf,  
That first he wroghte, and afterward he taughte.  
Out of the gospel he tho wordes caughte,  
And this figure he added eek therto,  
500 That if gold ruste, what shal iren do?  
For if a preest be foul, on whom we truste,  
No wonder is a lewed man to ruste;  
And shame it is, if a prest take keep,  
A shiten shepherde and a clene sheep.  
Wel oghte a preest ensample for to yive,  
By his clenness, how that his sheep sholde lyve.  
He sette nat his benefice to hyre  
And leet his sheep encombred in the myre  
And ran to Londoun unto Seinte Poules  
510 To seken hym a chaunterie for soules,  
Or with a bretherhed to been withholde;  
But dwelte at hoom, and kepte wel his folde,  
So that the wolf ne made it nat myscarie;  
He was a shepherde and noght a mercenarie.  
And though he hooly were and vertuuous,  
He was to synful men nat despitous,  
Ne of his speche daungerous ne digne,  
But in his techyng discreet and benygne.  
To drawen folk to hevene by fairnesse,  
520 By good ensample, this was his bisynesse.  
But it were any persone obstinat,  
What so he were, of heigh or lough estat,  
Hym wolde he snybben sharply for the nonys.  
A bettre preest I trowe that nowher noon ys.  
He waited after no pompe and reverence,  
Ne maked him a spiced conscience,  
But Cristes loore and his apostles twelve  
He taughte; but first he folwed it hymselfe.  
With hym ther was a PLOWMAN, was his brother,  
530 That hadde ylad of dong ful many a fother;  
A trewe swynkere and a good was he,  
Lyvyng in pees and parfit charitee.  
God loved he best with al his hoole herte



At alle tymes, thogh him gamed or smerte,  
And thanne his neighebor right as hymselfe.  
He wolde thresshe, and therto dyke and delve,  
For Cristes sake, for every povre wight,  
Withouten hire, if it lay in his myght.  
His tithes payde he ful faire and wel,  
540 Bothe of his propre swynk and his catel.  
In a tabard he rood upon a mere.  
Ther was also a REVE, and a MILLERE,  
A SOMNOUR, and a PARDONER also,  
A MAUNCIPLE, and myself -- ther were namo.  
The MILLERE was a stout carl for the nones;  
Ful byg he was of brawn, and eek of bones.  
That proved wel, for over al ther he cam,  
At wrastlynge he wolde have alwey the ram.  
He was short-sholdred, brood, a thikke knarre;  
550 Ther was no dore that he nolde heve of harre,  
Or breke it at a rennyng with his heed.  
His berd as any sowe or fox was reed,  
And therto brood, as though it were a spade.  
Upon the cop right of his nose he hade  
A werte, and theron stood a toft of herys,  
Reed as the brustles of a sowes erys;  
His nosethirles blake were and wyde.  
A swerd and a bokeler bar he by his syde.  
His mouth as greet was as a greet forneys.  
560 He was a janglere and a goliardeys,  
And that was moost of synne and harlotries.  
Wel koude he stelen corn and tollen thries;  
And yet he hadde a thombe of gold, pardee.  
A whit cote and a blew hood wered he.  
A baggepipe wel koude he blowe and sowne,  
And therwithal he broghte us out of towne.  
A gentil MAUNCIPLE was ther of a temple,  
Of which achatours myghte take exemple  
For to be wise in bynge of vitaille;  
570 For wheither that he payde or took by taille,  
Algate he wayted so in his achaat  
That he was ay biforn and in good staat.  
Now is nat that of God a ful fair grace  
That swich a lewed mannes wit shal pace  
The wisdom of an heap of lerned men?

Of maistres hadde he mo than thries ten,  
That weren of lawe expert and curious,  
Of which ther were a duszeyne in that hous  
Worthy to been stywardes of rente and lond  
580 Of any lord that is in Engelond,  
To make hym lyve by his propre good  
In honour dettelees (but if he were wood),  
Or lyve as scarsly as hym list desire;  
And able for to helpen al a shire  
In any caas that myghte falle or happe.  
And yet this Manciple sette hir aller cappe.  
The REVE was a sclendre colerik man.  
His berd was shave as ny as ever he kan;  
His heer was by his erys ful round yshorn;  
590 His top was dokked lyk a preest biforn.  
Ful longe were his legges and ful lene,  
Ylyk a staf; ther was no calf ysene.  
Wel koude he kepe a gerner and a bynne;  
Ther was noon auditour koude on him wyne.  
Wel wiste he by the droghte and by the reyn  
The yeldynge of his seed and of his greyn.  
His lordes sheep, his neet, his dayerye,  
His swyn, his hors, his stoor, and his pultrye  
Was hoolly in this Reves governynge,  
600 And by his covenant yaf the rekenynge,  
Syn that his lord was twenty yeer of age.  
Ther koude no man brynge hym in arrerage.  
Ther nas baillif, ne hierde, nor oother hyne,  
That he ne knew his sleighte and his covyne;  
They were adrad of hym as of the deeth.  
His wonyng was ful faire upon an heeth;  
With grene trees yshadwed was his place.  
He koude bettre than his lord purchace.  
Ful riche he was astored pryvely.  
610 His lord wel koude he plesen subtilly,  
To yeve and lene hym of his owene good,  
And have a thank, and yet a cote and hood.  
In youthe he hadde lerned a good myster:  
He was a wel good wrighte, a carpenter.  
This Reve sat upon a ful good stot  
That was al pomely grey and highte Scot.  
A long surcote of pers upon he hade,

And by his syde he baar a rusty blade.  
 Of Northfolk was this Reve of which I telle,  
 620 Biside a toun men clepen Baldeswelle.  
 Tukked he was as is a frere aboute,  
 And evere he rood the hyndreste of oure route.  
 A SOMONOUR was ther with us in that place,  
 That hadde a fyr-reed cherubynnes face,  
 For saucefleem he was, with eyen narwe.  
 As hoot he was and lecherous as a sparwe,  
 With scalled browes blake and piled berd.  
 Of his visage children were aferd.  
 Ther nas quyk-silver, lytarge, ne brymstoon,  
 630 Boras, ceruce, ne oille of tartre noon,  
 Ne oynement that wolde clense and byte,  
 That hym myghte helpen of his whelkes white,  
 Nor of the knobbes sittynge on his chekes.  
 Wel loved he garleek, oynons, and eek lekes,  
 And for to drynken strong wyn, reed as blood;  
 Thanne wolde he speke and crie as he were wood.  
 And whan that he wel dronken hadde the wyn,  
 Thanne wolde he speke no word but Latyn.  
 A fewe termes hadde he, two or thre,  
 640 That he had lerned out of som decree --  
 No wonder is, he herde it al the day;  
 And eek ye knowen wel how that a jay  
 Kan clepen "Watte" as wel as kan the pope.  
 But whoso koude in oother thyng hym grope,  
 Thanne hadde he spent al his philosophie;  
 Ay "Questio quid iuris" wolde he crie.  
 He was a gentil harlot and a kynde;  
 A bettre felawe sholde men noght fynde.

He wolde suffre for a quart of wyn  
 650 A good felawe to have his concubyn  
 A twelf month, and excuse hym atte fulle;  
 Ful prively a fynch eek koude he pulle.  
 And if he foond owher a good felawe,  
 He wolde techen him to have noon awe  
 In swich caas of the ercedekenes curs,  
 But if a mannes soule were in his purs;  
 For in his purs he sholde ypunysshed be.

"Purs is the ercedekenes helle," seyde he.  
But wel I woot he lyed right in dede;  
660 Of cursyng oghte ech gilty man him drede,  
For curs wol slee right as assoillyng savith,  
And also war hym of a Significavit.  
In daunger hadde he at his owene gise  
The yonge girles of the diocise,  
And knew hir conseil, and was al hir reed.  
A gerland hadde he set upon his heed,  
As greet as it were for an ale-stake.  
A bokeleer hadde he maad hym of a cake.  
With hym ther rood a gentil PARDONER  
670 Of Rouncivale, his freend and his compeer,  
That streight was comen fro the court of Rome.  
Ful loude he soong "Com hider, love, to me!"  
This Somonour bar to hym a stif burdoun;  
Was nevere trompe of half so greet a soun.  
This Pardoner hadde heer as yelow as wex,  
But smothe it heeng as dooth a strike of flex;  
By ounces henge his lokkes that he hadde,  
And therwith he his shuldres overspradde;  
But thynne it lay, by colpons oon and oon.  
680 But hood, for jolitee, wered he noon,  
For it was trussed up in his walet.  
Hym thoughte he rood al of the newe jet;  
Dischevelee, save his cappe, he rood al bare.  
Swiche glarynge eyen hadde he as an hare.  
A vernycle hadde he sowed upon his cappe.  
His walet, biforn hym in his lappe,  
Bretful of pardoun comen from Rome al hoot.  
A voys he hadde as smal as hath a goot.  
No berd hadde he, ne nevere sholde have;  
690 As smothe it was as it were late shave.  
I trowe he were a geldyng or a mare.  
But of his craft, fro Berwyk into Ware  
Ne was ther swich another pardoner.  
For in his male he hadde a pilwe-beer,  
Which that he seyde was Oure Lady veyl;  
He seyde he hadde a gobet of the seyl  
That Seint Peter hadde, whan that he wente  
Upon the see, til Jhesu Crist hym hente.  
He hadde a croys of latoun ful of stones,

700 And in a glas he hadde pigges bones.  
But with thise relikes, whan that he fond  
A povre person dwellynge upon lond,  
Upon a day he gat hym moore moneye  
Than that the person gat in monthes tweye;  
And thus, with feyned flaterye and japes,  
He made the person and the peple his apes.  
But trewely to tellen atte laste,  
He was in chirche a noble ecclesiaste.  
Wel koude he rede a lessoun or a storie,  
710 But alderbest he song an offertorie;  
For wel he wiste, whan that song was songe,  
He moste preche and wel affile his tonge  
To wynne silver, as he ful wel koude;  
Therefore he song the murierly and loude.  
Now have I toold you soothly, in a clause,  
Th' estaat, th' array, the nombre, and eek the cause  
Why that assembled was this compaignye  
In Southwerk at this gentil hostelrye  
That highte the Tabard, faste by the Belle.  
720 But now is tyme to yow for to telle  
How that we baren us that ilke nyght,  
Whan we were in that hostelrie alyght;  
And after wol I telle of our viage  
And al the remenaunt of oure pilgrimage.  
But first I pray yow, of youre curteisye,  
That ye n' arette it nat my vileynye,  
Thogh that I pleyedly speke in this mateere,  
To telle yow hir wordes and hir cheere,  
Ne thogh I speke hir wordes proprely.  
730 For this ye knowen al so wel as I:  
Whoso shal telle a tale after a man,  
He moot reherce as ny as evere he kan  
Everich a word, if it be in his charge,  
Al speke he never so rudeliche and large,  
Or ellis he moot telle his tale untrewe,  
Or feyne thyng, or fynde wordes newe.  
He may nat spare, althogh he were his brother;  
He moot as wel seye o word as another.  
Crist spak hymself ful brode in hooly writ,  
740 And wel ye woot no vileynye is it.  
Eek Plato seith, whoso kan hym rede,

The wordes moote be cosyn to the dede.  
Also I prey yow to foryeve it me,  
Al have I nat set folk in hir degree  
Heere in this tale, as that they sholde stonde.  
My wit is short, ye may wel understonde.  
Greet chiere made oure Hoost us everichon,  
And to the soper sette he us anon.  
He served us with vitaille at the beste;  
750 Strong was the wyn, and wel to drynke us leste.  
A semely man OURE HOOSTE was withalle  
For to been a marchal in an halle.  
A large man he was with eyen stepe --  
A fairer burgeys was ther noon in Chepe --  
Boold of his speche, and wys, and wel ytaught,  
And of manhod hym lakkede right naught.  
Eek therto he was right a myrie man;  
And after soper pleyen he bigan,  
And spak of myrthe amonges othere thynges,  
760 Whan that we hadde maad oure rekenynges,  
And seyde thus: "Now, lordynges, trewely,  
Ye been to me right welcome, hertely;  
For by my trouthe, if that I shal nat lye,  
I saugh nat this yeer so myrie a compaignye  
Atones in this herberwe as is now.  
Fayn wolde I doon yow myrthe, wiste I how.  
And of a myrthe I am right now bythoght,  
To doon yow ese, and it shal coste noght.  
"Ye goon to Caunterbury -- God yow speede,  
770 The blisful martir quite yow youre meede!  
And wel I woot, as ye goon by the weye,  
Ye shapen yow to talen and to pleye;  
For trewely, confort ne myrthe is noon  
To ride by the weye doumb as a stoon;  
And therefore wol I maken yow disport,  
As I seyde erst, and doon yow som confort.  
And if yow liketh alle by oon assent  
For to stonden at my juggement,  
And for to werken as I shal yow seye,  
780 Tomorwe, whan ye riden by the weye,  
Now, by my fader soule that is deed,  
But ye be myrie, I wol yeve yow myn heed!  
Hoold up youre hondes, withouten moore speche."

Oure conseil was nat longe for to seche.  
Us thoughte it was noght worth to make it wys,  
And graunted hym withouten moore avys,  
And bad him seye his voirdit as hym leste.  
"Lordynges," quod he, "now herkneth for the beste;  
But taak it nought, I prey yow, in desdeyn.  
790 This is the poynt, to speken short and pleyn,  
That ech of yow, to shorte with oure weye,  
In this viage shal telle tales tweye  
To Caunterbury-ward, I mene it so,  
And homward he shal tellen othere two,  
Of adventures that whilom han bifalle.  
And which of yow that bereth hym best of alle --  
That is to seyn, that telleth in this caas  
Tales of best sentence and moost solaas --  
Shal have a soper at oure aller cost  
800 Heere in this place, sittynge by this post,  
Whan that we come agayn fro Caunterbury.  
And for to make yow the moore mury,  
I wol myselfen goodly with yow ryde,  
Right at myn owene cost, and be youre gyde;  
And whoso wole my juggement withseye  
Shal paye al that we spenden by the weye.  
And if ye vouche sauf that it be so,  
Tel me anon, withouten wordes mo,  
And I wol erly shape me therfore."  
810 This thyng was graunted, and oure othes swore  
With ful glad herte, and preyden hym also  
That he wolde vouche sauf for to do so,  
And that he wolde been oure governour,  
And of oure tales juge and reportour,  
And sette a soper at a certeyn pris,  
And we wol reuled been at his devys  
In heigh and lough; and thus by oon assent  
We been acorded to his juggement.  
And therupon the wyn was fet anon;  
820 We dronken, and to reste wente echon,  
Withouten any lenger tarynge.  
Amorwe, whan that day bigan to sprynge,  
Up roos oure Hoost, and was oure aller cok,  
And gadrede us togidre alle in a flok,  
And forth we riden a litel moore than paas

Unto the Wateryng of Seint Thomas;  
And there oure Hoost bigan his hors areste  
And seyde, "Lordynges, herkneth, if yow leste.  
Ye woot youre foreward, and I it yow recorde.  
830 If even-song and morwe-song accorde,  
Lat se now who shal telle the firste tale.  
As evere mote I drynke wyn or ale,  
Whoso be rebel to my juggement  
Shal paye for al that by the wey is spent.  
Now draweth cut, er that we ferrer twynne;  
He which that hath the shorteste shal bigynne.  
Sire Knyght," quod he, "my mayster and my lord,  
Now draweth cut, for that is myn accord.  
Cometh neer," quod he, "my lady Prioress.  
840 And ye, sire Clerk, lat be youre shamefastnesse,  
Ne studieth noght; ley hond to, every man!"  
Anon to drawen every wight bigan,  
And shortly for to tellen as it was,  
Were it by aventure, or sort, or cas,  
The sothe is this: the cut fil to the Knyght,  
Of which ful blithe and glad was every wyght,  
And telle he moste his tale, as was resoun,  
By foreward and by composicioun,  
As ye han herd; what nedeth wordes mo?  
850 And whan this goode man saugh that it was so,  
As he that wys was and obedient  
To kepe his foreward by his free assent,  
He seyde, "Syn I shal bigynne the game,  
What, welcome be the cut, a Goddes name!  
Now lat us ryde, and herkneth what I seye."  
And with that word we ryden forth oure weye,  
And he bigan with right a myrie cheere  
His tale anon, and seyde as ye may heere.





## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

Whilom, as olde stories tellen us,  
860 Ther was a duc that highte Theseus;  
Of Atthenes he was lord and governour,  
And in his tyme swich a conquerour  
That gretter was ther noon under the sonne.  
Ful many a riche contree hadde he wonne;  
What with his wysdom and his chivalrie,  
He conquered al the regne of Femenye,  
That whilom was ycleped Scithia,  
And weddede the queene Ypolita,  
And broghte hire hoom with hym in his contree  
870 With muchel glorie and greet solempnytee,  
And eek hir yonge suster Emelye.  
And thus with victorie and with melodye  
Lete I this noble duc to Atthenes ryde,  
And al his hoost in armes hym bisyde.  
And certes, if it nere to long to heere,  
I wolde have toold yow fully the manere  
How wonnen was the regne of Femenye  
By Theseus and by his chivalrye;  
And of the grete bataille for the nones  
880 Bitwixen Atthenes and Amazones;  
And how asseged was Ypolita,  
The faire, hardy queene of Scithia;  
And of the feste that was at hir weddyng,  
And of the tempest at hir hoom-comyng;  
But al that thyng I moot as now forbere.  
I have, God woot, a large feeld to ere,  
And wayke been the oxen in my plough.  
The remenant of the tale is long ynough.  
I wol nat letten eek noon of this route;  
890 Lat every felawe telle his tale aboute,  
And lat se now who shal the soper wyne;  
And ther I lefte, I wol ayeyn bigynne.  
This duc, of whom I make mencion,  
Whan he was come almoost unto the toun,  
In al his wele and in his mooste pride,  
He was war, as he caste his eye aside,  
Where that ther kneled in the heighe weye  
A compaignye of ladyes, tweye and tweye,

Ech after oother clad in clothes blake;  
900 But swich a cry and swich a wo they make  
That in this world nys creature lyvyng  
That herde swich another waymentynge;  
And of this cry they nolde nevere stenten  
Til they the reynes of his brydel henten.  
"What folk been ye, that at myn hom-comynge  
Perturben so my feste with cryng?"  
Quod Theseus. "Have ye so greet envye  
Of myn honour, that thus compleyne and crye?  
Or who hath yow mysboden or offended?  
910 And telleth me if it may been amended,  
And why that ye been clothed thus in blak."  
The eldeste lady of hem alle spak,  
Whan she hadde swowned with a deedly cheere,  
That it was routhe for to seen and heere;  
She seyde, "Lord, to whom Fortune hath yiven  
Victorie, and as a conqueror to lyven,  
Nat greveth us youre glorie and youre honour,  
But we biseken mercy and socour.  
Have mercy on oure wo and oure distresse!  
920 Som drope of pitee, thurgh thy gentillesse,  
Upon us wrecched wommen lat thou falle,  
For, certes, lord, ther is noon of us alle  
That she ne hath been a duchesse or a queene.  
Now be we caytyves, as it is wel seene,  
Thanked be Fortune and hire false wheel,  
That noon estaat assureth to be weel.  
And certes, lord, to abyden youre presence,  
Heere in this temple of the goddesse Clemence  
We han ben waitynge al this fourtenyght.  
930 Now help us, lord, sith it is in thy myght.  
"I, wrecche, which that wepe and wayle thus,  
Was whilom wyf to kyng Cappaneus,  
That starf at Thebes -- cursed be that day! --  
And alle we that been in this array  
And maken al this lamentacioun,  
We losten alle oure housbondes at that toun,  
Whil that the seege therabout lay.  
And yet now the olde Creon -- weylaway! --  
That lord is now of Thebes the citee,  
940 Fulfild of ire and of iniquitee,

He, for despit and for his tirannye,  
To do the dede bodyes vileynye  
Of alle oure lordes whiche that been yslawe,  
Hath alle the bodyes on an heep ydrawe,  
And wol nat suffren hem, by noon assent,  
Neither to been yburyed nor ybrent,  
But maketh houndes ete hem in despit."  
And with that word, withouten moore respit,  
They fillen gruf and criden pitously,  
950 "Have on us wrecched wommen som mercy,  
And lat oure sorwe synken in thyn herte."  
This gentil duc down from his courser sterte  
With herte pitous, whan he herde hem speke.  
Hym thoughte that his herte wolde breke,  
Whan he saugh hem so pitous and so maat,  
That whilom weren of so greet estaat;  
And in his armes he hem alle up hente,  
And hem conforteth in ful good entente,  
And swoor his ooth, as he was trewe knyght,  
960 He wolde doon so ferforthly his myght  
Upon the tiraunt Creon hem to wreke  
That al the peple of Grece sholde speke  
How Creon was of Theseus yserved  
As he that hadde his deeth ful wel deserved.  
And right anon, withouten moore abood,  
His baner he displayeth, and forth rood  
To Thebes-ward, and al his hoost biside.  
No neer Atthenes wolde he go ne ride,  
Ne take his ese fully half a day,  
970 But onward on his wey that nyght he lay,  
And sente anon Ypolita the queene,  
And Emelye, hir yonge suster sheene,  
Unto the toun of Atthenes to dwelle,  
And forth he rit; ther is namoore to telle.  
The rede statue of Mars, with spere and targe,  
So shyneth in his white baner large  
That alle the feeldes glyteren up and doun;  
And by his baner born is his penoun  
Of gold ful riche, in which ther was ybete

980 The Mynotaur, which that he wan in Crete.  
Thus rit this duc, thus rit this conquerour,  
And in his hoost of chivalrie the flour,  
Til that he cam to Thebes and alighte  
Faire in a feeld, ther as he thoughte to fighte.  
But shortly for to speken of this thyng,  
With Creon, which that was of Thebes kyng,  
He faught, and slough hym manly as a knyght  
In pleyn bataille, and putte the folk to flyght;  
And by assaut he wan the citee after,  
990 And rente adoun bothe wall and sparre and rafter;  
And to the ladyes he restored agayn  
The bones of hir freendes that were slayn,  
To doon obsequies, as was tho the gyse.  
But it were al to longe for to devyse  
The grete clamour and the waymentynge  
That the ladyes made at the brennyng  
Of the bodies, and the grete honour  
That Theseus, the noble conquerour,  
Dooth to the ladyes, whan they from hym wente;  
1000 But shortly for to telle is myn entente.  
Whan that this worthy duc, this Theseus,  
Hath Creon slayn and wonne Thebes thus,  
Stille in that feeld he took al nyght his reste,  
And dide with al the contree as hym leste.  
To ransake in the taas of bodyes dede,  
Hem for to strepe of harneys and of wede,  
The pilours diden bisynesse and cure  
After the bataille and disconfiture.  
And so bifel that in the taas they founde,  
1010 Thurgh-girt with many a grevous bloody wounde,  
Two yonge knyghtes liggyng by and by,  
Bothe in oon armes, wroght ful richely,  
Of whiche two Arcita highte that oon,  
And that oother knyght highte Palamon.  
Nat fully quyke, ne fully dede they were,  
But by hir cote-armures and by hir gere  
The heraudes knewe hem best in special  
As they that weren of the blood roial  
Of Thebes, and of sustren two yborn.

1020 Out of the taas the pilours han hem torn,  
And han hem caried softe unto the tente  
Of Theseus; and he ful soone hem sente  
To Atthenes, to dwellen in prisoun  
Perpetuelly -- he nolde no raunsoun.  
And whan this worthy duc hath thus ydon,  
He took his hoost, and hoom he rit anon  
With laurer crowned as a conquerour;  
And ther he lyveth in joye and in honour  
Terme of his lyf; what nedeth wordes mo?  
1030 And in a tour, in angwissh and in wo,  
This Palamon and his felawe Arcite  
For everemoore; ther may no gold hem quite.  
This passeth yeer by yeer and day by day,  
Till it fil ones, in a morwe of May,  
That Emelye, that fairer was to sene  
Than is the lylie upon his stalke grene,  
And fressher than the May with floures newe --  
For with the rose colour stroof hire hewe,  
I noot which was the fyner of hem two --  
1040 Er it were day, as was hir wone to do,  
She was arisen and al redy dight,  
For May wole have no slogardie anyght.  
The sesoun priketh every gentil herte,  
And maketh it out of his slep to sterte,  
And seith "Arys, and do thyn observaunce."  
This maked Emelye have remembraunce  
To doon honour to May, and for to ryse.  
Yclothed was she fressh, for to devyse:  
Hir yelow heer was broyded in a tresse  
1050 Bihynde hir bak, a yerde long, I gesse.  
And in the gardyn, at the sonne upriste,  
She walketh up and down, and as hire liste  
She gadereth floures, party white and rede,  
To make a subtil gerland for hire hede;  
And as an aungel hevenysshly she soong.  
The grete tour, that was so thikke and stroong,  
Which of the castel was the chief dongeoun  
(Ther as the knyghtes weren in prisoun  
Of which I tolde yow and tellen shal),  
1060 Was evene joynant to the gardyn wal  
Ther as this Emelye hadde hir pleyynge.

Bright was the sonne and cleer that morwenynge,  
And Palamoun, this woful prisoner,  
As was his wone, by leve of his gayler,  
Was risen and romed in a chambre an heigh,  
In which he al the noble citee seigh,  
And eek the gardyn, ful of braunches grene,  
Ther as this fresshe Emelye the shene  
Was in hire walk, and romed up and doun.  
1070 This sorweful prisoner, this Palamoun,  
Goth in the chambre romynge to and fro  
And to hymself compleynyng of his wo.  
That he was born, ful ofte he seyde, "allas!"  
And so bifel, by aventure or cas,  
That thurgh a wyndow, thikke of many a barre  
Of iren greet and square as any sparre,  
He cast his eye upon Emelya,  
And therwithal he bleynte and cride, "A!"  
As though he stongen were unto the herte.  
1080 And with that cry Arcite anon up sterte  
And seyde, "Cosyn myn, what eyleth thee,  
That art so pale and deedly on to see?  
Why cridestow? Who hath thee doon offence?  
For Goddes love, taak al in pacience  
Oure prisoun, for it may noon oother be.  
Fortune hath yeven us this adversitee.  
Som wikke aspect or disposicioun  
Of Saturne, by som constellacioun,  
Hath yeven us this, although we hadde it sworn;  
1090 So stood the hevene whan that we were born.  
We moste endure it; this is the short and playn."  
This Palamon answerde and seyde agayn,  
"Cosyn, for sothe, of this opinioun  
Thow hast a veyn ymaginacioun.  
This prison caused me nat for to crye,  
But I was hurt right now thurghout myn ye  
Into myn herte, that wol my bane be.  
The fairnesse of that lady that I see  
Yond in the gardyn romen to and fro  
1100 Is cause of al my cryng and my wo.  
I noot wher she be womman or goddesse,  
But Venus is it soothly, as I gesse."  
And therwithal on knees doun he fil,

And seyde, "Venus, if it be thy wil  
Yow in this gardyn thus to transfigure  
Bifore me, sorweful, wrecched creature,  
Out of this prisoun help that we may scapen.  
And if so be my destynnee be shapen  
By eterne word to dyen in prisoun,  
1110 Of oure lynage have som compassioun,  
That is so lowe ybrought by tirannye."  
And with that word Arcite gan espye  
Wher as this lady romed to and fro,  
And with that sighte hir beautee hurte hym so,  
That, if that Palamon was wounded sore,  
Arcite is hurt as mucche as he, or moore.  
And with a sigh he seyde pitously,  
"The fresshe beautee sleeth me sodeynly  
Of hire that rometh in the yonder place;  
1120 And but I have hir mercy and hir grace,  
That I may seen hire atte leeste weye,  
I nam but deed; ther nis namoore to seye."  
This Palamon, whan he tho wordes herde,  
Dispitously he looked and answerde,  
"Wheither seistow this in earnest or in pley?"  
"Nay," quod Arcite, "in earnest, by my fey!  
God helpe me so, me list ful yvele pleye."  
This Palamon gan knytte his browes tweye.  
"It nere," quod he, "to thee no greet honour  
1130 For to be fals, ne for to be traitour  
To me, that am thy cosyn and thy brother  
Ysworn ful depe, and ech of us til oother,  
That nevere, for to dyen in the peyne,  
Til that the deeth departe shal us tweyne,  
Neither of us in love to hyndre oother,  
Ne in noon oother cas, my leeve brother,  
But that thou sholdest trewely forthren me  
In every cas, as I shal forthren thee --  
This was thyn ooth, and myn also, certeyn;  
1140 I woot right wel, thou darst it nat withseyn.  
Thus artow of my conseil, out of doute,  
And now thow woldest falsly been aboute  
To love my lady, whom I love and serve,  
And evere shal til that myn herte sterve.  
Nay, certes, false Arcite, thow shalt nat so.

I loved hire first, and tolde thee my wo  
 As to my conseil and my brother sworn  
 To forthre me, as I have toold biforn.  
 For which thou art ybounden as a knyght  
 1150 To helpen me, if it lay in thy myght,  
 Or elles artow fals, I dar wel seyn."  
 This Arcite ful proudly spak ageyn:  
 "Thow shalt," quod he, "be rather fals than I;  
 And thou art fals, I telle thee outrely,  
 For paramour I loved hire first er thow.  
 What wiltow seyen? Thou woost nat yet now  
 Wheither she be a womman or goddesse!  
 Thyn is affeccioun of hoolynesse,  
 And myn is love as to a creature;  
 1160 For which I tolde thee myn aventure  
 As to my cosyn and my brother sworn.  
 I pose that thow lovedest hire biforn;  
 Wostow nat wel the olde clerkes sawe,  
 That `who shal yeve a love any lawe?'  
 Love is a gretter lawe, by my pan,  
 Than may be yeve to any erthely man;  
 And therfore positif lawe and swich decree  
 Is broken al day for love in ech degree.  
 A man moot nedes love, maugree his heed;  
 1170 He may nat fleen it, thogh he sholde be deed,  
 Al be she mayde, or wydwe, or elles wyf.  
 And eek it is nat likly al thy lyf  
 To stonden in hir grace; namoore shal I;  
 For wel thou woost thyselfen, verraily,  
 That thou and I be dampned to prisoun  
 Perpetuelly; us gayneth no raunsoun.  
 We stryve as dide the houndes for the boon;  
 They foughte al day, and yet hir part was noon.  
 Ther cam a kyte, whil that they were so wrothe,  
 1180 And baar away the boon bitwixe hem bothe.  
 And therfore, at the kynges court, my brother,  
 Ech man for hymself, ther is noon oother.  
 Love, if thee list, for I love and ay shal;  
 And soothly, levee brother, this is al.  
 Heere in this prisoun moote we endure,  
 And everich of us take his aventure."  
 Greet was the strif and long bitwix hem tweye,



If that I hadde leyser for to seye;  
But to th' effect. It happed on a day,  
1190 To telle it yow as shortly as I may,  
A worthy duc that highte Perotheus,  
That felawe was unto duc Theseus  
Syn thilke day that they were children lite,  
Was come to Atthenes his felawe to visite,  
And for to pleye as he was wont to do;  
For in this world he loved no man so,  
And he loved hym als tendrely agayn.  
So wel they lovede, as olde bookes sayn,  
That whan that oon was deed, soothly to telle,  
1200 His felawe wente and soughte hym down in helle --  
But of that storie list me nat to write.  
Duc Perotheus loved wel Arcite,  
And hadde hym knowe at Thebes yeer by yere,  
And finally at requeste and preyere  
Of Perotheus, withouten any raunsoun,  
Duc Theseus hym leet out of prisoun  
Frely to goon wher that hym liste over al,  
In swich a gyse as I you tellen shal.  
This was the forward, pleyedly for t' endite,  
1210 Bitwixen Theseus and hym Arcite:  
That if so were that Arcite were yfounde  
Evere in his lif, by day or nyght, oo stounde  
In any contree of this Theseus,  
And he were caught, it was acorded thus,  
That with a swerd he sholde lese his heed.  
Ther nas noon oother remedie ne reed;  
But taketh his leve, and homward he him spedde.  
Lat hym be war! His nekke lith to wedde.  
How greet a sorwe suffreth now Arcite!  
1220 The deeth he feeleth thurgh his herte smyte;  
He wepeth, wayleth, crieth pitously;  
To sleen hymself he waiteth prively.  
He seyde, "Allas that day that I was born!  
Now is my prisoun worse than biforn;  
Now is me shape eternally to dwelle  
Noght in purgatorie, but in helle.  
Allas, that evere knew I Perotheus!  
For elles hadde I dwelled with Theseus,  
Yfetered in his prisoun everemo.

1230 Thanne hadde I been in blisse and nat in wo.  
 Oonly the sighte of hire whom that I serve,  
 Though that I nevere hir grace may deserve,  
 Wolde han suffised right ynough for me.  
 O deere cosyn Palamon," quod he,  
 "Thyn is the victorie of this aventure.  
 Ful blisfully in prison maistow dure --  
 In prison? Certes nay, but in paradys!  
 Wel hath Fortune yturned thee the dys,  
 That hast the sighte of hire, and I th' absence.  
 1240 For possible is, syn thou hast hire presence,  
 And art a knyght, a worthy and an able,  
 That by som cas, syn Fortune is chaungeable,  
 Thow maist to thy desir somtyme atteyne.  
 But I, that am exiled and bareyne  
 Of alle grace, and in so greet dispeir  
 That ther nys erthe, water, fir, ne eir,  
 Ne creature that of hem maked is,  
 That may me helpe or doon confort in this,  
 Wel oughte I sterve in wanhope and distresse.  
 1250 Farwel my lif, my lust, and my gladnesse!  
 "Allas, why pleynten folk so in commune  
 On purveiaunce of God, or of Fortune,  
 That yeveth hem ful ofte in many a gyse  
 Wel bettre than they kan hemself devyse?  
 Som man desireth for to han richesse,  
 That cause is of his mordre or greet siknesse;  
 And som man wolde out of his prisoun fayn,  
 That in his hous is of his meynnee slayn.  
 Infinite harmes been in this mateere.  
 1260 We witen nat what thing we preyen heere;  
 We faren as he that dronke is as a mous.  
 A dronke man woot wel he hath an hous,  
 But he noot which the righte wey is thider,  
 And to a dronke man the wey is slider.  
 And certes, in this world so faren we;  
 We seken faste after felicitee,  
 But we goon wrong ful often, trewely.  
 Thus may we seyen alle, and namely I,  
 That wende and hadde a greet opinioun  
 1270 That if I myghte escapen from prisoun,  
 Thanne hadde I been in joye and parfit heele,

Ther now I am exiled fro my wele.  
 Syn that I may nat seen you, Emelye,  
 I nam but deed; ther nys no remedye."  
 Upon that oother syde Palamon,  
 Whan that he wiste Arcite was agon,  
 Swich sorwe he maketh that the grete tour  
 Resouneth of his youlyng and clamour.  
 The pure fettres on his shynes grete  
 1280 Weren of his bittre, salte teeres wete.  
 "Allas," quod he, "Arcita, cosyn myn,  
 Of al oure strif, God woot, the fruyt is thyn.  
 Thow walkest now in Thebes at thy large,  
 And of my wo thow yevest litel charge.  
 Thou mayst, syn thou hast wisdom and manhede,  
 Assemblen alle the folk of oure kynrede,  
 And make a werre so sharp on this citee  
 That by som aventure or some tretee  
 Thow mayst have hire to lady and to wyf  
 1290 For whom that I moste nedes lese my lyf.  
 For, as by wey of possibilittee,  
 Sith thou art at thy large, of prisoun free,  
 And art a lord, greet is thyn avauntage  
 Moore than is myn, that sterve here in a cage.  
 For I moot wepe and wayle, whil I lyve,  
 With al the wo that prison may me yive,

And eek with peyne that love me yeveth also,  
 That doubleth al my torment and my wo."  
 Therwith the fyr of jalousie up sterte  
 1300 Withinne his brest, and hente him by the herte  
 So woodly that he lyk was to biholde  
 The boxtree or the asshe dede and colde.  
 Thanne seyde he, "O crueel goddes that governe  
 This world with byndyng of youre word eterne,  
 And writen in the table of atthamaunt  
 Youre parlement and youre eterne graunt,  
 What is mankynde moore unto you holde  
 Than is the sheep that rouketh in the folde?  
 For slayn is man right as another beest,

1310 And dwelleth eek in prison and arreest,  
 And hath siknesse and greet adversitee,  
 And ofte tymes giltelees, pardee.  
 "What governance is in this prescience,  
 That giltelees tormenteth innocence?  
 And yet encresseth this al my penaunce,  
 That man is bounden to his observaunce,  
 For Goddes sake, to letten of his wille,  
 Ther as a beest may al his lust fulfille.  
 And whan a beest is deed he hath no peyne;  
 1320 But man after his deeth moot wepe and pleyne,  
 Though in this world he have care and wo.  
 Withouten doute it may stonden so.  
 The answeere of this lete I to dyvynys,  
 But wel I woot that in this world greet pyne ys.  
 Allas, I se a serpent or a theef,  
 That many a trewe man hath doon mescheef,  
 Goon at his large, and where hym list may turne.  
 But I moot been in prisoun thurgh Saturne,  
 And eek thurgh Juno, jalous and eek wood,  
 1330 That hath destroyed wel ny al the blood  
 Of Thebes with his waste walles wyde;

And Venus sleeth me on that oother syde  
 For jalousie and fere of hym Arcite."  
 Now wol I stynte of Palamon a lite,  
 And lete hym in his prisoun stille dwelle,  
 And of Arcita forth I wol yow telle.  
 The somer passeth, and the nyghtes longe  
 Encressen double wise the peynes stronge  
 Bothe of the lovere and the prisoner.  
 1340 I noot which hath the wofuller mester.  
 For, shortly for to seyn, this Palamoun  
 Perpetuelly is dampned to prisoun,  
 In cheynes and in fettres to been deed;  
 And Arcite is exiled upon his heed  
 For everemo, as out of that contree,  
 Ne nevere mo ne shal his lady see.  
 Yow loveres axe I now this questioun:

Who hath the worse, Arcite or Palamoun?  
That oon may seen his lady day by day,  
1350 But in prison he moot dwelle alway;  
That oother wher hym list may ride or go,  
But seen his lady shal he nevere mo.  
Now demeth as yow liste, ye that kan,  
For I wol telle forth as I bigan.  
Whan that Arcite to Thebes comen was,  
Ful ofte a day he swelte and seyde "Allas!"  
For seen his lady shal he nevere mo.  
And shortly to concluden al his wo,  
So muche sorwe hadde nevere creature  
1360 That is, or shal, whil that the world may dure.  
His slep, his mete, his drynke, is hym biraft,  
That lene he wex and drye as is a shaft;  
His eyen holwe and grisly to biholde,  
His hewe falow and pale as asshen colde,  
And solitarie he was and evere allone,  
And waillynge al the nyght, makynge his mone;  
And if he herde song or instrument,  
Thanne wolde he wepe, he myghte nat be stent.  
So feble eek were his spiritz, and so lowe,  
1370 And chaunged so, that no man koude knowe  
His speche nor his voys, though men it herde.  
And in his geere for al the world he ferde  
Nat oonly lik the loveris maladye  
Of Hereos, but rather lyk manye,  
Engendred of humour malencolik  
Biforen, in his celle fantastik.  
And shortly, turned was al up so doun  
Bothe habit and eek disposicioun  
Of hym, this woful love daunce Arcite.  
1380 What sholde I al day of his wo endite?  
Whan he endured hadde a yeer or two  
This crueel torment and this peyne and wo,  
At Thebes, in his contree, as I seyde,  
Upon a nyght in sleep as he hym leyde,  
Hym thoughte how that the wynged god Mercurie  
Biforn hym stood and bad hym to be murie.  
His slepy yerde in hond he bar uprighte;  
An hat he werede upon his heris brighte.  
Arrayed was this god, as he took keep,

1390 As he was whan that Argus took his sleep;  
And seyde hym thus: "To Atthenes shaltou wende,  
Ther is thee shapen of thy wo an ende."  
And with that word Arcite wook and sterte.  
"Now trewely, hou soore that me smerte,"  
Quod he, "to Atthenes right now wol I fare,  
Ne for the drede of deeth shal I nat spare  
To se my lady, that I love and serve.  
In hire presence I recche nat to sterve."  
And with that word he caughte a greet mirour,  
1400 And saugh that chaunged was al his colour,  
And saugh his visage al in another kynde.  
And right anon it ran hym in his mynde,  
That, sith his face was so disfigured  
Of maladye the which he hadde endured,  
He myghte wel, if that he bar hym lowe,  
Lyve in Atthenes everemoore unknowe,  
And seen his lady wel ny day by day.  
And right anon he chaunged his array,  
And cladde hym as a povre laborer,  
1410 And al allone, save oonly a squier  
That knew his privetee and al his cas,  
Which was disguised povrely as he was,  
To Atthenes is he goon the nexte way.  
And to the court he wente upon a day,  
And at the gate he profreth his servyse  
To drugge and drawe, what so men wol devyse.  
And shortly of this matere for to seyn,  
He fil in office with a chamberleyn  
The which that dwellynge was with Emelye,  
1420 For he was wys and koude soone espie,  
Of every servaunt, which that serveth here.  
Wel koude he hewen wode, and water bere,  
For he was yong and myghty for the nones,  
And therto he was long and big of bones  
To doon that any wight kan hym devyse.  
A yeer or two he was in this servyse,  
Page of the chambre of Emelye the brighte,  
And Philostrate he seyde that he highte.  
But half so wel biloved a man as he  
1430 Ne was ther nevere in court of his degree;  
He was so gentil of condicioun

That thurghout al the court was his renoun.  
They seyden that it were a charitee  
That Theseus wolde enhauncen his degree,  
And putten hym in worshipful servyse,  
Ther as he myghte his vertu excercise.  
And thus withinne a while his name is spronge,  
Bothe of his dedes and his goode tonge,  
That Theseus hath taken hym so neer  
1440 That of his chambre he made hym a squier,  
And gaf hym gold to mayntene his degree.  
And eek men broghte hym out of his contree,  
From yeer to yeer, ful pryvely his rente;  
But honestly and slyly he it spente,  
That no man wondred how that he it hadde.  
And thre yeer in this wise his lif he ladde,  
And bar hym so, in pees and eek in werre,  
Ther was no man that Theseus hath derre.  
And in this blisse lete I now Arcite,  
1450 And speke I wole of Palamon a lite.  
In derknesse and horrible and strong prisoun  
Thise seven yeer hath seten Palamoun  
Forpynded, what for wo and for distresse.  
Who feeleth double soor and hevynesse  
But Palamon, that love destreyneth so  
That wood out of his wit he goth for wo?  
And eek therto he is a prisoner  
Perpetuelly, noght oonly for a yer.  
Who koude ryme in Englyssh proprely  
1460 His martirdom? For sothe it am nat I;  
Therefore I passe as lightly as I may.  
It fel that in the seventhe yer, of May  
The thridde nyght (as olde bookes seyn,  
That al this storie tellen moore pleyn),  
Were it by aventure or destynee --  
As, whan a thyng is shapen, it shal be --  
That soone after the mydnyght Palamoun,  
By helpyng of a freend, brak his prisoun  
And fleeth the citee faste as he may go.  
1470 For he hadde yeve his gayler drynke so  
Of a clarree maad of a certeyn wyn,  
With nercotikes and opie of Thebes fyn,  
That al that nyght, thogh that men wolde him shake,

The gayler sleep; he myghte nat awake.  
And thus he fleeth as faste as evere he may.  
The nyght was short and faste by the day  
That nedes cost he moot hymselfen hyde,  
And til a grove faste ther bisyde  
With dredeful foot thanne stalketh Palamon.  
1480 For, shortly, this was his opinion:  
That in that grove he wolde hym hyde al day,  
And in the nyght thanne wolde he take his way  
To Thebes-ward, his freendes for to preye  
On Theseus to helpe him to werreye;  
And shortly, outhere he wolde lese his lif  
Or wynnen Emelye unto his wyf.  
This is th' effect and his entente pleyn.  
Now wol I turne to Arcite ageyn,  
That litel wiste how ny that was his care,  
1490 Til that Fortune had broght him in the snare.  
The bisy larke, messenger of day,  
Salueth in hir song the morwe gray,  
And firy Phebus riseth up so bright  
That al the orient laugheth of the light,  
And with his stremes dryeth in the greves  
The silver dropes hangynge on the leves.  
And Arcita, that in the court roial  
With Theseus is squier principal,  
Is risen and looketh on the myrie day.  
1500 And for to doon his observaunce to May,  
Remembrynge on the poynt of his desir,  
He on a courser, startlynge as the fir,  
Is riden into the feeldes hym to pleye,  
Out of the court, were it a myle or tweye.  
And to the grove of which that I yow tolde  
By aventure his wey he gan to holde  
To maken hym a gerland of the greves,  
Were it of wodebynde or hawethorn leves,  
And loude he song ayeyn the sonne shene:  
1510 "May, with alle thy floures and thy grene,  
Welcome be thou, faire, fresshe May,  
In hope that I som grene gete may."  
And from his courser, with a lusty herte,  
Into the grove ful hastily he sterte,  
And in a path he rometh up and doun,



Ther as by aventure this Palamoun  
 Was in a bussh, that no man myghte hym se,  
 For soore afered of his deeth was he.  
 No thyng ne knew he that it was Arcite;  
 1520 God woot he wolde have trowed it ful lite.  
 But sooth is seyde, go sithen many yeres,  
 That "feeld hath eyen and the wode hath eres."  
 It is ful fair a man to bere hym evene,  
 For al day meeteth men at unset stevene.  
 Ful litel woot Arcite of his felawe,  
 That was so ny to herknen al his sawe,  
 For in the bussh he sitteth now ful stille.  
 Whan that Arcite hadde romed al his fille,  
 And songen al the roundel lustily,  
 1530 Into a studie he fil sodeynly,  
 As doon thise loveres in hir queynte geres,  
 Now in the crope, now down in the breres,

Now up, now down, as boket in a welle.  
 Right as the Friday, soothly for to telle,  
 Now it shyneth, now it reyneth faste,  
 Right so kan geery Venus overcaste  
 The hertes of hir folk; right as hir day  
 Is gerefyl, right so chaungeth she array.  
 Selde is the Friday al the wowke ylike.  
 1540 Whan that Arcite had songe, he gan to sike  
 And sette hym down withouten any moore.  
 "Allas," quod he, "that day that I was bore!  
 How longe, Juno, thurgh thy crueltee,  
 Woltow werreyen Thebes the citee?  
 Allas, ybroght is to confusioun  
 The blood roial of Cadme and Amphioun --  
 Of Cadmus, which that was the firste man  
 That Thebes bulde, or first the toun bigan,  
 And of the citee first was crouned kyng.  
 1550 Of his lynage am I and his ofspryng  
 By verray ligne, as of the stok roial,  
 And now I am so caytyf and so thral,  
 That he that is my mortal enemy,

I serve hym as his squier povrely.  
And yet dooth Juno me wel moore shame,  
For I dar noght biknowe myn owene name;  
But ther as I was wont to highte Arcite,  
Now highte I Philostrate, noght worth a myte.  
Allas, thou felle Mars! Allas, Juno!  
1560 Thus hath youre ire oure lynage al fordo,  
Save oonly me and wrecched Palamoun,  
That Theseus martireth in prisoun.  
And over al this, to sleen me outrely  
Love hath his firy dart so brennyngly  
Ystiked thurgh my trewe, careful herte  
That shapen was my deeth erst than my sherte.  
Ye sleen me with youre eyen, Emelye!  
Ye been the cause wherfore that I dye.  
Of al the remenant of myn oother care  
1570 Ne sette I nat the montance of a tare,  
So that I koude doon aught to youre plesaunce."  
And with that word he fil down in a traunce  
A longe tyme, and after he up sterte.  
This Palamoun, that thoughte that thurgh his herte  
He felte a coold swerd sodeynliche glyde,  
For ire he quook; no lenger wolde he byde.  
And whan that he had herd Arcites tale,  
As he were wood, with face deed and pale,  
He stirte hym up out of the buskes thikke  
1580 And seide: "Arcite, false traytour wikke,  
Now artow hent, that lovest my lady so,  
For whom that I have al this peyne and wo,  
And art my blood, and to my conseil sworn,  
As I ful ofte have told thee heerbiforn,  
And hast byjaped heere duc Theseus,  
And falsly chaunged hast thy name thus!  
I wol be deed, or elles thou shalt dye.  
Thou shalt nat love my lady Emelye,  
But I wol love hire oonly and namo;  
1590 For I am Palamon, thy mortal foo.  
And though that I no wepene have in this place,  
But out of prison am astert by grace,  
I drede noght that outhur thou shalt dye,  
Or thou ne shalt nat loven Emelye.  
Chees which thou wolt, or thou shalt nat asterte!"

This Arcite, with ful despitous herte,  
Whan he hym knew, and hadde his tale herd,  
As fiers as leon pulled out his swerd,  
And seyde thus: "By God that sit above,  
1600 Nere it that thou art sik and wood for love,  
And eek that thow no wepne hast in this place,  
Thou sholdest nevere out of this grove pace,  
That thou ne sholdest dyen of myn hond.  
For I defye the seurete and the bond  
Which that thou seist that I have maad to thee.  
What! Verray fool, thynk wel that love is free,  
And I wol love hire maugree al thy myght!  
But for as muche thou art a worthy knyght  
And wilnest to darreyne hire by bataille,  
1610 Have heer my trouthe; tomorwe I wol nat faille,  
Withoute wityng of any oother wight,  
That heere I wol be founden as a knyght,  
And bryngen harneys right ynough for thee;  
And ches the beste, and leef the worste for me.  
And mete and drynke this nyght wol I brynge  
Ynough for thee, and clothes for thy beddyng.  
And if so be that thou my lady wynne,  
And sle me in this wode ther I am inne,  
Thow mayst wel have thy lady as for me."  
1620 This Palamon answerde, "I graunte it thee."  
And thus they been departed til amorwe,  
Whan ech of hem had leyd his feith to borwe.  
O Cupide, out of alle charitee!  
O regne, that wolt no felawe have with thee!  
Ful sooth is seyde that love ne lordshipe  
Wol noght, his thanks, have no felaweshipe.  
Wel fynden that Arcite and Palamoun.  
Arcite is riden anon unto the toun,  
And on the morwe, er it were dayes light,  
1630 Ful prively two harneys hath he dight,  
Bothe suffisaunt and mete to darreyne  
The bataille in the feeld bitwix hem tweyne;  
And on his hors, allone as he was born,  
He carieth al the harneys hym biforn.  
And in the grove, at tyme and place yset,  
This Arcite and this Palamon ben met.  
To chaungen gan the colour in hir face;

Right as the hunters in the regne of Trace,  
That stondeth at the gappe with a spere,  
1640 Whan hunted is the leon or the bere,  
And hereth hym come russhyng in the greves,  
And breketh bothe bowes and the leves,  
And thynketh, "Heere cometh my mortal enemy!  
Withoute faille, he moot be deed, or I,  
For outhur I moot sleen hym at the gappe,  
Or he moot sleen me, if that me myshappe."  
So ferden they in chaungyng of hir hewe,  
As fer as everich of hem oother knewe.  
Ther nas no good day, ne no saluyng,  
1650 But streight, withouten word or rehersyng,  
Everich of hem heelp for to armen oother  
As freendly as he were his owene brother;  
And after that, with sharpe speres stronge  
They foynen ech at oother wonder longe.  
Thou myghtest wene that this Palamon  
In his fightyng were a wood leon,  
And as a crueel tigre was Arcite;  
As wilde bores gonne they to smyte,  
That frothen whit as foom for ire wood.  
1660 Up to the ancle foghte they in hir blood.  
And in this wise I lete hem fightyng dwelle,  
And forth I wole of Theseus yow telle.  
The destinee, ministre general,  
That executeth in the world over al  
The purveiaunce that God hath seyn biforn,  
So strong it is that, though the world had sworn  
The contrarie of a thyng by ye or nay,  
Yet somtyme it shal fallen on a day  
That falleth nat eft withinne a thousand yeer.  
1670 For certainly, oure appetites heer,  
Be it of werre, or pees, or hate, or love,  
Al is this reuled by the sighte above.  
This mene I now by myghty Theseus,  
That for to huntten is so desirus,  
And namely at the grete hert in May,  
That in his bed ther daweth hym no day  
That he nys clad, and redy for to ryde  
With hunte and horn and houndes hym bisyde.  
For in his huntynge hath he swich delit

1680 That it is al his joye and appetit  
To been hymself the grete hertes bane,  
For after Mars he serveth now Dyane.  
Cleer was the day, as I have toold er this,  
And Theseus with alle joye and blis,  
With his Ypolita, the faire queene,  
And Emelye, clothed al in grene,  
On huntyng be they riden roially.  
And to the grove that stood ful faste by,  
In which ther was an hert, as men hym tolde,  
1690 Duc Theseus the streighte wey hath holde.  
And to the launde he rideth hym ful right,  
For thider was the hert wont have his flight,  
And over a brook, and so forth on his weye.  
This duc wol han a cours at hym or tweye  
With houndes swiche as that hym list comaunde.  
And whan this duc was come unto the launde,  
Under the sonne he looketh, and anon  
He was war of Arcite and Palamon,  
That foughten breme as it were bores two.  
1700 The brighte swerdes wenten to and fro  
So hidously that with the leeste strook  
It semed as it wolde felle an ook.  
But what they were, no thyng he ne woot.  
This duc his courser with his spores smoot,  
And at a stert he was bitwix hem two,  
And pulled out a swerd and cride, "Hoo!  
Namooore, up peyne of lesynge of youre heed!  
By myghty Mars, he shal anon be deed  
That smyteth any strook that I may seen.  
1710 But telleth me what myster men ye been,  
That been so hardy for to fighten heere  
Withouten juge or oother officere,  
As it were in a lystes roially."  
This Palamon answerde hastily  
And seyde, "Sire, what nedeth wordes mo?  
We have the deeth disserved bothe two.  
Two woful wrecches been we, two caytyves,  
That been encombred of oure owene lyves;  
And as thou art a rightful lord and juge,  
1720 Ne yif us neither mercy ne refuge,  
But sle me first, for seinte charitee!

But sle my felawe eek as wel as me;  
Or sle hym first, for though thou knowest it lite,  
This is thy mortal foo, this is Arcite,  
That fro thy lond is banysshed on his heed,  
For which he hath deserved to be deed.  
For this is he that cam unto thy gate  
And seyde that he highte Philostrate.  
Thus hath he japed thee ful many a yer,  
1730 And thou hast maked hym thy chief squier;  
And this is he that loveth Emelye.  
For sith the day is come that I shal dye,  
I make pleyndly my confessioun  
That I am thilke woful Palamoun  
That hath thy prisoun broken wikkedly.  
I am thy mortal foo, and it am I  
That loveth so hoot Emelye the brighte  
That I wol dye present in hir sighte.  
Wherefore I axe deeth and my juwice;  
1740 But sle my felawe in the same wise,  
For bothe han we deserved to be slayn."  
This worthy duc answerde anon agayn,  
And seyde, "This is a short conclusioun.  
Youre owene mouth, by youre confessioun,  
Hath dampned yow, and I wol it recorde;  
It nedeth noght to pyne yow with the corde.  
Ye shal be deed, by myghty Mars the rede!"  
The queene anon, for verray wommanhede,  
Gan for to wepe, and so dide Emelye,  
1750 And alle the ladyes in the compaignye.  
Greet pitee was it, as it thoughte hem alle,  
That evere swich a chaunce sholde falle,  
For gentil men they were of greet estat,  
And no thyng but for love was this debaat;  
And saugh hir bloody woundes wyde and soore,  
And alle crieden, bothe lasse and moore,  
"Have mercy, Lord, upon us women alle!"  
And on hir bare knees adoun they falle  
And wolde have kist his feet ther as he stood;  
1760 Til at the laste aslaked was his mood,  
For pitee renneth soone in gentil herte.  
And though he first for ire quook and sterte,  
He hath considered shortly, in a clause,

The trespass of hem bothe, and eek the cause,  
 And although that his ire hir gilt accused,  
 Yet in his resoun he hem bothe excused,  
 As thus: he thoghte wel that every man  
 Wol helpe hymself in love, if that he kan,  
 And eek deliver hymself out of prisoun.

1770 And eek his herte hadde compassioun  
 Of wommen, for they wepen evere in oon,  
 And in his gentil herte he thoughte anon,  
 And softe unto hymself he seyde, "Fy  
 Upon a lord that wol have no mercy,  
 But been a leon, bothe in word and dede,  
 To hem that been in repentaunce and drede,  
 As wel as to a proud despitous man  
 That wol mayntene that he first bigan.  
 That lord hath litel of discrecioun,  
 1780 That in swich cas kan no divisioun  
 But weyeth pride and humblesse after oon."  
 And shortly, whan his ire is thus agoon,

He gan to looken up with eyen lighte  
 And spak thise same wordes al on highte:  
 "The god of love, a benedicite!  
 How myghty and how greet a lord is he!  
 Ayeyns his myght ther gayneth none obstacles.  
 He may be cleped a god for his myracles,  
 For he kan maken, at his owene gyse,  
 1790 Of everich herte as that hym list divyse.  
 Lo heere this Arcite and this Palamoun,  
 That quitly weren out of my prisoun,  
 And myghte han lyved in Thebes roially,  
 And witen I am hir mortal enemy,  
 And that hir deth lith in my myght also,  
 And yet hath love, maugree hir eyen two,  
 Broght hem hyder bothe for to dye.  
 Now looketh, is nat that an heigh folye?  
 Who may been a fool but if he love?  
 1800 Bihoold, for Goddes sake that sit above,  
 Se how they blede! Be they noght wel arrayed?

Thus hath hir lord, the god of love, ypayed  
 Hir wages and hir fees for hir servyse!  
 And yet they wenen for to been ful wyse  
 That serven love, for aught that may bifalle.  
 But this is yet the beste game of alle,  
 That she for whom they han this jolitee  
 Kan hem therfore as muche thank as me.  
 She woot namoore of al this hoot fare,  
 1810 By God, than woot a cokkow or an hare!  
 But all moot ben assayed, hoot and coold;  
 A man moot ben a fool, or yong or oold --  
 I woot it by myself ful yore agon,  
 For in my tyme a servant was I oon.  
 And therefore, syn I knowe of loves peyne  
 And woot hou soore it kan a man distreyne,  
 As he that hath ben caught ofte in his laas,  
 I yow foryeve al hoolly this trespaas,  
 At requeste of the queene, that kneleth heere,  
 1820 And eek of Emelye, my suster deere.  
 And ye shul bothe anon unto me swere  
 That nevere mo ye shal my contree dere,  
 Ne make werre upon me nyght ne day,  
 But been my freendes in all that ye may.  
 I yow foryeve this trespass every deel."  
 And they hym sworn his axying faire and weel,  
 And hym of lordshipe and of mercy preyde,  
 And he hem graunteth grace, and thus he seyde:  
 "To speke of roial lynage and richesse,  
 1830 Though that she were a queene or a princesse,  
 Ech of you bothe is worthy, doutelees,  
 To wedden whan tyme is; but nathelees --  
 I speke as for my suster Emelye,  
 For whom ye have this strif and jalousye --  
 Ye woot yourself she may nat wedden two  
 Atones, though ye fighten everemo,  
 That oon of you, al be hym looth or lief,  
 He moot go pipen in an yvy leef;  
 This is to seyn, she may nat now han bothe,  
 1840 Al be ye never so jalouse ne so wrothe.  
 And forthy I yow putte in this degree,  
 That ech of yow shal have his destyne  
 As hym is shape, and herkneth in what wyse;



Lo, heere youre ende of that I shal devyse.  
My wyl is this, for plat conclusioun,  
Withouten any repplicacioun --  
If that you liketh, take it for the beste:  
That everich of you shal goon where hym leste  
Frely, withouten raunson or daunger,  
1850 And this day fifty wykes, fer ne ner,  
Everich of you shal brynge an hundred knyghtes  
Armed for lystes up at alle rightes,  
Al redy to darreyne hire by bataille.  
And this bihote I yow withouten faille,  
Upon my trouthe, and as I am a knyght,  
That wheither of yow bothe that hath myght --  
This is to seyn, that wheither he or thow  
May with his hundred, as I spak of now,  
Sleen his contrarie, or out of lystes dryve,  
1860 Thanne shal I yeve Emelya to wyve  
To whom that Fortune yeveth so fair a grace.  
The lystes shal I maken in this place,  
And God so wisly on my soule rewe  
As I shal evene juge been and trewe.  
Ye shul noon oother ende with me maken,  
That oon of yow ne shal be deed or taken.  
And if yow thynketh this is weel ysayd,  
Seyeth youre avys, and holdeth you apayd.  
This is youre ende and youre conclusioun."  
1870 Who looketh lightly now but Palamoun?  
Who spryngeth up for joye but Arcite?  
Who kouthe telle, or who kouthe it endite,  
The joye that is maked in the place  
Whan Theseus hath doon so fair a grace?  
But down on knees wente every maner wight,  
And thonked hym with al hir herte and myght,  
And namely the Thebans often sithe.  
And thus with good hope and with herte blithe  
They taken hir leve, and homward gonne they ride  
1880 To Thebes with his olde walles wyde.  
I trowe men wolde deme it negligence  
If I foryete to tellen the dispence  
Of Theseus, that gooth so bisily  
To maken up the lystes roially,  
That swich a noble theatre as it was

I dar wel seyen in this world ther nas.  
 The circuit a myle was aboute,  
 Walled of stoon, and dyched al withoute.  
 Round was the shap, in manere of compas,  
 1890 Ful of degrees, the heighte of sixty pas,  
 That whan a man was set on o degree,  
 He letted nat his felawe for to see.  
 Estward ther stood a gate of marbul whit,  
 Westward right swich another in the opposit.  
 And shortly to concluden, swich a place  
 Was noon in erthe, as in so litel space;  
 For in the lond ther was no crafty man  
 That geometrie or ars-metrike kan,  
 Ne portreyour, ne kervere of ymages,  
 1900 That Theseus ne yaf him mete and wages

The theatre for to maken and devyse.  
 And for to doon his ryte and sacrificse,  
 He estward hath, upon the gate above,  
 In worshipe of Venus, goddesse of love,  
 Doon make an auter and an oratorie;  
 And on the gate westward, in memorie  
 Of Mars, he maketh hath right swich another,  
 That coste largely of gold a fother.  
 And northward, in a touret on the wal,  
 1910 Of alabastre whit and reed coral,  
 An oratorie, riche for to see,  
 In worshipe of Dyane of chastitee,  
 Hath Theseus doon wrought in noble wyse.  
 But yet hadde I foryeten to devyse  
 The noble kervyng and the portreitures,  
 The shap, the contenaunce, and the figures  
 That weren in thise oratories thre.  
 First in the temple of Venus maystow se  
 Wrought on the wal, ful pitous to biholde,  
 1920 The broken slepes, and the sikes colde,  
 The sacred teeris, and the waymentynge,  
 The firy strokes of the desiryng  
 That loves servantz in this lyf enduren;

The othes that hir covenantz assuren;  
 Plesaunce and Hope, Desir, Foolhardynesse,  
 Beautee and Youthe, Bauderie, Richesse,  
 Charmes and Force, Lesynges, Flaterye,  
 Despense, Bisynesse, and Jalousye,  
 That wered of yelewe gooldes a gerland,  
 1930 And a cokkow sittynge on hir hand;  
 Festes, instrumentz, caroles, daunces,  
 Lust and array, and alle the circumstaunces  
 Of love, which that I rekned and rekne shal,  
 By ordre weren peynted on the wal,  
 And mo than I kan make of mencioun.  
 For soothly al the mount of Citheroun,  
 Ther Venus hath hir principal dwellynge,  
 Was shewed on the wal in portreyynge,  
 With al the gardyn and the lustynesse.  
 1940 Nat was foryeten the porter, Ydelnesse,  
 Ne Narcisus the faire of yore agon,  
 Ne yet the folye of kyng Salomon,  
 Ne yet the grete strengthe of Ercules --  
 Th' enchaumentz of Medea and Circes --  
 Ne of Turnus, with the hardy fiers corage,  
 The riche Cresus, kaytyf in servage.  
 Thus may ye seen that wysdom ne richesse,  
 Beautee ne sleighte, strengthe ne hardynesse,  
 Ne may with Venus holde champartie,  
 1950 For as hir list the world than may she gye.  
 Lo, alle thise folk so caught were in hir las,  
 Til they for wo ful ofte seyde "allas!"  
 Suffiseth heere ensamples oon or two,  
 And though I koude rekene a thousand mo.  
 The statue of Venus, glorious for to se,  
 Was naked, fletynge in the large see,  
 And fro the navele doun al covered was  
 With wawes grene, and brighte as any glas.  
 A citole in hir right hand hadde she,  
 1960 And on hir heed, ful semely for to se,  
 A rose gerland, fressh and wel smellynge;  
 Above hir heed hir dowves flikerynge.  
 Biforn hire stood hir sone Cupido;  
 Upon his shuldres wynges hadde he two,  
 And blynd he was, as it is often seene;

A bowe he bar and arwes brighte and kene.  
 Why sholde I noght as wel eek telle yow al  
 The portreiture that was upon the wal  
 Withinne the temple of myghty Mars the rede?  
 1970 Al peynted was the wal, in lengthe and brede,  
 Lyk to the estres of the grisly place  
 That highte the grete temple of Mars in Trace,  
 In thilke colde, frosty regioun  
 Ther as Mars hath his sovereyn mansioun.  
 First on the wal was peynted a forest,  
 In which ther dwelleth neither man ne best,  
 With knotty, knarry, bareyne trees olde,  
 Of stubbes sharpe and hidouse to biholde,  
 In which ther ran a rumbel in a swough,  
 1980 As though a storm sholde bresten every bough.  
 And dounward from an hille, under a bente,  
 Ther stood the temple of Mars armypotente,  
 Wroght al of burned steel, of which the entree  
 Was long and streit, and gastly for to see.  
 And therout came a rage and swich a veze  
 That it made al the gate for to rese.  
 The northren lyght in at the dores shoon,  
 For wyndowe on the wal ne was ther noon,  
 Thurgh which men myghten any light discerne.  
 1990 The dore was al of adamant eterne,  
 Yclenched overthwart and endelong  
 With iren tough; and for to make it strong,  
 Every pyler, the temple to sustene,  
 Was tonne-greet, of iren bright and shene.  
 Ther saugh I first the derke ymaginyng  
 Of Felonye, and al the compassyng;  
 The crueel Ire, reed as any gleede;  
 The pykepurs, and eek the pale Drede;  
 The smylere with the knyf under the cloke;  
 2000 The shepne brennyng with the blake smoke;  
 The tresoun of the mordrynge in the bedde;  
 The open werre, with woundes al biblesde;  
 Contek, with bloody knyf and sharp manace.  
 Al ful of chirkyng was that sory place.  
 The sleere of hymself yet saugh I ther --  
 His herte-blood hath bathed al his heer --  
 The nayl ydryven in the shode anyght;

The colde deeth, with mouth gapyng upright.  
 Amyddes of the temple sat Meschaunce,  
 2010 With discomfort and sory contenaunce.  
 Yet saugh I Woodnesse, laughynge in his rage,  
 Armed Compleint, Outhees, and fiers Outrage;  
 The careyne in the busk, with throte ycorve;  
 A thousand slayn, and nat of qualm ystorve;  
 The tiraunt, with the pray by force yraft;  
 The toun destroyed, ther was no thyng laft.  
 Yet saugh I brent the shippes hoppesteres;  
 The hunte strangled with the wilde beres;  
 The sowe freten the child right in the cradel;  
 2020 The cook yscalded, for al his longe ladel.  
 Noght was foryeten by the infortune of Marte.  
 The cartere overryden with his carte --  
 Under the wheel ful lowe he lay adoun.  
 Ther were also, of Martes divisioun,  
 The barbour, and the bocher, and the smyth,  
 That forgeth sharpe swerdes on his styth.  
 And al above, depeynted in a tour,  
 Saugh I Conquest, sittynge in greet honour,  
 With the sharpe swerd over his heed  
 2030 Hangynge by a soutil twynnes threed.  
 Depeynted was the slaughtre of Julius,  
 Of grete Nero, and of Antonius;  
 Al be that thilke tyme they were unborn,  
 Yet was hir deth depeynted ther-biforn  
 By manasyng of Mars, right by figure;  
 So was it shewed in that portreiture,  
 As is depeynted in the sterres above  
 Who shal be slayn or elles deed for love.  
 Suffiseth oon ensample in stories olde;  
 2040 I may nat rekene hem alle though I wolde.  
 The statue of Mars upon a carte stood  
 Armed, and looked grym as he were wood;  
 And over his heed ther shynen two figures

Of sterres, that been cleped in scriptures,  
 That oon Puella, that oother Rubeus --

This god of armes was arrayed thus.  
 A wolf ther stood biforn hym at his feet  
 With eyen rede, and of a man he eet;  
 With soutil pencil was depeynted this storie  
 2050 In redoutynge of Mars and of his glorie.  
 Now to the temple of Dyane the chaste,  
 As shortly as I kan, I wol me haste,  
 To telle yow al the descripsioun.  
 Depeynted been the walles up and down  
 Of huntyng and of shamefast chastitee.  
 Ther saugh I how woful Calistopee,  
 Whan that Diane agreved was with here,  
 Was turned from a womman til a bere,  
 And after was she maad the loode-sterre.  
 2060 Thus was it peynted; I kan sey yow no ferre.  
 Hir sone is eek a sterre, as men may see.  
 Ther saugh I Dane, yturned til a tree --  
 I mene nat the goddesse Diane,  
 But Penneus doghter, which that highte Dane.  
 Ther saugh I Attheon an hert ymaked,  
 For vengeance that he saugh Diane al naked;  
 I saugh how that his houndes have hym caught  
 And freeten hym, for that they knewe hym naught.  
 Yet peynted was a litel forther moor  
 2070 How Atthalante hunted the wilde boor,  
 And Meleagre, and many another mo,  
 For which Dyane wroghte hym care and wo.  
 Ther saugh I many another wonder storie,  
 The which me list nat drawen to memorie.  
 This goddesse on an hert ful hye seet,  
 With smale houndes al aboute hir feet,  
 And undernethe hir feet she hadde a moone --  
 Wexynge it was and sholde wanye soone.  
 In gaude grene hir statue clothed was,  
 2080 With bowe in honde and arwes in a cas.  
 Hir eyen caste she ful lowe adoun  
 Ther Pluto hath his derke regioun.  
 A womman travaillynge was hire biforn;  
 But for hir child so longe was unborn,  
 Ful pitously Lucyna gan she calle  
 And seyde, "Help, for thou mayst best of alle!"  
 Wel koude he peynten lifly that it wroghte;

With many a floryn he the hewes boghte.  
Now been thise lystes maad, and Theseus,  
2090 That at his grete cost arrayed thus  
The temples and the theatre every deel,  
Whan it was doon, hym lyked wonder weel.  
But stynte I wole of Theseus a lite,  
And speke of Palamon and of Arcite.  
The day approacheth of hir retournynge,  
That everich sholde an hundred knyghtes brynge  
The bataille to darreyne, as I yow tolde.  
And til Atthenes, hir covenant for to holde,  
Hath everich of hem broght an hundred knyghtes,  
2100 Wel armed for the werre at alle rightes.  
And sikerly ther trowed many a man  
That nevere, sithen that the world bigan,  
As for to speke of knyghthod of hir hond,  
As fer as God hath makid see or lond,  
Nas of so fewe so noble a compaignye.  
For every wight that lovede chivalrye  
And wolde, his thanks, han a passant name,  
Hath preyed that he myghte been of that game;  
And wel was hym that therto chosen was,  
2110 For if ther fille tomorwe swich a cas,  
Ye knowen wel that every lusty knyght  
That loveth paramours and hath his myght,  
Were it in Engelond or elleswhere,  
They wolde, hir thanks, wilnen to be there --  
To fighte for a lady, benedicitee!  
It were a lusty sighte for to see.  
And right so ferden they with Palamon.  
With hym ther wenten knyghtes many on;  
Som wol ben armed in an haubergeoun,  
2120 And in a brestplate and a light gypoun;

And som wol have a paire plates large;  
And som wol have a Puce sheeld or a targe;  
Som wol ben armed on his legges weel,  
And have an ax, and som a mace of steel --  
Ther is no newe gyse that it nas old.

Armed were they, as I have yow told,  
Everych after his opinioun.  
Ther maistow seen, comynge with Palamoun,  
Lygurge hymself, the grete kyng of Trace.  
2130 Blak was his berd, and manly was his face;  
The cercles of his eyen in his heed,  
They gloweden bitwixen yelow and reed,  
And lik a grifphon looked he aboute,  
With kempe heeris on his browes stoute;  
His lymes grete, his brawnes harde and stronge,  
His shuldres brode, his armes rounde and longe;  
And as the gyse was in his contree,  
Ful hye upon a chaar of gold stood he,  
With foure white boles in the trays.  
2140 In stede of cote-armure over his harnays,  
With nayles yelewe and brighte as any gold,  
He hadde a beres skyn, col-blak for old.  
His longe heer was kembd bihynde his bak;  
As any ravenes fethere it shoon for blak;  
A wrethe of gold, arm-greet, of huge wighte,  
Upon his heed, set ful of stones brighte,  
Of fyne rubyes and of dyamauntz.  
Aboute his chaar ther wenten white alauntz,  
Twenty and mo, as grete as any steer,  
2150 To huntun at the leoun or the deer,  
And folwed hym with mosel faste ybounde,  
Colered of gold, and tourettes fyled rounde.  
An hundred lordes hadde he in his route,  
Armed ful wel, with hertes stierne and stoute.  
With Arcita, in stories as men fynde,  
The grete Emetreus, the kyng of Inde,  
Upon a steede bay trapped in steel,  
Covered in clooth of gold, dyapred weel,  
Cam ridynge lyk the god of armes, Mars.  
2160 His cote-armure was of clooth of Tars  
Couched with perles white and rounde and grete;  
His sadel was of brend gold newe ybete;  
A mantelet upon his shulder hangynge,  
Bret-ful of rubyes rede as fyr sparklynge;  
His crispe heer lyk rynges was yronne,  
And that was yelow, and glytered as the sonne.  
His nose was heigh, his eyen bright citryn,



His lippes rounde, his colour was sangwyn;  
A fewe frakenes in his face yspreynd,  
2170 Bitwixen yelow and somdel blak ymeynd;  
And as a leon he his lookyng caste.  
Of fyve and twenty yeer his age I caste.  
His berd was wel bigonne for to sprynge;  
His voys was as a trompe thonderynge.  
Upon his heed he wered of laurer grene  
A gerland, fressh and lusty for to sene.  
Upon his hand he bar for his deduyt  
An egle tame, as any lilye whyt.  
An hundred lordes hadde he with hym there,  
2180 Al armed, save hir heddes, in al hir gere,  
Ful richely in alle maner thynges.  
For trusteth wel that dukes, erles, kynges  
Were gadered in this noble compaignye,  
For love and for encrees of chivalrye.  
Aboute this kyng ther ran on every part  
Ful many a tame leon and leopart.  
And in this wise thise lordes, alle and some,  
Been on the Sondag to the citee come  
Aboute pryme, and in the toun alight.  
2190 This Theseus, this duc, this worthy knyght,  
Whan he had broght hem into his citee,  
And inned hem, everich at his degree,  
He festeth hem, and dooth so greet labour  
To esen hem and doon hem al honour  
That yet men wenen that no mannes wit  
Of noon estaat ne koude amenden it.  
The mynstralcy, the service at the feeste,  
The grete yiftes to the meeste and leeste,  
The riche array of Theseus paleys,  
2200 Ne who sat first ne last upon the deys,  
What ladyes fairest been or best daunsynge,  
Or which of hem kan dauncen best and synge,  
Ne who moost felyngly speketh of love;  
What haukes sitten on the perche above,  
What houndes liggen on the floor adoun --  
Of al this make I now no mencion,  
But al th' effect; that thynketh me the beste.  
Now cometh the point, and herkneth if yow leste.  
The Sondag nyght, er day bigan to sprynge,

2210 Whan Palamon the larke herde synge  
 (Although it nere nat day by houres two,  
 Yet song the larke) and Palamon right tho  
 With hooly herte and with an heigh corage,  
 He roos to wenden on his pilgrymage  
 Unto the blisful Citherea benigne --  
 I mene Venus, honorable and digne.  
 And in hir houre he walketh forth a pas  
 Unto the lystes ther hire temple was,  
 And doun he kneleth, and with humble cheere  
 2220 And herte soor he seyde as ye shal heere:  
 "Faireste of faire, O lady myn, Venus,  
 Doughter to Jove and spouse of Vulcanus,

Thow gladere of the mount of Citheron,  
 For thilke love thow haddest to Adoon,  
 Have pitee of my bittre teeris smerte,  
 And taak myn humble preyere at thyn herte.  
 Allas! I ne have no langage to telle  
 Th' effectes ne the tormentz of myn helle;  
 Myn herte may myne harmes nat biwreye;  
 2230 I am so confus that I kan noght seye  
 But `Mercy, lady bright, that knowest weele  
 My thought and seest what harmes that I feele!  
 Considere al this and rewe upon my soore,  
 As wisly as I shal for everemoore,  
 Emforth my myght, thy trewe servant be,  
 And holden werre alwey with chastitee.  
 That make I myn avow, so ye me helpe!  
 I kepe noght of armes for to yelpe,  
 Ne I ne axe nat tomorwe to have victorie,  
 2240 Ne renoun in this cas, ne veyne glorie  
 Of pris of armes blowen up and doun;  
 But I wolde have fully possessioun  
 Of Emelye, and dye in thy servyse.  
 Fynd thow the manere hou and in what wyse:  
 I recche nat but it may bettre be  
 To have victorie of hem, or they of me,  
 So that I have my lady in myne armes.

For though so be that Mars is god of armes,  
Youre vertu is so greet in hevene above  
2250 That if yow list, I shal wel have my love.  
Thy temple wol I worshiþe everemo,  
And on thyn auter, where I ride or go,  
I wol doon sacrifice and fires beete.  
And if ye wol nat so, my lady sweete,  
Thanne preye I thee, tomorwe with a spere  
That Arcita me thurgh the herte bere.  
Thanne rekke I noght, whan I have lost my lyf,  
Though that Arcita wynne hire to his wyf.  
This is th' effect and ende of my preyere:  
2260 Yif me my love, thow blisful lady deere."  
Whan the orison was doon of Palamon,  
His sacrifice he dide, and that anon,  
Ful pitously, with alle circumstaunces,  
Al telle I noght as now his observaunces;  
But atte laste the statue of Venus shook,  
And made a signe, wherby that he took  
That his preyere accepted was that day.  
For thogh the signe shewed a delay,  
Yet wiste he wel that graunted was his boone,  
2270 And with glad herte he wente hym hoom ful soone.  
The thridde houre inequal that Palamon  
Bigan to Venus temple for to gon,  
Up roos the sonne, and up roos Emelye  
And to the temple of Dyane gan hye.  
Hir maydens, that she thider with hire ladde,  
Ful redily with hem the fyr they hadde,  
Th' encens, the clothes, and the remenant al  
That to the sacrifice longen shal;  
The hornes fulle of meeth, as was the gyse --  
2280 Ther lakked noght to doon hir sacrifise.  
Smokyng the temple, ful of clothes faire,  
This Emelye, with herte debonaire,  
Hir body wessh with water of a welle.  
But hou she dide hir ryte I dar nat telle,  
But it be any thing in general;  
And yet it were a game to heeren al.  
To hym that meneth wel it were no charge;  
But it is good a man been at his large.  
Hir brighte heer was kembd, untressed al;

2290 A coroune of a grene ook cerial  
 Upon hir heed was set ful fair and meete.  
 Two fyres on the auter gan she beete,  
 And dide hir thynges, as men may biholde  
 In Stace of Thebes and thise bookes olde.  
 Whan kyndled was the fyr, with pitous cheere  
 Unto Dyane she spak as ye may heere:  
 "O chaste goddessse of the wodes grene,  
 To whom bothe hevene and erthe and see is sene,  
 Queene of the regne of Pluto derk and lowe,  
 2300 Goddessse of maydens, that myn herte hast knowe  
 Ful many a yeer, and woost what I desire,  
 As keepe me fro thy vengeaunce and thyn ire,  
 That Attheon aboughte cruelly.  
 Chaste goddessse, wel wostow that I  
 Desire to ben a mayden al my lyf,  
 Ne nevere wol I be no love ne wyf.  
 I am, thow woost, yet of thy compaignye,  
 A mayde, and love huntynge and venerye,  
 And for to walken in the wodes wilde,  
 2310 And noght to ben a wyf and be with childe.  
 Noght wol I knowe compaignye of man.  
 Now help me, lady, sith ye may and kan,  
 For tho thre formes that thou hast in thee.  
 And Palamon, that hath swich love to me,  
 And eek Arcite, that loveth me so soore,  
 This grace I preye thee withoute moore,  
 As sende love and pees bitwixe hem two,  
 And fro me turne away hir hertes so  
 That al hire hote love and hir desir,  
 2320 And al hir bisy torment, and hir fir  
 Be queynt, or turned in another place.  
 And if so be thou wolt nat do me grace,  
 Or if my destynnee be shapen so  
 That I shal nedes have oon of hem two,  
 As sende me hym that moost desireth me.  
 Bihoold, goddessse of clene chastitee,  
 The bittre teeris that on my chekes falle.  
 Syn thou art mayde and kepere of us alle,  
 My maydenhede thou kepe and wel conserve,  
 2330 And whil I lyve, a mayde I wol thee serve."  
 The fires brenne upon the auter cleere,

Whil Emelye was thus in hir preyere.  
But sodeynly she saugh a sighte queynte,  
For right anon oon of the fyres queynte  
And quyked agayn, and after that anon  
That oother fyr was queynt and al agon;  
And as it queynte it made a whistelynge,  
As doon thise wete brondes in hir brennynge,  
And at the brondes ende out ran anon  
2340 As it were bloody dropes many oon;  
For which so soore agast was Emelye  
That she was wel ny mad and gan to crye,  
For she ne wiste what it signyfiyd,  
But oonly for the feere thus hath she cried,  
And weep that it was pitee for to heere.  
And therwithal Dyane gan appeere,  
With bowe in honde, right as an hunteressee,  
And seyde, "Doghter, stynt thyn hevynesse.  
Among the goddes hye it is affermed,  
2350 And by eterne word writen and confermed,  
Thou shalt ben wedded unto oon of tho  
That han for thee so muchel care and wo,  
But unto which of hem I may nat telle.  
Farwel, for I ne may no lenger dwelle.  
The fires which that on myn auter brenne  
Shulle thee declaren, er that thou go henne,  
Thyn aventure of love, as in this cas."  
And with that word, the arwes in the caas  
Of the goddesse clateren faste and rynge,  
2360 And forth she wente and made a vanysshynge;  
For which this Emelye astoned was,  
And seyde, "What amounteth this, allas?  
I putte me in thy proteccioun,  
Dyane, and in thy disposicioun."  
And hoom she goth anon the nexte weye.  
This is th' effect; ther is namoore to seye.  
The nexte houre of Mars folwyng this,  
Arcite unto the temple walked is  
Of fierse Mars to doon his sacrificise,  
2370 With alle the rytes of his payen wyse.  
With pitous herte and heigh devocioun,  
Right thus to Mars he seyde his orisoun:  
"O stronge god, that in the regnes colde

Of Trace honoured art and lord yholde,  
And hast in every regne and every lond  
Of armes al the brydel in thyn hond,  
And hem fortunest as thee lyst devyse,  
Accepte of me my pitous sacrifice.  
If so be that my youthe may deserve,  
2380 And that my myght be worthy for to serve  
Thy godhede, that I may been oon of thyne,  
Thanne preye I thee to rewe upon my pyne.  
For thilke peyne and thilke hote fir  
In which thow whilom brendest for desir,  
Whan that thow usedest the beautee  
Of faire, yonge, fresshe Venus free,  
And haddest hire in armes at thy wille --  
Although thee ones on a tyme mysfille,  
Whan Vulcanus hadde caught thee in his las  
2390 And foond thee liggyng by his wyf, allas! --  
For thilke sorwe that was in thyn herte,  
Have routhe as wel upon my peynes smerte.  
I am yong and unkonnyng, as thow woost,  
And, as I trowe, with love offended moost  
That evere was any lyves creature,  
For she that dooth me al this wo endure  
Ne reccheth nevere wher I synke or fleete.  
And wel I woot, er she me mercy heete,  
I moot with strengthe wyne hire in the place,  
2400 And wel I woot, withouten help or grace  
Of thee ne may my strengthe noght availle.  
Thanne help me, lord, tomorwe in my bataille,  
For thilke fyr that whilom brente thee,  
As wel as thilke fyr now brenneth me,  
And do that I tomorwe have victorie.  
Myn be the travaille, and thyn be the glorie!  
Thy sovereyn temple wol I moost honouren  
Of any place, and alwey moost labouren  
In thy plesaunce and in thy craftes stronge,  
2410 And in thy temple I wol my baner honge  
And alle the armes of my compaignye,  
And everemo, unto that day I dye,  
Eterne fir I wol bifore thee fynde.  
And eek to this avow I wol me bynde:  
My beard, myn heer, that hongeth long adoun,

That nevere yet ne felte offensioun  
 Of rasour nor of shere, I wol thee yive,  
 And ben thy trewe servant whil I lyve.  
 Now, lord, have routhe upon my sorwes soore;  
 2420 Yif me [victorie]; I aske thee namoore."  
 The preyere stynt of Arcita the stronge,  
 The rynges on the temple dore that honge,  
 And eek the dores, clatereden ful faste,  
 Of which Arcita somewhat hym agaste.  
 The fyres brenden upon the auter brighte  
 That it gan al the temple for to lighte;  
 A sweete smel the ground anon up yaf,  
 And Arcita anon his hand up haf,  
 And moore encens into the fyr he caste,  
 2430 With othere rytes mo; and atte laste  
 The statue of Mars bigan his hauberk rynges,  
 And with that soun he herde a murmuryng  
 Ful lowe and dym, and seyde thus, "Victorie!"  
 For which he yaf to Mars honour and glorie.  
 And thus with joye and hope wel to fare  
 Arcite anon unto his in is fare,  
 As fayn as fowel is of the brighte sonne.  
 And right anon swich strif ther is bigonne,  
 For thilke grauntyng, in the hevene above,  
 2440 Bitwixe Venus, the goddesse of love,  
 And Mars, the stierne god armypotente,  
 That Juppiter was bisy it to stente,  
 Til that the pale Saturnus the colde,  
 That knew so manye of adventures olde,  
 Foond in his olde experience an art  
 That he ful soone hath plesed every part.  
 As sooth is seyde, elde hath greet advantage;  
 In elde is bothe wysdom and usage;  
 Men may the olde atrenne and noght atrede.  
 2450 Saturne anon, to stynten strif and drede,  
 Al be it that it is agayn his kynde,  
 Of al this strif he gan remedie fynde.  
 "My deere doghter Venus," quod Saturne,  
 "My cours, that hath so wyde for to turne,  
 Hath moore power than woot any man.  
 Myn is the drenchyng in the see so wan;  
 Myn is the prison in the derke cote;

Myn is the stranglyng and hangyng by the throte,  
 The murmure and the cherles rebellyng,  
 2460 The groynynge, and the pryvee empoysonyng;  
 I do vengeance and pleyne correccioun,  
 Whil I dwelle in the signe of the leoun.  
 Myn is the ruyne of the hye halles,  
 The fallynge of the toures and of the walles  
 Upon the mynour or the carpenter.  
 I slow Sampson, shakynge the piler;  
 And myne be the maladyes colde,  
 The derke tresons, and the castes olde;  
 My lookyng is the fader of pestilence.  
 2470 Now weep namore; I shal doon diligence  
 That Palamon, that is thyn owene knyght,  
 Shal have his lady, as thou hast him hight.  
 Though Mars shal helpe his knyght, yet nathelees  
 Bitwixe yow ther moot be som tyme pees,  
 Al be ye noght of o compleccioun,  
 That causeth al day swich divisioun.  
 I am thyn aiel, redy at thy wille;  
 Weep now namore; I wol thy lust fulfille."  
 Now wol I stynten of the goddes above,  
 2480 Of Mars, and of Venus, goddessse of love,  
 And telle yow as pleynly as I kan  
 The grete effect, for which that I bygan.  
 Greet was the feeste in Atthenes that day,  
 And eek the lusty seson of that May  
 Made every wight to been in swich plesaunce  
 That al that Monday justen they and daunce,  
 And spenden it in Venus heigh servyse.  
 But by the cause that they sholde ryse  
 Eerly, for to seen the grete fight,  
 2490 Unto hir reste wenten they at nyght.  
 And on the morwe, whan that day gan sprynge,  
 Of hors and harneys noyse and claterynge  
 Ther was in hostelryes al aboute,  
 And to the paleys rood ther many a route  
 Of lordes upon steedes and palfreys.  
 Ther maystow seen devisynge of harneys  
 So unkouth and so riche, and wroght so weel  
 Of goldsmythrye, of browdynge, and of steel;  
 The sheeldes brighte, testes, and trappures,



2500 Gold-hewen helmes, hauberkes, cote-armures;  
Lordes in parementz on hir courseres,  
Knyghtes of retenue, and eek squieres  
Nailynge the speres, and helmes bokelynge;  
Giggyng of sheeldes, with layneres lacyng --  
There as nede is they weren no thyng ydel;  
The fomy steedes on the golden brydel  
Gnawynge, and faste the armurers also  
With fyle and hamer prikyng to and fro;  
Yemen on foote, and communes many oon  
2510 With shorte staves, thikke as they may goon;  
Pypes, trompes, nakers, clariounes,  
That in the bataille blowen bloody sounes;  
The paleys ful of peple up and down,  
Heere thre, ther ten, holdyng hir questioun,  
Dyvynyng of this Thebane knyghtes two.  
Somme seyden thus, somme seyde "it shal be so";  
Somme helden with hym with the blake berd,  
Somme with the balled, somme with the thikke herd;  
Somme seyde he looked grymme, and he wolde fighte:  
2520 "He hath a sparth of twenty pound of wighte."  
Thus was the halle ful of divynyng,  
Longe after that the sonne gan to spryng.  
The grete Theseus, that of his sleep awaked  
With mynstralcie and noyse that was maked,  
Heeld yet the chambre of his paleys riche  
Til that the Thebane knyghtes, bothe yliche  
Honored, were into the paleys fet.  
Duc Theseus was at a wyndow set,  
Arrayed right as he were a god in trone.  
2530 The peple preesseth thiderward ful soone  
Hym for to seen, and doon heigh reverence,  
And eek to herkne his heste and his sentence.  
An heraud on a scaffold made an "Oo!"  
Til al the noyse of peple was ydo,  
And whan he saugh the peple of noyse al stille,  
Tho shewed he the myghty dukes wille:  
"The lord hath of his heigh discrecioun  
Considered that it were destruccioun  
To gentil blood to fighten in the gyse

2540 Of mortal bataille now in this emprise.  
Wherefore, to shapen that they shal nat dye,  
He wol his firste purpos modifie.  
No man therfore, up peyne of los of lyf,  
No maner shot, ne polax, ne short knyf  
Into the lystes sende or thider brynge;  
Ne short swerd, for to stoke with poynt bitynge,  
No man ne drawe, ne bere it by his syde.  
Ne no man shal unto his felawe ryde  
But o cours with a sharpe ygrounde spere;  
2550 Foyne, if hym list, on foote, hymself to were.  
And he that is at meschief shal be take  
And noght slayn, but be broght unto the stake  
That shal ben ordeyned on either syde;  
But thider he shal by force, and there abyde.  
And if so falle the chieftayn be take  
On outhur syde, or elles sleen his make,  
No lenger shal the turneiynge laste.  
God spede you! Gooth forth and ley on faste!  
With long swerd and with mace fighteth youre fille.  
2560 Gooth now youre wey; this is the lordes wille."  
The voys of peple touchede the hevene,  
So loude cride they with murie stevene,  
"God save swich a lord, that is so good  
He wilneth no destruccion of blood!"  
Up goon the trompes and the melodye,  
And to the lystes rit the compaignye,  
By ordinance, thurghout the citee large,  
Hanged with clooth of gold, and nat with sarge.  
Ful lik a lord this noble duc gan ryde,  
2570 Thise two Thebans upon either syde,  
And after rood the queene and Emelye,  
And after that another compaignye  
Of oon and oother, after hir degree.  
And thus they passen thurghout the citee,  
And to the lystes come they by tyme.  
It nas nat of the day yet fully pryme  
Whan set was Theseus ful riche and hye,  
Ypolita the queene, and Emelye,  
And othere ladys in degrees aboute.

2580 Unto the seetes preesseth al the route.  
And westward, thurgh the gates under Marte,  
Arcite, and eek the hondred of his parte,  
With baner reed is entred right anon;  
And in that selve moment Palamon  
Is under Venus, estward in the place,  
With baner whyt and hardy chiere and face.  
In al the world, to seken up and doun,  
So evene, withouten variacioun,  
Ther nere swiche compaignyes tweye,  
2590 For ther was noon so wys that koude seye  
That any hadde of oother avauntage  
Of worthynesse, ne of estaat, ne age,  
So evene were they chosen, for to gesse.  
And in two renges faire they hem dresse.  
Whan that hir names rad were everichon,  
That in hir nombre gyle were ther noon,  
Tho were the gates shet, and cried was loude:  
"Do now youre devoir, yonge knyghtes proude!"  
The heraudes lefte hir prikyng up and doun;  
2600 Now ryngen trompes loude and clarioun.  
Ther is namoore to seyn, but west and est  
In goon the speres ful sadly in arrest;  
In gooth the sharpe spore into the syde.  
Ther seen men who kan juste and who kan ryde;  
Ther shyveren shaftes upon sheeldes thikke;  
He feeleth thurgh the herte-spoon the prikke.  
Up spryngen speres twenty foot on highte;  
Out goon the swerdes as the silver brighte;  
The helmes they tohewen and toshrede;  
2610 Out brest the blood with stierne stremes rede;  
With myghty maces the bones they tobreste.  
He thurgh the thikkeste of the throng gan threste;  
Ther stomblen steedes stronge, and doun gooth al,  
He rolleth under foot as dooth a bal;  
He foyneth on his feet with his tronchoun,  
And he hym hurtleth with his hors adoun;  
He thurgh the body is hurt and sithen ytake,  
Maugree his heed, and broght unto the stake;  
As forward was, right there he moste abyde.  
2620 Another lad is on that oother syde.  
And some tyme dooth hem Theseus to reste,

Hem to refresshe and drynken, if hem leste.  
Ful ofte a day han thise Thebanes two  
Togydre ymet, and wroght his felawe wo;  
Unhorsed hath ech oother of hem tweye.  
Ther nas no tygre in the vale of Galgopheye,  
Whan that hir whelp is stole whan it is lite,  
So crueel on the hunte as is Arcite  
For jelous herte upon this Palamon.  
2630 Ne in Belmarye ther nys so fel leon,  
That hunted is, or for his hunger wood,  
Ne of his praye desireth so the blood,  
As Palamon to sleen his foo Arcite.  
The jelous strokes on hir helmes byte;  
Out renneth blood on bothe hir sydes rede.  
Som tyme an ende ther is of every dede.  
For er the sonne unto the reste wente,  
The stronge kyng Emetreus gan hente  
This Palamon, as he faught with Arcite,  
2640 And made his swerd depe in his flessch to byte,  
And by the force of twenty is he take  
Unyolden, and ydrawen to the stake.  
And in the rescus of this Palamoun  
The stronge kyng Lygurge is born adoun,  
And kyng Emetreus, for al his strengthe,  
Is born out of his sadel a swerdes lengthe,  
So hitte him Palamoun er he were take.  
But al for noght; he was broght to the stake.  
His hardy herte myghte hym helpe naught:  
2650 He moste abyde, whan that he was caught,  
By force and eek by composicioun.  
Who sorweth now but woful Palamoun,  
That moot namoore goon agayn to fighte?  
And whan that Theseus hadde seyn this sighte,  
Unto the folk that foghten thus echon  
He cryde, "Hoo! namoore, for it is doon!  
I wol be trewe juge, and no partie.  
Arcite of Thebes shal have Emelie,  
That by his fortune hath hire faire ywonne."  
2660 Anon ther is a noyse of peple bigonne  
For joye of this, so loude and heighe withalle  
It semed that the lystes sholde falle.  
What kan now faire Venus doon above?

What seith she now? What dooth this queene of love,  
But wepeth so, for wantynge of hir wille,  
Til that hir teeres in the lystes fille?  
She seyde, "I am ashamed, doutelees."  
Saturnus seyde, "Doghter, hoold thy pees!  
Mars hath his wille, his knyght hath al his boone,  
2670 And, by myn heed, thou shalt been esed soone."  
The trompours, with the loude mynstralcie,  
The heraudes, that ful loude yelle and crie,  
Been in hire wele for joye of daun Arcite.  
But herkneth me, and stynteth noyse a lite,  
Which a myracle ther bifel anon.  
This fierse Arcite hath of his helm ydon,  
And on a courser, for to shewe his face,  
He priketh endelong the large place  
Lokynge upward upon this Emelye;  
2680 And she agayn hym caste a freendlich ye  
(For wommen, as to speken in comune,  
Thei folwen alle the favour of Fortune)  
And was al his chiere, as in his herte.  
Out of the ground a furie infernal sterte,  
From Pluto sent at requeste of Saturne,  
For which his hors for fere gan to turne,  
And leep aside, and foundred as he leep;  
And er that Arcite may taken keep,  
He pighte hym on the pomel of his heed,  
2690 That in the place he lay as he were deed,  
His brest tobrosten with his sadel-bowe.  
As blak he lay as any cole or crowe,  
So was the blood yronnen in his face.  
Anon he was yborn out of the place,  
With herte soor, to Theseus paleys.  
Tho was he korven out of his harneys  
And in a bed ybrought ful faire and blyve,  
For he was yet in memorie and alyve,  
And alwey crynge after Emelye.  
2700 Duc Theseus, with al his compaignye,  
Is comen hoom to Atthenes his citee,  
With alle blisse and greet solempnitee.  
Al be it that this aventure was falle,  
He nolde noght disconforten hem alle.  
Men seyde eek that Arcite shal nat dye;

He shal been heeled of his maladye.  
And of another thyng they weren as fayn,  
That of hem alle was ther noon yslayn,  
Al were they soore yhurt, and namely oon,  
2710 That with a spere was thirled his brest boon.  
To othere woundes and to broken armes  
Somme hadden salves, and somme hadden charmes;  
Fermacies of herbes, and eek save  
They dronken, for they wolde hir lymes have.  
For which this noble duc, as he wel kan,  
Conforteth and honoureth every man,  
And made revel al the longe nyght  
Unto the straunge lordes, as was right.  
Ne ther was holden no disconfitynge  
2720 But as a justes or a tourneyng;  
For soothly ther was no disconfiture.  
For fallyng nys nat but an aventure,  
Ne to be lad by force unto the stake  
Unyolden, and with twenty knyghtes take,  
O persone allone, withouten mo,  
And haryed forth by arme, foot, and too,  
And eke his steede dryven forth with staves  
With footmen, bothe yemen and eek knaves --  
It nas arretted hym no vileynye;  
2730 Ther may no man clepen it cowardye.  
For which anon duc Theseus leet crye,  
To stynten alle rancour and envye,  
The gree as wel of o syde as of oother,  
And eyther syde ylik as ootheres brother;  
And yaf hem yiftes after hir degree,  
And fully heeld a feeste dayes three,  
And conveyed the kynges worthily  
Out of his toun a journee largely.  
And hoom wente every man the righte way.  
2740 Ther was namoore but "Fare wel, have good day!"  
Of this bataille I wol namoore endite,  
But speke of Palamon and of Arcite.  
Swelleth the brest of Arcite, and the soore  
Encreesseth at his herte moore and moore.  
The clothered blood, for any lechecraft,  
Corrupteth, and is in his bouk ylaft,  
That neither veyne-blood, ne ventusyng,

Ne drynke of herbes may ben his helpynge.  
 The vertu expulsif, or animal,  
 2750 Fro thilke vertu cleped natural  
 Ne may the venym voyden ne expelle.  
 The pipes of his longes gonne to swelle,  
 And every lacerte in his brest adoun  
 Is shent with venym and corrupcioun.  
 Hym gayneth neither, for to gete his lif,  
 Vomyt upward, ne dounward laxatif.  
 Al is tobrosten thilke regioun;  
 Nature hath now no dominacioun.  
 And certainly, ther Nature wol nat wirche,  
 2760 Fare wel phisik! Go ber the man to chirche!  
 This al and som, that Arcita moot dye;  
 For which he sendeth after Emelye,  
 And Palamon, that was his cosyn deere.  
 Thanne seyde he thus, as ye shal after heere:  
 "Naught may the woful spirit in myn herte  
 Declare o point of alle my sorwes smerte  
 To yow, my lady, that I love moost,  
 But I biquethe the servyce of my goost  
 To yow aboven every creature,  
 2770 Syn that my lyf may no lenger dure.  
 Allas, the wo! Allas, the peynes stronge,  
 That I for yow have suffred, and so longe!  
 Allas, the deeth! Allas, myn Emelye!  
 Allas, departynge of oure compaignye!  
 Allas, myn hertes queene! Allas, my wyf,  
 Myn hertes lady, endere of my lyf!  
 What is this world? What asketh men to have?  
 Now with his love, now in his colde grave  
 Allone, withouten any compaignye.  
 2780 Fare wel, my sweete foo, myn Emelye!  
 And softe taak me in youre armes tweye,  
 For love of God, and herkneth what I seye.  
 "I have heer with my cosyn Palamon  
 Had strif and rancour many a day agon  
 For love of yow, and for my jalousye.  
 And Juppiter so wys my soule gye,  
 To speken of a servaunt proprely,  
 With alle circumstances trewely --  
 That is to seyen, trouthe, honour, knyghthede,

2790 Wysdom, humblesse, estaat, and heigh kynrede,  
Freedom, and al that longeth to that art --  
So Juppiter have of my soule part,  
As in this world right now ne knowe I non  
So worthy to ben loved as Palamon,  
That serveth yow, and wol doon al his lyf.  
And if that evere ye shul ben a wyf,  
Foryet nat Palamon, the gentil man."  
And with that word his speche faille gan,  
For from his feet up to his brest was come  
2800 The coold of deeth, that hadde hym overcome,  
And yet mooreover, for in his armes two  
The vital strengthe is lost and al ago.  
Oonly the intellect, withouten moore,  
That dwelled in his herte syk and soore,  
Gan faillen whan the herte felte deeth.  
Dusked his eyen two, and failed breeth,  
But on his lady yet caste he his ye;  
His laste word was, "Mercy, Emelye!"  
His spirit chaunged hous and wente ther,  
2810 As I cam nevere, I kan nat tellen wher.  
Therefore I stynte; I nam no divinistre;  
Of soules fynde I nat in this registre,  
Ne me ne list thilke opinions to telle  
Of hem, though that they writen wher they dwelle.  
Arcite is coold, ther Mars his soule gye!  
Now wol I speken forth of Emelye.  
Shrighte Emelye, and howleth Palamon,  
And Theseus his suster took anon  
Swownynge, and baar hire fro the corps away.  
2820 What helpeth it to tarien forth the day  
To tellen how she weep bothe eve and morwe?  
For in swich cas wommen have swich sorwe,  
Whan that hir housbondes ben from hem ago,  
That for the moore part they sorwen so,  
Or ellis fallen in swich maladye  
That at the laste certainly they dye.  
Infinite been the sorwes and the teeres  
Of olde folk and folk of tendre yeeres  
In al the toun for deeth of this Theban.  
2830 For hym ther wepeth bothe child and man;  
So greet wepyng was ther noon, certayn,



Whan Ector was ybrought, al fressh yslayn,  
To Troye. Allas, the pitee that was ther,  
Cracchyng of chekes, rentyng eek of heer.  
"Why woldestow be deed," thise wommen crye,  
"And haddest gold ynough, and Emelye?"  
No man myghte gladen Theseus,  
Savyng his olde fader Egeus,  
That knew this worldes transmutacioun,  
2840 As he hadde seyn it chaunge bothe up and doun,  
Joye after wo, and wo after gladnesse,  
And shewed hem ensamples and liknesse.  
"Right as ther dyed nevere man," quod he,  
"That he ne lyvede in erthe in some degree,  
Right so ther lyvede never man," he seyde,  
"In al this world, that som tyme he ne deyde.  
This world nys but a thurghfare ful of wo,  
And we been pilgrymes, passyng to and fro.  
Deeth is an ende of every worldly soore."  
2850 And over al this yet seyde he muchel moore  
To this effect, ful wisely to enhort  
The peple that they sholde hem reconforte.  
Duc Theseus, with al his bisy cure,  
Caste now wher that the sepulture  
Of goode Arcite may best ymaked be,  
And eek moost honorable in his degree.  
And at the laste he took conclusioun  
That ther as first Arcite and Palamoun  
Hadden for love the bataille hem bitwene,  
2860 That in that selve grove, swoote and grene,  
Ther as he hadde his amoureuse desires,  
His compleynte, and for love his hote fires,

He wolde make a fyr in which the office  
Funeral he myghte al accomplice.  
And leet comande anon to hakke and hewe  
The okes olde, and leye hem on a rewe  
In colpons wel arrayed for to brenne.

His officers with swifte feet they renne  
And ryde anon at his comandement.  
2870 And after this, Theseus hath ysent  
After a beere, and it al overspradde  
With clooth of gold, the richeste that he hadde.  
And of the same suyte he cladde Arcite;  
Upon his hondes hadde he gloves white,  
Eek on his heed a coroune of laurer grene,  
And in his hond a swerd ful bright and kene.  
He leyde hym, bare the visage, on the beere;  
Therwith he weep that pitee was to heere.  
And for the peple sholde seen hym alle,  
2880 Whan it was day, he broghte hym to the halle,  
That roreth of the cryng and the soun.  
Tho cam this woful Theban Palamoun,  
With flotery berd and ruggy, asschy heeres,  
In clothes blake, ydropped al with teeres;  
And, passynge othere of wepyng, Emelye,  
The rewefulleste of al the compaignye.  
In as muche as the servyce sholde be  
The moore noble and riche in his degree,  
Duc Theseus leet forth thre steedes bryng,  
2890 That trapped were in steel al gliterynge,  
And covered with the armes of daun Arcite.  
Upon thise steedes, that weren grete and white,  
Ther seten folk, of whiche oon baar his sheeld,  
Another his spere up on his hondes heeld,  
The thridde baar with hym his bowe Turkeys  
(Of brend gold was the caas and eek the harneys);  
And riden forth a paas with sorweful cheere  
Toward the grove, as ye shul after heere.  
The nobleste of the Grekes that ther were  
2900 Upon hir shuldres caryeden the beere,  
With slakke paas and eyen rede and wete,  
Thurghout the citee by the maister strete,  
That sprad was al with blak, and wonder hye  
Right of the same is the strete ywrye.  
Upon the right hond wente olde Egeus,  
And on that oother syde duc Theseus,  
With vessels in hir hand of gold ful fyn,  
Al ful of hony, milk, and blood, and wyn;  
Eek Palamon, with ful greet compaignye;

2910 And after that cam woful Emelye,  
 With fyr in honde, as was that tyme the gyse,  
 To do the office of funeral servyse.  
 Heigh labour and ful greet apparaillynge  
 Was at the service and the fyr-makynge,  
 That with his grene top the hevene raughte;  
 And twenty fadme of brede the armes straughte --  
 This is to seyn, the bowes weren so brode.  
 Of stree first ther was leyd ful many a lode.  
 But how the fyr was maked upon highte,  
 2920 Ne eek the names that the trees highte,  
 As ook, firre, birch, aspe, alder, holm, popler,  
 Wylugh, elm, plane, asshe, box, chasteyn, lynde, laurer,  
 Mapul, thorn, bech, hasel, ew, whippeltree --  
 How they weren feld shal nat be toold for me;  
 Ne hou the goddes ronnen up and down,  
 Disherited of hire habitacioun,  
 In which they woneden in reste and pees,  
 Nymphes, fawnes and amadrides;  
 Ne hou the beestes and the briddes alle  
 2930 Fledden for fere, whan the wode was falle;  
 Ne how the ground agast was of the light,  
 That was nat wont to seen the sonne bright;  
 Ne how the fyr was couched first with stree,  
 And thanne with drye stikkes cloven a thre,  
 And thanne with grene wode and spicerye,  
 And thanne with clooth of gold and with perrye,  
 And gerlandes, hangynge with ful many a flour;  
 The mirre, th' encens, with al so greet odour;  
 Ne how Arcite lay among al this,  
 2940 Ne what richesse aboute his body is;  
 Ne how that Emelye, as was the gyse,  
 Putte in the fyr of funeral servyse;  
 Ne how she swowned whan men made the fyr,  
 Ne what she spak, ne what was hir desir;  
 Ne what jeweles men in the fyre caste,  
 Whan that the fyr was greet and brente faste;  
 Ne how somme caste hir sheeld, and somme hir spere,  
 And of hire vestimentz, whiche that they were,  
 And coppes fulle of wyn, and milk, and blood,  
 2950 Into the fyr, that brente as it were wood;  
 Ne how the Grekes, with an huge route,

Thries riden al the fyr aboute  
 Upon the left hand, with a loud shoutynge,  
 And thries with hir speres claterynge;  
 And thries how the ladyes gonne crye;  
 And how that lad was homward Emelye;  
 Ne how Arcite is brent to asshen colde;  
 Ne how that lyche-wake was yholde  
 Al thilke nyght; ne how the Grekes pleye  
 2960 The wake-pleyes; ne kepe I nat to seye  
 Who wrastleth best naked with oille enoynt,  
 Ne who that baar hym best, in no disjoynt.  
 I wol nat tellen eek how that they goon  
 Hoom til Atthenes, whan the pley is doon;  
 But shortly to the point thanne wol I wende  
 And maken of my longe tale an ende.  
 By processe and by lengthe of certeyn yeres,  
 Al stynted is the moornynge and the teres  
 Of Grekes, by oon general assent.  
 2970 Thanne semed me ther was a parlement  
 At Atthenes, upon certein pointz and caas;  
 Among the whiche pointz yspoken was,  
 To have with certein contrees alliaunce,  
 And have fully of Thebans obeisaunce.  
 For which this noble Theseus anon  
 Leet senden after gentil Palamon,  
 Unwist of hym what was the cause and why,  
 But in his blake clothes sorwefully  
 He cam at his comandement in hye.  
 2980 Tho sente Theseus for Emelye.  
 Whan they were set, and hust was al the place,  
 And Theseus abiden hadde a space  
 Er any word cam fram his wise brest,  
 His eyen sette he ther as was his lest.  
 And with a sad visage he siked stille,  
 And after that right thus he seyde his wille:  
 "The Firste Moevere of the cause above,  
 Whan he first made the faire cheyne of love,  
 Greet was th' effect, and heigh was his entente.  
 2990 Wel wiste he why, and what thereof he mente,  
 For with that faire cheyne of love he bond  
 The fyr, the eyr, the water, and the lond  
 In certeyn boundes, that they may nat flee.

That same Prince and that Moevere," quod he,  
"Hath stablissed in this wrecched world adoun  
Certeine dayes and duracioun  
To al that is engendred in this place,  
Over the whiche day they may nat pace,  
Al mowe they yet tho dayes wel abregge.  
3000 Ther nedeth noght noon auctoritee t' allegge,  
For it is preeved by experience,  
But that me list declaren my sentence.  
Thanne may men by this ordre wel discerne  
That thilke Moevere stable is and eterne.  
Wel may men knowe, but it be a fool,  
That every part dirryveth from his hool,  
For nature hath nat taken his bigynnyng  
Of no partie or cantel of a thyng,  
But of a thyng that parfit is and stable,  
3010 Descendynge so til it be corrupable.  
And therefore, of his wise purveiaunce,  
He hath so wel biset his ordinaunce  
That speses of thynges and progressiouns  
Shullen enduren by successiouns,  
And nat eterne, withouten any lye.  
This maystow understonde and seen at ye.  
"Loo the ook, that hath so long a norisshynge  
From tyme that it first bigynneth to sprynge,  
And hath so long a lif, as we may see,  
3020 Yet at the laste wasted is the tree.  
"Considereth eek how that the harde stoon  
Under oure feet, on which we trede and goon,  
Yet wasteth it as it lyth by the weye.  
The brode ryver somtyme wexeth dreye;  
The grete tounes se we wane and wende.  
Thanne may ye se that al this thyng hath ende.  
"Of man and womman seen we wel also  
That nedes, in oon of thise termes two --  
This is to seyn, in youthe or elles age --  
3030 He moot be deed, the kyng as shal a page;  
Som in his bed, som in the depe see,  
Som in the large feeld, as men may see;  
Ther helpeth noght; al goth that ilke weye.  
Thanne may I seyn that al this thyng moot deye.  
"What maketh this but Juppiter, the kyng,

That is prince and cause of alle thyng,  
Convertinge al unto his propre welle  
From which it is dirryved, sooth to telle?  
And heer-agayns no creature on lyve,  
3040 Of no degree, availleth for to stryve.  
"Thanne is it wysdom, as it thynketh me,  
To maken vertu of necessitee,  
And take it weel that we may nat eschue,  
And namely that to us alle is due.  
And whoso gruccheth ought, he dooth folye,  
And rebel is to hym that al may gye.  
And certainly a man hath moost honour  
To dyen in his excellence and flour,  
Whan he is siker of his goode name;  
3050 Thanne hath he doon his freend, ne hym, no shame.  
And gladder oghte his freend been of his deeth,  
Whan with honour up yolden is his breeth,  
Than whan his name apalled is for age,  
For al forgeten is his vassellage.  
Thanne is it best, as for a worthy fame,  
To dyen whan that he is best of name.  
"The contrarie of al this is wilfulnesse.  
Why grucchen we, why have we hevynesse,  
That goode Arcite, of chivalrie flour,  
3060 Departed is with duetee and honour  
Out of this foule prisoun of this lyf?  
Why grucchen heere his cosyn and his wyf  
Of his welfare, that loved hem so weel?  
Kan he hem thank? Nay, God woot, never a deel,  
That both his soule and eek hemself offende,  
And yet they mowe hir lustes nat amende.  
"What may I conlude of this longe serye,  
But after wo I rede us to be merye  
And thanken Juppiter of al his grace?  
3070 And er that we departen from this place  
I rede that we make of sorwes two  
O parfit joye, lastyng everemo.  
And looketh now, wher moost sorwe is herinne,  
Ther wol we first amenden and bigynne.  
"Suster," quod he, "this is my fulle assent,  
With al th' avys heere of my parlement,  
That gentil Palamon, youre owene knyght,

That serveth yow with wille, herte, and myght,  
And ever hath doon syn ye first hym knewe,  
3080 That ye shul of youre grace upon hym rewe,  
And taken hym for housbonde and for lord.  
Lene me youre hond, for this is oure accord.  
Lat se now of youre wommanly pitee.  
He is a kynges brother sone, pardee;  
And though he were a povre bachelor,  
Syn he hath served yow so many a yeer,  
And had for yow so greet adversitee,  
It moste been considered, leeveth me,  
For gentil mercy oghte to passen right."  
3090 Thanne seyde he thus to Palamon the knight:  
"I trowe ther nedeth litel sermonyng  
To make yow assente to this thyng.  
Com neer, and taak youre lady by the hond."  
Bitwixen hem was maad anon the bond  
That highte matrimoine or mariage,  
By al the conseil and the baronage.  
And thus with alle blisse and melodye  
Hath Palamon ywedded Emelye.  
And God, that al this wyde world hath wroght,  
3100 Sende hym his love that hath it deere aboght;  
For now is Palamon in alle wele,  
Lyvyng in blisse, in riches, and in heele,  
And Emelye hym loveth so tendrely,  
And he hire serveth so gentilly,  
That nevere was ther no word hem bitwene  
Of jalousie or any oother teene.  
Thus endeth Palamon and Emelye;  
And God save al this faire compaignye! Amen.



## THE MILLER'S PROLOGUE

Whan that the Knyght had thus his tale ytoold,  
 3110 In al the route nas ther yong ne oold  
 That he ne seyde it was a noble storie  
 And worthy for to drawen to memorie,  
 And namely the gentils everichon.  
 Oure Hooste lough and swoor, "So moot I gon,  
 This gooth aright; unboked is the male.  
 Lat se now who shal telle another tale;  
 For trewely the game is wel bigonne.  
 Now telleth ye, sir Monk, if that ye konne,  
 Somwhat to quite with the Knyghtes tale."  
 3120 The Millere, that for dronken was al pale,  
 So that unnethe upon his hors he sat,  
 He nolde avalen neither hood ne hat,  
 Ne abyde no man for his curteisie,  
 But in Pilates voys he gan to crie,  
 And swoor, "By armes, and by blood and bones,  
 I kan a noble tale for the nones,  
 With which I wol now quite the Knyghtes tale."  
 Oure Hooste saugh that he was dronke of ale,  
 And seyde, "Abyd, Robyn, my leeve brother;  
 3130 Som bettre man shal telle us first another.  
 Abyd, and lat us werken thriftily."  
 "By Goddes soule," quod he, "that wol nat I;  
 For I wol speke or elles go my wey."  
 Oure Hoost answerde, "Tel on, a devel wey!  
 Thou art a fool; thy wit is overcome."  
 "Now herkneth," quod the Millere, "alle and some!  
 But first I make a protestacioun  
 That I am dronke; I knowe it by my soun.  
 And therefore if that I mysspeke or seye,  
 3140 Wyte it the ale of Southwerk, I you preye.  
 For I wol telle a legende and a lyf  
 Bothe of a carpenter and of his wyf,  
 How that a clerk hath set the wrightes cappe."  
 The Reve answerde and seyde, "Stynt thy clappe!  
 Lat be thy lewed dronken harlotrye.  
 It is a synne and eek a greet folye  
 To apeyren any man, or hym defame,  
 And eek to bryngen wyves in swich fame.



Thou mayst ynogh of othere thynges seyn."  
3150 This dronke Millere spak ful soone ageyn  
And seyde, "Leve brother Osewold,  
Who hath no wyf, he is no cokewold.  
But I sey nat therfore that thou art oon;  
Ther been ful goode wyves many oon,  
And evere a thousand goode ayeys oon badde.  
That knowestow wel thyself, but if thou madde.  
Why artow angry with my tale now?  
I have a wyf, pardee, as wel as thow;  
Yet nolde I, for the oxen in my plogh,  
3160 Take upon me moore than ynogh,  
As demen of myself that I were oon;  
I wol bileve wel that I am noon.  
An housbonde shal nat been inquisityf  
Of Goddes pryvetee, nor of his wyf.  
So he may fynde Goddes foyson there,  
Of the remenant nedeth nat enquire."  
What sholde I moore seyn, but this Millere  
He nolde his wordes for no man forbere,  
But tolde his cherles tale in his manere.  
3170 M' athynketh that I shal reherce it heere.  
And therfore every gentil wight I preye,  
For Goddes love, demeth nat that I seye  
Of yvel entente, but for I moot reherce  
Hir tales alle, be they bettre or werse,  
Or elles falsen som of my mateere.  
And therfore, whoso list it nat yheere,  
Turne over the leef and chese another tale;  
For he shal fynde ynowe, grete and smale,  
Of storial thyng that toucheth gentillesse,  
3180 And eek moralitee and hoolynesse.  
Blameth nat me if that ye chese amys.  
The Millere is a cherl; ye knowe wel this.  
So was the Reve eek and othere mo,  
And harlotrie they tolden bothe two.  
Avyseth yow, and put me out of blame;  
And eek men shal nat maken ernest of game.



## THE MILLER'S TALE

Whilom ther was dwellynge at Oxenford  
 A riche gnof, that gestes heeld to bord,  
 And of his craft he was a carpenter.  
 3190 With hym ther was dwellynge a poure scoler,  
 Hadde lerned art, but al his fantasye  
 Was turned for to lerne astrologye,  
 And koude a certeyn of conclusiouns,  
 To demen by interrogaciouns,  
 If that men asked hym, in certain houres  
 Whan that men sholde have droghte or elles shoures,  
 Or if men asked hym what sholde bifalle  
 Of every thyng; I may nat rekene hem alle.  
 This clerk was cleped hende Nicholas.  
 3200 Of deerne love he koude and of solas;  
 And therto he was sleigh and ful privee,  
 And lyk a mayden meke for to see.  
 A chambre hadde he in that hostelrye  
 Allone, withouten any compaignye,  
 Ful fetisly ydight with herbes swoote;  
 And he hymself as sweete as is the roote  
 Of lycorys or any cetewale.  
 His Almageste, and bookes grete and smale,  
 His astrelabie, longynge for his art,  
 3210 His augrym stones layen faire apart,  
 On shelves couched at his beddes heed;  
 His presse ycovered with a faldyng reed;  
 And al above ther lay a gay sautrie,  
 On which he made a-nyghtes melodie  
 So swetely that all the chambre rong;  
 And Angelus ad virginem he song;  
 And after that he song the Kynges Noote.  
 Ful often blessed was his myrie throte.  
 And thus this sweete clerk his tyme spent  
 3220 After his freendes fyndyng and his rente.  
 This carpenter hadde wedded newe a wyf,  
 Which that he lovede moore than his lyf;  
 Of eighteteene yeer she was of age.  
 Jalous he was, and heeld hire narwe in cage,  
 For she was wylde and yong, and he was old  
 And demed hymself been lik a cokewold.

He knew nat Catoun, for his wit was rude,  
That bad man sholde wedde his simylitude.  
Men sholde wedden after hire estaat,  
3230 For youthe and elde is often at debaat.  
But sith that he was fallen in the snare,  
He moste endure, as oother folk, his care.  
Fair was this yonge wyf, and therewithal  
As any wezele hir body gent and smal.  
A ceynt she werede, barred al of silk,  
A barmclooth as whit as morne milk  
Upon hir lendes, ful of many a goore.  
Whit was hir smok, and broyden al bifoore  
And eek bihynde, on hir coler aboute,  
3240 Of col-blak silk, withinne and eek withoute.  
The tapes of hir white voluper  
Were of the same suyte of hir coler;  
Hir filet brood of silk, and set ful hye.  
And sikerly she hadde a likerous ye;  
Ful smale ypullen were hire browes two,  
And tho were bent and blake as any sloo.  
She was ful moore blisful on to see  
Than is the newe pere-jonette tree,  
And softer than the wolfe is of a wether.  
3250 And by hir girdel heeng a purs of lether,  
Tasseled with silk and perled with latoun.  
In al this world, to seken up and doun,  
There nys no man so wys that koude thenche  
So gay a popelote or swich a wenche.  
Ful brighter was the shynyng of hir hewe  
Than in the Tour the noble yforged newe.  
But of hir song, it was as loude and yerne  
As any swalwe sittynge on a berne.  
Therto she koude skippe and make game,  
3260 As any kyde or calf folwynge his dame.  
Hir mouth was sweete as bragot or the meeth,  
Or hoord of apples leyd in hey or heeth.  
Wynsynge she was, as is a joly colt,  
Long as a mast, and upright as a bolt.  
A brooch she baar upon hir lowe coler,  
As brood as is the boos of a bokeler.  
Hir shoes were laced on hir legges hye.  
She was a prymerole, a piggesnye,

For any lord to leggen in his bedde,  
3270 Or yet for any good yeman to wedde.  
Now, sire, and eft, sire, so bifel the cas  
That on a day this hende Nicholas  
Fil with this yonge wyf to rage and pleye,  
Whil that hir housbonde was at Oseneye,  
As clerkes ben ful subtile and ful queynte;  
And prively he caughte hire by the queynte,  
And seyde, "Ywis, but if ich have my wille,  
For deerne love of thee, lemman, I spille."  
And heeld hire harde by the haunchebones,  
3280 And seyde, "Lemman, love me al atones,  
Or I wol dyen, also God me save!"  
And she sproong as a colt dooth in the trave,  
And with hir heed she wryed faste away,  
And seyde, "I wol nat kisse thee, by my fey!  
Why, lat be!" quod she. "Lat be, Nicholas,  
Or I wol crie `out, harrow' and `allas'!  
Do wey youre handes, for youre curteisye!"  
This Nicholas gan mercy for to crye,  
And spak so faire, and profred him so faste,  
3290 That she hir love hym graunted atte laste,  
And swoor hir ooth, by Seint Thomas of Kent,  
That she wol been at his comandement,  
Whan that she may hir leyser wel espie.  
"Myn housbonde is so ful of jalousie  
That but ye wayte wel and been privee,  
I woot right wel I nam but deed," quod she.  
"Ye moste been ful deerne, as in this cas."  
"Nay, therof care thee noght," quod Nicholas.  
"A clerk hadde litherly biset his whyle,  
3300 But if he koude a carpenter bigyle."  
And thus they been accorded and ysworn  
To wayte a tyme, as I have told biforn.  
Whan Nicholas had doon thus everideel  
And thakked hire aboute the lendes weel,  
He kiste hire sweete and taketh his sawtrie,  
And pleyeth faste, and maketh melodie.  
Thanne fil it thus, that to the paryssh chirche,  
Cristes owene werkes for to wirche,  
This goode wyf went on an haliday.  
3310 Hir forheed shoon as bright as any day,

So was it wasshen whan she leet hir werk.  
 Now was ther of that chirche a parissh clerk,  
 The which that was ycleped Absolon.  
 Crul was his heer, and as the gold it shoon,  
 And strouted as a fanne large and brode;  
 Ful streight and evene lay his joly shode.  
 His rode was reed, his eyen greye as goos.  
 With Poules wyndow corven on his shoos,  
 In hoses rede he wente fetisly.  
 3320 Yclad he was ful smal and proprely  
 Al in a kirtel of a lyght waget;  
 Ful faire and thikke been the poyntes set.  
 And therupon he hadde a gay surplys  
 As whit as is the blosme upon the rys.  
 A myrie child he was, so God me save.  
 Wel koude he laten blood, and clippe and shave,  
 And maken a chartre of lond or acquitaunce.  
 In twenty manere koude he trippe and daunce  
 After the scole of Oxenforde tho,  
 3330 And with his legges casten to and fro,  
 And pleyen songes on a smal rubible;  
 Therto he song som tyme a loud quynnyble;  
 And as wel koude he pleye on a giterne.  
 In al the toun nas brewhous ne taverne  
 That he ne visited with his solas,  
 Ther any gaylard tappestere was.  
 But sooth to seyn, he was somdeel squaymous  
 Of fartyng, and of speche daungerous.  
 This Absolon, that jolif was and gay,  
 3340 Gooth with a sencer on the haliday,  
 Sensynge the wyves of the parisshe faste;  
 And many a lovely look on hem he caste,  
 And namely on this carpenteris wyf.  
 To looke on hire hym thoughte a myrie lyf,  
 She was so propre and sweete and likerous.  
 I dar wel seyn, if she hadde been a mous,  
 And he a cat, he wolde hire hente anon.  
 This parissh clerk, this joly Absolon,  
 Hath in his herte swich a love-longynge  
 3350 That of no wyf took he noon offrynge;  
 For curteisie, he seyde, he wolde noon.  
 The moone, whan it was nyght, ful brighte shoon,

And Absolon his gyterne hath ytake;  
For paramours he thoghte for to wake.  
And forth he gooth, jolif and amorous,  
Til he cam to the carpenteres hous  
A litel after cokkes hadde ycrowe,  
And dressed hym up by a shot-wyndowe  
That was upon the carpenteris wal.  
3360 He syngeth in his voys gentil and smal,  
"Now, deere lady, if thy wille be,  
I praye yow that ye wole rewe on me,"  
Ful wel acordaunt to his gyternynge.  
This carpenter awook, and herde him synge,  
And spak unto his wyf, and seyde anon,  
"What! Alison! Herestow nat Absolon,  
That chaunteth thus under oure boures wal?"  
And she answerde hir housbonde therwithal,  
"Yis, God woot, John, I heere it every deel."  
3370 This passeth forth; what wol ye bet than weel?  
Fro day to day this joly Absolon  
So woweth hire that hym is wo bigon.  
He waketh al the nyght and al the day;  
He kembeth his lokkes brode, and made hym gay;  
He woweth hire by meenes and brocage,  
And swoor he wolde been hir owene page;  
He syngeth, brokkynge as a nyghtyngale;  
He sente hire pyment, meeth, and spiced ale,  
And wafres, pipyng hoot out of the gleede;  
3380 And, for she was of town, he profred meede;  
For som folk wol ben wonnen for richesse,  
And somme for strokes, and somme for gentillesse.  
Somtyme, to shewe his lightnesse and maistrye,  
He pleyeth Herodes upon a scaffold hye.  
But what availleth hym as in this cas?  
She loveth so this hende Nicholas  
That Absolon may blowe the bukkes horn;  
He ne hadde for his labour but a scorn.  
And thus she maketh Absolon hire ape,  
3390 And al his earnest turneth til a jape.  
Ful sooth is this proverbe, it is no lye,  
Men seyn right thus: "Alwey the nye slye  
Maketh the ferre leeve to be looth."  
For though that Absolon be wood or wrooth,

By cause that he fer was from hire sight,  
This nye Nicholas stood in his light.  
Now ber thee wel, thou hende Nicholas,  
For Absolon may waille and synge "allas."  
And so bifel it on a Saterdag,  
3400 This carpenter was goon til Osenay;  
And hende Nicholas and Alisoun  
Acorded been to this conclusioun,  
That Nicholas shal shapen hym a wyle  
This sely jalous housbonde to bigyle;  
And if so be the game wente aright,  
She sholde slepen in his arm al nyght,  
For this was his desir and hire also.  
And right anon, withouten wordes mo,  
This Nicholas no lenger wolde tarie,  
3410 But dooth ful softe unto his chambre carie  
Bothe mete and drynke for a day or tweye,  
And to hire housbonde bad hire for to seye,  
If that he axed after Nicholas,  
She sholde seye she nyste where he was;  
Of al that day she saugh hym nat with ye;  
She trowed that he was in maladye,  
For, for no cry hir mayde koude hym calle,  
He nolde answeere for thyng that myghte falle.  
This passeth forth al thilke Saterdag,  
3420 That Nicholas stille in his chambre lay,  
And eet and sleep, or dide what hym leste,  
Til Sonday, that the sonne gooth to reste.  
This sely carpenter hath greet merveye  
Of Nicholas, or what thyng myghte hym eyle,  
And seyde, "I am adrad, by Seint Thomas,  
It stondeth nat aright with Nicholas.  
God shilde that he deyde sodeynly!  
This world is now ful tikel, sikerly.  
I saugh today a cors yborn to chirche  
3430 That now, on Monday last, I saugh hym wirche.  
"Go up," quod he unto his knave anoon,  
"Clepe at his dore, or knocke with a stoon.  
Looke how it is, and tel me boldely."  
This knave gooth hym up ful sturdily,  
And at the chambre dore whil that he stood,  
He cride and knocked as that he were wood,

"What, how! What do ye, maister Nicholay?  
How may ye slepen al the longe day?"  
But al for noght; he herde nat a word.  
3440 An hole he foond, ful lowe upon a bord,  
Ther as the cat was wont in for to crepe,  
And at that hole he looked in ful depe,  
And at the laste he hadde of hym a sight.  
This Nicholas sat evere capyng upright,  
As he had kiked on the newe moone.  
Adoun he gooth, and tolde his maister soone  
In what array he saugh this ilke man.  
This carpenter to blessen hym bigan,  
And seyde, "Help us, Seinte Frydeswyde!  
3450 A man woot litel what hym shal bityde.  
This man is falle, with his astromye,  
In some woodnesse or in som agonye.  
I thoghte ay wel how that it sholde be!  
Men sholde nat knowe of Goddes pryvetee.  
Ye, blessed be alwey a lewed man  
That noght but oonly his bileve kan!  
So ferde another clerk with astromye;  
He walked in the feeldes for to pryve  
Upon the sterres, what ther sholde bifalle,  
3460 Til he was in a marle-pit yfalle;  
He saugh nat that. But yet, by Seint Thomas,  
Me reweth soore of hende Nicholas.  
He shal be rated of his studyng,  
If that I may, by Jhesus, hevene kyng!  
Get me a staf, that I may underspore,  
Whil that thou, Robyn, hevest up the dore.  
He shal out of his studyng, as I gesse."  
And to the chambre dore he gan hym dresse.  
His knave was a strong carl for the nones,  
3470 And by the haspe he haaf it of atones;  
Into the floor the dore fil anon.  
This Nicholas sat ay as stille as stoon,  
And evere caped upward into the eir.  
This carpenter wende he were in despeir,  
And hente hym by the sholdres myghtily,  
And shook hym harde, and cride spitously,  
"What! Nicholay! What, how! What, looke adoun!  
Awak, and thenk on Cristes passioun!



I crouche thee from elves and fro wightes."  
 3480 Therwith the nyght-spel seyde he anon-rightes  
 On foure halves of the hous aboute,  
 And on the thresshold of the dore withoute:  
 "Jhesu Crist and Seinte Benedight,  
 Blesse this hous from every wikked wight,  
 For nyghtes verye, the white pater-noster!  
 Where wentestow, Seinte Petres soster?"  
 And atte laste this hende Nicholas  
 Gan for to sik soore, and seyde, "Allas!  
 Shal al the world be lost eftsoones now?"  
 3490 This carpenter answerde, "What seystow?  
 What! Thyngk on God, as we doon, men that swynke."  
 This Nicholas answerde, "Fecche me drynke,  
 And after wol I speke in pryvetee  
 Of certeyn thyng that toucheth me and thee.  
 I wol telle it noon oother man, certeyn."  
 This carpenter goth down, and comth ageyn,  
 And broghte of myghty ale a large quart;  
 And whan that ech of hem had dronke his part,  
 This Nicholas his dore faste shette,  
 3500 And down the carpenter by hym he sette.  
 He seyde, "John, myn hooste, lief and deere,  
 Thou shalt upon thy trouthe swere me heere  
 That to no wight thou shalt this conseil wreye,  
 For it is Cristes conseil that I seye,  
 And if thou telle it man, thou art forlore;  
 For this vengeaunce thou shalt han therfore,  
 That if thou wreye me, thou shalt be wood."  
 "Nay, Crist forbede it, for his hooly blood!"  
 Quod tho this sely man, "I nam no labbe,  
 3510 Ne, though I seye, I nam nat lief to gabbe.  
 Sey what thou wolt, I shal it nevere telle  
 To child ne wyf, by hym that harwed helle!"  
 "Now John," quod Nicholas, "I wol nat lye;  
 I have yfounde in myn astrologye,  
 As I have looked in the moone bright,  
 That now a Monday next, at quarter nyght,  
 Shal falle a reyn, and that so wilde and wood  
 That half so greet was nevere Noes flood.  
 This world," he seyde, "in lasse than an hour  
 3520 Shal al be dreynt, so hidous is the shour.

Thus shal mankynde drenche, and lese hir lyf."  
This carpenter answerde, "Allas, my wyf!  
And shal she drenche? Allas, myn Alisoun!"  
For sorwe of this he fil almoost adoun,  
And seyde, "Is ther no remedie in this cas?"  
"Why, yis, for Gode," quod hende Nicholas,  
"If thou wolt werken after loore and reed.  
Thou mayst nat werken after thyn owene heed;  
For thus seith Salomon, that was ful trewe:  
3530 'Werk al by conseil, and thou shalt nat rewe.'  
And if thou werken wolt by good conseil,  
I undertake, withouten mast and seyl,  
Yet shal I saven hire and thee and me.  
Hastow nat herd hou saved was Noe,  
Whan that oure Lord hadde warned hym biforn  
That al the world with water sholde be lorn?"  
"Yis," quod this Carpenter, "ful yooore ago."  
"Hastou nat herd," quod Nicholas, "also  
The sorwe of Noe with his felaweshipe,  
3540 Er that he myghte gete his wyf to shipe?  
Hym hadde be levere, I dar wel undertake,  
At thilke tyme, than alle his wetheres blake  
That she hadde had a ship herself allone.  
And therefore, woostou what is best to doone?  
This asketh haste, and of an hastif thyng  
Men may nat preche or maken tariyng.  
"Anon go gete us faste into this in  
A knedyng trogh, or ellis a kymelyn,  
For ech of us, but looke that they be large,  
3550 In which we mowe swymme as in a barge,  
And han therinne vitaille suffisant  
But for a day -- fy on the remenant!  
The water shal aslake and goon away  
Aboute pryme upon the nexte day.  
But Robyn may nat wite of this, thy knave,  
Ne eek thy mayde Gille I may nat save;  
Axe nat why, for though thou aske me,  
I wol nat tellen Goddes pryvetee.  
Suffiseth thee, but if thy wittes madde,  
3560 To han as greet a grace as Noe hadde.  
Thy wyf shal I wel saven, out of doute.  
Go now thy wey, and speed thee heer-about.

"But whan thou hast, for hire and thee and me,  
 Ygeten us thise knedyng tubbes thre,  
 Thanne shaltow hange hem in the roof ful hye,  
 That no man of oure purveiaunce espye.  
 And whan thou thus hast doon as I have seyde,  
 And hast oure vitaille faire in hem yleyde,  
 And eek an ax to smyte the corde atwo,  
 3570 Whan that the water comth, that we may go  
 And breke an hole an heigh, upon the gable,  
 Unto the gardyn-ward, over the stable,  
 That we may frely passen forth oure way,  
 Whan that the grete shour is goon away.  
 Thanne shaltou swymme as myrie, I undertake,  
 As dooth the white doke after hire drake.  
 Thanne wol I clepe, 'How, Alison! How, John!  
 Be myrie, for the flood wol passe anon.'  
 And thou wolt seyn, 'Hayl, maister Nicholay!  
 3580 Good morwe, I se thee wel, for it is day.'  
 And thanne shul we be lordes al oure lyf  
 Of al the world, as Noe and his wyf.  
 "But of o thyng I warne thee ful right:  
 Be wel avysed on that ilke nyght  
 That we ben entred into shippes bord,  
 That noon of us ne speke nat a word,  
 Ne clepe, ne crie, but be in his preyere;  
 For it is Goddes owene heeste deere.  
 "Thy wyf and thou moote hange fer atwynne,  
 3590 For that bitwixe yow shal be no synne,  
 Namore in lookyng than ther shal in deede.  
 This ordinance is seyde. Go, God thee speede!  
 Tomorwe at nyght, whan men ben alle aslepe,  
 Into oure knedyng-tubbes wol we crepe,  
 And sitten there, abidyng Goddes grace.  
 Go now thy wey; I have no lenger space  
 To make of this no lenger sermonyng.  
 Men seyn thus, 'sende the wise, and sey no thyng.'  
 Thou art so wys, it needeth thee nat teche.  
 3600 Go, save oure lyf, and that I the biseche."  
 This sely carpenter goth forth his wey.  
 Ful ofte he seide "Allas and weylawey,"  
 And to his wyf he tolde his pryvetee,  
 And she was war, and knew it bet than he,

What al this queynte cast was for to seye.  
But nathelees she ferde as she wolde deye,  
And seyde, "Allas! go forth thy wey anon,  
Help us to scape, or we been dede echon!  
I am thy trewe, verray wedded wyf;  
3610 Go, deere spouse, and help to save oure lyf."  
Lo, which a greet thyng is affeccioun!  
Men may dyen of ymaginacioun,  
So depe may impressioun be take.  
This sely carpenter bigynneth quake;  
Hym thynketh verrailly that he may see  
Noees flood come walwyng as the see  
To drenchen Alisoun, his hony deere.  
He wepeth, weyleth, maketh sory cheere;  
He siketh with ful many a sory swogh;  
3620 He gooth and geteth hym a knedyng trogh,  
And after that a tubbe and a kymelyn,  
And pryvely he sente hem to his in,  
And heng hem in the roof in pryvetee.  
His owene hand he made laddres thre,  
To clymben by the rones and the stalkes  
Unto the tubbes hangyng in the balkes,  
And hem vitailed, bothe trogh and tubbe,  
With breed, and chese, and good ale in a jubbe,  
Suffisyng right ynogh as for a day.  
3630 But er that he hadde maad al this array,  
He sente his knave, and eek his wenche also,  
Upon his nede to London for to go.  
And on the Monday, whan it drow to nyght,  
He shette his dore withoute candel-lyght,  
And dressed alle thyng as it sholde be.  
And shortly, up they clomben alle thre;  
They seten stille wel a furlong way.  
"Now, Pater-noster, clom!" seyde Nicholay,  
And "Clom!" quod John, and "Clom!" seyde Alisoun.  
3640 This carpenter seyde his devocioun,  
And stille he sit, and biddeth his preyere,  
Awaityng on the reyn, if he it heere.  
The dede sleep, for wery bisynesse,  
Fil on this carpenter right, as I gesse,  
Aboute corfew-tyme, or litel moore;  
For travaille of his goost he groneth soore,

And eft he routeth, for his heed myslay.  
Doun of the laddre stalketh Nicholay,  
And Alisoun ful softe adoun she spedde;  
3650 Withouten wordes mo they goon to bedde,  
Ther as the carpenter is wont to lye.  
Ther was the revel and the melodye;  
And thus lith Alison and Nicholas,  
In bisynesse of myrthe and of solas,  
Til that the belle of laudes gan to rynge,  
And freres in the chauncel gonne synge.  
This parissch clerk, this amorous Absolon,  
That is for love alwey so wo bigon,  
Upon the Monday was at Oseneye  
3660 With compaignye, hym to disporte and pleye,  
And axed upon cas a cloisterer  
Ful prively after John the carpenter;  
And he drough hym apart out of the chirche,  
And seyde, "I noot; I saugh hym heere nat wirche  
Syn Saterdag; I trowe that he be went  
For tymber, ther oure abbot hath hym sent;  
For he is wont for tymber for to go  
And dwellen at the grange a day or two;  
Or elles he is at his hous, certeyn.  
3670 Where that he be, I kan nat soothly seyn."  
This Absolon ful joly was and light,  
And thoghte, "Now is tyme to wake al nyght,  
For sikirly I saugh hym nat stiryng  
Aboute his dore, syn day bigan to spryng.  
"So moot I thryve, I shal, at cokkes crowe,  
Ful pryvely knokken at his wyndowe  
That stant ful lowe upon his boures wal.  
To Alison now wol I tellen al  
My love-longynge, for yet I shal nat mysse  
3680 That at the leeste wey I shal hire kisse.  
Som maner confort shal I have, parfay.  
My mouth hath icched al this longe day;  
That is a signe of kysyng atte leeste.  
Al nyght me mette eek I was at a feeste.  
Therefore I wol go slepe an houre or tweye,  
And al the nyght thanne wol I wake and pleye."  
Whan that the firste cok hath crowe, anon  
Up rist this joly love Absolon,

And hym arraieth gay, at poynt-devys.  
 3690 But first he cheweth greyn and lycorys,  
 To smellen sweete, er he hadde kembd his heer.  
 Under his tonge a trewe-love he beer,  
 For therby wende he to ben gracious.  
 He rometh to the carpenteres hous,  
 And stille he stant under the shot-wyndowe --  
 Unto his brest it raughte, it was so lowe --  
 And softe he cougheth with a semy soun:  
 "What do ye, hony-comb, sweete Alisoun,  
 My faire bryd, my sweete cynamome?  
 3700 Awaketh, lemman myn, and speketh to me!  
 Wel litel thynken ye upon my wo,  
 That for youre love I swete ther I go.  
 No wonder is thogh that I swelte and swete;  
 I moorne as dooth a lamb after the tete.  
 Ywis, lemman, I have swich love-longynge  
 That lik a turtel trewe is my moornynge.  
 I may nat ete na moore than a mayde."  
 "Go fro the wyndow, Jakke fool," she sayde;  
 "As help me God, it wol nat be `com pa me.'  
 3710 I love another -- and elles I were to blame --  
 Wel bet than thee, by Jhesu, Absolon.  
 Go forth thy wey, or I wol caste a ston,  
 And lat me slepe, a twenty devel wey!"  
 "Allas," quod Absolon, "and weylawey,  
 That trewe love was evere so yvel biset!  
 Thanne kysse me, syn it may be no bet,  
 For Jhesus love, and for the love of me."  
 "Wiltow thanne go thy wey therwith?" quod she.  
 "Ye, certes, lemman," quod this Absolon.  
 3720 "Thanne make thee redy," quod she, "I come anon."  
 And unto Nicholas she seyde stille,  
 "Now hust, and thou shalt laughen al thy fille."  
 This Absolon doun sette hym on his knees  
 And seyde, "I am a lord at alle degrees;  
 For after this I hope ther cometh moore.  
 Lemman, thy grace, and sweete bryd, thyn oore!"  
 The wyndow she undoth, and that in haste.  
 "Have do," quod she, "com of, and speed the faste,  
 Lest that oure neighebores thee espie."  
 3730 This Absolon gan wype his mouth ful drie.

Derk was the nyght as pich, or as the cole,  
 And at the wyndow out she putte hir hole,  
 And Absolon, hym fil no bet ne wers,  
 But with his mouth he kiste hir naked ers  
 Ful savourly, er he were war of this.  
 Abak he stirte, and thoughte it was amys,  
 For wel he wiste a womman hath no berd.  
 He felte a thyng al rough and long yherd,  
 And seyde, "Fy! allas! what have I do?"  
 3740 "Tehee!" quod she, and clapte the wyndow to,  
 And Absolon gooth forth a sory pas.  
 "A berd! A berd!" quod hende Nicholas,  
 "By Goddes corpus, this goth faire and weel."  
 This sely Absolon herde every deel,  
 And on his lippe he gan for anger byte,  
 And to hymself he seyde, "I shal thee quyte."  
 Who rubbeth now, who froteth now his lippes  
 With dust, with sond, with straw, with clooth, with chippes,  
 But Absolon, that seith ful ofte, "Allas!"  
 3750 "My soule bitake I unto Sathanas,  
 But me were levere than al this toun," quod he,  
 "Of this despit awroken for to be.  
 Allas," quod he, "allas, I ne hadde ybleynt!"  
 His hote love was coold and al yqueynt;  
 For fro that tyme that he hadde kist hir ers,  
 Of paramours he sette nat a kers,  
 For he was heeled of his maladie.  
 Ful ofte paramours he gan deffie,  
 And weep as dooth a child that is ybete.  
 3760 A softe paas he wente over the strete  
 Until a smyth men cleped daun Gerveys,  
 That in his forge smythed plough harneys;  
 He sharpeth shaar and kultour bisily.  
 This Absolon knokketh al esily,  
 And seyde, "Undo, Gerveys, and that anon."  
 "What, who artow?" "It am I, Absolon."  
 "What, Absolon! for Cristes sweete tree,  
 Why rise ye so rathe? Ey, benedicitee!  
 What eyleth yow? Som gay gerl, God it woot,  
 3770 Hath brought yow thus upon the viritoot.  
 By Seinte Note, ye woot wel what I mene."  
 This Absolon ne roghte nat a bene

Of al his pley; no word agayn he yaf;  
 He hadde moore tow on his distaf  
 Than Gerveys knew, and seyde, "Freend so deere,  
 That hote kultour in the chymenee heere,  
 As lene it me; I have therwith to doone,  
 And I wol brynge it thee agayn ful soone."  
 Gerveys answerde, "Certes, were it gold,  
 3780 Or in a poke nobles alle untold,  
 Thou sholdest have, as I am trewe smyth.  
 Ey, Cristes foo! What wol ye do therwith?"  
 "Therof," quod Absolon, "be as be may.  
 I shal wel telle it thee to-morwe day" --  
 And caughte the kultour by the colde stele.  
 Ful softe out at the dore he gan to stele,  
 And wente unto the carpenteris wal.  
 He cogheth first, and knokketh therwithal  
 Upon the wyndowe, right as he dide er.  
 3790 This Alison answerde, "Who is ther  
 That knokketh so? I warante it a theef."  
 "Why, nay," quod he, "God woot, my sweete leef,  
 I am thyn Absolon, my deerelyng.  
 Of gold," quod he, "I have thee broght a ryng.  
 My mooder yaf it me, so God me save;  
 Ful fyn it is, and therto wel ygrave.  
 This wol I yeve thee, if thou me kisse."  
 This Nicholas was risen for to pisse,  
 And thoughte he wolde amenden al the jape;  
 3800 He sholde kisse his ers er that he scape.  
 And up the wyndowe dide he hastily,  
 And out his ers he putteth pryvely  
 Over the buttoke, to the haunche-bon;  
 And therwith spak this clerk, this Absolon,  
 "Spek, sweete bryd, I noot nat where thou art."  
 This Nicholas anon leet fle a fart  
 As greet as it had been a thonder-dent,  
 That with the strook he was almoost yblent;  
 And he was redy with his iren hoot,  
 3810 And Nicholas amydd the ers he smoot.  
 Of gooth the skyn an hande-brede aboute,  
 The hote kultour brende so his toute,  
 And for the smert he wende for to dye.  
 As he were wood, for wo he gan to crye,



"Help! Water! Water! Help, for Goddes herte!"  
This carpenter out of his slomber sterte,  
And herde oon crien "water!" as he were wood,  
And thoughte, "Allas, now comth Nowelis flood!"  
He sit hym up withouten wordes mo,  
3820 And with his ax he smoot the corde atwo,  
And doun gooth al; he foond neither to selle,  
Ne breed ne ale, til he cam to the celle  
Upon the floor, and ther aswowne he lay.  
Up stirte hire Alison and Nicholay,  
And criden "Out" and "Harrow" in the strete.  
The neighebores, bothe smale and grete,  
In ronnen for to gauren on this man,  
That yet aswowne lay, bothe pale and wan,  
For with the fal he brosten hadde his arm.  
3830 But stonde he moste unto his owene harm;  
For whan he spak, he was anon bore doun  
With hende Nicholas and Alisoun.  
They tolden every man that he was wood;  
He was agast so of Nowelis flood  
Thurgh fantasie that of his vanytee  
He hadde ybought hym knedyng tubbes thre,  
And hadde hem hanged in the roof above;  
And that he preyed hem, for Goddes love,  
To sitten in the roof, par compaignye.  
3840 The folk gan laughen at his fantasye;  
Into the roof they kiken and they cape,  
And turned al his harm unto a jape.  
For what so that this carpenter answerde,  
It was for noght; no man his reson herde.  
With othes grete he was so sworn adoun  
That he was holde wood in al the toun;  
For every clerk anonright heeld with oother.  
They seyde, "The man is wood, my leeve brother";  
And every wight gan laughen at this stryf.  
3850 Thus swyved was this carpenteris wyf,  
For al his kepyng and his jalousye,  
And Absolon hath kist hir nether ye,  
And Nicholas is scalded in the towte.  
This tale is doon, and God save al the rowte!



## THE REEVE'S PROLOGUE

Whan folk hadde laughen at this nyce cas  
 Of Absolon and hende Nicholas,  
 Diverse folk diversely they seyde,  
 But for the moore part they loughe and pleyde.  
 Ne at this tale I saugh no man hym greve,  
 3860 But it were oonly Osewold the Reve.  
 By cause he was of carpenteris craft,  
 A litel ire is in his herte ylaft;  
 He gan to grucche, and blamed it a lite.  
 "So theek," quod he, "ful wel koude I thee quite  
 With bleryng of a proud milleres ye,  
 If that me liste speke of ribaudye.  
 But ik am oold; me list not pley for age;  
 Gras tyme is doon; my fodder is now forage;  
 This white top writeth myne olde yeris;  
 3870 Myn herte is also mowled as myne heris,  
 But if I fare as dooth an open-ers --  
 That ilke fruyt is ever lenger the wers,  
 Til it be roten in mullok or in stree.  
 We olde men, I drede, so fare we:  
 Til we be roten, kan we nat be rype;  
 We hoppen alwey whil that the world wol pype.  
 For in oure wyl ther stiketh evere a nayl,  
 To have an hoor heed and a grene tayl,  
 As hath a leek; for thogh oure myght be goon,  
 3880 Oure wyl desireth folie evere in oon.  
 For whan we may nat doon, than wol we speke;  
 Yet in oure asshen olde is fyr yreke.  
 "Foure gleedes han we, which I shal devyse --  
 Avauntyng, liyng, anger, coveitise;  
 Thise foure sparkles longen unto eelde.  
 Oure olde lemes mowe wel been unweelde,  
 But wyl ne shal nat faillen, that is sooth.  
 And yet ik have alwey a coltes tooth,  
 As many a yeer as it is passed henne  
 3890 Syn that my tappe of lif bigan to renne.  
 For sikerly, whan I was bore, anon  
 Deeth drough the tappe of lyf and leet it gon,  
 And ever sithe hath so the tappe yronne  
 Til that almoost al empty is the tonne.

The streem of lyf now droppeth on the chymbe.  
The sely tonge may wel rynge and chymbe  
Of wrecchednesse that passed is ful yoore;  
With olde folk, save dotage, is namoore!"  
Whan that oure Hoost hadde herd this sermonyng,  
3900 He gan to speke as lordly as a kyng.  
He seide, "What amounteth al this wit?  
What shul we speke alday of hooly writ?  
The devel made a reve for to preche,  
Or of a soutere a shipman or a leche.  
Sey forth thy tale, and tarie nat the tyme.  
Lo Depeford, and it is half-wey pryme!  
Lo Grenewych, ther many a shrewe is inne!  
It were al tyme thy tale to bigynne."  
"Now, sires," quod this Osewold the Reve,  
3910 "I pray yow alle that ye nat yow greve,  
Thogh I answeere, and somdeel sette his howve;  
For lefeful is with force force of-showve.  
"This dronke Millere hath ytoold us heer  
How that bigyled was a carpenteer,  
Peraventure in scorn, for I am oon.  
And, by youre leve, I shal hym quite anoon;  
Right in his cherles termes wol I speke.  
I pray to God his nekke mote to-breke;  
He kan wel in myn eye seen a stalke,  
3920 But in his owene he kan nat seen a balke."



## THE REEVE'S TALE

At Trumpyngtoun, nat fer fro Cantebrigge,  
 Ther gooth a brook, and over that a brigge,  
 Upon the whiche brook ther stant a melle;  
 And this is verray sooth that I yow telle:  
 A millere was ther dwellynge many a day.  
 As any pecok he was proud and gay.  
 Pipen he koude and fisshe, and nettes beete,  
 And turne coppes, and wel wrastle and sheete;  
 Ay by his belt he baar a long panade,  
 3930 And of a swerd ful trenchant was the blade.  
 A joly poppere baar he in his pouche;  
 Ther was no man, for peril, dorste hym touche.  
 A Sheffield thwitel baar he in his hose.  
 Round was his face, and camus was his nose;  
 As piled as an ape was his skulle.  
 He was a market-betere atte fulle.  
 Ther dorste no wight hand upon hym legge,  
 That he ne swoor he sholde anon abegge.  
 A theef he was for sothe of corn and mele,  
 3940 And that a sly, and usaunt for to stele.  
 His name was hoote deynous Symkyn.  
 A wyf he hadde, ycomen of noble kyn;  
 The person of the toun hir fader was.  
 With hire he yaf ful many a panne of bras,  
 For that Symkyn sholde in his blood allye.  
 She was yfostred in a nonnerye;  
 For Symkyn wolde no wyf, as he sayde,  
 But she were wel ynorissed and a mayde,  
 To saven his estaat of yomanrye.  
 3950 And she was proud, and peert as is a pye.  
 A ful fair sighte was it upon hem two;  
 On halydayes biforn hire wolde he go  
 With his typet wounde aboute his heed,  
 And she cam after in a gyte of reed;  
 And Symkyn hadde hosen of the same.  
 Ther dorste no wight clepen hire but "dame";  
 Was noon so hardy that wente by the weye  
 That with hire dorste rage or ones pleye,  
 But if he wolde be slayn of Symkyn  
 3960 With panade, or with knyf, or boidekyn.

For jalous folk ben perilous everemo --  
Algate they wolde hire wyves wenden so.  
And eek, for she was somdel smoterlich,  
She was as digne as water in a dich,  
And ful of hoker and of bisemare.  
Hir thoughte that a lady sholde hire spare,  
What for hire kynrede and hir nortelrie  
That she hadde lerned in the nonnerie.  
A doghter hadde they bitwixe hem two  
3970 Of twenty yeer, withouten any mo,  
Savyng a child that was of half yeer age;  
In cradel it lay and was a propre page.  
This wenche thikke and wel ygrowen was,  
With kamus nose and eyen greye as glas,  
With buttokes brode and brestes rounde and hye.  
But right fair was hire heer; I wol nat lye.  
This person of the toun, for she was feir,  
In purpos was to maken hire his heir,  
Bothe of his catel and his mesuage,  
3980 And straunge he made it of hir mariage.  
His purpos was for to bistowe hire hye  
Into som worthy blood of auncetrye;  
For hooly chirches good moot been despended  
On hooly chirches blood, that is descended.  
Therefore he wolde his hooly blood honoure,  
Though that he hooly chirche sholde devoure.  
Greet sokene hath this millere, out of doute,  
With whete and malt of al the land aboute;  
And nameliche ther was a greet collegge  
3990 Men clepen the Soler Halle at Cantebregge;  
Ther was hir whete and eek hir malt ygrounde.  
And on a day it happed, in a stounde,  
Sik lay the maunciple on a maladye;  
Men wenden wisly that he sholde dye.  
For which this millere stal bothe mele and corn  
An hundred tyme moore than biforn;  
For therbiforn he stal but curteisly,  
But now he was a theef outrageously,  
For which the wardeyn chidde and made fare.  
4000 But therof sette the millere nat a tare;  
He craketh boost, and swoor it was nat so.  
Thanne were ther yonge povre scolers two,

That dwelten in this halle, of which I seye.  
 Testif they were, and lusty for to pleye,  
 And, oonly for hire myrthe and revelrye,  
 Upon the wardeyn bisily they crye  
 To yeve hem leve, but a litel stounde,  
 To goon to mille and seen hir corn ygrounde;  
 And hardily they dorste leye hir nekke  
 4010 The millere sholde not stele hem half a pekke  
 Of corn by sleighte, ne by force hem reve;  
 And at the laste the wardeyn yaf hem leve.  
 John highte that oon, and Aleyn highte that oother;  
 Of o toun were they born, that highte Strother,  
 Fer in the north; I kan nat telle where.  
 This Aleyn maketh redy al his gere,  
 And on an hors the sak he caste anon.  
 Forth goth Aleyn the clerk, and also John,  
 With good swerd and with bokeler by hir syde.  
 4020 John knew the wey -- hem nedede no gyde --  
 And at the mille the sak adoun he layth.  
 Aleyn spak first: "Al hayl, Symond, y-fayth!  
 Hou fares thy faire doghter and thy wyf?"  
 "Aleyn, welcome," quod Symkyn, "by my lyf!  
 And John also, how now, what do ye heer?"  
 "Symond," quod John, "by God, nede has na peer.  
 Hym boes serve hymself that has na swayn,  
 Or elles he is a fool, as clerkes sayn.  
 Oure manciple, I hope he wil be deed,  
 4030 Swa werkes ay the wanges in his heed;  
 And forthy is I come, and eek Alayn,  
 To grynde oure corn and carie it ham agayn;  
 I pray yow spede us heythen that ye may."  
 "It shal be doon," quod Symkyn, "by my fay!  
 What wol ye doon whil that it is in hande?"  
 "By God, right by the hopur wil I stande,"  
 Quod John, "and se howgates the corn gas in.  
 Yet saugh I nevere, by my fader kyn,  
 How that the hopur wagges til and fra."  
 4040 Aleyn answerde, "John, and wiltow swa?  
 Thanne wil I be bynethe, by my croun,  
 And se how that the mele falles down  
 Into the trough; that sal be my disport.  
 For John, y-faith, I may been of youre sort;

I is as ille a millere as ar ye."  
 This millere smyled of hir nycetee,  
 And thoghte, "Al this nys doon but for a wyle.  
 They wene that no man may hem bigyle,  
 But by my thrift, yet shal I blere hir ye,  
 4050 For al the sleighte in hir philosophye.  
 The moore queynte crekes that they make,  
 The moore wol I stele whan I take.  
 In stide of flour yet wol I yeve hem bren.  
 'The gretteste clerkes been noght wisest men,'  
 As whilom to the wolf thus spak the mare.  
 Of al hir art counte I noght a tare."  
 Out at the dore he gooth ful pryvely,  
 Whan that he saugh his tyme, softly.  
 He looketh up and doun til he hath founde  
 4060 The clerkes hors, ther as it stood ybounde  
 Bihynde the mille, under a levesel;  
 And to the hors he goth hym faire and wel;  
 He strepeth of the brydel right anon.  
 And whan the hors was laus, he gynneth gon  
 Toward the fen, ther wilde mares renne,  
 And forth with "wehee," thurgh thikke and thurgh thenne.  
 This millere gooth agayn, no word he seyde,  
 But dooth his note, and with the clerkes pleyde  
 Til that hir corn was faire and weel ygrounde.  
 4070 And whan the mele is sakked and ybounde,  
 This John goth out and fynt his hors away,  
 And gan to crie "Harrow!" and "Weylaway!  
 Oure hors is lorn, Alayn, for Goddes banes,  
 Step on thy feet! Com of, man, al atanes!  
 Allas, our wardeyn has his palfrey lorn."  
 This Aleyn al forgat, bothe mele and corn;  
 Al was out of his mynde his housbondrie.  
 "What, whilk way is he geen?" he gan to crie.  
 The wyf cam lepynge inward with a ren.  
 4080 She seyde, "Allas! youre hors goth to the fen  
 With wilde mares, as faste as he may go.  
 Unthank come on his hand that boond hym so,  
 And he that bettre sholde han knyght the reyne!"  
 "Allas," quod John, "Aleyn, for Cristes peyne  
 Lay doun thy swerd, and I wil myn alswa.  
 I is ful wight, God waat, as is a raa;



By Goddes herte, he sal nat scape us bathe!  
Why ne had thou pit the capul in the lathe?  
Ilhayl! By God, Alayn, thou is a fonne!"

4090 Thise sely clerkes han ful faste yronne  
Toward the fen, bothe Aleyn and eek John.  
And whan the millere saugh that they were gon,  
He half a busshel of hir flour hath take,  
And bad his wyf go knede it in a cake.  
He seyde, "I trowe the clerkes were aferd.  
Yet kan a millere make a clerkes berd,  
For al his art; now lat hem goon hir weye!  
Lo, wher he gooth! Ye, lat the children pleye.  
They gete hym nat so lightly, by my croun."

4100 Thise sely clerkes rennen up and doun  
With "Keep! Keep! Stand! Stand! Jossa, warderere,  
Ga whistle thou, and I shal kepe hym heere!"  
But shortly, til that it was verray nyght,  
They koude nat, though they dide al hir myght,  
Hir capul cacche, he ran alwey so faste,  
Til in a dych they caughte hym atte laste.  
Wery and weet, as beest is in the reyn,  
Comth sely John, and with him comth Aleyn.  
"Allas," quod John, "the day that I was born!

4110 Now are we dryve til hethyng and til scorn.  
Oure corn is stoln; men wil us fooles calle,  
Bathe the wardeyn and oure felawes alle,  
And namely the millere, weylaway!"  
Thus pleyneth John as he gooth by the way  
Toward the mille, and Bayard in his hond.  
The millere sittynge by the fyr he fond,  
For it was nyght, and forther myghte they noght;  
But for the love of God they hym bisoght  
Of herberwe and of ese, as for hir peny.

4120 The millere seyde agayn, "If ther be eny,  
Swich as it is, yet shal ye have youre part.  
Myn hous is streit, but ye han lerned art;  
Ye konne by argumentes make a place  
A myle brood of twenty foot of space.  
Lat se now if this place may suffise,  
Or make it rowm with speche, as is youre gise."  
"Now, Symond," seyde John, "by Seint Cutberd,  
Ay is thou myrie, and this is faire answerd.

I have herd seyde, 'Man sal taa of twa thynges:  
4130 Slyk as he fyndes, or taa slyk as he brynges.'  
But specially I pray thee, hooste deere,  
Get us som mete and drynke, and make us cheere,  
And we wil payen trewely atte fulle.  
With empty hand men may na haukes tulle;  
Loo, heere oure silver, redy for to spende."  
This millere into toun his doghter sende  
For ale and breed, and rosted hem a goos,  
And boond hire hors, it sholde namoore go loos,  
And in his owene chambre hem made a bed,  
4140 With sheetes and with chalons faire yspred  
Noght from his owene bed ten foot or twelve.  
His doghter hadde a bed, al by hirselve,  
Right in the same chambre by and by.  
It myghte be no bet, and cause why?  
Ther was no roumer herberwe in the place.  
They soupen and they speke, hem to solace,  
And drynken evere strong ale atte beste.  
Aboute mydnyght wente they to reste.  
Wel hath this millere vernysshed his heed;  
4150 Ful pale he was for dronken, and nat reed.  
He yexeth, and he speketh thurgh the nose  
As he were on the quakke, or on the pose.  
To bedde he goth, and with hym goth his wyf.  
As any jay she light was and jolyf,  
So was hir joly whistle wel ywet.  
The cradel at hir beddes feet is set,  
To rokken, and to yeve the child to sowke.  
And whan that dronken al was in the crowke,  
To bedde wente the doghter right anon;  
4160 To bedde goth Aleyn and also John;  
Ther nas na moore -- hem nedede no dwale.  
This millere hath so wisely bibbed ale  
That as an hors he fnorteth in his sleep,  
Ne of his tayl bihynde he took no keep.  
His wyf bar hym a burdon, a ful strong;  
Men myghte hir rowtyng heere two furlong;  
The wenche rowteth eek, par compaignye.  
Aleyn the clerk, that herde this melodye,  
He poked John, and seyde, "Slepestow?  
4170 Herdestow evere slyk a sang er now?

Lo, swilk a complyn is ymel hem alle;  
 A wilde fyr upon thair bodyes falle!  
 Wha herkned evere slyk a ferly thyng?  
 Ye, they sal have the flour of il endyng.  
 This lange nyght ther tydes me na reste;  
 But yet, na fors, al sal be for the beste.  
 For, John," seyde he, "als evere moot I thryve,  
 If that I may, yon wenche wil I swyve.  
 Som esement has lawe yshapen us,  
 4180 For, John, ther is a lawe that says thus:  
 That gif a man in a point be agreved,  
 That in another he sal be releved.  
 Oure corn is stoln, sothly, it is na nay,  
 And we han had an il fit al this day;  
 And syn I sal have neen amendement  
 Agayn my los, I will have esement.  
 By Goddes sale, it sal neen other bee!"  
 This John answerde, "Alayn, avyse thee!  
 The millere is a perilous man," he seyde,  
 4190 "And gif that he out of his sleep abreyde,  
 He myghte doon us bathe a vileynye."  
 Aleyn answerde, "I counte hym nat a flye."  
 And up he rist, and by the wenche he crepte.  
 This wenche lay uprighte and faste slepte,  
 Til he so ny was, er she myghte espie,  
 That it had been to late for to crie,  
 And shortly for to seyn, they were aton.  
 Now pley, Aleyn, for I wol speke of John.  
 This John lith stille a furlong wey or two,  
 4200 And to hymself he maketh routhe and wo.  
 "Allas!" quod he, "this is a wikked jape;  
 Now may I seyn that I is but an ape.  
 Yet has my felawe somewhat for his harm;  
 He has the milleris doghter in his arm.  
 He auntred hym, and has his nedes sped,  
 And I lye as a draf-sak in my bed;  
 And when this jape is tald another day,  
 I sal been halde a daf, a cokenay!  
 I wil arise and auntre it, by my fayth!  
 4210 'Unhardy is unseely,' thus men sayth."  
 And up he roos, and softely he wente  
 Unto the cradel, and in his hand it hente,

And baar it softe unto his beddes feet.  
 Soone after this the wyf hir rowtyng leet,  
 And gan awake, and wente hire out to pisse,  
 And cam agayn, and gan hir cradel mysse,  
 And groped heer and ther, but she foond noon.  
 "Allas!" quod she, "I hadde almoost mysgoon;  
 I hadde almoost goon to the clerkes bed.  
 4220 Ey, benedicite! Thanne hadde I foule ysped!"  
 And forth she gooth til she the cradel fond.  
 She gropeth alwey forther with hir hond,  
 And foond the bed, and thoghte noght but good,  
 By cause that the cradel by it stood,  
 And nyste wher she was, for it was derk;  
 But faire and wel she creep in to the clerk,  
 And lith ful stille, and wolde han caught a sleep.  
 Withinne a while this John the clerk up leep,  
 And on this goode wyf he leith on soore.  
 4230 So myrie a fit ne hadde she nat ful yore;  
 He priketh harde and depe as he were mad.  
 This joly lyf han thise two clerkes lad  
 Til that the thridde cok bigan to synge.  
 Aleyn wax wery in the dawenyng,  
 For he had swonken al the longe nyght,  
 And seyde, "Fare weel, Malyne, sweete wight!  
 The day is come; I may no lenger byde;  
 But everemo, wher so I go or ryde,  
 I is thyn awen clerk, swa have I seel!"  
 4240 "Now, deere lemman," quod she, "go, far weel!  
 But er thou go, o thyng I wol thee telle:  
 Whan that thou wendest homward by the melle,  
 Right at the entree of the dore bihynde  
 Thou shalt a cake of half a busshel fynde  
 That was ymaked of thyn owene mele,  
 Which that I heelp my sire for to stele.  
 And, goode lemman, God thee save and kepe!"  
 And with that word almoost she gan to wepe.  
 Aleyn up rist, and thoughte, "Er that it dawe,  
 4250 I wol go crepen in by my felawe,"  
 And fond the cradel with his hand anon.  
 "By God," thoughte he, "al wrang I have mysgon.  
 Myn heed is toty of my swynk to-nyght,  
 That makes me that I ga nat aright.

I woot wel by the cradel I have mys-go;  
Heere lith the millere and his wyf also."  
And forth he goth, a twenty devel way,  
Unto the bed ther as the millere lay.  
He wende have copen by his felawe John,  
4260 And by the millere in he creep anon,  
And caughte hym by the nekke, and softe he spak.  
He seyde, "Thou John, thou swynes-heed, awak,  
For Cristes saule, and heer a noble game.  
For by that lord that called is Seint Jame,  
As I have thries in this shorte nyght  
Swyved the milleres doghter bolt upright,  
Whil thow hast, as a coward, been agast."  
"Ye, false harlot," quod the millere, "hast?  
A, false traitour! False clerk!" quod he,  
4270 "Thow shalt be deed, by Goddes dignitee!  
Who dorste be so boold to disparage  
My doghter, that is come of swich lynage?"  
And by the throte-bolle he caughte Alayn,  
And he hente hym despitously agayn,  
And on the nose he smoot hym with his fest.  
Doun ran the bloody streem upon his brest;  
And in the floor, with nose and mouth tobroke,  
They walwe as doon two pigges in a poke;  
And up they goon, and doun agayn anon,  
4280 Til that the millere sporned at a stoon,  
And doun he fil bakward upon his wyf,  
That wiste no thyng of this nyce stryf;  
For she was falle aslepe a lite wight  
With John the clerk, that waked hadde al nyght,  
And with the fal out of hir sleep she breyde.  
"Help! hooly croys of Bromeholm," she seyde,  
"In manus tuas! Lord, to thee I calle!  
Awak, Symond! The feend is on me falle.  
Myn herte is broken; help! I nam but deed!  
4290 Ther lyth oon upon my wombe and on myn heed.  
Help, Symkyn, for the false clerkes fighte!"  
This John stirte up as faste as ever he myghte,  
And graspeth by the walles to and fro,  
To fynde a staf; and she stirte up also,  
And knew the estres bet than dide this John,  
And by the wal a staf she foond anon,

And saugh a litel shymeryng of a light,  
For at an hole in shoon the moone bright,  
And by that light she saugh hem bothe two,  
4300 But sikerly she nyste who was who,  
But as she saugh a whit thyng in hir ye.  
And whan she gan this white thyng espye,  
She wende the clerk hadde wered a volupeer,  
And with the staf she drow ay neer and neer,  
And wende han hit this Aleyn at the fulle,  
And smoot the millere on the pyled skulle,  
That doun he gooth, and cride, "Harrow! I dye!"  
Thise clerkes beete hym weel and lete hym lye,  
And greythen hem, and tooke hir hors anon,  
4310 And eek hire mele, and on hir wey they gon.  
And at the mille yet they tooke hir cake  
Of half a busshel flour, ful wel ybake.  
Thus is the proude millere wel ybete,  
And hath ylost the gryndynge of the whete,  
And payed for the soper everideel  
Of Aleyn and of John, that bette hym weel.  
His wyf is swyved, and his doghter als.  
Lo, swich it is a millere to be fals!  
And therefore this proverbe is seyde ful sooth,  
4320 "Hym thar nat wene wel that yvele dooth."  
A gylour shal hymself bigyled be.  
And God, that sitteth heighe in magestee,  
Save al this compaignye, grete and smale!  
Thus have I quyt the Millere in my tale.



## THE COOK'S PROLOGUE

The Cook of Londoun, whil the Reve spak,  
 For joye him thoughte he clawed him on the bak.  
 "Ha! ha!" quod he, "For Cristes passion,  
 This millere hadde a sharp conclusion  
 Upon his argument of herbergage!  
 4330 Wel seyde Salomon in his langage,  
 'Ne bryng nat every man into thyn hous,'  
 For herberwyng by nyghte is perilous.  
 Wel oghte a man avysed for to be  
 Whom that he broghte into his pryvetee.  
 I pray to God, so yeve me sorwe and care  
 If evere, sitthe I highte Hogge of Ware,  
 Herde I a millere bettre yset a-werk.  
 He hadde a jape of malice in the derk.  
 But God forbede that we stynte heere;  
 4340 And therfore, if ye vouche-sauf to heere  
 A tale of me, that am a povre man,  
 I wol yow telle, as wel as evere I kan,  
 A litel jape that fil in oure citee."  
 Oure Hoost answerde and seide, "I graunte it thee.  
 Now telle on, Roger; looke that it be good,  
 For many a pastee hastow laten blood,  
 And many a Jakke of Dovere hastow soold  
 That hath been twies hoot and twies coold.  
 Of many a pilgrym hastow Cristes curs,  
 4350 For of thy percely yet they fare the wors,  
 That they han eten with thy stubbel goos,  
 For in thy shoppe is many a flye loos.  
 Now telle on, gentil Roger by thy name.  
 But yet I pray thee, be nat wroth for game;  
 A man may seye ful sooth in game and pley."  
 "Thou seist ful sooth," quod Roger, "by my fey!  
 But 'sooth pley, quaad pley,' as the Flemyng seith.  
 And therfore, Herry Bailly, by thy feith,  
 Be thou nat wrooth, er we departen heer,  
 4360 Though that my tale be of an hostileer.  
 But nathelees I wol nat telle it yit;  
 But er we parte, ywis, thou shalt be quit."  
 And therwithal he lough and made cheere,  
 And seyde his tale, as ye shul after heere.





## THE COOK'S TALE

A prentys whilom dwelled in oure citee,  
And of a craft of vitailliers was hee.  
Gaillard he was as goldfynch in the shawe,  
Broun as a berye, a propre short felawe,  
With lokkes blake, ykembd ful fetisly.  
4370 Dauncen he koude so wel and jolily  
That he was cleped Perkyn Revelour.  
He was as ful of love and paramour  
As is the hyve ful of hony sweete;  
Wel was the wenche with hym myghte meete.  
At every bridale wolde he synge and hoppe;  
He loved bet the taverne than the shoppe.  
For whan ther any ridyng was in Chepe,  
Out of the shoppe thider wolde he lepe --  
Til that he hadde al the sighte yseyn,  
4380 And daunced wel, he wolde nat come ayeyn --  
And gadered hym a meynee of his sort  
To hoppe and synge and maken swich disport;  
And ther they setten stevene for to meete,  
To playen at the dys in swich a streete.  
For in the toune nas ther no prentys  
That fairer koude caste a paire of dys  
Than Perkyn koude, and therto he was free  
Of his dispense, in place of pryvetee.  
That fond his maister wel in his chaffare,  
4390 For often tyme he foond his box ful bare.  
For sikerly a prentys revelour  
That haunteth dys, riot, or paramour,  
His maister shal it in his shoppe abyen,  
Al have he no part of the mynstralcyen.  
For thefte and riot, they been convertible,  
Al konne he pleye on gyterne or ribible.  
Revel and trouthe, as in a lowe degree,  
They been ful wrothe al day, as men may see.  
This joly prentys with his maister bood,  
4400 Til he were ny out of his prentishood,  
Al were he snybbed bothe erly and late,  
And somtyme lad with revel to Newegate.  
But atte laste his maister hym bithoghte,  
Upon a day, whan he his papir soghte,

Of a proverbe that seith this same word:  
"Wel bet is roten appul out of hoord  
Than that it rotie al the remenaunt."  
So fareth it by a riotous servaunt;  
It is ful lasse harm to lete hym pace,  
4410 Than he shende alle the servantz in the place.  
Therefore his maister yaf hym acquitance,  
And bad hym go, with sorwe and with meschance!  
And thus this joly prentys hadde his leve.  
Now lat hym riote al the nyght or leve.  
And for ther is no theef withoute a lowke,  
That helpeth hym to wasten and to sowke  
Of that he brybe kan or borwe may,  
Anon he sente his bed and his array  
Unto a compeer of his owene sort,  
4420 That lovede dys, and revel, and disport,  
And hadde a wyf that heeld for contenance  
A shoppe, and swyved for hir sustenance.



## THE MAN OF LAW'S INTRODUCTION AND PROLOGUE

Oure Hooste saugh wel that the brighte sonne  
 The ark of his artificial day hath ronne  
 The ferthe part, and half an houre and moore,  
 And though he were not depe ystert in loore,  
 He wiste it was the eightetethe day  
 Of Aprill, that is messenger to May;  
 And saugh wel that the shadwe of every tree  
 Was in lengthe the same quantitee  
 That was the body erect that caused it.  
 10 And therefore by the shadwe he took his wit  
 That Phebus, which that shoon so clere and brighte,  
 Degrees was fyve and fourty clombe on highte,  
 And for that day, as in that latitude,  
 It was ten of the klokke, he gan conclude,  
 And sodeynly he plighte his horse aboute.  
 "Lordynges," quod he, "I warne yow, al this route,  
 The fourthe party of this day is gon.  
 Now for the love of God and of Seint John,  
 Leseth no tyme, as ferforth as ye may.  
 20 Lordynges, the tyme wasteth nyght and day,  
 And steleth from us, what pryvely slepynge,  
 And what thurgh negligence in oure wakyng,  
 As dooth the streem that turneth nevere agayn,  
 Descendynge from the mountaigne into playn.  
 Wel kan Senec and many a philosopre  
 Biwailen tyme moore than gold in cofre;  
 For `Los of catel may recovered be,  
 But los of tyme shendeth us,' quod he.  
 It wol nat come agayn, withouten drede,  
 30 Nomoore than wole Malkynes maydenhede,  
 Whan she hath lost it in hir wantownesse.  
 Lat us nat mowlen thus in ydelnesse.  
 "Sire Man of Lawe," quod he, "so have ye blis,  
 Telle us a tale anon, as forward is.  
 Ye been submytted, thurgh youre free assent,  
 To stonden in this cas at my juggement.  
 Acquiteth yow now of youre biheeste;  
 Thanne have ye do youre devoir atte leeste."

"Hooste," quod he, "depardieux, ich assente;  
40 To breke forward is nat myn entente.  
Biheste is dette, and I wole holde fayn  
Al my biheste, I kan no bettre sayn.  
For swich lawe as a man yeveth another wight,  
He sholde hymselfen usen it, by right;  
Thus wole oure text. But nathelees, certeyn,  
I kan right now no thrifty tale seyn  
That Chaucer, thogh he kan but lewedly  
On metres and on rymyng craftily,  
Hath seyde hem in swich Englissh as he kan  
50 Of olde tyme, as knoweth many a man;  
And if he have noght seyde hem, leve brother,  
In o book, he hath seyde hem in another.  
For he hath toold of loveris up and down  
Mo than Ovide made of mencion  
In his Epistoles, that been ful olde.  
What sholde I tellen hem, syn they been tolde?  
"In youthe he made of Ceys and Alcione,  
And sitthen hath he spoken of everichone,  
Thise noble wyves and thise loveris eke.  
60 Whoso that wole his large volume seke,  
Clepeth the Seintes Legende of Cupide,  
Ther may he seen the large woundes wyde  
Of Lucesse, and of Babilan Tesbee;  
The swerd of Dido for the false Enee;  
The tree of Phillis for hire Demophon;  
The pleinte of Dianire and of Hermyon,  
Of Adriane, and of Isiphilee --  
The bareyne yle stondyng in the see --  
The dreynte Leandre for his Erro;  
70 The teeris of Eleyne, and eek the wo  
Of Brixseyde, and of the, Ladomya;  
The crueltee of the, queene Medea,  
Thy litel children hangyng by the hals,  
For thy Jason, that was of love so fals!  
O Ypermestra, Penelopee, Alceste,  
Youre wifhod he comendeth with the beste!  
"But certainly no word ne writeth he  
Of thilke wikke ensample of Canacee,  
That loved hir owene brother synfully --  
80 Of swiche cursed stories I sey fy! --

Or ellis of Tyro Appollonius,  
How that the cursed kyng Antiochus  
Birafted his doghter of hir maydenhede,  
That is so horrible a tale for to rede,  
Whan he hir threw upon the pavement.  
And therefore he, of ful avysement,  
Nolde nevere write in none of his sermons  
Of swiche unkynde abhomynacions,  
Ne I wol noon reherce, if that I may.  
90 "But of my tale how shal I doon this day?  
Me were looth be likned, doutelees,  
To Muses that men clepe Pierides --  
Methamorphosios woot what I mene;  
But nathelees, I recche noght a bene  
Though I come after hym with hawebake.  
I speke in prose, and lat him rymes make."  
And with that word he, with a sobre cheere,  
Bigan his tale, as ye shal after heere.  
O hateful harm, condicion of poverté!  
100 With thurst, with coold, with hunger so confoundid!  
To asken help thee shameth in thyn herte;  
If thou noon aske, with nede artow so woundid  
That verray nede unwrappeth al thy wounde hid!  
Maugree thyn heed, thou most for indigence  
Or stele, or begge, or borwe thy despence!  
Thow blamest Crist and seist ful bitterly  
He mysdeparteth richesse temporal;  
Thy neighebor thou wytest synfully,  
And seist thou hast to lite and he hath al.  
110 "Parfay," seistow, "somtye he rekene shal,  
Whan that his tayl shal brennen in the gleede,  
For he noght helpeth needfulle in hir neede."  
Herkne what is the sentence of the wise:  
"Bet is to dyen than have indigence";  
"Thy selve neighebor wol thee despise."  
If thou be povre, farwel thy reverence!  
Yet of the wise man take this sentence:  
"Alle the dayes of povre men been wikke."  
Be war, therefore, er thou come to that prikke!  
120 If thou be povre, thy brother hateth thee,  
And alle thy freendes fleen from thee, alas!  
O riche marchauntz, ful of wele been yee,

O noble, o prudent folk, as in this cas!  
Youre bagges been nat fild with ambes as,  
But with sys cynk, that renneth for youre chaunce;  
At Cristemasse myrie may ye daunce!  
Ye seken lond and see for yowre wynnynge;  
As wise folk ye knowen al th' estaat  
Of regnes; ye been fadres of tidynges  
130 And tales, bothe of pees and of debaat.  
I were right now of tales desolaat,  
Nere that a marchant, goon is many a yeere,  
Me taughte a tale, which that ye shal heere.



## THE MAN OF LAW'S TALE

In Surrye whilom dwelte a compaignye  
Of chapmen riche, and therto sadde and trewe,  
That wyde-where senten hir spicerye,  
Clothes of gold, and satyns riche of hewe.  
Hir chaffare was so thrifty and so newe  
That every wight hath deyntee to chaffare  
140 With hem, and eek to sellen hem hire ware.  
Now fil it that the maistres of that sort  
Han shapen hem to Rome for to wende;  
Were it for chapmanhod or for disport,  
Noon oother message wolde they thider sende,  
But comen hemself to Rome; this is the ende.  
And in swich place as thoughte hem advantage  
For hire entente, they take hir herbergage.  
Sojourned han thise merchantz in that toun  
A certain tyme, as fil to hire plesance.  
150 And so bifel that th' excellent renoun  
Of the Emperoures doghter, dame Custance,  
Reported was, with every circumstance,  
Unto thise Surryen marchantz in swich wyse,  
Fro day to day, as I shal yow devyse.  
This was the commune voys of every man:  
"Oure Emperour of Rome -- God hym see! --  
A doghter hath that, syn the world bigan,  
To rekene as wel hir goodnesse as beautee,  
Nas nevere swich another as is shee.  
160 I prey to God in honour hire susteene,  
And wolde she were of al Europe the queene.  
"In hire is heigh beautee, withoute pride,  
Yowthe, withoute grenehede or folye;  
To alle hire werkes vertu is hir gyde;  
Humblesse hath slayn in hire al tirannye.  
She is mirour of alle curteisye;  
Hir herte is verray chambre of hoolynesse,  
Hir hand, ministre of fredam for almesse."  
And al this voys was sooth, as God is trewe.  
170 But now to purpos lat us turne agayn.  
Thise marchantz han doon fraught hir shippes newe,  
And whan they han this blisful mayden sayn,  
Hoom to Surrye been they went ful fayn,

And doon hir nedes as they han doon yoore,  
And lyven in wele; I kan sey yow namoore.  
Now fil it that thise marchantz stode in grace  
Of hym that was the Sowdan of Surrye;  
For whan they cam from any strange place,  
He wolde, of his benigne curteisye,  
180 Make hem good chiere, and bisily espie  
Tidynges of sondry regnes, for to leere  
The wondres that they myghte seen or heere.  
Amonges othere thynges, specially,  
Thise marchantz han hym toold of dame Custance  
So greet noblesse in earnest, ceriously,  
That this Sowdan hath caught so greet plesance  
To han hir figure in his remembrance,  
That al his lust and al his bisy cure  
Was for to love hire while his lyf may dure.  
190 Paraventure in thilke large book  
Which that men clepe the hevene ywriten was  
With sterres, whan that he his birthe took,  
That he for love sholde han his deeth, alas!  
For in the sterres, clerer than is glas,  
Is writen, God woot, whoso koude it rede,  
The deeth of every man, withouten drede.  
In sterres, many a wynter therbiforn,  
Was writen the deeth of Ector, Achilles,  
Of Pompei, Julius, er they were born;  
200 The strif of Thebes; and of Ercules,  
Of Sampson, Turnus, and of Socrates  
The deeth; but mennes wittes ben so dulle  
That no wight kan wel rede it atte fulle.  
This Sowdan for his privee conseil sente,  
And, shortly of this matiere for to pace,  
He hath to hem declared his entente,  
And seyde hem, certein, but he myghte have grace  
To han Custance withinne a litel space,  
He nas but deed; and charged hem in hye  
210 To shapen for his lyf som remedye.  
Diverse men diverse thynges seyden;  
They argumenten, casten up and doun;  
Many a subtil resoun forth they leyden;  
They speken of magyk and abusioun.  
But finally, as in conclusioun,



They kan nat seen in that noon advantage,  
Ne in noon oother wey, save mariage.  
Thanne sawe they therinne swich difficultee  
By wey of reson, for to speke al playn,  
220 By cause that ther was swich diversitee  
Bitwene hir bothe lawes, that they sayn  
They trowe that no "Cristen prince wolde fayn  
Wedden his child under oure lawe sweete  
That us was taught by Mahoun, oure prophete."  
And he answerde, "Rather than I lese  
Custance, I wol be cristned, doutelees.  
I moot been hires; I may noon oother chese.  
I prey yow hoold youre argumentz in pees;  
Saveth my lyf, and beth noght recchelees  
230 To geten hire that hath my lyf in cure,  
For in this wo I may nat longe endure."  
What nedeth gretter dilatacioun?  
I seye, by tretys and embassadrie,  
And by the popes mediacioun,  
And al the chirche, and al the chivalrie,  
That in destruccioun of mawmettrie,  
And in encrees of Cristes lawe deere,  
They been acorded, so as ye shal heere:  
How that the Sowdan and his baronage  
240 And alle his liges sholde ycristned be,  
And he shal han Custance in mariage,  
And certein gold, I noot what quantitee;  
And heer-to founden sufficient suretee.  
This same accord was sworn on eyther syde;  
Now, faire Custance, almyghty God thee gyde!  
Now wolde som men waiten, as I gesse,  
That I sholde tellen al the purveiance  
That th' Emperour, of his grete noblesse,  
Hath shapen for his doghter, dame Custance.  
250 Wel may men knowen that so greet ordinance  
May no man tellen in a litel clause  
As was arrayed for so heigh a cause.  
Bisshopes been shapen with hire for to wende,  
Lordes, ladies, knyghtes of renoun,  
And oother folk ynowe; this is th' ende;  
And notified is thurghout the toun  
That every wight, with greet devocioun,

Sholde preyen Crist that he this mariage  
Receyve in gree and spede this viage.  
260 The day is comen of hir departynge;  
I seye, the woful day fatal is come,  
That ther may be no lenger tarynge,  
But forthward they hem dressen, alle and some.  
Custance, that was with sorwe al overcome,  
Ful pale arist, and dresseth hire to wende;  
For wel she seeth ther is noon oother ende.  
Allas, what wonder is it thogh she wepte,  
That shal be sent to strange nacioun  
Fro freendes that so tendrely hire kepte,  
270 And to be bounden under subjeccioun  
Of oon, she knoweth nat his condicioun?  
Housbondes been alle goode, and han ben yoore;  
That knowen wyves; I dar sey yow na moore.  
"Fader," she seyde, "thy wrecched child Custance,  
Thy yonge doghter fostred up so softe,  
And ye, my mooder, my soverayn plesance  
Over alle thyng, out-taken Crist on-lofte,  
Custance youre child hire recomandeth ofte  
Unto youre grace, for I shal to Surrye,  
280 Ne shal I nevere seen yow moore with ye.  
"Allas, unto the Barbre nacioun  
I moste anoon, syn that it is youre wille;  
But Crist, that starf for our redempcioun  
So yeve me grace his heestes to fulfille!  
I, wrecche womman, no fors though I spille!  
Wommen are born to thraldom and penance,  
And to been under mannes governance."  
I trowe at Troye, whan Pirrus brak the wal  
Or Ilion brende, at Thebes the citee,  
290 N' at Rome, for the harm thurgh Hanybal  
That Romainys hath venquysshed tymes thre,  
Nas herd swich tendre wepyng for pitee  
As in the chambre was for hire departynge;  
But forth she moot, wher-so she wepe or synge.  
O firste moevyng! Cruel firmament,  
With thy diurnal sweigh that crowdest ay  
And hurlest al from est til occident  
That naturelly wolde holde another way,  
Thy crowdyng set the hevene in swich array

300 At the bigynnyng of this fiers viage,  
That crueel Mars hath slayn this mariage.  
Infortunat ascendent tortuous,  
Of which the lord is helplees falle, alas,  
Out of his angle into the derkeste hous!  
O Mars, o atazir, as in this cas!  
O fieble moone, unhappy been thy paas!  
Thou knytttest thee ther thou art nat receyved;  
Ther thou were weel, fro thennes artow weyved.  
Imprudent Emperour of Rome, alas!  
310 Was ther no philosophre in al thy toun?  
Is no tyme bet than oother in swich cas?  
Of viage is ther noon eleccioun,  
Namely to folk of heigh condicioun?  
Noght whan a roote is of a burthe yknowe?  
Allas, we been to lewed or to slowe!  
To shippe is brought this woful faire mayde  
Solempnely, with every circumstance.  
"Now Jhesu Crist be with yow alle!" she sayde;  
Ther nys namoore, but "Farewel, faire Custance!"  
320 She peyneth hire to make good contenance;  
And forth I lete hire saille in this manere,  
And turne I wole agayn to my matere.  
The mooder of the Sowdan, welle of vices,  
Espied hath hir sones pleyn entente,  
How he wol lete his olde sacrifices;  
And right anon she for hir conseil sente,  
And they been come to knowe what she mente.  
And whan assembled was this folk in-feere,  
She sette hire down, and seyde as ye shal heere.  
330 "Lordes," quod she, "ye knowen everichon,  
How that my sone in point is for to lete  
The hooly lawes of our Alkaron,  
Yeven by Goddes message Makomete.  
But oon avow to grete God I heete,  
The lyf shal rather out of my body sterte  
Or Makometes lawe out of myn herte!  
"What sholde us tyden of this newe lawe  
But thraldom to oure bodies and penance,  
And afterward in helle to be drawe,  
340 For we reneyed Mahoun oure creance?  
But, lordes, wol ye maken assurance,

As I shal seyn, assentyng to my loore,  
And I shal make us sauf for everemoore?"  
They sworn and assenten, every man,  
To lyve with hire and dye, and by hire stonde,  
And everich, in the beste wise he kan,  
To strengthen hire shal alle his frendes fonde;  
And she hath this emprise ytake on honde,  
Which ye shal heren that I shal devyse,  
350 And to hem alle she spak right in this wyse:  
"We shul first feyne us cristendom to take --  
Coud water shal nat greve us but a lite! --  
And I shal swich a feeste and revel make  
That, as I trowe, I shal the Sowdan quite.  
For thogh his wyf be cristned never so white,  
She shal have nede to wasshe away the rede,  
Thogh she a font-ful water with hire lede."  
O Sowdanesse, roote of iniquitee!  
Virago, thou Semyrame the secounde!  
360 O serpent under femynynytee,  
Lik to the serpent depe in helle ybounde!  
O feyned womman, al that may confounde  
Vertu and innocence, thurgh thy malice,  
Is bred in thee, as nest of every vice!  
O Sathan, envious syn thilke day  
That thou were chaced from oure heritage,  
Wel knowestow to wommen the olde way!  
Thou madest Eva brynge us in servage;  
Thou wolt fordoon this Cristen mariage.  
370 Thyn instrument so -- weylawey the while! --  
Makestow of wommen, whan thou wolt bigile.  
This Sowdanesse, whom I thus blame and warye,  
Leet prively hire conseil goon hire way.  
What sholde I in this tale lenger tarye?  
She rydeth to the Sowdan on a day,  
And seyde hym that she wolde reneye hir lay,  
And cristendom of preestes handes fonge,  
Repentyng hire she hethen was so longe,  
Bisechyng hym to doon hire that honour,  
380 That she moste han the Cristen folk to feeste --  
"To plesen hem I wol do my labour."  
The Sowdan seith, "I wol doon at youre heeste,"  
And knelyng thanketh hire of that requeste.

So glad he was, he nyste what to seye.  
She kiste hir sone, and hoom she gooth hir weye.  
Arryved been this Cristen folk to londe  
In Surrye, with a greet solempne route,  
And hastifliche this Sowdan sente his sonde  
First to his mooder, and al the regne aboute,  
390 And seyde his wyf was comen, out of doute,  
And preyde hire for to ryde agayn the queene,  
The honour of his regne to susteene.  
Greet was the prees, and riche was th' array  
Of Surryens and Romainys met yfeere;  
The mooder of the Sowdan, riche and gay,  
Receyveth hire with also glad a cheere  
As any mooder myghte hir doghter deere,  
And to the nexte citee ther bisyde  
A softe paas solempnely they ryde.  
400 Noght trowe I the triumphe of Julius,  
Of which that Lucan maketh swich a boost,  
Was roialler ne moore curius  
Than was th' assemblee of this blisful hoost.  
But this scorioun, this wikked goost,  
The Sowdanesse, for al hire flaterynge,  
Caste under this ful mortally to styng.  
The Sowdan comth hymself soone after this  
So roially that wonder is to telle,  
And welcometh hire with alle joye and blis.  
410 And thus in murthe and joye I lete hem dwelle;  
The fruyt of this matiere is that I telle.  
Whan tyme cam, men thoughte it for the beste  
That revel stynte, and men goon to hir reste.  
The tyme cam, this olde Sowdanesse  
Ordeyned hath this feeste of which I tolde,  
And to the feeste Cristen folk hem dresse  
In general, ye, bothe yonge and olde.  
Heere may men feeste and roialtee biholde,  
And deyntees mo than I kan yow devyse;  
420 But al to deere they boghte it er they ryse.  
O sodeyn wo, that evere art successour  
To worldly blisse, spreynd with bitternesse,  
The ende of the joye of oure worldly labour!  
Wo occupieth the fyn of oure gladnesse.  
Herke this conseil for thy sikernes:

Upon thy glade day have in thy mynde  
The unwar wo or harm that comth bihynde.  
For shortly for to tellen, at o word,  
The Sowdan and the Cristen everichone  
430 Been al tohewe and stiked at the bord,  
But it were oonly dame Custance allone.  
This olde Sowdanesse, cursed krone,  
Hath with hir freendes doon this cursed dede,  
For she herself wolde al the contree lede.  
Ne ther was Surryen noon that was converted,  
That of the conseil of the Sowdan woot,  
That he nas al tohewe er he asterted.  
And Custance han they take anon, foot-hoot,  
And in a ship al steerelees, God woot,  
440 They han hir set, and bidde hire lerne saille  
Out of Surrye agaynward to Ytaille.  
A certain tresor that she thider ladde,  
And, sooth to seyn, vitaille greet plentee  
They han hire yeven, and clothes eek she hadde,  
And forth she sailleth in the salte see.  
O my Custance, ful of benignytee,  
O Emperoures yonge doghter deere,  
He that is lord of Fortune be thy steere!  
She blesseth hire, and with ful pitous voys  
450 Unto the croys of Crist thus seyde she:  
"O cleere, o welful auter, hooly croys,  
Reed of the Lambes blood ful of pitee,  
That wessh the world fro the olde iniquitee,  
Me fro the feend and fro his clawes kepe,  
That day that I shal drenchen in the depe.  
"Victorious tree, proteccioun of trewe,  
That oonly worthy were for to bere  
The Kyng of Hevene with his woundes newe,  
The white Lamb, that hurt was with a spere,  
460 Flemere of feendes out of hym and here  
On which thy lymes feithfully extenden,  
Me kepe, and yif me myght my lyf t' amenden."  
Yeres and dayes fleet this creature  
Thurghout the See of Grece unto the Strayte  
Of Marrok, as it was hire aventure.  
On many a sory meel now may she bayte;  
After hir deeth ful often may she wayte,

Er that the wilde wawes wol hire dryve  
Unto the place ther she shal arrayve.  
470 Men myghten asken why she was nat slayn  
Eek at the feeste? Who myghte hir body save?  
And I answer to that demande agayn,  
Who saved Danyel in the horrible cave  
Ther every wight save he, maister and knave,  
Was with the leon frete er he asterte?  
No wight but God that he bar in his herte.  
God liste to shewe his wonderful myracle  
In hire, for we sholde seen his myghty werkis;  
Crist, which that is to every harm triacle,  
480 By certeine meenes ofte, as knowen clerkis,  
Dooth thyng for certein ende that ful derk is  
To mannes wit, that for oure ignorance  
Ne konne noght knowe his prudent purveiance.  
Now sith she was nat at the feeste yslawe,  
Who kepte hire fro the drenchyng in the see?  
Who kepte Jonas in the fisshes mawe  
Til he was spouted up at Nynyvee?  
Wel may men knowe it was no wight but he  
That kepte peple Ebrayk from hir drenchyng,  
490 With drye feet thurghout the see passyng.  
Who bad the foure spirites of tempest  
That power han t' anoyen lond and see,  
Bothe north and south, and also west and est,  
"Anoyeth neither see, ne land, ne tree"?  
Soothly, the comandour of that was he  
That fro the tempest ay this womman kepte  
As wel whan she wook as whan she slepte.  
Where myghte this womman mete and drynke have  
Thre yeer and moore? How lasteth hire vitaille?  
500 Who fedde the Egipzien Marie in the cave,  
Or in desert? No wight but Crist, sanz faille.  
Fyve thousand folk it was as greet mervaille  
With loves fyve and fisshes two to feede.  
God sente his foyson at hir grete neede.  
She dryveth forth into oure occian  
Thurghout oure wilde see, til atte laste  
Under an hoold that nempnen I ne kan,  
Fer in Northhumberlond the wawe hire caste,  
And in the sond hir ship stiked so faste

510 That thennes wolde it noght of al a tyde;  
The wyl of Crist was that she sholde abyde.  
The constable of the castel doun is fare  
To seen this wrak, and al the ship he soghte,  
And foond this wery womman ful of care;  
He foond also the tresor that she broghte.  
In hir langage mercy she bisoghte,  
The lyf out of hir body for to twynne,  
Hire to delivere of wo that she was inne.  
A maner Latyn corrupt was hir speche,  
520 But algates therby was she understonde.  
The constable, whan hym lyst no longer seche,  
This woful womman broghte he to the londe.  
She kneleth doun and thanketh Goddes sonde;  
But what she was she wolde no man seye,  
For foul ne fair, thogh that she sholde deye.  
She seyde she was so mazed in the see  
That she forgat hir mynde, by hir trouthe.  
The constable hath of hire so greet pitee,  
And eek his wyf, that they wepen for routh.  
530 She was so diligent, withouten slouth,  
To serve and plesen everich in that place  
That alle hir loven that looken in hir face.  
This constable and dame Hermengyld, his wyf,  
Were payens, and that contree everywhere;  
But Hermengyld loved hire right as hir lyf,  
And Custance hath so longe sojourned there,  
In orisons, with many a bitter teere,  
Til Jhesu hath converted thurgh his grace  
Dame Hermengyld, constablesse of that place.  
540 In al that lond no Cristen dorste route;  
Alle Cristen folk been fled fro that contree  
Thurgh payens, that conquereden al aboute  
The plages of the north, by land and see.  
To Walys fledde the Cristyanytee  
Of olde Britons dwellynge in this ile;  
Ther was hir refut for the meene while.  
But yet nere Cristene Britons so exiled  
That ther nere somme that in hir privetee  
Honoured Crist and hethen folk bigiled,  
550 And ny the castel swiche ther dwelten three.  
That oon of hem was blynd and myghte nat see,



But it were with thilke eyen of his mynde  
With whiche men seen, after that they ben blynde.  
Bright was the sonne as in that someres day,  
For which the constable and his wyf also  
And Custance han ytake the righte way  
Toward the see a furlong wey or two,  
To pleyen and to romen to and fro,  
And in hir walk this blynde man they mette,  
560 Croked and oold, with eyen faste yshette.  
"In name of Crist," cride this blinde Britoun,  
"Dame Hermengyld, yif me my sighte agayn!"  
This lady weex affrayed of the soun,  
Lest that hir housbonde, shortly for to sayn,  
Wolde hire for Jhesu Cristes love han slayn,  
Til Custance made hire boold, and bad hire wirche  
The wyl of Crist, as doghter of his chirche.  
The constable weex abasshed of that sight,  
And seyde, "What amounteth al this fare?"  
570 Custance answerde, "Sire, it is Cristes myght,  
That helpeth folk out of the feendes snare."  
And so ferforth she gan oure lay declare  
That she the constable, er that it was eve  
Converteth, and on Crist made hym bileve.  
This constable was nothyng lord of this place  
Of which I speke, ther he Custance fond,  
But kepte it strongly many a wyntres space  
Under Alla, kyng of al Northhumbrelond,  
That was ful wys, and worthy of his hond  
580 Agayn the Scottes, as men may wel heere;  
But turne I wole agayn to my mateere.  
Sathan, that evere us waiteth to bigile,  
Saug of Custance al hire perfeccioun,  
And caste anon how he myghte quite hir while,  
And made a yong knyght that dwelte in that toun  
Love hire so hote, of foul affeccioun,  
That verrailly hym thoughte he sholde spille,  
But he of hire myghte ones have his wille.  
He woweth hire, but it availleth noght;  
590 She wolde do no synne, by no weye.  
And for despit he compassed in his thoght  
To maken hire on shameful deeth to deye.  
He wayteth whan the constable was aweye,

And pryvely upon a nyght he crepte  
In Hermengylde's chambre, whil she slepte.  
Wery, forwaked in hire orisouns,  
Slepeth Custance, and Hermengyld also.  
This knyght, thurgh Sathanas temptaciouns,  
Al softly is to the bed ygo,  
600 And kitte the throte of Hermengyld atwo,  
And leyde the bloody knyf by dame Custance,  
And wente his wey, ther God yeve hym meschance!  
Soone after cometh this constable hoom agayn,  
And eek Alla, that kyng was of that lond,  
And saugh his wyf despitously yslayn,  
For which ful ofte he weep and wroong his hond,  
And in the bed the bloody knyf he fond  
By Dame Custance. Allas, what myghte she seye?  
For verray wo hir wit was al aweye.  
610 To kyng Alla was toold al this meschance,  
And eek the tyme, and where, and in what wise  
That in a ship was founden this Custance,  
As heer-biforn that ye han herd devyse.  
The kynges herte of pitee gan agryse,  
Whan he saugh so benigne a creature  
Falle in disese and in mysaventure.  
For as the lomb toward his deeth is broght,  
So stant this innocent bfore the kyng.  
This false knyght, that hath this tresoun wroght,  
620 Berth hire on hond that she hath doon thys thyng.  
But nathelees, ther was greet moornyng  
Among the peple, and seyn they kan nat gesse  
That she had doon so greet a wikkednesse,  
For they han seyn hire evere so vertuous,  
And lovyng Hermengyld right as hir lyf.  
Of this baar witnesse everich in that hous,  
Save he that Hermengyld slow with his knyf.  
This gentil kyng hath caught a greet motyf  
Of this witnesse, and thoghte he wolde enquire  
630 Depper in this, a trouthe for to lere.  
Allas! Custance, thou hast no champioun,  
Ne fighte kanstow noght, so weylaway!  
But he that starf for our redempcioun,  
And boond Sathan (and yet lith ther he lay),  
So be thy stronge champion this day!

For, but if Crist open myracle kithe,  
Withouten gilt thou shalt be slayn as swithe.  
She sette hire down on knees, and thus she sayde:  
"Immortal God, that savedest Susanne  
640 Fro false blame, and thou, merciful mayde,  
Marie I meene, doghter to Seint Anne,  
Bifore whos child anges synge Osanne,  
If I be giltlees of this felonye,  
My socour be, for ellis shal I dye!"  
Have ye nat seyn somtyme a pale face,  
Among a prees, of hym that hath be lad  
Toward his deeth, wher as hym gat no grace,  
And swich a colour in his face hath had  
Men myghte knowe his face that was bistad  
650 Amonges alle the faces in that route?  
So stant Custance, and looketh hire aboute.  
O queenes, lyvyng in prosperitee,  
Duchesses, and ye ladyes everichone,  
Haveth som routhe on hire adversitee!  
An Emperoures doghter stant allone;  
She hath no wight to whom to make hir mone.  
O blood roial, that stondest in this drede,  
Fer been thy freendes at thy grete nede!  
This Alla kyng hath swich compassioun,  
660 As gentil herte is fulfild of pitee,  
That from his eyen ran the water down.  
"Now hastily do fecche a book," quod he,  
"And if this knyght wol sweren how that she  
This womman slow, yet wol we us avyse  
Whom that we wole that shal been oure justise."  
A Britoun book, written with Evaungiles,  
Was fet, and on this book he swoor anon  
She gilty was, and in the meene whiles  
An hand hym smoot upon the nekke-boon,  
670 That down he fil atones as a stoon,  
And bothe his eyen broste out of his face  
In sighte of every body in that place.  
A voys was herd in general audience,  
And seyde, "Thou hast desclaundred, giltelees,  
The doghter of hooly chirche in heigh presence;  
Thus hastou doon, and yet holde I my pees!"  
Of this mervaille agast was al the prees;

As mazed folk they stoden everichone,  
For drede of wreche, save Custance allone.  
680 Greet was the drede and eek the repentance  
Of hem that hadden wrong suspecioun  
Upon this sely innocent, Custance;  
And for this miracle, in conclusioun,  
And by Custances mediacioun,  
The kyng -- and many another in that place --  
Converted was, thanked be Cristes grace!  
This false knyght was slayn for his untrouthe  
By juggement of Alla hastifly;  
And yet Custance hadde of his deeth greet routhe.  
690 And after this Jhesus, of his mercy,  
Made Alla wedden ful solempnely  
This hooly mayden, that is so bright and sheene;  
And thus hath Crist ymaad Custance a queene.  
But who was woful, if I shal nat lye,  
Of this weddyng but Donegild, and namo,  
The kynges mooder, ful of tirannye?  
Hir thoughte hir cursed herte brast atwo.  
She wolde noght hir sone had do so;  
Hir thoughte a despit that he sholde take  
700 So strange a creature unto his make.  
Me list nat of the chaf, ne of the stree,  
Maken so long a tale as of the corn.  
What sholde I tellen of the roialtee  
At mariage, or which cours goth biforn;  
Who bloweth in a trumpe or in an horn?  
The fruyt of every tale is for to seye:  
They ete, and drynke, and daunce, and synge, and pleye.  
They goon to bedde, as it was skile and right;  
For thogh that wyves be ful hooly thynges,  
710 They moste take in pacience at nyght  
Swiche manere necessities as been plesynges  
To folk that han ywedded hem with rynges,  
And leye a lite hir hoolynesse aside,  
As for the tyme -- it may no bet bitide.  
On hire he gat a knave child anon,  
And to a bisshop, and his constable eke,  
He took his wyf to kepe, whan he is gon  
To Scotland-ward, his foomen for to seke.  
Now faire Custance, that is so humble and meke,

720 So longe is goon with childe, til that stille  
She halt hire chambre, abidyng Cristes wille.  
The tyme is come a knave child she beer;  
Mauricius at the fontstoon they hym calle.  
This constable dooth forth come a messageer,  
And wroot unto his kyng, that cleped was Alle,  
How that this blisful tidying is bifalle,  
And othere tidynges spedeful for to seye.  
He taketh the lettre, and forth he gooth his weye.  
This messenger, to doon his advantage,  
730 Unto the kynges mooder rideth swithe,  
And salueth hire ful faire in his langage:  
"Madame," quod he, "ye may be glad and blithe,  
And thanketh God an hundred thousand sithe!  
My lady queene hath child, withouten doute,  
To joye and blisse to al this regne aboute.  
"Lo, heere the lettres seled of this thyng,  
That I moot bere with al the haste I may.  
If ye wol aught unto youre sone the kyng,  
I am youre servant, bothe nyght and day."  
740 Donegild answerde, "As now at this tyme, nay;  
But heere al nyght I wol thou take thy reste.  
To-morwe wol I seye thee what me leste."  
This messenger drank sadly ale and wyn,  
And stolen were his lettres pryvely  
Out of his box, whil he sleep as a swyn;  
And countrefeted was ful subtilly  
Another lettre, wroght ful synfully,  
Unto the kyng direct of this mateere  
Fro his constable, as ye shal after heere.  
750 The lettre spak the queene delivered was  
Of so horrible a feendly creature  
That in the castel noon so hardy was  
That any while dorste ther endure.  
The mooder was an elf, by aventure  
Ycomen, by charmes or by sorcerie,  
And every wight hateth hir compaignye.  
Wo was this kyng whan he this lettre had sayn,  
But to no wight he tolde his sorwes soore,  
But of his owene hand he wroot agayn,  
760 "Welcome the sonde of Crist for everemoore  
To me that am now lerned in his loore!

Lord, welcome be thy lust and thy plesaunce;  
My lust I putte al in thyn ordinaunce.  
"Kepeth this child, al be it foul or feir,  
And eek my wyf, unto myn hoom-comynge.  
Crist, whan hym list, may sende me an heir  
Moore agreable than this to my likynge."  
This lettre he selet, pryvely wepyng,  
Which to the messenger was take soone,  
770 And forth he gooth; ther is na moore to doone.  
O messenger, fulfild of dronkenesse,  
Strong is thy breeth, thy lymes faltren ay,  
And thou biwreyest alle secreenesse.  
Thy mynde is lorn, thou janglest as a jay,  
Thy face is turned in a newe array.  
Ther dronkenesse regneth in any route,  
Ther is no conseil hyd, withouten doute.  
O Donegild, I ne have noon Englissh digne  
Unto thy malice and thy tirannye!  
780 And therfore to the feend I thee resigne;  
Lat hym enditen of thy traitorie!  
Fy, mannysh, fy! -- o nay, by God, I lye --  
Fy, feendlych spirit, for I dar wel telle,  
Thogh thou heere walke, thy spirit is in helle!  
This messenger comth fro the kyng agayn,  
And at the kynges moodres court he lighte,  
And she was of this messenger ful fayn,  
And plesed hym in al that ever she myghte.  
He drank, and wel his girdel underpighte;  
790 He slepeth, and he fnorteth in his gyse  
Al nyght, til the sonne gan aryse.  
Eft were his lettres stolen everychon,  
And countrefeted lettres in this wyse:  
"The king comandeth his constable anon,  
Up peyne of hangyng, and on heigh juyse,  
That he ne sholde suffren in no wyse  
Custance in-with his reawme for t' abyde  
Thre dayes and o quarter of a tyde;  
"But in the same ship as he hire fond,  
800 Hire, and hir yonge sone, and al hir geere,  
He sholde putte, and croude hire fro the lond,  
And charge hire that she never eft coome theere."  
O my Custance, wel may thy goost have feere,

And, slepyng, in thy dreem been in penance,  
 Whan Donegild cast al this ordinance.  
 This messenger on morwe, whan he wook,  
 Unto the castel halt the nexte way,  
 And to the constable he the lettre took;  
 And whan that he this pitous lettre say,  
 810 Ful ofte he seyde, "Allas and weylaway!"  
 "Lord Crist," quod he, "how may this world endure,  
 So ful of synne is many a creature?  
 "O myghty God, if that it be thy wille,  
 Sith thou art rightful juge, how may it be  
 That thou wolt suffren innocentz to spille,  
 And wikked folk regne in prosperitee?  
 O goode Custance, alas, so wo is me  
 That I moot be thy tormentour, or deye  
 On shames deeth; ther is noon oother weye."  
 820 Wepen bothe yonge and olde in al that place  
 Whan that the kyng this cursed lettre sente,  
 And Custance, with a deedly pale face,  
 The ferthe day toward hir ship she wente.  
 But nathelees she taketh in good entente  
 The wyl of Crist, and knelynge on the stronde,  
 She seyde, "Lord, ay welcome be thy sonde!  
 "He that me kepte fro the false blame  
 While I was on the lond amonges yow,  
 He kan me kepe from harm and eek fro shame  
 830 In salte see, althogh I se noght how.  
 As strong as evere he was, he is yet now.  
 In hym triste I, and in his mooder deere,  
 That is to me my seyl and eek my steere."  
 Hir litel child lay wepyng in hir arm,  
 And knelynge, pitously to hym she seyde,  
 "Pees, litel sone, I wol do thee noon harm."  
 With that hir coverchief of hir heed she breyde,  
 And over his litel eyen she it leyde,  
 And in hir arm she lulleth it ful faste,  
 840 And into hevene hire eyen up she caste.  
 "Mooder," quod she, "and mayde bright, Marie,  
 Sooth is that thurgh wommanes eggement  
 Mankynde was lorn, and damned ay to dye,  
 For which thy child was on a croys yrent.  
 Thy blisful eyen sawe al his torment;

Thanne is ther no comparison bitwene  
Thy wo and any wo man may sustene.  
"Thow sawe thy child yslayn bifore thyne yen,  
And yet now lyveth my litel child, parfay!  
850 Now, lady bright, to whom alle woful cryen,  
Thow glorie of wommanhede, thow faire may,  
Thow haven of refut, brighte sterre of day,  
Rewe on my child, that of thy gentillesse  
Rewest on every reweful in distresse.  
"O litel child, alas! What is thy gilt,  
That nevere wroghtest synne as yet, pardee?  
Why wil thyn harde fader han thee spilt?  
O mercy, deere constable," quod she,  
"As lat my litel child dwelle heer with thee;  
860 And if thou darst nat saven hym, for blame,  
So kys hym ones in his fadres name!"  
Therwith she looked bakward to the londe,  
And seyde, "Farewel, housbonde routhlees!"  
And up she rist, and walketh down the stronde  
Toward the ship -- hir folweth al the prees --  
And evere she preyeth hire child to holde his pees;  
And taketh hir leve, and with an hooly entente  
She blisseth hire, and into ship she wente.  
Vitailed was the ship, it is no drede,  
870 Habundantly for hire ful longe space,  
And othere necessities that sholde nede  
She hadde ynogh -- heryed be Goddes grace!  
For wynd and weder almyghty God purchase,  
And brynge hire hoom! I kan no bettre seye,  
But in the see she dryveth forth hir weye.  
Alla the kyng comth hoom soone after this  
Unto his castel, of the which I tolde,  
And asketh where his wyf and his child is.  
The constable gan aboute his herte colde,  
880 And pleyntly al the manere he hym tolde  
As ye han herd -- I kan telle it no bettre --  
And sheweth the kyng his seel and eek his lettre,  
And seyde, "Lord, as ye comanded me  
Up peyne of deeth, so have I doon, certein."  
This messenger tormented was til he  
Moste biknowe and tellen, plat and pleyn,  
Fro nyght to nyght, in what place he had leyn;



And thus, by wit and sotel enquerynge,  
Ymaged was by whom this harm gan spryng.  
890 The hand was knowe that the lettre wroot,  
And al the venym of this cursed dede,  
But in what wise, certeinly, I noot.  
Th' effect is this: that Alla, out of drede,  
His mooder slow -- that may men pleylnly rede --  
For that she traitour was to hire ligeance.  
Thus endeth olde Donegild, with meschance!  
The sorwe that this Alla nyght and day  
Maketh for his wyf, and for his child also,  
Ther is no tonge that it telle may.  
900 But now wol I unto Custance go,  
That fleteth in the see, in peyne and wo,  
Fyve yeer and moore, as liked Cristes sonde,  
Er that hir ship approched unto londe.  
Under an hethen castel, atte laste,  
Of which the name in my text noght I fynde,  
Custance, and eek hir child, the see up caste.  
Almyghty God, that saveth al mankynde,  
Have on Custance and on hir child som mynde,  
That fallen is in hethen hand eft soone,  
910 In point to spille, as I shal telle yow soone.  
Doun fro the castel comth ther many a wight  
To gauren on this ship and on Custance.  
But shortly, from the castel, on a nyght,  
The lordes styward -- God yeve hym meschance! --  
A thief, that hadde reneyed oure creance,  
Cam into ship allone, and seyde he sholde  
Hir lemman be, wher-so she wolde or nolde.  
Wo was this wrecched womman tho bigon;  
Hir child cride, and she cride pitously.  
920 But blisful Marie heelp hire right anon;  
For with hir struglyng wel and myghtily  
The thief fil over bord al sodeynly,  
And in the see he dreynte for vengeance;  
And thus hath Crist unwemmed kept Custance.  
O foule lust of luxurie, lo, thyn ende!  
Nat oonly that thou feyntest mannes mynde,  
But verrailly thou wolt his body shende.  
Th' ende of thy werk, or of thy lustes blynde,  
Is compleynyng. Hou many oon may men fynde

930 That noght for werk somtyme, but for th' entente  
To doon this synne, been outhur slayn or shente!  
How may this wayke womman han this strengthe  
Hire to defende agayn this renegat?  
O Goliath, unmesurable of lengthe,  
Hou myghte David make thee so maat,  
So yong and of armure so desolaat?  
Hou dorste he looke upon thy dredful face?  
Wel may men seen, it nas but Goddes grace.  
Who yaf Judith corage or hardynesse  
940 To sleen hym Oloferus in his tente,  
And to deliveren out of wrecchednesse  
The peple of God? I seye, for this entente,  
That right as God spirit of vigour sente  
To hem and saved hem out of meschance,  
So sente he myght and vigour to Custance.  
Forth gooth hir ship thurghout the narwe mouth  
Of Jubaltare and Septe, dryvyng ay  
Somtyme west, and somtyme north and south,  
And somtyme est, ful many a wery day,  
950 Til Cristes mooder -- blessed be she ay! --  
Hath shapen, thurgh hir endelees goodnesse,  
To make an ende of al hir hevynesse.  
Now lat us stynte of Custance but a throwe,  
And speke we of the Romain Emperour,  
That out of Surrye hath by lettres knowe  
The slaughtre of cristen folk, and dishonour  
Doon to his doghter by a fals traytour,  
I mene the cursed wikked Sowdanesse  
That at the feeste leet sleen bothe moore and lesse.  
960 For which this Emperour hath sent anon  
His senatour, with roial ordinance,  
And othere lordes, God woot, many oon,  
On Surryens to taken heigh vengeance.  
They brennen, sleen, and brynge hem to meschance  
Ful many a day; but shortly -- this is th' ende --  
Homward to Rome they shapen hem to wende.  
This senatour repaireth with victorie  
To Rome-ward, saillyng ful roially,  
And mette the ship dryvyng, as seith the storie,  
970 In which Custance sit ful pitously.  
Nothyng ne knew he what she was, ne why

She was in swich array, ne she nyl seye  
Of hire estaat, althogh she sholde deye.  
He bryngeth hire to Rome, and to his wyf  
He yaf hire, and hir yonge sone also;  
And with the senatour she ladde hir lyf.  
Thus kan Oure Lady bryngen out of wo  
Woful Custance, and many another mo.  
And longe tyme dwelled she in that place,  
980 In hooly werkes evere, as was hir grace.  
The senatoures wyf hir aunte was,  
But for al that she knew hire never the moore.  
I wol no lenger tarien in this cas,  
But to kyng Alla, which I spak of yoore,  
That for his wyf wepeth and siketh soore,  
I wol retourne, and lete I wol Custance  
Under the senatoures governance.  
Kyng Alla, which that hadde his mooder slayn,  
Upon a day fil in swich repentance  
990 That, if I shortly tellen shal and playn,  
To Rome he comth to receyven his penance;  
And putte hym in the Popes ordinance  
In heigh and logh, and Jhesu Crist bisoghte  
Foryeve his wikked werkes that he wroghte.  
The fame anon thurgh Rome toun is born,  
How Alla kyng shal comen in pilgrymage,  
By herbergeours that wenten hym biforn;  
For which the senatour, as was usage,  
Rood hym agayns, and many of his lynage,  
1000 As wel to shewen his heighe magnificence  
As to doon any kyng a reverence.  
Greet cheere dooth this noble senatour  
To kyng Alla, and he to hym also;  
Everich of hem dooth oother greet honour.  
And so bifel that in a day or two  
This senatour is to kyng Alla go  
To feste, and shortly, if I shal nat lye,  
Custances sone wente in his compaignye.  
Som men wolde seyn at requeste of Custance  
1010 This senatour hath lad this child to feeste;  
I may nat tellen every circumstance --  
Be as be may, ther was he at the leeste.  
But sooth is this, that at his moodres heeste

Biforn Alla, durynge the metes space,  
The child stood, lookynge in the kynges face.  
This Alla kyng hath of this child greet wonder,  
And to the senatour he seyde anon,  
"Whos is that faire child that stondeth yonder?"  
"I noot," quod he, "by God, and by Seint John!  
1020 A mooder he hath, but fader hath he noon  
That I of woot" -- and shortly, in a stounde,  
He tolde Alla how that this child was founde.  
"But God woot," quod this senatour also,  
"So vertuous a lyvere in my lyf  
Ne saugh I nevere as she, ne herde of mo,  
Of worldly wommen, mayde, ne of wyf.  
I dar wel seyn hir hadde levere a knyf  
Thurghout hir brest, than ben a womman wikke;  
There is no man koude brynge hire to that prikke."  
1030 Now was this child as lyk unto Custance  
As possible is a creature to be.  
This Alla hath the face in remembrance  
Of dame Custance, and ther on mused he  
If that the chilles mooder were aught she  
That is his wyf, and pryvely he sighte,  
And spedde hym fro the table that he myghte.  
"Parfay," thoghte he, "fantome is in myn heed!  
I oghte deme, of skilful juggement,  
That in the salte see my wyf is deed."  
1040 And afterward he made his argument:  
"What woot I if that Crist have hyder ysent  
My wyf by see, as wel as he hire sente  
To my contree fro thennes that she wente?"  
And after noon, hoom with the senatour  
Goth Alla, for to seen this wonder chaunce.  
This senatour dooth Alla greet honour,  
And hastifly he sente after Custaunce.  
But trusteth weel, hire liste nat to daunce  
Whan that she wiste wherfore was that sonde;  
1050 Unnethe upon hir feet she myghte stonde.  
Whan Alla saugh his wyf, faire he hire grette,  
And weep that it was routhe for to see;  
For at the firste look he on hire sette  
He knew wel verrailly that it was she.  
And she, for sorwe, as doubt stant as a tree,

So was hir herte shet in hir distresse,  
Whan she remembred his unkyndenesse.  
Twyes she swowned in his owene sighte;  
He weep, and hym excuseth pitously.  
1060 "Now God," quod he, "and his halwes brighte  
So wisly on my soule as have mercy,  
That of youre harm as giltelees am I  
As is Maurice my sone, so lyk youre face;  
Elles the feend me fecche out of this place!"  
Long was the sobbyng and the bitter peyne,  
Er that hir woful hertes myghte cesse;  
Greet was the pitee for to heere hem pleyne,  
Thurgh whiche pleintes gan hir wo encesse.  
I pray yow alle my labour to relesse;  
1070 I may nat telle hir wo until to-morwe,  
I am so wery for to speke of sorwe.  
But finally, whan that the sothe is wist  
That Alla giltelees was of hir wo,  
I trowe an hundred tymes been they kist,  
And swich a blisse is ther bitwix hem two  
That, save the joye that lasteth everemo,  
Ther is noon lyk that any creature  
Hath seyn or shal, whil that the world may dure.  
Tho preyde she hir housbonde mekely,  
1080 In relief of hir longe, pitous pyne,  
That he wolde preye hir fader specially  
That of his magestee he wolde enclyne  
To vouche sauf som day with hym to dyne.  
She preyde hym eek he sholde by no weye  
Unto hir fader no word of hire seye.  
Som men wolde seyn how that the child Maurice  
Dooth this message unto this Emperour;  
But, as I gesse, Alla was nat so nyce  
To hym that was of so sovereyn honour  
1090 As he that is of Cristen folk the flour,  
Sente any child, but it is bet to deeme  
He wente hymself, and so it may wel seeme.  
This Emperour hath graunted gentilly  
To come to dyner, as he hym bisoughte;  
And wel rede I he looked bisily  
Upon this child, and on his doghter thoghte.  
Alla goth to his in, and as hym oghte,

Arrayed for this feste in every wise  
As ferforth as his konnyng may suffice.  
1100 The morwe cam, and Alla gan hym dresse,  
And eek his wyf, this Emperour to meete;  
And forth they ryde in joye and in gladnesse.  
And whan she saugh hir fader in the strete,  
She lighte doun, and falleth hym to feete.  
"Fader," quod she, "youre yonge child Custance  
Is now ful clene out of youre remembrance.  
"I am youre doghter Custance," quod she,  
"That whilom ye han sent unto Surrye.  
It am I, fader, that in the salte see  
1110 Was put allone and dampned for to dye.  
Now, goode fader, mercy I yow crye!  
Sende me namoore unto noon hethenesse,  
But thonketh my lord heere of his kyndenesse."  
Who kan the pitous joye tellen al  
Bitwixe hem thre, syn they been thus ymette?  
But of my tale make an ende I shal;  
The day goth faste, I wol no lenger lette.  
This glade folk to dyner they hem sette;  
In joye and blisse at mete I lete hem dwelle  
1120 A thousand foold wel moore than I kan telle.  
This child Maurice was sithen Emperour  
Maad by the Pope, and lyved cristenly;  
To Cristes chirche he dide greet honour.  
But I lete al his storie passen by;  
Of Custance is my tale specially.  
In the olde Romain geestes may men fynde  
Maurices lyf; I bere it noght in mynde.  
This kyng Alla, whan he his tyme say,  
With his Custance, his hooly wyf so sweete,  
1130 To Engelond been they come the righte way,  
Wher as they lyve in joye and in quiete.  
But litel while it lasteth, I yow heete,  
Joye of this world, for tyme wol nat abyde;  
Fro day to nyght it changeth as the tyde.  
Who lyved euere in swich delit o day  
That hym ne moeved outhur conscience,  
Or ire, or talent, or som kynnes affray,  
Envye, or pride, or passion, or offence?  
I ne seye but for this ende this sentence,

1140 That litel while in joye or in plesance  
Lasteth the blisse of Alla with Custance.  
For Deeth, that taketh of heigh and logh his rente,  
Whan passed was a yeer, evene as I gesse,  
Out of this world this kyng Alla he hente,  
For whom Custance hath ful greet hevynesse.  
Now lat us prayen God his soule blesse!  
And dame Custance, finally to seye,  
Toward the toun of Rome goth hir weye.  
To Rome is come this hooly creature,  
1150 And fyndeth hire freendes hoole and sounde;  
Now is she scaped al hire aventure.  
And whan that she hir fader hath yfounde,  
Doun on hir knees falleth she to grounde;  
Wepynge for tendrenesse in herte blithe,  
She heryeth God an hundred thousand sithe.  
In vertu and in hooly almus-dede  
They lyven alle, and nevere asonder wende;  
Til deeth departeth hem, this lyf they lede.  
And fareth now weel! my tale is at an ende.  
1160 Now Jhesu Crist, that of his myght may sende  
Joye after wo, governe us in his grace,  
And kepe us alle that been in this place! Amen



## THE MAN OF LAW'S EPILOGUE

[Owre Hoost upon his stiropes stood anon,  
 And seyde, "Goode men, herkeneth everych on!  
 This was a thrifty tale for the nones!  
 Sir Parisshe Prest," quod he, "for Goddes bones,  
 Telle us a tale, as was thi forward yore.  
 I se wel that ye lerned men in lore  
 Can moche good, by Goddes dignitee!"  
 1170 The Parson him answerde, "Benedicite!  
 What eyleth the man, so synfully to swere?"  
 Oure Host answerde, "O Jankin, be ye there?  
 I smelle a Lollere in the wynd," quod he.  
 "Now! goode men," quod oure Hoste, "herkeneth me;  
 Abydeth, for Goddes digne passioun,  
 For we schal han a predicacioun;  
 This Lollere heer wil prechen us somewhat."  
 "Nay, by my fader soule, that schal he nat!"  
 Seyde the Shipman, "Heer schal he nat preche;  
 1180 He schal no gospel glosen here ne teche.  
 We leven alle in the grete God," quod he;  
 "He wolde sowen som difficulte,  
 Or springen cokkel in our clene corn.  
 And therfore, Hoost, I warne thee biforn,  
 My joly body schal a tale telle,  
 And I schal clynken you so mery a belle,  
 That I schal waken al this compaignie.  
 But it schal not ben of philosophie,  
 Ne phislyas, ne termes queinte of lawe.  
 1190 Ther is but litel Latyn in my mawe!"]





## THE WIFE OF BATH'S PROLOGUE

"Experience, though noon auctoritee  
 Were in this world, is right ynogh for me  
 To speke of wo that is in mariage;  
 For, lordynges, sith I twelve yeer was of age,  
 Thonked be God that is eterne on lyve,  
 Housbondes at chirche dore I have had fyve --  
 If I so ofte myghte have ywedded bee --  
 And alle were worthy men in hir degree.  
 But me was toold, certeyn, nat longe agoon is,  
 10 That sith that Crist ne wente nevere but onis  
 To weddyng, in the Cane of Galilee,  
 That by the same ensample taughte he me  
 That I ne sholde wedded be but ones.  
 Herkne eek, lo, which a sharp word for the nones,  
 Biside a welle, Jhesus, God and man,  
 Spak in repreeve of the Samaritan:  
 'Thou hast yhad fyve housbondes,' quod he,  
 'And that ilke man that now hath thee  
 Is noght thyn housbonde,' thus seyde he certeyn.  
 20 What that he mente therby, I kan nat seyn;  
 But that I axe, why that the fifthe man  
 Was noon housbonde to the Samaritan?  
 How manye myghte she have in mariage?  
 Yet herde I nevere tellen in myn age  
 Upon this nombre diffinicioun.  
 Men may devyne and glosen, up and doun,  
 But wel I woot, expres, withoute lye,  
 God bad us for to wexe and multiplie;  
 That gentil text kan I wel understonde.  
 30 Eek wel I woot, he seyde myn housbonde  
 Sholde lete fader and mooder and take to me.  
 But of no nombre mencion made he,  
 Of bigamye, or of octogamye;  
 Why sholde men thanne speke of it vileynye?  
 Lo, heere the wise kyng, daun Salomon;  
 I trowe he hadde wyves mo than oon.  
 As wolde God it leveful were unto me  
 To be refresshed half so ofte as he!  
 Which yifte of God hadde he for alle his wyvys!  
 40 No man hath swich that in this world alyve is.

God woot, this noble kyng, as to my wit,  
The firste nyght had many a myrie fit  
With ech of hem, so wel was hym on lyve.  
Yblessed be God that I have wedded fyve!  
[Of whiche I have pyked out the beste,  
Bothe of here nether purs and of here cheste.  
Diverse scoles maken parfyt clerkes,  
And diverse practyk in many sondry werkes  
Maketh the werkman parfyt sekirly;  
Of fyve husbondes scoleyng am I.]  
Welcome the sixte, whan that evere he shal.  
For sothe, I wol nat kepe me chaast in al.  
Whan myn housbonde is fro the world ygon,  
Som Cristen man shal wedde me anon,  
For thanne th' apostle seith that I am free  
50 To wedde, a Goddes half, where it liketh me.  
He seith that to be wedded is no synne;  
Bet is to be wedded than to brynne.  
What rekketh me, thogh folk seye vileynye  
Of shrewed Lameth and his bigamye?  
I woot wel Abraham was an hooly man,  
And Jacob eek, as ferforth as I kan;  
And ech of hem hadde wyves mo than two,  
And many another holy man also.  
Wher can ye seye, in any manere age,  
60 That hye God defended mariage  
By expres word? I pray yow, telleth me.  
Or where comanded he virginitee?  
I woot as wel as ye, it is no drede,  
Th' apostel, whan he speketh of maydenhede,  
He seyde that precept therof hadde he noon.  
Men may conseilte a womman to been oon,  
But conseillyng is no comandement.  
He putte it in oure owene juggement;  
For hadde God comanded maydenhede,  
70 Thanne hadde he dampned weddyng with the dede.  
And certes, if ther were no seed ysowe,  
Virginitee, thanne wherof sholde it growe?  
Poul dorste nat comanden, atte leeste,  
A thyng of which his maister yaf noon heeste.  
The dart is set up for virginitee;  
Cacche whoso may, who renneth best lat see.

But this word is nat taken of every wight,  
But ther as God lust gyve it of his myght.  
I woot wel that th' apostel was a mayde;  
80 But nathelees, thogh that he wroot and sayde  
He wolde that every wight were swich as he,  
Al nys but conseil to virginitee.  
And for to been a wyf he yaf me leve  
Of indulgence; so nys it no repreve  
To wedde me, if that my make dye,  
Withouten excepcion of bigamye.  
Al were it good no womman for to touche --  
He mente as in his bed or in his couche,  
For peril is bothe fyr and tow t' assemble;  
90 Ye knowe what this ensample may resemble.  
This is al and som: he heeld virginitee  
Moore parfit than weddyng in freletee.  
Freletee clepe I, but if that he and she  
Wolde leden al hir lyf in chastitee.  
I graunte it wel; I have noon envie,  
Thogh maydenhede preferre bigamye.  
It liketh hem to be clene, body and goost;  
Of myn estaat I nyl nat make no boost,  
For wel ye knowe, a lord in his houshold,  
100 He nath nat every vessel al of gold;  
Somme been of tree, and doon hir lord servyse.  
God clepeth folk to hym in sondry wyse,  
And everich hath of God a propre yifte --  
Som this, som that, as hym liketh shifte.  
Virginitee is greet perfeccion,  
And continence eek with devocion,  
But Crist, that of perfeccion is welle,  
Bad nat every wight he sholde go selle  
Al that he hadde, and gyve it to the poore,  
110 And in swich wise folwe hym and his foore.  
He spak to hem that wolde lyve parfitly;  
And lordynges, by youre leve, that am nat I.  
I wol bistowe the flour of al myn age  
In the actes and in fruyt of mariage.  
Telle me also, to what conclusion  
Were membres maad of generacion,  
And of so parfit wys a [wright] ywroght?  
Trusteth right wel, they were nat maad for noght.

Glose whoso wole, and seye bothe up and doun  
120 That they were maked for purgacioun  
Of uryne, and oure bothe thynges smale  
Were eek to knowe a femele from a male,  
And for noon oother cause -- say ye no?  
The experience woot wel it is noght so.  
So that the clerkes be nat with me wrothe,  
I sey this: that they maked ben for bothe;  
That is to seye, for office and for ese  
Of engendrure, ther we nat God displese.  
Why sholde men elles in hir bookes sette  
130 That man shal yelde to his wyf hire dette?  
Now wherwith sholde he make his paiement,  
If he ne used his sely instrument?  
Thanne were they maad upon a creature  
To purge uryne, and eek for engendrure.  
But I seye noght that every wight is holde,  
That hath swich harneys as I to yow tolde,  
To goon and usen hem in engendrure.  
Thanne sholde men take of chastitee no cure.  
Crist was a mayde and shapen as a man,  
140 And many a seint, sith that the world bigan;  
Yet lyved they evere in parfit chastitee.  
I nyl envye no virginitee.  
Lat hem be breed of pured whete-seed,  
And lat us wyves hoten barly-breed;  
And yet with barly-breed, Mark telle kan,  
Oure Lord Jhesu refresshed many a man.  
In swich estaat as God hath cleped us  
I wol persevere; I nam nat precius.  
In wyfhod I wol use myn instrument  
150 As frely as my Makere hath it sent.  
If I be daungerous, God yeve me sorwe!  
Myn housbonde shal it have bothe eve and morwe,  
Whan that hym list come forth and paye his dette.  
An housbonde I wol have -- I wol nat lette --  
Which shal be bothe my dettour and my thral,  
And have his tribulacion withal  
Upon his flessch, whil that I am his wyf.  
I have the power durynge al my lyf  
Upon his propre body, and noght he.  
160 Right thus the Apostel tolde it unto me,

And bad oure housbondes for to love us weel.  
Al this sentence me liketh every deel" --  
Up stirte the Pardoner, and that anon;  
"Now, dame," quod he, "by God and by Seint John!  
Ye been a noble prechour in this cas.  
I was aboute to wedde a wyf; alas!  
What sholde I bye it on my flessch so deere?  
Yet hadde I levere wedde no wyf to-yeere!"  
"Abyde!" quod she, "my tale is nat bigonne.  
170 Nay, thou shalt drynken of another tonne,  
Er that I go, shal savoure wors than ale.  
And whan that I have toold thee forth my tale  
Of tribulacion in mariage,  
Of which I am expert in al myn age --  
This is to seyn, myself have been the whippe --  
Than maystow chese wheither thou wolt sippe  
Of thilke tonne that I shal abroche.  
Be war of it, er thou to ny approche;  
For I shal telle ensamples mo than ten.  
180 `Whoso that nyl be war by othere men,  
By hym shul othere men corrected be.'  
The same wordes writeth Ptholomee;  
Rede in his Almageste, and take it there."  
"Dame, I wolde praye yow, if youre wyl it were,"  
Seyde this Pardoner, "as ye bigan,  
Telle forth youre tale, spareth for no man,  
And teche us yonge men of youre praktike."  
"Gladly," quod she, "sith it may yow like;  
But yet I praye to al this compaignye,  
190 If that I speke after my fantasye,  
As taketh not agrief of that I seye,  
For myn entente nys but for to pleye.  
Now, sire, now wol I telle forth my tale.  
As evere moote I drynken wyn or ale,  
I shal seye sooth; tho housbondes that I hadde,  
As thre of hem were goode, and two were badde.  
The thre were goode men, and riche, and olde;  
Unnethe myghte they the statut holde  
In which that they were bounden unto me.  
200 Ye woot wel what I meene of this, pardee!  
As help me God, I laughe whan I thynke  
How pitously a-nyght I made hem swynke!

And, by my fey, I tolde of it no stoor.  
They had me yeven hir lond and hir tresoor;  
Me neded nat do lenger diligence  
To wynne hir love, or doon hem reverence.  
They loved me so wel, by God above,  
That I ne tolde no deyntee of hir love!  
A wys womman wol bisye hire evere in oon  
210 To gete hire love, ye, ther as she hath noon.  
But sith I hadde hem hoolly in myn hond,  
And sith they hadde me yeven al hir lond,  
What sholde I taken keep hem for to plese,  
But it were for my profit and myn ese?  
I sette hem so a-werke, by my fey,  
That many a nyght they songen `Weilawey!'  
The bacon was nat fet for hem, I trowe,  
That som men han in Essex at Dunmowe.  
I governed hem so wel, after my lawe,  
220 That ech of hem ful blisful was and fawe  
To brynge me gaye thynges fro the fayre.  
They were ful glad whan I spak to hem faire,  
For, God it woot, I chidde hem spitously.  
Now herkneth hou I baar me proprely,  
Ye wise wyves, that kan understonde.  
Thus shulde ye speke and bere hem wrong on honde,  
For half so boldely kan ther no man  
Swere and lyen, as a womman kan.  
I sey nat this by wyves that been wyse,  
230 But if it be whan they hem mysavyse.  
A wys wyf, if that she kan hir good,  
Shal beren hym on honde the cow is wood,  
And take witnesse of hir owene mayde  
Of hir assent. But herkneth how I sayde:  
`Sire olde kaynard, is this thyn array?  
Why is my neighebores wyf so gay?  
She is honoured overal ther she gooth;  
I sitte at hoom; I have no thrifty clooth.  
What dostow at my neighebores hous?  
240 Is she so fair? Artow so amorous?  
What rowne ye with oure mayde? Benedicite!  
Sire olde lecchour, lat thy japes be!  
And if I have a gossib or a freend,  
Withouten gilt, thou chidest as a feend,

If that I walke or pleye unto his hous!  
Thou comest hoom as dronken as a mous,  
And prechest on thy bench, with yvel preef!  
Thou seist to me it is a greet meschief  
To wedde a povre womman, for costage;  
250 And if that she be riche, of heigh parage,  
Thanne seistow that it is a tormentrie  
To soffre hire pride and hire malencolie.  
And if that she be fair, thou verray knave,  
Thou seyst that every holour wol hire have;  
She may no while in chastitee abyde,  
That is assailed upon ech a syde.  
Thou seyst som folk desiren us for richesse,  
Somme for oure shap, and somme for oure fairnesse,  
And som for she kan outhur synge or daunce,  
260 And som for gentillesse and daliaunce;  
Som for hir handes and hir armes smale;  
Thus goth al to the devel, by thy tale.  
Thou seyst men may nat kepe a castel wal,  
It may so longe assailed been overal.  
And if that she be foul, thou seist that she  
Coveiteth every man that she may se,  
For as a spanyel she wol on hym lepe,  
Til that she fynde som man hire to chepe.  
Ne noon so grey goos gooth ther in the lake  
270 As, seistow, wol been withoute make.  
And seyst it is an hard thyng for to welde  
A thyng that no man wole, his thanks, helde.  
Thus seistow, lorel, whan thou goost to bedde,  
And that no wys man nedeth for to wedde,  
Ne no man that entendeth unto hevene.  
With wilde thonder-dynt and firy leve  
Moote thy welked nekke be tobroke!  
Thow seyst that droppying houses, and eek smoke,  
And chidyng wyves maken men to flee  
280 Out of hir owene houses; a, benedicitee!  
What eyleth swich an old man for to chide?  
Thow seyst we wyves wol oure vices hide  
Til we be fast, and thanne we wol hem shewe --  
Wel may that be a proverbe of a shrewe!  
Thou seist that oxen, asses, hors, and houndes,  
They been assayed at diverse stoundes;

Bacyns, lavours, er that men hem bye,  
Spoones and stooles, and al swich housbondrye,  
And so been pottes, clothes, and array;  
290 But folk of wyves maken noon assay,  
Til they be wedded -- olde dotard shrewe! --  
And thanne, seistow, we wol oure vices shewe.  
Thou seist also that it displeseth me  
But if that thou wolt preyse my beautee,  
And but thou poure alwey upon my face,  
And clepe me "faire dame" in every place.  
And but thou make a feeste on thilke day  
That I was born, and make me fressh and gay;  
And but thou do to my norice honour,  
300 And to my chamberere withinne my bour,  
And to my fadres folk and his allyes --  
Thus seistow, olde barel-ful of lyes!  
And yet of oure apprentice Janekyn,  
For his crispe heer, shynyng as gold so fyn,  
And for he squiereth me bothe up and doun,  
Yet hastow caught a fals suspecioun.  
I wol hym noght, thogh thou were deed tomorwe!  
But tel me this: why hydestow, with sorwe,  
The keyes of thy cheste away fro me?  
310 It is my good as wel as thyn, pardee!  
What, wenestow make an ydiot of oure dame?  
Now by that lord that called is Seint Jame,  
Thou shalt nat bothe, thogh that thou were wood,  
Be maister of my body and of my good;  
That oon thou shalt forgo, maugree thyne yen.  
What helpith it of me to enquire or spyen?  
I trowe thou woldest loke me in thy chiste!  
Thou sholdest seye, "Wyf, go wher thee liste;  
Taak youre disport; I wol nat leve no talys.  
320 I knowe yow for a trewe wyf, dame Alys."  
We love no man that taketh kep or charge  
Wher that we goon; we wol ben at oure large.  
Of alle men yblessed moot he be,  
The wise astrologien, Daun Ptholome,  
That seith this proverbe in his Almageste:  
"Of alle men his wysdom is the hyeste  
That rekketh nevere who hath the world in honde."  
By this proverbe thou shalt understonde,



Have thou ynogh, what thar thee recche or care  
330 How myrily that othere folkes fare?  
For, certeyn, olde dotard, by youre leve,  
Ye shul have queynte right ynogh at eve.  
He is to greet a nygard that wolde werne  
A man to lighte a candle at his lanterne;  
He shal have never the lasse light, pardee.  
Have thou ynogh, thee thar nat pleyne thee.  
Thou seyst also, that if we make us gay  
With clothyng, and with precious array,  
That it is peril of oure chastitee;  
340 And yet -- with sorwe! -- thou most enforce thee,  
And seye thise wordes in the Apostles name:  
"In habit maad with chastitee and shame  
Ye wommen shul apparaille yow," quod he,  
"And noght in tressed heer and gay perree,  
As perles, ne with gold, ne clothes riche."  
After thy text, ne after thy rubriche,  
I wol nat wirche as muchel as a gnat.  
Thou seydest this, that I was lyk a cat;  
For whoso wolde senge a cattes skyn,  
350 Thanne wolde the cat wel dwellen in his in;  
And if the cattes skyn be slyk and gay,  
She wol nat dwelle in house half a day,  
But forth she wole, er any day be dawed,  
To shewe hir skyn and goon a-caterwawed.  
This is to seye, if I be gay, sire shrewe,  
I wol renne out my borel for to shewe.  
Sire olde fool, what helpeth thee to spyen?  
Thogh thou preye Argus with his hundred yen  
To be my warde-cors, as he kan best,  
360 In feith, he shal nat kepe me but me lest;  
Yet koude I make his berd, so moot I thee!  
Thou seydest eek that ther been thynges thre,  
The whiche thynges troublen al this erthe,  
And that no wight may endure the ferthe.  
O leewe sire shrewe, Jhesu shorte thy lyf!  
Yet prechestow and seyst an hateful wyf  
Yrekened is for oon of thise meschances.  
Been ther none othere maner resemblances  
That ye may likne youre parables to,  
370 But if a sely wyf be oon of tho?

Thou liknest eek wommenes love to helle,  
To bareyne lond, ther water may nat dwelle.  
Thou liknest it also to wilde fyr;  
The moore it brenneth, the moore it hath desir  
To consume every thyng that brent wole be.  
Thou seyest, right as wormes shende a tree,  
Right so a wyf destroyeth hire housbonde;  
This knowe they that been to wyves bonde.'  
Lordynges, right thus, as ye have understonde,  
380 Baar I stifly myne olde housbondes on honde  
That thus they seyden in hir dronkenesse;  
And al was fals, but that I took witnesse  
On Janekyn, and on my nece also.  
O Lord! The peyne I dide hem and the wo,  
Ful giltelees, by Goddes sweete pyne!  
For as an hors I koude byte and whyne.  
I koude pleyne, and yit was in the gilt,  
Or elles often tyme hadde I been spilt.  
Whoso that first to mille comth, first grynt;  
390 I pleynd first, so was oure werre ystynt.  
They were ful glade to excuse hem blyve  
Of thyng of which they nevere agilte hir lyve.  
Of wenches wolde I beren hem on honde,  
Whan that for syk unnethes myghte they stonde.  
Yet tikled I his herte, for that he  
Wende that I hadde of hym so greet chiertee!  
I swoor that al my walkynge out by nyghte  
Was for t' espye wenches that he dighte;  
Under that colour hadde I many a myrthe.  
400 For al swich wit is yeven us in oure byrthe;  
Deceite, wepyng, spynnyng God hath yive  
To wommen kyndely, whil that they may lyve.  
And thus of o thyng I avaunte me:  
Atte ende I hadde the bettre in ech degree,  
By sleighte, or force, or by som maner thyng,  
As by continueel murmur or grucchyng.  
Namely abedde hadden they meschaunce:  
Ther wolde I chide and do hem no plesaunce;  
I wolde no lenger in the bed abyde,  
410 If that I felte his arm over my syde,  
Til he had maad his raunson unto me;  
Thanne wolde I suffre hym do his nycetee.

And therfore every man this tale I telle,  
Wynne whoso may, for al is for to selle;  
With empty hand men may none haukes lure.  
For wynnyng wolde I al his lust endure,  
And make me a feyned appetit;  
And yet in bacon hadde I nevere delit.  
That made me that evere I wolde hem chide,  
420 For thogh the pope hadde seten hem biside,  
I wolde nat spare hem at hir owene bord,  
For, by my trouthe, I quitte hem word for word.  
As helpe me verray God omnipotent,  
Though I right now sholde make my testament,  
I ne owe hem nat a word that it nys quit.  
I broghte it so aboute by my wit  
That they moste yeve it up, as for the beste,  
Or elles hadde we nevere been in reste;  
For thogh he looked as a wood leon,  
430 Yet sholde he faille of his conclusion.  
Thanne wolde I seye, 'Goode lief, taak keep  
How mekely looketh Wilkyn, oure sheep!  
Com neer, my spouse, lat me ba thy cheke!  
Ye sholde been al pacient and meke,  
And han a sweete spiced conscience,  
Sith ye so preche of Jobes pacience.  
Suffreth alwey, syn ye so wel kan preche;  
And but ye do, certein we shal yow teche  
That it is fair to have a wyf in pees.  
440 Oon of us two moste bowen, doutelees,  
And sith a man is moore resonable  
Than womman is, ye moste been suffrable.  
What eyleth yow to grucche thus and grone?  
Is it for ye wolde have my queynte allone?  
Wy, taak it al! Lo, have it every deel!  
Peter! I shrewe yow, but ye love it weel;  
For if I wolde selle my bele chose,  
I koude walke as fressh as is a rose;  
But I wol kepe it for youre owene tooth.  
450 Ye be to blame, by God! I sey yow sooth.'  
Swiche manere wordes hadde we on honde.  
Now wol I speken of my fourthe housbonde.  
My fourthe housbonde was a revelour --  
This is to seyn, he hadde a paramour --

And I was yong and ful of ragerye,  
 Stibourn and strong, and joly as a pye.  
 How koude I daunce to an harpe smale,  
 And synge, ywis, as any nyghtyngale,  
 Whan I had dronke a draughte of sweete wyn!  
 460 Metellius, the foule cherl, the swyn,  
 That with a staf birafte his wyf hir lyf,  
 For she drank wyn, thogh I hadde been his wyf,  
 He sholde nat han daunted me fro drynke!  
 And after wyn on Venus moste I thynke,  
 For al so siker as cold engendreth hayl,  
 A likerous mouth moste han a likerous tayl.  
 In wommen vinolent is no defence --  
 This knowen lecchours by experience.  
 But -- Lord Crist! -- whan that it remembreth me  
 470 Upon my yowthe, and on my jolitee,  
 It tikleth me aboute myn herte roote.  
 Unto this day it dooth myn herte boote  
 That I have had my world as in my tyme.  
 But age, alas, that al wole envenyme,  
 Hath me biraft my beautee and my pith.  
 Lat go. Farewel! The devel go therwith!  
 The flour is goon; ther is namoore to telle;  
 The bren, as I best kan, now moste I selle;  
 But yet to be right myrie wol I fonde.  
 480 Now wol I tellen of my fourthe housbonde.  
 I seye, I hadde in herte greet despit  
 That he of any oother had delit.  
 But he was quit, by God and by Seint Joce!  
 I made hym of the same wode a croce;  
 Nat of my body, in no foul manere,  
 But certainly, I made folk swich cheere  
 That in his owene grece I made hym frye  
 For angre, and for verray jalousye.  
 By God, in erthe I was his purgatorie,  
 490 For which I hope his soule be in glorie.  
 For, God it woot, he sat ful ofte and song,  
 Whan that his shoo ful bitterly hym wrong.  
 Ther was no wight, save God and he, that wiste,  
 In many wise, how soore I hym twiste.  
 He deyde whan I cam fro Jerusalem,  
 And lith ygrave under the roode beem,

Al is his tombe noght so curyus  
As was the sepulcre of hym Daryus,  
Which that Appelles wroghte subtilly;  
500 It nys but wast to burye hym preciously.  
Lat hym fare wel; God yeve his soule reste!  
He is now in his grave and in his cheste.  
Now of my fifthe housbonde wol I telle.  
God lete his soule nevere come in helle!  
And yet was he to me the mooste shrewe;  
That feele I on my ribbes al by rewe,  
And evere shal unto myn endyng day.  
But in oure bed he was so fressh and gay,  
And therwithal so wel koude he me glose,  
510 Whan that he wolde han my bele chose;  
That thogh he hadde me bete on every bon,  
He koude wynne agayn my love anon.  
I trowe I loved hym best, for that he  
Was of his love daungerous to me.  
We wommen han, if that I shal nat lye,  
In this matere a queynte fantasye:  
Wayte what thyng we may nat lightly have,  
Therafter wol we crie al day and crave.  
Forbede us thyng, and that desiren we;  
520 Preesse on us faste, and thanne wol we fle.  
With daunger oute we al oure chaffare;  
Greet prees at market maketh deere ware,  
And to greet cheep is holde at litel prys:  
This knoweth every womman that is wys.  
My fifthe housbonde -- God his soule blesse! --  
Which that I took for love, and no richesse,  
He som tyme was a clerk of Oxenford,  
And hadde left scole, and wente at hom to bord  
With my gossib, dwellynge in oure toun;  
530 God have hir soule! Hir name was Alisoun.  
She knew myn herte, and eek my privetee,  
Bet than oure parisshe preest, so moot I thee!  
To hire biwreyed I my conseil al.  
For hadde myn housbonde pissed on a wal,  
Or doon a thyng that sholde han cost his lyf,  
To hire, and to another worthy wyf,  
And to my nece, which that I loved weel,  
I wolde han toold his conseil every deel.

And so I dide ful often, God it woot,  
540 That made his face often reed and hoot  
For verray shame, and blamed hymself for he  
Had toold to me so greet a pryvetee.  
And so bifel that ones in a Lente --  
So often tymes I to my gossyb wente,  
For evere yet I loved to be gay,  
And for to walke in March, Averill, and May,  
Fro hous to hous, to heere sondry talys --  
That Jankyn clerk, and my gossyb dame Alys,  
And I myself, into the feeldes wente.  
550 Myn housbonde was at Londoun al that Lente;  
I hadde the bettre leyser for to pleye,  
And for to se, and eek for to be seye  
Of lusty folk. What wiste I wher my grace  
Was shapen for to be, or in what place?  
Therfore I made my visitaciouns  
To vigilies and to processions,  
To prechyng eek, and to thise pilgrimages,  
To pleyes of myracles, and to mariages,  
And wered upon my gaye scarlet gytes.  
560 Thise wormes, ne thise motthes, ne thise mytes,  
Upon my peril, frete hem never a deel;  
And wostow why? For they were used weel.  
Now wol I tellen forth what happed me.  
I seye that in the feeldes walked we,  
Til trewely we hadde swich daliance,  
This clerk and I, that of my purveiance  
I spak to hym and seyde hym how that he,  
If I were wydwe, sholde wedde me.  
For certainly -- I sey for no bobance --  
570 Yet was I nevere withouten purveiance  
Of mariage, n' of othere thynges eek.  
I holde a mouses herte nat worth a leek  
That hath but oon hole for to sterte to,  
And if that faille, thanne is al ydo.  
I bar hym on honde he hadde enchanted me --  
My dame taughte me that soutiltee --  
And eek I seyde I mette of hym al nyght,  
He wolde han slayn me as I lay upright,  
And al my bed was ful of verray blood;  
580 `But yet I hope that ye shal do me good,

For blood bitokeneth gold, as me was taught.'  
And al was fals; I dremed of it right naught,  
But as I folwed ay my dames loore,  
As wel of this as of othere thynges moore.  
But now, sire, lat me se what I shal seyn.  
A ha! By God, I have my tale ageyn.  
Whan that my fourthe housbonde was on beere,  
I weep algate, and made sory cheere,  
As wyves mooten, for it is usage,  
590 And with my coverchief covered my visage,  
But for that I was purveyed of a make,  
I wepte but smal, and that I undertake.  
To chirche was myn housbonde born a-morwe  
With neighebores, that for hym maden sorwe;  
And Jankyn, oure clerk, was oon of tho.  
As help me God, whan that I saugh hym go  
After the beere, me thoughte he hadde a paire  
Of legges and of feet so clene and faire  
That al myn herte I yaf unto his hoold.  
600 He was, I trowe, twenty wynter oold,  
And I was fourty, if I shal seye sooth;  
But yet I hadde alwey a coltes tooth.  
Gat-tothed I was, and that bicam me weel;  
I hadde the prente of seinte Venus seel.  
As help me God, I was a lusty oon,  
And faire, and riche, and yong, and wel bigon,  
And trewely, as myne housbondes tolde me,  
I hadde the beste quoniam myghte be.  
For certes, I am al Venerien  
610 In feelynge, and myn herte is Marcien.  
Venus me yaf my lust, my likerousnesse,  
And Mars yaf me my sturdy hardynesse;  
Myn ascendent was Taur, and Mars therinne.  
Allas, allas! That evere love was synne!  
I folwed ay myn inclinacioun  
By vertu of my constellacioun;  
That made me I koude noght withdrawe  
My chambre of Venus from a good felawe.  
Yet have I Martes mark upon my face,  
620 And also in another privee place.  
For God so wys be my savacioun,  
I ne loved nevere by no discrecioun,

But evere folwede myn appetit,  
Al were he short, or long, or blak, or whit;  
I took no kep, so that he liked me,  
How poore he was, ne eek of what degree.  
What sholde I seye but, at the monthes ende,  
This joly clerk, Jankyn, that was so hende,  
Hath wedded me with greet solempnytee,  
630 And to hym yaf I al the lond and fee  
That evere was me yeven therbifoore.  
But afterward repented me ful soore;  
He nolde suffre nothyng of my list.  
By God, he smoot me ones on the lyst,  
For that I rente out of his book a leef,  
That of the strook myn ere wax al deef.  
Stibourn I was as is a leonesse,  
And of my tonge a verray jangleresse,  
And walke I wolde, as I had doon biforn,  
640 From hous to hous, although he had it sworn;  
For which he often tymes wolde preche,  
And me of olde Romain geestes teche;  
How he Symplicius Gallus lefte his wyf,  
And hire forsook for terme of al his lyf,  
Noght but for open-heveded he hir say  
Lookynge out at his dore upon a day.  
Another Romain tolde he me by name,  
That, for his wyf was at a someres game  
Withouten his wityng, he forsook hire eke.  
650 And thanne wolde he upon his Bible seke  
That ilke proverbe of Ecclesiaste  
Where he comandeth and forbedeth faste  
Man shal nat suffre his wyf go roule aboute.  
Thanne wolde he seye right thus, withouten doute:  
'Whoso that buyldeth his hous al of salwes,  
And priketh his blynde hors over the falwes,  
And suffreth his wyf to go seken halwes,  
Is worthy to been hanged on the galwes!'  
But al for noght, I sette noght an hawe  
660 Of his proverbes n' of his olde sawe,  
Ne I wolde nat of hym corrected be.  
I hate hym that my vices telleth me,  
And so doo mo, God woot, of us than I.  
This made hym with me wood al outrely;



I nolde noght forbere hym in no cas.  
Now wol I seye yow sooth, by Seint Thomas,  
Why that I rente out of his book a leef,  
For which he smoot me so that I was deaf.  
He hadde a book that gladly, nyght and day,  
670 For his desport he wolde rede alway;  
He cleped it Valerie and Theofraste,  
At which book he lough alwey ful faste.  
And eek ther was somtyme a clerk at Rome,  
A cardinal, that highte Seint Jerome,  
That made a book agayn Jovinian;  
In which book eek ther was Tertulan,  
Crisippus, Trotula, and Helowys,  
That was abbesse nat fer fro Parys,  
And eek the Parables of Salomon,  
680 Ovides Art, and bookes many on,  
And alle thise were bounden in o volume.  
And every nyght and day was his custume,  
Whan he hadde leyser and vacacioun  
From oother worldly occupacioun,  
To reden on this book of wikked wyves.  
He knew of hem mo legendes and lyves  
Than been of goode wyves in the Bible.  
For trusteth wel, it is an impossible  
That any clerk wol speke good of wyves,  
690 But if it be of hooly seintes lyves,  
Ne of noon oother womman never the mo.  
Who peyntede the leon, tel me who?  
By God, if wommen hadde writen stories,  
As clerkes han withinne hire oratories,  
They wolde han writen of men moore wikkednesse  
Than al the mark of Adam may redresse.  
The children of Mercurie and of Venus  
Been in hir wirkyng ful contrarius;  
Mercurie loveth wysdam and science,  
700 And Venus loveth ryot and dispence.  
And, for hire diverse disposicioun,  
Ech falleth in otheres exaltacioun.  
And thus, God woot, Mercurie is desolat  
In Pisces, wher Venus is exaltat,  
And Venus falleth ther Mercurie is reysed.  
Therefore no womman of no clerk is preysed.

The clerk, whan he is oold, and may noght do  
Of Venus werkes worth his olde sho,  
Thanne sit he down, and writ in his dotage  
710 That wommen kan nat kepe hir mariage!  
But now to purpos, why I tolde thee  
That I was beten for a book, pardee!  
Upon a nyght Jankyn, that was oure sire,  
Redde on his book, as he sat by the fire,  
Of Eva first, that for hir wikkednesse  
Was al mankynde broght to wrecchednesse,  
For which that Jhesu Crist hymself was slayn,  
That boghte us with his herte blood agayn.  
Lo, heere expres of womman may ye fynde  
720 That womman was the los of al mankynde.  
Tho redde he me how Sampson loste his heres:  
Slepynge, his lemman kitte it with hir sheres;  
Thurgh which treson loste he bothe his yen.  
Tho redde he me, if that I shal nat lyen,  
Of Hercules and of his Dianyre,  
That caused hym to sette hymself afyre.  
No thyng forgat he the care and the wo  
That Socrates hadde with his wyves two,  
How Xantippa caste pisse upon his heed.  
730 This sely man sat stille as he were deed;  
He wiped his heed, namoore dorste he seyn,  
But `Er that thonder stynte, comth a reyn!'  
Of Phasipha, that was the queene of Crete,  
For shrewednesse, hym thoughte the tale swete;  
Fy! Spek namoore -- it is a grisly thyng --  
Of hire horrible lust and hir likyng.  
Of Clitermystra, for hire lecherye,  
That falsly made hire housbonde for to dye,  
He redde it with ful good devocioun.  
740 He tolde me eek for what occasioun  
Amphiorax at Thebes loste his lyf.  
Myn housbonde hadde a legende of his wyf,  
Eriphilem, that for an ouche of gold  
Hath prively unto the Grekes told  
Wher that hir housbonde hidde hym in a place,  
For which he hadde at Thebes sory grace.  
Of Lyvia tolde he me, and of Lucye:  
They bothe made hir housbondes for to dye,

That oon for love, that oother was for hate.  
750 Lyvia hir housbonde, on an even late,  
Empoysoned hath, for that she was his fo;  
Lucia, likerous, loved hire housbonde so  
That, for he sholde alwey upon hire thynke,  
She yaf hym swich a manere love-drynke  
That he was deed er it were by the morwe;  
And thus algates housbondes han sorwe.  
Thanne tolde he me how oon Latumyus  
Compleyned unto his felawe Arrius  
That in his gardyn growed swich a tree  
760 On which he seyde how that his wyves thre  
Hanged himself for herte despitus.  
'O leeve brother,' quod this Arrius,  
'Yif me a plante of thilke blissed tree,  
And in my gardyn planted shal it bee.'  
Of latter date, of wyves hath he red  
That somme han slayn hir housbondes in hir bed,  
And lete hir lecchour dighte hire al the nyght,  
Whan that the corps lay in the floor upright.  
And somme han dryve nayles in hir brayn,  
770 Whil that they slepte, and thus they had hem slayn.  
Somme han hem yeve poyoun in hire drynke.  
He spak moore harm than herte may bithynke,  
And therwithal he knew of mo proverbes  
Than in this world ther growen gras or herbes.  
'Bet is,' quod he, 'thyn habitacioun  
Be with a leon or a foul dragoun,  
Than with a womman usynge for to chyde.  
Bet is,' quod he, 'hye in the roof abyde,  
Than with an angry wyf down in the hous;  
780 They been so wikked and contrarious,  
They haten that hir housbondes loven ay.'  
He seyde, 'A womman cast hir shame away,  
Whan she cast of hir smok'; and forthermo,  
'A fair womman, but she be chaast also,  
Is lyk a gold ryng in a sowes nose.'  
Who wolde wene, or who wolde suppose,  
The wo that in myn herte was, and pyne?  
And whan I saugh he wolde nevere fyne  
To reden on this cursed book al nyght,  
790 Al sodeynly thre leves have I plyght

Out of his book, right as he radde, and eke  
 I with my fest so took hym on the cheke  
 That in oure fyr he fil bakward adoun.  
 And he up stirte as dooth a wood leoun,  
 And with his fest he smoot me on the heed  
 That in the floor I lay as I were deed.  
 And whan he saugh how stille that I lay,  
 He was agast and wolde han fled his way,  
 Til atte laste out of my swogh I breyde.  
 800 'O! hastow slayn me, false theef?' I seyde,  
 'And for my land thus hastow mordred me?  
 Er I be deed, yet wol I kisse thee.'  
 And neer he cam, and kneled faire adoun,  
 And seyde, 'Deere suster Alisoun,  
 As help me God, I shal thee nevere smyte!  
 That I have doon, it is thyself to wyte.  
 Foryeve it me, and that I thee biseke!'  
 And yet eftsoones I hitte hym on the cheke,  
 And seyde, 'Theef, thus muchel am I wreke;  
 810 Now wol I dye, I may no lenger speke.'  
 But atte laste, with muchel care and wo,  
 We fille acorded by us selven two.  
 He yaf me al the bridel in myn hond,  
 To han the governance of hous and lond,  
 And of his tonge, and of his hond also;  
 And made hym brenne his book anon right tho.  
 And whan that I hadde geten unto me,  
 By maistrie, al the soveraynetee,  
 And that he seyde, 'Myn owene trewe wyf,  
 820 Do as thee lust the terme of al thy lyf;  
 Keep thyn honour, and keep eek myn estaat' --  
 After that day we hadden never debaat.  
 God helpe me so, I was to hym as kynde  
 As any wyf from Denmark unto Ynde,  
 And also trewe, and so was he to me.  
 I prey to God, that sit in magestee,  
 So blesse his soule for his mercy deere.  
 Now wol I seye my tale, if ye wol heere."  
 The Frere lough, whan he hadde herd al this;  
 830 "Now dame," quod he, "so have I joye or blis,  
 This is a long preamble of a tale!"  
 And whan the Somonour herde the Frere gale,

"Lo," quod the Somonour, "Goddess armes two!

A frere wol entremette hym everemo.

Lo, goode men, a flye and eek a frere

Wol falle in every dyssh and eek mateere.

What spekestow of preambulacioun?

What! amble, or trotte, or pees, or go sit down!

Thou lettest oure disport in this manere."

840 "Ye, woltow so, sire Somonour?" quod the Frere;

"Now, by my feith I shal, er that I go,

Telle of a somonour swich a tale or two

That alle the folk shal laughen in this place."

"Now elles, Frere, I bishrewe thy face,"

Quod this Somonour, "and I bishrewe me,

But if I telle tales two or thre

Of freres er I come to Sidyngborne

That I shal make thyn herte for to morne,

For wel I woot thy pacience is gon."

850 Oure Hooste cride "Pees! And that anon!"

And seyde, "Lat the womman telle hire tale.

Ye fare as folk that dronken ben of ale.

Do, dame, telle forth youre tale, and that is best."

"Al redy, sire," quod she, "right as yow lest,

If I have licence of this worthy Frere."

"Yis, dame," quod he, "tel forth, and I wol heere."



## THE WIFE OF BATH'S TALE

In th' olde dayes of the Kyng Arthour,  
Of which that Britons speken greet honour,  
Al was this land fulfild of fayerye.

860 The elf-queene, with hir joly compaignye,  
Daunced ful ofte in many a grene mede.

This was the olde opinion, as I rede;  
I speke of manye hundred yeres ago.

But now kan no man se none elves mo,  
For now the grete charitee and prayeres  
Of lymytours and othere hooly freres,  
That serchen every lond and every streem,  
As thikke as motes in the sonne-beem,  
Blessynge halles, chambres, kichenes, boures,

870 Citees, burghes, castels, hye toures,

Thropes, bernes, shipnes, dayeryes --  
This maketh that ther ben no fayeryes.

For ther as wont to walken was an elf  
Ther walketh now the lymytour hymself  
In undermeles and in morwenynges,  
And seyth his matyns and his hooly thynges  
As he gooth in his lymytacioun.

Wommen may go saufly up and down.

In every bussh or under every tree

880 Ther is noon oother incubus but he,  
And he ne wol doon hem but dishonour.

And so bifel that this kyng Arthour  
Hadde in his hous a lusty bachelor,  
That on a day cam ridynge fro ryver,  
And happed that, allone as he was born,  
He saugh a mayde walkynge hym biforn,  
Of which mayde anon, maugree hir heed,  
By verray force, he rafte hire maydenhed;  
For which oppressioun was swich clamour

890 And swich pursute unto the kyng Arthour  
That dampned was this knyght for to be deed,  
By cours of lawe, and sholde han lost his heed --

Paraventure swich was the statut tho --  
But that the queene and other ladyes mo  
So longe preyeden the kyng of grace  
Til he his lyf hym graunted in the place,

And yaf hym to the queene, al at hir wille,  
To chese wheither she wolde hym save or spille.  
The queene thanketh the kyng with al hir myght,  
900 And after this thus spak she to the knyght,  
Whan that she saugh hir tyme, upon a day:  
"Thou standest yet," quod she, "in swich array  
That of thy lyf yet hastow no suretee.  
I grante thee lyf, if thou kanst tellen me  
What thyng is it that wommen moost desiren.  
Be war, and keep thy nekke-boon from iren!  
And if thou kanst nat tellen it anon,  
Yet wol I yeve thee leve for to gon  
A twelf-month and a day, to seche and leere  
910 An answeere suffisant in this mateere;  
And suretee wol I han, er that thou pace,  
Thy body for to yelden in this place."  
Wo was this knyght, and sorwefully he siketh;  
But what! He may nat do al as hym liketh.  
And at the laste he chees hym for to wende  
And come agayn, right at the yeres ende,  
With swich answeere as God wolde hym purveye;  
And taketh his leve, and wendeth forth his weye.  
He seketh every hous and every place  
920 Where as he hopeth for to fynde grace  
To lerne what thyng wommen loven moost,  
But he ne koude arryven in no coost  
Wher as he myghte fynde in this mateere  
Two creatures accordynge in-feere.  
Somme seyde wommen loven best richesse,  
Somme seyde honour, somme seyde jolynesse,  
Somme riche array, somme seyden lust abedde,  
And oftetyme to be wydwe and wedde.  
Somme seyde that oure hertes been moost esed  
930 Whan that we been yflatered and yplesed.  
He gooth ful ny the sothe, I wol nat lye.  
A man shal wynne us best with flaterye,  
And with attendance and with bisynesse  
Been we ylymed, bothe moore and lesse.  
And somme seyen that we loven best  
For to be free and do right as us lest,  
And that no man repreve us of oure vice,  
But seye that we be wise and no thyng nyce.

For trewely ther is noon of us alle,  
940 If any wight wol clawe us on the galle,  
That we nel kike, for he seith us sooth.  
Assay, and he shal fynde it that so dooth;  
For, be we never so vicious withinne,  
We wol been holden wise and clene of synne.  
And somme seyn that greet delit han we  
For to been holden stable, and eek secree,  
And in o purpos stedefastly to dwelle,  
And nat biwreye thyng that men us telle.  
But that tale is nat worth a rake-stele.  
950 Pardee, we wommen konne no thyng hele;  
Witnesse on Myda -- wol ye heere the tale?  
Ovyde, amonges othere thynges smale,  
Seyde Myda hadde, under his longe heres,  
Growynge upon his heed two asses eres,  
The whiche vice he hydde as he best myghte  
Ful subtilly from every mannes sighte,  
That, save his wyf, ther wiste of it namo.  
He loved hire moost, and trusted hire also;  
He preyede hire that to no creature  
960 She sholde tellen of his disfigure.  
She swoor him, "Nay"; for al this world to wynne,  
She nolde do that vileynye or synne,  
To make hir housbonde han so foul a name.  
She nolde nat telle it for hir owene shame.  
But nathelees, hir thoughte that she dyde  
That she so longe sholde a conseil hyde;  
Hir thoughte it swal so soore aboute hir herte  
That nedely som word hire moste asterte;  
And sith she dorste telle it to no man,  
970 Doun to a mareys faste by she ran --  
Til she cam there hir herte was afyre --  
And as a bitore bombleth in the myre,  
She leyde hir mouth unto the water doun:  
"Biwreye me nat, thou water, with thy soun,"  
Quod she; "to thee I telle it and namo;  
Myn housbonde hath longe asses erys two!  
Now is myn herte al hool; now is it oute.  
I myghte no lenger kepe it, out of doute."  
Heere may ye se, thogh we a tyme abyde,  
980 Yet out it moot; we kan no conseil hyde.



The remenant of the tale if ye wol heere,  
 Redeth Ovyde, and ther ye may it leere.  
 This knyght, of which my tale is specially,  
 Whan that he saugh he myghte nat come therby --  
 This is to seye, what wommen love moost --  
 Withinne his brest ful sorweful was the goost.  
 But hoom he gooth; he myghte nat sojourne;  
 The day was come that homward moste he tourne.  
 And in his wey it happed hym to ryde,  
 990 In al this care, under a forest syde,  
 Wher as he saugh upon a daunce go  
 Of ladyes foure and twenty, and yet mo;  
 Toward the whiche daunce he drow ful yerne,  
 In hope that som wysdom sholde he lerne.  
 But certeinly, er he cam fully there,  
 Vanysshed was this daunce, he nyste where.  
 No creature saugh he that bar lyf,  
 Save on the grene he saugh sittynge a wyf --  
 A fouler wight ther may no man devyse.  
 1000 Agayn the knyght this olde wyf gan ryse,  
 And seyde, "Sire knyght, heer forth ne lith no wey.  
 Tel me what that ye seken, by youre fey!  
 Paraventure it may the bettre be;  
 Thise olde folk kan muchel thyng," quod she.  
 "My leeve mooder," quod this knyght, "certeyn  
 I nam but deed but if that I kan seyn  
 What thyng it is that wommen moost desire.  
 Koude ye me wisse, I wolde wel quite youre hire."  
 "Plight me thy trouthe heere in myn hand," quod she,  
 1010 "The nexte thyng that I requere thee,  
 Thou shalt it do, if it lye in thy myght,  
 And I wol telle it yow er it be nyght."  
 "Have heer my trouthe," quod the knyght, "I grante."  
 "Thanne," quod she, "I dar me wel avante  
 Thy lyf is sauf, for I wol stonde therby;  
 Upon my lyf, the queene wol seye as I.  
 Lat se which is the proudeste of hem alle  
 That wereth on a coverchief or a calle  
 That dar seye nay of that I shal thee teche.  
 1020 Lat us go forth withouten lenger speche."  
 Tho rowned she a pistel in his ere,  
 And bad hym to be glad and have no fere.

Whan they be comen to the court, this knyght  
Seyde he had holde his day, as he hadde hight,  
And redy was his answeere, as he sayde.  
Ful many a noble wyf, and many a mayde,  
And many a wydwe, for that they been wise,  
The queene herself sittynge as a justise,  
Assembled been, his answeere for to heere;  
1030 And afterward this knyght was bode appeere.  
To every wight comanded was silence,  
And that the knyght sholde telle in audience  
What thyng that worldly wommen loven best.  
This knyght ne stood nat stille as doth a best,  
But to his questioun anon answerde  
With manly voys, that al the court it herde:  
"My lige lady, generally," quod he,  
"Wommen desiren to have sovereynetee  
As wel over hir housbond as hir love,  
1040 And for to been in maistrie hym above.  
This is youre mooste desir, thogh ye me kille.  
Dooth as yow list; I am heer at youre wille."  
In al the court ne was ther wyf, ne mayde,  
Ne wydwe that contraried that he sayde,  
But seyden he was worthy han his lyf.  
And with that word up stirte the olde wyf,  
Which that the knyght saugh sittynge on the grene:  
"Mercy," quod she, "my sovereyn lady queene!  
Er that youre court departe, do me right.  
1050 I taughte this answeere unto the knyght;  
For which he plighte me his trouthe there,  
The firste thyng that I wolde hym requere  
He wolde it do, if it lay in his myghte.  
Bifore the court thanne preye I thee, sir knyght,"  
Quod she, "that thou me take unto thy wyf,  
For wel thou woost that I have kept thy lyf.  
If I seye fals, sey nay, upon thy fey!"  
This knyght answerde, "Allas and weylawey!  
I woot right wel that swich was my biheste.  
1060 For Goddes love, as chees a newe requeste!  
Taak al my good and lat my body go."  
"Nay, thanne," quod she, "I shrewe us bothe two!  
For thogh that I be foul, and oold, and poore  
I nolde for al the metal, ne for oore

That under erthe is grave or lith above,  
But if thy wyf I were, and eek thy love."  
"My love?" quod he, "nay, my dampnacioun!  
Allas, that any of my nacioun  
Sholde evere so foule disparaged be!"  
1070 But al for noght; the ende is this, that he  
Constreyned was; he nedes moste hire wedde,  
And taketh his olde wyf, and gooth to bedde.  
Now wolden som men seye, paraventure,  
That for my negligence I do no cure  
To tellen yow the joye and al th' array  
That at the feeste was that ilke day.  
To which thyng shortly answeren I shal:  
I seye ther nas no joye ne feeste at al;  
Ther nas but hevynesse and mucche sorwe.  
1080 For prively he wedded hire on morwe,  
And al day after hidde hym as an owle,  
So wo was hym, his wyf looked so foule.  
Greet was the wo the knyght hadde in his thoght,  
Whan he was with his wyf abedde ybrought;  
He walweth and he turneth to and fro.  
His olde wyf lay smyllynge everemo,  
And seyde, "O deere housbonde, benedicitee!  
Fareth every knyght thus with his wyf as ye?  
Is this the lawe of kyng Arthures hous?  
1090 Is every knyght of his so dangerous?  
I am youre owene love and youre wyf;  
I am she which that saved hath youre lyf,  
And, certes, yet ne dide I yow nevere unright;  
Why fare ye thus with me this firste nyght?  
Ye faren lyk a man had lost his wit.  
What is my gilt? For Goddes love, tel it,  
And it shal been amended, if I may."  
"Amended?" quod this knyght, "Allas, nay, nay!  
It wol nat been amended nevere mo.  
1100 Thou art so loothly, and so oold also,  
And therto comen of so lough a kynde,  
That litel wonder is thogh I walwe and wynde.  
So wolde God myn herte wolde breste!"  
"Is this," quod she, "the cause of youre unreste?"  
"Ye, certainly," quod he, "no wonder is."  
"Now, sire," quod she, "I koude amende al this,

If that me liste, er it were dayes thre,  
 So wel ye myghte bere yow unto me.  
 "But, for ye speken of swich gentillesse  
 1110 As is descended out of old richesse,  
 That therfore sholden ye be gentil men,  
 Swich arrogance is nat worth an hen.  
 Looke who that is moost vertuous alway,  
 Pryvee and apert, and moost entendeth ay  
 To do the gentil dedes that he kan;  
 Taak hym for the grettest gentil man.  
 Crist wole we clayme of hym oure gentillesse,  
 Nat of oure eldres for hire old richesse.  
 For thogh they yeve us al hir heritage,  
 1120 For which we clayme to been of heigh parage,  
 Yet may they nat biquethe for no thyng  
 To noon of us hir vertuous lyvyng,  
 That made hem gentil men ycalled be,  
 And bad us folwen hem in swich degree.  
 "Wel kan the wise poete of Florence,  
 That highte Dant, speken in this sentence.  
 Lo, in swich maner rym is Dantes tale:  
 `Ful selde up riseth by his branches smale  
 Prowesse of man, for God, of his goodnesse,  
 1130 Wole that of hym we clayme oure gentillesse';  
 For of oure eldres may we no thyng clayme  
 But temporel thyng, that man may hurte and mayme.  
 "Eek every wight woot this as wel as I,  
 If gentillesse were planted natureelly  
 Unto a certeyn lynage down the lyne,  
 Pryvee and apert thanne wolde they nevere fyne  
 To doon of gentillesse the faire office;  
 They myghte do no vileynye or vice.  
 "Taak fyr and ber it in the derkeste hous  
 1140 Bitwix this and the mount of Kaukasous,  
 And lat men shette the dores and go thenne;  
 Yet wole the fyr as faire lye and brenne  
 As twenty thousand men myghte it biholde;  
 His office natureel ay wol it holde,  
 Up peril of my lyf, til that it dye.  
 "Heere may ye se wel how that genterye  
 Is nat annexed to possessioun,  
 Sith folk ne doon hir operacioun

Alwey, as dooth the fyr, lo, in his kynde.  
1150 For, God it woot, men may wel often fynde  
A lordes sone do shame and vileynye;  
And he that wole han pris of his gentrye,  
For he was boren of a gentil hous  
And hadde his eldres noble and vertuous,  
And nel hymselfen do no gentil dedis  
Ne folwen his gentil auncestre that deed is,  
He nys nat gentil, be he duc or erl,  
For vileyns synful dedes make a cherl.  
For gentillesse nys but renomee  
1160 Of thyne auncestres, for hire heigh bountee,  
Which is a strange thyng to thy persone.  
Thy gentillesse cometh fro God allone.  
Thanne comth oure verray gentillesse of grace;  
It was no thyng biquethe us with oure place.  
"Thenketh hou noble, as seith Valerius,  
Was thilke Tullius Hostilius,  
That out of poverte roos to heigh noblesse.  
Reedeth Senek, and redeth eek Boece;  
Ther shul ye seen expres that it no drede is  
1170 That he is gentil that dooth gentil dedis.  
And therefore, leewe housbonde, I thus conclude:  
Al were it that myne auncestres were rude,  
Yet may the hye God, and so hope I,  
Grante me grace to lyven vertuously.  
Thanne am I gentil, whan that I bigynne  
To lyven vertuously and weyve synne.  
"And ther as ye of poverte me repreeve,  
The hye God, on whom that we bileeve,  
In wilful poverte chees to lyve his lyf.  
1180 And certes every man, mayden, or wyf  
May understonde that Jhesus, hevene kyng,  
Ne wolde nat chese a vicious lyvyng.  
Glad poverte is an honest thyng, certeyn;  
This wole Senec and othere clerkes seyn.  
Whoso that halt hym payd of his poverte,  
I holde hym riche, al hadde he nat a sherte.  
He that coveiteth is a povre wight,  
For he wolde han that is nat in his myght;  
But he that noght hath, ne coveiteth have,  
1190 Is riche, although ye holde hym but a knave.

Verray poverte, it syngeth proprely;  
Juvenal seith of poverte myrily:  
'The povre man, whan he goth by the weye,  
Bifore the theves he may synge and pleye.'  
Poverte is hateful good and, as I gesse,  
A ful greet bryngere out of bisynesse;  
A greet amendere eek of sapience  
To hym that taketh it in pacience.  
Poverte is this, although it seme alenge:  
1200 Possessioun that no wight wol challenge.  
Poverte ful ofte, whan a man is lowe,  
Maketh his God and eek hymself to knowe.  
Poverte a spectacle is, as thynketh me,  
Thurgh which he may his verray freendes see.  
And therefore, sire, syn that I noght yow greve,  
Of my poverte namoore ye me repreve.  
"Now, sire, of elde ye repreve me;  
And certes, sire, thogh noon auctoritee  
Were in no book, ye gentils of honour  
1210 Seyn that men sholde an oold wight doon favour  
And clepe hym fader, for youre gentillesse;  
And auctours shal I fynden, as I gesse.  
"Now ther ye seye that I am foul and old,  
Than drede you noght to been a cokewold;  
For filthe and eelde, also moot I thee,  
Been grete wardeyns upon chastitee.  
But nathelees, syn I knowe youre delit,  
I shal fulfille youre worldly appetit.  
"Chese now," quod she, "oon of thise thynges tweye:  
1220 To han me foul and old til that I deye,  
And be to yow a trewe, humble wyf,  
And nevere yow displese in al my lyf,  
Or elles ye wol han me yong and fair,  
And take youre aventure of the repair  
That shal be to youre hous by cause of me,  
Or in som oother place, may wel be.  
Now chese yourselven, wheither that yow liketh."  
This knyght avyseth hym and sore siketh,  
But atte laste he seyde in this manere:  
1230 "My lady and my love, and wyf so deere,  
I put me in youre wise governance;  
Cheseth youreself which may be moost plesance

And moost honour to yow and me also.  
I do no fors the wheither of the two,  
For as yow liketh, it suffiseth me."  
"Thanne have I gete of yow maistrie," quod she,  
"Syn I may chese and governe as me lest?"  
"Ye, certes, wyf," quod he, "I holde it best."  
"Kys me," quod she, "we be no lenger wrothe,  
1240 For, by my trouthe, I wol be to yow bothe --  
This is to seyn, ye, bothe fair and good.  
I prey to God that I moote sterven wood,  
But I to yow be also good and trewe  
As evere was wyf, syn that the world was newe.  
And but I be to-morn as fair to seene  
As any lady, emperice, or queene,  
That is bitwixe the est and eke the west,  
Dooth with my lyf and deth right as yow lest.  
Cast up the curtyn, looke how that it is."  
1250 And whan the knyght saugh verrailly al this,  
That she so fair was, and so yong therto,  
For joye he hente hire in his armes two.  
His herte bathed in a bath of blisse.  
A thousand tyme a-rewe he gan hire kisse,  
And she obeyed hym in every thyng  
That myghte doon hym plesance or likyng.  
And thus they lyve unto hir lyves ende  
In parfit joye; and Jhesu Crist us sende  
Housbondes meeke, yonge, and fressh abedde,  
1260 And grace t' overbyde hem that we wedde;  
And eek I praye Jhesu shorte hir lyves  
That noght wol be governed by hir wyves;  
And olde and angry nygardes of dispence,  
God sende hem soone verray pestilence!



## THE FRIAR'S PROLOGUE

This worthy lymytour, this noble Frere,  
He made alwey a maner louryng chiere  
Upon the Somonour, but for honestee  
No vileyns word as yet to hym spak he.  
But atte laste he seyde unto the wyf,  
1270 "Dame," quod he, "God yeve yow right good lyf!  
Ye han heer touched, also moot I thee,  
In scole-matere greet difficultee.  
Ye han seyde mucche thyng right wel, I seye;  
But, dame, heere as we ryde by the weye,  
Us nedeth nat to speken but of game,  
And lete auctoritees, on Goddes name,  
To prechyng and to scoles of clergie.  
But if it lyke to this compaignye,  
I wol yow of a somonour telle a game.  
1280 Pardee, ye may wel knowe by the name  
That of a somonour may no good be sayd;  
I praye that noon of you be yvele apayd.  
A somonour is a rennere up and doun  
With mandementz for fornicacioun,  
And is ybet at every townes ende."  
Oure Hoost tho spak, "A, sire, ye sholde be hende  
And curteys, as a man of youre estaat;  
In compaignye we wol have no debaat.  
Telleth youre tale, and lat the Somonour be."  
1290 "Nay," quod the Somonour, "lat hym seye to me  
What so hym list; whan it comth to my lot,  
By God, I shal hym quiten every grot.  
I shal hym tellen which a greet honour  
It is to be a flaterynge lymytour,  
And of many another manere cryme  
Which nedeth nat rehercen at this tyme;  
And his office I shal hym telle, ywis."  
Oure Hoost answerde, "Pees, namoore of this!"  
And after this he seyde unto the Frere,  
1300 "Tel forth youre tale, leeve maister deere."





## THE FRIAR'S TALE

Whilom ther was dwellynge in my contree  
 An erchedeken, a man of heigh degree,  
 That boldely dide execucioun  
 In punysshynge of fornicacioun,  
 Of wicchecraft, and eek of bawderye,  
 Of diffamacioun, and avowtrye,  
 Of chirche reves, and of testamentz,  
 Of contractes and of lakke of sacramentz,  
 Of usure, and of symonye also.  
 1310 But certes, lecchours dide he grettest wo;  
 They sholde synge if that they were hent;  
 And smale tytheres weren foule yshent,  
 If any persoun wolde upon hem pleyne.  
 Ther myghte aterne hym no pecunyal peyne.  
 For smale tithes and for smal offrynge  
 He made the peple pitously to synge,  
 For er the bisshop caughte hem with his hook,  
 They weren in the erchedeknes book.  
 Thanne hadde he, thurgh his jurisdiccoun,  
 1320 Power to doon on hem correccioun.  
 He hadde a somonour redy to his hond;  
 A slyer boye nas noon in Engelond;  
 For subtilly he hadde his espaille,  
 That taughte hym wel wher that hym myghte availle.  
 He koude spare of lecchours oon or two,  
 To techen hym to foure and twenty mo.  
 For thogh this Somonour wood were as an hare,  
 To telle his harlotrye I wol nat spare;  
 For we been out of his correccioun.  
 1330 They han of us no jurisdiccoun,  
 Ne nevere shullen, terme of alle hir lyves.  
 "Peter! so been wommen of the styves,"  
 Quod the Somonour, "yput out of oure cure!"  
 "Pees! with myschance and with mysaventure!"  
 Thus seyde oure Hoost, "and lat hym telle his tale.  
 Now telleth forth, thogh that the Somonour gale;  
 Ne spareth nat, myn owene maister deere."  
 This false theef, this somonour, quod the Frere,  
 Hadde alwey bawdes redy to his hond,  
 1340 As any hauk to lure in Engelond,

That tolde hym al the secree that they knewe,  
For hire acqueyntance was nat come of newe.  
They weren his approwours prively.  
He took hymself a greet profit therby;  
His maister knew nat alwey what he wan.  
Withouten mandement a lewed man  
He koude somne, on peyne of Cristes curs,  
And they were glade for to fille his purs  
And make hym grete feestes atte nale.  
1350 And right as Judas hadde purses smale,  
And was a theef, right swich a theef was he;  
His maister hadde but half his duetee.  
He was, if I shal yeven hym his laude,  
A theef, and eek a somnour, and a baude.  
He hadde eek wenches at his retenue,  
That, wheither that sir Robert or sir Huwe,  
Or Jakke, or Rauf, or whoso that it were  
That lay by hem, they tolde it in his ere.  
Thus was the wenche and he of oon assent,  
1360 And he wolde fecche a feyned mandement,  
And somne hem to chapitre bothe two,  
And pile the man, and lete the wenche go.  
Thanne wolde he seye, "Freend, I shal for thy sake  
Do striken hire out of oure lettres blake;  
Thee thar namoore as in this cas travaille.  
I am thy freend, ther I thee may availle."  
Certeyn he knew of briberyes mo  
Than possible is to telle in yeres two.  
For in this world nys dogge for the bowe  
1370 That kan an hurt deer from an hool yknowe  
Bet than this somnour knew a sly lecchour,  
Or an avowtier, or a paramour.  
And for that was the fruyt of al his rente,  
Therefore on it he sette al his entente.  
And so bifel that ones on a day  
This somnour, evere waityng on his pray,  
Rood for to somne an old wydwe, a ribibe,  
Feynyng a cause, for he wolde brybe.  
And happed that he saugh bifore hym ryde  
1380 A gay yeman, under a forest syde.  
A bowe he bar, and arwes brighte and kene;  
He hadde upon a courtepy of grene,

An hat upon his heed with frenges blake.  
"Sire," quod this somnour, "hayl, and wel atake!"  
"Welcome," quod he, "and every good felawe!  
Wher rydestow, under this grene-wode shawe?"  
Seyde this yeman, "Wiltow fer to day?"  
This somnour hym answerde and seyde, "Nay;  
Heere faste by," quod he, "is myn entente  
1390 To ryden, for to reysen up a rente  
That longeth to my lordes duetee."  
"Artow thanne a bailly?" "Ye," quod he.  
He dorste nat, for verray filthe and shame  
Seye that he was a somonour, for the name.  
"Depardieux," quod this yeman, "deere broother,  
Thou art a bailly, and I am another.  
I am unknownen as in this contree;  
Of thyn aqueyntance I wolde praye thee,  
And eek of bretherhede, if that yow leste.  
1400 I have gold and silver in my cheste;  
If that thee happe to comen in oure shire,  
Al shal be thyn, right as thou wolt desire."  
"Grant mercy," quod this somonour, "by my feith!"  
Everych in ootheres hand his trouthe leith,  
For to be sworne bretheren til they deye.  
In daliance they ryden forth and pleye.  
This somonour, which that was as ful of jangles  
As ful of venym been thise waryangles  
And evere enqueryng upon every thyng,  
1410 "Brother," quod he, "where is now youre dwellyng  
Another day if that I sholde yow seche?"  
This yeman hym answerde in softe speche,  
"Brother," quod he, "fer in the north contree,  
Whereas I hope som tyme I shal thee see.  
Er we departe, I shal thee so wel wisse  
That of myn hous ne shaltow nevere mysse."  
"Now, brother," quod this somonour, "I yow preye,  
Teche me, whil that we ryden by the weye,  
Syn that ye been a baillif as am I,  
1420 Som subtiltee, and tel me feithfully  
In myn office how that I may moost wynne;  
And spareth nat for conscience ne synne,  
But as my brother tel me, how do ye."  
"Now, by my trouthe, brother deere," seyde he,

"As I shal tellen thee a feithful tale,  
My wages been ful streite and ful smale.  
My lord is hard to me and daungerous,  
And myn office is ful laborous,  
And therfore by extorcions I lyve.  
1430 For sothe, I take al that men wol me yive.  
Algate, by sleyghte or by violence,  
Fro yeer to yeer I wynne al my dispence.  
I kan no bettre telle, feithfully."

"Now certes," quod this Somonour, "so fare I.  
I spare nat to taken, God it woot,  
But if it be to hevy or to hoot.  
What I may gete in conseil prively,  
No maner conscience of that have I.  
Nere myn extorcioun, I myghte nat lyven,  
1440 Ne of swiche japes wol I nat be shryven.  
Stomak ne conscience ne knowe I noon;  
I shrewe thise shrifte-fadres everychoon.  
Wel be we met, by God and by Seint Jame!  
But, leeve brother, tel me thanne thy name,"  
Quod this somonour. In this meene while  
This yeman gan a litel for to smyle.

"Brother," quod he, "wiltow that I thee telle?  
I am a feend; my dwellyng is in helle,  
And heere I ryde aboute my purchasyng,  
1450 To wite wher men wol yeve me any thyng.  
My purchas is th' effect of al my rente.  
Looke how thou rydest for the same entente,  
To wynne good, thou rekkest nevere how;  
Right so fare I, for ryde wolde I now  
Unto the worldes ende for a preye."

"A!" quod this somonour, "benedicite! What sey ye?  
I wende ye were a yeman trewely.  
Ye han a mannes shap as wel as I;  
Han ye a figure thanne determinat  
1460 In helle, ther ye been in youre estat?"

"Nay, certainly," quod he, "ther have we noon;  
But whan us liketh we kan take us oon,  
Or elles make yow seme we been shape;  
Somtyme lyk a man, or lyk an ape,  
Or lyk an angel kan I ryde or go.  
It is no wonder thyng thogh it be so;

A lowsy jogelour kan deceyve thee,  
And pardee, yet kan I moore craft than he."  
"Why," quod this somonour, "ryde ye thanne or goon  
1470 In sondry shap, and nat alwey in oon?"  
"For we," quod he, "wol us swiche formes make  
As moost able is oure preyes for to take."  
"What maketh yow to han al this labour?"  
"Ful many a cause, leeve sire somonour,"  
Seyde this feend, "but alle thyng hath tyme.  
The day is short, and it is passed pryme,  
And yet ne wan I nothyng in this day.  
I wol entende to wynnyng, if I may,  
And nat entende oure wittes to declare.  
1480 For, brother myn, thy wit is al to bare  
To understonde, althogh I tolde hem thee.  
But, for thou axest why labouren we --  
For somtyme we been Goddes instrumentz  
And meenes to doon his comandementz,  
Whan that hym list, upon his creatures,  
In divers art and in diverse figures.  
Withouten hym we have no myght, certayn,  
If that hym list to stonden ther-agayn.  
And somtyme, at oure prayere, han we leve  
1490 Oonly the body and nat the soule greve;  
Witnesse on Job, whom that we diden wo.  
And somtyme han we myght of bothe two --  
This is to seyn, of soule and body eke.  
And somtyme be we suffred for to seke  
Upon a man and doon his soule unreste  
And nat his body, and al is for the beste.  
Whan he withstandeth oure temptacioun,  
It is a cause of his savacioun,  
Al be it that it was nat oure entente  
1500 He sholde be sauf, but that we wolde hym hente.  
And somtyme be we servant unto man,  
As to the erchebisshop Seint Dunstan,  
And to the apostles servant eek was I."  
"Yet tel me," quod the somonour, "feithfully,  
Make ye yow newe bodies thus alway  
Of elementz?" The feend answerde, "Nay.  
Somtyme we feyne, and somtyme we aryse  
With dede bodyes, in ful sondry wyse,

And speke as renably and faire and wel  
1510 As to the Phitonissa dide Samuel.  
(And yet wol som men seye it was nat he;  
I do no fors of youre dyvynytee.)  
But o thyng warne I thee, I wol nat jape:  
Thou wolt algates wite how we been shape;  
Thou shalt hereafterward, my brother deere,  
Come there thee nedeth nat of me to leere,  
For thou shalt, by thyn owene experience,  
Konne in a chayer rede of this sentence  
Bet than Virgile, while he was on lyve,  
1520 Or Dant also. Now lat us ryde blyve,  
For I wole holde compaignye with thee  
Til it be so that thou forsake me."  
"Nay," quod this somonour, "that shal nat bityde!  
I am a yeman, knowen is ful wyde;  
My trouthe wol I holde, as in this cas.  
For though thou were the devel Sathanas,  
My trouthe wol I holde to my brother,  
As I am sworn, and ech of us til oother,  
For to be trewe brother in this cas;  
1530 And bothe we goon abouten oure purchas.  
Taak thou thy part, what that men wol thee yive,  
And I shal myn; thus may we bothe lyve.  
And if that any of us have moore than oother,  
Lat hym be trewe and parte it with his brother."  
"I graunte," quod the devel, "by my fey."  
And with that word they ryden forth hir wey.  
And right at the entryng of the townes ende,  
To which this somonour shoop hym for to wende,  
They saugh a cart that charged was with hey,  
1540 Which that a cartere droof forth in his wey.  
Deep was the wey, for which the carte stood.  
The cartere smoot and cryde as he were wood,  
"Hayt, Brok! Hayt, Scot! What spare ye for the stones?  
The feend," quod he, "yow fecche, body and bones,  
As ferforthly as evere were ye foled,  
So muche wo as I have with yow tholed!  
The devel have al, bothe hors and cart and hey!"  
This somonour seyde, "Heere shal we have a pley."  
And neer the feend he drough, as noght ne were,  
1550 Ful prively, and rowned in his ere:

"Herkne, my brother, herkne, by thy feith!  
Herestow nat how that the cartere seith?  
Hent it anon, for he hath yeve it thee,  
Bothe hey and cart, and eek his caples thre."  
"Nay," quod the devel, "God woot, never a deel!  
It is nat his entente, trust me weel.  
Axe hym thyself, if thou nat trowest me;  
Or elles stynt a while, and thou shalt see."  
This cartere thakketh his hors upon the croupe,  
1560 And they bigonne to drawen and to stoupe.  
"Heyt! Now," quod he, "ther Jhesu Crist yow blesse,  
And al his handwerk, bothe moore and lesse!  
That was wel twight, myn owene lyard boy.  
I pray God save thee, and Seinte Loy!  
Now is my cart out of the slow, pardee!"  
"Lo, brother," quod the feend, "what tolde I thee?  
Heere may ye se, myn owene deere brother,  
The carl spak oo thing, but he thoghte another.  
Lat us go forth abouten oure viage;  
1570 Heere wyne I nothyng upon cariage."  
Whan that they coomen somewhat out of towne,  
This somonour to his brother gan to rowne:  
"Brother," quod he, "heere woneth an old rebekke  
That hadde almoost as lief to lese hire nekke  
As for to yeve a peny of hir good.  
I wole han twelf pens, though that she be wood,  
Or I wol sompne hire unto oure office;  
And yet, God woot, of hire knowe I no vice.  
But for thou kanst nat, as in this contree,  
1580 Wyne thy cost, taak heer ensample of me."  
This somonour clappeth at the wydweys gate.  
"Com out," quod he, "thou olde virytrate!  
I trowe thou hast som frere or preest with thee."  
"Who clappeth?" seyde this wyf, "benedicitee!  
God save you, sire, what is youre sweete wille?"  
"I have," quod he, "of somonce here a bille;  
Up peyne of cursyng, looke that thou be  
Tomorn bfore the erchedeknes knee  
T' answere to the court of certeyn thynges."  
1590 "Now, Lord," quod she, "Crist Jhesu, kyng of kynges,  
So wisly helpe me, as I ne may.  
I have been syk, and that ful many a day.



I may nat go so fer," quod she, "ne ryde,  
 But I be deed, so priketh it in my syde.  
 May I nat axe a libel, sire somonour,  
 And answer there by my procuratour  
 To swich thyng as men wole opposen me?"  
 "Yis," quod this somonour, "pay anon -- lat se --  
 Twelf pens to me, and I wol thee acquite.  
 1600 I shal no profit han therby but lite;  
 My maister hath the profit and nat I.  
 Com of, and lat me ryden hastily;  
 Yif me twelf pens, I may no lenger tarye."  
 "Twelf pens!" quod she, "Now, lady Seinte Marie  
 So wisly help me out of care and synne,  
 This wyde world thogh that I sholde wynne,  
 Ne have I nat twelf pens withinne myn hoold.  
 Ye knowen wel that I am povre and oold;  
 Kithe youre almesse on me, povre wrecche."  
 1610 "Nay thanne," quod he, "the foule feend me fecche  
 If I th' excuse, though thou shul be spilt!"  
 "Allas!" quod she, "God woot, I have no gilt."  
 "Pay me," quod he, "or by the sweete Seinte Anne,  
 As I wol bere away thy newe panne  
 For dette which thou owest me of old.  
 Whan that thou madest thyn housbonde cokewold,  
 I payde at hoom for thy correccioun."  
 "Thou lixt!" quod she, "by my savacioun,  
 Ne was I nevere er now, wydwe ne wyf,  
 1620 Somoned unto youre court in al my lyf;  
 Ne nevere I nas but of my body trewe!  
 Unto the devel blak and rough of hewe  
 Yeve I thy body and my panne also!"  
 And whan the devel herde hire cursen so  
 Upon hir knees, he seyde in this manere,  
 "Now, Mabely, myn owene mooder deere,  
 Is this youre wyl in ernest that ye seye?"  
 "The devel," quod she, "so fecche hym er he deye,  
 And panne and al, but he wol hym repente!"  
 1630 "Nay, olde stot, that is nat myn entente,"  
 Quod this somonour, "for to repente me  
 For any thyng that I have had of thee.  
 I wolde I hadde thy smok and every clooth!"  
 "Now, brother," quod the devel, "be nat wrooth;

Thy body and this panne been myne by right.  
Thou shalt with me to helle yet tonyght,  
Where thou shalt knowen of oure privetee  
Moore than a maister of dyvynytee."  
And with that word this foule feend hym hente;  
1640 Body and soule he with the devel wente  
Where as that somonours han hir heritage.  
And God, that maked after his ymage  
Mankynde, save and gyde us, alle and some,  
And leve thise somonours goode men bicomme!  
Lordynges, I koude han toold yow, quod this Frere,  
Hadde I had leyser for this Somnour heere,  
After the text of Crist, Poul, and John,  
And of oure othere doctours many oon,  
Swiche peynes that youre hertes myghte agryse,  
1650 Al be it so no tonge may it devyse,  
Thogh that I myghte a thousand wynter telle  
The peynes of thilke cursed hous of helle.  
But for to kepe us fro that cursed place,  
Waketh and preyeth Jhesu for his grace  
So kepe us fro the temptour Sathanas.  
Herketh this word! Beth war, as in this cas:  
"The leoun sit in his awayt alway  
To sle the innocent, if that he may."  
Disposeth ay youre hertes to withstonde  
1660 The feend, that yow wolde make thral and bonde.  
He may nat tempte yow over youre myght,  
For Crist wol be youre champion and knyght.  
And prayeth that thise somonours hem repente  
Of hir mysdedes, er that the feend hem hente!



## THE SUMMONER'S PROLOGUE

This Somonour in his styropes hye stood;  
 Upon this Frere his herte was so wood  
 That lyk an aspen leef he quook for ire.  
 "Lordynges," quod he, "but o thyng I desire;  
 I yow biseke that, of youre curteisye,  
 1670 Syn ye han herd this false Frere lye,  
 As suffreth me I may my tale telle.  
 This Frere bosteth that he knoweth helle,  
 And God it woot, that it is litel wonder;  
 Freres and feendes been but lyte asonder.  
 For, pardee, ye han ofte tyme herd telle  
 How that a frere ravysshed was to helle  
 In spirit ones by a visioun;  
 And as an angel ladde hym up and doun,  
 To shewen hym the peynes that ther were,  
 1680 In al the place saugh he nat a frere;  
 Of oother folk he saugh ynowe in wo.  
 Unto this angel spak the frere tho:  
 'Now, sire,' quod he, 'han freres swich a grace  
 That noon of hem shal come to this place?'  
 'Yis' quod this angel, 'many a millioun!'  
 And unto Sathanas he ladde hym doun.  
 'And now hath Sathanas,' seith he, 'a tayl  
 Brodder than of a carryk is the sayl.  
 Hold up thy tayl, thou Sathanas!' quod he;  
 1690 'Shewe forth thyn ers, and lat the frere se  
 Where is the nest of freres in this place!'  
 And er that half a furlong wey of space,  
 Right so as bees out swarmen from an hyve,  
 Out of the develes ers ther gonne dryve  
 Twenty thousand freres on a route,  
 And thurghout helle swarmed al aboute,  
 And comen agayn as faste as they may gon,  
 And in his ers they crepten everychon.  
 He clapte his tayl agayn and lay ful stille.  
 1700 This frere, whan he looked hadde his fille  
 Upon the tormentz of this sory place,  
 His spirit God restored, of his grace,  
 Unto his body agayn, and he awook.  
 But natheles, for fere yet he quook,

So was the develes ers ay in his mynde,  
That is his heritage of verray kynde.  
God save yow alle, save this cursed Frere!  
My prologe wol I ende in this manere."



## THE SUMMONER'S TALE

Lordynges, ther is in Yorkshire, as I gesse,  
 1710 A mersshy contree called Holdernesse,  
 In which ther wente a lymytour aboute  
 To preche, and eek to begge, it is no doute.  
 And so bifel that on a day this frere  
 Hadde preched at a chirche in his manere,  
 And specially, aboven every thyng,  
 Excited he the peple in his prechyng  
 To trentals, and to yeve, for Goddes sake,  
 Wherwith men myghte hooly houses make,  
 Ther as divine servyce is honoured,  
 1720 Nat ther as it is wasted and devoured,  
 Ne ther it nedeth nat for to be yive,  
 As to possessioners, that mowen lyve,  
 Thanked be God, in wele and habundaunce.  
 "Trentals," seyde he, "deliveren fro penaunce  
 Hir freendes soules, as wel olde as yonge --  
 Ye, whan that they been hastily ysonge,  
 Nat for to holde a preest joly and gay --  
 He syngeth nat but o masse in a day.  
 Delivereth out," quod he, "anon the soules!  
 1730 Ful hard it is with flesshook or with oules  
 To been yclawed, or to brenne or bake.  
 Now spede yow hastily, for Cristes sake!"  
 And whan this frere had seyde al his entente,  
 With qui cum patre forth his wey he wente.  
 Whan folk in chirche had yeve him what hem leste,  
 He wente his wey; no lenger wolde he reste.  
 With scrippe and tipped staf, ytukked hye,  
 In every hous he gan to poure and pryde,  
 And beggeth mele and chese, or elles corn.  
 1740 His felawe hadde a staf tipped with horn,  
 A peyre of tables al of yvory,  
 And a poyntel polysshed fetisly,  
 And wroot the names alwey, as he stood,  
 Of alle folk that yaf hym any good,  
 Ascaunces that he wolde for hem preye.  
 "Yif us a busschel whete, malt, or reye,  
 A Goddes kechyl, or a trype of chese,  
 Or elles what yow lyst, we may nat cheese;

A Goddes halfpeny, or a masse peny,  
1750 Or yif us of youre brawn, if ye have eny;  
A dagon of youre blanket, leeve dame,  
Oure suster deere -- lo! Heere I write youre name --  
Bacon or beef, or swich thyng as ye fynde."  
A sturdy harlot wente ay hem bihynde,  
That was hir hostes man, and bar a sak,  
And what men yaf hem, leyde it on his bak.  
And whan that he was out at dore, anon  
He planed away the names everichon  
That he biforn had writen in his tables;  
1760 He served hem with nyfles and with fables.  
"Nay, ther thou lixt, thou Somonour!" quod the Frere.  
"Pees," quod oure Hoost, "for Cristes mooder deere!  
Tel forth thy tale, and spare it nat at al."  
"So thryve I," quod this Somonour, "so I shal!"  
So longe he wente, hous by hous, til he  
Cam til an hous ther he was wont to be  
Refresshed moore than in an hundred placis.  
Syk lay the goode man whos that the place is;  
Bedrede upon a couche lowe he lay.  
1770 "Deus hic!" quod he, "O Thomas, freend, good day!"  
Seyde this frere, curteisly and softe.  
"Thomas," quod he, "God yelde yow! Ful ofte  
Have I upon this bench faren ful weel;  
Heere have I eten many a myrie meel."  
And fro the bench he droof away the cat,  
And leyde adoun his potente and his hat,  
And eek his scrippe, and sette hym softe adoun.  
His felawe was go walked into toun  
Forth with his knave, into that hostelrye  
1780 Where as he shoop hym thilke nyght to lye.  
"O deere maister," quod this sike man,  
"How han ye fare sith that March bigan?  
I saugh yow noght this fourtenyght or moore."  
"God woot," quod he, "laboured I have ful soore,  
And specially for thy savacion  
Have I seyde many a precious orison,  
And for oure othere freendes, God hem blesse!  
I have to day been at youre chirche at messe,  
And seyde a sermon after my symple wit --  
1790 Nat al after the text of hooly writ,

For it is hard to yow, as I suppose,  
 And therefore wol I teche yow al the glose.  
 Glosynge is a glorious thyng, certeyn,  
 For lettre sleeth, so as we clerkes seyn --  
 There have I taught hem to be charitable,  
 And spende hir good ther it is resonable;  
 And there I saugh oure dame -- A! Where is she?"  
 "Yond in the yerd I trowe that she be,"  
 Seyde this man, "and she wol come anon."  
 1800 "Ey, maister, welcome be ye, by Seint John!"  
 Seyde this wyf, "How fare ye, hertely?"  
 The frere ariseth up ful curteisly,  
 And hire embraceth in his armes narwe,  
 And kiste hire sweete, and chirketh as a sparwe  
 With his lyppe: "Dame," quod he, "right weel,  
 As he that is youre servant every deel,  
 Thanked be God, that yow yaf soule and lyf!  
 Yet saugh I nat this day so fair a wyf  
 In al the chirche, God so save me!"  
 1810 "Ye, God amende defautes, sire," quod she.  
 "Algates, welcome be ye, by my fey!"  
 "Graunt mercy, dame, this have I founde alwey.  
 But of youre grete goodnesse, by youre leve,  
 I wolde prey yow that ye nat yow greve,  
 I wole with Thomas speke a litel throwe.  
 Thise curatz been ful necligent and slowe  
 To grope tendrely a conscience  
 In shrift; in prechyng is my diligence,  
 And studie in Petres wordes and in Poules.  
 1820 I walke and fische Cristen mennes soules  
 To yelden Jhesu Crist his propre rente;  
 To sprede his word is set al myn entente."  
 "Now, by youre leve, o deere sire," quod she,  
 "Chideth him weel, for seinte Trinitee!  
 He is as angry as a pissemyre,  
 Though that he have al that he kan desire;  
 Though I hym wrye a-nyght and make hym warm,  
 And over hym leye my leg outhur myn arm,  
 He groneth lyk oure boor, lith in oure sty.  
 1830 Oother desport right noon of hym have I;  
 I may nat plese hym in no maner cas."  
 "O Thomas, je vous dy, Thomas! Thomas!"

This maketh the feend; this moste ben amended.  
Ire is a thyng that hye God defended,  
And therof wol I speke a word or two."  
"Now, maister," quod the wyf, "er that I go,  
What wol ye dyne? I wol go therabout." "  
"Now, dame," quod he, "now je vous dy sanz doute,  
Have I nat of a capon but the lyvere,  
1840 And of youre softe breed nat but a shyvere,  
And after that a rosted pigges heed --  
But that I nolde no beest for me were deed --  
Thanne hadde I with yow hoonly suffisaunce.  
I am a man of litel sustenaunce;  
My spirit hath his fostryng in the Bible.  
The body is ay so redy and penyble  
To wake, that my stomak is destroyed.  
I prey yow, dame, ye be nat anoyed,  
Though I so freendly yow my conseil shewe.  
1850 By God! I wolde nat telle it but a fewe."  
"Now, sire," quod she, "but o word er I go.  
My child is deed withinne thise wykes two,  
Soone after that ye wente out of this toun."  
"His deeth saugh I by revelacioun,"  
Seide this frere, "at hoom in oure dortour.  
I dar wel seyn that, er that half an hour  
After his deeth, I saugh hym born to blisse  
In myn avision, so God me wisse!  
So dide oure sexteyn and oure fermerer,  
1860 That han been trewe freres fifty yeer;  
They may now -- God be thanked of his loone! --  
Maken hir jubilee and walke allone.  
And up I roos, and al oure covent eke,  
With many a teere trillyng on my cheke,  
Withouten noyse or claterynge of belles;  
Te Deum was oure song, and nothyng elles,  
Save that to Crist I seyde an orison,  
Thankyng hym of his revelacion.  
For, sire and dame, trusteth me right weel,  
1870 Oure orisons been moore effectueel,  
And moore we seen of Cristes secree thynges,  
Than burel folk, although they weren kynges.  
We lyve in poverte and in abstinence,  
And burell folk in riches and despence



Of mete and drynke, and in hir foul delit.  
We han this worldes lust al in despit.  
Lazar and Dives lyveden diversly,  
And divers gerdon hadden they therby.  
Whoso wol preye, he moot faste and be clene,  
1880 And fatte his soule, and make his body lene.  
We fare as seith th' apostle; clooth and foode  
Suffisen us, though they be nat ful goode.  
The clenness and the fastynge of us freres  
Maketh that Crist accepteth oure preyes.  
"Lo, Moyses fourty dayes and fourty nyght  
Fasted, er that the heighe God of myght  
Spak with hym in the mountayne of Synay.  
With empty wombe, fastynge many a day,  
Receyved he the lawe that was writen  
1890 With Goddes fynger; and Elye, wel ye witen,  
In mount Oreb, er he hadde any speche  
With hye God, that is oure lyves leche,  
He fasted longe and was in contemplaunce.  
"Aaron, that hadde the temple in governaunce,  
And eek the othere preestes everichon,  
Into the temple whan they sholde gon  
To preye for the peple and do servyse,  
They nolden drynken in no maner wyse  
No drynke which that myghte hem dronke make,  
1900 But there in abstinence preye and wake,  
Lest that they deyden. Taak heede what I seye!  
But they be sobre that for the peple preye,  
War that -- I seye namoore, for it suffiseth.  
"Oure Lord Jhesu, as hooly writ devyseth,  
Yaf us ensample of fastynge and preyes.  
Therefore we mendynantz, we sely freres,  
Been wedded to poverte and continence,  
To charite, humblesse, and abstinence,  
To persecucioun for rightwisnesse,  
1910 To wepyng, misericorde, and clenness.  
And therefore may ye se that oure preyes --  
I speke of us, we mendynantz, we freres --  
Been to the hye God moore acceptable  
Than youres, with youre feestes at the table.  
Fro Paradys first, if I shal nat lye,  
Was man out chaced for his glotony;

And chaast was man in Paradys, certeyn.  
 "But herkne now, Thomas, what I shal seyn.  
 I ne have no text of it, as I suppose,  
 1920 But I shal fynde it in a maner glose,  
 That specially oure sweete Lord Jhesus  
 Spak this by freres, whan he seyde thus:  
 'Blessed be they that povere in spirit been.'  
 And so forth al the gospel may ye seen,  
 Wher it be likker oure professioun,  
 Or hirs that swymmen in possessioun.  
 Fy on hire pompe and on hire glotonye!  
 And for hir lewednesse I hem diffye.  
 "Me thynketh they been lyk Jovinyan,  
 1930 Fat as a whale, and walkynge as a swan,  
 Al vinolent as botel in the spence.  
 Hir preyere is of ful greet reverence,  
 Whan they for soules seye the psalm of Davit:  
 Lo, 'buf!' they seye, 'cor meum eructavit!'  
 Who folweth Cristes gospel and his foore,  
 But we that humble been, and chaast, and poore,  
 Werkeris of Goddes word, nat auditours?  
 Therefore, right as an hauk up at a sours  
 Up springeth into th' eir, right so prayeres  
 1940 Of charitable and chaste bisy freres  
 Maken hir sours to Goddes eres two.  
 Thomas, Thomas! So moote I ryde or go,  
 And by that lord that clepid is Seint Yve,  
 Nere thou oure brother, sholdestou nat thryve.  
 In our chapitre praye we day and nyght  
 To Crist, that he thee sende heele and myght  
 Thy body for to weelden hastily."  
 "God woot," quod he, "no thyng therof feele I!  
 As help me Crist, as I in fewe yeres,  
 1950 Have spent upon diverse manere freres  
 Ful many a pound; yet fare I never the bet.  
 Certeyn, my good have I almoost biset.  
 Farwel, my gold, for it is al ago!"  
 The frere answerde, "O Thomas, dostow so?  
 What nedeth yow diverse freres seche?  
 What nedeth hym that hath a parfit leche  
 To sechen othere leches in the toun?  
 Youre inconstance is youre confusioun.

Holde ye thanne me, or elles oure covent,  
 1960 To praye for yow been insufficient?  
 Thomas, that jape nys nat worth a myte.  
 Youre maladye is for we han to lyte.  
 A, yif that covent half a quarter otes!  
 A, yif that covent foure and twenty grotes!  
 A, yif that frere a peny, and lat hym go!  
 Nay, nay, Thomas, it may no thyng be so!  
 What is a ferthyng worth parted in twelve?  
 Lo, ech thyng that is oned in himselve  
 Is moore strong than whan it is toscatered.  
 1970 Thomas, of me thou shalt nat been yflatered;  
 Thou woldest han oure labour al for noght.  
 The hye God, that al this world hath wroght,  
 Seith that the werkman worthy is his hyre.  
 Thomas, noght of youre tresor I desire  
 As for myself, but that al oure covent  
 To preye for yow is ay so diligent,  
 And for to buylden Cristes owene chirche.  
 Thomas, if ye wol lerne for to wirche,  
 Of buyldyng up of chirches may ye fynde  
 1980 If it be good in Thomas lyf of Inde.  
 Ye lye heere ful of anger and of ire,  
 With which the devel set youre herte afyre,  
 And chiden heere the sely innocent,  
 Youre wyf, that is so meke and pacient.  
 And therefore, Thomas, trowe me if thee leste,  
 Ne stryve nat with thy wyf, as for thy beste;  
 And ber this word away now, by thy feith;  
 Touchyng swich thyng, lo, what the wise seith:  
 `Withinne thyn hous ne be thou no leon;  
 1990 To thy subgitz do noon oppression,  
 Ne make thyne aqueyntances nat to flee.'  
 And, Thomas, yet eft-soones I charge thee,  
 Be war from Ire that in thy bosom slepeth;  
 War fro the serpent that so slily crepeth  
 Under the gras and styngeth subtilly.  
 Be war, my sone, and herkne paciently  
 That twenty thousand men han lost hir lyves  
 For stryvynge with hir lemmans and hir wyves.  
 Now sith ye han so hooly meke a wyf,  
 2000 What nedeth yow, Thomas, to maken stryf?

Ther nys, ywys, no serpent so cruel,  
Whan man tret on his tayl, ne half so fel,  
As womman is, whan she hath caught an ire;  
Vengeance is thanne al that they desire.  
Ire is a synne, oon of the grete of sevene,  
Abhomynable unto the God of hevene;  
And to hymself it is destruccion.  
This every lewed viker or person  
Kan seye, how ire engendreth homycide.  
2010 Ire is, in sooth, executour of pryde.  
I koude of ire seye so muche sorwe,  
My tale sholde laste til to-morwe.  
And therefore preye I God bothe day and nyght  
An irous man, God sende hym litel myght!  
It is greet harm and certes greet pitee  
To sette an irous man in heigh degree.  
"Whilom ther was an irous potestat,  
As seith Senek, that, duryng his estaat,  
Upon a day out ryden knyghtes two,  
2020 And as Fortune wolde that it were so,  
That oon of hem cam hoom, that oother noght.  
Anon the knyght bifore the juge is broght,  
That seyde thus, 'Thou hast thy felawe slayn,  
For which I deme thee to the deeth, certayn.'  
And to another knyght comanded he,  
'Go lede hym to the deeth, I charge thee.'  
And happed, as they wente by the weye  
Toward the place ther he sholde deye,  
The knyght cam which men wenden had be deed.  
2030 Thanne thoughte they it were the beste reed  
To lede hem bothe to the juge agayn.  
They seiden, 'Lord, the knyght ne hath nat slayn  
His felawe; heere he standeth hool alyve.'  
'Ye shul be deed,' quod he, 'so moot I thryve!  
That is to seyn, bothe oon, and two, and thre!'  
And to the firste knyght right thus spak he,  
'I dampned thee; thou most algate be deed.  
And thou also most nedes lese thyn heed,  
For thou art cause why thy felawe deyth.'  
2040 And to the thridde knyght right thus he seith,  
'Thou hast nat doon that I comanded thee.'  
And thus he dide doon sleen hem alle thre.

"Irous Cambises was eek dronkelewe,  
 And ay delited hym to been a shrewe.  
 And so bifel, a lord of his meynee  
 That loved vertuous moralitee  
 Seyde on a day bitwix hem two right thus:  
 "'A lord is lost, if he be vicius;  
 And dronkenesse is eek a foul record  
 2050 Of any man, and namely in a lord.  
 Ther is ful many an eye and many an ere  
 Awaityng on a lord, and he noot where.  
 For Goddes love, drynk moore attemprely!  
 Wyn maketh man to lesen wrecchedly  
 His mynde and eek his lymes everichon.'  
 "'The revers shaltou se,' quod he, 'anon,  
 And preve it by thyn owene experience,  
 That wyn ne dooth to folk no swich offence.  
 Ther is no wyn bireveth me my myght  
 2060 Of hand ne foot, ne of myne eyen sight.'  
 And for despit he drank ful muchel moore,  
 An hondred part, than he hadde don bifoore;  
 And right anon this irous, cursed wrecche  
 Leet this knyghtes sone bifoore hym fecche,  
 Comandyng hym he sholde bifoore hym stonde.  
 And sodeynly he took his bowe in honde,  
 And up the streng he pulled to his ere,  
 And with an arwe he slow the child right there.  
 'Now wheither have I a siker hand or noon?'  
 2070 Quod he; 'Is al my myght and mynde agon?  
 Hath wyn bireved me myn eyen sight?'  
 What sholde I telle th' answer of the knyght?  
 His sone was slayn; ther is namoore to seye.  
 Beth war, therefore, with lordes how ye pleye.  
 Syngeth Placebo and 'I shal, if I kan,'  
 But if it be unto a povre man.  
 To a povre man men sholde his vices telle,  
 But nat to a lord, thogh he sholde go to helle.  
 "Lo irous Cirus, thilke Percien,  
 2080 How he destroyed the ryver of Gysen,  
 For that an hors of his was dreynt therinne,  
 Whan that he wente Babiloigne to wyne.  
 He made that the ryver was so smal  
 That wommen myghte wade it over al.

Lo, what seyde he that so wel teche kan?  
`Ne be no felawe to an irous man,  
Ne with no wood man walke by the weye,  
Lest thee repente;' I wol no ferther seye.  
"Now, Thomas, leeve brother, lef thyn ire;  
2090 Thou shalt me fynde as just as is a squyre.  
Hoolde nat the develes knyf ay at thyn herte --  
Thyn angre dooth thee al to soore smerte --  
But shewe to me al thy confessioun."  
"Nay," quod the sike man, "by Seint Symoun!  
I have be shryven this day at my curat.  
I have hym toold hoolly al myn estat;  
Nedeth namoore to speken of it," seith he,  
"But if me list, of myn humylitee."  
"Yif me thanne of thy gold, to make oure cloystre,"  
2100 Quod he, "for many a muscle and many an oystre,  
Whan othere men han ben ful wel at eyse,  
Hath been oure foode, our cloystre for to reyse.  
And yet, God woot, unnethe the fundement  
Parfourned is, ne of our pavement  
Nys nat a tyle yet withinne oure wones.  
By God, we owen fourty pound for stones.  
"Now help, Thomas, for hym that harwed helle!  
For elles moste we oure bookes selle.  
And if yow lakke oure predicacioun,  
2110 Thanne goth the world al to destruccioun.  
For whoso wolde us fro this world bireve,  
So God me save, Thomas, by youre leve,  
He wolde bireve out of this world the sonne.  
For who kan teche and werchen as we konne?  
And that is nat of litel tyme," quod he,  
"But syn Elye was, or Elise,  
Han freres been -- that fynde I of record --  
In charitee, ythanked be oure Lord!  
Now Thomas, help, for seinte charitee!"  
2120 And down anon he sette hym on his knee.  
This sike man wax wel ny wood for ire;  
He wolde that the frere had been on-fire  
With his false dissymulacioun.  
"Swich thyng as is in my possessioun,"  
Quod he, "that may I yeve, and noon oother.  
Ye sey me thus, how that I am youre brother?"

"Ye, certes," quod the frere, "trusteth weel.  
I took oure dame oure lettre with oure seel."  
"Now wel," quod he, "and somewhat shal I yive  
2130 Unto youre hooly covent whil I lyve;  
And in thyn hand thou shalt it have anon,  
On this condicion, and oother noon,  
That thou departe it so, my deere brother,  
That every frere have also mucche as oother.  
This shaltou swere on thy professioun,  
Withouten fraude or cavillacioun."  
"I swere it," quod this frere, "by my feith!"  
And therewithal his hand in his he leith,  
"Lo, heer my feith; in me shal be no lak."  
2140 "Now thanne, put in thyn hand down by my bak,"  
Seyde this man, "and grope wel bihynde.  
Bynethe my buttok there shaltow fynde  
A thyng that I have hyd in pryvetee."  
"A!" thoghte this frere, "That shal go with me!"  
And doun his hand he launcheth to the clifte  
In hope for to fynde there a yifte.  
And whan this sike man felte this frere  
Aboute his tuwel grope there and heere,  
Amydde his hand he leet the frere a fart;  
2150 Ther nys no capul, drawynge in a cart,  
That myghte have lete a fart of swich a soun.  
The frere up stirte as dooth a wood leoun --  
"A, false cherl," quod he, "for Goddes bones!  
This hastow for despit doon for the nones.  
Thou shalt abyge this fart, if that I may!"  
His meynnee, whiche that herden this affray,  
Cam lepyng in and chaced out the frere;  
And forth he gooth, with a ful angry cheere,  
And fette his felawe, ther as lay his stoor.  
2160 He looked as it were a wilde boor;  
He grynte with his teeth, so was he wrooth.  
A sturdy paas doun to the court he gooth,  
Wher as ther woned a man of greet honour,  
To whom that he was alwey confessour.  
This worthy man was lord of that village.  
This frere cam as he were in a rage,  
Where as this lord sat etyng at his bord;  
Unnethes myghte the frere speke a word,

Til atte laste he seyde, "God yow see!"  
2170 This lord gan looke, and seide, "Benedicitee!  
What, frere John, what maner world is this?  
I se wel that som thyng ther is amys;  
Ye looken as the wode were ful of thevys.  
Sit down anon, and tel me what youre grief is,  
And it shal been amended, if I may."  
"I have," quod he, "had a despit this day,  
God yelde yow, adoun in youre village,  
That in this world is noon so povre a page  
That he nolde have abhomynacioun  
2180 Of that I have receyved in youre toun.  
And yet ne greveth me nothyng so soore,  
As that this olde cherl with lokkes hoore  
Blasphemed hath oure hooly covent eke."  
"Now, maister," quod this lord, "I yow biseke --"  
"No maister, sire," quod he, "but servitour,  
Thogh I have had in scole that honour.  
God liketh nat that 'Raby' men us calle,  
Neither in market ne in youre large halle."  
"No fors," quod he, "but tel me al youre grief."  
2190 "Sire," quod this frere, "an odious meschief  
This day bityd is to myn ordre and me,  
And so, per consequens, to ech degree  
Of hooly chirche -- God amende it soone!"  
"Sire," quod the lord, "ye woot what is to doone.  
Distempere yow noght; ye be my confessour;  
Ye been the salt of the erthe and the savour.  
For Goddes love, youre pacience ye holde!  
Tel me youre grief." And he anon hym tolde,  
As ye han herd biforn -- ye woot wel what.  
2200 The lady of the hous ay stille sat  
Til she had herd what the frere sayde.  
"Ey, Goddes mooder," quod she, "Blisful mayde!  
Is ther oght elles? Telle me feithfully."  
"Madame," quod he, "how thynke ye herby?"  
"How that me thynketh?" quod she. "So God me speede,  
I seye a cherl hath doon a cherles dede.  
What shold I seye? God lat hym nevere thee!  
His sike heed is ful of vanytee;  
I holde hym in a manere frenesye."  
2210 "Madame," quod he, "by God, I shal nat lye,



But I on oother wyse may be wreke,  
I shal disclaundre hym over al ther I speke,  
This false blasphemour that charged me  
To parte that wol nat departed be  
To every man yliche, with meschaunce!"  
The lord sat stille as he were in a traunce,  
And in his herte he rolled up and down,  
"How hadde this cherl ymaginacioun  
To shewe swich a probleme to the frere?  
2220 Nevere erst er now herde I of swich mateere.  
I trowe the devel putte it in his mynde.  
In ars-metrike shal ther no man fynde,  
Biforn this day, of swich a question.  
Who sholde make a demonstracion  
That every man sholde have yliche his part  
As of the soun or savour of a fart?  
O nyce, proude cherl, I shrewe his face!  
Lo, sires," quod the lord, "with harde grace!  
Who evere herde of swich a thyng er now?  
2230 To every man ylike? Tel me how.  
It is an impossible; it may nat be.  
Ey, nyce cherl, God lete him nevere thee!  
The rumblyng of a fart, and every soun,  
Nis but of eir reverberacioun,  
And evere it wasteth litel and litel away.  
Ther is no man kan deemen, by my fey,  
If that it were departed equally.  
What, lo, my cherl, lo, yet how shrewedly  
Unto my confessour to-day he spak!  
2240 I holde hym certeyn a demonyak!  
Now ete youre mete, and lat the cherl go pleye;  
Lat hym go honge hymself a devel weye!"  
Now stood the lordes squier at the bord,  
That karf his mete, and herde word by word  
Of alle thynges whiche I have yow sayd.  
"My lord," quod he, "be ye nat yvele apayd,  
I koude telle, for a gowne-clooth,  
To yow, sire frere, so ye be nat wrooth,  
How that this fart sholde evene deled be  
2250 Among youre covent, if it lyked me."  
"Tel," quod the lord, "and thou shalt have anon  
A gowne-clooth, by God and by Seint John!"

"My lord," quod he, "whan that the weder is fair,  
 Withouten wynd or perturbynge of air,  
 Lat brynge a cartwheel heere into this halle;  
 But looke that it have his spokes alle --  
 Twelve spokes hath a cartwheel comunly.  
 And bryng me thanne twelve freres. Woot ye why?  
 For thrittene is a covent, as I gesse.  
 2260 Youre confessour heere, for his worthynesse,  
 Shal parfourne up the nombre of his covent.  
 Thanne shal they knele doun, by oon assent,  
 And to every spokes ende, in this manere,  
 Ful sadly leye his nose shal a frere.  
 Youre noble confessour -- there God hym save! --  
 Shal holde his nose upright under the nave.  
 Thanne shal this cherl, with bely stif and toght  
 As any tabour, hyder been ybrought;  
 And sette hym on the wheel right of this cart,  
 2270 Upon the nave, and make hym lete a fart.  
 And ye shul seen, up peril of my lyf,  
 By preeve which that is demonstratif,  
 That equally the soun of it wol wende,  
 And eke the stynk, unto the spokes ende,  
 Save that this worthy man, youre confessour,  
 By cause he is a man of greet honour,  
 Shal have the firste fruyt, as resoun is.  
 The noble usage of freres yet is this,  
 The worthy men of hem shul first be served;  
 2280 And certainly he hath it weel disserved.  
 He hath to-day taught us so muche good  
 With prechyng in the pulpit ther he stood,  
 That I may vouche sauf, I sey for me,  
 He hadde the firste smel of fartes thre;  
 And so wolde al his covent hardily,  
 He bereth hym so faire and hoolily."  
 The lord, the lady, and ech man, save the frere,  
 Seyde that Jankyn spak, in this matere,  
 As wel as Euclide [dide] or Ptholomee.  
 2290 Touchyng the cherl, they seyde, subtiltee  
 And heigh wit made hym speken as he spak;  
 He nys no fool, ne no demonyak.  
 And Jankyn hath ywonne a newe gowne --  
 My tale is doon; we been almoost at towne.



## THE CLERK'S PROLOGUE

"Sire Clerk of Oxenford," oure Hooste sayde,  
 "Ye ryde as coy and stille as dooth a mayde  
 Were newe spoused, sittynge at the bord;  
 This day ne herde I of youre tonge a word.  
 I trowe ye studie aboute som sophyme;  
 But Salomon seith `every thyng hath tyme.'  
 "For Goddes sake, as beth of bettre cheere!  
 It is no tyme for to studien heere.  
 Telle us som myrie tale, by youre fey!  
 10 For what man that is entred in a pley,  
 He nedes moot unto the pley assente.  
 But precheth nat, as freres doon in Lente,  
 To make us for oure olde synnes wepe,  
 Ne that thy tale make us nat to slepe.  
 "Telle us som murie thyng of adventures.  
 Youre termes, youre colours, and youre figures,  
 Keepe hem in stoor til so be ye endite  
 Heigh style, as whan that men to kynges write.  
 Speketh so pleyn at this tyme, we yow preye,  
 20 That we may understonde what ye seye."  
 This worthy clerk benignely answerde:  
 "Hooste," quod he, "I am under youre yerde;  
 Ye han of us as now the governance,  
 And therfore wol I do yow obeisance,  
 As fer as resoun axeth, hardily.  
 I wol yow telle a tale which that I  
 Lerned at Padowe of a worthy clerk,  
 As preved by his wordes and his werk.  
 He is now deed and nayled in his cheste;  
 30 I prey to God so yeve his soule reste!  
 "Fraunceys Petrak, the lauriat poete,  
 Highte this clerk, whos rethorike sweete  
 Enlumyned al Ytaille of poetrie,  
 As Lynyan dide of philosophie,  
 Or lawe, or oother art particuler;  
 But Deeth, that wol nat suffre us dwellen heer,  
 But as it were a twynklyng of an ye,  
 Hem bothe hath slayn, and alle shul we dye.  
 "But forth to tellen of this worthy man  
 40 That taughte me this tale, as I bigan,

I seye that first with heigh stile he enditeth,  
Er he the body of his tale writeth,  
A prohemye, in the which discryveth he  
Pemond and of Saluces the contree,  
And speketh of Apennyn, the hilles hye,  
That been the boundes of West Lumbardye,  
And of Mount Vesulus in special,  
Where as the Poo out of a welle smal  
Taketh his firste spryngyng and his sours,  
50 That estward ay encresseth in his cours  
To Emele-ward, to Ferrare, and Venyse,  
The which a long thyng were to devyse.  
And trewely, as to my juggement,  
Me thynketh it a thyng impertinent,  
Save that he wole conveyen his mateere;  
But this his tale, which that ye may heere."



## THE CLERK'S TALE

Ther is, at the west syde of Ytaille,  
 Doun at the roote of Vesulus the colde,  
 A lusty playn, habundant of vitaille,  
 60 Where many a tour and toun thou mayst biholde,  
 That founded were in tyme of fadres olde,  
 And many another delitable sighte,  
 And Saluces this noble contree highte.  
 A markys whilom lord was of that lond,  
 As were his worthy eldres hym bifore;  
 And obeisant, ay redy to his hond,  
 Were alle his liges, bothe lasse and moore.  
 Thus in delit he lyveth, and hath doon yoore,  
 Biloved and drad, thurgh favour of Fortune,  
 70 Bothe of his lordes and of his commune.  
 Therwith he was, to speke as of lynage,  
 The gentilleste yborn of Lumbardye,  
 A fair persone, and strong, and yong of age,  
 And ful of honour and of curteisye;  
 Discreet ynogh his contree for to gye,  
 Save in somme thynges that he was to blame;  
 And Walter was this yonge lordes name.  
 I blame hym thus: that he considered noght  
 In tyme comynge what myghte hym bityde,  
 80 But on his lust present was al his thoght,  
 As for to hauke and hunte on every syde.  
 Wel ny alle othere cures leet he slyde,  
 And eek he nolde -- and that was worst of alle --  
 Wedde no wyf, for noght that may bifalle.  
 Oonly that point his peple bar so soore  
 That flokmeele on a day they to hym wente,  
 And oon of hem, that wisest was of loore --  
 Or elles that the lord best wolde assente  
 That he sholde telle hym what his peple mente,  
 90 Or elles koude he shewe wel swich mateere --  
 He to the markys seyde as ye shul heere:  
 "O noble markys, youre humanitee  
 Asseureth us and yeveth us hardinesse,  
 As ofte as tyme is of necessitee,  
 That we to yow mowe telle oure hevynesse.  
 Accepteth, lord, now of youre gentillesse

That we with pitous herte unto yow pleyne,  
And lat youre eres nat my voys desdayne.  
"Al have I noght to doone in this mateere  
100 Moore than another man hath in this place,  
Yet for as muche as ye, my lord so deere,  
Han alwey shewed me favour and grace  
I dar the bettre aske of yow a space  
Of audience to shewenoure requeste,  
And ye, my lord, to doon right as yow leste.  
"For certes, lord, so wel us liketh yow  
And al youre werk, and evere han doon, that we  
Ne koude nat us self devysen how  
We myghte lyven in moore felicitee,  
110 Save o thyng, lord, if it youre wille be,  
That for to been a wedded man yow leste;  
Thanne were youre peple in sovereyn hertes reste.  
"Boweth youre nekke under that blisful yok  
Of soveraynetee, noght of servyse,  
Which that men clepe spousaille or wedlok;  
And thenketh, lord, among youre thoghtes wyse  
How thatoure dayes passe in sondry wyse,  
For thogh we slepe, or wake, or rome, or ryde,  
Ay fleeth the tyme; it nyl no man abyde.  
120 "And thogh youre grene youthe floure as yit,  
In crepeth age alwey, as stille as stoon,  
And deeth manaceth every age, and smyt  
In ech estaat, for ther escapeth noon;  
And al so certein as we knowe echoon  
That we shul deye, as uncerteyn we alle  
Been of that day whan deeth shal on us falle.  
"Accepteth thanne of us the trewe entente,  
That nevere yet refuseden youre heeste,  
And we wol, lord, if that ye wole assente,  
130 Chese yow a wyf, in short tyme atte leeste,  
Born of the gentilleste and of the meeste  
Of al this land, so that it oghte seme  
Honour to God and yow, as we kan deeme.  
"Delivere us out of al this bisy drede,  
And taak a wyf, for hye Goddes sake!  
For if it so bifelle, as God forbede,  
That thurgh youre deeth youre lyne sholde slake,  
And that a straunge successour sholde take

Your heritage, O wo were us alyve!  
140 Wherefore we pray you hastily to wyve."  
Hir meeke preyere and hir pitous cheere  
Made the markys herte han pitee.  
"Ye wol," quod he, "myn owene peple deere,  
To that I nevere erst thoughte streyne me.  
I me rejoysed of my liberte,  
That seelde tyme is founde in mariage;  
Ther I was free, I moot been in servage.  
"But natheles I se youre trewe entente,  
And truste upon youre wit, and have doon ay;  
150 Wherefore of my free wyl I wole assente  
To wedde me, as soone as evere I may.  
But ther as ye han profred me to-day  
To chese me a wyf, I yow relesse  
That choys and prey yow of that profre cesse.  
"For God it woot, that children ofte been  
Unlyk hir worthy eldres hem bifore;  
Bountee comth al of God, nat of the streen  
Of which they been engendred and ybore.  
I truste in Goddes bountee, and therfore  
160 My mariage and myn estaat and reste  
I hym bitake; he may doon as hym leste.  
"Lat me allone in chesyng of my wyf --  
That charge upon my bak I wole endure.  
But I yow preye, and charge upon youre lyf,  
What wyf that I take, ye me assure  
To worshiþ hire, whil that hir lyf may dure,  
In word and werk, bothe heere and everywheere,  
As she an emperoures doghter weere.  
"And forthermoore, this shal ye swere: that ye  
170 Agayn my choys shul neither grucche ne stryve;  
For sith I shal forgoon my libertee  
At youre requeste, as evere moot I thryve,  
Ther as myn herte is set, ther wol I wyve;  
And but ye wole assente in swich manere,  
I prey yow, speketh namoore of this matere."  
With hertely wyl they sworn and assenten  
To al this thyng -- ther seyde no wight nay --  
Bisekyng hym of grace, er that they wenten,  
That he wolde graunten hem a certein day  
180 Of his spousaille, as soone as evere he may;



For yet alwey the peple somewhat dredde,  
Lest that the markys no wyf wolde wedde.  
He graunted hem a day, swich as hym leste,  
On which he wolde be wedded sikerly,  
And seyde he dide al this at hir requeste.  
And they, with humble entente, buxomly,  
Knelynge upon hir knees ful reverently,  
Hym thonken alle; and thus they han an ende  
Of hire entente, and hoom agayn they wende.  
190 And heerupon he to his officeres  
Comaundeth for the feste to purveye,  
And to his privee knyghtes and squieres  
Swich charge yaf as hym liste on hem leye;  
And they to his comandement obeye,  
And ech of hem dooth al his diligence  
To doon unto the feeste reverence.  
Noght fer fro thilke paleys honorable,  
Wher as this markys shoop his mariage,  
There stood a throop, of site delitable,  
200 In which that povre folk of that village  
Hadden hir beestes and hir herbergage,  
And of hire labour tooke hir sustenance,  
After that the erthe yaf hem habundance.  
Amonges thise povre folk ther dwelte a man  
Which that was holden povrest of hem alle;  
But hye God somtyme senden kan  
His grace into a litel oxes stalle;  
Janicula men of that throop hym calle.  
A doghter hadde he, fair ynogh to sighte,  
210 And Grisildis this yonge mayden highte.  
But for to speke of vertuous beautee,  
Thanne was she oon the faireste under sonne;  
For povreliche yfostred up was she,  
No likerous lust was thurgh hire herte yronne.  
Wel ofter of the welle than of the tonne  
She drank, and for she wolde vertu plese,  
She knew wel labour but noon ydel ese.  
But thogh this mayde tendre were of age,  
Yet in the brest of hire virginitee  
220 Ther was enclosed rype and sad corage;  
And in greet reverence and charitee  
Hir olde povre fader fostred shee.

A fewe sheep, spynnyng, on feeld she kepte;  
She wolde noght been ydel til she slepte.  
And whan she homward cam, she wolde bryng  
Wortes or othere herbes tymes ofte,  
The whiche she shredde and seeth for hir lyvyng,  
And made hir bed ful hard and nothyng softe;  
And ay she kepte hir fadres lyf on-lofte  
230 With everich obeisaunce and diligence  
That child may doon to fadres reverence.  
Upon Grisilde, this povre creature,  
Ful ofte sithe this markys sette his ye  
As he on huntyng rood paraventure;  
And whan it fil that he myghte hire espye,  
He noght with wantown lookyng of folye  
His eyen caste on hire, but in sad wyse  
Upon hir chiere he wolde hym ofte avyse,  
Commendynge in his herte hir wommanhede,  
240 And eek hir vertu, passynge any wight  
Of so yong age, as wel in chiere as dede.  
For thogh the peple have no greet insight  
In vertu, he considered ful right  
Hir bountee, and disposed that he wolde  
Wedde hire oonly, if evere he wedde sholde.  
The day of weddyng cam, but no wight kan  
Telle what womman that it sholde be;  
For which merveille wondred many a man,  
And seyden, whan they were in privetee,  
250 "Wol nat oure lord yet leve his vanytee?  
Wol he nat wedde? Allas! Allas, the while!  
Why wole he thus hymself and us bigile?"  
But natheles this markys hath doon make  
Of gemmes, set in gold and in asure,  
Brooches and rynges, for Grisildis sake;  
And of hir clothyng took he the mesure  
By a mayde lyk to hire stature,  
And eek of othere aornementes alle  
That unto swich a weddyng sholde falle.  
260 The time of undren of the same day  
Approcheth, that this weddyng sholde be,  
And al the paleys put was in array,  
Bothe halle and chambres, ech in his degree;  
Houses of office stuffed with plentee

Ther maystow seen, of deyntevous vitaille  
That may be founde as fer as last Ytaille.  
This roial markys, richely arrayed,  
Lordes and ladyes in his compaignye,  
The whiche that to the feeste weren yprayed,  
270 And of his retenue the bachelrye,  
With many a soun of sondry melodye,  
Unto the village of the which I tolde  
In this array the righte wey han holde.  
Grisilde of this, God woot, ful innocent,  
That for hire shapen was al this array,  
To fecchen water at a welle is went,  
And cometh hoom as soone as ever she may;  
For wel she hadde herd seyde that thilke day  
The markys sholde wedde, and if she myghte,  
280 She wolde fayn han seyn som of that sighte.  
She thoghte, "I wole with othere maydens stonde,  
That been my felawes, in oure dore and se  
The markysesse, and therfore wol I fonde  
To doon at hoom, as soone as it may be,  
The labour which that longeth unto me,  
And thanne I may at leyser hire biholde,  
If she this wey unto the castel holde."  
And as she wolde over hir thressfold gon,  
The markys cam and gan hire for to calle;  
290 And she set down hir water pot anon,  
Biside the thressfold, in an oxes stalle,  
And down upon hir knes she gan to falle,  
And with sad contenance kneleth stille,  
Til she had herd what was the lordes wille.  
This thoughtful markys spak unto this mayde  
Ful sobrelly, and seyde in this manere:  
"Where is youre fader, O Grisildis?" he sayde.  
And she with reverence, in humble cheere,  
Answerde, "Lord, he is al redy heere."  
300 And in she gooth withouten lenger lette,  
And to the markys she hir fader fette.  
He by the hand thanne took this olde man,  
And seyde thus, whan he hym hadde asyde:  
"Janicula, I neither may ne kan  
Lenger the plesance of myn herte hyde.  
If that thou vouche sauf, what so bityde,

Thy doghter wol I take, er that I wende,  
As for my wyf, unto hir lyves ende.

"Thou lovest me, I woot it wel certeyn,  
310 And art my feithful lige man ybore,  
And al that liketh me, I dar wel seyn  
It liketh thee, and specially therfore  
Tel me that poynt that I have seyde bifore,  
If that thou wolt unto that purpos drawe,  
To take me as for thy sone-in-lawe."

This sodeyn cas this man astonyed so  
That reed he wax; abayst and al quakyng  
He stood; unnethes seyde he wordes mo,  
But oonly thus: "Lord," quod he, "my willyng  
320 Is as ye wole, ne ayeynes youre likyng  
I wol no thyng, ye be my lord so deere;  
Right as yow lust, governeth this mateere."

"Yet wol I," quod this markys softly,  
"That in thy chambre I and thou and she  
Have a collacioun, and wostow why?  
For I wol axe if it hire wille be  
To be my wyf and reule hire after me.  
And al this shal be doon in thy presence;  
I wol noght speke out of thyn audience."

330 And in the chambre, whil they were aboute  
Hir tretys, which as ye shal after heere,  
The peple cam unto the hous withoute,  
And wondred hem in how honest manere  
And tentifly she kepte hir fader deere.

But outrely Grisildis wondre myghte,  
For nevere erst ne saugh she swich a sighte.  
No wonder is thogh that she were astoned  
To seen so greet a gest come in that place;  
She nevere was to swiche gestes woned,

340 For which she looked with ful pale face.

But shortly forth this matere for to chace,  
Thise arn the wordes that the markys sayde  
To this benigne, verray, feithful mayde:  
"Grisilde," he seyde, "ye shal wel understonde  
It liketh to youre fader and to me  
That I yow wedde, and eek it may so stonde,  
As I suppose, ye wol that it so be.

But thise demandes axe I first," quod he,

"That, sith it shal be doon in hastif wyse,  
350 Wol ye assente, or elles yow avyse?  
"I seye this: be ye redy with good herte  
To al my lust, and that I frely may,  
As me best thynketh, do yow laughe or smerte,  
And nevere ye to grucche it, nyght ne day?  
And eek whan I sey `ye,' ne sey nat `nay,'  
Neither by word ne frownyng contenance?  
Swere this, and heere I swere oure alliance."  
Wondrynge upon this word, quakyng for drede,  
She seyde, "Lord, undigne and unworthy  
360 Am I to thilke honour that ye me beede,  
But as ye wole youreself, right so wol I.  
And heere I swere that nevere willyngly,  
In werk ne thoght, I nyl yow disobeye,  
For to be deed, though me were looth to deye."  
"This is ynogh, Grisilde myn," quod he.  
And forth he gooth with a ful sobre cheere  
Out at the dore, and after that cam she,  
And to the peple he seyde in this manere:  
"This is my wyf," quod he, "that standeth heere.  
370 Honoureth hire and loveth hire, I preye,  
Whoso me loveth; ther is namoore to seye."  
And for that no thyng of hir olde geere  
She sholde brynge into his hous, he bad  
That wommen sholde dispoillen hire right theere;  
Of which thise ladyes were nat right glad  
To handle hir clothes, wherinne she was clad.  
But nathelees, this mayde bright of hewe  
Fro foot to heed they clothed han al newe.  
Hir heris han they kembd, that lay untressed  
380 Ful rudely, and with hir fynGRES smale  
A corone on hire heed they han ydressed,  
And sette hire ful of nowches grete and smale.  
Of hire array what sholde I make a tale?  
Unnethe the peple hir knew for hire fairnesse  
Whan she translated was in swich richesse.  
This markys hath hire spoused with a ryng  
Broght for the same cause, and thanne hire sette  
Upon an hors, snow-whit and wel amblyng,  
And to his paleys, er he lenger lette,  
390 With joyful peple that hire ladde and mette,

Conveyed hire; and thus the day they spende  
In revel, til the sonne gan descende.  
And shortly forth this tale for to chace,  
I seye that to this newe markysesse  
God hath swich favour sent hire of his grace  
That it ne semed nat by liklynesse  
That she was born and fed in rudenesse,  
As in a cote or in an oxe-stalle,  
But norissed in an emperoures halle.  
400 To every wight she woxen is so deere  
And worshipful that folk ther she was bore,  
And from hire birthe knewe hire yeer by yeere,  
Unnethe trowed they -- but dorste han swore --  
That to Janicle, of which I spak bifore,  
She doghter were, for, as by conjecture,  
Hem thoughte she was another creature.  
For though that evere vertuous was she,  
She was encressed in swich excellence  
Of thewes goode, yset in heigh bountee,  
410 And so discreet and fair of eloquence,  
So benigne and so digne of reverence,  
And koude so the peples herte embrace,  
That ech hire lovede that looked on hir face.  
Noght oonly of Saluces in the toun  
Publiced was the bountee of hir name,  
But eek biside in many a regioun,  
If oon seide wel, another seyde the same;  
So spradde of hire heighe bountee the fame  
That men and wommen, as wel yonge as olde,  
420 Goon to Saluce upon hire to biholde.  
Thus Walter lowely -- nay, but roially --  
Wedded with fortunat honestetee,  
In Goddes pees lyveth ful esily  
At hoom, and outward grace ynogh had he;  
And for he saugh that under low degree  
Was ofte vertu hid, the peple hym heelde  
A prudent man, and that is seyn ful seelde.  
Nat oonly this Grisildis thurgh hir wit  
Koude al the feet of wyfly hoomlinesse,  
430 But eek, whan that the cas required it,  
The commune profit koude she redresse.  
Ther nas discord, rancour, ne hevynesse

In al that land that she ne koude apese,  
And wisely brynge hem alle in reste and ese.  
Though that hire housbonde absent were anon,  
If gentil men or othere of hire contree  
Were wrothe, she wolde bryngen hem aton;  
So wise and rype wordes hadde she,  
And juggementz of so greet equitee,  
440 That she from hevene sent was, as men wende,  
Peple to save and every wrong t' amende.  
Nat longe tyme after that this Grisild  
Was wedded, she a doghter hath ybore,  
Al had hire levere have born a knave child;  
Glad was this markys and the folk therfore,  
For though a mayde child coome al bifore,  
She may unto a knave child atteyne  
By liklihede, syn she nys nat bareyne.  
Ther fil, as it bifalleth tymes mo,  
450 Whan that this child had souked but a throwe,  
This markys in his herte longeth so  
To tempte his wyf, hir sadnesse for to knowe,  
That he ne myghte out of his herte throwe  
This merveillous desir his wyf t' assaye;  
Nedeles, God woot, he thoghte hire for t' affraye.  
He hadde assayed hire ynogh bifore,  
And foond hire evere good; what neded it  
Hire for to tempte, and alwey moore and moore,  
Though som men preise it for a subtil wit?  
460 But as for me, I seye that yvele it sit  
To assaye a wyf whan that it is no nede,  
And putten hire in angwyssh and in drede.  
For which this markys wroghte in this manere:  
He cam allone a-nyght, ther as she lay,  
With stierne face and with ful trouble cheere,  
And seyde thus: "Grisilde," quod he, "that day  
That I yow took out of youre povere array,  
And putte yow in estaat of heigh noblesse --  
Ye have nat that forgeten, as I gesse?  
470 "I seye, Grisilde, this present dignitee,  
In which that I have put yow, as I trowe,  
Maketh yow nat foryetful for to be  
That I yow took in povre estaat ful lowe,  
For any wele ye moot youreselven knowe.

Taak heede of every word that y yow seye;  
Ther is no wight that hereth it but we tweye.  
"Ye woot youreself wel how that ye cam heere  
Into this hous, it is nat longe ago;  
And though to me that ye be lief and deere,  
480 Unto my gentils ye be no thyng so.  
They seyn, to hem it is greet shame and wo  
For to be subgetz and been in servage  
To thee, that born art of a smal village.  
"And namely sith thy doghter was ybore  
Thise wordes han they spoken, doutelees.  
But I desire, as I have doon bifore,  
To lyve my lyf with hem in reste and pees.  
I may nat in this caas be recchelees;  
I moot doon with thy doghter for the beste,  
490 Nat as I wolde, but as my peple leste.  
"And yet, God woot, this is ful looth to me;  
But nathelees withoute youre wityng  
I wol nat doon; but this wol I," quod he,  
"That ye to me assente as in this thyng.  
Shewe now youre pacience in youre werkyng,  
That ye me highte and swore in youre village  
That day that maked was oure mariage."  
Whan she had herd al this, she noght ameved  
Neither in word, or chiere, or contenaunce,  
500 For, as it semed, she was nat agreved.  
She seyde, "Lord, al lyth in youre plesaunce.  
My child and I, with hertely obeisaunce,  
Been youre al, and ye mowe save or spille  
Youre owene thyng; werketh after youre wille.  
"Ther may no thyng, God so my soule save,  
Liken to yow that may displese me;  
Ne I desire no thyng for to have,  
Ne drede for to leese, save oonly yee.  
This wyl is in myn herte, and ay shal be;  
510 No lengthe of tyme or deeth may this deface,  
Ne chaunge my corage to another place."  
Glad was this markys of hire answeyng,  
But yet he feyned as he were nat so;  
Al drery was his cheere and his lookyng,  
Whan that he sholde out of the chambre go.  
Soone after this, a furlong wey or two,



He prively hath toold al his entente  
Unto a man, and to his wyf hym sente.  
A maner sergeant was this privee man,  
520 The which that feithful ofte he founden hadde  
In thynges grete, and eek swich folk wel kan  
Doon execucioun in thynges badde.  
The lord knew wel that he hym loved and dradde;  
And whan this sergeant wiste his lordes wille,  
Into the chambre he stalked hym ful stille.  
"Madame," he seyde, "ye moote foryeve it me,  
Though I do thyng to which I am constreyned.  
Ye been so wys that ful wel knowe ye  
That lordes heestes mowe nat been yfeyned;  
530 They mowe wel been biwailed or compleyned,  
But men moote nede unto hire lust obeye,  
And so wol I; ther is namoore to seye.  
"This child I am comanded for to take" --  
And spak namoore, but out the child he hente  
Despitously, and gan a cheere make  
As though he wolde han slayn it er he wente.  
Grisildis moot al suffre and al consente,  
And as a lamb she sitteth meke and stille,  
And leet this crueel sergeant doon his wille.  
540 Suspicious was the diffame of this man,  
Suspect his face, suspect his word also;  
Suspect the tyme in which he this bigan.  
Allas! Hir doghter that she loved so,  
She wende he wolde han slawen it right tho.  
But nathelees she neither weep ne syked,  
Conformynge hire to that the markys lyked.  
But atte laste to speken she bigan,  
And mekely she to the sergeant preyde,  
So as he was a worthy gentil man,  
550 That she moste kisse hire child er that it deyde.  
And in hir barm this litel child she leyde  
With ful sad face, and gan the child to blisse,  
And lulled it, and after gan it kisse.  
And thus she seyde in hire benigne voys,  
"Fareweel my child! I shal thee nevere see.  
But sith I thee have marked with the croys  
Of thilke Fader -- blessed moote he be! --  
That for us deyde upon a croys of tree,

Thy soule, litel child, I hym bitake,  
560 For this nyght shaltow dyen for my sake."  
I trowe that to a norice in this cas  
It had been hard this reuthe for to se;  
Wel myghte a mooder thanne han cryd "allas!"  
But nathelees so sad stidefast was she  
That she endured al adversitee,  
And to the sergeant mekely she sayde,  
"Have heer agayn youre litel yonge mayde.  
"Gooth now," quod she, "and dooth my lordes heeste;  
But o thyng wol I prey yow of youre grace,  
570 That, but my lord forbad yow, atte leeste  
Burieth this litel body in som place  
That beestes ne no briddes it torace."  
But he no word wol to that purpos seye,  
But took the child and wente upon his weye.  
This sergeant cam unto his lord ageyn,  
And of Grisildis wordes and hire cheere  
He tolde hym point for point, in short and pleyn,  
And hym presenteth with his doghter deere.  
Somwhat this lord hadde routhe in his manere,  
580 But nathelees his purpos heeld he stille,  
As lordes doon, whan they wol han hir wille;  
And bad this sergeant that he pryvely  
Sholde this child softe wynde and wrappe,  
With alle circumstances tendrely,  
And carie it in a cofre or in a lappe;  
But, upon peyne his heed of for to swappe,  
That no man sholde knowe of his entente,  
Ne whenne he cam, ne whider that he wente;  
But at Boloigne to his suster deere,  
590 That thilke tyme of Panik was countesse,  
He sholde it take and shewe hire this mateere,  
Bisekyng hire to doon hire bisynesse  
This child to fostre in alle gentillesse;  
And whos child that it was he bad hire hyde  
From every wight, for oght that may bityde.  
The sergeant gooth, and hath fulfild this thyng;  
But to this markys now retourne we.  
For now gooth he ful faste ymaginyng  
If by his wyves cheere he myghte se,  
600 Or by hire word aperceyve, that she

Were chaunged; but he nevere hire koude fynde  
But evere in oon ylike sad and kynde.  
As glad, as humble, as bisy in servyse,  
And eek in love, as she was wont to be,  
Was she to hym in every maner wyse;  
Ne of hir doghter noght a word spak she.  
Noon accident, for noon adversitee,  
Was seyn in hire, ne nevere hir doghter name  
Ne nempned she, in ernest nor in game.  
610 In this estaat ther passed been foure yeer  
Er she with childe was, but, as God wolde,  
A knave child she bar by this Walter,  
Ful gracious and fair for to biholde.  
And whan that folk it to his fader tolde,  
Nat oonly he but al his contree merye  
Was for this child, and God they thanke and herye.  
Whan it was two yeer old, and fro the brest  
Departed of his norice, on a day  
This markys caughte yet another lest  
620 To tempte his wyf yet ofter, if he may.  
O nedelee was she tempted in assay!  
But wedded men ne knowe no mesure,  
Whan that they fynde a pacient creature.  
"Wyf," quod this markys, "ye han herd er this  
My peple sikly berth oure mariage;  
And namely sith my sone yboren is,  
Now is it worse than evere in al oure age.  
The murmur sleeth myn herte and my corage,  
For to myne eres comth the voys so smerte  
630 That it wel ny destroyed hath myn herte.  
"Now sey they thus: 'Whan Walter is agon,  
Thanne shal the blood of Janicle succede  
And been oure lord, for oother have we noon.'  
Swiche wordes seith my peple, out of drede.  
Wel oughte I of swich murmur taken heede,  
For certainly I drede swich sentence,  
Though they nat pleyn speke in myn audience.  
"I wolde lyve in pees, if that I myghte;  
Wherfore I am disposed outrely,  
640 As I his suster servede by nyghte,  
Right so thenke I to serve hym pryvely.  
This warne I yow, that ye nat sodeynly

Out of youreself for no wo sholde outreye;  
Beth pacient, and therof I yow preye."  
"I have," quod she, "seyd thus, and evere shal:  
I wol no thyng, ne nyl no thyng, certayn,  
But as yow list. Naught greveth me at al,  
Though that my doughter and my sone be slayn --  
At youre comandement, this is to sayn.  
650 I have noght had no part of children tweyne  
But first siknesse, and after, wo and peyne.  
"Ye been oure lord; dooth with youre owene thyng  
Right as yow list; axeth no reed at me.  
For as I lefte at hoom al my clothyng,  
Whan I first cam to yow, right so," quod she,  
"Lefte I my wyl and al my libertee,  
And took youre clothyng; wherfore I yow preye,  
Dooth youre plesaunce; I wol youre lust obeye.  
"And certes, if I hadde prescience  
660 Youre wyl to knowe, er ye youre lust me tolde,  
I wolde it doon withouten necligence;  
But now I woot youre lust, and what ye wolde,  
Al youre plesance ferme and stable I holde;  
For wiste I that my deeth wolde do yow ese,  
Right gladly wolde I dyen, yow to plese.  
"Deth may noght make no comparisoun  
Unto youre love." And whan this markys say  
The constance of his wyf, he caste adoun  
His eyen two, and wondreth that she may  
670 In pacience suffre al this array;  
And forth he goth with drery contenance,  
But to his herte it was ful greet plesance.  
This ugly sergeant, in the same wyse  
That he hire doghter caughte, right so he --  
Or worse, if men worse kan devyse --  
Hath hent hire sone, that ful was of beautee.  
And evere in oon so pacient was she  
That she no chiere maade of hevynesse,  
But kiste hir sone, and after gan it blesse;  
680 Save this, she preyede hym that, if he myghte,  
Hir litel sone he wolde in erthe grave  
His tendre lymes, delicaat to sighte,  
Fro foweles and fro beestes for to save.  
But she noon answer of hym myghte have.

He wente his wey, as hym no thyng ne roghte,  
But to Boloigne he tendrely it broghte.  
This markys wondred, evere lenger the moore,  
Upon hir pacience, and if that he  
Ne hadde soothly knowen therbifoore  
690 That parfitly hir children loved she,  
He wolde have wend that of som subtiltee,  
And of malice, or for crueel corage,  
That she hadde suffred this with sad visage.  
But wel he knew that next hymself, certayn,  
She loved hir children best in every wyse.  
But now of wommen wolde I axen fayn  
If thise assayes myghte nat suffise?  
What koude a sturdy housbonde moore devyse  
To preeve hir wyfhod and hir stedefastnesse,  
700 And he continuyng evere in sturdinesse?  
But ther been folk of swich condicion  
That whan they have a certein purpos take,  
They kan nat stynte of hire entencion,  
But, right as they were bounden to that stake,  
They wol nat of that firste purpos slake.  
Right so this markys fulliche hath purposed  
To tempte his wyf as he was first disposed.  
He waiteth if by word or contenance  
That she to hym was changed of corage,  
710 But nevere koude he fynde variance.  
She was ay oon in herte and in visage,  
And ay the forther that she was in age,  
The moore trewe, if that it were possible,  
She was to hym in love, and moore penyble.  
For which it semed thus: that of hem two  
Ther nas but o wyl, for as Walter leste,  
The same lust was hire plesance also.  
And, God be thanked, al fil for the beste.  
She shewed wel, for no worldly unreste  
720 A wyf, as of hirself, nothing ne sholde  
Wille in effect, but as hir housbonde wolde.  
The sclandre of Walter ofte and wyde spradde,  
That of a crueel herte he wikkedly,  
For he a povre womman wedded hadde,  
Hath mordred bothe his children prively.  
Swich murmur was among hem comunly.

No wonder is, for to the peples ere  
Ther cam no word but that they mordred were.  
For which, where as his peple therbifore  
730 Hadde loved hym wel, the sclaundre of his diffame  
Made hem that they hym hatede therfore.  
To been a mordrere is an hateful name;  
But nathelees, for ernest ne for game,  
He of his crueel purpos nolde stente;  
To tempte his wyf was set al his entente.  
Whan that his doghter twelve yeer was of age,  
He to the court of Rome, in subtil wyse  
Enformed of his wyl, sente his message,  
Comaundyng hem swiche bulles to devyse  
740 As to his crueel purpos may suffyse --  
How that the pope, as for his peples reste,  
Bad hym to wedde another, if hym leste.  
I seye, he bad they sholde countrefete  
The popes bulles, makynge mencion  
That he hath leve his firste wyf to lete,  
As by the popes dispensacion,  
To stynte rancour and dissencion  
Bitwixe his peple and hym; thus seyde the bulle,  
The which they han publiced atte fulle.  
750 The rude peple, as it no wonder is,  
Wenden ful wel that it hadde be right so;  
But whan thise tidynges came to Grisildis,  
I deeme that hire herte was ful wo.  
But she, ylike sad for everemo,  
Disposed was, this humble creature,  
The adversitee of Fortune al t' endure,  
Abidyng evere his lust and his plesance,  
To whom that she was yeven herte and al,  
As to hire verray worldly suffisance.  
760 But shortly if this storie I tellen shal,  
This markys writen hath in special  
A lettre, in which he sheweth his entente,  
And secreely he to Boloigne it sente.  
To the Erl of Panyk, which that hadde tho  
Wedded his suster, preyde he specially  
To bryngen hoom agayn his children two  
In honourable estaat al openly.  
But o thyng he hym preyede outrely,

That he to no wight, though men wolde enquire,  
770 Sholde nat telle whos children that they were,  
But seye the mayden sholde ywedded be  
Unto the Markys of Saluce anon.  
And as this erl was preyed, so dide he;  
For at day set he on his wey is goon  
Toward Saluce, and lordes many oon  
In riche array, this mayden for to gyde,  
Hir yonge brother ridynge hire bisyde.  
Arrayed was toward hir mariage  
This fresshe mayde, ful of gemmes cleere;  
780 Hir brother, which that seven yeer was of age,  
Arrayed eek ful fressh in his manere.  
And thus in greet noblesse and with glad cheere,  
Toward Saluces shapyng hir journey,  
Fro day to day they ryden in hir wey.  
Among al this, after his wikke usage,  
This markys, yet his wyf to tempte moore  
To the outtreste preeve of hir corage,  
Fully to han experience and loore  
If that she were as stidefast as bifoore,  
790 He on a day in open audience  
Ful boistously hath seyde hire this sentence:  
"Certes, Grisilde, I hadde ynogh plesance  
To han yow to my wyf for youre goodnesse,  
As for youre trouthe and for youre obeisance,  
Noght for youre lynage, ne for youre richesse;  
But now knowe I in verray soothfastnesse  
That in greet lordshipe, if I wel avyse,  
Ther is greet servitude in sondry wyse.  
"I may nat doon as every plowman may.  
800 My peple me constreyneth for to take  
Another wyf, and crien day by day;  
And eek the pope, rancour for to slake,  
Consenteth it -- that dar I undertake --  
And trewely thus muche I wol yow seye:  
My newe wyf is comynge by the weye.  
"Be strong of herte, and voyde anon hir place;  
And thilke dower that ye broghten me,  
Taak it agayn; I graunte it of my grace.  
Retourneth to youre fadres hous," quod he;  
810 "No man may alwey han prosperitee.

With evene herte I rede yow t' endure  
The strook of Fortune or of aventure."  
And she agayn answerde in pacience:  
"My lord," quod she, "I woot, and wiste alway,  
How that bitwixen youre magnificence  
And my poverte no wight kan ne may  
Maken comparison; it is no nay.

I ne heeld me nevere digne in no manere  
To be youre wyf, no, ne youre chamberere.  
820 "And in this hous, ther ye me lady maade --  
The heighe God take I for my witnesse,  
And also wysly he my soule glaade --  
I nevere heeld me lady ne mistresse,  
But humble servant to youre worthynesse,  
And evere shal, whil that my lyf may dure,  
Aboven every worldly creature.

"That ye so longe of youre benignitee  
Han holden me in honour and nobleye,  
Where as I was noght worthy for to bee,  
830 That thonke I God and yow, to whom I preye  
Foryelde it yow; ther is namoore to seye.  
Unto my fader gladly wol I wende,  
And with hym dwelle unto my lyves ende.

"Ther I was fostred of a child ful smal,  
Til I be deed my lyf ther wol I lede,  
A wydwe clene in body, herte, and al.  
For sith I yaf to yow my maydenhede,  
And am youre trewe wyf, it is no drede,  
God shilde swich a lordes wyf to take  
840 Another man to housbonde or to make!

"And of youre newe wyf God of his grace  
So graunte yow wele and prosperitee!  
For I wol gladly yelden hire my place,  
In which that I was blisful wont to bee.  
For sith it liketh yow, my lord," quod shee,  
"That whilom weren al myn hertes reste,  
That I shal goon, I wol goon whan yow leste.

"But ther as ye me profre swich dowaire  
As I first broghte, it is wel in my mynde  
850 It were my wrecched clothes, nothyng faire,  
The whiche to me were hard now for to fynde.  
O goode God! How gentil and how kynde



Ye semed by youre speche and youre visage  
 The day that maked was oure mariage!  
 "But sooth is seyde -- algate I fynde it trewe,  
 For in effect it preeved is on me --  
 Love is noght oold as whan that it is newe.  
 But certes, lord, for noon adversitee,  
 To dyen in the cas, it shal nat bee  
 860 That evere in word or werk I shal repente  
 That I yow yaf myn herte in hool entente.  
 "My lord, ye woot that in my fadres place  
 Ye dide me streepe out of my povre weede,  
 And richely me cladden, of youre grace.  
 To yow broghte I noght elles, out of drede,  
 But feith, and nakednesse, and maydenhede;  
 And heere agayn your clothyng I restoore,  
 And eek your weddyng ryng, for everemore.  
 "The remenant of youre jueles redy be  
 870 Inwith youre chambre, dar I sauflly sayn.  
 Naked out of my fadres hous," quod she,  
 "I cam, and naked moot I turne agayn.  
 Al youre plesance wol I folwen fayn;  
 But yet I hope it be nat youre entente  
 That I smoklees out of youre paleys wente.  
 "Ye koude nat doon so dishonest a thyng,  
 That thilke wombe in which youre children leye  
 Sholde biforn the peple, in my walkyng,  
 Be seyn al bare; wherfore I yow preye,  
 880 Lat me nat lyk a worm go by the weye.  
 Remembre yow, myn owene lord so deere,  
 I was youre wyf, though I unworthy weere.  
 "Wherfore, in gerdon of my maydenhede,  
 Which that I broghte, and noght agayn I bere,  
 As voucheth sauf to yeve me, to my meede,  
 But swich a smok as I was wont to were,  
 That I therwith may wrye the wombe of here  
 That was youre wyf. And heer take I my leve  
 Of yow, myn owene lord, lest I yow greve."  
 890 "The smok," quod he, "that thou hast on thy bak,  
 Lat it be stille, and bere it forth with thee."  
 But wel unnethes thilke word he spak,  
 But wente his wey, for routhe and for pitee.  
 Biforn the folk hirselves strepeth she,

And in hir smok, with heed and foot al bare,  
Toward hir fadre hous forth is she fare.  
The folk hire folwe, wepynge in hir weye,  
And Fortune ay they cursen as they goon;  
But she fro wepyng kepte hire eyen dreye,  
900 Ne in this tyme word ne spak she noon.  
Hir fader, that this tidynge herde anoon,  
Curseth the day and tyme that Nature  
Shoop hym to been a lyves creature.  
For out of doute this olde poure man  
Was evere in suspect of hir mariage;  
For evere he demed, sith that it bigan,  
That whan the lord fulfild hadde his corage,  
Hym wolde thynke it were a disparage  
To his estaat so lowe for t' alighte,  
910 And voyden hire as soone as ever he myghte.  
Agayns his doghter hastily goth he,  
For he by noyse of folk knew hire comynge,  
And with hire olde coote, as it myghte be  
He covered hire, ful sorwefully wepynge.  
But on hire body myghte he it nat brynge,  
For rude was the clooth, and moore of age  
By dayes fele than at hire mariage.  
Thus with hire fader for a certeyn space  
Dwelleth this flour of wyfly pacience,  
920 That neither by hire wordes ne hire face,  
Biforn the folk, ne eek in hire absence,  
Ne shewed she that hire was doon offence;  
Ne of hire heighe estaat no remembraunce  
Ne hadde she, as by hire contenaunce.  
No wonder is, for in hire grete estaat  
Hire goost was evere in pleyne humylitee;  
No tendre mouth, noon herte delicaat,  
No pompe, no semblant of roialtee,  
But ful of pacient benygnytee,  
930 Discreet and pridelees, ay honorable,  
And to hire housbonde evere meke and stable.  
Men speke of Job, and moost for his humblesse,  
As clerkes, whan hem list, konne wel endite,  
Namely of men, but as in soothfastnesse,  
Though clerkes preise wommen but a lite,  
Ther kan no man in humblesse hym acquite

As womman kan, ne kan been half so trewe  
As wommen been, but it be falle of newe.  
Fro Boloigne is this Erl of Panyk come,  
940 Of which the fame up sprang to moore and lesse,  
And to the peples eres, alle and some,  
Was kouth eek that a newe markysesse  
He with hym broghte, in swich pompe and richesse  
That nevere was ther seyn with mannes ye  
So noble array in al West Lumbardye.  
The markys, which that shoop and knew al this,  
Er that this erl was come, sente his message  
For thilke sely povre Grisildis;  
And she with humble herte and glad visage,  
950 Nat with no swollen thoght in hire corage,  
Cam at his heste, and on hire knees hire sette,  
And reverently and wisely she hym grette.  
"Grisilde," quod he, "my wyl is outrely  
This mayden, that shal wedded been to me,  
Received be to-morwe as roially  
As it possible is in myn hous to be,  
And eek that every wight in his degree  
Have his estaat, in sitting and servyse  
And heigh plesaunce, as I kan best devyse.  
960 "I have no wommen suffisaunt, certayn,  
The chambres for t' arraye in ordinaunce  
After my lust, and therfore wolde I fayn  
That thyn were al swich manere governaunce.  
Thou knowest eek of old al my plesaunce;  
Thogh thyn array be badde and yvel biseye,  
Do thou thy devoir at the leeste weye."  
"Nat oonly, lord, that I am glad," quod she,  
"To doon youre lust, but I desire also  
Yow for to serve and plese in my degree  
970 Withouten feynting, and shal everemo;  
Ne nevere, for no wele ne no wo,  
Ne shal the goost withinne myn herte stente  
To love yow best with al my trewe entente."  
And with that word she gan the hous to dighte,  
And tables for to sette, and beddes make;  
And peyned hire to doon al that she myghte,  
Preyinge the chambereres, for Goddes sake,  
To hasten hem, and faste swepe and shake;

And she, the mooste servysable of alle,  
980 Hath every chambre arrayed and his halle.  
Abouten undren gan this erl alighte,  
That with hym broghte thise noble children tweye,  
For which the peple ran to seen the sighte  
Of hire array, so richely biseye;  
And thanne at erst amonges hem they seye  
That Walter was no fool, thogh that hym leste  
To chaunge his wyf, for it was for the beste.  
For she is fairer, as they deemen alle,  
Than is Grisilde, and moore tendre of age,  
990 And fairer fruyt bitwene hem sholde falle,  
And moore plesant, for hire heigh lynage.  
Hir brother eek so fair was of visage  
That hem to seen the peple hath caught plesaunce,  
Commendynge now the markys governaunce.  
"O stormy peple! Unsad and evere untreweth!  
Ay undiscreet and chaungynge as a fane!  
Delitynge evere in rumbul that is newe,  
For lyk the moone ay wexe ye and wane!  
Ay ful of clappyng, deere ynogh a jane!  
1000 Youre doom is fals, youre constance yvele preeveth;  
A ful greet fool is he that on yow leeveth."  
Thus seyden sadde folk in that citee,  
Whan that the peple gazed up and doun,  
For they were glad, right for the noveltee,  
To han a newe lady of hir toun.  
Namore of this make I now mencion,  
But to Grisilde agayn wol I me dresse,  
And telle hir constance and hir bisynesse.  
Ful bisy was Grisilde in every thyng  
1010 That to the feeste was apertinent.  
Right noght was she abayst of hire clothyng,  
Thogh it were rude and somdeel eek torent;  
But with glad cheere to the yate is went  
With oother folk to greete the markysesse,  
And after that dooth forth hire bisynesse.  
With so glad chiere his gestes she receyveth,  
And so konnyngly, everich in his degree,  
That no defaute no man aperceyveth,  
But ay they wondren what she myghte bee  
1020 That in so povre array was for to see,

And koude swich honour and reverence,  
 And worthily they preisen hire prudence.  
 In al this meene while she ne stente  
 This mayde and eek hir brother to commende  
 With al hir herte, in ful benyngne entente,  
 So wel that no man koude hir pris amende.  
 But atte laste, whan that thise lordes wende  
 To sitten down to mete, he gan to calle  
 Grisilde, as she was bisy in his halle.  
 1030 "Grisilde," quod he, as it were in his pley,  
 "How liketh thee my wyf and hire beautee?"  
 "Right wel," quod she, "my lord; for, in good fey,  
 A fairer saugh I nevere noon than she.  
 I prey to God yeve hire prosperitee;  
 And so hope I that he wol to yow sende  
 Plesance ynogh unto youre lyves ende.  
 "O thyng biseke I yow, and warne also,  
 That ye ne prikke with no tormentynge  
 This tendre mayden, as ye han doon mo;  
 1040 For she is fostred in hire norissynge  
 Moore tendrely, and, to my supposynge,  
 She koude nat adversitee endure  
 As koude a povre fostred creature."  
 And whan this Walter saugh hire pacience,  
 Hir glade chiere, and no malice at al,  
 And he so ofte had doon to hire offence,  
 And she ay sad and constant as a wal,  
 Continuyng evere hire innocence overal,  
 This sturdy markys gan his herte dresse  
 1050 To rewen upon hire wyfly stedfastnesse.  
 "This is ynogh, Grisilde myn," quod he;  
 "Be now namoore agast ne yvele apayed.  
 I have thy feith and thy benyngnytee,  
 As wel as evere womman was, assayed,  
 In greet estaat and povreliche arrayed.  
 Now knowe I, dere wyf, thy stedfastnesse" --  
 And hire in armes took and gan hire kesse.  
 And she for wonder took of it no keep;  
 She herde nat what thyng he to hire seyde;  
 1060 She ferde as she had stert out of a sleep,  
 Til she out of hire mazednesse abreyde.  
 "Grisilde," quod he, "by God, that for us deyde,

Thou art my wyf, ne noon oother I have,  
Ne nevere hadde, as God my soule save!  
"This is thy doghter, which thou hast supposed  
To be my wyf; that oother feithfully  
Shal be myn heir, as I have ay disposed;  
Thou bare hym in thy body trewely.  
At Boloigne have I kept hem prively;  
1070 Taak hem agayn, for now maystow nat seye  
That thou hast lorn noon of thy children tweye.  
"And folk that ootherweys han seyd of me,  
I warne hem wel that I have doon this deede  
For no malice, ne for no crueltee,  
But for t' assaye in thee thy wommanheede,  
And nat to sleen my children -- God forbeede! --  
But for to kepe hem pryvely and stille,  
Til I thy purpos knewe and al thy wille."  
Whan she this herde, aswowne doun she falleth  
1080 For pitous joye, and after hire swownynge  
She bothe hire yonge children to hire calleth,  
And in hire armes, pitously wepynge,  
Embraceth hem, and tendrely kissynge  
Ful lyk a mooder, with hire salte teeres  
She bathed bothe hire visage and hire heeres.  
O which a pitous thyng it was to se  
Hir swownyng, and hire humble voys to heere!  
"Grauntmercy, lord, God thanke it yow," quod she,  
"That ye han saved me my children deere!  
1090 Now rekke I nevere to been deed right heere;  
Sith I stonde in youre love and in youre grace,  
No fors of deeth, ne whan my spirit pace!  
"O tendre, o deere, o yonge children myne!  
Youre woful mooder wende stedfastly  
That crueel houndes or som foul vermyne  
Hadde eten yow; but God of his mercy  
And youre benyngne fader tendrely  
Hath doon yow kept" -- and in that same stounde  
Al sodeynly she swapte adoun to grounde.  
1100 And in hire swough so sadly holdeth she  
Hire children two, whan she gan hem t' embrace,  
That with greet sleighte and greet difficultee  
The children from hire arm they gonne arace.  
O many a teere on many a pitous face

Doun ran of hem that stooden hire bisyde;  
Unnethe abouten hire myghte they abyde.  
Walter hire gladeth and hire sorwe slaketh;  
She riseth up, abaysed, from hire traunce,  
And every wight hire joye and feeste maketh  
1110 Til she hath caught agayn hire contenaunce.  
Walter hire dooth so feithfully plesaunce  
That it was deyntee for to seen the cheere  
Bitwixe hem two, now they been met yfeere.  
Thise ladyes, whan that they hir tyme say,  
Han taken hire and into chambre gon,  
And strepen hire out of hire rude array,  
And in a clooth of gold that brighte shoon,  
With a coroune of many a riche stoon  
Upon hire heed, they into halle hire broghte,  
1120 And ther she was honored as hire oghte.  
Thus hath this pitous day a blisful ende,  
For every man and womman dooth his myght  
This day in murthe and revel to dispende  
Til on the welkne shoon the sterres lyght.  
For moore solempne in every mannes syght  
This feste was, and gretter of costage,  
Than was the revel of hire mariage.  
Ful many a yeer in heigh prosperitee  
Lyven thise two in concord and in reste,  
1130 And richely his doghter maryed he  
Unto a lord, oon of the worthieste  
Of al Ytaille; and thanne in pees and reste  
His wyves fader in his court he kepeth,  
Til that the soule out of his body crepeth.  
His sone succedeth in his heritage  
In reste and pees, after his fader day,  
And fortunat was eek in mariage,  
Al putte he nat his wyf in greet assay.  
This world is nat so strong, it is no nay,  
1140 As it hath been in olde tymes yoore,  
And herkneth what this auctour seith therfoore.  
This storie is seyed nat for that wyves sholde  
Folwen Grisilde as in humylitee,  
For it were inportable, though they wolde,  
But for that every wight, in his degree,  
Sholde be constant in adversitee

As was Grisilde; therfore Petrak writeth  
This storie, which with heigh stile he enditeth.  
For sith a womman was so pacient  
1150 Unto a mortal man, wel moore us oghte  
Receyven al in gree that God us sent;  
For greet skile is he preeve that he wroghte.  
But he ne tempteth no man that he boghte,  
As seith Seint Jame, if ye his pistel rede;  
He preeveth folk al day, it is no drede,  
And suffreth us, as for oure excercise,  
With sharpe scourges of adversitee  
Ful ofte to be bete in sondry wise;  
Nat for to knowe oure wyl, for certes he,  
1160 Er we were born, knew al oure freletee;  
And for oure beste is al his governaunce.  
Lat us thanne lyve in vertuous suffraunce.  
But o word, lordynges, herkneth er I go:  
It were ful hard to fynde now-a-dayes  
In al a toun Grisildis thre or two;  
For if that they were put to swiche assayes,  
The gold of hem hath now so badde alayes  
With bras, that thogh the coyne be fair at ye,  
It wolde rather breste a-two than plye.  
1170 For which heere, for the Wyves love of Bathe --  
Whos lyf and al hire secte God mayntene  
In heigh maistrie, and elles were it scathe --  
I wol with lusty herte, fressh and grene,  
Seyn yow a song to glade yow, I wene;  
And lat us stynte of earnestful matere.  
Herkneth my song that seith in this manere:  
Grisilde is deed, and eek hire pacience,  
And bothe atones buryed in Ytaille;  
For which I crie in open audience  
1180 No wedded man so hardy be t' assaille  
His wyves pacience in trust to fynde  
Grisildis, for in certain he shal faille.  
O noble wyves, ful of heigh prudence,  
Lat noon humylitee youre tonge naille,  
Ne lat no clerk have cause or diligence  
To write of yow a storie of swich mervaille  
As of Grisildis pacient and kynde,  
Lest Chichevache yow swelwe in hire entraille!



Folweth Ekko, that holdeth no silence,  
1190 But evere answereth at the countretaille.  
Beth nat bidaffed for youre innocence,  
But sharply taak on yow the governaille.  
Emprenteth wel this lessoun in youre mynde,  
For commune profit sith it may availle.  
Ye archewyves, stondeth at defense,  
Syn ye be strong as is a greet camaille;  
Ne suffreth nat that men yow doon offense.  
And sklendre wyves, fieble as in bataille,  
Beth egre as is a tygre yond in Ynde;  
1200 Ay clappeth as a mille, I yow consaille.  
Ne dreed hem nat; doth hem no reverence,  
For though thyn housbonde armed be in maille,  
The arwes of thy crabbed eloquence  
Shal perce his brest and eek his aventaille.  
In jalousie I rede eek thou hym bynde,  
And thou shalt make hym couche as doth a quaille.  
If thou be fair, ther folk been in presence,  
Shewe thou thy visage and thyn apparaille;  
If thou be foul, be fre of thy dispence;  
1210 To gete thee freendes ay do thy travaille;  
Be ay of chiere as light as leef on lynde,  
And lat hym care, and wepe, and wrynge, and waille!  
[This worthy Clerk, whan ended was his tale,  
Oure Hooste seyde, and swoor, "By Goddes bones,  
Me were levere than a barel ale  
My wyf at hoom had herd this legende ones!  
This is a gentil tale for the nones,  
As to my purpos, wiste ye my wille;  
But thyng that wol nat be, lat it be stille."]



## THE MERCHANT'S PROLOGUE

"Wepying and waylyng, care and oother sorwe  
I knowe ynogh, on even and a-morwe,"  
Quod the Marchant, "and so doon other mo  
That wedded been. I trowe that it be so,  
For wel I woot it fareth so with me.  
I have a wyf, the worste that may be;  
For thogh the feend to hire ycoupled were,  
1220 She wolde hym overmacche, I dar wel swere.  
What sholde I yow reherce in special  
Hir hye malice? She is a shrewe at al.  
Ther is a long and large difference  
Bitwix Grisildis grete pacience  
And of my wyf the passyng crueltee.  
Were I unbounden, also moot I thee,  
I wolde nevere eft comen in the snare.  
We wedded men lyven in sorwe and care.  
Assaye whoso wole, and he shal fynde  
1230 That I seye sooth, by Seint Thomas of Ynde,  
As for the moore part -- I sey nat alle.  
God shilde that it sholde so bifalle!  
"A, goode sire Hoost, I have ywedded bee  
Thise monthes two, and moore nat, pardee;  
And yet, I trowe, he that al his lyve  
Wyflees hath been, though that men wolde him ryve  
Unto the herte, ne koude in no manere  
Tellen so muchel sorwe as I now heere  
Koude tellen of my wyves cursednesse!"  
1240 "Now," quod oure Hoost, "Marchaunt, so God yow blesse,  
Syn ye so muchel knowen of that art  
Ful hertely I pray yow telle us part."  
"Gladly," quod he, "but of myn owene soore,  
For soory herte, I telle may namoore."



## THE MERCHANT'S TALE

Whilom ther was dwellynge in Lumbardye  
 A worthy knyght, that born was of Pavye,  
 In which he lyved in greet prosperitee;  
 And sixty yeer a wyfleeves man was hee,  
 And folwed ay his bodily delyt  
 1250 On wommen, ther as was his appetyt,  
 As doon thise fooles that been seculeer.  
 And whan that he was passed sixty yeer,  
 Were it for hoolynesse or for dotage  
 I kan nat seye, but swich a greet corage  
 Hadde this knyght to been a wedded man  
 That day and nyght he dooth al that he kan  
 T' espie where he myghte wedded be,  
 Preyinge oure Lord to graunte him that he  
 Mighte ones knowe of thilke blisful lyf  
 1260 That is bitwixe an housbonde and his wyf,  
 And for to lyve under that hooly boond  
 With which that first God man and womman bond.  
 "Noon oother lyf," seyde he, "is worth a bene,  
 For wedlok is so esy and so clene,  
 That in this world it is a paradys."  
 Thus seyde this olde knyght, that was so wys.  
 And certainly, as sooth as God is kyng,  
 To take a wyf it is a glorious thyng,  
 And namely whan a man is oold and hoor;  
 1270 Thanne is a wyf the fruyt of his tresor.  
 Thanne sholde he take a yong wyf and a feir,  
 On which he myghte engendren hym an heir,  
 And lede his lyf in joye and in solas,  
 Where as thise bachelers synge "allas,"  
 Whan that they fynden any adversitee  
 In love, which nys but chilyssh vanytee.  
 And trewely it sit wel to be so,  
 That bachelers have often peyne and wo;  
 On brotel ground they buylde, and brotelnesse  
 1280 They fynde whan they wene sikernes.  
 They lyve but as a bryd or as a beest,  
 In libertee and under noon arreest,  
 Ther as a wedded man in his estat  
 Lyveth a lyf blisful and ordinaat

Under this yok of mariage ybounde.  
 Wel may his herte in joy and blisse habounde,  
 For who kan be so buxom as a wyf?  
 Who is so trewe, and eek so ententyf  
 To kepe hym, syk and hool, as is his make?  
 1290 For wele or wo she wole hym nat forsake;  
 She nys nat wery hym to love and serve,  
 Though that he lye bedrede til he sterve.  
 And yet somme clerkes seyn it nys nat so,  
 Of whiche he Theofraste is oon of tho.  
 What force though Theofraste liste lye?  
 "Ne take no wyf," quod he, "for housbondrye,  
 As for to spare in houshold thy dispence.  
 A trewe servant dooth moore diligence  
 Thy good to kepe than thyn owene wyf,  
 1300 For she wol clayme half part al hir lyf.  
 And if thou be syk, so God me save,  
 Thy verray freendes, or a trewe knave,  
 Wol kepe thee bet than she that waiteth ay  
 After thy good and hath doon many a day.  
 And if thou take a wyf unto thyn hoold  
 Ful lightly maystow been a cokewold."  
 This sentence, and an hundred thynges worse,  
 Writeth this man, ther God his bones corse!  
 But take no kep of al swich vanytee;  
 1310 Deffie Theofraste, and herke me.  
 A wyf is Goddes yifte verrailly;  
 Alle othere manere yiftes hardily,  
 As londes, rentes, pasture, or commune,  
 Or moebles -- alle been yiftes of Fortune  
 That passen as a shadwe upon a wal.  
 But drede nat, if pleyedly speke I shal:  
 A wyf wol laste, and in thyn hous endure,  
 Wel lenger than thee list, paraventure.  
 Mariage is a ful greet sacrement.  
 1320 He which that hath no wyf, I holde hym shent;  
 He lyveth helplees and al desolat --  
 I speke of folk in seculer estaat.  
 And herke why -- I sey nat this for noght --  
 That womman is for mannes helpe ywroght.  
 The hye God, whan he hadde Adam maked,  
 And saugh him al allone, bely-naked,

God of his grete goodnesse seyde than,  
 "Lat us now make an helpe unto this man  
 Lyk to hymself"; and thanne he made him Eve.  
 1330 Heere may ye se, and heerby may ye preve,  
 That wyf is mannes helpe and his confort,  
 His paradys terrestre, and his disport.  
 So buxom and so vertuous is she,  
 They moste nedes lyve in unitee.  
 O flessch they been, and o fleesh, as I gesse,  
 Hath but oon herte, in wele and in distresse.  
 A wyf! a, Seinte Marie, benedicite!  
 How myghte a man han any adversitee  
 That hath a wyf? Certes, I kan nat seye.  
 1340 The blisse which that is bitwixe hem tweye  
 Ther may no tonge telle, or herte thynke.  
 If he be povre, she helpeth hym to swynke;  
 She kepeth his good, and wasteth never a deel;  
 Al that hire housbonde lust, hire liketh weel;  
 She seith nat ones "nay," whan he seith "ye."  
 "Do this," seith he; "Al redy, sire," seith she.  
 O blisful ordre of wedlok precious,  
 Thou art so murye, and eek so vertuous,  
 And so commended and appreved eek  
 1350 That every man that halt hym worth a leek  
 Upon his bare knees oughte al his lyf  
 Thanken his God that hym hath sent a wyf,  
 Or elles preye to God hym for to sende  
 A wyf to laste unto his lyves ende.  
 For thanne his lyf is set in sikernes;e  
 He may nat be deceyved, as I gesse,  
 So that he werke after his wyves reed.  
 Thanne may he boldely beren up his heed,  
 They been so trewe and therwithal so wyse;  
 1360 For which, if thou wolt werken as the wyse,  
 Do alwey so as wommen wol thee rede.  
 Lo, how that Jacob, as thise clerkes rede,  
 By good conseil of his mooder Rebekke,  
 Boond the kydes skyn aboute his nekke,  
 For which his fadres benyson he wan.  
 Lo Judith, as the storie eek telle kan,  
 By wys conseil she Goddes peple kepte,  
 And slow hym Oloferus, whil he slepte.

Lo Abigayl, by good conseil how she  
1370 Saved hir housbonde Nabal whan that he  
Sholde han be slayn; and looke, Ester also  
By good conseil delyvered out of wo  
The peple of God, and made hym Mardochee  
Of Assuere enhaunced for to be.  
Ther nys no thyng in gree superlatyf,  
As seith Senek, above an humble wyf.  
Suffre thy wyves tonge, as Catoun bit;  
She shal comande, and thou shalt suffren it,  
And yet she wole obeye of curteisye.  
1380 A wyf is kepere of thyn housbondrye;  
Wel may the sike man biwaille and wepe,  
Ther as ther nys no wyf the hous to kepe.  
I warne thee, if wisely thou wolt wirche,  
Love wel thy wyf, as Crist loved his chirche.  
If thou lovest thyself, thou lovest thy wyf;  
No man hateth his flessch, but in his lyf  
He fostreth it, and therfore bidde I thee  
Cherisse thy wyf, or thou shalt nevere thee.  
Housbonde and wyf, what so men jape or pleye,  
1390 Of worldly folk holden the siker weye;  
They been so knyght ther may noon harm bityde,  
And namely upon the wyves syde.  
For which this Januarie, of whom I tolde,  
Considered hath, inwith his dayes olde,  
The lusty lyf, the vertuous quyete,  
That is in mariage hony-sweete,  
And for his freendes on a day he sente,  
To tellen hem th' effect of his entente.  
With face sad his tale he hath hem toold.  
1400 He seyde, "Freendes, I am hoor and oold,  
And almoost, God woot, on my pittes brynke;  
Upon my soule somewhat moste I thynke.  
I have my body folily despended;  
Blessed be God that it shal been amended!  
For I wol be, certeyn, a wedded man,  
And that anon in al the haste I kan.  
Unto som mayde fair and tendre of age,  
I prey yow, shapeth for my mariage  
Al sodeynly, for I wol nat abyde;  
1410 And I wol fonde t' espie, on my syde,

To whom I may be wedded hastily.  
But forasmuche as ye been mo than I,  
Ye shullen rather swich a thyng espyen  
Than I, and where me best were to allyen.  
"But o thyng warne I yow, my freendes deere,  
I wol noon oold wyf han in no manere.  
She shal nat passe twenty yeer, certayn;  
Oold fissh and yong flessch wolde I have fayn.  
Bet is," quod he, "a pyk than a pykerel,  
1420 And bet than old boef is the tendre veel.  
I wol no womman thritty yeer of age;  
It is but bene-straw and greet forage.  
And eek thise olde wydwes, God it woot,  
They konne so muchel craft on Wades boot,  
So muchel broken harm, whan that hem leste,  
That with hem sholde I nevere lyve in reste.  
For sondry scoles maken sotile clerkis;  
Womman of manye scoles half a clerk is.  
But certeynly, a yong thyng may men gye,  
1430 Right as men may warm wex with handes plye.  
Wherefore I sey yow pleyedly, in a clause,  
I wol noon oold wyf han right for this cause.  
For if so were I hadde swich myschaunce  
That I in hire ne koude han no plesaunce,  
Thanne sholde I lede my lyf in avoutrye  
And go streight to the devel whan I dye.  
Ne children sholde I none upon hire geten;  
Yet were me levere houndes had me eten  
Than that myn heritage sholde falle  
1440 In straunge hand, and this I telle yow alle.  
I dote nat; I woot the cause why  
Men sholde wedde, and forthermoore woot I  
Ther speketh many a man of mariage  
That woot namoore of it than woot my page  
For whiche causes man sholde take a wyf.  
If he ne may nat lyven chaast his lyf,  
Take hym a wyf with greet devocioun,  
By cause of leveful procreacioun  
Of children to th' honour of God above,  
1450 And nat oonly for paramour or love;  
And for they sholde leccherye eschue,  
And yelde hir dette whan that it is due;

Or for that ech of hem sholde helpen oother  
 In meschief, as a suster shal the brother,  
 And lyve in chastitee ful holily.  
 But sires, by youre leve, that am nat I.  
 For -- God be thanked! -- I dar make avaunt  
 I feele my lymes stark and suffisaunt  
 To do al that a man bilongeth to;  
 1460 I woot myselven best what I may do.  
 Though I be hoor, I fare as dooth a tree  
 That blosmeth er that fruyt ywoxen bee;  
 And blosmy tree nys neither drye ne deed.  
 I feele me nowhere hoor but on myn heed;  
 Myn herte and alle my lymes been as grene  
 As laurer thurgh the yeer is for to sene.  
 And syn that ye han herd al myn entente,  
 I prey yow to my wyl ye wole assente."  
 Diverse men diversely hym tolde  
 1470 Of mariage manye ensamples olde.  
 Somme blamed it, somme preysed it, certeyn,  
 But atte laste, shortly for to seyn,  
 As al day falleth altercacioun  
 Bitwixen freendes in disputisoun,  
 Ther fil a stryf bitwixe his bretheren two,  
 Of whiche that oon was cleped Placebo;  
 Justinus soothly called was that oother.  
 Placebo seyde, "O Januarie, brother,  
 Ful litel nede hadde ye, my lord so deere,  
 1480 Conseil to axe of any that is heere,  
 But that ye been so ful of sapience  
 That yow ne liketh, for youre heighe prudence,  
 To weyven fro the word of Salomon.  
 This word seyde he unto us everychon:  
 'Wirk alle thyng by conseil,' thus seyde he,  
 'And thanne shaltow nat repente thee.'  
 But though that Salomon spak swich a word,  
 Myn owene deere brother and my lord,  
 So wysly God my soule brynge at reste,  
 1490 I holde youre owene conseil is the beste.  
 For, brother myn, of me taak this motyf:  
 I have now been a court-man al my lyf,  
 And God it woot, though I unworthy be,  
 I have stonden in ful greet degree



Abouten lordes of ful heigh estaat;  
 Yet hadde I nevere with noon of hem debaat.  
 I nevere hem contraried, trewely;  
 I woot wel that my lord kan moore than I.  
 What that he seith, I holde it ferme and stable;  
 1500 I seye the same, or elles thyng semblable.  
 A ful greet fool is any conseilour  
 That serveth any lord of heigh honour,  
 That dar presume, or elles thenken it,  
 That his conseil sholde passe his lordes wit.  
 Nay, lordes been no fooles, by my fay!  
 Ye han youreselven shewed heer to-day  
 So heigh sentence, so holily and weel,  
 That I consente and conferme everydeel  
 Youre wordes alle and youre opinioun.  
 1510 By God, ther nys no man in al this toun,  
 Ne in Ytaille, that koude bet han sayd!  
 Crist halt hym of this conseil ful wel apayd.  
 And trewely, it is an heigh corage  
 Of any man that stapen is in age  
 To take a yong wyf; by my fader kyn,  
 Youre herte hangeth on a joly pyn!  
 Dooth now in this matiere right as yow leste,  
 For finally I holde it for the beste."  
 Justinus, that ay stille sat and herde,  
 1520 Right in this wise he to Placebo answerde:  
 "Now, brother myn, be pacient, I preye,  
 Syn ye han seyde, and herkneth what I seye.  
 Senek, amonges othere wordes wyse,  
 Seith that a man oghte hym right wel avyse  
 To whom he yeveth his lond or his catel.  
 And syn I oghte avyse me right wel  
 To whom I yeve my good away fro me,  
 Wel muchel moore I oghte avysed be  
 To whom I yeve my body for alwey.  
 1530 I warne yow wel, it is no chilles pley  
 To take a wyf withouten avysement.  
 Men moste enquire -- this is myn assent --  
 Wher she be wys, or sobre, or dronkelewe,  
 Or proud, or elles ootherweys a shrewe,  
 A chidestere, or wastour of thy good,  
 Or riche, or poore, or elles mannyssh wood.

Al be it so that no man fynden shal  
Noon in this world that trotteth hool in al,  
Ne man, ne beest, swich as men koude devyse;  
1540 But nathelees it oghte ynough suffise  
With any wyf, if so were that she hadde  
Mo goode thewes than hire vices badde;  
And al this axeth leyser for t' enquire.  
For, God it woot, I have wept many a teere  
Ful pryvely, syn I have had a wyf.  
Preyse whoso wole a wedded mannes lyf,  
Certein I fynde in it but cost and care  
And observances, of alle blisses bare.  
And yet, God woot, my neighebores aboute,  
1550 And namely of wommen many a route,  
Seyn that I have the mooste stedefast wyf,  
And eek the mekeste oon that bereth lyf;  
But I woot best where wryngeth me my sho.  
Ye mowe, for me, right as yow liketh do;  
Avyseth yow -- ye been a man of age --  
How that ye entren into mariage,  
And namely with a yong wyf and a fair.  
By hym that made water, erthe, and air,  
The yongeste man that is in al this route  
1560 Is bisy ynough to bryngen it aboute  
To han his wyf allone. Trusteth me,  
Ye shul nat plesen hire fully yeres thre --  
This is to seyn, to doon hire ful plesaunce.  
A wyf axeth ful many an observaunce.  
I prey yow that ye be nat yvele apayd."  
"Wel," quod this Januarie, "and hastow ysayd?  
Straw for thy Senek, and for thy proverbes!  
I counte nat a panyer ful of herbes  
Of scole-terms. Wyser men than thou,  
1570 As thou hast herd, assenteden right now  
To my purpos. Placebo, what sey ye?"  
"I seye it is a cursed man," quod he,  
"That letteth matrimoigne, sikerly."  
And with that word they rysen sodeynly,  
And been assented fully that he sholde  
Be wedded whanne hym liste and where he wolde.  
Heigh fantasye and curious bisynesse  
Fro day to day gan in the soule impresse

Of Januarie aboute his mariage.

1580 Many fair shap and many a fair visage  
Ther passeth thurgh his herte nyght by nyght,  
As whoso tooke a mirour, polissed bryght,  
And sette it in a commune market-place,  
Thanne sholde he se ful many a figure pace  
By his mirour; and in the same wyse  
Gan Januarie inwith his thoght devyse  
Of maydens whiche that dwelten hym bisyde.  
He wiste nat wher that he myghte abyde.  
For if that oon have beaute in hir face,  
1590 Another stant so in the peples grace  
For hire sadnesse and hire benyngnytee  
That of the peple grettest voys hath she;  
And somme were riche and hadden badde name.  
But nathelees, bitwixe ernest and game,  
He atte laste apoynted hym on oon,  
And leet alle othere from his herte goon,  
And chees hire of his owene auctoritee;  
For love is blynd alday, and may nat see.  
And whan that he was in his bed ybrought,  
1600 He purtreyed in his herte and in his thoght  
Hir fresshe beautee and hir age tendre,  
Hir myddel smal, hire armes longe and sklendre,  
Hir wise governaunce, hir gentillesse,  
Hir wommanly berynge, and hire sadnesse.  
And whan that he on hire was condescended,  
Hym thoughte his choys myghte nat ben amended.  
For whan that he hymself concluded hadde,  
Hym thoughte ech oother mannes wit so badde  
That impossible it were to repplye  
1610 Agayn his choys; this was his fantasye.  
His freendes sente he to, at his instaunce,  
And preyed hem to doon hym that plesaunce,  
That hastily they wolden to hym come;  
He wolde abregge hir labour, alle and some.  
Nedeth namoore for hym to go ne ryde;  
He was apoynted ther he wolde abyde.  
Placebo cam, and eek his freendes soone,  
And alderfirst he bad hem alle a boone,  
That noon of hem none argumentes make  
1620 Agayn the purpos which that he hath take,

Which purpos was plesant to God, seyde he,  
And verray ground of his prosperitee.  
He seyde ther was a mayden in the toun,  
Which that of beautee hadde greet renoun,  
Al were it so she were of smal degree;  
Suffiseth hym hir yowthe and hir beautee.  
Which mayde, he seyde, he wolde han to his wyf,  
To lede in ese and hoolynesse his lyf;  
And thanked God that he myghte han hire al,  
1630 That no wight his blisse parten shal.  
And preyed hem to laboure in this nede,  
And shapen that he faille nat to spede;  
For thanne, he seyde, his spirit was at ese.  
"Thanne is," quod he, "no thyng may me displese,  
Save o thyng priketh in my conscience,  
The which I wol reherce in youre presence.  
"I have," quod he, "herd seyd, ful yoore ago,  
Ther may no man han parfite blisses two --  
This is to seye, in erthe and eek in hevene.  
1640 For though he kepe hym fro the synnes sevenne,  
And eek from every branche of thilke tree,  
Yet is ther so parfit felicitee  
And so greet ese and lust in mariage  
That evere I am agast now in myn age  
That I shal lede now so myrie a lyf,  
So delicat, withouten wo and stryf,  
That I shal have myn hevene in erthe heere.  
For sith that verray hevene is boght so deere  
With tribulacion and greet penaunce,  
1650 How sholde I thanne, that lyve in swich plesaunce  
As alle wedded men doon with hire wyvys,  
Come to the blisse ther Crist eterne on lyve ys?  
This is my drede, and ye, my bretheren tweye,  
Assoilleth me this question, I preye."  
Justinus, which that hated his folye,  
Answerde anon right in his japerie;  
And for he wolde his longe tale abregge,  
He wolde noon auctoritee allegge,  
But seyde, "Sire, so ther be noon obstacle  
1660 Oother than this, God of his hygh myracle  
And of his mercy may so for yow wirche  
That, er ye have youre right of hooly chirche,

Ye may repente of wedded mannes lyf,  
 In which ye seyn ther is no wo ne stryf.  
 And elles, God forbede but he sente  
 A wedded man hym grace to repente  
 Wel ofte rather than a sengle man!  
 And therefore, sire -- the beste reed I kan --  
 Dispeire yow noght, but have in youre memorie,  
 1670 Paraunter she may be youre purgatorie!  
 She may be Goddes meene and Goddes whippe;  
 Thanne shal youre soule up to hevene skippe  
 Swifter than dooth an arwe out of a bowe.  
 I hope to God, herafter shul ye knowe  
 That ther nys no so greet felicitee  
 In mariage, ne nevere mo shal bee,  
 That yow shal lette of youre savacion,  
 So that ye use, as skile is and reson,  
 The lustes of youre wyf attemprely,  
 1680 And that ye plesse hire nat to amorously,  
 And that ye kepe yow eek from oother synne.  
 My tale is doon, for my wit is thynne.  
 Beth nat agast herof, my brother deere,  
 But lat us waden out of this mateere.  
 The Wyf of Bathe, if ye han understonde,  
 Of mariage, which we have on honde,  
 Declared hath ful wel in litel space.  
 Fareth now wel. God have yow in his grace."  
 And with this word this Justyn and his brother  
 1690 Han take hir leve, and ech of hem of oother.  
 For whan they saughe that it moste nedes be,  
 They wroghten so, by sly and wys trettee,  
 That she, this mayden which that Mayus highte,  
 As hastily as evere that she myghte  
 Shal wedded be unto this Januarie.  
 I trowe it were to longe yow to tarie,  
 If I yow tolde of every scrit and bond  
 By which that she was feffed in his lond,  
 Or for to herkennen of hir riche array.  
 1700 But finally ycomen is the day  
 That to the chirche bothe be they went  
 For to receyve the hooly sacrament.  
 Forth comth the preest, with stole aboute his nekke,  
 And bad hire be lyk Sarra and Rebekke

In wysdom and in trouthe of mariage;  
And seyde his orisons, as is usage,  
And croucheth hem, and bad God sholde hem blesse,  
And made al siker ynogh with hoolynesse.  
Thus been they wedded with solempnitee,  
1710 And at the feeste sitteth he and she  
With othere worthy folk upon the deys.  
Al ful of joye and blisse is the paleys,  
And ful of instrumentz and of vitaille,  
The mooste deyntevous of al Ytaille.  
Biforn hem stoode instrumentz of swich soun  
That Orpheus, ne of Thebes Amphion,  
Ne maden nevere swich a melodye.  
At every cours thanne cam loud mynstralcy  
That nevere tromped Joab for to heere,  
1720 Nor he Theodomas, yet half so cleere  
At Thebes whan the citee was in doute.  
Bacus the wyn hem shynketh al aboute,  
And Venus laugheth upon every wight,  
For Januarie was bicom e hir knyght  
And wolde bothe assayen his corage  
In libertee, and eek in mariage;  
And with hire fyrbrond in hire hand aboute  
Daunceth biforn the bryde and al the route.  
And certainly, I dar right wel seyn this,  
1730 Ymeneus, that god of weddyng is,  
Saugh nevere his lyf so myrie a wedded man.  
Hoolde thou thy pees, thou poete Marcian,  
That writest us that ilke weddyng murie  
Of hire Philologie and hym Mercurie,  
And of the songes that the Muses songe!  
To smal is bothe thy penne, and eek thy tonge,  
For to descryven of this mariage.  
Whan tendre youthe hath wedded stoupyng age,  
Ther is swich myrthe that it may nat be writen.  
1740 Assayeth it youreself; thanne may ye witen  
If that I lye or noon in this matiere.  
Mayus, that sit with so benyngne a chiere,  
Hire to biholde it semed fayerye.  
Queene Ester looked nevere with swich an ye  
On Assuer, so meke a look hath she.  
I may yow nat devyse al hir beautee.

But thus muche of hire beautee telle I may,  
 That she was lyk the brighte morwe of May,  
 Fulfild of alle beautee and plesaunce.  
 1750 This Januarie is ravysshed in a traunce  
 At every tyme he looked on hir face;  
 But in his herte he gan hire to manace  
 That he that nyght in armes wolde hire streyne  
 Harder than evere Parys dide Eleyne.  
 But nathelees yet hadde he greet pitee  
 That thilke nyght offenden hire moste he,  
 And thoughte, "Allas! O tendre creature,  
 Now wolde God ye myghte wel endure  
 Al my corage, it is so sharp and keene!  
 1760 I am agast ye shul it nat susteene.  
 But God forbede that I dide al my myght!  
 Now wolde God that it were woxen nyght,  
 And that the nyght wolde lasten everemo.  
 I wolde that al this peple were ago."  
 And finally he dooth al his labour,  
 As he best myghte, savyng his honour,  
 To haste hem fro the mete in subtil wyse.  
 The tyme cam that resoun was to ryse;  
 And after that men daunce and drynken faste,  
 1770 And spices al aboute the hous they caste,  
 And ful of joye and blisse is every man --  
 Al but a squyer, highte Damyan,  
 Which carf biforn the knyght ful many a day.  
 He was so ravysshed on his lady May  
 That for the verray peyne he was ny wood.  
 Almoost he swelte and swowned ther he stood,  
 So soore hath Venus hurt hym with hire brond,  
 As that she bar it daunsynge in hire hond;  
 And to his bed he wente hym hastily.  
 1780 Namooore of hym at this tyme speke I,  
 But there I lete hym wepe ynogh and pleyne  
 Til fresshe May wol rewen on his peyne.  
 O perilous fyr, that in the bedstraw bredeth!  
 O famulier foo, that his servyce bedeth!  
 O servant traytour, false hoomly hewe,  
 Lyk to the naddre in bosom sly untrewe,  
 God shilde us alle from youre aqueyntaunce!  
 O Januarie, dronken in plesaunce

In mariage, se how thy Damyan,  
 1790 Thyn owene squier and thy borne man,  
 Entendeth for to do thee vileynye.  
 God graunte thee thyn hoomly fo t' espye!  
 For in this world nys worse pestilence  
 Than hoomly foo al day in thy presence.  
 Parfourned hath the sonne his ark diurne;  
 No lenger may the body of hym sojurne  
 On th' orisonte, as in that latitude.  
 Night with his mantel, that is derk and rude,  
 Gan oversprede the hemysperie aboute;  
 1800 For which departed is this lusty route  
 Fro Januarie, with thank on every syde.  
 Hoom to hir houses lustily they ryde,  
 Where as they doon hir thynges as hem leste,  
 And whan they sye hir tyme, goon to reste.  
 Soone after that, this hastif Januarie  
 Wolde go to bedde; he wolde no lenger tarye.  
 He drynketh ypocras, clarree, and vernage  
 Of spices hoote t' encreessen his corage;  
 And many a letuarie hath he ful fyn,  
 1810 Swiche as the cursed monk, daun Constantyn,  
 Hath writen in his book De Coitu;  
 To eten hem alle he nas no thyng eschu.  
 And to his privee freendes thus seyde he:  
 "For Goddes love, as soone as it may be,  
 Lat voyden al this hous in curteys wyse."  
 And they han doon right as he wol devyse.  
 Men drynken and the travers drawe anon.  
 The bryde was broght abedde as stille as stoon;  
 And whan the bed was with the preest yblessed,  
 1820 Out of the chambre hath every wight hym dressed,  
 And Januarie hath faste in armes take  
 His fresshe May, his paradys, his make.  
 He lulleth hire; he kisseth hire ful ofte;  
 With thikke brustles of his berd unsofte,  
 Lyk to the skyn of houndfyssh, sharp as brere --  
 For he was shave al newe in his manere --  
 He rubbeth hire aboute hir tendre face,  
 And seyde thus, "Allas! I moot trespace  
 To yow, my spouse, and yow greetly offende  
 1830 Er tyme come that I wil doun descende.



But nathelees, considereth this," quod he,  
 "Ther nys no werkman, whatsoevere he be,  
 That may bothe werke wel and hastily;  
 This wol be doon at leyser parfitly.  
 It is no fors how longe that we pleye;  
 In trewe wedlok coupled be we tweye,  
 And blessed be the yok that we been inne,  
 For in oure actes we mowe do no synne.  
 A man may do no synne with his wyf,  
 1840 Ne hurte hymselfen with his owene knyf,  
 For we han leve to pleye us by the lawe."  
 Thus laboureth he til that the day gan dawe;  
 And thanne he taketh a sop in fyn clarree,  
 And upright in his bed thanne sitteth he,  
 And after that he sang ful loude and cleere,  
 And kiste his wyf, and made wantown cheere.  
 He was al coltish, ful of ragerye,  
 And ful of jargon as a flekked pye.  
 The slakke skyn aboute his nekke shaketh  
 1850 Whil that he sang, so chaunteth he and craketh.  
 But God woot what that May thoughte in hir herte,  
 Whan she hym saugh up sittynge in his sherte,  
 In his nyght-cappe, and with his nekke lene;  
 She preyseth nat his pleying worth a bene.  
 Thanne seide he thus, "My reste wol I take;  
 Now day is come, I may no lenger wake."  
 And doun he leyde his heed and sleep til pryme.  
 And afterward, whan that he saugh his tyme,  
 Up ryseth Januarie; but fresshe May  
 1860 Heeld hire chambre unto the fourthe day,  
 As usage is of wyves for the beste.  
 For every labour somtyme moot han reste,  
 Or elles longe may he nat endure;  
 This is to seyn, no lyves creature,  
 Be it of fyssh, or bryd, or beest, or man.  
 Now wol I speke of woful Damyan,  
 That langwischeth for love, as ye shul heere;  
 Therefore I speke to hym in this manere:  
 I seye, "O sely Damyan, alas!  
 1870 Andswere to my demaunde, as in this cas.  
 How shaltow to thy lady, fresshe May,  
 Telle thy wo? She wole alwey seye nay.

Eek if thou speke, she wol thy wo biwreye.  
 God be thyn helpe! I kan no bettre seye."  
 This sike Damyan in Venus fyr  
 So brenneth that he dyeth for desyr,  
 For which he putte his lyf in aventure.  
 No lenger myghte he in this wise endure,  
 But prively a penner gan he borwe,  
 1880 And in a lettre wroot he al his sorwe,  
 In manere of a compleynt or a lay,  
 Unto his faire, fresshe lady May;  
 And in a purs of sylk heng on his sherte  
 He hath it put, and leyde it at his herte.  
 The moone, that at noon was thilke day  
 That Januarie hath wedded fresshe May  
 In two of Tawr, was into Cancre glyden;  
 So longe hath Mayus in hir chambre abyden,  
 As custume is unto thise nobles alle.  
 1890 A bryde shal nat eten in the halle  
 Til dayes foure, or thre dayes atte leeste,  
 Ypassed been; thanne lat hire go to feeste.  
 The fourthe day compleet fro noon to noon,  
 Whan that the heighe masse was ydoon,  
 In halle sit this Januarie and May,  
 As fressh as is the brighte someres day.  
 And so bifel how that this goode man  
 Remembred hym upon this Damyan,  
 And seyde, "Seynte Marie! how may this be,  
 1900 That Damyan entendeth nat to me?  
 Is he ay syk, or how may this bityde?"  
 His squieres, whiche that stooden ther bisyde,  
 Excused hym by cause of his siknesse,  
 Which letted hym to doon his bisynesse;  
 Noon oother cause myghte make hym tarye.  
 "That me forthynketh," quod this Januarie,  
 "He is a gentil squier, by my trouthe!  
 If that he deyde, it were harm and routhe.  
 He is as wys, discreet, and as secree  
 1910 As any man I woot of his degree,  
 And therto manly, and eek servysable,  
 And for to been a thrifty man right able.  
 But after mete, as soone as evere I may,  
 I wol myself visite hym, and eek May,

To doon hym al the confort that I kan."  
 And for that word hym blessed every man,  
 That of his bountee and his gentillesse  
 He wolde so conforten in siknesse  
 His squier, for it was a gentil dede.  
 1920 "Dame," quod this Januarie, "taak good hede,  
 At after-mete ye with youre wommen alle,  
 Whan ye han been in chambre out of this halle,  
 That alle ye go se this Damyan.  
 Dooth hym disport -- he is a gentil man;  
 And telleth hym that I wol hym visite,  
 Have I no thyng but rested me a lite;  
 And spede yow faste, for I wole abyde  
 Til that ye slepe faste by my syde."  
 And with that word he gan to hym to calle  
 1930 A squier, that was marchal of his halle,  
 And tolde hym certeyn thynges, what he wolde.  
 This fresshe May hath streight hir wey yholde  
 With alle hir wommen unto Damyan.  
 Doun by his beddes syde sit she than,  
 Confortynge hym as goodly as she may.  
 This Damyan, whan that his tyme he say,  
 In secree wise his purs and eek his bille,  
 In which that he ywriten hadde his wille,  
 Hath put into hire hand, withouten moore,  
 1940 Save that he siketh wonder depe and soore,  
 And softely to hire right thus seyde he:  
 "Mercy! And that ye nat discovere me,  
 For I am deed if that this thyng be kyd."  
 This purs hath she inwith hir bosom hyd  
 And wente hire wey; ye gete namoore of me.  
 But unto Januarie ycomen is she,  
 That on his beddes syde sit ful softe.  
 He taketh hire, and kisseth hire ful ofte,  
 And leyde hym doun to slepe, and that anon.  
 1950 She feyned hire as that she moste gon  
 Ther as ye woot that every wight moot neede;  
 And whan she of this bille hath taken heede,  
 She rente it al to cloutes atte laste,  
 And in the pryvee softely it caste.  
 Who studieth now but faire fresshe May?  
 Adoun by olde Januarie she lay,

That sleep til that the coughe hath hym awaked.  
 Anon he preyde hire strepen hire al naked;  
 He wolde of hire, he seyde, han som plesaunce;  
 1960 He seyde hir clothes dide hym encombraunce,  
 And she obeyeth, be hire lief or looth.  
 But lest that precious folk be with me wrooth,  
 How that he wroghte, I dar nat to yow telle,  
 Or wheither hire thoughte it paradys or helle.  
 But heere I lete hem werken in hir wyse  
 Til evensong rong and that they moste aryse.  
 Were it by destynnee or by aventure,  
 Were it by influence or by nature,  
 Or constellacion, that in swich estaat  
 1970 The hevene stood that tyme fortunaat  
 Was for to putte a bille of Venus werkes --  
 For alle thyng hath tyme, as seyn thise clerkes --  
 To any womman for to gete hire love,  
 I kan nat seye; but grete God above,  
 That knoweth that noon act is causelees,  
 He deme of al, for I wole holde my pees.  
 But sooth is this, how that this fresshe May  
 Hath take swich impression that day  
 Of pitee of this sike Damyan  
 1980 That from hire herte she ne dryve kan  
 The remembrance for to doon hym ese.  
 "Certeyn," thoghte she, "whom that this thyng displese  
 I rekke noght, for heere I hym assure  
 To love hym best of any creature,  
 Though he namoore hadde than his sherte."  
 Lo, pitee renneth soone in gentil herte!  
 Heere may ye se how excellent franchise  
 In wommen is, whan they hem narwe avyse.  
 Som tyrant is, as ther be many oon  
 1990 That hath an herte as hard as any stoon,  
 Which wolde han lat hym sterven in the place  
 Wel rather than han graunted hym hire grace,  
 And hem rejoysen in hire crueel pryde,  
 And rekke nat to been an homycide.  
 This gentil May, fulfilled of pitee,  
 Right of hire hand a lettre made she,  
 In which she graunteth hym hire verray grace.  
 Ther lakketh noght oonly but day and place

Wher that she myghte unto his lust suffise,  
 2000 For it shal be right as he wole devyse.  
 And whan she saugh hir tyme, upon a day  
 To visite this Damyan gooth May,  
 And sotilly this lettre doun she threste  
 Under his pilwe; rede it if hym leste.  
 She taketh hym by the hand and harde hym twiste  
 So secrely that no wight of it wiste,  
 And bad hym been al hool, and forth she wente  
 To Januarie, whan that he for hire sente.  
 Up riseth Damyan the nexte morwe;  
 2010 Al passed was his siknesse and his sorwe.  
 He kembeth hym, he preyneth hym and pyketh,  
 He dooth al that his lady lust and lyketh,  
 And eek to Januarie he gooth as lowe  
 As evere dide a dogge for the bowe.  
 He is so plesant unto every man  
 (For craft is al, whoso that do it kan)  
 That every wight is fayn to speke hym good,  
 And fully in his lady grace he stood.  
 Thus lete I Damyan aboute his nede,  
 2020 And in my tale forth I wol procede.  
 Somme clerkes holden that felicitee  
 Stant in delit, and therfore certeyn he,  
 This noble Januarie, with al his myght,  
 In honest wyse, as longeth to a knyght,  
 Shoop hym to lyve ful deliciously.  
 His housynge, his array, as honestly  
 To his degree was maked as a kynges.  
 Amonges othere of his honeste thynges,  
 He made a gardyn, walled al with stoon;  
 2030 So fair a gardyn woot I nowher noon.  
 For, out of doute, I verrailly suppose  
 That he that wroot the Romance of the Rose  
 Ne koude of it the beautee wel devyse;  
 Ne Priapus ne myghte nat suffise,  
 Though he be god of gardyns, for to telle  
 The beautee of the gardyn and the welle  
 That stood under a laurer alwey grene.  
 Ful ofte tyme he Pluto and his queene,  
 Proserpina, and al hire fayerye,  
 2040 Disporten hem and maken melodye

Aboute that welle, and daunced, as men tolde.  
 This noble knyght, this Januarie the olde,  
 Swich deyntee hath in it to walke and pleye,  
 That he wol no wight suffren bere the keye  
 Save he hymself; for of the smale wyket  
 He baar alwey of silver a clyket,  
 With which, whan that hym leste, he it unshette.  
 And whan he wolde paye his wyf hir dette  
 In somer seson, thider wolde he go,  
 2050 And May his wyf, and no wight but they two;  
 And thynges whiche that were nat doon abedde,  
 He in the gardyn parfourned hem and spedde.  
 And in this wyse, many a murye day,  
 Lyved this Januarie and fresshe May.  
 But worldly joye may nat alwey dure  
 To Januarie, ne to no creature.  
 O sodeyn hap! O thou Fortune unstable!  
 Lyk to the scorpion so deceyvable,  
 That flaterest with thyn heed whan thou wolt styng;e;  
 2060 Thy tayl is deeth, thurgh thyn envenymyng.  
 O brotil joye! O sweete venym queynte!  
 O monstre, that so subtilly kanst peynte  
 Thy yiftes under hewe of stidefastnesse,  
 That thou deceyvest bothe moore and lesse!  
 Why hastow Januarie thus deceyved,  
 That haddest hym for thy fulle freend receyved?  
 And now thou hast biraft hym bothe his yen,  
 For sorwe of which desireth he to dyen.  
 Allas, this noble Januarie free,  
 2070 Amydde his lust and his prosperitee,  
 Is woxen blynd, and that al sodeynly.  
 He wepeth and he wayleth pitously;  
 And therwithal the fyr of jalousie,  
 Lest that his wyf sholde falle in som folye,  
 So brente his herte that he wolde fayn  
 That som man bothe hire and hym had slayn.  
 For neither after his deeth nor in his lyf  
 Ne wolde he that she were love ne wyf,  
 But evere lyve as wydwe in clothes blake,  
 2080 Soul as the turtle that lost hath hire make.  
 But atte laste, after a month or tweye,  
 His sorwe gan aswage, sooth to seye;

For whan he wiste it may noon oother be,  
He paciently took his adversitee,  
Save, out of doute, he may nat forgoon  
That he nas jalous everemoore in oon;  
Which jalousye it was so outrageous  
That neither in halle, n' yn noon oother hous,  
Ne in noon oother place, neverthemo,  
2090 He nolde suffre hire for to ryde or go,  
But if that he had hond on hire alway;  
For which ful ofte wepeth fresshe May,  
That loveth Damyan so benyngnely  
That she moot outhere dyen sodeynly  
Or elles she moot han hym as hir leste.  
She wayteth whan hir herte wolde breste.  
Upon that oother syde Damyan  
Bicomen is the sorwefulleste man  
That evere was, for neither nyght ne day  
2100 Ne myghte he speke a word to fresshe May,  
As to his purpos, of no swich mateere,  
But if that Januarie moste it heere,  
That hadde an hand upon hire everemo.  
But nathelees, by writyng to and fro  
And privee signes wiste he what she mente,  
And she knew eek the fyn of his entente.  
O Januarie, what myghte it thee availle,  
Thogh thou myghtest se as fer as shippes saille?  
For as good is blynd deceyved be  
2110 As to be deceyved whan a man may se.  
Lo, Argus, which that hadde an hondred yen,  
For al that evere he koude poure or pryen,  
Yet was he blent, and, God woot, so been mo  
That wenen wisly that it be nat so.  
Passe over is an ese, I sey namoore.  
This fresshe May, that I spak of so yooore,  
In warm wex hath emprented the clyket  
That Januarie bar of the smale wyket,  
By which into his gardyn ofte he wente;  
2120 And Damyan, that knew al hire entente,  
The clyket countrefeted pryvely.  
Ther nys namoore to seye, but hastily  
Som wonder by this clyket shal bityde,  
Which ye shul heeren, if ye wole abyde.

O noble Ovyde, ful sooth seystou, God woot,  
 What sleighte is it, thogh it be long and hoot,  
 That Love nyl fynde it out in som manere?  
 By Piramus and Tesbee may men leere;  
 Thogh they were kept ful longe streite overal,  
 2130 They been accorded, rownyng thurgh a wal,  
 Ther no wight koude han founde out swich a sleighte.  
 But now to purpos: er that dayes eighte  
 Were passed [of] the month of [Juyn], bifil  
 That Januarie hath caught so greet a wil,  
 Thurgh eggynge of his wyf, hym for to pleye  
 In his gardyn, and no wight but they tweye,  
 That in a morwe unto his May seith he:  
 "Rys up, my wyf, my love, my lady free!  
 The turtles voys is herd, my dowve sweete;  
 2140 The wynter is goon with alle his reynes weete.  
 Com forth now, with thyne eyen columbyn!  
 How fairer been thy brestes than is wyn!  
 The gardyn is enclosed al aboute;  
 Com forth, my white spouse! Out of doute  
 Thou hast me wounded in myn herte, O wyf!  
 No spot of thee ne knew I al my lyf.  
 Com forth, and lat us taken oure disport;  
 I chees thee for my wyf and my confort."  
 Swiche olde lewed wordes used he.  
 2150 On Damyan a signe made she,  
 That he sholde go biforn with his cliket.  
 This Damyan thanne hath opened the wyket,  
 And in he stirte, and that in swich manere  
 That no wight myghte it se neither yheere,  
 And stille he sit under a bussh anon.  
 This Januarie, as blynd as is a stoon,  
 With Mayus in his hand, and no wight mo,  
 Into his fresshe gardyn is ago,  
 And clapte to the wyket sodeynly.  
 2160 "Now wyf," quod he, "heere nys but thou and I,  
 That art the creature that I best love.  
 For by that Lord that sit in hevene above,  
 Levere ich hadde to dyen on a knyf  
 Than thee offende, trewe deere wyf!  
 For Goddes sake, thenk how I thee chees,  
 Noght for no coveitise, doutelees,



But oonly for the love I had to thee.  
 And though that I be oold and may nat see,  
 Beth to me trewe, and I wol telle yow why.  
 2170 Thre thynges, certes, shal ye wynne therby:  
 First, love of Crist, and to youreself honour,  
 And al myn heritage, toun and tour;  
 I yeve it yow, maketh chartres as yow leste;  
 This shal be doon to-morwe er sonne reste,  
 So wisly God my soule brynge in blisse.  
 I prey yow first, in covenant ye me kisse;  
 And though that I be jalous, wyte me noght.  
 Ye been so depe enprented in my thoght  
 That, whan that I considere youre beautee  
 2180 And therwithal the unlikly elde of me,  
 I may nat, certes, though I sholde dye,  
 Forbere to been out of youre compaignye  
 For verray love; this is withouten doute.  
 Now kys me, wyf, and lat us rome aboute."  
 This fresshe May, whan she thise wordes herde,  
 Benyngnely to Januarie answerde,  
 But first and forward she bigan to wepe.  
 "I have," quod she, "a soule for to kepe  
 As wel as ye, and also myn honour,  
 2190 And of my wyfhod thilke tendre flour,  
 Which that I have assured in youre hond,  
 Whan that the preest to yow my body bond;  
 Wherefore I wole answer in this manere,  
 By the leve of yow, my lord so deere:  
 I prey to God that nevere dawe the day  
 That I ne sterve, as foule as womman may,  
 If evere I do unto my kyn that shame,  
 Or elles I empeyre so my name,  
 That I be fals; and if I do that lak,  
 2200 Do strepe me and put me in a sak,  
 And in the nexte ryver do me drenche.  
 I am a gentil womman and no wenche.  
 Why speke ye thus? But men been evere untrewe,  
 And wommen have repreve of yow ay newe.  
 Ye han noon oother contenance, I leeve,  
 But speke to us of untrust and repreeve."  
 And with that word she saugh wher Damyan  
 Sat in the bussh, and coughen she bigan,

And with hir fynger signes made she  
 2210 That Damyan sholde clymbe upon a tree  
 That charged was with fruyt, and up he wente.  
 For verrailly he knew al hire entente,  
 And every signe that she koude make,  
 Wel bet than Januarie, hir owene make,  
 For in a lettre she hadde toold hym al  
 Of this matere, how he werchen shal.  
 And thus I lete hym sitte upon the pyrie,  
 And Januarie and May romynge myrie.  
 Bright was the day, and blew the firmament;  
 2220 Phebus hath of gold his stremes doun ysent  
 To gladen every flour with his warmnesse.  
 He was that tyme in Geminis, as I gesse,  
 But litel fro his declynacion  
 Of Cancer, Jovis exaltacion.  
 And so bifel, that brighte morwe-tyde  
 That in that gardyn, in the ferther syde,  
 Pluto, that is kyng of Fayerye,  
 And many a lady in his compaignye,  
 Folwynge his wyf, the queene Proserpyna,  
 2230 Which that he ravysshed out of [Ethna]  
 Whil that she gadered floures in the mede --  
 In Claudyan ye may the stories rede,  
 How in his grisely carte he hire fette --  
 This kyng of Fairye thanne adoun hym sette  
 Upon a bench of turves, fressh and grene,  
 And right anon thus seyde he to his queene:  
 "My wyf," quod he, "ther may no wight seye nay;  
 Th' experience so preveth every day  
 The tresons whiche that wommen doon to man.  
 2240 Ten hondred thousand [tales] tellen I kan  
 Notable of youre untrouthe and brotilnesse.  
 O Salomon, wys, and richest of richesse,  
 Fulfuld of sapience and of worldly glorie,  
 Ful worthy been thy wordes to memorie  
 To every wight that wit and reson kan.  
 Thus preiseth he yet the bountee of man:  
 'Amonges a thousand men yet foond I oon,  
 But of wommen alle foond I noon.'  
 "Thus seith the kyng that knoweth youre wikkednesse.  
 2250 And Jhesus, filius Syrak, as I gesse,

Ne speketh of yow but seelde reverence.  
 A wylde fyr and corrupt pestilence  
 So falle upon youre bodyes yet to-nyght!  
 Ne se ye nat this honorable knyght,  
 By cause, allas, that he is blynd and old,  
 His owene man shal make hym cokewold.  
 Lo, where he sit, the lechour, in the tree!  
 Now wol I graunten, of my magestee,  
 Unto this olde, blynde, worthy knyght  
 2260 That he shal have ayen his eyen syght,  
 Whan that his wyf wold doon hym vileynye.  
 Thanne shal he knowen al hire harlotrye,  
 Bothe in repreve of hire and othere mo."  
 "Ye shal?" quod Proserpyne, "wol ye so?  
 Now by my moodres sires soule I swere  
 That I shal yeven hire suffisant answer,  
 And alle wommen after, for hir sake,  
 That, though they be in any gilt ytake,  
 With face boold they shulle hemself excuse,  
 2270 And bere hem down that wolden hem accuse.  
 For lak of answer noon of hem shal dyen.  
 Al hadde man seyn a thyng with bothe his yen,  
 Yit shul we wommen visage it hardily,  
 And wepe, and swere, and chyde subtilly,  
 So that ye men shul been as lewed as gees.  
 "What rekketh me of youre auctoritees?  
 I woot wel that this Jew, this Salomon,  
 Foond of us wommen fooles many oon.  
 But though that he ne foond no good womman,  
 2280 Yet hath ther founde many another man  
 Wommen ful trewe, ful goode, and vertuous.  
 Witnesse on hem that dwelle in Cristes hous;  
 With martirdom they preved hire constance.  
 The Romain geestes eek make remembrance  
 Of many a verray, trewe wyf also.  
 But, sire, ne be nat wrooth, al be it so,  
 Though that he seyde he foond no good womman,  
 I prey yow take the sentence of the man;  
 He mente thus, that in sovereyn bontee  
 2290 Nis noon but God, but neither he ne she.  
 "Ey! for verray God that nys but oon,  
 What make ye so mucche of Salomon?

What though he made a temple, Goddes hous?  
 What though he were riche and glorious?  
 So made he eek a temple of false goddis.  
 How myghte he do a thyng that moore forbode is?  
 Pardee, as faire as ye his name emplastre,  
 He was a lecchour and an ydolastre,  
 And in his elde he verray God forsook;  
 2300 And if God ne hadde, as seith the book,  
 Yspared him for his fadres sake, he sholde  
 Have lost his regne rather than he wolde.  
 I sette right noght, of al the vileynye  
 That ye of wommen write, a boterflye!  
 I am a womman, nedes moot I speke,  
 Or elles swelle til myn herte breke.  
 For sithen he seyde that we been jangleresses,  
 As evere hool I moote brouke my tresses,  
 I shal nat spare, for no curteisye,  
 2310 To speke hym harm that wolde us vileynye."  
 "Dame," quod this Pluto, "be no lenger wrooth;  
 I yeve it up! But sith I swoor myn ooth  
 That I wolde graunten hym his sighte ageyn,  
 My word shal stonde, I warne yow certeyn.  
 I am a kyng; it sit me noght to lye."  
 "And I," quod she, "a queene of Fayerye!  
 Hir answeere shal she have, I undertake.  
 Lat us namoore wordes heerof make;  
 For sothe, I wol no lenger yow contrarie."  
 2320 Now lat us turne agayn to Januarie,  
 That in the gardyn with his faire May  
 Syngeth ful murier than the papejay,  
 "Yow love I best, and shal, and oother noon."  
 So longe aboute the aleyes is he goon,  
 Til he was come agaynes thilke pyrie  
 Where as this Damyan sitteth ful myrie  
 An heigh among the fresshe leves grene.  
 This fresshe May, that is so bright and sheene,  
 Gan for to syke, and seyde, "Allas, my syde!  
 2330 Now sire," quod she, "for aught that may bityde,  
 I moste han of the peres that I see,  
 Or I moot dye, so soore longeth me  
 To eten of the smale peres grene.  
 Help, for hir love that is of hevene queene!

I telle yow wel, a womman in my plit  
May han to fruyt so greet an appetit  
That she may dyen but she of it have."  
"Allas," quod he, "that I ne had heer a knave  
That koude clymbe! Allas, allas," quod he,  
2340 "For I am blynd!" "Ye, sire, no fors," quod she;  
"But wolde ye vouche sauf, for Goddes sake,  
The pyrie inwith youre armes for to take,  
For wel I woot that ye mystruste me,  
Thanne sholde I clymbe wel ynogh," quod she,  
"So I my foot myghte sette upon youre bak."  
"Certes," quod he, "theron shal be no lak,  
Mighte I yow helpen with myn herte blood."  
He stoupeth down, and on his bak she stood,  
And caughte hire by a twiste, and up she gooth --  
2350 Ladyes, I prey yow that ye be nat wrooth;  
I kan nat glose, I am a rude man --  
And sodeynly anon this Damyan  
Gan pullen up the smok, and in he throng.  
And whan that Pluto saugh this grete wrong,  
To Januarie he gaf agayn his sighte,  
And made hym se as wel as evere he myghte.  
And whan that he hadde caught his sighte agayn,  
Ne was ther nevere man of thyng so fayn,  
But on his wyf his thought was everemo.  
2360 Up to the tree he caste his eyen two,  
And saugh that Damyan his wyf had dressed  
In swich manere it may nat been expressed,  
But if I wolde speke uncurteisly;  
And up he yaf a roryng and a cry,  
As dooth the mooder whan the child shal dye:  
"Out! Help! Allas! Harrow!" he gan to crye,  
"O stronge lady stoore, what dostow?"  
And she answerde, "Sire, what eyleth yow?  
Have pacience and resoun in youre mynde.  
2370 I have yow holpe on bothe youre eyen blynde.  
Up peril of my soule, I shal nat lyen,  
As me was taught, to heele with youre eyen,  
Was no thyng bet, to make yow to see,  
Than strugle with a man upon a tree.  
God woot, I dide it in ful good entente."  
"Strugle?" quod he, "Ye, algate in it wente!

God yeve yow bothe on shames deth to dyen!  
He swyved thee; I saugh it with myne yen,  
And elles be I hanged by the hals!"  
2380 "Thanne is," quod she, "my medicyne fals;  
For certainly, if that ye myghte se,  
Ye wolde nat seyn thise wordes unto me.  
Ye han som glymsyng, and no parfit sighte."  
"I se," quod he, "as wel as evere I myghte,  
Thonked be God! With bothe myne eyen two,  
And by my trouthe, me thoughte he dide thee so."  
"Ye maze, maze, goode sire," quod she;  
"This thank have I for I have maad yow see.  
Allas," quod she, "that evere I was so kynde!"  
2390 "Now, dame," quod he, "lat al passe out of mynde.  
Com doun, my lief, and if I have myssayd,  
God helpe me so, as I am yvele apayd.  
But, by my fader soule, I wende han seyn  
How that this Damyan hadde by thee leyn,  
And that thy smok hadde leyn upon his brest."  
"Ye, sire," quod she, "ye may wene as yow lest.  
But, sire, a man that waketh out of his sleep,  
He may nat sodeynly wel taken keep  
Upon a thyng, ne seen it parfitly,  
2400 Til that he be adawed verrailly.  
Right so a man that longe hath blynd ybe,  
Ne may nat sodeynly so wel yse,  
First whan his sighte is newe come ageyn,  
As he that hath a day or two yseyn.  
Til that youre sighte ysatled be a while  
Ther may ful many a sighte yow bigile.  
Beth war, I prey yow, for by hevene kyng,  
Ful many a man weneth to seen a thyng,  
And it is al another than it semeth.  
2410 He that mysconceyveth, he mysdemeth."  
And with that word she leep doun fro the tree.  
This Januarie, who is glad but he?  
He kisseth hire and clippeth hire ful ofte,  
And on hire wombe he stroketh hire ful softe,  
And to his palays hoom he hath hire lad.  
Now, goode men, I pray yow to be glad.  
Thus endeth heere my tale of Januarie;  
God blesse us, and his mooder Seinte Marie!



## THE MERCHANT'S EPILOGUE

"Ey! Goddes mercy!" seyde oure Hooste tho,  
2420 "Now swich a wyf I pray God kepe me fro!  
Lo, whiche sleightes and subtilitees  
In wommen been! For ay as bisy as bees  
Been they, us sely men for to deceyve,  
And from the soothe evere wol they weyve;  
By this Marchauntes tale it preveth weel.  
But doutelees, as trewe as any steel  
I have a wyf, though that she povre be,  
But of hir tonge, a labbyng shrewe is she,  
And yet she hath an heep of vices mo;  
2430 Therof no fors! Lat alle swiche thynges go.  
But wyte ye what? In conseil be it seyde,  
Me reweth soore I am unto hire teyd.  
For and I sholde rekenen every vice  
Which that she hath, ywis I were to nyce.  
And cause why? It sholde reported be  
And toold to hire of somme of this meynee --  
Of whom, it nedeth nat for to declare,  
Syn wommen konnen outen swich chaffare;  
And eek my wit suffiseth nat therto  
2440 To tellen al; wherfore my tale is do."





## THE SQUIRE'S INTRODUCTION

"Squier, com neer, if it youre wille be,  
And sey somewhat of love, for certes ye  
Konnen theron as muche as any man."

"Nay, sire," quod he, "but I wol seye as I kan  
With hertly wyl, for I wol nat rebelle  
Agayn youre lust; a tale wol I telle.  
Have me excused if I speke amys;  
My wyl is good, and lo, my tale is this."



## THE SQUIRE'S TALE

At Sarray, in the land of Tartarye,  
10 Ther dwelte a kyng that werreyed Russye,  
Thurgh which ther dyde many a doughty man.  
This noble kyng was cleped Cambyuskan,  
Which in his tyme was of so greet renoun  
That ther was nowher in no regioun  
So excellent a lord in alle thyng:  
Hym lakked noght that longeth to a kyng.  
As of the secte of which that he was born  
He kepte his lay, to which that he was sworn;  
And therto he was hardy, wys, and riche,  
20 And pitous and just, alwey yliche;  
Sooth of his word, benigne, and honourable;  
Of his corage as any centre stable;  
Yong, fressh, and strong, in armes desirous  
As any bacheler of al his hous.  
A fair persone he was and fortunat,  
And kept alwey so wel roial estat  
That ther was nowher swich another man.  
This noble kyng, this Tartre Cambyuskan,  
Hadde two sones on Elpheta his wyf,  
30 Of whiche the eldeste highte Algarsyf;  
That oother sone was cleped Cambalo.  
A doghter hadde this worthy kyng also,  
That yongest was, and highte Canacee.  
But for to telle yow al hir beautee,  
It lyth nat in my tonge, n' yn my konnyng;  
I dar nat undertake so heigh a thyng.  
Myn Englissh eek is insufficient.  
It moste been a rethor excellent  
That koude his colours longynge for that art,  
40 If he sholde hire discryven every part.  
I am noon swich, I moot speke as I kan.  
And so bifel that whan this Cambyuskan  
Hath twenty wynter born his diademe,  
As he was wont fro yeer to yeer, I deme,  
He leet the feeste of his nativitee  
Doon cryen thurghout Sarray his citee,  
The laste Idus of March, after the yeer.  
Phebus the sonne ful joly was and cleer,

For he was neigh his exaltacioun  
50 In Martes face and in his mansioun  
In Aries, the colerik hoote signe.  
Ful lusty was the weder and benigne,  
For which the foweles, agayn the sonne sheene,  
What for the sesoun and the yonge grene,  
Ful loude songen hire affecciouns.  
Hem semed han geten hem protecciouns  
Agayn the swerd of wynter, keene and coold.  
This Cambyuskan, of which I have yow toold,  
In roial vestiment sit on his deys,  
60 With diademe, ful heighe in his paleys,  
And halt his feeste so solempne and so ryche  
That in this world ne was ther noon it lyche;  
Of which if I shal tellen al th' array,  
Thanne wolde it occupie a someres day,  
And eek it nedeth nat for to devyse  
At every cours the ordre of hire servyse.  
I wol nat tellen of hir strange sewes,  
Ne of hir swannes, ne of hire heronsewes.  
Eek in that lond, as tellen knyghtes olde,  
70 Ther is som mete that is ful deynte holde  
That in this lond men recche of it but smal;  
Ther nys no man that may reporten al.  
I wol nat taryen yow, for it is pryme  
And for it is no fruyt but los of tyme;  
Unto my firste I wole have my recours.  
And so bifel that after the thridde cours,  
Whil that this kyng sit thus in his nobleye,  
Herknyng his mynstralles hir thynges pleye  
Biforn hym at the bord deliciously,  
80 In at the halle dore al sodeynly  
Ther cam a knyght upon a steede of bras,  
And in his hand a brood mirour of glas.  
Upon his thombe he hadde of gold a ryng,  
And by his syde a naked swerd hangyng;  
And up he rideth to the heighe bord.  
In al the halle ne was ther spoken a word  
For merveille of this knyght; hym to biholde  
Ful bisily they wayten, yonge and olde.  
This strange knyght, that cam thus sodeynly,  
90 Al armed, save his heed, ful richely,

Saleweth kyng and queene and lordes alle,  
By ordre, as they seten in the halle,  
With so heigh reverence and obeisaunce,  
As wel in speche as in contenaunce,  
That Gawayn, with his olde curteisye,  
Though he were comen ayeyn out of Fairye,  
Ne koude hym nat amende with a word.  
And after this, biforn the heighe bord,  
He with a manly voys seide his message,  
100 After the forme used in his langage,  
Withouten vice of silable or of lettre;  
And for his tale sholde seme the better,  
Accordant to his wordes was his cheere,  
As techeth art of speche hem that it leere.  
Al be that I kan nat sowne his stile,  
Ne kan nat clymben over so heigh a style,  
Yet seye I this, as to commune entente:  
Thus muche amounteth al that evere he mente,  
If it so be that I have it in mynde.  
110 He seyde, "The kyng of Arabe and of Inde,  
My lige lord, on this solempne day  
Saleweth yow, as he best kan and may,  
And sendeth yow, in honour of youre feeste,  
By me, that am al redy at youre heeste,  
This steede of bras, that esily and weel  
Kan in the space of o day natureel --  
This is to seyn, in foure and twenty houres --  
Wher-so yow lyst, in droghte or elles shoures,  
Beren youre body into every place  
120 To which youre herte wilneth for to pace,  
Withouten wem of yow, thurgh foul or fair;  
Or, if yow lyst to fleen as hye in the air  
As dooth an egle whan hym list to soore,  
This same steede shal bere yow evere moore,  
Withouten harm, til ye be ther yow leste,  
Though that ye slepen on his bak or reste,  
And turne ayeyn with writhyng of a pyn.  
He that it wroghte koude ful many a gyn.  
He wayted many a constellacion  
130 Er he had doon this operacion,  
And knew ful many a seel and many a bond.  
"This mirour eek, that I have in myn hond,

Hath swich a myght that men may in it see  
Whan ther shal fallen any adversitee  
Unto youre regne or to youreself also,  
And openly who is youre freend or foo.  
"And over al this, if any lady bright  
Hath set hire herte on any maner wight,  
If he be fals, she shal his tresoun see,  
140 His newe love, and al his subtiltee,  
So openly that ther shal no thyng hyde.  
Wherefore, ageyn this lusty someres tyde,  
This mirour and this ryng, that ye may see,  
He hath sent to my lady Canacee,  
Youre excellent doghter that is heere.  
"The vertu of the ryng, if ye wol heere,  
Is this: that if hire lust it for to were  
Upon hir thombe or in hir purs it bere,  
Ther is no fowel that fleeth under the hevene  
150 That she ne shal wel understonde his stevene,  
And knowe his menyng openly and pleyn,  
And answeere hym in his langage ageyn;  
And every gras that groweth upon roote  
She shal eek knowe, and whom it wol do boote,  
Al be his woundes never so depe and wyde.  
"This naked swerd, that hangeth by my syde,  
Swich vertu hath that what man so ye smyte  
Thurghout his armure it wole kerve and byte,  
Were it as thikke as is a branched ook;  
160 And what man that is wounded with the strook  
Shal never be hool til that yow list, of grace,  
To stroke hym with the plat in thilke place  
Ther he is hurt; this is as mucche to seyn,  
Ye moote with the platte swerd ageyn  
Stroke hym in the wounde, and it wol close.  
This is a verray sooth, withouten glose;  
It failleth nat whils it is in youre hoold."  
And whan this knyght hath thus his tale toold,  
He rideth out of halle and doun he lighte.  
170 His steede, which that shoon as sonne brighte,  
Stant in the court, stille as any stoon.  
This knyght is to his chambre lad anoon,  
And is unarmed, and to mete yset.  
The presentes been ful roially yfet --

This is to seyn, the swerd and the mirour --  
And born anon into the heighe tour  
With certeine officers ordeyned therfore;  
And unto Canacee this ryng is bore  
Solempnely, ther she sit at the table.  
180 But sikerly, withouten any fable,  
The hors of bras, that may nat be remewed,  
It stant as it were to the ground yglewed.  
Ther may no man out of the place it dryve  
For noon engyn of wyndas or polyve;  
And cause why? For they kan nat the craft.  
And therfore in the place they han it laft  
Til that the knyght hath taught hem the manere  
To voyden hym, as ye shal after heere.  
Greet was the prees that swarmeth to and fro  
190 To gauren on this hors that stondeth so,  
For it so heigh was, and so brood and long,  
So wel proporcioned for to been strong,  
Right as it were a steede of Lumbardye;  
Therwith so horsly, and so quyk of ye,  
As it a gentil Poilleys courser were.  
For certes, fro his tayl unto his ere  
Nature ne art ne koude hym nat amende  
In no degree, as al the people wende.  
But everemoore hir mooste wonder was  
200 How that it koude gon, and was of bras;  
It was a fairye, as the peple semed.  
Diverse folk diversely they demed;  
As many heddes, as manye wittes ther been.  
They murmureden as dooth a swarm of been,  
And maden skiles after hir fantasies,  
Rehersynge of thise olde poetries,  
And seyden it was lyk the Pegasee,  
The hors that hadde wynges for to flee;  
Or elles it was the Grekes hors Synon,  
210 That broghte Troie to destruccion,  
As men in thise olde geestes rede.  
"Myn herte," quod oon, "is everemoore in drede;  
I trowe som men of armes been therinne,  
That shapen hem this citee for to wyne.  
It were right good that al swich thyng were knowe."  
Another rowned to his felawe lowe,

And seyde, "He lyeth, for it is rather lyk  
An apparence ymaad by som magyk,  
As jogelours pleyen at thise feestes grete."  
220 Of sondry doutes thus they jangle and trete,  
As lewed peple demeth comunly  
Of thynges that been maad moore subtilly  
Than they kan in hir lewednesse comprehende;  
They demen gladly to the badder ende.  
And somme of hem wondred on the mirour,  
That born was up into the maister-tour,  
Hou men myghte in it swiche thynges se.  
Another answerde and seyde it myghte wel be  
Naturelly, by composiciouns  
230 Of anglis and of slye reflexiouns,  
And seyde that in Rome was swich oon.  
They speken of Alocen, and Vitulon,  
And Aristotle, that writen in hir lyves  
Of queynte mirours and of perspectives,  
As knowen they that han hir bookes herd.  
And oother folk han wondred on the swerd  
That wolde percen thurghout every thyng,  
And fille in speche of Thelophus the kyng,  
And of Achilles with his queynte spere,  
240 For he koude with it bothe heele and dere,  
Right in swich wise as men may with the swerd  
Of which right now ye han youreselven herd.  
They speken of sondry hardyng of metal,  
And speke of medicynes therwithal,  
And how and whanne it sholde yharded be,  
Which is unknowe, algates unto me.  
Tho speeke they of Canacees ryng,  
And seyden alle that swich a wonder thyng  
Of craft of rynges herde they nevere noon,  
250 Save that he Moyses and kyng Salomon  
Hadde a name of konnyng in swich art.  
Thus seyn the peple and drawen hem apart.  
But nathelees somme seiden that it was  
Wonder to maken of fern-asshen glas,  
And yet nys glas nat lyk asshen of fern;  
But, for they han yknowen it so fern,  
Therefore cesseth hir janglyng and hir wonder.  
As soore wondren somme on cause of thonder,

On ebbe, on flood, on gossomer, and on myst,  
260 And alle thyng, til that the cause is wyst.  
Thus jangle they, and demen, and devyse  
Til that the kyng gan fro the bord aryse.  
Phebus hath laft the angle meridional,  
And yet ascendynge was the beest roial,  
The gentil Leon, with his Aldiran,  
Whan that this Tartre kyng, Cambyuskan,  
Roos fro his bord, ther as he sat ful hye.  
Toforn hym gooth the loude mynstralcye  
Til he cam to his chambre of parementz,  
270 Ther as they sownen diverse instrumentz  
That it is lyk an hevene for to heere.  
Now dauncen lusty Venus children deere,  
For in the Fyssh hir lady sat ful hye,  
And looketh on hem with a freendly ye.  
This noble kyng is set upon his trone.  
This strange knyght is fet to hym ful soone,  
And on the daunce he gooth with Canacee.  
Heere is the revel and the jolitee  
That is nat able a dul man to devyse.  
280 He moste han knowen love and his servyse  
And been a feestlych man as fressh as May,  
That sholde yow devysen swich array.  
Who koude telle yow the forme of daunces  
So unkouth, and swiche fresshe contenaunces,  
Swich subtil lookyng and dissymulynges  
For drede of jalouse mennes apercevynges?  
No man but Launcelot, and he is deed.  
Therefore I passe of al this lustiheed;  
I sey namoore, but in this jolynesse  
290 I lete hem til men to the soper dresse.  
The styward bit the spices for to hye,  
And eek the wyn, in al this melodye.  
The usshers and the squiers been ygoon,  
The spices and the wyn is come anoon.  
They ete and drynke, and whan this hadde an ende,  
Unto the temple, as reson was, they wende.  
The service doon, they soupn al by day.  
What nedeth yow rehercen hire array?  
Ech man woot wel that a kynges feeste  
300 Hath plentee to the meeste and to the leeste,



And deyntees mo than been in my knowyng.  
At after-soper gooth this noble kyng  
To seen this hors of bras, with al a route  
Of lordes and of ladyes hym aboute.  
Swich wondryng was ther on this hors of bras  
That syn the grete sege of Troie was,  
Theras men wondreden on an hors also,  
Ne was ther swich a wondryng as was tho.  
But fynally the kyng axeth this knyght  
310 The vertu of this courser and the myght,  
And preyde hym to telle his governaunce.  
This hors anoon bigan to trippe and daunce,  
Whan that this knyght leyde hand upon his reyne,  
And seyde, "Sire, ther is namoore to seyne,  
But, whan yow list to ryden anywhere,  
Ye mooten trille a pyn, stant in his ere,  
Which I shal yow telle bitwix us two.  
Ye moote nempne hym to what place also,  
Or to what contree, that yow list to ryde.  
320 And whan ye come ther as yow list abyde,  
Bidde hym descende, and trille another pyn,  
For therin lith th' effect of al the gyn,  
And he wol doun descende and doon youre wille,  
And in that place he wol abyde stille.  
Though al the world the contrarie hadde yswore,  
He shal nat thennes been ydrawe ne ybore.  
Or, if yow liste bidde hym thennes goon,  
Trille this pyn, and he wol vanysshe anoon  
Out of the sighte of every maner wight,  
330 And come agayn, be it by day or nyght,  
Whan that yow list to clepen hym ageyn  
In swich a gyse as I shal to yow seyn  
Bitwixe yow and me, and that ful soone.  
Ride whan yow list; ther is namoore to doone."  
Enformed whan the kyng was of that knyght,  
And hath conceyved in his wit aright  
The manere and the forme of al this thyng,  
Ful glad and blithe, this noble doughty kyng  
Repeireth to his revel as biforn.  
340 The brydel is unto the tour yborn  
And kept among his jueles leeve and deere.  
The hors vanysshed, I noot in what manere,

Out of hir sighte; ye gete namoore of me.  
But thus I lete in lust and jolitee  
This Cambyuskan his lordes festeiynge  
Til wel ny the day bigan to sprynge.  
The norice of digestioun, the sleep,  
Gan on hem wynke and bad hem taken keep  
That muchel drynke and labour wolde han reste;  
350 And with a galpyng mouth hem alle he keste,  
And seyde that it was tyme to lye adoun,  
For blood was in his domynacioun.  
"Cherisseth blood, natures freend," quod he.  
They thanken hym galpynge, by two, by thre,  
And every wight gan drawe hym to his reste,  
As sleep hem bad; they tooke it for the beste.  
Hire dremes shul nat now been toold for me;  
Ful were hire heddes of fumositee,  
That causeth dreem of which ther nys no charge.  
360 They slepen til that it was pryme large,  
The mooste part, but it were Canacee.  
She was ful mesurable, as wommen be;  
For of hir fader hadde she take leve  
To goon to reste soone after it was eve.  
Hir liste nat appalled for to be,  
Ne on the morwe unfeestlich for to se,  
And slepte hire firste sleep, and thanne awook.  
For swich a joye she in hir herte took  
Bothe of hir queynte ryng and hire mirour,  
370 That twenty tyme she changed hir colour;  
And in hire sleep, right for impressioun  
Of hire mirour, she hadde a visioun.  
Wherfore, er that the sonne gan up glyde,  
She cleped on hir maistresse hire bisyde,  
And seyde that hire liste for to ryse.  
Thise olde wommen that been gladly wyse,  
As is hire maistresse, answerde hire anon,  
And seyde, "Madame, whider wil ye goon  
Thus erly, for the folk been alle on reste?"  
380 "I wol," quod she, "arise, for me leste  
Ne lenger for to slepe, and walke aboute."  
Hire maistresse clepeth wommen a greet route,  
And up they rysen, wel a ten or twelve;  
Up riseth fresshe Canacee hireselve,

As rody and bright as dooth the yonge sonne,  
That in the Ram is foure degrees up ronne --  
Noon hyer was he whan she redy was --  
And forth she walketh esily a pas,  
Arrayed after the lusty seson soote  
390 Lightly, for to pleye and walke on foote,  
Nat but with fyve or sixe of hir meynee;  
And in a trench forth in the park gooth she.  
The vapour which that fro the erthe glood  
Made the sonne to seme rody and brood;  
But nathelees it was so fair a sighte  
That it made alle hire hertes for to lighte,  
What for the seson and the morwenynge,  
And for the foweles that she herde synge.  
For right anon she wiste what they mente  
400 Right by hir song, and knew al hire entente.  
The knotte why that every tale is toold,  
If it be taried til that lust be coold  
Of hem that han it after herkned yoore,  
The savour passeth ever lenger the moore,  
For fulsomnesse of his prolixitee;  
And by the same resoun, thynketh me,  
I sholde to the knotte condescende,  
And maken of hir walkyng soone an ende.  
Amydde a tree, for drye as whit as chalk,  
410 As Canacee was pleyyng in hir walk,  
Ther sat a faucon over hire heed ful hye,  
That with a pitous voys so gan to crye  
That all the wode resounded of hire cry.  
Ybeten hadde she herself so pitously  
With bothe hir wynges til the rede blood  
Ran endelong the tree ther-as she stood.  
And evere in oon she cryde alwey and shrighthe,  
And with hir beek herselven so she prighthe  
That ther nys tygre, ne noon so crueel beest  
420 That dwelleth outhere in wode or in forest,  
That nolde han wept, if that he wepe koude,  
For sorwe of hire, she shrighthe alwey so loude.  
For ther nas nevere yet no man on lyve,  
If that I koude a faucon wel discryve,  
That herde of swich another of fairnesse,  
As wel of plumage as of gentillesse

Of shap, of al that myghte yrekened be.  
A faucon peregryn thanne semed she  
Of fremde land; and everemoore, as she stood,  
430 She swowneth now and now for lak of blood,  
Til wel neigh is she fallen fro the tree.  
This faire kynges doghter, Canacee,  
That on hir fynger baar the queynte ryng,  
Thurgh which she understood wel every thyng  
That any fowel may in his leden seyn,  
And koude answeren hym in his ledene ageyn,  
Hath understonde what this faucon seyde,  
And wel neigh for the routhe almoost she deyde.  
And to the tree she gooth ful hastily,  
440 And on this faukon looketh pitously,  
And heeld hir lappe abroad, for wel she wiste  
The faukon moste fallen fro the twiste,  
Whan that it swowned next, for lak of blood.  
A longe whil to wayten hire she stood  
Til atte laste she spak in this manere  
Unto the hauk, as ye shal after heere:  
"What is the cause, if it be for to telle,  
That ye be in this furial pyne of helle?"  
Quod Canacee unto this hauk above.  
450 "Is this for sorwe of deeth or los of love?  
For, as I trowe, thise been causes two  
That causen moost a gentil herte wo;  
Of oother harm it nedeth nat to speke.  
For ye youreself upon yourself yow wreke,  
Which proveth wel that outhir ire or drede  
Moot been enchesoun of youre cruel dede,  
Syn that I see noon oother wight yow chace.  
For love of God, as dooth youreselven grace,  
Or what may been youre help? For west nor est  
460 Ne saugh I nevere er now no bryd ne beest  
That ferde with hymself so pitously.  
Ye sle me with youre sorwe verrailly,  
I have of yow so greet compassioun.  
For Goddes love, com fro the tree adoun;  
And as I am a kynges doghter trewe,  
If that I verrailly the cause knewe  
Of youre disese, if it lay in my myght,  
I wolde amenden it er that it were nyght,

As wisly helpe me grete God of kynde!  
470 And herbes shal I right ynowe yfynde  
To heel with youre hurtes hastily."  
Tho shrighte this faucon yet moore pitously  
Than ever she dide, and fil to grounde anon,  
And lith aswowne, deed and lyk a stoon,  
Til Canacee hath in hire lappe hire take  
Unto the tyme she gan of swough awake.  
And after that she of hir swough gan breyde,  
Right in hir haukes ledene thus she seyde:  
"That pitee renneth soone in gentil herte,  
480 Feelynge his similitude in peynes smerte,  
Is preved alday, as men may it see,  
As wel by werk as by auctoritee;  
For gentil herte kitheth gentillesse.  
I se wel that ye han of my distresse  
Compassion, my faire Canacee,  
Of verray wommanly benignytee  
That Nature in youre principles hath set.  
But for noon hope for to fare the bet,  
But for to obeye unto youre herte free,  
490 And for to maken othere be war by me,  
As by the whelp chasted is the leon,  
Right for that cause and that conclusion,  
Whil that I have a leyser and a space,  
Myn harm I wol confessen er I pace."  
And evere, whil that oon hir sorwe tolde,  
That oother weep as she to water wolde  
Til that the faucon bad hire to be stille,  
And, with a syk, right thus she seyde hir wille:  
"Ther I was bred -- alas, that ilke day! --  
500 And fostred in a roche of marbul gray  
So tendrely that no thyng eyled me,  
I nyste nat what was adversitee  
Til I koude flee ful hye under the sky.  
Tho dwelte a tercelet me faste by,  
That semed welle of alle gentillesse;  
Al were he ful of treson and falsnesse,  
It was so wrapped under humble cheere,  
And under hewe of trouthe in swich manere,  
Under plesance, and under bisy peyne,  
510 That no wight koude han wend he koude feyne,

So depe in greyn he dyed his coloures.  
Right as a serpent hit hym under floures  
Til he may seen his tyme for to byte,  
Right so this god of loves ypocryte  
Dooth so his cerymonyes and obeisaunces,  
And kepeth in semblaunt alle his observaunces  
That sownen into gentillesse of love.  
As in a tounge is al the faire above,  
And under is the corps, swich as ye woot,  
520 Swich was this ypocrite, bothe coold and hoot.  
And in this wise he served his entente  
That, save the feend, noon wiste what he mente,  
Til he so longe hadde wopen and compleyned,  
And many a yeer his service to me feyned,  
Til that myn herte, to pitous and to nyce,  
Al innocent of his crouned malice,  
Forfered of his deeth, as thoughte me,  
Upon his othes and his seuretee,  
Graunted hym love, upon this condicioun,  
530 That everemoore myn honour and renoun  
Were saved, bothe privee and apert;  
This is to seyn, that after his desert,  
I yaf hym al myn herte and al my thought --  
God woot and he, that ootherwise noght --  
And took his herte in chaunge of myn for ay.  
But sooth is seyde, goon sithen many a day,  
'A trewe wight and a theef thenken nat oon.'  
And whan he saugh the thyng so fer ygoon  
That I hadde graunted hym fully my love  
540 In swich a gyse as I have seyde above,  
And yeven hym my trewe herte as free  
As he swoor he yaf his herte to me,  
Anon this tigre, ful of doublenesse,  
Fil on his knees with so devout humblesse,  
With so heigh reverence, and, as by his cheere,  
So lyk a gentil love of manere,  
So ravysshed, as it semed, for the joye  
That nevere Jason ne Parys of Troye --  
Jason? certes, ne noon oother man  
550 Syn Lameth was, that alderfirst bigan  
To loven two, as writen folk biforn --  
Ne nevere, syn the firste man was born,

Ne koude man, by twenty thousand part,  
Countrefete the sophymes of his art,  
Ne were worthy unbokelen his galoche,  
Ther doublenesse or feynyng sholde approche,  
Ne so koude thonke a wight as he dide me!  
His manere was an hevene for to see  
Til any womman, were she never so wys,  
560 So peynted he and kembde at point-devys  
As wel his wordes as his contenaunce.  
And I so loved hym for his obeisaunce,  
And for the trouthe I demed in his herte,  
That if so were that any thyng hym smerte,  
Al were it never so lite, and I it wiste,  
Me thoughte I felte deeth myn herte twiste.  
And shortly, so ferforth this thyng is went  
That my wyl was his willes instrument;  
This is to seyn, my wyl obeyed his wyl  
570 In alle thyng, as fer as reson fil,  
Kepyng the boundes of my worshipe evere.  
Ne nevere hadde I thyng so lief, ne levere,  
As hym, God woot, ne nevere shal namo.  
"This laste lenger than a yeer or two,  
That I supposed of hym noght but good.  
But finally, thus atte laste it stood,  
That Fortune wolde that he moste twynne  
Out of that place which that I was inne.  
Wher me was wo, that is no questioun;  
580 I kan nat make of it discripsioun.  
For o thyng dar I tellen boldely:  
I knowe what is the peyne of deeth therby;  
Swich harm I felte for he ne myghte bileve.  
So on a day of me he took his leve,  
So sorwefully eek that I wende verraily  
That he had felt as muche harm as I,  
Whan that I herde hym speke and saugh his hewe.  
But nathelees, I thoughte he was so trewe,  
And eek that he repaire sholde ageyn  
590 Withinne a litel while, sooth to seyn;  
And resoun wolde eek that he moste go  
For his honour, as ofte it happeth so,  
That I made vertu of necessitee,  
And took it wel, syn that it moste be.

As I best myghte, I hidde fro hym my sorwe,  
 And took hym by the hond, Seint John to borwe,  
 And seyde hym thus: 'Lo, I am youres al;  
 Beth swich as I to yow have been and shal.'  
 What he answerde, it nedeth noght reherce;  
 600 Who kan sey bet than he, who kan do werse?  
 Whan he hath al wel seyde, thanne hath he doon.  
 'Therefore bihoveth hire a ful long spoon  
 That shal ete with a feend,' thus herde I seye.  
 So atte laste he moste forth his weye,  
 And forth he fleeth til he cam ther hym leste.  
 Whan it cam hym to purpos for to reste,  
 I trowe he hadde thilke text in mynde,  
 That 'alle thyng, repeiryng to his kynde,  
 Gladeth hymself;' thus seyn men, as I gesse.  
 610 Men loven of propre kynde newefangelnesse,  
 As briddes doon that men in cages fede.  
 For though thou nyght and day take of hem hede,  
 And strawe hir cage faire and softe as silk,  
 And yeve hem sugre, hony, breed and milk,  
 Yet right anon as that his dore is uppe  
 He with his feet wol spurne adoun his cuppe,  
 And to the wode he wole and wormes ete;  
 So newefangel been they of hire mete,  
 And loven novelries of propre kynde,  
 620 No gentillesse of blood ne may hem bynde.  
 "So ferde this tercelet, alas the day!  
 Though he were gentil born, and fressh and gay,  
 And goodlich for to seen, and humble and free,  
 He saugh upon a tyme a kyte flee,  
 And sodeynly he loved this kyte so  
 That al his love is clene fro me ago,  
 And hath his trouthe falsed in this wyse.  
 Thus hath the kyte my love in hire servyse,  
 And I am lorn withouten remedie!"  
 630 And with that word this faucon gan to crie  
 And swowned eft in Canacees barm.  
 Greet was the sorwe for the haukes harm  
 That Canacee and alle hir wommen made;  
 They nyste hou they myghte the faucon glade.  
 But Canacee hom bereth hire in hir lappe,  
 And softely in plastres gan hire wrappe,



Ther as she with hire beek hadde hurt hirselve.  
Now kan nat Canacee but herbes delve  
Out of the ground, and make salves newe  
640 Of herbes precieuse and fyne of hewe  
To heelen with this hauk. Fro day to nyght  
She dooth hire bisynesse and al hire myght,  
And by hire beddes heed she made a mewe  
And covered it with veluettes blewe,  
In signe of trouthe that is in wommen sene.  
And al withoute, the mewe is peynted grene,  
In which were peynted alle thise false fowles,  
As ben thise tidyves, tercelettes, and owles;  
Right for despit were peynted hem bisyde,  
650 Pyes, on hem for to crie and chyde.  
Thus lete I Canacee hir hauk kepyng;  
I wol namoore as now speke of hir ryng  
Til it come eft to purpos for to seyn  
How that this faucon gat hire love ageyn  
Repentant, as the storie telleth us,  
By mediacion of Cambalus,  
The kynges sone, of which I yow tolde.  
But hennesforth I wol my proces holde  
To speken of adventures and of batailles  
660 That nevere yet was herd so grete mervailles.  
First wol I telle yow of Cambyuskan,  
That in his tyme many a citee wan;  
And after wol I speke of Algarsif,  
How that he wan Theodora to his wif,  
For whom ful ofte in greet peril he was,  
Ne hadde he ben holpen by the steede of bras;  
And after wol I speke of Cambalo,  
That faught in lystes with the bretheren two  
For Canacee er that he myghte hire wyne.  
670 And ther I lefte I wol ayeyn bigynne.  
Appollo whirleth up his chaar so hye  
Til that the god Mercurius hous, the slye --  
"In feith, Squier, thow hast thee wel yquit  
And gentilly. I preise wel thy wit,"  
Quod the Frankeleyn, "considerynge thy yowthe,  
So feelyngly thou spekest, sire, I allow the!  
As to my doom, ther is noon that is heere  
Of eloquence that shal be thy peere,

If that thou lyve; God yeve thee good chaunce,  
680 And in vertu sende thee continuaunce,  
For of thy speche I have greet deyntee.  
I have a sone, and by the Trinitee,  
I hadde levere than twenty pound worth lond,  
Though it right now were fallen in myn hond,  
He were a man of swich discrecioun  
As that ye been! Fy on possessioun,  
But if a man be vertuous withal!  
I have my sone snybbed, and yet shal,  
For he to vertu listeth nat entende;  
690 But for to pleye at dees, and to despende  
And lese al that he hath is his usage.  
And he hath levere talken with a page  
Than to comune with any gentil wight  
Where he myghte lerne gentillesse aright."  
"Straw for youre gentillesse!" quod oure Hoost.  
"What, Frankeleyn! Pardee, sire, wel thou woost  
That ech of yow moot tellen atte leste  
A tale or two, or breken his biheste."  
"That knowe I wel, sire," quod the Frankeleyn.  
700 "I prey yow, haveth me nat in desdeyn,  
Though to this man I speke a word or two."  
"Telle on thy tale withouten wordes mo."  
"Gladly, sire Hoost," quod he, "I wole obeye  
Unto your wyl; now herkneth what I seye.  
I wol yow nat contrarien in no wyse  
As fer as that my wittes wol suffyse.  
I prey to God that it may plesen yow;  
Thanne woot I wel that it is good ynow."



## THE FRANKLIN'S PROLOGUE

Thise olde gentil Britouns in hir dayes  
710 Of diverse adventures maden layes,  
Rymeyed in hir firste Briton tonge,  
Whiche layes with hir instrumentz they songe  
Or elles redden hem for hir plesaunce;  
And oon of hem have I in remembraunce,  
Which I shal seyn with good wyl as I kan.  
But, sires, by cause I am a burel man,  
At my bigynnyng first I yow biseche,  
Have me excused of my rude speche.  
I lerned nevere rethorik, certeyn;  
720 Thyng that I speke, it moot be bare and pleyn.  
I sleep nevere on the Mount of Pernaso,  
Ne lerned Marcus Tullius Scithero.  
Colours ne knowe I none, withouten drede,  
But swiche colours as growen in the mede,  
Or elles swiche as men dye or peynte.  
Colours of rethoryk been to me queynte;  
My spirit feeleth noght of swich mateere.  
But if yow list, my tale shul ye heere.



## THE FRANKLIN'S TALE

In Armorik, that called is Britayne,  
730 Ther was a knyght that loved and dide his payne  
To serve a lady in his beste wise;  
And many a labour, many a greet emprise,  
He for his lady wroghte er she were wonne.  
For she was oon the faireste under sonne,  
And eek therto comen of so heigh kynrede  
That wel unnethes dorste this knyght, for drede,  
Telle hire his wo, his peyne, and his distresse.  
But atte laste she, for his worthynesse,  
And namely for his meke obeysaunce,  
740 Hath swich a pitee caught of his penaunce  
That pryvely she fil of his accord  
To take hym for hir housbonde and hir lord,  
Of swich lordshipe as men han over hir wyves.  
And for to lede the moore in blisse hir lyves,  
Of his free wyl he swoor hire as a knyght  
That nevere in al his lyf he, day ne nyght,  
Ne sholde upon hym take no maistrie  
Agayn hir wyl, ne kithe hire jalousie,  
But hire obeye, and folwe hir wyl in al,  
750 As any love to his lady shal,  
Save that the name of soveraynetee,  
That wolde he have for shame of his degree.  
She thanked hym, and with ful greet humblesse  
She seyde, "Sire, sith of youre gentillesse  
Ye profre me to have so large a reyne,  
Ne wolde nevere God bitwixe us tweyne,  
As in my gilt, were outhere werre or stryf.  
Sire, I wol be youre humble trewe wyf --  
Have heer my trouthe -- til that myn herte breste."  
760 Thus been they bothe in quiete and in reste.  
For o thyng, sires, saufly dar I seye,  
That freendes everych oother moot obeye,  
If they wol longe holden compaignye.  
Love wol nat been constreyned by maistrye.  
Whan maistrie comth, the God of Love anon  
Beteth his wynges, and farewel, he is gon!  
Love is a thyng as any spirit free.  
Wommen, of kynde, desiren libertee,

And nat to been constreyned as a thral;  
770 And so doon men, if I sooth seyen shal.  
Looke who that is moost pacient in love,  
He is at his advantage al above.  
Pacience is an heigh vertu, certeyn,  
For it venquysseth, as thise clerkes seyn,  
Thynges that rigour sholde nevere atteyne.  
For every word men may nat chide or pleyne.  
Lerneth to suffre, or elles, so moot I goon,  
Ye shul it lerne, wher so ye wole or noon;  
For in this world, certein, ther no wight is  
780 That he ne dooth or seith somtyme amys.  
Ire, siknesse, or constellacioun,  
Wyn, wo, or chaungynge of complexioun  
Causeth ful ofte to doon amys or speken.  
On every wrong a man may nat be wreken.  
After the tyme moste be temperaunce  
To every wight that kan on governaunce.  
And therefore hath this wise, worthy knyght,  
To lyve in ese, suffrance hire bihight,  
And she to hym ful wisly gan to swere  
790 That nevere sholde ther be defaute in here.  
Heere may men seen an humble, wys accord;  
Thus hath she take hir servant and hir lord --  
Servant in love, and lord in mariage.  
Thanne was he bothe in lordshipe and servage.  
Servage? Nay, but in lordshipe above,  
Sith he hath bothe his lady and his love;  
His lady, certes, and his wyf also,  
The which that lawe of love acordeth to.  
And whan he was in this prosperitee,  
800 Hoom with his wyf he gooth to his contree,  
Nat fer fro Pedmark, ther his dwellyng was,  
Where as he lyveth in blisse and in solas.  
Who koude telle, but he hadde wedded be,  
The joye, the ese, and the prosperitee  
That is bitwixe an housbonde and his wyf?  
A yeer and moore lasted this blisful lyf,  
Til that the knyght of which I speke of thus,  
That of Kayrrud was cleped Arveragus,  
Shoop hym to goon and dwelle a yeer or tweyne  
810 In Engelond, that cleped was eek Briteyne,

To seke in armes worshiþe and honour --  
For al his lust he sette in swich labour --  
And dwelled there two yeer; the book seith thus.  
Now wol I stynten of this Arveragus,  
And speken I wole of Dorigen his wyf,  
That loveth hire housbonde as hire hertes lyf.  
For his absence wepeth she and siketh,  
As doon thise noble wyves whan hem liketh.  
She moorneth, waketh, wayleth, fasteth, pleyneth;  
820 Desir of his presence hire so destreyneth  
That al this wyde world she sette at noght.  
Hire freendes, whiche that knewe hir hevy thoght,  
Conforten hire in al that ever they may.  
They prechen hire, they telle hire nyght and day  
That causelees she sleeth herself, alas!  
And every confort possible in this cas  
They doon to hire with al hire bisynesse,  
Al for to make hire leve hire hevynesse.  
By proces, as ye knowen everichoon,  
830 Men may so longe graven in a stoon  
Til som figure therinne emprented be.  
So longe han they comforted hire til she  
Receyved hath, by hope and by resoun,  
The emprentyng of hire consolacioun,  
Thurgh which hir grete sorwe gan aswage;  
She may nat alwey duren in swich rage.  
And eek Arveragus, in al this care,  
Hath sent hire lettres hoom of his welfare,  
And that he wol come hastily agayn;  
840 Or elles hadde this sorwe hir herte slayn.  
Hire freendes sawe hir sorwe gan to slake  
And preyde hire on knees, for Goddes sake,  
To come and romen hire in compaignye,  
Awey to dryve hire derke fantasye.  
And finally she graunted that requeste,  
For wel she saugh that it was for the beste.  
Now stood hire castel faste by the see,  
And often with hire freendes walketh shee  
Hire to disporte upon the bank an heigh,  
850 Where as she many a ship and barge seigh  
Seillynge hir cours, where as hem liste go.  
But thanne was that a parcel of hire wo,

For to hirself ful ofte, "Allas!" seith she,  
"Is ther no ship, of so manye as I se,  
Wol bryngen hom my lord? Thanne were myn herte  
Al warissched of his bittre peynes smerte."  
Another tyme ther wolde she sitte and thynke,  
And caste hir eyen downward fro the brynke.  
But whan she saugh the grisly rokkes blake,  
860 For verray feere so wolde hir herte quake  
That on hire feet she myghte hire noght sustene.  
Thanne wolde she sitte adoun upon the grene,  
And pitously into the see biholde,  
And seyn right thus, with sorweful sikes colde:  
"Eterne God, that thurgh thy purveiaunce  
Ledest the world by certein governaunce,  
In ydel, as men seyn, ye no thyng make.  
But, Lord, thise grisly feendly rokkes blake,  
That semen rather a foul confusion  
870 Of werk than any fair creacion  
Of swich a parfit wys God and a stable,  
Why han ye wroght this werk unresonable?  
For by this werk, south, north, ne west, ne eest,  
Ther nys yfostred man, ne bryd, ne beest;  
It dooth no good, to my wit, but anoyeth.  
Se ye nat, Lord, how mankynde it destroyeth?  
An hundred thousand bodyes of mankynde  
Han rokkes slayn, al be they nat in mynde,  
Which mankynde is so fair part of thy werk  
880 That thou it madest lyk to thyn owene merk.  
Thanne semed it ye hadde a greet chiertee  
Toward mankynde; but how thanne may it bee  
That ye swiche meenes make it to destroyen,  
Whiche meenes do no good, but evere anoyen?  
I woot wel clerkes wol seyn as hem leste,  
By argumentz, that al is for the beste,  
Though I ne kan the causes nat yknowe.  
But thilke God that made wynd to blowe  
As kepe my lord! This my conclusion.  
890 To clerkes lete I al disputison.  
But wolde God that alle thise rokkes blake  
Were sonken into helle for his sake!  
Thise rokkes sleen myn herte for the feere."  
Thus wolde she seyn, with many a pitous teere.

Hire freendes sawe that it was no disport  
To romen by the see, but discomfort,  
And shopen for to pleyen somwher elles.  
They leden hire by ryveres and by welles,  
And eek in othere places delitables;  
900 They dauncen and they pleyen at ches and tables.  
So on a day, right in the morwe-tyde,  
Unto a gardyn that was ther bisyde,  
In which that they hadde maad hir ordinaunce  
Of vitaille and of oother purveiaunce,  
They goon and pleye hem al the longe day.  
And this was on the sixte morwe of May,  
Which May hadde peynted with his softe shoures  
This gardyn ful of leves and of floures;  
And craft of mannes hand so curiously  
910 Arrayed hadde this gardyn, trewely,  
That nevere was ther gardyn of swich prys  
But if it were the verray paradys.  
The odour of floures and the fresshe sighte  
Wolde han maked any herte lighte  
That evere was born, but if to greet siknesse  
Or to greet sorwe helde it in distresse,  
So ful it was of beautee with plesaunce.  
At after-dyner gonne they to daunce,  
And synge also, save Dorigen allone,  
920 Which made alwey hir compleint and hir moone,  
For she ne saugh hym on the daunce go  
That was hir housbonde and hir love also.  
But nathelees she moste a tyme abyde  
And with good hope lete hir sorwe slyde.  
Upon this daunce, amonges othere men,  
Daunced a squier biforn Dorigen,  
That fressher was and jolyer of array,  
As to my doom, than is the month of May.  
He syngeth, daunceth, passynge any man  
930 That is, or was, sith that the world bigan.  
Therwith he was, if men sholde hym discryve,  
Oon of the beste farynge man on lyve;  
Yong, strong, right vertuouse, and riche, and wys,  
And wel biloved, and holden in greet prys.  
And shortly, if the sothe I tellen shal,  
Unwityng of this Dorigen at al,



This lusty squier, servant to Venus,  
 Which that ycleped was Aurelius,  
 Hadde loved hire best of any creature  
 940 Two yeer and moore, as was his aventure,  
 But nevere dorste he tellen hire his grevaunce.  
 Withouten coppe he drank al his penaunce.  
 He was despeyred; no thyng dorste he seye,  
 Save in his songes somewhat wolde he wreye  
 His wo, as in a general compleynyng;  
 He seyde he lovede and was biloved no thyng.  
 Of swich matere made he manye layes,  
 Songes, compleintes, roundels, virelayes,  
 How that he dorste nat his sorwe telle,  
 950 But langwissheth as a furye dooth in helle;  
 And dye he moste, he seyde, as dide Ekko  
 For Narcisus, that dorste nat telle hir wo.  
 In oother manere than ye heere me seye,  
 Ne dorste he nat to hire his wo biwreye,  
 Save that, paraventure, somtyme at daunces,  
 Ther yonge folk kepen hir observaunces,  
 It may wel be he looked on hir face  
 In swich a wise as man that asketh grace;  
 But nothyng wiste she of his entente.  
 960 Nathelees it happed, er they thennes wente,  
 By cause that he was hire neighebour,  
 And was a man of worshipe and honour,  
 And hadde yknowen hym of tyme yoore,  
 They fille in speche; and forth, moore and moore,  
 Unto his purpos drough Aurelius,  
 And whan he saugh his tyme, he seyde thus:  
 "Madame," quod he, "by God that this world made,  
 So that I wiste it myghte youre herte glade,  
 I wolde that day that youre Arveragus  
 970 Wente over the see, that I, Aurelius,  
 Hadde went ther nevere I sholde have come agayn.  
 For wel I woot my servyce is in vayn;  
 My gerdon is but brestyng of myn herte.  
 Madame, reweth upon my peynes smerte;  
 For with a word ye may me sleen or save.  
 Heere at youre feet God wolde that I were grave!  
 I ne have as now no leyser moore to seye;  
 Have mercy, sweete, or ye wol do me deye!"

She gan to looke upon Aurelius;  
 980 "Is this youre wyl," quod she, "and sey ye thus?  
 Nevere erst," quod she, "ne wiste I what ye mente.  
 But now, Aurelie, I knowe youre entente,  
 By thilke God that yaf me soule and lyf,  
 Ne shal I nevere been untrewed wyf  
 In word ne werk, as fer as I have wit;  
 I wol been his to whom that I am knyght.  
 Taak this for fynal answer as of me."  
 But after that in pley thus seyde she:  
 "Aurelie," quod she, "by heighe God above,  
 990 Yet wolde I graunte yow to been youre love,  
 Syn I yow se so pitously complayne.  
 Looke what day that endelong Britayne  
 Ye remoeve alle the rokkes, stoon by stoon,  
 That they ne lette ship ne boot to goon --  
 I seye, whan ye han maad the coost so clene  
 Of rokkes that ther nys no stoon ysene,  
 Thanne wol I love yow best of any man;  
 Have heer my trouthe, in al that evere I kan."  
 "Is ther noon oother grace in yow?" quod he.  
 1000 "No, by that Lord," quod she, "that maked me!  
 For wel I woot that it shal never bityde.  
 Lat swiche folies out of youre herte slyde.  
 What deyntee sholde a man han in his lyf  
 For to go love another mannes wyf,  
 That hath hir body whan so that hym liketh?"  
 Aurelius ful ofte soore siketh;  
 Wo was Aurelie whan that he this herde,  
 And with a sorweful herte he thus answerde:  
 "Madame," quod he, "this were an impossible!  
 1010 Thanne moot I dye of sodeyn deth horrible."  
 And with that word he turned hym anon.  
 Tho coome hir othere freendes many oon,  
 And in the aleyes romeden up and doun,  
 And nothyng wiste of this conclusioun,  
 But sodeynly bigonne revel newe  
 Til that the brighte sonne loste his hewe;  
 For th' orisonte hath reft the sonne his lyght --  
 This is as muche to seye as it was nyght --  
 And hoom they goon in joye and in solas,  
 1020 Save oonly wrecche Aurelius, alas!

He to his hous is goon with sorweful herte.  
He seeth he may nat fro his deeth asterte;  
Hym semed that he felte his herte colde.  
Up to the hevene his handes he gan holde,  
And on his knowes bare he sette hym doun,  
And in his ravyng seyde his orisoun.  
For verray wo out of his wit he breyde.  
He nyste what he spak, but thus he seyde;  
With pitous herte his pleynt hath he bigonne  
1030 Unto the goddes, and first unto the sonne:  
He seyde, "Appollo, god and governour  
Of every plaunte, herbe, tree, and flour,  
That yevest, after thy declinacion,  
To ech of hem his tyme and his seson,  
As thyn herberwe chaungeth lowe or heighe,  
Lord Phebus, cast thy merciabie eighe  
On wrecche Aurelie, which that am but lorn.  
Lo, lord! My lady hath my deeth ysworn  
Withoute gilt, but thy benignytee  
1040 Upon my dedly herte have som pitee.  
For wel I woot, lord Phebus, if yow lest,  
Ye may me helpen, save my lady, best.  
Now voucheth sauf that I may yow devyse  
How that I may been holpen and in what wyse.  
"Youre blisful suster, Lucina the sheene,  
That of the see is chief goddesse and queene  
(Though Neptunus have deitee in the see,  
Yet emperisse aboven hym is she),  
Ye knowen wel, lord, that right as hir desir  
1050 Is to be quyked and lighted of youre fir,  
For which she folweth yow ful bisily,  
Right so the see desireth naturelly  
To folwen hire, as she that is goddesse  
Bothe in the see and ryveres moore and lesse.  
Wherfore, lord Phebus, this is my requeste --  
Do this miracle, or do myn herte breste --  
That now next at this opposicion  
Which in the signe shal be of the Leon,  
As preieth hire so greet a flood to brynge  
1060 That fyve fadme at the leeste it oversprynge  
The hyeste rokke in Armorik Briteyne;  
And lat this flood endure yeres tweyne.

Thanne certes to my lady may I seye,  
'Holdeth youre heste, the rokkes been aweye.'  
"Lord Phebus, dooth this miracle for me.  
Preye hire she go no faster cours than ye;  
I seye, preyeth your suster that she go  
No faster cours than ye thise yeres two.  
Thanne shal she been evene atte fulle alway,  
1070 And spryng flood laste bothe nyght and day.  
And but she vouche sauf in swich manere  
To graunte me my sovereyn lady deere,  
Prey hire to synken every rok adoun  
Into hir owene dirke regioun  
Under the ground, ther Pluto dwelleth inne,  
Or nevere mo shal I my lady wyne.  
Thy temple in Delphos wol I barefoot seke.  
Lord Phebus, se the teeris on my cheke,  
And of my peyne have som compassioun."  
1080 And with that word in swowne he fil adoun,  
And longe tyme he lay forth in a traunce.  
His brother, which that knew of his penaunce,  
Up caughte hym and to bedde he hath hym broght.  
Dispeyred in this torment and this thoght  
Lete I this woful creature lye;  
Chese he, for me, wheither he wol lyve or dye.  
Arveragus, with heele and greet honour,  
As he that was of chivalrie the flour,  
Is comen hoom, and othere worthy men.  
1090 O blisful artow now, thou Dorigen,  
That hast thy lusty housbonde in thyne armes,  
The fresshe knyght, the worthy man of armes,  
That loveth thee as his owene hertes lyf.  
No thyng list hym to been ymaginatyf,  
If any wight hadde spoke, whil he was oute,  
To hire of love; he hadde of it no doute.  
He noght entendeth to no swich mateere,  
But daunceth, justeth, maketh hire good cheere;  
And thus in joye and blisse I lete hem dwelle,  
1100 And of the sike Aurelius wol I telle.  
In langour and in torment furyus  
Two yeer and moore lay wrecche Aurelyus,  
Er any foot he myghte on erthe gon;  
Ne confort in this tyme hadde he noon,

Save of his brother, which that was a clerk.  
He knew of al this wo and al this werk,  
For to noon oother creature, certeyn,  
Of this matere he dorste no word seyn.  
Under his brest he baar it moore secree  
1110 Than evere dide Pamphilus for Galathee.  
His brest was hool, withoute for to sene,  
But in his herte ay was the arwe kene.  
And wel ye knowe that of a sursanure  
In surgerye is perilous the cure,  
But men myghte touche the arwe or come therby.  
His brother weep and wayled pryvely,  
Til atte laste hym fil in remembraunce,  
That whiles he was at Orliens in Fraunce --  
As yonge clerkes that been lykerous  
1120 To reden artes that been curious  
Seken in every halke and every herne  
Particuler sciences for to lerne --  
He hym remembred that, upon a day,  
At Orliens in studie a book he say  
Of magyk natureel, which his felawe,  
That was that tyme a bachelor of lawe,  
Al were he ther to lerne another craft,  
Hadde prively upon his desk ylaft;  
Which book spak muchel of the operaciouns  
1130 Touchynge the eighte and twenty mansiouns  
That longen to the moone, and swich folye  
As in oure dayes is nat worth a flye --  
For hooly chirches feith in oure bileve  
Ne suffreth noon illusioun us to greve.  
And whan this book was in his remembraunce,  
Anon for joye his herte gan to daunce,  
And to hymself he seyde pryvely:  
"My brother shal be warisshed hastily;  
For I am siker that ther be sciences  
1140 By whiche men make diverse apparences,  
Swiche as thise subtile tregetoures pleye.  
For ofte at feestes have I wel herd seye  
That tregetours withinne an halle large  
Have maad come in a water and a barge,  
And in the halle rowen up and down.  
Somtyme hath semed come a grym leoun;

And somtyme floures sprynge as in a mede;  
Somtyme a vyne, and grapes white and rede;  
Somtyme a castel, al of lym and stoon;  
1150 And whan hem lyked, voyded it anon.  
Thus semed it to every mannes sighte.  
"Now thanne conclude I thus: that if I myghte  
At Orliens som oold felawe yfynde  
That hadde thise moones mansions in mynde,  
Or oother magyk natureel above,  
He sholde wel make my brother han his love.  
For with an apparence a clerk may make,  
To mannes sighte, that alle the rokkes blake  
Of Britaigne weren yvoyded everichon,  
1160 And shippes by the brynke comen and gon,  
And in swich forme enduren a wowke or two.  
Thanne were my brother warissshed of his wo;  
Thanne moste she nedes holden hire biheste,  
Or elles he shal shame hire atte leeste."  
What sholde I make a lenger tale of this?  
Unto his brotheres bed he comen is,  
And swich confort he yaf hym for to gon  
To Orliens that he up stirte anon,  
And on his wey forthward thanne is he fare  
1170 In hope for to been lissed of his care.  
Whan they were come almoost to that citee,  
But if it were a two furlong or thre,  
A yong clerk romynge by hymself they mette,  
Which that in Latyn thriftily hem grette,  
And after that he seyde a wonder thyng:  
"I knowe," quod he, "the cause of youre comyng."  
And er they ferther any foote wente,  
He tolde hem al that was in hire entente.  
This Briton clerk hym asked of felawes  
1180 The whiche that he had knowe in olde dawes,  
And he answerde hym that they dede were,  
For which he weep ful ofte many a teere.  
Doun of his hors Aurelius lighte anon,  
And with this magicien forth is he gon  
Hoom to his hous, and maden hem wel at ese.  
Hem lakked no vitaille that myghte hem plese.  
So wel arrayed hous as ther was oon  
Aurelius in his lyf saugh nevere noon.

He shewed hym, er he wente to sopeer,  
 1190 Forestes, parkes ful of wilde deer;  
 Ther saugh he hertes with hir hornes hye,  
 The gretteste that evere were seyn with ye.  
 He saugh of hem an hondred slayn with houndes,  
 And somme with arwes blede of bittre woundes.  
 He saugh, whan voyded were thise wilde deer,  
 Thise fauconers upon a fair ryver,  
 That with hir haukes han the heron slayn.  
 Tho saugh he knyghtes justyng in a playn;  
 And after this he dide hym swich plesaunce  
 1200 That he hym shewed his lady on a daunce,  
 On which hymself he daunced, as hym thoughte.  
 And whan this maister that this magyk wroughte  
 Saugh it was tyme, he clapte his handes two,  
 And farewell! Al oure revel was ago.  
 And yet remoeved they nevere out of the hous,  
 Whil they saugh al this sighte merveillous,  
 But in his studie, ther as his bookes be,  
 They seten stille, and no wight but they thre.  
 To hym this maister called his squier,  
 1210 And seyde hym thus: "Is redy oure soper?  
 Almoost an houre it is, I undertake,  
 Sith I yow bad oure soper for to make,  
 Whan that thise worthy men wenten with me  
 Into my studie, ther as my bookes be."  
 "Sire," quod this squier, "whan it liketh yow,  
 It is al redy, though ye wol right now."  
 "Go we thanne soupe," quod he, "as for the beste.  
 Thise amorous folk somtyme moote han hir reste."  
 At after-soper fille they in tretee  
 1220 What somme sholde this maistres gerdon be  
 To remoeven alle the rokkes of Britayne,  
 And eek from Gerounde to the mouth of Sayne.  
 He made it straunge, and swoor, so God hym save,  
 Lasse than a thousand pound he wolde nat have,  
 Ne gladly for that somme he wolde nat goon.  
 Aurelius, with blisful herte anoon,  
 Answerde thus: "Fy on a thousand pound!  
 This wyde world, which that men seye is round,  
 I wolde it yeve, if I were lord of it.  
 1230 This bargayn is ful dryve, for we been knyht.

Ye shal be payed trewely, by my trouthe!  
But looketh now, for no necligence or slouthe  
Ye tarie us heere no lenger than to-morwe."  
"Nay," quod this clerk, "have heer my feith to borwe."  
To bedde is goon Aurelius whan hym leste,  
And wel ny al that nyght he hadde his reste.  
What for his labour and his hope of blisse,  
His woful herte of penaunce hadde a lisse.  
Upon the morwe, whan that it was day,  
1240 To Britaigne tooke they the righte way,  
Aurelius and this magicien bisyde,  
And been descended ther they wolde abyde.  
And this was, as thise bookes me remembre,  
The colde, frosty seson of Decembre.  
Phebus wax old, and hewed lyk laton,  
That in his hoothe declynacion  
Shoon as the burned gold with stremes brighte;  
But now in Capricorn adoun he lighte,  
Where as he shoon ful pale, I dar wel seyn.  
1250 The bittre frostes, with the sleet and reyn,  
Destroyed hath the grene in every yerd.  
Janus sit by the fyr, with double berd,  
And drynketh of his bugle horn the wyn;  
Biforn hym stant brawen of the tusked swyn,  
And "Nowel" crieth every lusty man.  
Aurelius in al that evere he kan  
Dooth to this maister chiere and reverence,  
And preyeth hym to doon his diligence  
To bryngen hym out of his peynes smerte,  
1260 Or with a swerd that he wolde slitte his herte.  
This subtil clerk swich routhe had of this man  
That nyght and day he spedde hym that he kan  
To wayten a tyme of his conclusioun;  
This is to seye, to maken illusioun,  
By swich an apparence or jogelrye --  
I ne kan no termes of astrologye --  
That she and every wight sholde wene and seye  
That of Britaigne the rokkes were aweye,  
Or ellis they were sonken under grounde.  
1270 So atte laste he hath his tyme yfounde  
To maken his japes and his wrecchednesse  
Of swich a supersticious cursednesse.



His tables Tolletanes forth he brought,  
 Ful wel corrected, ne ther lakked nought,  
 Neither his collect ne his expans yeeris,  
 Ne his rootes, ne his othere geeris,  
 As been his centris and his argumentz  
 And his proporcioneles convenientz  
 For his equacions in every thyng.  
 1280 And by his eighte speere in his wirkyng  
 He knew ful wel how fer Alnath was shove  
 Fro the heed of thilke fixe Aries above,  
 That in the ninthe speere considered is;  
 Ful subtilly he kalkuled al this.  
 Whan he hadde founde his firste mansioun,  
 He knew the remenaunt by proporcoun,  
 And knew the arisyng of his moone weel,  
 And in whos face, and terme, and everydeel;  
 And knew ful weel the moones mansioun  
 1290 Acordaunt to his operacioun,  
 And knew also his othere observaunces  
 For swiche illusiouns and swiche meschaunces  
 As hethen folk useden in thilke dayes.  
 For which no lenger maked he delayes,  
 But thurgh his magik, for a wyke or tweye,  
 It semed that alle the rokkes were aweye.  
 Aurelius, which that yet despeired is  
 Wher he shal han his love or fare amys,  
 Awaiteth nyght and day on this myracle;  
 1300 And whan he knew that ther was noon obstacle,  
 That voyded were thise rokkes everychon,  
 Doun to his maistres feet he fil anon,  
 And seyde, "I woful wrecche, Aurelius,  
 Thanke yow, lord, and lady myn Venus,  
 That me han holpen fro my cares colde."  
 And to the temple his wey forth hath he holde,  
 Where as he knew he sholde his lady see.  
 And whan he saugh his tyme, anon-right hee,  
 With dredful herte and with ful humble cheere,  
 1310 Salewed hath his sovereyn lady deere:  
 "My righte lady," quod this woful man,  
 "Whom I moost drede and love as I best kan,  
 And lothest were of al this world displese,  
 Nere it that I for yow have swich disese

That I moste dyen heere at youre foot anon,  
Noght wolde I telle how me is wo bigon.  
But certes outhere moste I dye or pleyne;  
Ye sle me giltelees for verray peyne.  
But of my deeth thogh that ye have no routhe,  
1320 Avyseth yow er that ye breke youre trouthe.  
Repenteth yow, for thilke God above,  
Er ye me sleen by cause that I yow love.  
For, madame, wel ye woot what ye han hight --  
Nat that I chalange any thyng of right  
Of yow, my sovereyn lady, but youre grace --  
But in a gardyn yond, at swich a place,  
Ye woot right wel what ye bihighten me;  
And in myn hand youre trouthe plighen ye  
To love me best -- God woot, ye seyde so,  
1330 Al be that I unworthy am therto.  
Madame, I speke it for the honour of yow  
Moore than to save myn hertes lyf right now --  
I have do so as ye comanded me;  
And if ye vouche sauf, ye may go see.  
Dooth as yow list; have youre biheste in mynde,  
For, quyk or deed, right there ye shal me fynde.  
In yow lith al to do me lyve or deye --  
But wel I woot the rokkes been aweye."  
He taketh his leve, and she astoned stood;  
1340 In al hir face nas a drope of blood.  
She wende nevere han come in swich a trappe.  
"Allas," quod she, "that evere this sholde happe!  
For wende I nevere by possibilitee  
That swich a monstre or merveille myghte be!  
It is agayns the proces of nature."  
And hoom she goth a sorweful creature;  
For verray feere unnethe may she go.  
She wepeth, wailleth, al a day or two,  
And swowneth, that it routhe was to see.  
1350 But why it was to no wight tolde shee,  
For out of towne was goon Arveragus.  
But to herself she spak, and seyde thus,  
With face pale and with ful sorweful cheere,  
In hire compleynt, as ye shal after heere:  
"Allas," quod she, "on thee, Fortune, I pleyne,  
That unwar wrapped hast me in thy cheyne,

Fro which t' escape woot I no socour,  
Save oonly deeth or elles dishonour;  
Oon of thise two bihoveth me to chese.  
1360 But nathelees, yet have I levere to lese  
My lif than of my body to have a shame,  
Or knowe myselven fals, or lese my name;  
And with my deth I may be quyt, ywis.  
Hath ther nat many a noble wyf er this,  
And many a mayde, yslayn hirself, allas,  
Rather than with hir body doon trespas?  
"Yis, certes, lo, thise stories beren witnesse:  
Whan thritty tirauntz, ful of cursednesse,  
Hadde slayn Phidon in Atthenes atte feste,  
1370 They comanded his doghtres for t' areste  
And bryngen hem biforn hem in despit,  
Al naked, to fulfille hir foul delit,  
And in hir fadres blood they made hem daunce  
Upon the pavement, God yeve hem meschaunce!  
For which thise woful maydens, ful of drede,  
Rather than they wolde lese hir maydenhede,  
They prively been stirt into a welle  
And dreynte hemselven, as the bookes telle.  
"They of Mecene leete enquire and seke  
1380 Of Lacedomye fifty maydens eke,  
On whiche they wolden doon hir lecherye.  
But was ther noon of al that compaignye  
That she nas slayn, and with a good entente  
Chees rather for to dye than assente  
To been oppressed of hir maydenhede.  
Why sholde I thanne to dye been in drede?  
Lo, eek, the tiraunt Aristoclides,  
That loved a mayden, heet Stymphalides,  
Whan that hir fader slayn was on a nyght,  
1390 Unto Dianas temple goth she right,  
And hente the ymage in hir handes two,  
Fro which ymage wolde she nevere go.  
No wight ne myghte hir handes of it arace  
Til she was slayn, right in the selve place.  
"Now sith that maydens hadden swich despit  
To been defouled with mannes foul delit,  
Wel oghte a wyf rather hirselven slee  
Than be defouled, as it thynketh me.

What shal I seyn of Hasdrubales wyf,  
 1400 That at Cartage birafted himself his lyf?  
 For whan she saugh that Romainys wan the toun,  
 She took his children alle, and skippe adoun  
 Into the fyr, and cheere rather to dye  
 Than any Romaine dide hire vileynye.  
 Hath nat Lucrece yslayn herself, allas,  
 At Rome, whan that she oppressed was  
 Of Tarquyn, for hire thoughte it was a shame  
 To lyven whan she hadde lost his name?  
 The sevene maydens of Miliesie also  
 1410 Han slayn hemself, for verrey drede and wo,  
 Rather than folk of Gawe hem sholde oppresse.  
 Mo than a thousand stories, as I gesse,  
 Koude I now telle as touchynge this mateere.  
 Whan Habradate was slayn, his wyf so deere  
 Herselven slow, and leet his blood to glyde  
 In Habradates woundes depe and wyde,  
 And seyde, 'My body, at the leeste way,  
 Ther shal no wight defoulen, if I may."  
 "What sholde I mo ensamples heerof sayn,  
 1420 Sith that so manye han hemselven slayn  
 Wel rather than they wolde defouled be?  
 I wol conclude that it is bet for me  
 To sleen myself than been defouled thus.  
 I wol be trewe unto Arveragus,  
 Or rather sleen myself in som manere,  
 As dide Democion's doghter deere  
 By cause that she wolde nat defouled be.  
 O Cadasus, it is ful greet pitee  
 To reden how thy doghter deyde, allas,  
 1430 That slowe hemself for swich manere cas.  
 As greet a pitee was it, or wel moore,  
 The Theban mayden that for Nichanore  
 Herselven slow, right for swich manere wo.  
 Another Theban mayden dide right so;  
 For oon of Macidonye hadde hire oppressed,  
 She with hire deeth his maydenhede redressed.  
 What shal I seye of Nicerates wyf,  
 That for swich cas birafted himself his lyf?  
 How trewe eek was to Alcebiades  
 1440 His love, that rather for to dyen cheere

Than for to suffre his body unburyed be.  
 Lo, which a wyf was Alceste," quod she.  
 "What seith Omer of goode Penalopee?  
 Al Grece knoweth of hire chastitee.  
 Pardee, of Laodomya is writen thus,  
 That whan at Troie was slayn Protheselaus,  
 Ne lenger wolde she lyve after his day.  
 The same of noble Porcia telle I may;  
 Withoute Brutus koude she nat lyve,  
 1450 To whom she hadde al hool hir herte yive.  
 The parfit wyfhod of Arthemesie  
 Honured is thurgh al the Barbarie.  
 O Teuta, queene, thy wyfly chastitee  
 To alle wyves may a mirour bee.  
 The same thyng I seye of Bilyea,  
 Of Rodogone, and eek Valeria."  
 Thus pleyned Dorigen a day or tweye,  
 Purposynge evere that she wolde deye.  
 But nathelees, upon the thridde nyght,  
 1460 Hoom cam Arveragus, this worthy knyght,  
 And asked hire why that she weep so soore;  
 And she gan wepen ever lenger the moore.  
 "Allas," quod she, "that evere was I born!  
 Thus have I seyde," quod she, "thus have I sworn" --  
 And toold hym al as ye han herd bifore;  
 It nedeth nat reherce it yow namoore.  
 This housbonde, with glad chiere, in freendly wyse  
 Answerde and seyde as I shal yow devyse:  
 "Is ther oght elles, Dorigen, but this?"  
 1470 "Nay, nay," quod she, "God helpe me so as wys!  
 This is to muche, and it were Goddes wille."  
 "Ye, wyf," quod he, "lat slepen that is stille.  
 It may be wel, paraventure, yet to day.  
 Ye shul youre trouthe holden, by my fay!  
 For God so wisly have mercy upon me,  
 I hadde wel levere ystiked for to be  
 For verray love which that I to yow have,  
 But if ye sholde youre trouthe kepe and save.  
 Trouthe is the hyeste thyng that man may kepe" --  
 1480 But with that word he brast anon to wepe,  
 And seyde, "I yow forbede, up payne of deeth,  
 That nevere, whil thee lasteth lyf ne breeth,

To no wight telle thou of this aventure --  
As I may best, I wol my wo endure --  
Ne make no contenance of hevynesse,  
That folk of yow may demen harm or gesse."  
And forth he cleped a squier and a mayde:  
"Gooth forth anon with Dorigen," he sayde,  
"And bryngeth hire to swich a place anon."  
1490 They take hir leve, and on hir wey they gon,  
But they ne wiste why she thider wente.  
He nolde no wight tellen his entente.  
Paraventure an heep of yow, ywis,  
Wol holden hym a lewed man in this  
That he wol putte his wyf in jupartie.  
Herkeneth the tale er ye upon hire crie.  
She may have bettre fortune than yow semeth;  
And whan that ye han herd the tale, demeth.  
This squier, which that highte Aurelius,  
1500 On Dorigen that was so amorus,  
Of aventure happed hire to meete  
Amydde the toun, right in the quykkest strete,  
As she was bown to goon the wey forth right  
Toward the gardyn ther as she had hight.  
And he was to the gardyn-ward also;  
For wel he spyed whan she wolde go  
Out of hir hous to any maner place.  
But thus they mette, of aventure or grace,  
And he saleweth hire with glad entente,  
1510 And asked of hire whiderward she wente;  
And she answerde, half as she were mad,  
"Unto the gardyn, as myn housbonde bad,  
My trouthe for to holde -- alas, alas!"  
Aurelius gan wondren on this cas,  
And in his herte hadde greet compassioun  
Of hire and of hire lamentacioun,  
And of Arveragus, the worthy knyght,  
That bad hire holden al that she had hight,  
So looth hym was his wyf sholde breke hir trouthe;  
1520 And in his herte he caughte of this greet routhe,  
Considerynge the beste on every syde,  
That fro his lust yet were hym levere abyde  
Than doon so heigh a cherlyssh wrecchednesse  
Agayns franchise and alle gentillesse;

For which in fewe wordes seyde he thus:  
"Madame, seyth to youre lord Arveragus  
That sith I se his grete gentillesse  
To yow, and eek I se wel youre distresse,  
That him were levere han shame (and that were routhe)  
1530 Than ye to me sholde breke thus youre trouthe,  
I have wel levere evere to suffre wo  
Than I departe the love bitwix yow two.  
I yow relesse, madame, into youre hond  
Quyt every serement and every bond  
That ye han maad to me as heerbiforn,  
Sith thilke tyme which that ye were born.  
My trouthe I plighte, I shal yow never repreve  
Of no biheste, and heere I take my leve,  
As of the treweste and the beste wyf  
1540 That evere yet I knew in al my lyf.  
But every wyf be war of hire biheeste!  
On Dorigen remembreth, atte leeste.  
Thus kan a squier doon a gentil dede  
As wel as kan a knyght, withouten drede."  
She thonketh hym upon hir knees al bare,  
And hoom unto hir housbonde is she fare,  
And tolde hym al, as ye han herd me sayd;  
And be ye siker, he was so weel apayd  
That it were impossible me to wryte.  
1550 What sholde I lenger of this cas endyte?  
Arveragus and Dorigen his wyf  
In sovereyn blisse leden forth hir lyf.  
Nevere eft ne was ther angre hem bitwene.  
He cherisseth hire as though she were a queene,  
And she was to hym trewe for everemoore.  
Of thise two folk ye gete of me namoore.  
Aurelius, that his cost hath al forlorn,  
Curseth the tyme that evere he was born:  
"Allas!" quod he. "Allas, that I bihighte  
1560 Of pured gold a thousand pound of wighte  
Unto this philosophre! How shal I do?  
I se namoore but that I am fordo.  
Myn heritage moot I nedes selle,  
And been a beggere; heere may I nat dwelle  
And shamen al my kynrede in this place,  
But I of hym may gete bettre grace.

But nathelees, I wole of hym assaye,  
 At certeyn dayes, yeer by yeer, to paye,  
 And thanke hym of his grete curteisye.  
 1570 My trouthe wol I kepe, I wol nat lye."  
 With herte soor he gooth unto his cofre,  
 And broghte gold unto this philosophre,  
 The value of fyve hundred pound, I gesse,  
 And hym bisecheth, of his gentillesse,  
 To graunte hym dayes of the remenaunt;  
 And seyde, "Maister, I dar wel make avaunt,  
 I failed nevere of my trouthe as yit.  
 For sikerly my dette shal be quyt  
 Towardes yow, howevere that I fare  
 1580 To goon a-begged in my kirtle bare.  
 But wolde ye vouche sauf, upon seuretee,  
 Two yeer or thre for to respiten me,  
 Thanne were I wel; for elles moot I selle  
 Myn heritage; ther is namoore to telle."  
 This philosophre sobrelly answerde,  
 And seyde thus, whan he thise wordes herde:  
 "Have I nat holden covenant unto thee?"  
 "Yes, certes, wel and trewely," quod he.  
 "Hastow nat had thy lady as thee liketh?"  
 1590 "No, no," quod he, and sorwefully he siketh.  
 "What was the cause? Tel me if thou kan."  
 Aurelius his tale anon bigan,  
 And tolde hym al, as ye han herd bifoore;  
 It nedeth nat to yow reherce it moore.  
 He seide, "Arveragus, of gentillesse,  
 Hadde levere dye in sorwe and in distresse  
 Than that his wyf were of hir trouthe fals."  
 The sorwe of Dorigen he tolde hym als;  
 How looth hire was to been a wikked wyf,  
 1600 And that she levere had lost that day hir lyf,  
 And that hir trouthe she swoor thurgh innocence,  
 She nevere erst hadde herde speke of apparence.  
 "That made me han of hire so greet pitee;  
 And right as frely as he sente hire me,  
 As frely sente I hire to hym ageyn.  
 This al and som; ther is namoore to seyn."  
 This philosophre answerde, "Leeve brother,  
 Everich of yow dide gentilly til oother.



Thou art a squier, and he is a knyght;  
1610 But God forbede, for his blisful myght,  
But if a clerk koude doon a gentil dede  
As wel as any of yow, it is no drede!  
Sire, I releesse thee thy thousand pound,  
As thou right now were copen out of the ground,  
Ne nevere er now ne haddest knowen me.  
For, sire, I wol nat taken a peny of thee  
For al my craft, ne noght for my travaille.  
Thou hast ypayed wel for my vitaille.  
It is ynogh, and farewel, have good day!"  
1620 And took his hors, and forth he goth his way.  
Lordynges, this question, thanne, wol I aske now,  
Which was the mooste fre, as thynketh yow?  
Now telleth me, er that ye ferther wende.  
I kan namoore; my tale is at an ende.



## THE PHYSICIAN'S TALE

Ther was, as telleth Titus Livius,  
A knyght that called was Virginius,  
Fulfilde of honour and of worthynesse,  
And strong of freendes, and of greet richesse.  
This knyght a doghter hadde by his wyf;  
No children hadde he mo in al his lyf.  
Fair was this mayde in excellent beautee  
Aboven every wight that man may see;  
For Nature hath with sovereyn diligence  
10 Yformed hire in so greet excellence,  
As though she wolde seyn, "Lo! I, Nature,  
Thus kan I forme and peynte a creature,  
Whan that me list; who kan me countrefete?  
Pigmalion noght, though he ay forge and bete,  
Or grave, or peynte; for I dar wel seyn  
Apelles, Zanzis, sholde werche in veyn  
Outher to grave, or peynte, or forge, or bete,  
If they presumed me to countrefete.  
For He that is the formere principal  
20 Hath maked me his vicaire general,  
To forme and peynten erthely creaturis  
Right as me list, and ech thyng in my cure is  
Under the moone, that may wane and waxe,  
And for my werk right no thyng wol I axe;  
My lord and I been ful of oon accord.  
I made hire to the worshipe of my lord;  
So do I alle myne othere creatures,  
What colour that they han or what figures."  
Thus semeth me that Nature wolde seye.  
30 This mayde of age twelve yeer was and tweye,  
In which that Nature hadde swich delit.  
For right as she kan peynte a lilie whit,  
And reed a rose, right with swich peynture  
She peynted hath this noble creature,  
Er she were born, upon hir lymes fre,  
Where as by right swiche colours sholde be;  
And Phebus dyed hath hire tresses grete  
Lyk to the stremes of his burned heete.  
And if that excellent was hire beautee,  
40 A thousand foold moore vertuous was she.

In hire ne lakked no condicioun  
That is to preyse, as by discrecioun.  
As wel in goost as body chast was she,  
For which she floured in virginitee  
With alle humylitee and abstinence,  
With alle attemperaunce and pacience,  
With mesure eek of beryng and array.  
Discreet she was in answeryng alway;  
Though she were wis as Pallas, dar I seyn,  
50 Hir facound eek ful wommanly and pleyn,  
No countrefeted termes hadde she  
To seme wys, but after hir degree  
She spak, and alle hire wordes, moore and lesse,  
Sownynge in vertu and in gentillesse.  
Shamefast she was in maydens shamefastnesse,  
Constant in herte, and evere in bisynesse  
To dryve hire out of ydel slogardye.  
Bacus hadde of hir mouth right no maistrie;  
For wyn and youthe dooth Venus encresse,  
60 As men in fyr wol casten oille or gresse.  
And of hir owene vertu, unconstreyned,  
She hath ful ofte tyme syk hire feyned,  
For that she wolde fleen the compaignye  
Where likly was to treten of folye,  
As is at feestes, revels, and at daunces,  
That been occasions of daliaunces.  
Swich thynges maken children for to be  
To soone rype and boold, as men may se,  
Which is ful perilous and hath been yoore.  
70 For al to soone may she lerne loore  
Of booldnesse, whan she woxen is a wyf.  
And ye maistresses, in youre olde lyf,  
That lordes doghtres han in governaunce,  
Ne taketh of my wordes no displesaunce.  
Thenketh that ye been set in governynges  
Of lordes doghtres oonly for two thynges:  
Outher for ye han kept youre honestee,  
Or elles ye han falle in freletee,  
And knowen wel ynough the olde daunce,  
80 And han forsaken fully swich meschaunce  
For everemo; therfore, for Cristes sake,  
To teche hem vertu looke that ye ne slake.

A thief of venysoun, that hath forlaft  
His likerousnesse and al his olde craft,  
Kan kepe a forest best of any man.  
Now kepeth wel, for if ye wole, ye kan.  
Looke wel that ye unto no vice assente,  
Lest ye be dampned for youre wikke entente;  
For whoso dooth, a traitour is, certeyn.  
90 And taketh kep of that that I shal seyn:  
Of alle tresons sovereyn pestilence  
Is whan a wight bitrayseth innocence.  
Ye fadres and ye moodres eek also,  
Though ye han children, be it oon or mo,  
Youre is the charge of al hir surveiaunce,  
Whil that they been under youre governaunce.  
Beth war, if by ensample of youre lyvyng,  
Or by youre negligence in chastisyng,  
That they ne perisse; for I dar wel seye  
100 If that they doon, ye shul it deere abeye.  
Under a shepherde softe and negligent  
The wolf hath many a sheep and lamb torent.  
Suffiseth oon ensample now as heere,  
For I moot turne agayn to my matere.  
This mayde, of which I wol this tale expresse,  
So kepte herself hir neded no maistresse,  
For in hir lyvyng maydens myghten rede,  
As in a book, every good word or dede  
That longeth to a mayden vertuous,  
110 She was so prudent and so bountevous.  
For which the fame out sprong on every syde,  
Bothe of hir beautee and hir bountee wyde,  
That thurgh that land they preised hire echone  
That loved vertu, save Envye allone,  
That sory is of oother mennes wele  
And glad is of his sorwe and his unheelee.  
(The Doctour maketh this descripcioun.)  
This mayde upon a day wente in the toun  
Toward a temple, with hire mooder deere,  
120 As is of yonge maydens the manere.  
Now was ther thanne a justice in that toun,  
That governour was of that regioun.  
And so bifel this jage his eyen caste  
Upon this mayde, avysyng hym ful faste,

As she cam forby ther as this juge stood.  
Anon his herte chaunged and his mood,  
So was he caught with beautee of this mayde,  
And to hymself ful pryvely he sayde,  
"This mayde shal be myn, for any man!"  
130 Anon the feend into his herte ran,  
And taughte hym sodeynly that he by slyghte  
The mayden to his purpos wyne myghte.  
For certes, by no force ne by no meede,  
Hym thoughte, he was nat able for to speede;  
For she was strong of freendes, and eek she  
Confermed was in swich soverayn bountee  
That wel he wiste he myghte hire nevere wyne  
As for to make hire with hir body synne.  
For which, by greet deliberacioun,  
140 He sente after a cherl, was in the toun,  
Which that he knew for subtil and for boold.  
This juge unto this cherl his tale hath toold  
In secree wise, and made hym to ensure  
He sholde telle it to no creature,  
And if he dide, he sholde lese his heed.  
Whan that assented was this cursed reed,  
Glad was this juge, and maked him greet cheere,  
And yaf hym yiftes preciose and deere.  
Whan shapen was al hire conspiracie  
150 Fro point to point, how that his lecherie  
Parfourned sholde been ful subtilly,  
As ye shul heere it after openly,  
Hoom gooth the cherl, that highte Claudius.  
This false juge, that highte Apius,  
(So was his name, for this is no fable,  
But knowen for historial thyng notable;  
The sentence of it sooth is, out of doute),  
This false juge gooth now faste aboute  
To hasten his delit al that he may.  
160 And so bifel soone after, on a day,  
This false juge, as telleth us the storie,  
As he was wont, sat in his consistorie,  
And yaf his doomes upon sondry cas.  
This false cherl cam forth a ful greet pas,  
And seyde, "Lord, if that it be youre wille,  
As dooth me right upon this pitous bille,

In which I pleyne upon Virginius;  
And if that he wol seyn it is nat thus,  
I wol it preeve, and fynde good witnesse,  
170 That sooth is that my bille wol expresse."  
The juge answerde, "Of this, in his absence,  
I may nat yeve diffynytyf sentence.  
Lat do hym calle, and I wol gladly heere;  
Thou shalt have al right, and no wrong heere."  
Virginius cam to wite the juges wille,  
And right anon was rad this cursed bille;  
The sentence of it was as ye shul heere:  
"To yow, my lord, sire Apius so deere,  
Sheweth youre povre servant Claudius  
180 How that a knyght, called Virginius,  
Agayns the lawe, agayn al equitee,  
Holdeth, expres agayn the wyl of me,  
My servant, which that is my thral by right,  
Which fro myn hous was stole upon a nyght,  
Whil that she was ful yong; this wol I preeve  
By witnesse, lord, so that it nat yow greeve.  
She nys his doghter nat, what so he seye.  
Wherefore to yow, my lord the juge, I preye,  
Yeld me my thral, if that it be youre wille."  
190 Lo, this was al the sentence of his bille.  
Virginius gan upon the cherl biholde,  
But hastily, er he his tale tolde,  
And wolde have preeved it as sholde a knyght,  
And eek by witnessyng of many a wight,  
That al was fals that seyde his adversarie,  
This cursed juge wolde no thyng tarie,  
Ne heere a word moore of Virginius,  
But yaf his juggement, and seyde thus:  
"I deeme anon this cherl his servant have;  
200 Thou shalt no lenger in thyn hous hir save.  
Go bryng hire forth, and put hire in oure warde.  
The cherl shal have his thral, this I awarde."  
And whan this worthy knyght Virginius  
Thurgh sentence of this justice Apius  
Moste by force his deere doghter yiven  
Unto the juge, in lecherie to lyven,  
He gooth hym hoom, and sette him in his halle,  
And leet anon his deere doghter calle,

And with a face deed as asshen colde  
210 Upon hir humble face he gan biholde,  
With fadres pitee stikynge thurgh his herte,  
Al wolde he from his purpos nat converte.  
"Doghter," quod he, "Virginia, by thy name,  
Ther been two weyes, outhere deeth or shame,  
That thou most suffre; alas, that I was bore!  
For nevere thou deservedest wherfore  
To dyen with a swerd or with a knyf.  
O deere doghter, endere of my lyf,  
Which I have fostred up with swich plesaunce  
220 That thou were nevere out of my remembraunce!  
O doghter, which that art my laste wo,  
And in my lyf my laste joye also,  
O gemme of chastitee, in pacience  
Take thou thy deeth, for this is my sentence.  
For love, and nat for hate, thou most be deed;  
My pitous hand moot smyten of thyn heed.  
Allas, that evere Apius the say!  
Thus hath he falsly jugged the to-day" --  
And tolde hire al the cas, as ye bifore  
230 Han herd; nat nedeth for to telle it moore.  
"O mercy, deere fader!" quod this mayde,  
And with that word she bothe hir armes layde  
Aboute his nekke, as she was wont to do.  
The teeris bruste out of hir eyen two,  
And seyde, "Goode fader, shal I dye?  
Is ther no grace, is ther no remedye?"  
"No, certes, deere doghter myn," quod he.  
"Thanne yif me leyser, fader myn," quod she,  
"My deeth for to compleyne a litel space;  
240 For, pardee, Jepte yaf his doghter grace  
For to compleyne, er he hir slow, alas!  
And, God it woot, no thyng was hir trespas,  
But for she ran hir fader first to see,  
To welcome hym with greet solempnitee."  
And with that word she fil aswowne anon,  
And after, whan hir swownyng is agon,  
She riseth up, and to hir fader sayde,  
"Blissed be God that I shal dye a mayde!  
Yif me my deeth, er that I have a shame;  
250 Dooth with youre child youre wyl, a Goddes name!"

And with that word she preyed hym ful ofte  
That with his swerd he wolde smyte softe;  
And with that word aswowne doun she fil.  
Hir fader, with ful sorweful herte and wil,  
Hir heed of smoot, and by the top it hente,  
And to the juge he gan it to presente,  
As he sat yet in doom in consistorie.  
And whan the juge it saugh, as seith the storie,  
He bad to take hym and anhangen hym faste;  
260 But right anon a thousand peple in thraste,  
To save the knyght, for routhe and for pitee,  
For knownen was the false iniquitee.  
The peple anon had suspect in this thyng,  
By manere of the cherles chalangyng,  
That it was by the assent of Apius;  
They wisten wel that he was lecherus.  
For which unto this Apius they gon  
And caste hym in a prisoun right anon,  
Ther as he slow hymself; and Claudius,  
270 That servant was unto this Apius,  
Was demed for to hange upon a tree,  
But that Virginius, of his pitee,  
So preye for hym that he was exiled;  
And elles, certes, he had been bigyled.  
The remenant were anhangen, moore and lesse,  
That were consentant of this cursednesse.  
Heere may men seen how synne hath his merite.  
Beth war, for no man woot whom God wol smyte  
In no degree, ne in which manere wyse;  
280 The worm of conscience may agryse  
Of wikked lyf, though it so pryvee be  
That no man woot therof but God and he.  
For be he lewed man, or ellis lered,  
He noot how soone that he shal been afered.  
Therefore I rede yow this conseil take:  
Forsaketh synne, er synne yow forsake.





## THE PARDONER'S INTRODUCTION AND PROLOGUE

Oure Hooste gan to swere as he were wood;  
 "Harrow!" quod he, "by nayles and by blood!  
 This was a fals cherl and a fals justise.  
 290 As shameful deeth as herte may devyse  
 Come to thise juges and hire advocatz!  
 Algate this sely mayde is slayn, alas!  
 Allas, to deere boughte she beautee!  
 Wherefore I seye al day that men may see  
 That yiftes of Fortune and of Nature  
 Been cause of deeth to many a creature.  
 Hire beautee was hire deth, I dar wel sayn.  
 Allas, so pitously as she was slayn!  
 Of bothe yiftes that I speke of now  
 300 Men han ful ofte moore for harm than prow.  
 But trewely, myn owene maister deere,  
 This is a pitous tale for to heere.  
 But nathelees, passe over; is no fors.  
 I pray to God so save thy gentil cors,  
 And eek thyne uryngs and thy jurdones,  
 Thyn ypocras, and eek thy galiones,  
 And every boyste ful of thy letuarie;  
 God blesse hem, and oure lady Seinte Marie!  
 So moot I theen, thou art a propre man,  
 310 And lyk a prelat, by Seint Ronyan!  
 Seyde I nat wel? I kan nat speke in terme;  
 But wel I woot thou doost myn herte to erme,  
 That I almoost have caught a cardynacle.  
 By corpus bones! but I have triacle,  
 Or elles a draughte of moyste and corny ale,  
 Or but I heere anon a myrie tale,  
 Myn herte is lost for pitee of this mayde.  
 Thou beel amy, thou Pardoner," he sayde,  
 "Telle us som myrthe or japes right anon."  
 320 "It shal be doon," quod he, "by Seint Ronyon!  
 But first," quod he, "heere at this alestake  
 I wol bothe drynke and eten of a cake."  
 But right anon thise gentils gonne to crye,  
 "Nay, lat hym telle us of no ribaudye!  
 Telle us som moral thyng, that we may leere  
 Som wit, and thanne wol we gladly heere."

"I graunte, ywis," quod he, "but I moot thynke  
Upon som honest thyng while that I drynke."

"Lordynges," quod he, "in chirches whan I preche,

330 I peyne me to han an hauteyn speche,  
And ryng it out as round as gooth a belle,  
For I kan al by rote that I telle.

My theme is alwey oon, and evere was --  
Radix malorum est Cupiditas.

"First I pronounce whennes that I come,  
And thanne my bulles shewe I, alle and some.

Oure lige lordes seel on my patente,  
That shewe I first, my body to warente,  
That no man be so boold, ne preest ne clerk,

340 Me to destourbe of Cristes hooly werk.

And after that thanne telle I forth my tales;

Bulles of popes and of cardynales,  
Of patriarkes and bishopes I shewe,

And in Latyn I speke a wordes fewe,

To saffron with my predicacioun,

And for to stire hem to devocioun.

Thanne shewe I forth my longe cristal stones,

Ycrammed ful of cloutes and of bones --

Relikes been they, as wenen they echoon.

350 Thanne have I in latoun a sholder-boon

Which that was of an hooly Jewes sheep.

`Goode men,' I seye, `taak of my wordes keep;

If that this boon be wasshe in any welle,

If cow, or calf, or sheep, or oxe swelle

That any worm hath ete, or worm ystonge,

Taak water of that welle and wassh his tonge,

And it is hool anon; and forthermoore,

Of pokkes and of scabbe, and every soore

Shal every sheep be hool that of this welle

360 Drynketh a draughte. Taak kep eek what I telle:

If that the good-man that the beestes oweth

Wol every wyke, er that the cok hym croweth,

Fastynge, drynken of this welle a draughte,

As thilke hooly Jew oure eldres taughte,

His beestes and his stoor shal multiplie.

`And, sires, also it heeleth jalousie;

For though a man be falle in jalous rage,

Lat maken with this water his potage,

And nevere shal he moore his wyf mystriste,  
370 Though he the soothe of hir defaute wiste,  
Al had she taken prestes two or thre.  
'Heere is a miteyn eek, that ye may se.  
He that his hand wol putte in this mitayn,  
He shal have multipliynge of his grayn,  
Whan he hath sownen, be it whete or otes,  
So that he offre pens, or elles grotes.  
'Goode men and wommen, o thyng warne I yow:  
If any wight be in this chirche now  
That hath doon synne horrible, that he  
380 Dar nat, for shame, of it yshryven be,  
Or any womman, be she yong or old,  
That hath ymaked hir housbonde cokewold,  
Swich folk shal have no power ne no grace  
To offren to my reliques in this place.  
And whoso fyndeth hym out of swich blame,  
He wol come up and offre a Goddes name,  
And I assoille him by the auctoritee  
Which that by bulle ygraunted was to me.'  
"By this gaude have I wonne, yeer by yeer,  
390 An hundred mark sith I was pardoner.  
I stonde lyk a clerk in my pulpet,  
And whan the lewed peple is doun yset,  
I preche so as ye han herd bifoore  
And telle an hundred false japes moore.  
Thanne payne I me to strecche forth the nekke,  
And est and west upon the peple I bekke,  
As dooth a dowve sittynge on a berne.  
Myne handes and my tonge goon so yerne  
That it is joye to se my bisynesse.  
400 Of avarice and of swich cursednesse  
Is al my prechyng, for to make hem free  
To yeven hir pens, and namely unto me.  
For myn entente is nat but for to wyne,  
And nothyng for correccioun of synne.  
I rekke nevere, whan that they been beryed,  
Though that hir soules goon a-blakeberyed!  
For certes, many a predicacioun  
Comth ofte tyme of yvel entencioun;  
Som for plesance of folk and flaterye,  
410 To been avaunced by ypocrisie,

And som for veyne glorie, and som for hate.  
For whan I dar noon oother weyes debate,  
Thanne wol I styng hym with my tonge smerte  
In prechyng, so that he shal nat asterte  
To been defamed falsly, if that he  
Hath trespassed to my bretheren or to me.  
For though I telle noght his propre name,  
Men shal wel knowe that it is the same,  
By signes, and by othere circumstances.  
420 Thus quyte I folk that doon us displesances;  
Thus spitte I out my venym under hewe  
Of hoolynesse, to semen hooly and trewe.  
"But shortly myn entente I wol devyse:  
I preche of no thyng but for coveityse.  
Therefore my theme is yet, and evere was,  
Radix malorum est Cupiditas.  
Thus kan I preche agayn that same vice  
Which that I use, and that is avarice.  
But though myself be gilty in that synne,  
430 Yet kan I maken oother folk to twynne  
From avarice and soore to repente.  
But that is nat my principal entente;  
I preche nothyng but for coveitise.  
Of this mateere it oghte ynogh suffise.  
"Thanne telle I hem ensamples many oon  
Of olde stories longe tyme agoon.  
For lewed peple loven tales olde;  
Swiche thynges kan they wel reporte and holde.  
What, trowe ye, that whiles I may preche,  
440 And wyne gold and silver for I teche,  
That I wol lyve in poverte wilfully?  
Nay, nay, I thoghte it nevere, trewely!  
For I wol preche and begge in sondry landes;  
I wol nat do no labour with myne handes,  
Ne make baskettes and lyve therby,  
By cause I wol nat beggen ydelly.  
I wol noon of the apostles countrefete;  
I wol have moneie, wolle, chese, and whete,  
Al were it yeven of the povereste page,  
450 Or of the povereste wydwe in a village,  
Al sholde hir children sterve for famyne.  
Nay, I wol drynke licour of the vyne

And have a joly wenche in every toun.  
But herkneth, lordynges, in conclusioun:  
Youre likyng is that I shal telle a tale.  
Now have I dronke a draughte of corny ale,  
By God, I hope I shal yow telle a thyng  
That shal by reson been at youre likyng.  
For though myself be a ful vicious man,  
460 A moral tale yet I yow telle kan,  
Which I am wont to preche for to wyne.  
Now hoold youre pees! My tale I wol bigynne."



## THE PARDONER'S TALE

In Flaundres whilom was a compaignye  
 Of yonge folk that haunteden folye,  
 As riot, hasard, stywes, and tavernes,  
 Where as with harpes, lutes, and gyternes,  
 They daunce and pleyen at dees bothe day and nyght,  
 And eten also and drynken over hir myght,  
 Thurgh which they doon the devel sacrificise  
 470 Withinne that develes temple in cursed wise  
 By superfluytee abhomynable.  
 Hir othes been so grete and so dampnable  
 That it is grisly for to heere hem swere.  
 Oure blissed Lordes body they totere --  
 Hem thoughte that Jewes rente hym noght ynough --  
 And ech of hem at otheres synne lough.  
 And right anon thanne comen tombesteres  
 Fetys and smale, and yonge frutesteres,  
 Syngeres with harpes, baudes, wafereres,  
 480 Whiche been the verray develes officeres  
 To kyndle and blowe the fyr of lecherye,  
 That is annexed unto glotonye.  
 The hooly writ take I to my witnesse  
 That luxurie is in wyn and dronkenesse.  
 Lo, how that dronken Looth, unkyndely,  
 Lay by his doghtres two, unwityngly;  
 So dronke he was, he nyste what he wroghte.  
 Herodes, whoso wel the stories soghte,  
 Whan he of wyn was repleet at his feeste,  
 490 Right at his owene table he yaf his heeste  
 To sleen the Baptist John, ful giltelees.  
 Senec seith a good word doutelees;  
 He seith he kan no difference fynde  
 Bitwix a man that is out of his mynde  
 And a man which that is dronkelewe,  
 But that woodnesse, yfallen in a shrewe,  
 Persevereth lenger than doth dronkenesse.  
 O glotonye, ful of cursednesse!  
 O cause first of oure confusioun!  
 500 O original of oure dampnacioun,  
 Til Crist hadde boght us with his blood agayn!  
 Lo, how deere, shortly for to sayn,

Aboght was thilke cursed vileynye!  
Corrupt was al this world for glotonye.  
Adam oure fader, and his wyf also,  
Fro Paradys to labour and to wo  
Were dryven for that vice, it is no drede.  
For whil that Adam fasted, as I rede,  
He was in Paradys; and whan that he  
510 Eet of the fruyt deffended on the tree,  
Anon he was out cast to wo and peyne.  
O glotonye, on thee wel oghte us pleyne!  
O, wiste a man how manye maladyes  
Folwen of excesse and of glotonyes,  
He wolde been the moore mesurable  
Of his diete, sittynge at his table.  
Allas, the shorte throte, the tendre mouth,  
Maketh that est and west and north and south,  
In erthe, in eir, in water, men to swynke  
520 To gete a glotoun deyntee mete and drynke!  
Of this matiere, O Paul, wel kanstow trete:  
"Mete unto wombe, and wombe eek unto mete,  
Shal God destroyen bothe," as Paulus seith.  
Allas, a foul thyng is it, by my feith,  
To seye this word, and fouler is the dede,  
Whan man so drynketh of the white and rede  
That of his throte he maketh his pryvee  
Thurgh thilke cursed superfluitee.  
The apostel wepyng seith ful pitously,  
530 "Ther walken manye of whiche yow toold have I --  
I seye it now wepyng, with pitous voys --  
They been enemys of Cristes croys,  
Of whiche the ende is deeth; wombe is hir god!"  
O wombe! O bely! O stynkyng cod,  
Fulfilled of dong and of corrupcioun!  
At either ende of thee foul is the soun.  
How greet labour and cost is thee to fynde!  
Thise cookes, how they stampe, and streyne, and grynde,  
And turnen substaunce into accident  
540 To fulfille al thy likerous talent!  
Out of the harde bones knocke they  
The mary, for they caste noght away  
That may go thurgh the golet softe and swoote.  
Of spicerie of leef, and bark, and roote

Shal been his sauce ymaked by delit,  
To make hym yet a newer appetit.  
But, certes, he that haunteth swiche delices  
Is deed, whil that he lyveth in tho vices.  
A lecherous thyng is wyn, and dronkenesse  
550 Is ful of stryvyng and of wrecchednesse.  
O dronke man, disfigured is thy face,  
Sour is thy breeth, foul artow to embrace,  
And thurgh thy dronke nose semeth the soun  
As though thou seydest ay "Sampsoun, Sampsoun!"  
And yet, God woot, Sampsoun drank nevere no wyn.  
Thou fallest as it were a styked swyn;  
Thy tonge is lost, and al thyn honeste cure,  
For dronkenesse is verray sepulture  
Of mannes wit and his discrecioun.  
560 In whom that drynke hath dominacioun  
He kan no conseil kepe; it is no drede.  
Now kepe yow fro the white and fro the rede,  
And namely fro the white wyn of Lepe  
That is to selle in Fysshstrete or in Chepe.  
This wyn of Spaigne crepeth subtilly  
In othere wyne, growynge faste by,  
Of which ther ryseth swich fumositee  
That whan a man hath dronken draughtes thre,  
And weneth that he be at hoom in Chepe,  
570 He is in Spaigne, right at the toun of Lepe --  
Nat at the Rochele, ne at Burdeux toun --  
And thanne wol he seye "Sampsoun, Sampsoun!"  
But herkneth, lordynges, o word, I yow preye,  
That alle the sovereyn actes, dar I seye,  
Of victories in the Olde Testament,  
Thurgh verray God, that is omnipotent,  
Were doon in abstinence and in preyere.  
Looketh the Bible, and ther ye may it leere.  
Looke, Attila, the grete conquerour,  
580 Deyde in his sleep, with shame and dishonour,  
Bledynge ay at his nose in dronkenesse.  
A capitayn sholde lyve in sobrenesse.  
And over al this, avyseth yow right wel  
What was comaunded unto Lamuel --  
Nat Samuel, but Lamuel, seye I;  
Redeth the Bible, and fynde it expresly



Of wyn-yevyng to hem that han justise.  
Namore of this, for it may wel suffise.  
And now that I have spoken of glotonye,  
590 Now wol I yow deffenden hasardrye.  
Hasard is verray mooder of lesynges,  
And of deceite, and cursed forswerynges,  
Blaspheme of Crist, manslaughtre, and wast also  
Of catel and of tyme; and forthermo,  
It is repreeve and contrarie of honour  
For to ben holde a commune hasardour.  
And ever the hyer he is of estaat,  
The moore is he yholden desolaat.  
If that a prynce useth hasardrye,  
600 In alle governaunce and policye  
He is, as by commune opinioun,  
Yholde the lasse in reputacioun.  
Stilboun, that was a wys embassadour,  
Was sent to Corynthe in ful greet honour  
Fro Lacidomye to make hire alliaunce.  
And whan he cam, hym happede, par chaunce,  
That alle the gretteste that were of that lond,  
Pleyynge atte hasard he hem fond.  
For which, as soone as it myghte be,  
610 He stal hym hoom agayn to his contree,  
And seyde, "Ther wol I nat lese my name,  
Ne I wol nat take on me so greet defame,  
Yow for to allie unto none hasardours.  
Sendeth othere wise embassadours;  
For, by my trouthe, me were levere dye  
Than I yow sholde to hasardours allye.  
For ye, that been so glorious in honours,  
Shul nat allyen yow with hasardours  
As by my wyl, ne as by my tretee."  
620 This wise philosophre, thus seyde hee.  
Looke eek that to the kyng Demetrius  
The kyng of Parthes, as the book seith us,  
Sente him a paire of dees of gold in scorn,  
For he hadde used hasard ther-biforn;  
For which he heeld his glorie or his renoun  
At no value or reputacioun.  
Lordes may fynden oother maner pley  
Honest ynough to dryve the day away.

Now wol I speke of othes false and grete  
630 A word or two, as olde bookes trete.  
Gret sweryng is a thyng abhominable,  
And fals sweryng is yet moore reprevable.  
The heighe God forbad sweryng at al,  
Witnesse on Mathew; but in special  
Of sweryng seith the hooly Jeremye,  
"Thou shalt swere sooth thyne othes, and nat lye,  
And swere in doom and eek in rightwisnesse";  
But ydel sweryng is a cursednesse.  
Bihoold and se that in the firste table  
640 Of heighe Goddes heestes honorable,  
Hou that the seconde heeste of hym is this:  
"Take nat my name in ydel or amys."  
Lo, rather he forbedeth swich sweryng  
Than homycide or many a cursed thyng;  
I seye that, as by ordre, thus it stondeth;  
This knoweth, that his heestes understondeth,  
How that the seconde heeste of God is that.  
And forther over, I wol thee telle al plat  
That vengeance shal nat parten from his hous  
650 That of his othes is to outrageous.  
"By Goddes precious herte," and "By his nayles,"  
And "By the blood of Crist that is in Hayles,  
Sevene is my chaunce, and thyn is cynk and treye!"  
"By Goddes armes, if thou falsly pleye,  
This daggere shal thurghout thyn herte go!" --  
This fruyt cometh of the bicched bones two,  
Forsweryng, ire, falsnesse, homycide.  
Now, for the love of Crist, that for us dyde,  
Lete youre othes, bothe grete and smale.  
660 But, sires, now wol I telle forth my tale.  
Thise riotoures thre of whiche I telle,  
Longe erst er prime rong of any belle,  
Were set hem in a taverne to drynke,  
And as they sat, they herde a belle clynke  
Biforn a cors, was caried to his grave.  
That oon of hem gan callen to his knave:  
"Go bet," quod he, "and axe redily  
What cors is this that passeth heer forby;  
And looke that thou reporte his name weel."  
670 "Sire," quod this boy, "it nedeth never-a-deel;

It was me toold er ye cam heer two houres.  
 He was, pardee, an old felawe of youres,  
 And sodeynly he was yslayn to-nyght,  
 Fordronke, as he sat on his bench upright.  
 Ther cam a privee theef men clepeth Deeth,  
 That in this contree al the peple sleeth,  
 And with his spere he smoot his herte atwo,  
 And wente his wey withouten wordes mo.  
 He hath a thousand slayn this pestilence.  
 680 And, maister, er ye come in his presence,  
 Me thynketh that it were necessarie  
 For to be war of swich an adversarie.  
 Beth redy for to meete hym everemoore;  
 Thus taughte me my dame; I sey namoore."  
 "By Seinte Marie!" seyde this taverner,  
 "The child seith sooth, for he hath slayn this yeer,  
 Henne over a mile, withinne a greet village,  
 Bothe man and womman, child, and hyne, and page;  
 I trowe his habitacioun be there.  
 690 To been avysed greet wysdom it were,  
 Er that he dide a man a dishonour."  
 "Ye, Goddes armes!" quod this riotour,  
 "Is it swich peril with hym for to meete?  
 I shal hym seke by wey and eek by strete,  
 I make avow to Goddes digne bones!  
 Herketh, felawes, we thre been al ones;  
 Lat ech of us holde up his hand til oother,  
 And ech of us bicomen otheres brother,  
 And we wol sleen this false traytour Deeth.  
 700 He shal be slayn, he that so manye sleeth,  
 By Goddes dignitee, er it be nyght!"  
 Togidres han thise thre hir trouthes plight  
 To lyve and dyen ech of hem for oother,  
 As though he were his owene ybore brother.  
 And up they stirte, al dronken in this rage,  
 And forth they goon towardses that village  
 Of which the taverner hadde spoke biforn.  
 And many a grisly ooth thanne han they sworn,  
 And Cristes blessed body they torente --  
 710 Deeth shal be deed, if that they may hym hente!  
 Whan they han goon nat fully half a mile,  
 Right as they wolde han troden over a stile,

An oold man and a povre with hem mette.  
 This olde man ful mekely hem grette,  
 And seyde thus, "Now, lordes, God yow see!"  
 The proudeste of thise riotoures three  
 Answerde agayn, "What, carl, with sory grace!  
 Why artow al forwrapped save thy face?  
 Why lyvestow so longe in so greet age?"  
 720 This olde man gan looke in his visage,  
 And seyde thus: "For I ne kan nat fynde  
 A man, though that I walked into Ynde,  
 Neither in citee ne in no village,  
 That wolde chaunge his youthe for myn age;  
 And therfore moot I han myn age stille,  
 As longe tyme as it is Goddes wille.  
 Ne Deeth, alas, ne wol nat han my lyf.  
 Thus walke I, lyk a resteleees kaityf,  
 And on the ground, which is my moodres gate,  
 730 I knokke with my staf, bothe erly and late,  
 And seye `Leeve mooder, leet me in!  
 Lo how I vanysshe, flessch, and blood, and skyn!  
 Allas, whan shul my bones been at reste?  
 Mooder, with yow wolde I chaunge my cheste  
 That in my chambre longe tyme hath be,  
 Ye, for an heyre clowt to wrappe me!"  
 But yet to me she wol nat do that grace,  
 For which ful pale and welked is my face.  
 "But, sires, to yow it is no curteisye  
 740 To speken to an old man vileynye,  
 But he trespasse in word or elles in dede.  
 In Hooly Writ ye may yourself wel rede:  
 `Agayns an oold man, hoor upon his heed,  
 Ye sholde arise;' wherfore I yeve yow reed,  
 Ne dooth unto an oold man noon harm now,  
 Namooore than that ye wolde men did to yow  
 In age, if that ye so longe abyde.  
 And God be with yow, where ye go or ryde!  
 I moot go thider as I have to go."  
 750 "Nay, olde cherl, by God, thou shalt nat so,"  
 Seyde this oother hasardour anon;  
 "Thou partest nat so lightly, by Seint John!  
 Thou spak right now of thilke traytour Deeth.  
 That in this contree alleoure freendes sleeth.

Have heer my trouthe, as thou art his espye,  
 Telle where he is or thou shalt it abyde,  
 By God and by the hooly sacrament!  
 For soothly thou art oon of his assent  
 To sleen us yonge folk, thou false theef!"  
 760 "Now, sires," quod he, "if that yow be so leef  
 To fynde Deeth, turne up this croked wey,  
 For in that grove I lafte hym, by my fey,  
 Under a tree, and there he wole abyde;  
 Noght for youre boost he wole him no thyng hyde.  
 Se ye that ook? Right there ye shal hym fynde.  
 God save yow, that boghte agayn mankynde,  
 And yow amende!" Thus seyde this olde man;  
 And everich of thise riotoures ran  
 Til he cam to that tree, and ther they founde  
 770 Of floryns fyne of gold ycoyned rounde  
 Wel ny an eighte busshels, as hem thoughte.  
 No lenger thanne after Deeth they soughte,  
 But ech of hem so glad was of that sighte,  
 For that the floryns been so faire and brighte,  
 That doun they sette hem by this precious hoord.  
 The worste of hem, he spak the firste word.  
 "Bretheren," quod he, "taak kep what that I seye;  
 My wit is greet, though that I bourde and pleye.  
 This tresor hath Fortune unto us yiven  
 780 In myrthe and joliftee oure lyf to lyven,  
 And lightly as it comth, so wol we spende.  
 Ey, Goddes precious dignitee! Who wende  
 To-day that we sholde han so fair a grace?  
 But myghte this gold be caried fro this place  
 Hoom to myn hous, or elles unto youres --  
 For wel ye woot that al this gold is oures --  
 Thanne were we in heigh felicitee.  
 But trewely, by daye it may nat bee.  
 Men wolde seyn that we were theves stronge,  
 790 And for oure owene tresor doon us honge.  
 This tresor moste ycaried be by nyghte  
 As wisely and as slyly as it myghte.  
 Wherfore I rede that cut among us alle  
 Be drawe, and lat se wher the cut wol falle;  
 And he that hath the cut with herte blithe  
 Shal renne to the town, and that ful swithe,

And brynge us breed and wyn ful prively.  
And two of us shul kepen subtilly  
This tresor wel; and if he wol nat tarie,  
800 Whan it is nyght, we wol this tresor carie,  
By oon assent, where as us thynketh best."  
That oon of hem the cut broghte in his fest,  
And bad hem drawe and looke where it wol falle;  
And it fil on the yongeste of hem alle,  
And forth toward the toun he wente anon.  
And also soone as that he was gon,  
That oon of hem spak thus unto that oother:  
"Thow knowest wel thou art my sworn brother;  
Thy profit wol I telle thee anon.  
810 Thou woost wel that oure felawe is agon.  
And heere is gold, and that ful greet plentee,  
That shal departed been among us thre.  
But nathelees, if I kan shape it so  
That it departed were among us two,  
Hadde I nat doon a freendes torn to thee?"  
That oother answerde, "I noot hou that may be.  
He woot that the gold is with us tweye;  
What shal we doon? What shal we to hym seye?"  
"Shal it be conseil?" seyde the firste shrewe,  
820 "And I shal tellen in a wordes fewe  
What we shal doon, and brynge it wel aboute."  
"I graunte," quod that oother, "out of doute,  
That, by my trouthe, I wol thee nat biwreye."  
"Now," quod the firste, "thou woost wel we be tweye,  
And two of us shul strenger be than oon.  
Looke whan that he is set, that right anoon  
Arys as though thou woldest with hym pleye,  
And I shal ryve hym thurgh the sydes tweye  
Whil that thou strogelest with hym as in game,  
830 And with thy daggere looke thou do the same;  
And thanne shal al this gold departed be,  
My deere freend, bitwixen me and thee.  
Thanne may we bothe oure lustes all fulfille,  
And pleye at dees right at oure owene wille."  
And thus acorded been thise shrewes tweye  
To sleen the thridde, as ye han herd me seye.  
This yongeste, which that wente to the toun,  
Ful ofte in herte he rolleth up and down

The beautee of thise floryns newe and brighte.  
840 "O Lord!" quod he, "if so were that I myghte  
Have al this tresor to myself allone,  
Ther is no man that lyveth under the trone  
Of God that sholde lyve so murye as I!"  
And atte laste the feend, oure enemy,  
Putte in his thought that he sholde poyson beye,  
With which he myghte sleen his felawes tweye;  
For-why the feend foond hym in swich lyvyng  
That he hadde leve him to sorwe brynge.  
For this was outrely his fulle entente,  
850 To sleen hem bothe and nevere to repente.  
And forth he gooth, no lenger wolde he tarie,  
Into the toun, unto a pothecarie,  
And preyde hym that he hym wolde selle  
Som poyson, that he myghte his rattes quelle;  
And eek ther was a polcat in his hawe,  
That, as he seyde, his capouns hadde yslawe,  
And fayn he wolde wreke hym, if he myghte,  
On vermyn that destroyed hym by nyghte.  
The pothecarie answerde, "And thou shalt have  
860 A thyng that, also God my soule save,  
In al this world ther is no creature  
That eten or dronken hath of this confiture  
Noght but the montance of a corn of whete,  
That he ne shal his lif anon forlete;  
Ye, sterve he shal, and that in lasse while  
Than thou wolt goon a paas nat but a mile,  
This poyssoun is so strong and violent."  
This cursed man hath in his hond yhent  
This poyssoun in a box, and sith he ran  
870 Into the nexte strete unto a man,  
And borwed [of] hym large botelles thre,  
And in the two his poyson poured he;  
The thridde he kepte clene for his drynke.  
For al the nyght he shoop hym for to swynke  
In cariynge of the gold out of that place.  
And whan this riotour, with sory grace,  
Hadde filled with wyn his grete botels thre,  
To his felawes agayn repaireth he.  
What nedeth it to sermone of it moore?  
880 For right as they hadde cast his deeth bifoore,

Right so they han hym slayn, and that anon.  
And whan that this was doon, thus spak that oon:  
"Now lat us sitte and drynke, and make us merie,  
And afterward we wol his body berie."  
And with that word it happed hym, par cas,  
To take the botel ther the poyson was,  
And drank, and yaf his felawe drynke also,  
For which anon they storven bothe two.  
But certes, I suppose that Avycen  
890 Wroot nevere in no canon, ne in no fen,  
Mo wonder signes of empoisonyng  
Than hadde thise wrecches two, er hir endyng.  
Thus ended been thise homycides two,  
And eek the false empoysonere also.  
O cursed synne of alle cursednesse!  
O traytours homycide, O wikkednesse!  
O glotonye, luxurie, and hasardrye!  
Thou blasphemour of Crist with vileynye  
And othes grete, of usage and of pride!  
900 Allas, mankynde, how may it bitide  
That to thy creatour, which that the wroghte  
And with his precious herte-blood thee boghte,  
Thou art so fals and so unkynde, allas?  
Now, goode men, God foryeve yow youre trespas,  
And ware yow fro the synne of avarice!  
Myn hooly pardoun may yow alle warice,  
So that ye offre nobles or sterlynges,  
Or elles silver broches, spoones, rynges.  
Boweth youre heed under this hooly bulle!  
910 Cometh up, ye wyves, offreth of youre wolle!  
Youre names I entre heer in my rolle anon;  
Into the blisse of hevene shul ye gon.  
I yow assoille, by myn heigh power,  
Yow that wol offre, as clene and eek as cleer  
As ye were born. -- And lo, sires, thus I preche.  
And Jhesu Crist, that is oure soules leche,  
So graunte yow his pardoun to receyve,  
For that is best; I wol yow nat deceyve.  
But, sires, o word forgat I in my tale:  
920 I have relikes and pardoun in my male,  
As faire as any man in Engelond,  
Whiche were me yeven by the popes hond.



If any of yow wole, of devocion,  
Offren and han myn absolucion,  
Com forth anon, and kneleth heere adoun,  
And mekely receyveth my pardoun;  
Or elles taketh pardoun as ye wende,  
Al newe and fressh at every miles ende,  
So that ye offren, alwey newe and newe,  
930 Nobles or pens, whiche that be goode and trewe.  
It is an honour to everich that is heer  
That ye mowe have a suffisant pardoneer  
T' assoille yow in contree as ye ryde,  
For adventures whiche that may bityde.  
Paraventure ther may fallen oon or two  
Doun of his hors and breke his nekke atwo.  
Looke which a seuretee is it to yow alle  
That I am in youre felaweshipe yfalle,  
That may assoille yow, bothe moore and lasse,  
940 Whan that the soule shal fro the body passe.  
I rede that oure Hoost heere shal bigynne,  
For he is moost enveloped in synne.  
Com forth, sire Hoost, and offre first anon,  
And thou shalt kisse the relikes everychon,  
Ye, for a grote! Unbokele anon thy purs."  
"Nay, nay!" quod he, "thanne have I Cristes curs!  
Lat be," quod he, "it shal nat be, so theeche!  
Thou woldest make me kisse thyn olde breech,  
And swere it were a relyk of a seint,  
950 Though it were with thy fundement depeint!  
But, by the croys which that Seint Eleyne fond,  
I wolde I hadde thy coillons in myn hond  
In stide of relikes or of seintuarie.  
Lat kutte hem of, I wol thee helpe hem carie;  
They shul be shryned in an hogges toord!"  
This Pardoner answerde nat a word;  
So wrooth he was, no word ne wolde he seye.  
"Now," quod oure Hoost, "I wol no lenger pleye  
With thee, ne with noon oother angry man."  
960 But right anon the worthy Knyght bigan,  
Whan that he saugh that al the peple lough,  
"Namore of this, for it is right ynough!  
Sire Pardoner, be glad and myrie of cheere;  
And ye, sire Hoost, that been to me so deere,

I prey yow that ye kisse the Pardoner.  
And Pardoner, I prey thee, drawe thee neer,  
And, as we diden, lat us laughe and pleye."  
Anon they kiste, and ryden forth hir weye.



## THE SHIPMAN'S TALE

A marchant whilom dwelled at Seint-Denys,  
That riche was, for which men helde hym wys.  
A wyf he hadde of excellent beautee;  
And compaignable and revelous was she,  
Which is a thyng that causeth more dispence  
Than worth is al the chiere and reverence  
That men hem doon at festes and at daunces.  
Swiche salutaciouns and contenaunces  
Passen as dooth a shadwe upon the wal;  
10 But wo is hym that payen moot for al!  
The sely housbonde, algate he moot paye,  
He moot us clothe, and he moot us arraye,  
Al for his owene worshipe richely,  
In which array we daunce jolily.  
And if that he noght may, par aventure,  
Or ellis list no swich dispence endure,  
But thynketh it is wasted and ylost,  
Thanne moot another payen for oure cost,  
Or lene us gold, and that is perilous.  
20 This noble marchaunt heeld a worthy hous,  
For which he hadde alday so greet repair  
For his largesse, and for his wyf was fair,  
That wonder is; but herkneth to my tale.  
Amonges alle his gestes, grete and smale,  
Ther was a monk, a fair man and a boold --  
I trowe a thritty wynter he was oold --  
That evere in oon was drawynge to that place.  
This yonge monk, that was so fair of face,  
Aqueynted was so with the goode man,  
30 Sith that hir firste knoweliche bigan,  
That in his hous as famulier was he  
As it is possible any freend to be.  
And for as muchel as this goode man,  
And eek this monk of which that I bigan,  
Were bothe two yborn in o village,  
The monk hym claymeth as for cosynage,  
And he agayn; he seith nat ones nay,  
But was as glad therof as fowel of day,  
For to his herte it was a greet plesaunce.  
40 Thus been they knyht with eterne alliaunce,

And ech of hem gan oother for t' assure  
Of bretherhede whil that hir lyf may dure.  
Free was daun John, and manly of dispence,  
As in that hous, and ful of diligence  
To doon plesaunce, and also greet costage.  
He noght forgat to yeve the leeste page  
In al that hous; but after hir degree,  
He yaf the lord, and sitthe al his meynee,  
Whan that he cam, som manere honest thyng,  
50 For which they were as glad of his comyng  
As fowel is fayn whan that the sonne up riseth.  
Na moore of this as now, for it suffiseth.  
But so bifel, this marchant on a day  
Shoop hym to make redy his array  
Toward the toun of Brugges for to fare,  
To byen there a porcioun of ware;  
For which he hath to Parys sent anon  
A messenger, and preyed hath daun John  
That he sholde come to Seint-Denys to pleye  
60 With hym and with his wyf a day or tweye,  
Er he to Brugges wente, in alle wise.  
This noble monk, of which I yow devyse,  
Hath of his abbot, as hym list, licence,  
By cause he was a man of heigh prudence  
And eek an officer, out for to ryde,  
To seen hir graunges and hire bernys wyde,  
And unto Seint-Denys he comth anon.  
Who was so welcome as my lord daun John,  
Oure deere cosyn, ful of curteisye?  
70 With hym broghte he a jubbe of malvesye,  
And eek another ful of fyn vernage,  
And volatyl, as ay was his usage.  
And thus I lete hem ete and drynke and pleye,  
This marchant and this monk, a day or tweye.  
The thridde day, this marchant up ariseth,  
And on his nedes sadly hym avyseth,  
And up into his countour-hous gooth he  
To rekene with hymself, wel may be,  
Of thilke yeer how that it with hym stood,  
80 And how that he despended hadde his good,  
And if that he encreased were or noon.  
His bookes and his bagges many oon

He leith biforn hym on his countyng-bord.  
Ful riche was his tresor and his hord,  
For which ful faste his countour-dore he shette;  
And eek he nolde that no man sholde hym lette  
Of his acountes, for the meene tyme;  
And thus he sit til it was passed pryme.  
Daun John was rysen in the morwe also,  
90 And in the gardyn walketh to and fro,  
And hath his thynges seyde ful curteisly.  
This goode wyf cam walkyng pryvely  
Into the gardyn, there he walketh softe,  
And hym saleweth, as she hath doon ofte.  
A mayde child cam in hire compaignye,  
Which as hir list she may governe and gye,  
For yet under the yerde was the mayde.  
"O deere cosyn myn, daun John," she sayde,  
"What eyleth yow so rathe for to ryse?"  
100 "Nece," quod he, "it oghte ynough suffise  
Fyve houres for to slepe upon a nyght,  
But it were for an old appalled wight,  
As been thise wedded men, that lye and dare  
As in a fourme sit a wery hare,  
Were al forstraught with houndes grete and smale.  
But deere nece, why be ye so pale?  
I trowe, certes, that oure goode man  
Hath yow laboured sith the nyght bigan  
That yow were nede to resten hastily."  
110 And with that word he lough ful murily,  
And of his owene thought he wax al reed.  
This faire wyf gan for to shake hir heed  
And seyde thus, "Ye, God woot al," quod she.  
"Nay, cosyn myn, it stant nat so with me;  
For, by that God that yaf me soule and lyf,  
In al the reawme of France is ther no wyf  
That lasse lust hath to that sory pley.  
For I may synge `allas and weylawey  
That I was born,' but to no wight," quod she,  
120 "Dar I nat telle how that it stant with me.  
Wherfore I thynke out of this land to wende,  
Or elles of myself to make an ende,  
So ful am I of drede and eek of care."  
This monk bigan upon this wyf to stare,

And seyde, "Allas, my nece, God forbede  
That ye, for any sorwe or any drede,  
Fordo youreself; but telleth me youre grief.  
Paraventure I may, in youre meschief,  
Conseille or helpe; and therfore telleth me  
130 Al youre anoy, for it shal been secree.  
For on my portehors I make an ooth  
That nevere in my lyf, for lief ne looth,  
Ne shal I of no conseil yow biwreye."  
"The same agayn to yow," quod she, "I seye.  
By God and by this portehors I swere,  
Though men me wolde al into pieces tere,  
Ne shal I nevere, for to goon to helle,  
Biwreye a word of thyng that ye me telle,  
Nat for no cosynage ne alliance,  
140 But verrailly for love and affiance."  
Thus been they sworn, and heerupon they kiste,  
And ech of hem tolde oother what hem liste.  
"Cosyn," quod she, "if that I hadde a space,  
As I have noon, and namely in this place,  
Thanne wolde I telle a legende of my lyf,  
What I have suffred sith I was a wyf  
With myn housbonde, al be he youre cosyn."  
"Nay," quod this monk, "by God and Seint Martyn,  
He is na moore cosyn unto me  
150 Than is this leef that hangeth on the tree!  
I clepe hym so, by Seint Denys of Fraunce,  
To have the moore cause of aqueyntaunce  
Of yow, which I have loved specially  
Aboven alle wommen, sikerly.  
This swere I yow on my professioun.  
Telleth youre grief, lest that he come adoun;  
And hasteth yow, and gooth youre wey anon."  
"My deere love," quod she, "O my daun John,  
Ful lief were me this conseil for to hyde,  
160 But out it moot; I may namoore abyde.  
Myn housbonde is to me the worste man  
That evere was sith that the world bigan.  
But sith I am a wyf, it sit nat me  
To tellen no wight of oure privetee,  
Neither abedde ne in noon oother place;  
God shilde I sholde it tellen, for his grace!

A wyf ne shal nat seyn of hir housbonde  
But al honour, as I kan understonde;  
Save unto yow thus muche I tellen shal:  
170 As helpe me God, he is noght worth at al  
In no degree the value of a flye.  
But yet me greveth moost his nygardye.  
And wel ye woot that wommen naturelly  
Desiren thynges sixe as wel as I:  
They wolde that hir housbondes sholde be  
Hardy and wise, and riche, and therto free,  
And buxom unto his wyf and fressh abedde.  
But by that ilke Lord that for us bledde,  
For his honour, myself for to arraye,  
180 A Sonday next I moste nedes paye  
An hundred frankes, or ellis I am lorn.  
Yet were me levere that I were unborn  
Than me were doon a sclaunder or vileynye;  
And if myn housbonde eek it myghte espye,  
I nere but lost; and therfore I yow preye,  
Lene me this somme, or ellis moot I deye.  
Daun John, I seye, lene me thise hundred frankes.  
Pardee, I wol nat faille yow my thanks,  
If that yow list to doon that I yow praye.  
190 For at a certeyn day I wol yow paye,  
And doon to yow what plesance and service  
That I may doon, right as yow list devise.  
And but I do, God take on me vengeance  
As foul as evere hadde Genylon of France."  
This gentil monk answerde in this manere:  
"Now trewely, myn owene lady deere,  
I have," quod he, "on yow so greet a routhe  
That I yow swere, and plichte yow my trouthe,  
That whan youre housbonde is to Flaundres fare,  
200 I wol delyvere yow out of this care;  
For I wol brynge yow an hundred frankes."  
And with that word he caughte hire by the flankes,  
And hire embraceth harde, and kiste hire ofte.  
"Gooth now youre wey," quod he, "al stille and softe,  
And lat us dyne as soone as that ye may;  
For by my chilyndre it is pryme of day.  
Gooth now, and beeth as trewe as I shal be."  
"Now elles God forbede, sire," quod she;

And forth she gooth as jolif as a pye,  
210 And bad the cookes that they sholde hem hye,  
So that men myghte dyne, and that anon.  
Up to hir housbonde is this wyf ygon,  
And knokketh at his countour boldely.  
"Quy la?" quod he. "Peter! it am I,"  
Quod she; "What, sire, how longe wol ye faste?  
How longe tyme wol ye rekene and caste  
Youre sommes, and youre bookes, and youre thynges?  
The devel have part on alle swiche rekenynges!  
Ye have ynough, pardee, of Goddes sonde;  
220 Com doun to-day, and lat youre bagges stonde.  
Ne be ye nat ashamed that daun John  
Shal fasting al this day alenge goon?  
What, lat us heere a messe, and go we dyne."  
"Wyf," quod this man, "litel kanstow devyne  
The curious bisynesse that we have.  
For of us chapmen, also God me save,  
And by that lord that clepid is Seint Yve,  
Scarsly amonges twelve tweye shul thryve  
Continuelly, lastynge unto oure age.  
230 We may wel make chiere and good visage,  
And dryve forth the world as it may be,  
And kepen oure estaat in pryvetee,  
Til we be deed, or elles that we pleye  
A pilgrymage, or goon out of the weye.  
And therfore have I greet necessitee  
Upon this queynte world t' avyse me,  
For everemoore we moote stonde in drede  
Of hap and fortune in oure chapmanhede.  
"To Flaundres wol I go to-morwe at day,  
240 And come agayn, as soone as evere I may.  
For which, my deere wyf, I thee biseke,  
As be to every wight buxom and meke,  
And for to kepe oure good be curious,  
And honestly governe wel oure hous.  
Thou hast ynough, in every maner wise,  
That to a thrifty houshold may suffise.  
Thee lakketh noon array ne no vitaille;  
Of silver in thy purs shaltow nat faille."  
And with that word his countour-dore he shette,  
250 And doun he gooth, no lenger wolde he lette.



But hastily a messe was ther seyde,  
And spedily the tables were yleyde,  
And to the dyner faste they hem spedde,  
And richely this monk the chapman fedde.  
At after-dyner daun John sobrely  
This chapman took apart, and prively  
He seyde hym thus: "Cosyn, it standeth so,  
That wel I se to Brugges wol ye go.  
God and Seint Austyn spede yow and gyde!  
260 I prey yow, cosyn, wisely that ye ryde.  
Governeth yow also of youre diete  
Atemprely, and namely in this hete.  
Bitwix us two nedeth no strange fare;  
Farewel, cosyn; God shilde yow fro care!  
And if that any thyng by day or nyght,  
If it lye in my power and my myght,  
That ye me wol comande in any wyse,  
It shal be doon right as ye wol devyse.  
"O thyng, er that ye goon, if it may be,  
270 I wolde prey yow: for to lene me  
An hundred frankes, for a wyke or tweye,  
For certein beestes that I moste beye,  
To stoore with a place that is oures.  
God helpe me so, I wolde it were youre!  
I shal nat faille surely of my day,  
Nat for a thousand frankes, a mile way.  
But lat this thyng be secree, I yow preye,  
For yet to-nyght thise beestes moot I beye.  
And fare now wel, myn owene cosyn deere;  
280 Graunt mercy of youre cost and of youre cheere."  
This noble marchant gentilly anon  
Answerde and seyde, "O cosyn myn, daun John,  
Now sikerly this is a smal requeste.  
My gold is youre, whan that it yow leste,  
And nat oonly my gold, but my chaffare.  
Take what yow list; God shilde that ye spare.  
"But o thyng is, ye knowe it wel ynogh  
Of chapmen, that hir moneie is hir plogh.  
We may creaunce whil we have a name,  
290 But goldlees for to be, it is no game.  
Paye it agayn whan it lith in youre ese;  
After my myght ful fayn wolde I yow plese."

Thise hundred frankes he fette forth anon,  
And prively he took hem to daun John.  
No wight in al this world wiste of this loone  
Savyng this marchant and daun John allone.  
They drynke, and speke, and rome a while and pleye,  
Til that daun John rideth to his abbeye.  
The morwe cam, and forth this marchant rideth  
300 To Flaundres-ward; his prentys wel hym gydeth  
Til he came into Brugges murily.  
Now gooth this marchant faste and bisily  
Aboute his nede, and byeth and creaunceth.  
He neither pleyeth at the dees ne daunceth,  
But as a marchaunt, shortly for to telle,  
He let his lyf, and there I lete hym dwelle.  
The Sondag next the marchant was agon,  
To Seint-Denys ycomen is daun John,  
With crowne and berd al fressh and newe yshave.  
310 In al the hous ther nas so litel a knave,  
Ne no wight elles, that he nas ful fayn  
That my lord daun John was come agayn.  
And shortly to the point right for to gon,  
This faire wyf acorded with daun John  
That for thise hundred frankes he sholde al nyght  
Have hire in his armes bolt upright;  
And this acord parfourned was in dede.  
In myrthe al nyght a bisy lyf they lede  
Til it was day, that daun John wente his way,  
320 And bad the meynee "Farewel, have good day!"  
For noon of hem, ne no wight in the toun,  
Hath of daun John right no suspecioun.  
And forth he rydeth hoom to his abbeye,  
Or where hym list; namoore of hym I seye.  
This marchant, whan that ended was the faire,  
To Seint-Denys he gan for to repaire,  
And with his wyf he maketh feeste and cheere,  
And telleth hire that chaffare is so deere  
That nedes moste he make a chevyssaunce,  
330 For he was bounden in a reconyssaunce  
To paye twenty thousand sheeld anon.  
For which this marchant is to Parys gon  
To borwe of certeine freendes that he hadde  
A certeyn frankes; and somme with him he ladde.

And whan that he was come into the toun,  
For greet chiertee and greet affeccioun,  
Unto daun John he first gooth hym to pleye;  
Nat for to axe or borwe of hym moneye,  
But for to wite and seen of his welfare,  
340 And for to tellen hym of his chaffare,  
As freendes doon whan they been met yfeere.  
Daun John hym maketh feeste and murye cheere,  
And he hym tolde agayn, ful specially,  
How he hadde wel ybought and graciously,  
Thanked be God, al hool his marchandise,  
Save that he moste, in alle maner wise,  
Maken a chevysaunce, as for his beste,  
And thanne he sholde been in joye and reste.  
Daun John answerde, "Certes, I am fayn  
350 That ye in heele ar comen hom agayn.  
And if that I were riche, as have I blisse,  
Of twenty thousand sheeld sholde ye nat mysse,  
For ye so kyndely this oother day  
Lente me gold; and as I kan and may,  
I thanke yow, by God and by Seint Jame!  
But nathelees, I took unto oure dame,  
Youre wyf, at hom, the same gold ageyn  
Upon youre bench; she woot it wel, certeyn,  
By certeyn tokenes that I kan hire telle.  
360 Now, by youre leve, I may no lenger dwelle;  
Oure abbot wole out of this toun anon,  
And in his compaignye moot I goon.  
Grete wel oure dame, myn owene nece sweete,  
And fare wel, deere cosyn, til we meete!"  
This marchant, which that was ful war and wys,  
Creanced hath, and payd eek in Parys  
To certeyn Lumbardes, redy in hir hond,  
The somme of gold, and gat of hem his bond;  
And hoom he gooth, murie as a papejay,  
370 For wel he knew he stood in swich array  
That nedes moste he wyne in that viage  
A thousand frankes aboven al his costage.  
His wyf ful redy mette hym atte gate,  
As she was wont of oold usage algate,  
And al that nyght in myrthe they bisette;  
For he was riche and cleerly out of dette.

Whan it was day, this marchant gan embrace  
 His wyf al newe, and kiste hire on hir face,  
 And up he gooth and maketh it ful tough.  
 380 "Namooore," quod she, "by God, ye have ynough!"  
 And wantownly agayn with hym she pleyde  
 Til atte laste thus this marchant seyde:  
 "By God," quod he, "I am a litel wrooth  
 With yow, my wyf, although it be me looth.  
 And woot ye why? By God, as that I gesse  
 That ye han maad a manere straungenesse  
 Bitwixen me and my cosyn daun John.  
 Ye sholde han warned me, er I had gon,  
 That he yow hadde an hundred frankes payed  
 390 By redy token; and heeld hym yvele apayed,  
 For that I to hym spak of chevysaunce;  
 Me semed so, as by his contenaunce.  
 But nathelees, by God, oure hevene kyng,  
 I thoughte nat to axen hym no thyng.  
 I prey thee, wyf, ne do namooore so;  
 Telle me alwey, er that I fro thee go,  
 If any dettour hath in myn absence  
 Ypayed thee, lest thurgh thy necligence  
 I myghte hym axe a thing that he hath payed."  
 400 This wyf was nat afered nor affrayed,  
 But boldely she seyde, and that anon,  
 "Marie, I deffie the false monk, daun John!  
 I kepe nat of his tokenes never a deel;  
 He took me certeyn gold, that woot I weel --  
 What! Yvel thedam on his monkes snowte!  
 For, God it woot, I wende, withouten doute,  
 That he hadde yeve it me bycause of yow  
 To doon therwith myn honour and my prow,  
 For cosynage, and eek for beelee cheere  
 410 That he hath had ful ofte tymes heere.  
 But sith I se I stonde in this disjoynt,  
 I wol answer yow shortly to the poynt.  
 Ye han mo slakkere dettours than am I!  
 For I wol paye yow wel and redily  
 Fro day to day, and if so be I faille,  
 I am youre wyf; score it upon my taille,  
 And I shal paye as soone as ever I may.  
 For by my trouthe, I have on myn array,

And nat on wast, bistowed every deel;  
420 And for I have bistowed it so weel  
For youre honour, for Goddes sake, I seye,  
As be nat wrooth, but lat us laughe and pleye.  
Ye shal my joly body have to wedde;  
By God, I wol nat paye yow but abedde!  
Forgyve it me, myn owene spouse deere;  
Turne hiderward, and maketh bettre cheere."  
This marchant saugh ther was no remedie,  
And for to chide it nere but folie,  
Sith that the thyng may nat amended be.  
430 "Now wyf," he seyde, "and I foryeve it thee;  
But, by thy lyf, ne be namoore so large.  
Keep bet thy good, this yeve I thee in charge."  
Thus endeth my tale, and God us sende  
Taillynge ynough unto oure lyves ende. Amen  
"Wel seyde, by corpus dominus," quod oure Hoost,  
"Now longe moote thou saille by the cost,  
Sire gentil maister, gentil maryneer!  
God yeve the monk a thousand last quade yeer!  
A ha! Felawes, beth ware of swich a jape!  
440 The monk putte in the mannes hood an ape,  
And in his wyves eek, by Seint Austyn!  
Draweth no monkes moore unto youre in.  
"But now passe over, and lat us seke aboute,  
Who shal now telle first of al this route  
Another tale;" and with that word he sayde,  
As curteisly as it had been a mayde,  
"My lady Prioress, by youre leve,  
So that I wiste I sholde yow nat greve,  
I wolde demen that ye tellen sholde  
450 A tale next, if so were that ye wolde.  
Now wol ye vouche sauf, my lady deere?"  
"Gladly," quod she, and seyde as ye shal heere.



## THE PRIORESS' PROLOGUE

O Lord, oure Lord, thy name how merveillous  
Is in this large world ysprad -- quod she --  
For noght oonly thy laude precious  
Parfourned is by men of dignitee,  
But by the mouth of children thy bountee  
Parfourned is, for on the brest soukyng  
Somtyme shewen they thyn heriyng.  
460 Wherefore in laude, as I best kan or may,  
Of thee and of the white lylle flour  
Which that the bar, and is a mayde alway,  
To telle a storie I wol do my labour;  
Nat that I may encressen hir honour,  
For she herself is honour and the roote  
Of bountee, next hir Sone, and soules boote.  
O mooder Mayde, O mayde Mooder free!  
O bussh unbrent, brennyng in Moyses sighte,  
That ravyshest down fro the Deitee,  
470 Thurgh thyn humblesse, the Goost that in th' alighte,  
Of whos vertu, whan he thyn herte lighte,  
Conceyved was the Fadres sapience,  
Help me to telle it in thy reverence!  
Lady, thy bountee, thy magnificence,  
Thy vertu and thy grete humylitee  
Ther may no tonge expresse in no science;  
For somtyme, Lady, er men praye to thee,  
Thou goost biforn of thy benyngnytee,  
And getest us the lyght, of thy preyere,  
480 To gyden us unto thy Sone so deere.  
My konnyng is so wayk, O blisful Queene,  
For to declare thy grete worthynesse  
That I ne may the weighte nat susteene;  
But as a child of twelf month oold, or lesse,  
That kan unnethes any word expresse,  
Right so fare I, and therefore I yow preye,  
Gydeth my song that I shal of yow seye.



## THE PRIORESS' TALE

Ther was in Asye, in a greet citee,  
Amonges Cristene folk a Jewerye,  
490 Sustened by a lord of that contree  
For foule usure and lucre of vileynye,  
Hateful to Crist and to his compaignye;  
And thurgh the strete men myghte ride or wende,  
For it was free and open at eyther ende.  
A litel scole of Cristen folk ther stood  
Doun at the ferther ende, in which ther were  
Children an heep, ycomen of Cristen blood,  
That lerned in that scole yeer by yere  
Swich manere doctrine as men used there,  
500 This is to seyn, to syngen and to rede,  
As smale children doon in hire childhede.  
Among thise children was a wydwe sone,  
A litel clergeon, seven yeer of age,  
That day by day to scole was his wone,  
And eek also, where as he saugh th' ymage  
Of Cristes mooder, hadde he in usage,  
As hym was taught, to knele adoun and seye  
His Ave Marie, as he goth by the weye.  
Thus hath this wydwe hir litel sone ytaught  
510 Oure blisful Lady, Cristes mooder deere,  
To worshipe ay, and he forgat it naught,  
For sely child wol alday soone leere.  
But ay, whan I remembre on this mateere,  
Seint Nicholas stant evere in my presence,  
For he so yong to Crist dide reverence.  
This litel child, his litel book lernynge,  
As he sat in the scole at his prymer,  
He Alma redemptoris herde synge,  
As children lerned hire antiphoner;  
520 And as he dorste, he drough hym ner and ner,  
And herkned ay the wordes and the noote,  
Til he the firste vers koude al by rote.  
Noght wiste he what this Latyn was to seye,  
For he so yong and tendre was of age.  
But on a day his felawe gan he preye  
T' expounden hym this song in his langage,  
Or telle hym why this song was in usage;

This preyde he hym to construe and declare  
Ful often tyme upon his knowes bare.  
530 His felawe, which that elder was than he,  
Answerde hym thus: "This song, I have herd seye,  
Was maked of our blisful Lady free,  
Hire to salue, and eek hire for to preye  
To been oure help and socour whan we deye.  
I kan namoore expounde in this mateere.  
I lerne song; I kan but smal grammeere."  
"And is this song maked in reverence  
Of Cristes mooder?" seyde this innocent.  
"Now, certes, I wol do my diligence  
540 To konne it al er Cristemasse be went.  
Though that I for my prymer shal be shent  
And shal be beten thries in an houre,  
I wol it konne Oure Lady for to honoure!"  
His felawe taughte hym homward prively,  
Fro day to day, til he koude it by rote,  
And thanne he song it wel and boldely,  
Fro word to word, acordynge with the note.  
Twies a day it passed thurgh his throte,  
To scoleward and homward whan he wente;  
550 On Cristes mooder set was his entente.  
As I have seyde, thurghout the Juerie  
This litel child, as he cam to and fro,  
Ful murily than wolde he synge and crie  
O Alma redemptoris everemo.  
The swetnesse his herte perced so  
Of Cristes mooder that, to hire to preye,  
He kan nat stynte of syngyng by the weye.  
Oure firste foo, the serpent Sathanas,  
That hath in Jues herte his waspes nest,  
560 Up swal, and seide, "O Hebrayk peple, allas!  
Is this to yow a thyng that is honest,  
That swich a boy shal walken as hym lest  
In youre despit, and synge of swich sentence,  
Which is agayn youre lawes reverence?"  
Fro thennes forth the Jues han conspired  
This innocent out of this world to chace.  
An homicide therto han they hyred,  
That in an aleye hadde a privee place;  
And as the child gan forby for to pace,



570 This cursed Jew hym hente, and heeld hym faste,  
 And kitte his throte, and in a pit hym caste.  
 I seye that in a wardrobe they hym threwe  
 Where as thise Jewes purgen hire entraille.  
 O cursed folk of Herodes al newe,  
 What may youre yvel entente yow availle?  
 Mordre wol out, certeyn, it wol nat faille,  
 And namely ther th' honour of God shal sprede;  
 The blood out crieth on youre cursed dede.  
 O martir, sowded to virginitee,  
 580 Now maystow syngen, folwynge evere in oon  
 The white Lamb celestial -- quod she --  
 Of which the grete evaungelist, Seint John,  
 In Pathmos wroot, which seith that they that goon  
 Biforn this Lamb and synge a song al newe,  
 That nevere, fleshly, wommen they ne knewe.  
 This poure wydwe awaiteth al that nyght  
 After hir litel child, but he cam noght;  
 For which, as soone as it was dayes lyght,  
 With face pale of drede and bisy thoght,  
 590 She hath at scole and elleswhere hym soght,  
 Til finally she gan so fer espie  
 That he last seyn was in the Juerie.  
 With moodres pitee in hir brest enclosed,  
 She gooth, as she were half out of hir mynde,  
 To every place where she hath supposed  
 By liklihede hir litel child to fynde;  
 And evere on Cristes mooder meeke and kynde  
 She cride, and atte laste thus she wroghte:  
 Among the cursed Jues she hym soghte.  
 600 She frayneth and she preyeth pitously  
 To every Jew that dwelte in thilke place,  
 To telle hire if hir child wente oght forby.  
 They seyde "nay"; but Jhesu of his grace  
 Yaf in hir thoght inwith a litel space  
 That in that place after hir sone she cryde,  
 Where he was casten in a pit bisyde.  
 O grete God, that parfournest thy laude  
 By mouth of innocentz, lo, heere thy myght!  
 This gemme of chastite, this emeraude,  
 610 And eek of martirdom the ruby bright,  
 Ther he with throte ykorven lay upright,

He Alma redemptoris gan to synge  
So loude that al the place gan to rynge.  
The Cristene folk that thurgh the strete wente  
In coomen for to wondre upon this thyng,  
And hastily they for the provost sente;  
He cam anon withouten tariyng,  
And herieth Crist that is of hevene kyng,  
And eek his mooder, honour of mankynde,  
620 And after that the Jewes leet he bynde.  
This child with pitous lamentacioun  
Up taken was, syngyng his song alway,  
And with honour of greet processiou  
They carien hym unto the nexte abbay.  
His mooder swownyng by his beere lay;  
Unnethe myghte the peple that was theere  
This newe Rachel bryng fro his beere.  
With torment and with shameful deeth echon,  
This provost dooth this Jewes for to sterve  
630 That of this mordre wiste, and that anon.  
He nolde no swich cursednesse observe.  
"Yvele shal have that yvele wol deserve";  
Therefore with wilde hors he dide hem drawe,  
And after that he heng hem by the lawe.  
Upon this beere ay lith this innocent  
Biforn the chief auter, whil the masse laste;  
And after that, the abbot with his covent  
Han sped hem for to burien hym ful faste;  
And whan they hooly water on hym caste,  
640 Yet spak this child, whan spreynd was hooly water,  
And song O Alma redemptoris mater!  
This abbot, which that was an hooly man,  
As monkes been -- or elles oghte be --  
This yonge child to conjure he bigan,  
And seyde, "O deere child, I halse thee,  
In vertu of the hooly Trinitee,  
Tel me what is thy cause for to synge,  
Sith that thy throte is kut to my semyng?"  
"My throte is kut unto my nekke boon,"  
650 Seyde this child, "and as by wey of kynde  
I sholde have dyed, ye, longe tyme agon.  
But Jesu Crist, as ye in bookes fynde,  
Wil that his glorie laste and be in mynde,

And for the worship of his Mooder deere  
 Yet may I synge O Alma loude and cleere.  
 "This welle of mercy, Cristes mooder sweete,  
 I loved alwey, as after my konnyng;  
 And whan that I my lyf sholde forlete,  
 To me she cam, and bad me for to synge  
 660 This anthem verrailly in my deyyng,  
 As ye han herd, and whan that I hadde songe,  
 Me thoughte she leyde a greyn upon my tonge.  
 "Wherefore I synge, and synge moot certeyn,  
 In honour of that blisful Mayden free  
 Til fro my tonge of taken is the greyn;  
 And after that thus seyde she to me:  
 'My litel child, now wol I fecche thee,  
 Whan that the greyn is fro thy tonge ytake.  
 Be nat agast; I wol thee nat forsake.'"  
 670 This hooly monk, this abbot, hym meene I,  
 His tonge out caughte, and took away the greyn,  
 And he yaf up the goost ful softly.  
 And whan this abbot hadde this wonder seyn,  
 His salte teeris trikked down as reyn,  
 And gruf he fil al plat upon the grounde,  
 And stille he lay as he had ben ybounde.  
 The covent eek lay on the pavement  
 Wepynge, and heryng Cristes mooder deere,  
 And after that they ryse, and forth been went,  
 680 And taken away this martir from his beere;  
 And in a tombe of marbul stones cleere  
 Enclosen they his litel body sweete.  
 Ther he is now, God leve us for to meete!  
 O yonge Hugh of Lyncoln, slayn also  
 With cursed Jewes, as it is notable,  
 For it is but a litel while ago,  
 Preye eek for us, we synful folk unstable,  
 That of his mercy God so merciablen  
 On us his grete mercy multiplie,  
 690 For reverence of his mooder Marie. Amen.



## THE PROLOGUE TO THE TALE OF SIR THOPAS

Whan seyde was al this miracle, every man  
As sobre was that wonder was to se,  
Til that oure Hooste jopen tho bigan,  
And thanne at erst he looked upon me,  
And seyde thus: "What man artow?" quod he;  
"Thou lookest as thou woldest fynde an hare,  
For evere upon the ground I se thee stare.  
"Approche neer, and looke up murily.  
Now war yow, sires, and lat this man have place!  
700 He in the waast is shape as wel as I;  
This were a popet in an arm t' enbrace  
For any womman, smal and fair of face.  
He semeth elvyssh by his contenaunce,  
For unto no wight dooth he daliaunce.  
"Sey now somewhat, syn oother folk han sayd;  
Telle us a tale of myrthe, and that anon."  
"Hooste," quod I, "ne beth nat yvele apayd,  
For oother tale certes kan I noon,  
But of a rym I lerned longe agoon."  
710 "Ye, that is good," quod he; "now shul we heere  
Som deyntee thyng, me thynketh by his cheere."



## THE TALE OF SIR THOPAS

Listeth, lordes, in good entent,  
And I wol telle verrayment  
Of myrthe and of solas,  
Al of a knyght was fair and gent  
In bataille and in tourneyment;  
His name was sire Thopas.  
Yborn he was in fer contree,  
In Flaundres, al biyonde the see,  
720 At Poperyng, in the place.  
His fader was a man ful free,  
And lord he was of that contree,  
As it was Goddes grace.  
Sire Thopas wax a doghty swayn;  
Whit was his face as payndemayn,  
His lippes rede as rose;  
His rode is lyk scarlet in grayn,  
And I yow telle in good certayn  
He hadde a semely nose.  
730 His heer, his berd was lyk saffroun,  
That to his girdel raughte adoun;  
His shoon of cordewane.  
Of Brugges were his hosen broun,  
His robe was of syklatoun,  
That coste many a jane.  
He koude hunte at wilde deer,  
And ride an haukyng for river  
With grey goshawk on honde;  
Therto he was a good archeer;  
740 Of wrastlyng was ther noon his peer,  
Ther any ram shal stonde.  
Ful many a mayde, bright in bour,  
They moorne for hym paramour,  
Whan hem were bet to slepe;  
But he was chaast and no lechour,  
And sweete as is the brembul flour  
That bereth the rede hepe.  
And so bifel upon a day,  
For sothe, as I yow telle may,  
750 Sire Thopas wolde out ride.  
He worth upon his steede gray,

And in his hand a launcegay,  
A long swerd by his side.  
He priketh thurgh a fair forest,  
Therinne is many a wilde best,  
Ye, bothe bukke and hare;  
And as he priketh north and est,  
I telle it yow, hym hadde almost  
Bitid a sory care.  
760 Ther spryngen herbes grete and smale,  
The lycorys and the cetewale,  
And many a clowe-gylofre;  
And notemuge to putte in ale,  
Wheither it be moyste or stale,  
Or for to leye in cofre.  
The briddes synge, it is no nay,  
The sparhawk and the papejay,  
That joye it was to heere;  
The thrustelcok made eek hir lay,  
770 The wodedowve upon the spray  
She sang ful loude and cleere.  
Sire Thopas fil in love-longynge,  
Al whan he herde the thrustel synge,  
And pryked as he were wood.  
His faire steede in his prikyng  
So swatte that men myghte him wrynge;  
His sydes were al blood.  
Sire Thopas eek so wery was  
For prikyng on the softe gras,  
780 So fiers was his corage,  
That doun he leyde him in that plas  
To make his steede som solas,  
And yaf hym good forage.  
"O Seinte Marie, benedicite!  
What eyleth this love at me  
To bynde me so soore?  
Me dremed al this nyght, pardee,  
An elf-queene shal my lemman be  
And slepe under my goore.  
790 "An elf-queene wol I love, ywis,  
For in this world no womman is  
Worthy to be my make  
In towne;

Alle othere wommen I forsake,  
And to an elf-queene I me take  
By dale and eek by downe!"  
Into his sadel he clamb anon,  
And priketh over stile and stoon  
An elf-queene for t' espye,  
800 Til he so longe hath riden and goon  
That he foond, in a pryve woon,  
The contree of Fairye  
So wilde;  
For in that contree was ther noon  
That to him durste ride or goon,  
Neither wyf ne childe;  
Til that ther cam a greet geaunt,  
His name was sire Olifaunt,  
A perilous man of dede.  
810 He seyde, "Child, by Termagaunt,  
But if thou prike out of myn haunt,  
Anon I sle thy steede  
With mace.  
Heere is the queene of Fayerye,  
With harpe and pipe and symphonie,  
Dwellynge in this place."  
The child seyde, "Also moote I thee,  
Tomorwe wol I meete with thee,  
Whan I have myn armoure;  
820 And yet I hope, par ma fay,  
That thou shalt with this launcegay  
Abyen it ful sowre.  
Thy mawe  
Shal I percen, if I may,  
Er it be fully pryme of day,  
For heere thou shalt be slawe."  
Sire Thopas drow abak ful faste;  
This geant at hym stones caste  
Out of a fel staf-slynge.  
830 But faire escapeth child Thopas,  
And al it was thurgh Goddes gras,  
And thurgh his fair berynge.  
Yet listeth, lordes, to my tale  
Murier than the nightyngale,  
For now I wol yow rowne

How sir Thopas, with sydes smale,  
Prikyng over hill and dale,  
Is comen agayn to towne.  
His myrie men comanded he  
840 To make hym bothe game and glee,  
For nedes moste he fighte  
With a geaunt with hevedes three,  
For paramour and jolitee  
Of oon that shoon ful brighte.  
"Do come," he seyde, "my mynstrales,  
And geestours for to tellen tales,  
Anon in myn armynge,  
Of romances that been roiales,  
Of popes and of cardinales,  
850 And eek of love-likyng."  
They fette hym first the sweete wyn,  
And mede eek in a mazelyn,  
And roial spicerye  
Of gyngebreede that was ful fyn,  
And lycorys, and eek comyn,  
With sugre that is trye.  
He dide next his white leere  
Of cloth of lake fyn and cleere,  
A breech and eek a sherte;  
860 And next his sherte an aketoun,  
And over that an haubergeoun  
For percynge of his herte;  
And over that a fyn hawberk,  
Was al ywroght of Jewes werk,  
Ful strong it was of plate;  
And over that his cote-armour  
As whit as is a lilye flour,  
In which he wol debate.  
His sheeld was al of gold so reed,  
870 And therinne was a bores heed,  
A charbocle bisyde;  
And there he swoor on ale and breed  
How that the geaunt shal be deed,  
Bityde what bityde!  
His jambeux were of quyrboilly,  
His swerdes shethe of yvory,  
His helm of latoun bright;



His sadel was of rewel boon,  
His brydel as the sonne shoon,  
880 Or as the moone light.  
His spere was of fyn ciprees,  
That bodeth werre, and nothyng pees,  
The heed ful sharpe ygrounde;  
His steede was al dappull gray,  
It gooth an ambil in the way  
Ful softely and rounde  
In londe.  
Loo, lordes myne, heere is a fit!  
If ye wol any moore of it,  
890 To telle it wol I fonde.  
Now holde youre mouth, par charitee,  
Bothe knyght and lady free,  
And herkneth to my spelle;  
Of bataille and of chivalry,  
And of ladyes love-drury  
Anon I wol yow telle.  
Men speken of romances of prys,  
Of Horn child and of Ypotys,  
Of Beves and sir Gy,  
900 Of sir Lybeux and Pleyndamour --  
But sir Thopas, he bereth the flour  
Of roial chivalry!  
His goode steede al he bistrood,  
And forth upon his wey he glood  
As sparcle out of the bronde;  
Upon his creest he bar a tour,  
And therinne stiked a lilie flour --  
God shilde his cors fro shonde!  
And for he was a knyght auntrous,  
910 He nolde slepen in noon hous,  
But liggen in his hooode;  
His brighte helm was his wonger,  
And by hym baiteth his dextrer  
Of herbes fyne and goode.  
Hymself drank water of the well,  
As dide the knyght sire Percyvell  
So worly under wede,  
Til on a day --  
"Namooore of this, for Goddes dignitee,"

920 Quod oure Hooste, "for thou makest me  
So wery of thy verray lewednesse  
That, also wisly God my soule blesse,  
Myne eres aken of thy drasty speche.  
Now swich a rym the devel I biteche!  
This may wel be rym dogerel," quod he.  
"Why so?" quod I, "why wiltow lette me  
Moore of my tale than another man,  
Syn that it is the beste rym I kan?"  
"By God," quod he, "for pleyonly, at a word,  
930 Thy drasty rymyng is nat worth a toord!  
Thou doost noght elles but despendest tyme.  
Sire, at o word, thou shalt no lenger ryme.  
Lat se wher thou kanst tellen aught in geeste,  
Or telle in prose somewhat, at the leeste,  
In which ther be som murthe or som doctryne."  
"Gladly," quod I, "by Goddes sweete pyne!  
I wol yow telle a litel thyng in prose  
That oghte liken yow, as I suppose,  
Or elles, certes, ye been to daungerous.  
940 It is a moral tale vertuous,  
Al be it told somtyme in sondry wyse  
Of sondry folk, as I shal yow devyse.  
"As thus: ye woot that every Evaungelist  
That telleth us the peyne of Jhesu Crist  
Ne seith nat alle thyng as his felawe dooth;  
But nathelees hir sentence is al sooth,  
And alle acorden as in hire sentence,  
Al be ther in hir tellyng difference.  
For somme of hem seyn moore, and somme seyn lesse,  
950 Whan they his pitous passioun expresse --  
I meene of Mark, Mathew, Luc, and John --  
But doutelees hir sentence is al oon.  
Therefore, lordynges alle, I yow biseche,  
If that yow thynke I varie as in my speche,  
As thus, though that I telle somewhat moore  
Of proverbes than ye han herd bifoore  
Comprehended in this litel tretys heere,  
To enforce with th' effect of my mateere;  
And though I nat the same wordes seye  
960 As ye han herd, yet to yow alle I preye  
Blameth me nat; for, as in my sentence,

Shul ye nowher fynden difference  
Fro the sentence of this tretys lyte  
After the which this murye tale I write.  
And therfore herkneth what that I shal seye,  
And lat me tellen al my tale, I preye."



## THE TALE OF MELIBEE

A yong man called Melibeus, myghty and riche, bigat upon his wyf, that called was Prudence,

a doghter which that called was Sophie.

Upon a day bifel that he for his desport is went into the feeldes hym to pleye.

His wyf and eek his doghter hath he left inwith his hous, of which the dores weren faste yshette.

970 Thre of his olde foes han it espyed, and setten laddres to the walles of his hous,

970A and by wyndowes been entred,

and betten his wyf, and wounded his doghter with fyve mortal woundes in fyve sondry places --

this is to seyn, in hir feet, in hire handes, in hir erys, in hir nose, and in hire mouth -- and leften hire for deed, and wenten away.

Whan Melibeus retourned was into his hous, and saugh al this meschief, he,

lyk a mad man rentynge his clothes, gan to wepe and crie.

Prudence, his wyf, as ferforth as she dorste, bisoghte hym of his wepyng for to stynte,

but nat forthy he gan to crie and wepen evere lenger the moore.

This noble wyf Prudence remembred hire upon the sentence of Ovide, in his book

that cleped is the Remedie of Love, where as he seith,

"He is a fool that destourbeth the mooder to wepen in the deeth of hire child

til she have wept hir fille as for a certein tyme,

and thanne shal man doon his diligence with amyable wordes hire to reconforte,

and preyen hire of hir wepyng for to stynte."

For which resoun this noble wyf Prudence suffred hir housbonde for to wepe and crie as for a certein space,

980 and whan she saugh hir tyme, she seyde hym in this wise:

980A "Allas, my lord," quod she, "why make ye youreself for to be lyk a fool?

For sothe it aperteneth nat to a wys man to maken swich a sorwe.

Youre doghter, with the grace of God, shal warisshe and escape.

And, al were it so that she right now were deed,

ye ne oughte nat, as for hir deeth, youreself to destroye.

Senek seith: `The wise man shal nat take to greet discomfort for the deeth of his children,

but, certes, he sholde suffren it in pacience  
 as wel as he abideth the deeth of his owene propre persone."  
 This Melibeus answerde anon and seyde, "What man," quod he,  
 "sholde of his wepyng stente  
 that hath so greet a cause for to wepe?  
 Jhesu Crist, oure Lord, hymself wepte for the deeth of Lazarus hys  
 freend."

Prudence answerde: "Certes, wel I woot attempree wepyng is no  
 thyng deffended to hym that sorweful is,  
 amonges folk in sorwe, but it is rather graunted hym to wepe.  
 The Apostle Paul unto the Romayns writeth, 'Man shal rejoyse  
 with hem that maken joye and wepen with swich folk as wepen.'  
 990 But though attempree wepyng be ygraunted, outrageous wepyng  
 certes is deffended.

Mesure of wepyng sholde be considered after the loore that techeth us  
 Senek:

'Whan that thy frend is deed,' quod he, 'lat nat thyne eyen to moyste  
 been of teeris,  
 ne to muche drye; although the teeris come to thyne eyen, lat hem nat  
 falle;  
 and whan thou hast forgoon thy freend, do diligence to gete another  
 freend;  
 and this is moore wysdom than for to wepe for thy freend  
 which that thou hast lorn, for therinne is no boote.'  
 And therefore, if ye governe yow by sapience, put away sorwe out of  
 youre herte.

Remembre yow that Jhesus Syrak seith, 'A man that is joyous and glad  
 in herte,  
 it hym conserveth florissynge in his age; but soothly sorweful herte  
 maketh his bones drye.'

He seith eek thus, that sorwe in herte sleeth ful many a man.  
 Salomon seith that right as motthes in the shepes flees anoyeth to the  
 clothes,  
 and the smale wormes to the tree, right so anoyeth sorwe to the herte.  
 Wherfore us oghte, as wel in the deeth of oure children  
 as in the los of oure othere goodes temporels, have pacience.  
 Remembre yow upon the pacient Job. Whan he hadde lost his children  
 and his temporeel substance,  
 and in his body endured and receyved ful many a grevous tribulacion,  
 yet seyde he thus:

1000 'Oure Lord hath yeve it me; oure Lord hath biraft it me; right as  
 oure Lord hath wold,

1000A right so it is doon; blessed be the name of oure Lord!"  
To this forseide thynges answerde Melibeus unto his wyf Prudence:  
"Alle thy wordes," quod he,  
"been sothe and therto profitable, but trewely myn herte is troubled  
with this sorwe  
so greuously that I noot what to doone."  
"Lat calle," quod Prudence, "thy trewe freendes alle and thy lynage  
whiche that been wise. Telleth youre cas,  
and herkneth what they seye in conseillyng, and yow governe after  
hire sentence.  
Salomon seith, 'Werk alle thy thynges by conseil, and thou shalt never  
repente.'"  
Thanne, by the conseil of his wyf Prudence, this Melibeus leet callen a  
greet congregacion of folk,  
as surgiens, phisiciens, olde folk and yonge, and somme of his olde  
enemys reconsiled  
as by hir semblaunt to his love and into his grace;  
and therwithal ther coomen somme of his neighebores that diden hym  
reverence  
moore for drede than for love, as it happeth ofte.  
Ther coomen also ful many subtille flatereres and wise advocatz  
lerner in the lawe.  
And whan this folk togidre assembled weren, this Melibeus in  
sorweful wise shewed hem his cas.  
And by the manere of his speche it semed that in herte he baar a  
cruel ire,  
redy to doon vengeance upon his foes, and sodeynly desired that the  
werre sholde bigynne;  
1010 but natheles, yet axed he hire conseil upon this matiere.  
A surgien, by licence and assent of swiche as weren wise, up roos  
and to Melibeus seyde as ye may heere:  
"Sire," quod he, "as to us surgiens aperteneth that we do to every  
wight the beste that we kan,  
where as we been withholde, and to oure pacientz that we do no  
damage,  
wherfore it happeth many tyme and ofte that whan twey men han  
everich wounded oother,  
oon same surgien heeleth hem bothe;  
wherfore unto oure art it is nat pertinent to norice werre ne parties to  
supporte.  
But certes, as to the warisshynge of youre doghter, al be it so that she  
perilously be wounded,

we shullen do so ententif bisynesse fro day to nyght that with the grace of God

she shal be hool and sound as soone as is possible."

Almoost right in the same wise the phisiciens answerden, save that they seyden a fewe woordes moore:

that right as maladies been cured by hir contraries, right so shul men warisshe werre by vengeaunce.

His neighebores ful of envye, his feyned freendes that semeden reconsiled, and his flatereres

maden semblant of wepyng, and empeireden and agreggeden muchel of this matiere

in preisyng greetly Melibee of myght, of power, of richesse, and of freendes, despisyng the power of his adversaries,

1020 and seiden outrely that he anon sholde wreken hym on his foes and bigynne werre.

Up roos thanne an advocat that was wys,

by leve and by conseil of othere that were wise, and seide:

"Lordynges, the nede for which we been assembled in this place

is a ful hevy thyng and an heigh matiere,

by cause of the wrong and of the wikkednesse that hath be doon,

and eek by resoun of the grete damages that in tyme comynge

been possible to fallen for this same cause,

and eek by resoun of the grete richesse and power of the parties bothe,

for the whiche resouns it were a ful greet peril to erren in this matiere.

Wherfore, Melibeus, this is oure sentence: we conseilte yow aboven alle thyng that right anon thou do thy diligence

in kepyng of thy propre persone in swich a wise

that thou ne wante noon espie ne wacche thy persone for to save.

And after that, we conseilte that in thyn hous thou sette sufficeant garnisoun

so that they may as wel thy body as thyn hous defende.

But certes, for to moeve werre, ne sodeynly for to doon vengeaunce, we may nat demen

in so litel tyme that it were profitable.

Wherfore we axen leyser and espace to have deliberacion in this cas to deme.

1030 For the commune proverbe seith thus: 'He that soone deemeth, soone shal repente.'

And eek men seyn that thilke juge is wys that soone understondeth a matiere and juggeth by leyser;

for al be it so that alle tariyng be anoyful,  
algates it is nat to repreve in yevyng of juggement ne in vengeance  
takyng,  
whan it is sufficeant and resonable.  
And that shewed oure Lord Jhesu Crist by ensample, for whan that the  
womman that was taken in avowtrie  
was broght in his presence to knowen what sholde be doon with hire  
persone, al be it so that he wiste wel hymself what  
that he wolde answeere, yet ne wolde he nat answeere sodeynly,  
but he wolde have deliberacion, and in the ground he wroot twies.  
And by thise causes we axen deliberacioun, and we shal thanne, by the  
grace of God, conseil the  
thyng that shal be profitable."

Up stirten thanne the yonge folk atones, and the mooste partie of that  
campaignye han scorned this olde wise  
man, and bigonnen to make noyse, and seyden that  
right so as whil that iren is hoot men sholden smyte,  
right so men sholde wreken hir wronges whil that they been fresshe  
and newe;

and with loud voys they criden "Werre! Werre!"

Up roos tho oon of thise olde wise, and with his hand made  
contenaunce that

men sholde holden hem stille and yeven hym audience.

"Lordynges," quod he, "ther is ful many a man that crieth `Werre,  
werre!"

that woot ful litel what werre amounteth.

Werre at his bigynnyng hath so greet an entryng and so large that  
every wight may entre

whan hym liketh and lightly fynde werre;

1040 but certes what ende that shal therof bifalle, it is nat light to  
knowe.

For soothly, whan that werre is ones bigonne, ther is ful many a child  
unborn of his mooder

that shal sterve yong by cause of thilke werre, or elles lyve in sorwe  
and dye in wrecchednesse.

And therefore, er that any werre bigynne, men moste have greet  
conseil and greet deliberacion."

And whan this olde man wende to enforcen his tale by resons, wel ny  
alle atones bigonne they

to rise for to breken his tale, and beden hym ful ofte his wordes for to  
abregge.

For soothly, he that precheth to hem that listen nat heeren his wordes,



his sermon hem anoieth.

For Jhesus Syrak seith that "musik in wepyng is a noyous thyng"; this is to seyn:

as muche availleth to speken bifore folk to which his speche anoyeth as it is to synge biforn hym that wepeth.

And whan this wise man saugh that hym wanted audience, al shamefast he sette hym doun agayn.

For Salomon seith: "Ther as thou ne mayst have noon audience, enforce thee nat to speke."

"I see wel," quod this wise man, "that the commune proverbe is sooth, that

`good conseil wanteth whan it is moost nede.'"

Yet hadde this Melibeus in his conseil many folk that prively in his eere conseilled hym certeyn thyng,

and conseilled hym the contrarie in general audience.

1050 Whan Melibeus hadde herd that the gretteste partie of his conseil weren accorded that he sholde maken werre,

1050A anoon he consented to hir conseillyng and fully affermed hire sentence.

Thanne dame Prudence, whan that she saugh how that hir housbonde shoop hym for to wreken hym on his

foes and to bigynne werre, she in ful humble wise, whan she saugh hir tyme, seide to hym thise wordes:

"My lord," quod she, "I yow biseche, as hertely as I dar and kan, ne haste yow nat to faste and, for alle gerdons, as yeveth me audience.

For Piers Alfonce seith, `Whoso that dooth to thee oother good or harm, haste thee nat to quiten it,

for in this wise thy freend wole abyde and thyn enemy shal the lenger lyve in drede.'

The proverbe seith, `He hasteth wel that wisely kan abyde,' and `in wikked haste is no profit.'"

This Melibee answerde unto his wyf Prudence: "I purpose nat," quod he, "to werke by thy conseil,

for many causes and resouns. For certes, every wight wolde holde me thanne a fool;

this is to seyn, if I, for thy conseillyng, wolde chaungen

thynges that been ordeyned and affermed by so manye wyse.

Secoundely, I seye that alle wommen been wikke, and noon good of hem alle.

For `of a thousand men,' seith Salomon, `I foond o good man, but certes,

of alle wommen, good womman foond I nevere.'

And also, certes, if I governed me by thy conseil,  
it sholde seme that I hadde yeve to thee over me the maistrie,  
and God forbede that it so weere!

For Jhesus Syrak seith that `if the wyf have maistrie, she is contrarious  
to hir housbonde.'

1060 And Salomon seith: `Nevere in thy lyf to thy wyf, ne to thy child,  
ne to thy freend

1060A ne yeve no power over thyself, for bettre it were that thy  
children

1060B aske of thy persone thynges that hem nedeth than thou see  
thyself

1060C in the handes of thy children.'

And also if I wolde werke by thy conseillyng, certes, my conseil moste  
som tyme be secree,

til it were tyme that it moste be knowe, and this ne may noght be.

Whanne dame Prudence, ful debonairly and with greet pacience,  
hadde herd al that hir housbonde liked for to seye,  
thanne axed she of hym licence for to speke, and seyde in this wise:  
"My lord," quod she, "as to youre firste resoun, certes it may lightly  
been answered. For I seye that

it is no folie to chaunge conseil whan the thyng is chaunged,  
or elles whan the thyng semeth ootherweyes than it was biforn.

And mooreover, I seye that though ye han sworn and bihight to  
perfourne youre emprise, and nathelees ye weyve  
to perfourne thilke same emprise by juste cause, men sholde nat seyn  
therfore that ye were a liere ne forsworn.

For the book seith that `the wise man maketh no lesyng whan he  
turneth his corage to the bettre.'

And al be it so that youre emprise be establised and ordeyned by  
greet multitude of folk,

yet thar ye nat accomplice thilke ordinaunce but yow like.

For the trouthe of thynges and the profit been rather founden in fewe  
folk that been wise and

ful of resoun than by greet multitude of folk ther every man crieth and  
clatereth what that hym liketh.

Soothly swich multitude is nat honest.

1070 And as to the seconde resoun, where as ye seyn that alle  
wommen been wikke;

1070A save youre grace, certes ye despisen alle women in this wyse,  
and

1070B `he that al despiseth, al displeseth,' as seith the book.

And Senec seith that `whoso wole have sapience shal no man

dispreyse,  
 but he shal gladly techen the science that he kan withouten  
 presumpcion or pride;  
 and swiche thynges as he noght ne kan, he shal nat been ashamed to  
 lerne hem,  
 and enquire of lasse folk than hymself.'  
 And, sire, that ther hath been many a good womman may lightly be  
 preved.  
 For certes, sire, oure Lord Jhesu Crist wolde nevere have descended to  
 be born of a womman,  
 if alle wommen hadden been wikke.  
 And after that, for the grete bountee that is in wommen,  
 oure Lord Jhesu Crist, whan he was risen fro deeth to lyve,  
 appeered rather to a womman than to his Apostles.  
 And though that Salomon seith that he ne foond nevere womman  
 good,  
 it folweth nat therfore that alle wommen ben wikke.  
 For though that he ne foond no good womman, certes,  
 many another man hath founden many a womman ful good and trewe.  
 Or elles, per aventure, the entente of Salomon was this:  
 that, as in sovereyn bounte, he foond no womman --  
 this is to seyn, that ther is no wight that hath sovereyn bountee save  
 God allone,  
 as he hymself recordeth in hys Evaungelie.  
 1080 For ther nys no creature so good that hym ne wanteth  
 1080A somewhat of the perfeccioun of God, that is his makere.  
 Youre thridde reson is this: ye seyn that if ye governe yow by my  
 conseil,  
 it sholde seme that ye hadde yeve me the maistrie and the lordshipe  
 over youre persone.  
 Sire, save youre grace, it is nat so. For if it so were that no man sholde  
 be conseilled  
 but oonly of hem that hadden lordshipe and maistrie of his persone,  
 men wolden nat be conseilled so ofte.  
 For soothly thilke man that asketh conseil of a purpos, yet hath he free  
 choys  
 wheither he wole werke by that conseil or noon.  
 And as to youre fourthe resoun, ther ye seyn that the janglerie of  
 wommen kan hyde thynges that they  
 wot noght, as who seith that a womman kan nat hyde that she woot;  
 sire, thise wordes been understonde of wommen that been  
 jangleresses and wikked;

of whiche wommen men seyn that thre thynges dryven a man out of his hous --

that is to seyn, smoke, droppynge of reyn, and wikked wyves;

and of swiche wommen seith Salomon that

'it were bettre dwelle in desert than with a womman that is riotous.'

And sire, by youre leve, that am nat I,

for ye han ful ofte assayed my grete silence and my grete pacience, and eek how wel that

I kan hyde and hele thynges that men oghte secreely to hyde.

1090 And soothly, as to youre fifthe resoun, where as ye seyn that in wikked conseil wommen venquisshe men,

1090A God woot, thilke resoun stant heere in no stede.

For understood now, ye asken conseil to do wikkednesse;

and if ye wole werken wikkednesse, and youre wif restreyneth thilke wikked purpos,

and overcometh yow by reson and by good conseil,

certes youre wyf oghte rather to be preised than yblamed.

Thus sholde ye understonde the philosophre that seith, 'In wikked conseil wommen venquisshe hir housbondes.'

And ther as ye blamen alle wommen and hir resouns, I shal shewe yow by manye ensamples that

many a womman hath ben ful good, and yet been, and hir conseils ful hoolsome and profitable.

Eek som men han seyde that the conseillynge of wommen

is outhur to deere or elles to litel of pris.

But al be it so that ful many a womman is badde and hir conseil vile and noght worth,

yet han men founde ful many a good womman, and ful discret and wis in conseillynge.

Loo, Jacob by good conseil of his mooder Rebekka wan the benysoun of Ysaak his fader

and the lordshipe over alle his bretheren.

Judith by hire good conseil delivered the citee of Bethulie, in which she dwelled,

out of the handes of Olofernus, that hadde it biseged and wolde have al destroyed it.

1100 Abygail delivered Nabal hir housbonde fro David the kyng, that wolde have slayn hym,

1100A and apayed the ire of the kyng by hir wit and by hir good conseillyng.

Hester by hir good conseil enhaunced greetly the peple of God in the regne of Assuerus the kyng.

And the same bountee in good conseil of many a good womman  
may men telle.

And moreover, whan our Lord hadde creat Adam, our forme fader,  
he seyde in this wise:

'It is nat good to been a man alloone; make we to hym an helpe  
semblable to hymself.'

Heere may ye se that if that wommen were nat goode, and hir conseil  
goode and profitable,

our Lord God of hevene wolde nevere han wrought hem,

ne called hem help of man, but rather confusioun of man.

And ther seyde oones a clerk in two vers, 'What is bettre than gold?  
Jaspre.

What is bettre than jaspre? Wisdom.

And what is better than wisdom? Womman. And what is bettre than  
a good womman? Nothyng.'

And, sire, by manye of othere resons may ye seen that

manye wommen been goode, and hir conseil goode and profitable.

1110 And therefore, sire, if ye wol triste to my conseil, I shal restoore  
yow youre doghter hool and sound.

And eek I wol do to yow so muche that ye shul have honour in this  
cause."

Whan Melibee hadde herd the wordes of his wyf Prudence, he seyde  
thus:

"I se wel that the word of Salomon is sooth.

He seith that 'wordes that been spoken discreetly by ordinaunce been  
honycombes,

for they yeven swetnesse to the soule and hoolsomnesse to the body.'

And, wyf, by cause of thy sweete wordes, and eek for I have assayed  
and preved thy grete sapience

and thy grete trouthe, I wol governe me by thy conseil in alle thyng."

"Now, sire," quod dame Prudence, "and syn ye vouche sauf to been  
governed by my conseil,

I wol enforme yow how ye shul governe yourself in chesynge of youre  
conseillours.

Ye shul first in alle youre werkes mekely biseken to the heighe God  
that he wol be youre conseilour;

and shapeth yow to swich entente that he yeve yow conseil and

confort, as taughte Thobie his sone:

'At alle tymes thou shalt blesse God, and praye hym to dresse thy  
weyes,

and looke that alle thy conseil been in hym for everemoore.'

Seint Jame eek seith: 'If any of yow have nede of sapience, axe it of

God.'

1120 And afterward thanne shul ye taken conseil in youreself,  
1120A and examyne wel youre thoghtes of swich thyng as yow  
thynketh that is best for youre profit.

And thanne shul ye dryve fro youre herte thre thynges that been  
contrariouse to good conseil;

that is to seyn, ire, coveitise, and hastifnesse.

"First, he that axeth conseil of hymself, certes he moste been  
withouten ire, for manye causes.

The firste is this: he that hath greet ire and wratthe in hymself, he  
weneth alwey that

he may do thyng that he may nat do.

And secoundely, he that is irous and wrooth, he ne may nat wel deme;  
and he that may nat wel deme, may nat wel conseil.

The thridde is this, that he that is irous and wrooth, as seith Senec,  
ne may nat speke but blameful thynges,  
and with his viciouse wordes he stireth oother folk to angre and to ire.  
And eek, sire, ye moste dryve coveitise out of youre herte.

1130 For the Apostle seith that coveitise is roote of alle harmes.

And trust wel that a coveitous man ne kan noght deme ne thynke,  
but oonly to fulfille the ende of his coveitise;  
and certes, that ne may nevere been accompliced,  
for evere the moore habundaunce that he hath of richesse, the moore  
he desireth.

And, sire, ye moste also dryve out of youre herte hastifnesse; for  
certes,

ye ne may nat deeme for the beste by a sodeyn thought that falleth in  
youre herte,

but ye moste avyse yow on it ful ofte.

For, as ye herde her biforn, the commune proverbe is this, that 'he  
that soone deemeth, soone repenteth.'

Sire, ye ne be nat alwey in lyk disposicioun;

for certes, somthyng that somtyme semeth to yow that it is good for to  
do,

another tyme it semeth to yow the contrarie.

"Whan ye han taken conseil in youreself and han deemed by good  
deliberacion swich thyng as you semeth best,  
thanne rede I yow that ye kepe it secree.

1140 Biwrey nat youre conseil to no persone, but if so be that ye  
wenen sikerly that

1140A thurgh youre biwreyng youre condicioun shal be to yow the  
moore profitable.

For Jhesus Syrak seith, 'Neither to thy foo ne to thy frend discovere  
nat thy secree ne thy folie,

for they wol yeve yow audience and lookynge and supportacioun in  
thy presence and scorne thee in thyn absence.'

Another clerk seith that 'scarsly shaltou fynden any persone that may  
kepe conseil secretly.'

The book seith, 'Whil that thou kepest thy conseil in thyn herte, thou  
kepest it in thy prisoun,

and whan thou biwreyest thy conseil to any wight, he holdeth thee in  
his snare.'

And therefore yow is bettre to hyde youre conseil in youre herte than  
praye him

to whom ye han biwreyed youre conseil that he wole kepen it cloos  
and stille.

For Seneca seith: 'If so be that thou ne mayst nat thyn owene conseil  
hyde,

how darstou prayen any oother wight thy conseil secretly to kepe?'

But nathelees, if thou wene sikerly that the biwreiyng of thy conseil to  
a persone wol make

thy condicion to stonden in the bettre plyt, thanne shaltou tellen hym  
thy conseil in this wise.

First thou shalt make no semblant wheither thee were levere pees or  
werre, or this or that,

ne shewe hym nat thy wille and thyn entente.

1150 For trust wel that comunli thise conseilours been flatereres,

namely the conseilours of grete lordes,

for they enforcen hem alwey rather to speken plesante wordes,

enclynyng to the lordes lust,

than wordes that been trewe or profitable.

And therefore men seyn that the riche man hath seeld good conseil, but  
if he have it of hymself.

And after that thou shalt considere thy freendes and thyne enemys.

And as touchynge thy freendes, thou shalt considere which of hem  
been

moost feithful and moost wise and eldest and most approved in  
conseillyng;

and of hem shalt thou aske thy conseil, as the caas requireth.

I seye that first ye shul clepe to youre conseil youre freendes that been  
trewe.

For Salomon seith that 'right as the herte of a man deliteth in savour  
that is soote,

right so the conseil of trewe freendes yeveth swetnesse to the soule.'

He seith also, 'Ther may no thyng be likned to the trewe freend,  
1160 for certes gold ne silver ben nat so muche worth as the goode  
wyl of a trewe freend.'

And eek he seith that 'a trewe freend is a strong deffense; who so that  
it fyndeth,

certes he fyndeth a greet tresour.'

Thanne shul ye eek considere if that youre trewe freendes been  
discrete and wise.

For the book seith, 'Axe alwey thy conseil of hem that been wise.'

And by this same resoun shul ye clepen to youre conseil of youre  
freendes that been of age,

swiche as han seyn and been expert in manye thynges and been  
approved in conseillynges.

For the book seith that 'in olde men is the sapience, and in longe tyme  
the prudence.'

And Tullius seith that 'grete thynges ne been nat ay accompliced by  
strengthe, ne by delivernesse of body, but

by good conseil, by auctoritee of persones, and by science; the whiche  
thre thynges ne been nat fieble by age,

but certes they enforcen and encreescen day by day.'

And thanne shul ye kepe this for a general reule: First shul ye clepen  
to youre conseil

a fewe of youre freendes that been especiale;

for Salomon seith, 'Manye freendes have thou, but among a thousand  
chese thee oon to be thy conseilour.'

For al be it so that thou first ne telle thy conseil but to a fewe,

thou mayst afterward telle it to mo folk if it be nede.

But looke alwey that thy conseilours have thilke thre condiciouns  
that I have seyde bifore --

that is to seyn, that they be trewe, wise, and of oold experience.

1170 And werke nat alwey in every nede by oon counseillour allone;

1170A for somtyme bihooveth it to been conseilled by manye.

For Salomon seith, 'Salvacion of thynges is where as ther been manye  
conseillours.'

"Now, sith that I have toold yow of which folk ye sholde been  
counseilled, now

wol I teche yow which conseil ye oghte to eschewe.

First, ye shul eschue the conseillyng of fooles; for Salomon seith, 'Taak  
no conseil of a fool,

for he ne kan noght conseille but after his owene lust and his  
affeccioun.'

The book seith that 'the propretee of a fool is this: he troweth lightly



harm of every wight,  
 and lightly troweth alle bountee in hymself.'  
 Thou shalt eek eschue the conseillyng of alle flatereres, swiche as  
 enforcen hem rather to preise youre persone  
 by flaterye than for to telle yow the soothfastnesse of thynges.  
 Wherfore Tullius seith, 'Amonges alle the pestilences that been in  
 freendshipe the gretteste is flaterie.'  
 And therefore is it moore nede that thou eschue and drede flatereres  
 than any oother peple.  
 The book seith, 'Thou shalt rather drede and flee fro the sweete  
 wordes of flaterynge preiseres  
 than fro the egre wordes of thy freend that seith thee thy sothes.'  
 Salomon seith that 'the wordes of a flaterere is a snare to cacche with  
 innocentz.'  
 He seith also that 'he that speketh to his freend wordes of swetnesse  
 and of plesaunce  
 setteth a net biforn his feet to cacche hym.'  
 1180 And therefore seith Tullius, 'Enclyne nat thyne eres to flatereres,  
 ne taak no conseil of the wordes of flaterye.'  
 And Caton seith, 'Avyse thee wel, and eschue the wordes of swetnesse  
 and of plesaunce.'  
 And eek thou shalt eschue the conseillyng of thyne olde enemys that  
 been reconsiled.  
 The book seith that 'no wight retourneth sauflly into the grace of his  
 olde enemy.'  
 And Isope seith, 'Ne trust nat to hem to whiche thou hast had som  
 tyme werre or enemytee,  
 ne telle hem nat thy conseil.'  
 And Seneca telleth the cause why: 'It may nat be,' seith he, 'that where  
 greet  
 fyr hath longe tyme endured, that ther ne dwelleth som vapour of  
 warmnesse.'  
 And therefore seith Salomon, 'In thyn olde foo trust nevere.'  
 For sikerly, though thyn enemy be reconsiled, and maketh thee chiere  
 of humylitee,  
 and lowteth to thee with his heed, ne trust hym nevere.  
 For certes he maketh thilke feyned humilitee moore for his profit than  
 for any love of thy persone,  
 by cause that he deemeth to have victorie over thy persone by swich  
 feyned contenance,  
 the which victorie he myghte nat have by strif or werre.  
 And Peter Alfonce seith, 'Make no felawshipe with thyne olde enemys,

for if thou do hem bountee,  
they wol perverten it into wikkednesse.'  
1190 And eek thou most eschue the conseillyng of hem that been thy  
servantz and beren thee greet reverence,  
1190A for peraventure they seyn it moore for drede than for love.  
And therefore seith a philosophre in this wise:  
'Ther is no wight parfitly trewe to hym that he to soore dredeth.'  
And Tullius seith, 'Ther nys no myght so greet of any emperour that  
longe may endure,  
but if he have moore love of the peple than drede.'  
Thou shalt also eschue the conseiling of folk that been dronkelewe, for  
they ne kan no conseil hyde.  
For Salomon seith, 'Ther is no privetee ther as regneth dronkenesse.'  
Ye shul also han in suspect the conseillyng of swich folk as  
conseille yow o thyng prively and conseille yow the contrarie openly.  
For Cassidorie seith that 'it is a manere sleighte to hyndre,  
whan he sheweth to doon o thyng openly and werketh prively the  
contrarie.'  
Thou shalt also have in suspect the conseillyng of wikked folk. For the  
book seith,  
'The conseillyng of wikked folk is alwey ful of fraude.'  
And David seith, 'Blisful is that man that hath nat folwed the  
conseilyng of shrewes.'  
Thou shalt also eschue the conseillyng of yong folk, for hir conseil is  
nat rype.  
1200 "Now, sire, sith I have shewed yow of which folk ye shul take  
youre conseil  
1200A and of which folk ye shul folwe the conseil,  
now wol I teche yow how ye shal examyne youre conseil, after the  
doctrine of Tullius.  
In the examynyng thanne of youre conseillour ye shul considere  
manye thynges.  
Alderfirst thou shalt considere that in thilke thyng that thou  
purposest, and upon what thyng thou wolt have conseil,  
that verray trouthe be seyed and conserved; this is to seyn, telle  
trewely thy tale.  
For he that seith fals may nat wel be conseilled in that cas of which he  
lieth.  
And after this thou shalt considere the thynges that acorden to that  
thou purposest  
for to do by thy conseillours, if resoun accorde therto,  
and eek if thy myght may atteine therto, and if the moore part

and the bettre part of thy conseilours acorde therto, or noon.  
 Thanne shaltou considere what thyng shal folwe of that conseillyng,  
 as hate, pees, werre, grace, profit, or damage, and manye othere  
 thynges.

And in alle thise thynges thou shalt chese the beste and weyve alle  
 othere thynges.

Thanne shaltow considere of what roote is engendred the matiere of  
 thy conseil

and what fruyt it may conceyve and engendre.

1210 Thou shalt eek considere alle thise causes, fro whennes they  
 been sprongen.

And whan ye han examyned youre conseil, as I have seyde, and which  
 partie is the bettre

and moore profitable, and han approved it by manye wise folk and  
 olde,

thanne shaltou considere if thou mayst parfournen it and maken of it a  
 good ende.

For certes resoun wol nat that any man sholde bigynne a thyng

but if he myghte parfournen it as hym oghte;

ne no wight sholde take upon hym so hevy a charge that he myghte  
 nat bere it.

For the proverbe seith, 'He that to muche embraceth, distreyneth  
 litel.'

And Catoun seith, 'Assay to do swich thyng as thou hast power to  
 doon,

lest that the charge oppresse thee so soore that

thee bihoveth to weyve thyng that thou hast bigonne.'

And if so be that thou be in doute wheither thou mayst parfournen a  
 thing or noon,

chese rather to suffren than bigynne.

And Piers Alphonse seith, 'If thou hast myght to doon a thyng of which  
 thou most repente,

it is bettre "nay" than "ye."'

This is to seyn, that thee is bettre holde thy tonge stille than for to  
 speke.

1220 Thanne may ye understonde by strengere resons that if thou hast  
 power to parfournen a werk

1220A of which thou shalt repente, thanne is it bettre that thou suffren  
 than bigynne.

Wel seyn they that defenden every wight to assaye a thyng of which  
 he is in doute

wheither he may parfournen it or noon.

And after, whan ye han examyned youre conseil, as I have seyde bifore,  
and knowen wel that  
ye may parfournen youre emprise, conferme it thanne sadly til it be at  
an ende.

"Now is it resoun and tyme that I shewe yow whanne and wherfore  
that

ye may chaunge youre conseil withouten youre repreve.

Soothly, a man may chaungen his purpos and his conseil if the cause  
cesseth,

or whan a newe caas bitydeth.

For the lawe seith that `upon thynges that newly bityden bihoveth  
newe conseil.'

And Senec seith, `If thy conseil is comen to the eeris of thyn enemy,  
chaunge thy conseil.'

Thou mayst also chaunge thy conseil if so be that thou fynde that by  
errour,

or by oother cause, harm or damage may bityde.

Also if thy conseil be dishonest, or ellis cometh of dishonest cause,  
chaunge thy conseil.

For the lawes seyn that `alle bihestes that been dishoneste been of no  
value';

1230 and eek if so be that it be impossible, or may nat goodly be  
parfourned or kept.

"And take this for a general reule, that every conseil that is affermed  
so strongly that it may nat

be chaunged for no condicioun that may bityde, I seye that thilke  
conseil is wikked."

This Melibeus, whanne he hadde herd the doctrine of his wyf dame  
Prudence, answerde in this wyse:

"Dame," quod he, "as yet into this tyme ye han wel and covenably  
taught me as in general how

I shal governe me in the chesyng and in the withholdynge of my  
conseillours.

But now wolde I fayn that ye wolde condescende in especial  
and telle me how liketh yow, or what semeth yow, by oure  
conseillours

that we han chosen in oure present nede."

"My lord," quod she, "I biseke yow in al humblesse that ye wol nat  
wilfully replie agayn my resouns,

ne distempre youre herte, thogh I speke thyng that yow displese.

For God woot that, as in myn entente, I speke it for youre beste,  
for youre honour, and for youre profite eke.

And soothly, I hope that youre benyngnytee wol taken it in pacience.  
Trusteth me wel," quod she, "that youre conseil as in this caas ne  
sholde nat, as to speke properly,

be called a conseillyng, but a mocioun or a moevyng of folye,  
1240 in which conseil ye han erred in many a sondry wise.

"First and forward, ye han erred in th' assemblynge of youre  
conseillours.

For ye sholde first have cleped a fewe folk to youre conseil, and after  
ye myghte han shewed it  
to mo folk, if it hadde been nede.

But certes, ye han sodeynly cleped to youre conseil a greet multitude  
of peple,

ful chargeant and ful anoyous for to heere.

Also ye han erred, for theras ye sholden oonly have cleped to youre  
conseil

your trewe frendes olde and wise,

ye han ycleped straunge folk, yonge folk, false flatereres, and enemys  
reconsiled,

and folk that doon yow reverence withouten love.

And eek also ye have erred, for ye han broght with yow to youre  
conseil ire, coveitise, and hastifnesse,

the whiche thre thinges been contrariouse to every conseil honest and  
profitable;

the whiche thre thinges ye han nat anientissed or destroyed hem,  
neither in youreself, ne in youre conseillours, as yow oghte.

Ye han erred also, for ye han shewed to youre conseillours

your talent and youre affeccoun to make werre anon and for to do  
vengeance.

1250 They han espied by youre wordes to what thyng ye been  
enclyned;

and therefore han they rather conseilled yow to youre talent than to  
your profit.

Ye han erred also, for it semeth that yow suffiseth

to han been conseilled by thise conseillours oonly, and with litel avys,  
whereas in so greet and so heigh a nede it hadde been necessarie mo  
conseillours

and moore deliberacion to parfourne youre emprise.

Ye han erred also, for ye ne han nat examyned youre conseil in the  
forseyde manere,

ne in due manere, as the caas requireth.

Ye han erred also, for ye han maked no division bitwixe youre  
conseillours -- this is to seyn,

bitwixen youre trewe freendes and youre feyned conseilours --  
ne ye han nat knowe the wil of youre trewe freendes olde and wise,  
but ye han cast alle hire wordes in an hochepot, and enclyned youre  
herte to the moore part  
and to the gretter nombre, and there been ye condescended.  
And sith ye woot wel that men shal alwey fynde a gretter nombre of  
fooles than of wise men,  
and therfore the conseils that been at congregaciouns and multitudes  
of folk, there as men take moore reward  
to the nombre than to the sapience of persones,  
1260 ye se wel that in swiche conseillynges fooles han the maistrie."  
Melibeus answerde agayn, and seyde, "I graunte wel that I have erred;  
but there as thou hast toold me heerbiforn  
that he nys nat to blame that chaungeth his conseilours in certain  
caas and for certeine juste causes,  
I am al redy to chaunge my conseilours right as thow wolt devyse.  
The proverbe seith that `for to do synne is mannyssh,  
but certes for to persevere longe in synne is werk of the devel."  
To this sentence answered anon dame Prudence, and seyde,  
"Examineth," quod she, "your conseil, and lat us see  
the whiche of hem han spoken most resonably and taught yow best  
conseil.  
And for as muche as that the examynacion is necessarie, lat us  
bigynne at the surgiens  
and at the phisiciens, that first speeken in this matiere.  
I sey yow that the surgiens and phisiciens han seyde yow in youre  
conseil discreetly, as hem oughte,  
and in hir speche seyden ful wisely that to the office of hem  
aperteneth to doon to every wight  
honour and profit, and no wight for to anoye,  
1270 and after hir craft to doon greet diligence  
1270A unto the cure of hem which that they han in hir governaunce.  
And, sire, right as they han answered wisely and discreetly,  
right so rede I that they been heighly and sovereynly gerdoned for hir  
noble speche,  
and eek for they sholde do the moore ententif bisynesse in the  
curacion of youre doghter deere.  
For al be it so that they been youre freendes, therfore shal ye nat  
suffren  
that they serve yow for noght,  
but ye oughte the rather gerdone hem and shewe hem youre largesse.  
And as touchynge the proposicioun which that the phisiciens

encreesceden in this caas -- this is to seyn,  
that in maladies that oon contrarie is warissshed by another contrarie -

-  
I wolde fayn knowe hou ye understonde thilke text, and what is youre sentence."

"Certes," quod Melibeus, "I understonde it in this wise:  
1280 that right as they han doon me a contrarie, right so sholde I doon hem another.

For right as they han venged hem on me and doon me wrong,  
right so shal I venge me upon hem and doon hem wrong;  
and thanne have I cured oon contrarie by another."

"Lo, lo," quod dame Prudence, "how lightly is every man enclined to his owene desir

and to his owene plesaunce!

Certes," quod she, "the wordes of the phisiciens ne sholde nat han been understonden in thys wise.

For certes, wikkednesse is nat contrarie to wikkednesse, ne vengeance to vengeance,

ne wrong to wrong, but they been semblable.

And therfore o vengeance is nat warissshed by another vengeance, ne o wroong by another wroong,

but everich of hem encreesceth and aggreggeth oother.

But certes, the wordes of the phisiciens sholde been understonden in this wise:

for good and wikkednesse been two contraries, and pees and werre, vengeance

and suffraunce, discord and accord, and manye othere thynges;

1290 but certes, wikkednesse shal be warissshed by goodnesse, discord by accord, werre by pees,

1290A and so forth of othere thynges.

And heerto accordeth Seint Paul the Apostle in manye places.

He seith, 'Ne yeldeth nat harm for harm, ne wikked speche for wikked speche,

but do wel to hym that dooth thee harm and blesse hym that seith to thee harm.'

And in manye othere places he amonesteth pees and accord.

But now wol I speke to yow of the conseil which that was yeven to yow

by the men of lawe and the wise folk,

that seyden alle by oon accord, as ye han herd bifore,

that over alle thynges ye shal doon youre diligence to kepen youre persone and to warnestoore youre hous;

and seyden also that in this caas yow oghten for to werken ful avysely and with greet deliberacioun.

And, sire, as to the firste point, that toucheth to the kepyng of youre persone,

1300 ye shul understonde that he that hath werre shal everemoore mekely and devoutly preyen, biforn alle thynges, that Jhesus Crist of his mercy wol han hym in his proteccion and been his sovereyn helpyng at his nede.

For certes, in this world ther is no wight that may be conseilled ne kept sufficeantly

withouten the kepyng of oure Lord Jhesu Crist.

To this sentence accordeth the prophete David, that seith,

'If God ne kepe the citee, in ydel waketh he that it kepeth.'

Now, sire, thanne shul ye committe the kepyng of youre persone to youre trewe freendes that been approved and yknowe, and of hem shul ye axen help youre persone for to kepe. For Catoun seith,

'If thou hast nede of help, axe it of thy freendes,

for ther nys noon so good a phisicien as thy trewe freend.'

And after this thanne shul ye kepe yow fro alle straunge folk, and fro lyeres,

and have alwey in suspect hire compaignye.

For Piers Alfonse seith, 'Ne taak no compaignye by the weye of a straunge man,

but if so be that thou have knowe hym of a lenger tyme.

1310 And if so be that he falle into thy compaignye paraventure, withouten thyn assent,

enquere thanne as subtilly as thou mayst of his conversacion, and of his lyf bifore, and feyne thy wey;

seye that [thou] wolt thider as thou wolt nat go;

and if he bereth a spere, hoold thee on the right syde,

and if he bere a swerd, hoold thee on the lift syde.'

And after this thanne shul ye kepe yow wisely from all swich manere peple as I have seyde bifore,

and hem and hir conseil eschewe.

And after this thanne shul ye kepe yow in swich manere

that, for any presumpcion of youre strengthe, that ye ne dispise nat, ne accompte nat the myght

of youre adversarie so litel that ye lete the kepyng of youre persone for youre presumpcioun,

for every wys man dredeth his enemy.

And Salomon seith, 'Weleful is he that of alle hath drede,



for certes, he that thurgh the hardynesse of his herte and thurgh the hardynesse of hymself hath

to greet presumpcioun, hym shal yvel bityde.'

Thanne shul ye everemoore contrewayte embusshementz and alle espiaille.

1320 For Senec seith that `the wise man that dredeth harmes, eschueth harmes,

ne he ne falleth into perils that perils eschueth.'

And al be it so that it seme that thou art in siker place,

yet shaltow alwey do thy diligence in kepyng of thy persone;

this is to seyn, ne be nat necligent to kepe thy persone

nat oonly fro thy gretteste enemys but fro thy leeste enemy.

Senec seith, `A man that is well avysed, he dredeth his leste enemy.'

Ovyde seith that `the litel wesele wol slee the grete bole and the wilde hert.'

And the book seith, `A litel thorn may prikke a kyng ful soore, and an hound wol holde the wilde boor.'

But nathelees, I sey nat thou shalt be so coward that thou doute ther wher as is no drede.

The book seith that `somme folk han greet lust to deceyve, but yet they dreden hem to be deceyved.'

Yet shaltou drede to been empoisoned and kepe the from the compaignye of scorneres.

1330 For the book seith, `With scorneres make no compaignye, but flee hire wordes as venym.'

"Now, as to the seconde point,

where as youre wise conseilours conseilled yow to warnestoore youre hous with gret diligence,

I wolde fayn knowe how that ye understonde thilke wordes and what is youre sentence."

Melibeus answerde and seyde, "Certes, I understande it in this wise:

That I shal warnestoore myn hous with toures,

swiche as han castelles and othere manere edifices, and armure, and artelries,

by whiche thynges I may my persone and myn hous so kepen and deffenden

that myne enemys shul been in drede myn hous for to approche."

To this sentence answerde anon Prudence: "Warnestooryng," quod she,

"of heighe toures and of grete edifices apperteyneth somtyme to pryde.

And eek men make heighe toures, [and grete edifices] with grete

costages and with greet travail,  
and whan that they been accompliced, yet be they nat worth a stree,  
but if they be defended by trewe freendes that been olde and wise.  
And understoond wel that the gretteste and strongeste garnysoun  
that a riche man may have,  
as wel to kepen his persone as his goodes, is  
that he be biloved with hys subgetz and with his neighebores.  
For thus seith Tullius, that `ther is a manere garnysoun  
that no man may venquysse ne disconfite, and that is  
1340 a lord to be biloved of his citezeins and of his peple.'  
Now, sire, as to the thridde point, where as youre olde  
and wise conseilours seyden that yow ne oghte nat sodeynly ne  
hastily proceden in this nede,  
but that yow oghte purveyen and apparailen yow in this caas with  
greet diligence and greet deliberacioun;  
trewely, I trowe that they seyden right wisely and right sooth.  
For Tullius seith, `In every nede, er thou bigynne it, apparaille thee  
with greet diligence.'  
Thanne seye I that in vengeance-takyng, in werre, in bataille, and in  
warnestooryng,  
er thou bigynne, I rede that thou apparaille thee therto, and do it with  
greet deliberacion.  
For Tullius seith that `longe apparaillyng biforn the bataille maketh  
short victorie.'  
And Cassidorus seith, `The garnysoun is stronger whan it is longe  
tyme avysed.'  
But now lat us speken of the conseil that was accorded by youre  
neighebores,  
swiche as doon yow reverence withouten love,  
1350 youre olde enemys reconsiled, youre flatereres,  
that conseilled yow certeyne thynges prively, and openly conseilleden  
yow the contrarie;  
the yonge folk also, that conseilleden yow to venge yow and make  
werre anon.  
And certes, sire, as I have seyde biforn, ye han greetly erred  
to han cleped swich manere folk to youre conseil,  
which conseilours been ynogh repreved by the resouns aforeseyd.  
But natheles, lat us now descende to the special. Ye shuln first  
procede after the doctrine of Tullius.  
Certes, the trouthe of this matiere, or of this conseil, nedeth nat  
diligently enquire,  
for it is wel wist whiche they been that han doon to yow this trespas

and vileynye,  
and how manye trespassours, and in what manere  
they han to yow doon al this wrong and al this vileynye.  
And after this, thanne shul ye examyne the seconde condicion which  
that the same Tullius addeth in this matiere.  
1360 For Tullius put a thyng which that he clepeth `consentyng'; this  
is to seyn,  
who been they, and whiche been they and how manye that consenten  
to thy conseil  
in thy wilfulnesse to doon hastif vengeance.  
And lat us considere also who been they, and how manye been they,  
and whiche been they that consenteden to youre adversaries.  
And certes, as to the firste poynt, it is wel knownen whiche folk been  
they that consenteden to youre hastif wilfulnesse,  
for trewely, alle tho that conseilleden yow to maken sodeyn werre ne  
been nat youre freendes.  
Lat us now considere whiche been they that ye holde so greetly youre  
freendes as to youre persone.  
For al be it so that ye be myghty and riche, certes ye ne been but  
allone,  
for certes ye ne han no child but a doghter,  
ne ye ne han bretheren, ne cosyns garmayns, ne noon oother neigh  
kynrede,  
wherfore that youre enemys for drede sholde stinte to plede with yow  
or to destroye youre persone.  
1370 Ye knowen also that youre richesches mooten been dispended in  
diverse parties,  
and whan that every wight hath his part, they ne wollen taken but litel  
reward to venge thy deeth.  
But thyne enemys been thre, and they han manie children, bretheren,  
cosyns, and oother ny kynrede.  
And though so were that thou haddest slayn of hem two or three, yet  
dwellen ther ynowe  
to wreken hir deeth and to sle thy persone.  
And though so be that youre kynrede be moore siker and stedefast  
than the kyn of youre adversarie,  
yet natheles youre kynrede nys but a fer kynrede; they been but litel  
syb to yow,  
and the kyn of youre enemys been ny syb to hem.  
And certes, as in that, hir condicioun is bet than youre.  
Thanne lat us considere also if the conseillyng of hem that  
conseilleden yow to taken sodeyn vengeance,

wheither it accorde to resoun.  
 And certes, ye knowe wel `nay.'  
 For, as by right and resoun, ther may no man taken vengeance on no  
 wight  
 but the juge that hath the jurisdiccoun of it,  
 1380 whan it is graunted hym to take thilke vengeance hastily or  
 attemprely, as the lawe requireth.  
 And yet mooreover of thilke word that Tullius clepeth `consentyng,'  
 thou shalt considere if thy myght and thy power may consenten  
 and suffise to thy wilfulnesse and to thy conseilours.  
 And certes thou mayst wel seyn that `nay.'  
 For sikerly, as for to speke proprely, we may do no thyng  
 but oonly swich thyng as we may doon rightfully.  
 And certes rightfully ne mowe ye take no vengeance, as of youre  
 propre auctoritee.  
 Thanne mowe ye seen that youre power ne consenteth nat, ne  
 accordeth nat, with youre wilfulnesse.  
 "Lat us now examyne the thridde point, that Tullius clepeth  
 `consequent.'  
 Thou shalt understonde that the vengeance that thou purposest for to  
 take is the consequent;  
 and therof folweth another vengeaunce, peril, and werre, and othere  
 damages withoute nombre,  
 of whiche we be nat war, as at this tyme.  
 1390 And as touchyng the fourthe point, that Tullius clepeth  
 `engendryng,'  
 thou shalt considere that this wrong which that is doon to thee  
 is engendred of the hate of thyne enemys,  
 and of the vengeance-takyng upon that wolde engendre another  
 vengeance,  
 and muchel sorwe and wastyng of riches, as I seyde.  
 "Now, sire, as to the point that Tullius clepeth `causes,' which that is  
 the laste point,  
 thou shalt understonde that the wrong that thou hast receyved hath  
 certeine causes,  
 whiche that clerkes clepen Oriens and Efficiens, and Causa longinqua  
 and Causa propinqua;  
 this is to seyn, the fer cause and the ny cause.  
 The fer cause is almyghty God, that is cause of alle thynges.  
 The neer cause is thy thre enemys.  
 The cause accidental was hate.  
 The cause material been the fyve woundes of thy doghter.

1400 The cause formal is the manere of hir werkynge that broghten laddres and cloumben in at thy wyndowes.

The cause final was for to sle thy doghter. It letted nat in as muche as in hem was.

But for to speken of the fer cause, as to what ende they shul come, or what shal finally

bityde of hem in this caas, ne kan I nat deeme but by coniectynge and by supposynge.

For we shul suppose that they shul come to a wikked ende, by cause that the Book of Decrees seith, 'Seelden, or with greet peyne, been causes ybrought to good ende whanne they been baddely bigonne.'

"Now, sire, if men wolde axe me why that God suffred men to do yow this vileynye,

certes, I kan nat wel answer, as for no soothfastnesse.

For th' apostle seith that 'the sciences and the juggementz of oure Lord God almyghty been ful depe;

ther may no man comprehende ne serchen hem suffisantly.'

Natheles, by certeyne presumpciouns and coniectynges, I holde and bileeve

that God, which that is ful of justice and of rightwisnesse, hath suffred this bityde by juste cause resonable.

1410 "Thy name is Melibee; this is to seyn, 'a man that drynketh hony.'

Thou hast ydronke so muchel hony of sweete temporeel riches, and delices and honours of this world

that thou art dronken and hast forgotten Jhesu Crist thy creatour.

Thou ne hast nat doon to hym swich honour and reverence as thee oughte,

ne thou ne hast nat wel ytaken kep to the wordes of Ovide, that seith, 'Under the hony of the goodes of the body is hyd the venym that sleeth the soule.'

And Salomon seith, 'If thou hast founden hony, ete of it that suffiseth, for if thou ete of it out of mesure, thou shalt spewe' and be nedy and povre.

And peraventure Crist hath thee in despit, and hath turned away fro thee his face and his eeris of misericorde, and also he hath suffred that thou hast been punysshed in the manere that thow hast ytrespassed.

1420 Thou hast doon synne agayn oure Lord Crist,

for certes, the three enemys of mankynde

-- that is to seyn, the flessch, the feend, and the world --

thou hast suffred hem entre in to thyn herte wilfully by the wyndowes

of thy body,  
 and hast nat defended thyself suffisantly agayns hire assautes and  
 hire temptaciouns,  
 so that they han wounded thy soule in fyve places;  
 this is to seyn, the deedly synnes that been entred into thyn herte by  
 thy fyve wittes.

And in the same manere oure Lord Crist hath woold and suffred  
 that thy three enemys been entred into thyn house by the wyndowes  
 and han ywounded thy doghter in the forseyde manere."

"Certes," quod Melibee, "I se wel that ye enforce yow muchel by  
 wordes to overcome me in swich manere  
 that I shal nat venge me of myne enemys,  
 shewynge me the perils and the yveles that myghten falle of this  
 vengeance.

But whoso wolde considere in alle vengeancees the perils and yveles  
 that myghte sewe of vengeance-takyng,  
 1430 a man wolde nevere take vengeance, and that were harm;  
 for by the vengeance-takyng been the wikked men dissevered fro the  
 goode men,  
 and they that han wyl to do wikkednesse restreyne hir wikked  
 purpos,  
 whan they seen the punyssynge and chastisynge of the trespassours."  
 And yet seye I moore, that right as a singuler persone synneth in  
 takynge vengeance of another man,  
 right so synneth the juge if he do no vengeance of hem that it han  
 disserved.

For Senec seith thus: 'That maister,' he seith, 'is good that proveth  
 shrewes.'

And as Cassidore seith, 'A man dredeth to do outrages whan he woot  
 and knoweth

that it displeth to the juges and the sovereyns.'

And another seith, 'The juge that dredeth to do right maketh men  
 shrewes.'

1440 And Seint Paul the Apostle seith in his Epistle, whan he writeth  
 unto the Romainys, that

1440A 'the juges beren nat the spere withouten cause,  
 but they beren it to punysse the shrewes and mysdoers and for to  
 defende the goode men.'

If ye wol thanne take vengeance of youre enemys, ye shul retourne or  
 have youre recours to the juge  
 that hath the jurisdiccio upon hem,  
 and he shal punysse hem as the lawe axeth and requireth."

"A," quod Melibee, "this vengeance liketh me no thyng.  
 I bithenke me now and take heede how Fortune hath norissed me fro  
 my childhede  
 and hath holpen me to passe many a stroong paas.  
 Now wol I assayen hire, trowynge, with Goddes help, that she shal  
 helpe me my shame for to venge."

"Certes," quod Prudence, "if ye wol werke by my conseil, ye shul nat  
 assaye Fortune by no wey,

ne ye shul nat lene or bowe unto hire, after the word of Senec,  
 for `thynges that been folily doon, and that been in hope of Fortune,  
 shullen nevere come to good ende.'

1450 And, as the same Senec seith, `The moore cleer and the moore  
 shynyng that Fortune is,

1450A the moore brotil and the sonner broken she is.'

Trusteth nat in hire, for she nys nat stidefast ne stable,  
 for whan thow trowest to be moost seur or siker of hire help,  
 she wol faille thee and deceyve thee.

And where as ye seyn that Fortune hath norissed yow fro youre  
 childhede,

I seye that in so muchel shul ye the lasse truste in hire and in hir wit.

For Senec seith, `What man that is norissed by Fortune, she maketh  
 hym a greet fool.'

Now thanne, syn ye desire and axe vengeance, and the vengeance that  
 is doon after the lawe

and bifore the juge ne liketh yow nat,

and the vengeance that is doon in hope of Fortune is perilous and  
 uncertein,

thanne have ye noon oother remedie but for to have youre recours  
 unto the sovereyn Juge that vengeth alle vileynyes and wronges.

And he shal venge yow after that hymself witnesseth, where as he  
 seith,

1460 `Leveth the vengeance to me, and I shal do it.'"

Melibee answerde, "If I ne venge me nat of the vileynye that men han  
 doon to me,

I sompne or warne hem that han doon to me that vileynye,  
 and alle othere, to do me another vileynye.

For it is writen, `If thou take no vengeance of an oold vileynye,  
 thou sompnest thyne adversaries to do thee a newe vileynye.'

And also for my suffrance men wolden do me so muchel vileynye that  
 I myghte neither bere it ne susteene,

and so sholde I been put and holden overlowe.

For men seyn, `In muchel suffrynge shul manye thynges falle unto

thee whiche thou shalt nat mowe suffre."

"Certes," quod Prudence, "I graunte yow that over-muchel suffraunce is nat good.

But yet ne folweth it nat therof that every persone to whom men doon vileynye take of it vengeance,

for that aperteneth and longeth al oonly to the juges, for they shul venge the vileynyes and injuries.

1470 And therefore tho two auctoritees that ye han seyde above been oonly understonden in the juges,

for whan they suffren over-muchel the wronges and the vileynyes to be doon withouten punysshynge,

they sompne nat a man al oonly for to do newe wronges, but they comanden it.

Also a wys man seith that 'the juge that correcteth nat the synnere comandeth and biddeth hym do synne.'

And the juges and sovereyns myghten in hir land so muchel suffre of the shrewes and mysdoeres

that they sholden, by swich suffraunce, by proces of tyme wexen of swich power and myght

that they sholden putte out the juges and the sovereyns from hir places,

and atte laste maken hem lesen hire lordshipes.

"But lat us now putte that ye have leve to venge yow.

I seye ye been nat of myght and power as now to venge yow,

for if ye wole maken comparisoun unto the myght of youre adversaries, ye shul fynde in manye thynges that

I have shewed yow er this that hire condicion is bettre than youre.

1480 And therefore seye I that it is good as now that ye suffre and be pacient.

"Forthermoore, ye knowen wel that after the comune sawe, 'it is a woodnesse a man to stryve

with a strenger or a moore myghty man than he is hymself,

and for to stryve with a man of evene strengthe -- that is to seyn,

with as strong a man as he is -- it is peril,

and for to stryve with a weyker man, it is folie.'

And therefore sholde a man flee stryvynge as muchel as he myghte.

For Salomon seith, 'It is a greet worshipe to a man to kepen hym fro noyse and stryf.'

And if it so bifalle or happe that a man of gretter myght and strengthe than thou art do thee grevaunce,

studie and bisye thee rather to stille the same grevaunce than for to venge thee.



For Senec seith that `he putteth hym in greet peril  
that stryvet with a gretter man than he is hymself.'  
And Catoun seith, `If a man of hyer estaat or degree, or moore myghty  
than thou,  
do thee anoy or grevaunce, suffre hym,  
1490 for he that oones hath greved thee, may another tyme releeve  
thee and helpe.'

Yet sette I caas ye have bothe myght and licence for to venge yow,  
I seye that ther be ful manye thynges that shul restreyne yow of  
vengeance-takyng  
and make yow for to enclyne to suffre, and for to han pacience  
in the wronges that han been doon to yow.

First and foreward, if ye wole considere the defautes that been in  
yours owene persone,  
for whiche defautes God hath suffred yow have this tribulacioun, as I  
have seyde yow heer-biforn.

For the poete seith that `we oghte paciently taken the tribulacions  
that comen to us, whan we thyngen and consideren that we han  
disserved to have hem.'

And Seint Gregorie seith that `whan a man considereth wel the  
nombre of his defautes and of his synnes,  
the peynes and the tribulaciouns that he suffreth semen the lesse unto  
hym;

and in as muche as hym thyneketh his synnes moore hevy and grevous,  
1500 in so muche semeth his payne the lighter and the esier unto  
hym.'

Also ye owen to enclyne and bowe yours herte  
to take the pacience of oure Lord Jhesu Crist, as seith Seint Peter in his  
Epistles.

`Jhesu Crist,' he seith, `hath suffred for us and yeven ensample to  
every man to folwe and sewe hym,  
for he dide nevere synne, ne nevere cam ther a vileyns word out of his  
mouth.

Whan men cursed hym, he cursed hem noght, and whan men betten  
hym, he manaced hem noght.'

Also the grete pacience which the seintes that been in Paradys han  
had in tribulaciouns  
that they han ysuffred, withouten hir desert or gilt,  
oghte muchel stiren yow to pacience.

Forthermoore ye sholde enforce yow to have pacience,  
considerynge that the tribulaciouns of this world but litel while  
endure and soone passed been and goon,

and the joye that a man seketh to have by pacience in tribulaciouns is perdurable,

after that the Apostle seith in his epistle.

1510 'The joye of God,' he seith, 'is perdurable' -- that is to seyn, everelastyng.

Also troweth and bileveth stedefastly that he nys nat wel ynorissed, ne wel ytaught,

that kan nat have pacience or wol nat receyve pacience.

For Salomon seith that 'the doctrine and the wit of a man is knowen by pacience.'

And in another place he seith that 'he that is pacient governeth hym by greet prudence.'

And the same Salomon seith, 'The angry and wrathful man maketh noyses,

and the pacient man atempreth hem and stilleth.'

He seith also, 'It is moore worth to be pacient than for to be right strong;

and he that may have the lordshipe of his owene herte is moore to preyse than he that

by his force or strengthe taketh grete citees.'

And therfore seith Seint Jame in his Epistle that 'pacience is a greet vertu of perfeccioun.'"

"Certes," quod Melibee, "I graunte yow, dame Prudence, that pacience is a greet vertu of perfeccioun;

but every man may nat have the perfeccioun that ye seken;

1520 ne I nam nat of the nombre of right parfite men,

for myn herte may nevere been in pees unto the tyme it be venged.

And al be it so that it was greet peril to myne enemys

to do me a vileynye in takynge vengeance upon me,

yet tooken they noon heede of the peril, but fulfilleden hir wikked wyl and hir corage.

And therfore me thynketh men oghten nat repreve me,

though I putte me in a litel peril for to venge me,

and though I do a greet excesse; that is to seyn, that I venge oon outrage by another."

"A," quod dame Prudence, "ye seyn youre wyl and as yow liketh,

but in no caas of the world a man sholde nat doon outrage ne excesse for to vengen hym.

For Cassidore seith that 'as yvele dooth he that vengeth hym by outrage as he that dooth the outrage.'

And therfore ye shul venge yow after the ordre of right; that is to seyn, by the lawe

and noght by excesse ne by outrage.

1530 And also, if ye wol venge yow of the outrage of youre adversaries  
1530A in oother manere than right comandeth, ye synnen.

And therfore seith Senec that `a man shal nevere vengen  
shrewednesse by shrewednesse.'

And if ye seye that right axeth a man to defenden violence by violence  
and fightyng by fightyng,

certes ye seye sooth, whan the defense is doon anon withouten  
intervalle or withouten taryng or delay,

for to deffenden hym and nat for to vengen hym.

And it bihoveth that a man putte swich attemperance in his deffense  
that men have no cause ne matiere to repreven hym that deffendeth  
hym of excesse and outrage,

for ellis were it agayn resoun.

Pardee, ye knowen wel that ye maken no deffense

as now for to deffende yow, but for to venge yow;

and so seweth it that ye han no wyl to do youre dede attemprely.

And therfore me thynketh that pacience is good. For Salomon seith  
that

`he that is nat pacient shal have greet harm.'"

1540 "Certes," quod Melibee, "I graunte yow that whan a man is  
inpatient and wrooth of that

1540A that toucheth hym noght and that aperteneth nat unto hym,  
though it harme hym, it is no wonder.

For the lawe seith that `he is coupable that entremetteth hym  
or medleth with swych thyng as aperteneth nat unto hym.'

And Salomon seith that `he that entremetteth hym of the noyse or strif  
of another man

is lyk to hym that taketh an hound by the eris.'

For right as he that taketh a straunge hound by the eris is outhewhile  
biten with the hound,

right in the same wise is it resoun that he have harm that by his  
inpacience medleth hym

of the noyse of another man, wheras it aperteneth nat unto hym.

But ye knowen wel that this dede -- that is to seyn,

my grief and my disese -- toucheth me right ny.

And therfore, though I be wrooth and impatient, it is no merveille.

And, savyngge youre grace, I kan nat seen that it myghte greetly harme  
me though I tooke vengeaunce.

For I am richer and moore myghty than myne enemys been;

and wel knowen ye that by moneye and by havynge grete possessions  
been alle the thynges of this world governed.

1550 And Salomon seith that `alle thynges obeyen to moneye."

Whan Prudence hadde herd hir housbonde avanten hym of his richesse

and of his moneye, dispreisyng the power of his adversaries,  
she spak and seyde in this wise:

"Certes, deere sire, I graunte yow that ye been riche and myghty  
and that the riches been goode to hem that han wel ygeten hem  
and wel konne usen hem.

For right as the body of a man may nat lyven withoute the soule,  
namoore may it lyve withouten temporeel goodes.

And by riches may a man gete hym grete freendes.

And therefore seith Pamphilles: 'If a net-herdes doghter,' seith he, 'be  
riche,

she may chesen of a thousand men which she wol take to hir  
housbonde,

for, of a thousand men, oon wol nat forsaken hire ne refusen hire.'

And this Pamphilles seith also, 'If thou be right happy -- that is to  
seyn,

if thou be right riche -- thou shalt fynde a greet nombre of felawes and  
freendes.

And if thy fortune change that thou wexe povre, farewell freendshipe  
and felaweshipe,

1560 for thou shalt be alloone withouten any compaignye, but if it be  
the compaignye of povre folk.'

And yet seith this Pamphilles moreover that `they that been thralle  
and bonde of lynage

shullen been maad worthy and noble by the riches.

And right so as by riches ther comen manye goodes,

right so by poverté come ther manye harmes and yveles,

for greet poverté constreyneth a man to do manye yveles.

And therefore clepeth Cassidore poverté the mooder of ruyne;

that is to seyn, the mooder of overthrowng or fallyng down.

And therefore seith Piers Alfonse, 'Oon of the gretteste adversitees of  
this world is

whan a free man by kynde or of burthe is constreyned by poverté  
to eten the almesse of his enemy,'

and the same seith Innocent in oon of his bookes. He seith that

`sorweful and myshappy is the condicioun of a povre beggere;

for if he axe nat his mete, he dyeth for hunger;

1570 and if he axe, he dyeth for shame; and algates necessitee  
constreyneth hym to axe.'

And seith Salomon that `bet it is to dye than for to have swich

poverté.'

And as the same Salomon seith, 'Betre it is to dye of bitter deeth  
than for to lyven in swich wise.'

By thise resons that I have seid unto yow and by manye othere resons  
that I koude seye,

I graunte yow that richesches been goode to hem that geten hem wel  
and to hem that wel usen tho richesches.

And therefore wol I shewe yow hou ye shul have yow, and how ye shul  
bere yow

in gaderynge of richesches, and in what manere ye shul usen hem.

"First, ye shul geten hem withouten greet desir, by good leyser,  
sokynghly and nat over-hastily.

For a man that is to desiryng to gete richesches abaundoneth hym  
first to thefte, and to alle othere yveles;

and therefore seith Salomon, 'He that hasteth hym to bisily to wexe  
riche shal be noon innocent.'

He seith also that 'the richesche that hastily cometh to a man soone  
and lightly gooth and passeth fro a man,

1580 but that richesche that cometh litel and litel wexeth alwey and  
multiplieth.'

And, sire, ye shul geten richesches by youre wit and by youre travaille  
unto youre profit,

and that withouten wrong or harm doynge to any oother persone.

For the lawe seith that 'ther maketh no man himselven riche, if he do  
harm to another wight.'

This is to seyn, that nature deffendeth and forbedeth by right that  
no man make hymself riche unto the harm of another persone.

And Tullius seith that 'no sorwe, ne no drede of deeth, ne no thyng  
that may falle unto a man, is so muchel agayns

nature as a man to encressen his owene profit to the harm of another  
man.

And though the grete men and the myghty men geten richesches moore  
lightly than thou,

yet shaltou nat been ydel ne slow to do thy profit, for thou shalt in alle  
wise flee ydelnesse.'

For Salomon seith that 'ydelnesse techeth a man to do manye yveles.'

1590 And the same Salomon seith that 'he that travailleth and bisieth  
hym to tilien his land shal eten breed,

but he that is ydel and casteth hym to no bisynesse

ne occupacioun shal falle into poverté and dye for hunger.'

And he that is ydel and slow kan nevere fynde covenable tyme for to  
doon his profit.

For ther is a versifiour seith that `the ydel man excuseth hym in  
 wynter by cause  
 of the grete coold, and in somer by enchesoun of the greete heete.'  
 For thise causes seith Caton, `Waketh and enclyneth nat yow over-  
 muchel for to slepe,  
 for over-muchel reste norisseth and causeth manye vices.'  
 And therfore seith Seint Jerome, `Dooth somme goode dedes that the  
 devel,  
 which is oure enemy, ne fynde yow nat unocupied.'  
 For the devel ne taketh nat lightly unto his werkynge swiche as he  
 fyndeth occupied in goode werkes.  
 "Thanne thus in getynge richesces ye mosten flee ydelnesse.  
 And afterward, ye shul use the richesces which ye have gotten by youre  
 wit and by youre travaille  
 in swich a manere that men holde yow nat to scars, ne to sparynge, ne  
 to fool-large  
 -- that is to seyen, over-large a spendere.  
 1600 For right as men blamen an avaricious man by cause of his  
 scarsetee and chyncherie,  
 in the same wise is he to blame that spendeth over-largely.  
 And therfore seith Caton: `Use,' he seith, `thy richesces that thou hast  
 gotten  
 in swich a manere that men have no matiere ne cause to calle thee  
 neither wrecche ne chynche,  
 for it is a greet shame to a man to have a povere herte and a riche  
 purs.'  
 He seith also, `The goodes that thou hast ygeten, use hem by mesure;'  
 that is to seyn, spende hem mesurably,  
 for they that folily wasten and despenden the goodes that they han,  
 whan they han namoore propre of hir owene, they shapen hem to take  
 the goodes of another man.  
 I seye thanne that ye shul fleen avarice,  
 usynge youre richesces in swich manere that men seye nat that youre  
 richesces been yburied  
 1610 but that ye have hem in youre myght and in youre weeldynge.  
 For a wys man repreveth the avaricious man, and seith thus in two  
 vers:  
 `Wherto and why burieth a man his goodes by his grete avarice,  
 and knoweth wel that nedes moste he dye?  
 For deeth is the ende of every man as in this present lyf.'  
 And for what cause or enchesoun joyneth he hym or knytteth he hym  
 so faste unto his goodes

that alle hise wittes mowen nat disseveren hym or departen hym from his goodes,

and knoweth wel, or oghte knowe, that whan he is deed he shal no thyng bere with hym out of this world?

And therfore seith Seint Austyn that 'the avaricious man is likned unto helle,

that the moore it swelweth the moore desir it hath to swelwe and devoure.'

And as wel as ye wolde eschewe to be called an avaricious man or chynche,

1620 as wel sholde ye kepe yow and governe yow in swich a wise that men calle yow nat fool-large.

Therfore seith Tullius: 'The goodes,' he seith, 'of thyn hous ne sholde nat been hyd ne kept so cloos,

but that they myghte been opened by pitee and debonairetee' (that is to seyn, to yeven part to hem that han greet nede),

'ne thy goodes shullen nat been so opene to been every mannes goodes.'

Afterward, in getynge of youre riches and in usynge hem ye shul alwey have thre thynges in youre herte

(that is to seyn, oure Lord God, conscience, and good name).

First, ye shul have God in youre herte,

and for no riches ye shullen do no thyng which may in any manere displese God,

that is youre creatour and makere.

For after the word of Salomon, 'It is bettre to have a litel good with the love of God

than to have muchel good and tresour and lese the love of his Lord God.'

1630 And the prophete seith that 'bettre it is to been a good man and have litel good and tresour

than to been holden a shrewe and have grete riches.'

And yet seye I ferthermoore, that ye sholde alwey doon youre bisynesse to gete yow riches,

so that ye gete hem with good conscience.

And th' Apostle seith that 'ther nys thyng in this world of which we sholden have so greet joye as whan oure conscience bereth us good witnesse.'

And the wise man seith, 'The substance of a man is ful good, whan synne is nat in mannes conscience.'

Afterward, in getynge of youre riches and in usynge of hem, yow moste have greet bisynesse and greet diligence that youre goode

name be alwey kept and conserved.

For Salomon seith that `bette it is and moore it availleth a man to have a good name

than for to have grete riches.

And therefore he seith in another place, `Do greet diligence,' seith Salomon,

`in kepyng of thy freend and of thy goode name;

1640 for it shal lenger abide with thee than any tresour, be it never so precious.'

And certes he sholde nat be called a gentil man that after God and good conscience, alle thynges left,

ne dooth his diligence and bisynesse to kepen his goode name.

And Cassidore seith that `it is signe of a gentil herte

whan a man loveth and desireth to han a good name.'

And therefore seith Seint Austyn that `ther been two thynges that arn necessarie and nedefulle,

and that is good conscience and good loos;

that is to seyn, good conscience to thyn owene persone inward and good loos for thy neighebor outward.'

And he that trusteth hym so muchel in his goode conscience

that he displeth, and setteth at noght his goode name or loos,

and rekketh noght though he kepe nat his goode name, nys but a crueel cherl.

"Sire, now have I shewed yow how ye shul do in getyng riches, and how ye shullen usen hem,

and I se wel that for the trust that ye han in youre riches

ye wole move werre and bataille.

1650 I conseil yow that ye bigynne no werre in trust of youre riches,

1650A for they ne suffisen noght werres to mayntene.

And therefore seith a philosopre, `That man that desireth and wole algates han werre, shal nevere have suffisaunce,

for the richer that he is, the gretter despenses moste he make, if he wole have worshippe and victorie.'

And Salomon seith that `the gretter riches that a man hath, the mo dependours he hath.'

And, deere sire, al be it so that for youre riches ye mowe have muchel folk,

yet bihoveth it nat, ne it is nat good, to bigynne werre whereas ye mowe

in oother manere have pees unto youre worshippe and profit.

For the victorie of batailles that been in this world lyth nat in greet



nombre or multitude  
 of the peple, ne in the vertu of man,  
 but it lith in the wyl and in the hand of oure Lord God Almyghty.  
 And therfore Judas Machabeus, which was Goddes knyght,  
 whan he sholde fighte agayn his adversarie that hadde a gretter  
 nombre  
 and a gretter multitude of folk and strenger than was this peple of  
 Machabee,  
 1660 yet he reconforted his litel compaignye, and seyde right in this  
 wise:  
 'Als lightly,' quod he, 'may oure Lord God Almyghty yeve victorie to a  
 fewe folk as to many folk,  
 for the victorie of a bataile comth nat by the grete nombre of peple,  
 but it cometh from oure Lord God of hevene.'  
 And, deere sire, for as muchel as ther is no man certein if he be worthy  
 that  
 God yeve hym victorie . . . or naught, after that Salomon seith,  
 therfore every man sholde greetly drede werres to bigynne.  
 And by cause that in batailles fallen manye perils,  
 and happeth outhur while that as soone is the grete man slayn as the  
 litel man;  
 and as it is writen in the seconde Book of Kynges,  
 'The dedes of batailles been aventureuse and nothyng certeyne,  
 for as lightly is oon hurt with a spere as another';  
 1670 and for ther is gret peril in werre, therfore sholde a man flee and  
 eschue werre,  
 1670A in as muchel as a man may goodly.  
 For Salomon seith, 'He that loveth peril shal falle in peril.'  
 After that Dame Prudence hadde spoken in this manere, Melibee  
 answerde and seyde,  
 "I see wel, dame Prudence, that by youre faire wordes and by youre  
 resouns  
 that ye han shewed me, that the werre liketh yow no thyng;  
 but I have nat yet herd youre conseil, how I shal do in this nede."  
 "Certes," quod she, "I conseilte yow that ye accorde with youre  
 adversaries and that ye have pees with hem.  
 For Seint Jame seith in his Epistles that 'by concord and pees the  
 smale richesses wexen grete,  
 and by debaat and discord the grete richesses fallen down.'  
 And ye knowen wel that oon of the gretteste and moost sovereyn  
 thyng  
 that is in this world is unytee and pees.

And therefore seyde oure Lord Jhesu Crist to his apostles in this wise:  
 1680 'Wel happy and blessed been they that loven and purchacen  
 pees, for they been called children of God.'"

"A," quod Melibee, "now se I wel that ye loven nat myn honour ne my  
 worshipe.

Ye knowen wel that myne adversaries han bigonnen this debaat and  
 bryge by hire outrage,  
 and ye se wel that they ne requeren ne preyen me nat of pees,  
 ne they asken nat to be reconciled.

Wol ye thanne that I go and meke me, and obeye me to hem, and crie  
 hem mercy?

For sothe, that were nat my worshipe.

For right as men seyn that 'over-greet hoomlynesse engendreth  
 dispreisyng,' so fareth it by to greet humylitee or mekenesse."

Thanne bigan dame Prudence to maken semblant of wratthe and  
 seyde:

"Certes, sire, sauf youre grace, I love youre honour and youre profit  
 as I do myn owene, and evere have doon;

ne ye, ne noon oother, seyn nevere the contrarie.

1690 And yit if I hadde seyde that ye sholde han purchaced the pees  
 1690A and the reconsiliacioun, I ne hadde nat muchel mistaken me ne  
 seyde amys.

For the wise man seith, 'The dissensioun bigynneth by another man,  
 and the reconsilyng bygynneth by thyself.'

And the prophete seith, 'Flee shrewednesse and do goodnesse;  
 seke pees and folwe it, as muchel as in thee is.'

Yet seye I nat that ye shul rather pursue to youre adversaries for pees  
 than they shuln to yow.

For I knowe wel that ye been so hard-herted that ye wol do no thyng  
 for me.

And Salomon seith, 'He that hath over-hard an herte, atte laste he shal  
 myshappe and mystyde.'"

Whanne Melibee hadde herd dame Prudence maken semblant of  
 wratthe, he seyde in this wise:

"Dame, I prey yow that ye be nat displesed of thynges that I seye,  
 for ye knowe wel that I am angry and wrooth, and that is no wonder;  
 1700 and they that been wrothe witen nat wel what they don ne what  
 they seyn.

Therefore the prophete seith that 'troubled eyen han no cleer sighte.'

But seyeth and conseileth me as yow liketh, for I am redy to do right  
 as ye wol desire;

and if ye repreve me of my folye,

I am the moore holden to love yow and to preyse yow.  
 For Salomon seith that `he that repreveth hym that dooth folye,  
 he shal fynde gretter grace than he that deceyveth hym by sweete  
 wordes."

Thanne seide dame Prudence, "I make no semblant of wratthe ne  
 anger, but for youre grete profit.

For Salomon seith, `He is moore worth that repreveth or chideth a fool  
 for his folye,

shewynge hym semblant of wratthe,  
 than he that supporteth hym and preyseth hym in his mysdoynge and  
 laugheth at his folye.'

And this same Salomon seith afterward that

`by the sorweful visage of a man'

(that is to seyn by the sory and hevy contenance of a man)

1710 `the fool correcteth and amendeth hymself."

Thanne seyde Melibee, "I shal nat konne answeere to

so manye faire resouns as ye putten to me and shewen.

Seyeth shortly youre wyl and youre conseil, and I am al redy to fulfille  
 and parfourne it."

Thanne dame Prudence discovered al hir wyl to hym and seyde,

"I conseilte yow," quod she, "aboven alle thynges, that ye make pees  
 bitwene God and yow,

and beth reconsiled unto hym and to his grace.

For, as I have seyde yow heer biforn, God hath suffred yow

to have this tribulacioun and disese for youre synnes.

And if ye do as I sey yow, God wol sende youre adversaries unto yow  
 and maken hem fallen at youre feet, redy to do youre wyl and youre  
 comandementz.

For Salomon seith, `Whan the condicioun of man is plesaunt and  
 likynge to God,

1720 he chaungeth the hertes of the mannes adversaries and  
 constreyneth hem to biseken hym of pees and of grace.'

And I prey yow lat me speke with youre adversaries in privee place,  
 for they shul nat knowe that it be of youre wyl or of youre assent.

And thanne, whan I knowe hir wil and hire entente, I may conseilte  
 yow the moore seurely."

"Dame," quod Melibee, "dooth youre wil and youre likynge;

for I putte me hoolly in youre disposicioun and ordinaunce."

Thanne dame Prudence, whan she saugh the goode wyl of hir  
 housbonde, delibered and took avys in herself,

thinkinge how she myghte brynge this nede unto a good conclusioun  
 and to a good ende.

And whan she saugh hir tyme, she sente for thise adversaries to come  
unto hire into a pryvee place  
and shewed wisely unto hem the grete goodes that comen of pees  
1730 and the grete harmes and perils that been in werre,  
and seyde to hem in a goodly manere hou that hem oughten have  
greet repentaunce  
of the injurie and wrong that they hadden doon to Melibee hir lord,  
and unto hire, and to hire doghter.

And whan they herden the goodliche wordes of dame Prudence,  
they weren so supprised and ravysshed and hadden so greet joye of  
hire that wonder was to telle.

"A, lady," quod they, "ye han shewed unto us the blessynge of  
swetnesse,

after the sawe of David the prophete,  
for the reconsilynge which we been nat worthy to have in no manere,  
but we oghte requeren it with greet contricioun and humylitee,  
ye of youre grete goodnesse have presented unto us.

Now se we wel that the science and the konnyng of Salomon is ful  
trewe.

1740 For he seith that 'sweete wordes multiplien and encreescen  
freendes and maken shrewes to be debonaire and meeke.'

"Certes," quod they, "we putten oure dede and al oure matere and  
cause al hoolly in youre goode wyl  
and been redy to obeye to the speche and comandement of my lord  
Melibee.

And therefore, deere and benygne lady, we preien yow and biseke yow  
as mekely as we konne and mowen

that it lyke unto youre grete goodnesse to fulfillen in dede youre  
goodliche wordes,

for we consideren and knowelichen that we han offended and greved  
my lord Melibee out of mesure,

so ferforth that we be nat of power to maken his amendes.

And therefore we oblige and bynden us and oure freendes for to doon  
al his wyl and his comandementz.

But peraventure he hath swich hevynesse and swich wratthe to us-  
ward by cause of oure offense

that he wole enjoyne us swich a peyne as we mowe nat bere ne  
susteene.

1750 And therefore, noble lady, we biseke to youre wommanly pitee  
to taken swich avysement in this nede that

we ne oure freendes be nat desherited ne destroyed thurgh oure  
folye."

"Certes," quod Prudence, "it is an hard thyng and right perilous  
that a man putte hym al outrely in the arbitracioun and juggement,  
and in the myght and power of his enemys.

For Salomon seith, 'Leeveth me, and yeveth credence to that I shal  
seyn: I seye,' quod he,

'ye peple, folk and governours of hooly chirche,  
to thy sone, to thy wyf, to thy freend, ne to thy broother  
ne yeve thou nevere myght ne maistrie of thy body whil thou lyvest.'  
Now sithen he deffendeth that man sholde nat yeven to his broother  
ne to his freend the myght of his body,  
by a strengre resoun he deffendeth and forbedeth a man to yeven  
hymself to his enemy.

And natheles I conseilte you that ye mystruste nat my lord,  
1760 for I woot wel and knowe verraily that he is debonaire and  
meeke, large, curteys,  
and nothyng desirous ne coveitous of good ne richesse.

For ther nys nothyng in this world that he desireth, save oonly  
worshipe and honour.

Forthermoore I knowe wel and am right seur that he shal nothyng  
doon in this nede withouten my conseil,  
and I shal so werken in this cause that by the grace of oure Lord God  
ye shul been reconsiled unto us."

Thanne seyden they with o voys, "Worshipful lady, we putten us  
and oure goodes al fully in youre wil and disposicioun,  
and been redy to comen, what day that it like unto youre noblesse to  
lymyte us or assigne us,

for to maken oure obligacioun and boond as strong as it liketh unto  
youre goodnesse,

that we mowe fulfille the wille of yow and of my lord Melibee."

Whan dame Prudence hadde herd the answeres of thise men, she bad  
hem goon agayn prively;

1770 and she retourned to hir lord Melibee, and tolde hym how she  
foond his adversaries ful repentant,

knowelechyng ful lowely hir synnes and trespas, and how they were  
redy to suffren all peyne,

requiryng and preiynge hym of mercy and pitee.

Thanne seyde Melibee: "He is wel worthy to have pardoun

and foryifnesse of his synne, that excuseth nat his synne

but knowelecheth it and repenteth hym, axinge indulgence.

For Senec seith, 'Ther is the remissioun and foryifnesse, where as the  
confessioun is,'

for confessioun is neighebor to innocence.

And he seith in another place that `he that hath shame of his synne  
and knowlecheth

[it is worthy remissioun].' And therfore I assente and conferme me to  
have pees;

but it is good that we do it nat withouten the assent and wyl of oure  
freendes."

Thanne was Prudence right glad and joyeful and seyde:

1780 "Certes, sire," quod she, "ye han wel and goodly answered,  
for right as by the conseil, assent, and help of youre freendes  
ye han been stired to venge yow and maken werre,  
right so withouten hire conseil shul ye nat accorden yow ne have pees  
with youre adversaries.

For the lawe seith, `Ther nys no thyng so good by wey of kynde as a  
thyng

to be unbounde by hym that it was ybounde."

And thanne dame Prudence withouten delay or tariynge sente anon  
hire messages for hire kyn

and for hire olde freendes which that were trewe and wyse,  
and tolde hem by ordre in the presence of Melibee al this mateere  
as it is aboven expressed and declared,  
and preyden hem that they wolde yeven hire avys and conseil what  
best were to doon in this nede.

And whan Melibees freendes hadde taken hire avys and deliberacioun  
of the forseide mateere,

and hadden examyned it by greet bisynesse and greet diligence,  
they yave ful conseil for to have pees and reste,

1790 and that Melibee sholde receyve with good herte his adversaries  
to foryifnesse and mercy.

And whan dame Prudence hadde herd the assent of hir lord Melibee,  
and the conseil of his freendes

accorde with hire wille and hire entencioun,

she was wonderly glad in hire herte and seyde:

"Ther is an old proverbe," quod she, "seith that `the goodnesse that  
thou mayst do this day, do it,

and abide nat ne delaye it nat til tomorwe.'

And therfore I conseilte that ye sende youre messages, swiche as been  
discrete and wise,

unto youre adversaries, tellynge hem on youre bihalve

that if they wole trete of pees and of accord,

that they shape hem withouten delay or tariyng to comen unto us."

1800 Which thyng parfourned was in dede.

And whanne thise trespassours and repentyng folk of hire folies

-- that is to seyn, the adversaries of Melibee --  
hadden herd what thise messagers seyden unto hem,  
they weren right glad and joyeful, and answereden ful mekely and  
benignely,  
yeldyng grace and thankynges to hir lord Melibee and to al his  
compaignye,  
and shopen hem withouten delay to go with the messagers and obeye  
to the comandement of hir lord Melibee.

And right anon they tooken hire way to the court of Melibee,  
and tooken with hem somme of hire trewe freendes  
to maken feith for hem and for to been hire borwes.  
And whan they were comen to the presence of Melibee, he seyde hem  
thise wordes:

"It standeth thus," quod Melibee, "and sooth it is, that ye,  
1810 causelees and withouten skile and resoun,  
han doon grete injuries and wronges to me and to my wyf Prudence  
and to my doghter also.

For ye han entred into myn hous by violence,  
and have doon swich outrage that alle men knowen wel that ye have  
disserved the deeth.

And therefore wol I knowe and wite of yow  
wheither ye wol putte the punysshment and the chastisyng and the  
vengeance of this outrage in the wyl  
of me and of my wyf Prudence, or ye wol nat?"

Thanne the wiseste of hem thre answerde for hem alle and seyde,  
"Sire," quod he, "we knowen wel that we been unworthy to comen  
unto the court

of so greet a lord and so worthy as ye been.

For we han so greetly mystaken us, and han offended  
and agilt in swich a wise agayn youre heigh lordshipe  
that trewely we han disserved the deeth.

1820 But yet, for the grete goodnesse and debonairetee that al the  
world witnesseth of youre persone,  
we submytten us to the excellence and benignitee of youre gracious  
lordshipe,

and been redy to obeie to alle youre comandementz,  
bisekyng yow that of youre merciable pitee ye wol considere oure  
grete repentaunce and lowe submyssioun  
and graunten us foryevenesse of oure outrageous trespas and offense.  
For wel we knowe that youre liberal grace and mercy  
strecchen hem ferther into goodnesse than doon oure outrageouse  
giltes and trespas into wikkednesse,

al be it that cursedly and dampnably we han agilt agayn youre heigh lordshipe."

Thanne Melibee took hem up fro the ground ful benignely,  
and receyved hire obligaciouns and hir boondes by hire othes upon  
hire plegges and borwes,

and assigned hem a certeyn day to retourne unto his court

1830 for to accepte and receyve the sentence and juggement that

Melibee wolde comande

1830A to be doon on hem by the causes aforeseyd.

Whiche thynges ordeyned, every man retourned to his hous.

And whan that dame Prudence saugh hir tyme, she freyned and axed  
hir lord Melibee

what vengeance he thoughte to taken of his adversaries.

To which Melibee answerde and seyde, "Certes," quod he, "I thynke  
and purpose me fully

to desherite hem of al that evere they han and for to putte hem in exil  
for evere."

"Certes," quod dame Prudence, "this were a crueel sentence and  
muchel agayn resoun.

For ye been riche ynough and han no nede of oother mennes good,

and ye myghte lightly in this wise gete yow a coveitous name,

which is a vicious thyng, and oghte been eschued of every good man.

1840 For after the sawe of the word of the Apostle, 'Coveitise is roote  
of alle harmes.'

And therefore it were bettre for yow to lese so muchel good of youre  
owene

than for to taken of hir good in this manere,

for bettre it is to lesen good with worshipe than it is to wyne good  
with vileynye and shame.

And everi man oghte to doon his diligence and his bisynesse to geten  
hym a good name.

And yet shal he nat oonly bisie hym in kepyng of his good name,

but he shal also enforcen hym alwey to do somthyng by which he may  
renovelle his good name.

For it is writen that 'the olde good loos or good name of a man is  
soone goon

and passed, whan it is nat newed ne renovelled.'

And as touchyng that ye seyn ye wole exile youre adversaries,

that thynketh me muchel agayn resoun and out of mesure,

considered the power that they han yeve yow upon hemself.

1850 And it is writen that 'he is worthy to lesen his privilege that  
mysuseth



1850A the myght and the power that is yeven hym.'

And I sette cas ye myghte enjoyne hem that peyne by right and by lawe,

which I trowe ye mowe nat do;

I seye ye mighte nat putten it to execucioun peraventure,

and thanne were it likly to retourne to the werre as it was biforn.

And therefore, if ye wole that men do yow obeisance, ye moste deemen moore curteisly;

this is to seyn, ye moste yeven moore esy sentences and juggementz.

For it is writen that 'he that moost curteisly comandeth, to hym men moost obeyen.'

And therefore I prey yow that in this necessitee and in this nede ye caste yow to overcome youre herte.

For Senec seith that 'he that overcometh his herte overcometh twies.'

1860 And Tullius seith, 'Ther is no thyng so comendable in a greet lord as whan he is debonaire and meeke, and appeseth him lightly.'

And I prey yow that ye wole forbere now to do vengeance,

in swich a manere that youre goode name may be kept and conserved,

and that men mowe have cause and mateere to preyse yow of pitee

and of mercy,

and that ye have no cause to repente yow of thyng that ye doon.

For Senec seith, 'He overcometh in an yvel manere that repenteth hym of his victorie.'

Wherfore I pray yow, lat mercy been in youre herte,

to th' effect and entente that God Almighty have mercy on yow in his laste juggement.

For Seint Jame seith in his Epistle: 'Juggement withouten mercy shal be doon

to hym that hath no mercy of another wight.'"

1870 Whanne Melibee hadde herd the grete skiles and resouns of dame Prudence, and hire wise informaciouns and techynges,

his herte gan encline to the wil of his wif, considerynge hir trewe entente,

and conformed hym anon and assented fully to werken after hir conseil,

and thonked God, of whom procedeth al vertu and alle goodnesse, that hym sente a wyf of so greet discrecioun.

And whan the day cam that his adversaries sholde appieren in his presence,

he spak unto hem ful goodly, and seyde in this wyse:

"Al be it so that of youre pride and heigh presumpcioun and folie, and of youre necligence and unkonnyng,

ye have mysborn yow and trespassed unto me,  
yet for as muche as I see and biholde youre grete humylitee  
and that ye been sory and repentant of youre giltes,  
1880 it constreyneth me to doon yow grace and mercy.  
Wherfore I receyve yow to my grace  
and foryeve yow outrely alle the offenses, injuries, and wronges that  
ye have doon agayn me and myne,  
to this effect and to this ende, that God of his endeles mercy  
wole at the tyme of oure dyngge foryeven us oure giltes  
that we han trespassed to hym in this wrecched world.  
For douteles, if we be sory and repentant of the synnes and giltes  
which we han trespassed  
in the sighte of oure Lord God,  
he is so free and so merciabile  
that he wole foryeven us oure giltes  
and bryngen us to the blisse that nevere hath ende." Amen.



## THE MONK'S PROLOGUE

Whan ended was my tale of Melibee,  
 1890 And of Prudence and hire benignytee,  
 Oure Hooste seyde, "As I am feithful man,  
 And by that precious corpus Madrian,  
 I hadde levere than a barel ale  
 That Goodelief, my wyf, hadde herd this tale!  
 For she nys no thyng of swich pacience  
 As was this Melibeus wyf Prudence.  
 By Goddes bones, whan I bete my knaves,  
 She bryngeth me forth the grete clobbed staves,  
 And crieth, 'Slee the dogges everichoon,  
 1900 And brek hem, bothe bak and every boon!'  
 "And if that any neighebor of myne  
 Wol nat in chirche to my wyf enclyne,  
 Or be so hardy to hire to trespase,  
 Whan she comth hoom she rampeth in my face,  
 And crieth, 'False coward, wreck thy wyf!  
 By corpus bones, I wol have thy knyf,  
 And thou shalt have my distaf and go spynne!'  
 Fro day to nyght right thus she wol bigynne.  
 'Allas,' she seith, 'that evere I was shape  
 1910 To wedden a milksop, or a coward ape,  
 That wol been overlad with every wight!  
 Thou darst nat stonden by thy wyves right!'  
 "This is my lif, but if that I wol fighte;  
 And out at dore anon I moot me dighte,  
 Or elles I am but lost, but if that I  
 Be lik a wilde leoun, fool-hardy.  
 I woot wel she wol do me slee som day  
 Som neighebor, and thanne go my way;  
 For I am perilous with knyf in honde,  
 1920 Al be it that I dar nat hire withstonde,  
 For she is byg in armes, by my feith:  
 That shal he fynde that hire mysdooth or seith --  
 But lat us passe away fro this mateere.  
 "My lord, the Monk," quod he, "be myrie of cheere,  
 For ye shul telle a tale trewely.  
 Loo, Rouchestre stant heer faste by!  
 Ryde forth, myn owene lord, brek nat oure game.  
 But, by my trouthe, I knowe nat youre name.

Wher shal I calle yow my lord daun John,  
 1930 Or daun Thomas, or elles daun Albon?  
 Of what hous be ye, by youre fader kyn?  
 I vowe to God, thou hast a ful fair skyn;  
 It is a gentil pasture ther thow goost.  
 Thou art nat lyk a penant or a goost:  
 Upon my feith, thou art som officer,  
 Som worthy sexteyn, or som celerer,  
 For by my fader soule, as to my doom,  
 Thou art a maister whan thou art at hoom;  
 No povre cloysterer, ne no novys,  
 1940 But a governour, wily and wys,  
 And therwithal of brawnes and of bones  
 A wel farynge persone for the nones.  
 I pray to God, yeve hym confusioun  
 That first thee broghte unto religioun!  
 Thou woldest han been a tredefowel aright.  
 Haddestow as greet a leeve as thou hast myght  
 To parfourne al thy lust in engendrure,  
 Thou haddest bigeten ful many a creature.  
 Allas, why werestow so wyd a cope?  
 1950 God yeve me sorwe, but, and I were a pope,  
 Nat oonly thou, but every myghty man,  
 Though he were shorn ful hye upon his pan,  
 Sholde have a wyf; for al the world is lorn!  
 Religioun hath take up al the corn  
 Of tredyng, and we borel men been shrympes.  
 Of fieble trees ther comen wrecched ympes.  
 This maketh that oure heires been so sklendre  
 And feble that they may nat wel engendre.  
 This maketh that oure wyves wole assaye  
 1960 Religious folk, for ye mowe bettre paye  
 Of Venus paiementz than mowe we;  
 God woot, no lussheburghes payen ye!  
 But be nat wrooth, my lord, though that I pleye.  
 Ful ofte in game a sooth I have herd seye!"  
 This worthy Monk took al in pacience,  
 And seyde, "I wol doon al my diligence,  
 As fer as sowneth into honestee,  
 To telle yow a tale, or two, or three.  
 And if yow list to herkne hyderward,  
 1970 I wol yow seyn the lyf of Seint Edward;

Or ellis, first, tragedies wol I telle,  
Of whiche I have an hundred in my celle.  
Tragedie is to seyn a certeyn storie,  
As olde bookes maken us memorie,  
Of hym that stood in greet prosperitee,  
And is yfallen out of heigh degree  
Into myserie, and endeth wrecchedly.  
And they ben versified communely  
Of six feet, which men clepen exametron.  
1980 In prose eek been endited many oon,  
And eek in meetre in many a sondry wyse.  
Lo, this declaryng oghte ynogh suffise.  
"Now herkneth, if yow liketh for to heere.  
But first I yow biseeke in this mateere,  
Though I by ordre telle nat thise thynges,  
Be it of popes, emperours, or kynges,  
After hir ages, as men writen fynde,  
But tellen hem som bifore and som bihynde,  
As it now comth unto my remembraunce,  
1990 Have me excused of myn ignoraunce."



## THE MONK'S TALE

I wol biwaille in manere of tragedie  
 The harm of hem that stode in heigh degree,  
 And fillen so that ther nas no remedie  
 To brynge hem out of hir adversitee.  
 For certein, whan that Fortune list to flee,  
 Ther may no man the cours of hire withholde.  
 Lat no man truste on blynd prosperitee;  
 Be war by thise ensamples trewe and olde.  
 At Lucifer, though he an angel were  
 2000 And nat a man, at hym wol I bigynne.  
 For though Fortune may noon angel dere,  
 From heigh degree yet fel he for his synne  
 Doun into helle, where he yet is inne.  
 O Lucifer, brightest of angels alle,  
 Now artow Sathanas, that mayst nat twynne  
 Out of miserie, in which that thou art falle.  
 Loo Adam, in the feeld of Damyssene  
 With Goddes owene fynger wroght was he,  
 And nat bigeten of mannes sperme unclene,  
 2010 And welte al paradys savyng o tree.  
 Hadde nevere worldly man so heigh degree  
 As Adam, til he for mysgovernaunce  
 Was dryven out of hys hye prosperitee  
 To labour, and to helle, and to meschaunce.  
 Loo Sampson, which that was annunciat  
 By th' angel longe er his nativitee,  
 And was to God Almyghty consecrat,  
 And stood in noblesse whil he myghte see.  
 Was nevere swich another as was hee,  
 2020 To speke of strengthe, and therwith hardynesse;  
 But to his wyves toolde he his secree,  
 Thurgh which he slow hymself for wrecchednesse.  
 Sampson, this noble almyghty champioun,  
 Withouten wepen save his handes tweye,  
 He slow and al torente the leoun,  
 Toward his weddyng walkynge by the weye.  
 His false wyf koude hym so plese and preye  
 Til she his conseil knew; and she, untrewe,  
 Unto his foos his conseil gan biwrewe,  
 2030 And hym forsook, and took another newe.

Thre hundred foxes took Sampson for ire,  
 And alle hir tayles he togydre bond,  
 And sette the foxes tayles alle on fire,  
 For he on every tayl had knyht a brond;  
 And they brende alle the cornes in that lond,  
 And alle hire olyveres, and vynes eke.  
 A thousand men he slow eek with his hond,  
 And hadde no wepen but an asses cheke.  
 Whan they were slayn, so thursted hym that he  
 2040 Was wel ny lorn, for which he gan to preye  
 That God wolde on his peyne han some pitee  
 And sende hym drynke, or elles moste he deye;  
 And of this asses cheke, that was dreye,  
 Out of a wang-tooth sprang anon a welle,  
 Of which he drank ynogh, shortly to seye;  
 Thus heelp hym God, as Judicum can telle.  
 By verray force at Gazan on a nyght,  
 Maugree Philistiens of that citee,  
 The gates of the toun he hath up plyght,  
 2050 And on his bak ycaryed hem hath hee  
 Hye on an hill whereas men myghte hem see.  
 O noble, almyghty Sampson, lief and deere,  
 Had thou nat toold to wommen thy secree,  
 In al this world ne hadde been thy peere!  
 This Sampson nevere ciser drank ne wyn,  
 Ne on his heed cam rasour noon ne sheere,  
 By precept of the messenger divyn,  
 For alle his strengthes in his heeres weere.  
 And fully twenty wynter, yeer by yeere,  
 2060 He hadde of Israel the governaunce.  
 But soone shal he wepe many a teere,  
 For wommen shal hym bryngen to meschaunce!  
 Unto his lemman Dalida he tolde  
 That in his heeris al his strengthe lay,  
 And falsly to his foomen she hym solde.  
 And slepynge in hir barm upon a day,  
 She made to clippe or shere his heres away,  
 And made his foomen al his craft espyen;  
 And whan that they hym foond in this array,  
 2070 They bounde hym faste and putten out his yen.  
 But er his heer were clipped or yshave,  
 Ther was no boond with which men myghte him bynde;

But now is he in prison in a cave,  
Where-as they made hym at the queerne grynde.  
O noble Sampson, strongest of mankynde,  
O whilom juge, in glorie and in richesse!  
Now maystow wepen with thyne eyen blynde,  
Sith thou fro wele art falle in wrecchednesse.  
The ende of this caytyf was as I shal seye.  
2080 His foomen made a feeste upon a day,  
And made hym as hire fool biforn hem pleye;  
And this was in a temple of greet array.  
But atte laste he made a foul affray,  
For he two pilers shook and made hem falle,  
And doun fil temple and al, and ther it lay --  
And slow hymself, and eek his foomen alle.  
This is to seyn, the prynces everichoon,  
And eek thre thousand bodyes, were ther slayn  
With fallynge of the grete temple of stoon.  
2090 Of Sampson now wol I namoore sayn.  
Beth war by this ensample oold and playn  
That no men telle hir conseil til hir wyves  
Of swich thyng as they wolde han secree fayn,  
If that it touche hir lymes or hir lyves.  
Of Hercules, the sovereyn conquerour,  
Syngen his werkes laude and heigh renoun;  
For in his tyme of strengthe he was the flour.  
He slow and rafte the skyn of the leoun;  
He of Centauros leyde the boost adoun;  
2100 He Arpies slow, the crueel bryddes felle;  
He golden apples rafte of the dragoun;  
He drow out Cerberus, the hound of helle;  
He slow the crueel tyrant Busirus  
And made his hors to frete hym, flessch and boon;  
He slow the firy serpent venymus;  
Of Acheloy's two hornes he brak oon;  
And he slow Cacus in a cave of stoon;  
He slow the geant Antheus the stronge;  
He slow the grisly boor, and that anon;  
2110 And bar the hevene on his nekke longe.  
Was nevere wight, sith that this world bigan,  
That slow so manye monstres as dide he.  
Thurghout this wyde world his name ran,  
What for his strengthe and for his heigh bountee,



And every reawme wente he for to see.  
He was so stroong that no man myghte hym lette.  
At bothe the worldes endes, seith Trophee,  
In stide of boundes he a pileer sette.  
A lemman hadde this noble champioun,  
2120 That highte Dianira, fressh as May;  
And as thise clerkes maken mencion,  
She hath hym sent a sherte, fressh and gay.  
Allas, this sherte -- alas and weylaway! --  
Envenymed was so subtilly withalle  
That er that he had wered it half a day  
It made his flessch al from his bones falle.  
But natheles somme clerkes hire excusen  
By oon that highte Nessus, that it maked.  
Be as be may, I wol hire noght accusen;  
2130 But on his bak this sherte he wered al naked  
Til that his flessch was for the venym blaked.  
And whan he saugh noon oother remedye,  
In hoote coles he hath hymselfen raked,  
For with no venym deigned hym to dye.  
Thus starf this worthy, myghty Hercules.  
Lo, who may truste on Fortune any throwe?  
For hym that folweth al this world of prees  
Er he be war is ofte yleyd ful lowe.  
Ful wys is he that kan hymselfen knowe!  
2140 Beth war, for whan that Fortune list to glose,  
Thanne wayteth she her man to overthrowe  
By swich a wey as he wolde leest suppose.  
The myghty trone, the precious tresor,  
The glorious ceptre, and roial magestee  
That hadde the kyng Nabugodonosor  
With tonge unnethe may discryved bee.  
He twyes wan Jerusalem the citee;  
The vessel of the temple he with hym ladde.  
At Babiloigne was his sovereyn see,  
2150 In which his glorie and his delit he hadde.  
The faireste children of the blood roial  
Of Israel he leet do gelde anon,  
And maked ech of hem to been his thral.  
Amonges othere Daniel was oon,  
That was the wiseste child of everychon,  
For he the dremes of the kyng expowned,

Whereas in Chaldeye clerk ne was ther noon  
That wiste to what fyn his dremes sowned.  
This proude kyng leet maken a statue of gold,  
2160 Sixty cubites long and sevene in brede,  
To which ymage bothe yong and oold  
Comanded he to loute, and have in drede,  
Or in a fourneys, ful of flambes rede,  
He shal be brent that wolde noght obeye.  
But nevere wolde assente to that dede  
Daniel ne his yonge felawes tweye.  
This kyng of kynges proud was and elaat;  
He wende that God, that sit in magestee,  
Ne myghte hym nat bireve of his estaat.  
2170 But sodeynly he loste his dignytee,  
And lyk a beest hym semed for to bee,  
And eet hey as an oxe, and lay theroute  
In reyn; with wilde beestes walked hee  
Til certein tyme was ycome aboute.  
And lik an egles fetheres wax his heres;  
His nayles lyk a briddes clawes weere;  
Til God releessed hym a certeyn yeres,  
And yaf hym wit, and thanne with many a teere  
He thanked God, and evere his lyf in feere  
2180 Was he to doon amys or moore trespass;  
And til that tyme he leyd was on his beere  
He knew that God was ful of myght and grace.  
His sone, which that highte Balthasar,  
That heeld the regne after his fader day,  
He by his fader koude noght be war,  
For proud he was of herte and of array,  
And eek an ydolastre was he ay.  
His hye estaat assured hym in pryde;  
But Fortune caste hym down, and ther he lay,  
2190 And sodeynly his regne gan divide.  
A feeste he made unto his lordes alle  
Upon a tyme and bad hem blithe bee;  
And thanne his officeres gan he calle:  
"Gooth, bryngeth forth the vesseles," quod he,  
"Whiche that my fader in his prosperitee  
Out of the temple of Jerusalem birafte;  
And to oure hye goddes thanke we  
Of honour that oure eldres with us lafte."

Hys wyf, his lordes, and his concubynes  
2200 Ay drunken, whil hire appetites laste,  
Out of thise noble vessels sondry wyne.  
And on a wal this kyng his eyen caste  
And saugh an hand, armlees, that wroot ful faste,  
For feere of which he quook and siked soore.  
This hand that Balthasar so soore agaste  
Wroot Mane, techel, phares, and namoore.  
In all that land magicien was noon  
That koude expoune what this lettre mente;  
But Daniel expowned it anoon,  
2210 And seyde, "Kyng, God to thy fader lente  
Glorie and honour, regne, tresour, rente;  
And he was proud and nothyng God ne dradde,  
And therfore God greet wreche upon hym sente,  
And hym biraft the regne that he hadde.  
"He was out cast of mannes compaignye;  
With asses was his habitacioun,  
And eet hey as a beest in weet and drye  
Til that he knew, by grace and by resoun,  
That God of hevene hath domynacioun  
2220 Over every regne and every creature;  
And thanne hadde God of hym compassioun,  
And hym restored his regne and his figure.  
"Eek thou, that art his sone, art proud also,  
And knowest alle thise thynges verrailly,  
And art rebel to God, and art his foo.  
Thou drank eek of his vessels boldely;  
Thy wyf eek, and thy wenches, synfully  
Dronke of the same vessels sondry wynys;  
And heryest false goddes cursedly;  
2230 Therefore to thee yshapen ful greet pyne ys.  
"This hand was sent from God that on the wal  
Wroot Mane, techel, phares, truste me;  
Thy regne is doon; thou weyest noght at al.  
Dyvyded is thy regne, and it shal be  
To Medes and to Perses yeven," quod he.  
And thilke same nyght this kyng was slawe,  
And Darius occupieth his degree,  
Thogh he therto hadde neither right ne lawe.  
Lordynges, ensample heerby may ye take  
2240 How that in lordshipe is no sikernesse,

For whan Fortune wole a man forsake,  
She bereth away his regne and his richesse,  
And eek his freendes, bothe moore and lesse.  
For what man that hath freendes thurgh Fortune,  
Mishap wol maken hem enemys, I gesse;  
This proverbe is ful sooth and ful commune.  
Cenobia, of Palymerie queene,  
As writen Persiens of hir noblesse,  
So worthy was in armes and so keene  
2250 That no wight passed hire in hardynesse,  
Ne in lynage, ne in oother gentillesse.  
Of kynges blood of Perce is she descended.  
I seye nat that she hadde moost fairnesse,  
But of hir shap she myghte nat been amended.  
From hire childhede I fynde that she fledde  
Office of wommen, and to wode she wente,  
And many a wilde hertes blood she shedde  
With arwes brode that she to hem sente.  
She was so swift that she anon hem hente;  
2260 And whan that she was elder, she wolde kille  
Leouns, leopardes, and beres al torente,  
And in hir armes weelde hem at hir wille.  
She dorste wilde beestes dennes seke,  
And rennen in the montaignes al the nyght,  
And slepen under a bussh, and she koude eke  
Wrastlen, by verray force and verray myght,  
With any yong man, were he never so wight.  
Ther myghte no thyng in hir armes stonde.  
She kepte hir maydenhod from every wight;  
2270 To no man deigned hire for to be bonde.  
But atte laste hir freendes han hire married  
To Odenake, a prynce of that contree,  
Al were it so that she hem longe taried.  
And ye shul understonde how that he  
Hadde swiche fantasies as hadde she.  
But natheless, whan they were knyht in-feere,  
They lyved in joye and in felicitee,  
For ech of hem hadde oother lief and deere,  
Save o thyng: that she wolde nevere assente,  
2280 By no wey, that he sholde by hire lye  
But ones, for it was hir pleyn entente  
To have a child, the world to multiplie;

And also soone as that she myghte espye  
That she was nat with childe with that dede,  
Thanne wolde she suffre hym doon his fantasye  
Eft-soone, and nat but oones, out of drede.  
And if she were with childe at thilke cast,  
Namooore sholde he pleyen thilke game  
Til fully fourty [wikes] weren past;  
2290 Thanne wolde she ones suffre hym do the same.  
Al were this Odenake wilde or tame,  
He gat namooore of hire, for thus she seyde:  
It was to wyves lecherie and shame,  
In oother caas, if that men with hem pleyde.  
Two sones by this Odenake hadde she,  
The whiche she kepte in vertu and lettrure.  
But now unto oure tale turne we.  
I seye, so worshipful a creature,  
And wys therwith, and large with mesure,  
2300 So penyble in the werre, and curteis eke,  
Ne moore labour myghte in werre endure,  
Was noon, though al this world men sholde seke.  
Hir riche array ne myghte nat be told,  
As wel in vessel as in hire clothynge.  
She was al clad in perree and in gold,  
And eek she lafte noght, for noon huntyng,  
To have of sondry tonges ful knowyng,  
Whan that she leyser hadde; and for to entende  
To lerne bookes was al hire likyng,  
2310 How she in vertu myghte hir lyf dispende.  
And shortly of this storie for to trete,  
So doghty was hir housbonde and eek she,  
That they conquered manye regnes grete  
In the orient, with many a fair citee  
Apertenaunt unto the magestee  
Of Rome, and with strong hond held hem ful faste,  
Ne nevere myghte hir foomen doon hem flee,  
Ay whil that Odenakes dayes laste.  
Hir batailles, whoso list hem for to rede,  
2320 Agayn Sapor the kyng and othere mo,  
And how that al this proces fil in dede,  
Why she conquered and what title had therto,  
And after, of hir meschief and hire wo,  
How that she was biseged and ytake --

Lat hym unto my maister Petrak go,  
That writ ynough of this, I undertake.  
Whan Odenake was deed, she myghtily  
The regnes heeld, and with hire propre hond  
Agayn hir foos she faught so cruelly  
2330 That ther nas kyng ne prynce in al that lond  
That he nas glad, if he that grace fond,  
That she ne wolde upon his lond werreye.  
With hire they maden alliance by bond  
To been in pees, and lete hire ride and pleye.  
The Emperour of Rome, Claudius  
Ne hym bifore, the Romain Galien,  
Ne dorste nevere been so corageus,  
Ne noon Ermyn, ne noon Egipcien,  
Ne Surrien, ne noon Arabyen,  
2340 Withinne the feeld that dorste with hire fighte,  
Lest that she wolde hem with hir handes slen,  
Or with hir meignee putten hem to flighte.  
In kynges habit wente hir sones two,  
As heires of hir fadres regnes alle,  
And Hermanno and Thymalao  
Hir names were, as Persiens hem calle.  
But ay Fortune hath in hire hony galle;  
This myghty queene may no while endure.  
Fortune out of hir regne made hire falle  
2350 To wrecchednesse and to mysaventure.  
Aurelian, whan that the governaunce  
Of Rome cam into his handes tweye,  
He shoop upon this queene to doon vengeance.  
And with his legions he took his weye  
Toward Cenobie, and shortly for to seye,  
He made hire flee, and atte laste hire hente,  
And fettred hire, and eek hire children tweye,  
And wan the land, and hoom to Rome he wente.  
Amonges othere thynges that he wan,  
2360 Hir chaar, that was with gold wroght and perree,  
This grete Romain, this Aurelian,  
Hath with hym lad, for that men sholde it see.  
Biforen his triumphe walketh shee,  
With gilte cheynes on hire nekke hangynge.  
Coroned was she, as after hir degree,  
And ful of perree charged hire clothyng.

Allas, Fortune! She that whilom was  
 Dredeful to kynges and to emperoures,  
 Now gaureth al the peple on hire, allas!  
 2370 And she that helmed was in starke stoures  
 And wan by force townes stronge and toures,  
 Shal on hir heed now were a vitremyte;  
 And she that bar the ceptre ful of floures  
 Shal bere a distaf, hire cost for to quyte.  
 O noble, O worthy Petro, glorie of Spayne,  
 Whom Fortune heeld so hye in magestee,  
 Wel oghten men thy pitous deeth complayne!  
 Out of thy land thy brother made thee flee,  
 And after, at a seege, by subtiltee,  
 2380 Thou were bitraysed and lad unto his tente,  
 Where as he with his owene hand slow thee,  
 Succedyng in thy regne and in thy rente.  
 The feeld of snow, with th' egle of blak therinne,  
 Caught with the lymrod coloured as the gleede,  
 He brew this cursednesse and al this synne.  
 The wikked nest was werker of this nede.  
 Noght Charles Olyver, that took ay heede  
 Of trouthe and honour, but of Armorike  
 Genylon-Olyver, corrupt for meede,  
 2390 Broghte this worthy kyng in swich a brike.  
 O worthy Petro, kyng of Cipre, also,  
 That Alisandre wan by heigh maistrie,  
 Ful many an hethen wroghtestow ful wo,  
 Of which thyne owene liges hadde envie,  
 And for no thyng but for thy chivalrie  
 They in thy bed han slayn thee by the morwe.  
 Thus kan Fortune hir wheel governe and gye,  
 And out of joye brynge men to sorwe.  
 Off Melan grete Barnabo Viscounte,  
 2400 God of delit and scourge of Lumbardye,  
 Why sholde I nat thyn infortune acounte,  
 Sith in estaat thou cloumbe were so hye?  
 Thy brother sone, that was thy double allye,  
 For he thy nevew was and sone-in-lawe,  
 Withinne his prisoun made thee to dye --  
 But why ne how noot I that thou were slawe.  
 Off the Erl Hugelyn of Pyze the langour  
 Ther may no tonge telle for pitee.

But litel out of Pize stant a tour,  
2410 In which tour in prisoun put was he,  
And with hym been his litel children thre;  
The eldest scarsly fyf yeer was of age.  
Allas, Fortune, it was greet crueltee  
Swiche briddes for to putte in swich a cage!  
Dampned was he to dyen in that prisoun,  
For Roger, which that bisshop was of Pize,  
Hadde on hym maad a fals suggestioun,  
Thurgh which the peple gan upon hym rise  
And putten hym to prisoun in swich wise  
2420 As ye han herd, and mete and drynke he hadde  
So smal that wel unnethe it may suffise,  
And therwithal it was ful povre and badde.  
And on a day bifil that in that hour  
Whan that his mete wont was to be broght,  
The gayler shette the dores of the tour.  
He herde it wel, but he spak right noght,  
And in his herte anon ther fil a thocht  
That they for hunger wolde doon hym dyen.  
"Allas!" quod he, "Allas, that I was wroght!"  
2430 Therwith the teeris fillen from his yen.  
His yonge sone, that thre yeer was of age,  
Unto hym seyde, "Fader, why do ye wepe?  
Whanne wol the gayler bryngen oure potage?  
Is ther no morsel breed that ye do kepe?  
I am so hungry that I may nat slepe.  
Now wolde God that I myghte slepen evere!  
Thanne sholde nat hunger in my wombe crepe;  
Ther is no thyng, but breed, that me were levere."  
Thus day by day this child bigan to crye,  
2440 Til in his fadres barm adoun it lay,  
And seyde, "Farewel, fader, I moot dye!"  
And kiste his fader, and dyde the same day.  
And whan the woful fader deed it say,  
For wo his armes two he gan to byte,  
And seyde, "Allas, Fortune, and weylaway!  
Thy false wheel my wo al may I wyte."  
His children wende that it for hunger was  
That he his armes gnaw, and nat for wo,  
And seyde, "Fader, do nat so, allas!"  
2450 But rather ete the flessch upon us two.



Oure flessch thou yaf us, take oure flessch us fro,  
 And ete ynogh" -- right thus they to hym seyde,  
 And after that, withinne a day or two,  
 They leyde hem in his lappe adoun and deyde.  
 Hymself, despeired, eek for hunger starf;  
 Thus ended is this myghty Erl of Pize.  
 From heigh estaat Fortune away hym carf.  
 Of this tragedie it oghte ynough suffise;  
 Whoso wol here it in a lenger wise,  
 2460 Redeth the grete poete of Ytaille  
 That highte Dant, for he kan al devyse  
 Fro point to point; nat o word wol he faille.  
 Although that Nero were as vicius  
 As any feend that lith ful lowe adoun,  
 Yet he, as telleth us Swetonius,  
 This wyde world hadde in subjeccioun,  
 Bothe est and west, [south], and septemtrioun.  
 Of rubies, sapphires, and of peerles white  
 Were alle his clothes brouded up and doun,  
 2470 For he in gemmes greetly gan delite.  
 Moore delicaat, moore pompous of array,  
 Moore proud was nevere emperour than he;  
 That ilke clooth that he hadde wered o day,  
 After that tyme he nolde it nevere see.  
 Nettes of gold threed hadde he greet plentee  
 To fissue in Tybre, whan hym liste pleye.  
 His lustes were al lawe in his decree,  
 For Fortune as his freend hym wolde obeye.  
 He Rome brende for his delicacie;  
 2480 The senatours he slow upon a day  
 To heere how that men wolde wepe and crie;  
 And slow his brother, and by his suster lay.  
 His mooder made he in pitous array,  
 For he hire wombe slitte to biholde  
 Where he conceyved was -- so weilaway  
 That he so litel of his mooder tolde!  
 No teere out of his eyen for that sighte  
 Ne cam, but seyde, "A fair womman was she!"  
 Greet wonder is how that he koude or myghte  
 2490 Be domesman of hire dede beautee.  
 The wyn to bryngen hym comanded he,  
 And drank anon -- noon oother wo he made.

Whan myght is joyned unto crueltee,  
Allas, to depe wol the venym wade!  
In yowthe a maister hadde this emperour  
To teche hym letterure and curteisye,  
For of moralitee he was the flour,  
As in his tyme, but if bookes lye;  
And whil this maister hadde of hym maistrye,  
2500 He maked hym so konnyng and so sowple  
That longe tyme it was er tyrannye  
Or any vice dorste on hym uncowple.  
This Seneca, of which that I devyse,  
By cause Nero hadde of hym swich drede,  
For he fro vices wolde hym ay chastise  
Discreetly, as by word and nat by dede --  
"Sire," wolde he seyn, "an emperour moot nede  
Be vertuous and hate tyrannye --"  
For which he in a bath made hym to blede  
2510 On bothe his armes, til he moste dye.  
This Nero hadde eek of acostumaunce  
In youthe agayns his maister for to ryse,  
Which afterward hym thoughte a greet grevaunce;  
Therefore he made hym dyen in this wise.  
But natheless this Seneca the wise  
Chees in a bath to dye in this manere  
Rather than han another tormentise;  
And thus hath Nero slayn his maister deere.  
Now fil it so that Fortune liste no lenger  
2520 The hye pryde of Nero to cherice,  
For though that he were strong, yet was she strengier.  
She thoughte thus: "By God! I am to nyce  
To sette a man that is fulfild of vice  
In heigh degree, and emperour hym calle.  
By God, out of his sete I wol hym trice;  
Whan he leest weneth, sonnest shal he falle."  
The peple roos upon hym on a nyght  
For his defaute, and whan he it espied,  
Out of his dores anon he hath hym dight  
2530 Allone, and ther he wende han been allied  
He knocked faste, and ay the moore he cried  
The fastere shette they the dores alle.  
Tho wiste he wel, he hadde himself mysgyed,  
And wente his wey; no lenger dorste he calle.

The peple cried and rombled up and doun,  
That with his erys herde he how they seyde,  
"Where is this false tiraunt, this Neroun?"  
For fere almoost out of his wit he breyde,  
And to his goddes pitously he preyde  
2540 For socour, but it myghte nat bityde.  
For drede of this hym thoughte that he deyde,  
And ran into a gardyn hym to hyde.  
And in this gardyn foond he cherles tweye  
That seten by a fyr, greet and reed.  
And to thise cherles two he gan to preye  
To sleen hym and to girden of his heed,  
That to his body, whan that he were deed,  
Were no despit ydoon for his defame.  
Hymself he slow, he koude no bettre reed,  
2550 Of which Fortune lough, and hadde a game.  
Was nevere capitayn under a kyng  
That regnes mo putte in subjeccioun,  
Ne strengier was in feeld of alle thyng,  
As in his tyme, ne gretter of renoun,  
Ne moore pompous in heigh presumpcioun  
Than Oloferne, which Fortune ay kiste  
So likerously, and ladde hym up and doun  
Til that his heed was of, er that he wiste.  
Nat oonly that this world hadde hym in awe  
2560 For lesynge of richesse or libertee,  
But he made every man reneyen his lawe.  
"Nabugodonosor was god," seyde hee;  
"Noon oother god sholde adoured bee."  
Agayns his heeste no wight dorst trespase,  
Save in Bethulia, a strong citee,  
Where Eliachim a preest was of that place.  
But taak kep of the deth of Oloferne:  
Amydde his hoost he dronke lay a-nyght,  
Withinne his tente, large as is a berne,  
2570 And yet, for al his pompe and al his myght,  
Judith, a womman, as he lay upright  
Slepynge, his heed of smoot, and from his tente  
Ful pryvely she stal from every wight,  
And with his heed unto hir toun she wente.  
What nedeth it of kyng Anthiochus  
To telle his hye roial magestee,

His hye pride, his werkes venymus?  
For swich another was ther noon as he.  
Rede which that he was in Machabee,  
2580 And rede the proude wordes that he seyde,  
And why he fil fro heigh prosperitee,  
And in an hill how wrecchedly he deyde.  
Fortune hym hadde enhaunced so in pride  
That verrailly he wende he myghte attayne  
Unto the sterres upon every syde,  
And in balance weyen ech montayne,  
And alle the floodes of the see restrayne.  
And Goddes peple hadde he moost in hate;  
Hem wolde he sleen in torment and in payne,  
2590 Wenyng that God ne myghte his pride abate.  
And for that Nichanore and Thymothee  
Of Jewes weren venquysshed myghtily,  
Unto the Jewes swich an hate hadde he  
That he bad greithen his chaar ful hastily,  
And swoor, and seyde ful despitously  
Unto Jerusalem he wolde eftsoone  
To wreken his ire on it ful cruelly;  
But of his purpos he was let ful soone.  
God for his manace hym so soore smoot  
2600 With invisible wounde, ay incurable,  
That in his guttes carf it so and boot  
That his peynes weren importable.  
And certainly the wreche was resonable,  
For many a mannes guttes dide he peyne.  
But from his purpos cursed and dampnable,  
For al his smert, he wolde hym nat restreyne,  
But bad anon apparailen his hoost;  
And sodeynly, er he was of it war,  
God daunted al his pride and al his boost.  
2610 For he so soore fil out of his char  
That it his limes and his skyn totar,  
So that he neyther myghte go ne ryde,  
But in a chayer men aboute hym bar,  
Al forbrused, bothe bak and syde.  
The wreche of God hym smoot so cruelly  
That thurgh his body wikked wormes crepte,  
And therwithal he stank so horribly  
That noon of al his meynee that hym kepte,

Wheither so he wook or ellis slepte,  
2620 Ne myghte noght the stynk of hym endure.  
In this meschief he wayled and eek wepte,  
And knew God lord of every creature.  
To al his hoost and to hymself also  
Ful wlatson was the stynk of his careyne;  
No man ne myghte hym bere to ne fro.  
And in this stynk and this horrible peyne,  
He starf ful wrecchedly in a monteyne.  
Thus hath this robbour and this homycide,  
That many a man made to wepe and pleyne,  
2630 Swich gerdoun as bilongeth unto pryde.  
The storie of Alisaundre is so commune  
That every wight that hath discrecioun  
Hath herd somewhat or al of his fortune.  
This wyde world, as in conclusioun,  
He wan by strengthe, or for his hye renoun  
They weren glad for pees unto hym sende.  
The pride of man and beest he leyde adoun,  
Wherso he cam, unto the worldes ende.  
Comparisoun myghte nevere yet been maked  
2640 Bitwixe hym and another conquerour;  
For al this world for drede of hym hath quaked.  
He was of knyghthod and of fredom flour;  
Fortune hym made the heir of hire honour.  
Save wyn and wommen, no thing myghte aswage  
His hye entente in armes and labour,  
So was he ful of leonyn corage.  
What pris were it to hym, though I yow tolde  
Of Darius, and an hundred thousand mo  
Of kynges, princes, dukes, erles bolde  
2650 Whiche he conquered, and broghte hem into wo?  
I seye, as fer as man may ryde or go,  
The world was his -- what sholde I moore devyse?  
For though I write or tolde yow everemo  
Of his knyghthod, it myghte nat suffise.  
Twelf yeer he regned, as seith Machabee.  
Philippes sone of Macidoynes he was,  
That first was kyng in Grece the contree.  
O worthy, gentil Alisandre, allas,  
That evere sholde fallen swich a cas!  
2660 Empoysoned of thyn owene folk thou weere;

Thy sys Fortune hath turned into aas,  
 And for thee ne weep she never a teere.  
 Who shal me yeven teeris to compleyne  
 The deeth of gentillesse and of franchise,  
 That al the world weelded in his demeyne,  
 And yet hym thoughte it myghte nat suffise?  
 So ful was his corage of heigh emprise.  
 Allas, who shal me helpe to endite  
 False Fortune, and poyson to despise,  
 2670 The whiche two of al this wo I wyte?  
 By wisdom, manhede, and by greet labour,  
 From humble bed to roial magestee  
 Up roos he Julius, the conquerour,  
 That wan al th' occident by land and see,  
 By strengthe of hand, or elles by tretee,  
 And unto Rome made hem tributarie;  
 And sitthe of Rome the emperour was he  
 Til that Fortune weex his adversarie.  
 O myghty Cesar, that in Thessalie  
 2680 Agayn Pompeus, fader thyn in lawe,  
 That of the orient hadde al the chivalrie  
 As fer as that the day bigynneth dawe,  
 Thou thurgh thy knyghthod hast hem take and slawe,  
 Save fewe folk that with Pompeus fledde,  
 Thurgh which thou puttest al th' orient in awe.  
 Thanke Fortune, that so wel thee spedde!  
 But now a litel while I wol biwaille  
 This Pompeus, this noble governour  
 Of Rome, which that fleigh at this bataille.  
 2690 I seye, oon of his men, a fals traitour,  
 His heed of smoot, to wynnen hym favour  
 Of Julius, and hym the heed he broghte.  
 Allas, Pompeye, of th' orient conquerour,  
 That Fortune unto swich a fyn thee broghte!  
 To Rome agayn repaireth Julius  
 With his triumphe, lauriat ful hye;  
 But on a tyme Brutus Cassius,  
 That evere hadde of his hye estaat envye,  
 Ful prively hath maad conspiracye  
 2700 Agayns this Julius in subtil wise,  
 And caste the place in which he sholde dye  
 With boydekyns, as I shal yow devyse.

This Julius to the Capitolie wente  
Upon a day, as he was wont to goon,  
And in the Capitolie anon hym hente  
This false Brutus and his othere foon,  
And stiked hym with boydekyns anoon  
With many a wounde, and thus they lete hym lye;  
But nevere gronte he at no strook but oon,  
2710 Or elles at two, but if his storie lye.  
So manly was this Julius of herte,  
And so wel lovede estaatly honestee,  
That though his deedly woundes soore smerte,  
His mantel over his hypes caste he,  
For no man sholde seen his privetee;  
And as he lay of diyng in a traunce,  
And wiste verrailly that deed was hee,  
Of honestee yet hadde he remembraunce.  
Lucan, to thee this storie I recomende,  
2720 And to Swetoun, and to Valerius also,  
That of this storie writen word and ende,  
How that to thise grete conqueroures two  
Fortune was first freend, and sitthe foo.  
No man ne truste upon hire favour longe,  
But have hire in awayt for everemoo;  
Witnesse on alle thise conqueroures stronge.  
This riche Cresus, whilom kyng of Lyde,  
Of which Cresus Cyrus soore hym dradde,  
Yet was he caught amyddes al his pryde,  
2730 And to be brent men to the fyr hym ladde.  
But swich a reyn doun fro the welkne shadde  
That slow the fyr, and made hym to escape;  
But to be war no grace yet he hadde,  
Til Fortune on the galwes made hym gape.  
Whanne he escaped was, he kan nat stente  
For to bigynne a newe werre agayn.  
He wende wel, for that Fortune hym sente  
Swich hap that he escaped thurgh the rayn,  
That of his foos he myghte nat be slayn;  
2740 And eek a sweven upon a nyght he mette,  
Of which he was so proud and eek so fayn  
That in vengeance he al his herte sette.  
Upon a tree he was, as that hym thoughte,  
Ther Juppiter hym wessh, bothe bak and syde,

And Phebus eek a fair towaille hym broughte  
To dryen hym with; and therfore wax his pryde,  
And to his doghter, that stood hym bisyde,  
Which that he knew in heigh sentence habounde,  
He bad hire telle hym what it signifyde,  
2750 And she his dreem bigan right thus expounde:  
"The tree," quod she, "the galwes is to meene,  
And Juppiter bitokneth snow and reyn,  
And Phebus, with his towaille so clene,  
Tho been the sonne stremes for to seyn.  
Thou shalt anhangd be, fader, certeyn;  
Reyn shal thee wasshe, and sonne shal thee drye."  
Thus warned hym ful plat and ek ful pleyn  
His doghter, which that called was Phanye.  
Anhangd was Cresus, the proude kyng;  
2760 His roial trone myghte hym nat availle.  
Tragedies noon oother maner thyng  
Ne kan in syngyng crie ne biwaille  
But that Fortune alwey wole assaille  
With unwar strook the regnes that been proude;  
For whan men trusteth hire, thanne wol she faille,  
And covere hire brighte face with a clowde.





## THE NUN'S PRIEST'S PROLOGUE

"Hoo!" quod the Knyght, "good sire, namoore of this!  
That ye han seyde is right ynough, ywis,  
And muchel moore; for litel hevynesse  
2770 Is right ynough to muche folk, I gesse.  
I seye for me, it is a greet disese,  
Whereas men han been in greet welthe and ese,  
To heeren of hire sodeyn fal, alas!  
And the contrarie is joye and greet solas,  
As whan a man hath been in povre estat,  
And clymbeth up and wexeth fortunat,  
And there abideth in prosperitee.  
Swich thyng is gladsom, as it thynketh me,  
And of swich thyng were goodly for to telle."  
2780 "Ye," quod oure Hooste, "by Seint Poules belle!  
Ye seye right sooth; this Monk he clappeth lowde.  
He spak how Fortune covered with a clowde  
I noot nevere what; and als of a tragedie  
Right now ye herde, and pardee, no remedie  
It is for to biwaille ne compleyne  
That that is doon, and als it is a peyne,  
As ye han seyde, to heere of hevynesse.  
"Sire Monk, namoore of this, so God yow blesse!  
Youre tale anyeth al this compaignye.  
2790 Swich talkyng is nat worth a boterflye,  
For therinne is ther no desport ne game.  
Wherfore, sire Monk, daun Piers by youre name,  
I pray yow hertely telle us somewhat elles;  
For sikerly, nere clynkyng of youre belles  
That on youre bridel hange on every syde,  
By hevene kyng that for us alle dyde,  
I sholde er this han fallen doun for sleep,  
Although the slough had never been so deep;  
Thanne hadde your tale al be toold in veyn.  
2800 For certainly, as that thise clerkes seyn,  
Whereas a man may have noon audience,  
Noght helpeth it to tellen his sentence.  
"And wel I woot the substance is in me,  
If any thyng shal wel reported be.  
Sir, sey somewhat of huntyng, I yow preye."  
"Nay," quod this Monk, "I have no lust to pleye.

Now lat another telle, as I have toold."  
Thanne spak oure Hoost with rude speche and boold,  
And seyde unto the Nonnes Preest anon,  
2810 "Com neer, thou preest, com hyder, thou sir John!  
Telle us swich thyng as may oure hertes glade.  
Be blithe, though thou ryde upon a jade.  
What thogh thyn hors be bothe foul and lene?  
If he wol serve thee, rekke nat a bene.  
Looke that thyn herte be murie everemo."  
"Yis, sir," quod he, "yis, Hoost, so moot I go,  
But I be myrie, ywis I wol be blamed."  
And right anon his tale he hath attamed,  
And thus he seyde unto us everichon,  
2820 This sweete preest, this goodly man sir John.



## THE NUN'S PRIEST'S TALE

A povre wydwe, somdeel stape in age,  
 Was whilom dwellyng in a narwe cotage,  
 Biside a grove, stondynge in a dale.  
 This wydwe, of which I telle yow my tale,  
 Syn thilke day that she was last a wyf  
 In pacience ladde a ful symple lyf,  
 For litel was hir catel and hir rente.  
 By housbondrie of swich as God hire sente  
 She foond herself and eek hir doghtren two.  
 2830 Thre large sowes hadde she, and namo,  
 Three keen, and eek a sheep that highte Malle.  
 Ful sooty was hire bour and eek hir halle,  
 In which she eet ful many a sklendre meel.  
 Of poynaunt sauce hir neded never a deel.  
 No deyntee morsel passed thurgh hir throte;  
 Hir diete was accordant to hir cote.  
 Repleccioun ne made hire nevere sik;  
 Attemprete diete was al hir phisik,  
 And exercise, and hertes suffisaunce.  
 2840 The goute lette hire nothyng for to daunce,  
 N' apoplexie shente nat hir heed.  
 No wyn ne drank she, neither whit ne reed;  
 Hir bord was served moost with whit and blak --  
 Milk and broun breed, in which she foond no lak,  
 Seynd bacoun, and somtyme an ey or tweye,  
 For she was, as it were, a maner deye.  
 A yeerd she hadde, enclosed al aboute  
 With stikkes, and a drye dych withoute,  
 In which she hadde a cok, hight Chauntecleer.  
 2850 In al the land, of crowyng nas his peer.  
 His voys was murier than the murie orgon  
 On messe-dayes that in the chirche gon.  
 Wel sikerer was his crowyng in his logge  
 Than is a klokke or an abbey orlogge.  
 By nature he knew ech ascencioun  
 Of the equynoxial in thilke toun;  
 For whan degrees fiftene weren ascended,  
 Thanne crew he that it myghte nat been amended.  
 His coomb was redder than the fyn coral,  
 2860 And batailled as it were a castel wal;

His byle was blak, and as the jeet it shoon;  
 Lyk asure were his legges and his toon;  
 His nayles whitter than the lylle flour,  
 And lyk the burned gold was his colour.  
 This gentil cok hadde in his governaunce  
 Sevene hennes for to doon al his plesaunce,  
 Whiche were his sustres and his paramours,  
 And wonder lyk to hym, as of colours;  
 Of whiche the faireste hewed on hir throte  
 2870 Was cleped faire damoysele Pertelote.  
 Curteys she was, discreet, and debonaire,  
 And compaignable, and bar hyrself so faire  
 Syn thilke day that she was seven nyght oold  
 That trewely she hath the herte in hoold  
 Of Chauntecleer, loken in every lith;  
 He loved hire so that wel was hym therwith.  
 But swich a joye was it to here hem synge,  
 Whan that the brighte sonne gan to sprynge,  
 In sweete accord, "My lief is faren in londe!" --  
 2880 For thilke tyme, as I have understonde,  
 Beestes and briddes koude speke and synge.  
 And so bifel that in a dawenyng,  
 As Chauntecleer among his wyves alle  
 Sat on his perche, that was in the halle,  
 And next hym sat this faire Pertelote,  
 This Chauntecleer gan gronen in his throte,  
 As man that in his dreem is drecched soore.  
 And whan that Pertelote thus herde hym roore,  
 She was agast and seyde, "Herte deere,  
 2890 What eyleth yow, to grone in this manere?  
 Ye been a verray sleper; fy, for shame!"  
 And he answerde, and seyde thus: "Madame,  
 I pray yow that ye take it nat agrief.  
 By God, me mette I was in swich meschief  
 Right now that yet myn herte is soore afright.  
 Now God," quod he, "my swevene recche aright,  
 And kepe my body out of foul prisoun!  
 Me mette how that I romed up and down  
 Withinne our yeerd, wheer as I saugh a beast  
 2900 Was lyk an hound, and wolde han maad areest  
 Upon my body, and wolde han had me deed.  
 His colour was bitwixe yelow and reed,

And tipped was his tayl and bothe his eeris  
 With blak, unlyk the remenant of his heeris;  
 His snowte smal, with glowynge eyen tweye.  
 Yet of his look for feere almoost I deye;  
 This caused me my gronyng, doutelees."  
 "Avoy!" quod she, "fy on yow, hertelees!  
 Allas," quod she, "for, by that God above,  
 2910 Now han ye lost myn herte and al my love!  
 I kan nat love a coward, by my feith!  
 For certes, what so any womman seith,  
 We alle desiren, if it myghte bee,  
 To han housbondes hardy, wise, and free,  
 And secree -- and no nygard, ne no fool,  
 Ne hym that is agast of every tool,  
 Ne noon avauntour, by that God above!  
 How dorste ye seyn, for shame, unto youre love  
 That any thyng myghte make yow aferd?  
 2920 Have ye no mannes herte, and han a berd?  
 Allas! And konne ye been agast of swevenys?  
 Nothyng, God woot, but vanitee in sweven is.  
 Swevenes engendren of replecciouns,  
 And ofte of fume and of complecciouns,  
 Whan humours been to habundant in a wight.  
 Certes this dreem, which ye han met to-nyght,  
 Cometh of the greete superfluytee  
 Of youre rede colera, pardee,  
 Which causeth folk to dreden in hir dremes  
 2930 Of arwes, and of fyr with rede lemes,  
 Of rede beestes, that they wol hem byte,  
 Of kontek, and of whelpes, grete and lyte;  
 Right as the humour of malencolie  
 Causeth ful many a man in sleep to crie  
 For feere of blake beres, or boles blake,  
 Or elles blake develes wole hem take.  
 Of othere humours koude I telle also  
 That werken many a man sleep ful wo;  
 But I wol passe as lightly as I kan.  
 2940 "Lo Catoun, which that was so wys a man,  
 Seyde he nat thus, `Ne do no fors of dremes'?  
 "Now sire," quod she, "whan we flee fro the bemes,  
 For Goddes love, as taak som laxatyf.  
 Up peril of my soule and of my lyf,

I conseilte yow the beste -- I wol nat lye --  
 That bothe of colere and of malencolye  
 Ye purge yow; and for ye shal nat tarie,  
 Though in this toun is noon apothecarie,  
 I shal myself to herbes techen yow  
 2950 That shul been for youre hele and for youre prow;  
 And in oure yeerd tho herbes shal I fynde  
 The whiche han of hire propretee by kynde  
 To purge yow bynethe and eek above.  
 Foryet nat this, for Goddes owene love!  
 Ye been ful coleryk of compleccioun;  
 Ware the sonne in his ascencioun  
 Ne fynde yow nat repleet of humours hoote.  
 And if it do, I dar wel leye a grote,  
 That ye shul have a fevere terciane,  
 2960 Or an agu that may be youre bane.  
 A day or two ye shul have digestyves  
 Of wormes, er ye take youre laxatyves  
 Of lawriol, centaure, and fumetere,  
 Or elles of ellebor, that groweth there,  
 Of katapuce, or of gaitrys beryis,  
 Of herbe yve, growyng in oure yeerd, ther mery is;  
 Pekke hem up right as they growe and ete hem yn.  
 Be myrie, housbonde, for youre fader kyn!  
 Dredeth no dreem; I kan sey yow namoore."  
 2970 "Madame," quod he, "graunt mercy of youre loore.  
 But nathelees, as touchyng daun Catoun,  
 That hath of wysdom swich a greet renoun,  
 Though that he bad no dremes for to drede,  
 By God, men may in olde bookes rede  
 Of many a man moore of auctorite  
 Than evere Caton was, so moot I thee,  
 That al the revers seyn of this sentence,  
 And han wel founden by experience  
 That dremes been significaciouns  
 2980 As wel of joye as of tribulaciouns  
 That folk endure in this lif present.  
 Ther nedeth make of this noon argument;  
 The verray preeve sheweth it in dede.  
 "Oon of the gretteste auctour that men rede  
 Seith thus: that whilom two felawes wente  
 On pilgrimage, in a ful good entente,

And happed so, they coomen in a toun  
Wher as ther was swich congregacioun  
Of peple, and eek so streit of herbergage,  
2990 That they ne founde as muche as o cotage  
In which they bothe myghte ylogged bee.  
Wherfore they mosten of necessitee,  
As for that nyght, departen compaignye;  
And ech of hem gooth to his hostelrye,  
And took his loggyng as it wolde falle.  
That oon of hem was logged in a stalle,  
Fer in a yeerd, with oxen of the plough;  
That oother man was logged wel ynough,  
As was his aventure or his fortune,  
3000 That us governeth alle as in commune.  
"And so bifel that, longe er it were day,  
This man mette in his bed, ther as he lay,  
How that his felawe gan upon hym calle,  
And seyde, `Allas, for in an oxes stalle  
This nyght I shal be mordred ther I lye!  
Now help me, deere brother, or I dye.  
In alle haste com to me!' he sayde.  
This man out of his sleep for feere abrayde;  
But whan that he was wakened of his sleep,  
3010 He turned hym and took of this no keep.  
Hym thoughte his dreem nas but a vanitee.  
Thus twies in his slepyng dremed hee;  
And atte thridde tyme yet his felawe  
Cam, as hym thoughte, and seide, `I am now slawe.  
Bihoold my bloody woundes depe and wyde!  
Arys up erly in the morwe tyde,  
And at the west gate of the toun,' quod he,  
`A carte ful of dong ther shaltow se,  
In which my body is hid ful prively;  
3020 Do thilke carte arresten boldely.  
My gold caused my mordre, sooth to sayn,'  
And tolde hym every point how he was slayn,  
With a ful pitous face, pale of hewe.  
And truste wel, his dreem he foond ful trewe,  
For on the morwe, as soone as it was day,  
To his felawes in he took the way;  
And whan that he cam to this oxes stalle,  
After his felawe he bigan to calle.

"The hostiler answerede hym anon,  
3030 And seyde, 'Sire, your felawe is agon.  
As soone as day he wente out of the toun.'  
"This man gan fallen in suspecioun,  
Remembrynge on his dremes that he mette,  
And forth he gooth -- no lenger wolde he lette --  
Unto the west gate of the toun, and fond  
A dong-carte, wente as it were to donge lond,  
That was arrayed in that same wise  
As ye han herd the dede man devyse.  
And with an hardy herte he gan to crye  
3040 Vengeance and justice of this felonye:  
'My felawe mordred is this same nyght,  
And in this carte he lith gapyng upright.  
I crye out on the ministres,' quod he,  
'That sholden kepe and reulen this citee.  
Harrow! Allas! Heere lith my felawe slayn!'  
What sholde I moore unto this tale sayn?  
The peple out sterte and caste the cart to grounde,  
And in the myddel of the dong they founde  
The dede man, that mordred was al newe.  
3050 "O blisful God, that art so just and trewe,  
Lo, how that thou biwreyest mordre alway!  
Mordre wol out; that se we day by day.  
Mordre is so wlatson and abhomynable  
To God, that is so just and resonable,  
That he ne wol nat suffre it heled be,  
Though it abyde a yeer, or two, or thre.  
Mordre wol out, this my conclusioun.  
And right anon, ministres of that toun  
Han hent the carter and so soore hym pyned,  
3060 And eek the hostiler so soore engyned,  
That they biknewe hire wikkednesse anon,  
And were anhangen by the nekke-bon.  
"Heere may men seen that dremes been to drede.  
And certes in the same book I rede,  
Right in the nexte chapitre after this --  
I gabbe nat, so have I joye or blis --  
Two men that wolde han passed over see,  
For certeyn cause, into a fer contree,  
If that the wynd ne hadde been contrarie,  
3070 That made hem in a citee for to tarie



That stood ful myrie upon an haven-syde;  
But on a day, agayn the even-tyde,  
The wynd gan chaunge, and blew right as hem leste.  
Jolif and glad they wente unto hir reste,  
And casten hem ful erly for to saille.  
But herkneth! To that o man fil a greet mervaille:  
That oon of hem, in slepyng as he lay,  
Hym mette a wonder dreem agayn the day.  
Hym thoughte a man stood by his beddes syde,  
3080 And hym comanded that he sholde abyde,  
And seyde hym thus: 'If thou tomorwe wende,  
Thow shalt be dreynt; my tale is at an ende.'  
He wook, and tolde his felawe what he mette,  
And preyde hym his viage for to lette;  
As for that day, he preyde hym to byde.  
His felawe, that lay by his beddes syde,  
Gan for to laughe, and scorned him ful faste.  
'No dreem,' quod he, 'may so myn herte agaste  
That I wol lette for to do my thynges.  
3090 I sette nat a straw by thy dremynges,  
For swevenes been but vanytees and japes.  
Men dreme alday of owles and of apes,  
And of many a maze therwithal;  
Men dreme of thyng that nevere was ne shal.  
But sith I see that thou wolt heere abyde,  
And thus forslewthen wilfully thy tyde,  
God woot, it reweth me; and have good day!'  
And thus he took his leve, and wente his way.  
But er that he hadde half his cours yseyled,  
3100 Noot I nat why, ne what myschaunce it eyled,  
But casuely the shippes botme rente,  
And ship and man under the water wente  
In sighte of othere shippes it bisyde,  
That with hem seyled at the same tyde.  
And therefore, faire Pertelote so deere,  
By swiche ensamples olde maistow leere  
That no man sholde been to recchelees  
Of dremes; for I seye thee, doutelees,  
That many a dreem ful soore is for to drede.  
3110 "Lo, in the lyf of Seint Kenelm I rede,  
That was Kenulphus sone, the noble kyng  
Of Mercenrike, how Kenelm mette a thyng.

A lite er he was mordred, on a day,  
His mordre in his avysioun he say.  
His norice hym expowned every deel  
His sweven, and bad hym for to kepe hym weel  
For traisoun; but he nas but seven yeer oold,  
And therfore litel tale hath he toold  
Of any dreem, so hooly was his herte.  
3120 By God! I hadde levere than my sherte  
That ye hadde rad his legende, as have I.  
"Dame Pertelote, I sey yow trewely,  
Macrobeus, that writ the avisioun  
In Affrike of the worthy Cipioun,  
Affermeth dremes, and seith that they been  
Warnynge of thynges that men after seen.  
And forthermoore, I pray yow, looketh wel  
In the olde testament, of Daniel,  
If he heeld dremes any vanitee.  
3130 Reed eek of Joseph, and ther shul ye see  
Wher dremes be somtyme -- I sey nat alle --  
Warnynge of thynges that shul after falle.  
Looke of Egipte the kyng, daun Pharao,  
His bakere and his butiller also,  
Wher they ne felte noon effect in dremes.  
Whoso wol seken actes of sondry remes  
May rede of dremes many a wonder thyng.  
Lo Cresus, which that was of Lyde kyng,  
Mette he nat that he sat upon a tree,  
3140 Which signified he sholde anhangen bee?  
Lo heere Andromacha, Ectores wyf,  
That day that Ector sholde lese his lyf,  
She dremed on the same nyght biforn  
How that the lyf of Ector sholde be lorn,  
If thilke day he wente into bataille.  
She warned hym, but it myghte nat availle;  
He wente for to fighte natheles,  
But he was slayn anon of Achilles.  
But thilke tale is al to longe to telle,  
3150 And eek it is ny day; I may nat dwelle.  
Shortly I seye, as for conclusioun,  
That I shal han of this avisioun  
Adversitee; and I seye forthermoor  
That I ne telle of laxatyves no stoor,

For they been venymes, I woot it weel;  
I hem diffye, I love hem never a deel!  
"Now let us speke of myrthe, and stynte al this.  
Madame Pertelote, so have I blis,  
Of o thyng God hath sent me large grace;  
3160 For whan I se the beautee of youre face,  
Ye been so scarlet reed aboute youre yen,  
It maketh al my drede for to dyen;  
For al so siker as In principio,  
Mulier est hominis confusio --  
Madame, the sentence of this Latyn is,  
'Womman is mannes joye and al his blis.'  
For whan I feele a-nyght your softe syde --  
Al be it that I may nat on yow ryde,  
For that oure perche is maad so narwe, allas --  
3170 I am so ful of joye and of solas,  
That I diffye bothe sweven and dreem."  
And with that word he fley doun fro the beem,  
For it was day, and eke his hennes alle,  
And with a chuk he gan hem for to calle,  
For he hadde founde a corn, lay in the yerd.  
Real he was, he was namoore aferd.  
He fethered Pertelote twenty tyme,  
And trad hire eke as ofte, er it was pryme.  
He looketh as it were a grym leoun,  
3180 And on his toos he rometh up and doun;  
Hym deigned nat to sette his foot to grounde.  
He chukketh whan he hath a corn yfounde,  
And to hym rennen thanne his wyves alle.  
Thus roial, as a prince is in his halle,  
Leve I this Chauntecleer in his pasture,  
And after wol I telle his aventure.  
Whan that the month in which the world bigan,  
That highte March, whan God first maked man,  
Was compleet, and passed were also,  
3190 Syn March [was gon], thritty dayes and two,  
Bifel that Chauntecleer in al his pryde,  
His sevene wyves walkynge by his syde,  
Caste up his eyen to the brighte sonne,  
That in the signe of Taurus hadde yronne  
Twenty degrees and oon, and somewhat moore,  
And knew by kynde, and by noon oother loore,

That it was pryme, and crew with blisful stevene.  
"The sonne," he seyde, "is clomben up on hevene  
Fourty degrees and oon, and moore ywis.  
3200 Madame Pertelote, my worldes blis,  
Herkneth thise blisful briddes how they synge,  
And se the fresshe floures how they sprynge;  
Ful is myn herte of revel and solas!"  
But sodeynly hym fil a sorweful cas,  
For evere the latter ende of joye is wo.  
God woot that worldly joye is soone ago;  
And if a rethor koude faire endite,  
He in a cronycle saufly myghte it write  
As for a sovereyn notabilitee.  
3210 Now every wys man, lat him herkne me;  
This storie is also trewe, I undertake,  
As is the book of Launcelot de Lake,  
That wommen holde in ful greet reverence.  
Now wol I torne agayn to my sentence.  
A col-fox, ful of sly iniquitee,  
That in the grove hadde woned yeres three,  
By heigh ymaginacioun forncast,  
The same nyght thurghout the hegges brast  
Into the yerd ther Chauntecleer the faire  
3220 Was wont, and eek his wyves, to repaire;  
And in a bed of wortes stille he lay  
Til it was passed undren of the day,  
Waitynge his tyme on Chauntecleer to falle,  
As gladly doon thise homycides alle  
That in await liggen to mordre men.  
O false mordre, lurkyng in thy den!  
O newe Scariot, newe Genylon,  
False dissymulour, o Greek Synon,  
That broghtest Troye al outrely to sorwe!  
3230 O Chauntecleer, acursed be that morwe  
That thou into that yerd flaugh fro the bemes!  
Thou were ful wel ywarned by thy dremes  
That thilke day was perilous to thee;  
But what that God forwoot moot nedes bee,  
After the opinioun of certein clerkis.  
Witnesse on hym that any parfit clerk is,  
That in scole is greet altercacioun  
In this mateere, and greet disputisoun,

And hath been of an hundred thousand men.  
 3240 But I ne kan nat bulte it to the bren  
 As kan the hooly doctour Augustyn,  
 Or Boece, or the Bisshop Bradwardyn,  
 Wheither that Goddes worthy forwityng  
 Streyneth me nedely for to doon a thyng --  
 "Nedely" clepe I symple necessitee --  
 Or elles, if free choys be graunted me  
 To do that same thyng, or do it noght,  
 Though God forwoot it er that I was wrought;  
 Or if his wityng streyneth never a deel  
 3250 But by necessitee condicioneel.  
 I wol nat han to do of swich mateere;  
 My tale is of a cok, as ye may heere,  
 That tok his conseil of his wyf, with sorwe,  
 To walken in the yerd upon that morwe  
 That he hadde met that dreem that I yow tolde.  
 Wommennes conseils been ful ofte colde;  
 Wommannes conseil broghte us first to wo  
 And made Adam fro Paradys to go,  
 Ther as he was ful myrie and wel at ese.  
 3260 But for I noot to whom it myght displese,  
 If I conseil of women wolde blame,  
 Passe over, for I seyde it in my game.  
 Rede auctours, where they trete of swich mateere,  
 And what they seyn of women ye may heere.  
 Thise been the cokkes wordes, and nat myne;  
 I kan noon harm of no womman divyne.  
 Faire in the soond, to bathe hire myrily,  
 Lith Pertelote, and alle hire sustres by,  
 Agayn the sonne, and Chauntecleer so free  
 3270 Soong murier than the mermayde in the see  
 (For Physiologus seith sikerly  
 How that they syngen wel and myrily).  
 And so bifel that, as he caste his ye  
 Among the wortes on a boterflye,  
 He was war of this fox, that lay ful lowe.  
 Nothyng ne liste hym thanne for to crowe,  
 But cride anon, "Cok! cok!" and up he sterte  
 As man that was affrayed in his herte.  
 For natureelly a beest desireth flee  
 3280 Fro his contrarie, if he may it see,

Though he never erst hadde seyn it with his ye.  
This Chauntecleer, whan he gan hym espye,  
He wolde han fled, but that the fox anon  
Seyde, "Gentil sire, alas, wher wol ye gon?  
Be ye affrayed of me that am youre freend?  
Now, certes, I were worse than a feend,  
If I to yow wolde harm or vileynye!  
I am nat come youre conseil for t' espye,  
But trewely, the cause of my comynge  
3290 Was oonly for to herkne how that ye synge.  
For trewely, ye have as myrie a stevene  
As any aungel hath that is in hevene.  
Therwith ye han in musyk moore feelynge  
Than hadde Boece, or any that kan synge.  
My lord youre fader -- God his soule blesse! --  
And eek youre mooder, of hire gentillesse,  
Han in myn hous ybeen to my greet ese;  
And certes, sire, ful fayn wolde I yow plese.  
But, for men speke of syngyng, I wol seye --  
3300 So moote I brouke wel myne eyen tweye --  
Save yow, I herde nevere man so synge  
As dide youre fader in the morwenynge.  
Certes, it was of herte, al that he song.  
And for to make his voys the moore strong,  
He wolde so peyne hym that with bothe his yen  
He moste wynke, so loude he wolde cryen,  
And stonden on his tiptoon therwithal,  
And strecche forth his nekke long and smal.  
And eek he was of swich discrecioun  
3310 That ther nas no man in no regioun  
That hym in song or wisdom myghte passe.  
I have wel rad in 'Daun Burnel the Asse,'  
Among his vers, how that ther was a cok,  
For that a preestes sone yaf hym a knock  
Upon his leg whil he was yong and nyce,  
He made hym for to lese his benefice.  
But certeyn, ther nys no comparisoun  
Bitwixe the wisdom and discrecioun  
Of youre fader and of his subtiltee.  
3320 Now syngeth, sire, for seinte charitee;  
Lat se; konne ye youre fader countrefete?"  
This Chauntecleer his wynges gan to bete,

As man that koude his traysoun nat espie,  
 So was he ravysshed with his flaterie.  
 Allas, ye lordes, many a fals flatour  
 Is in youre courtes, and many a losengeour,  
 That plesen yow wel moore, by my feith,  
 Than he that soothfastnesse unto yow seith.  
 Redeth Ecclesiaste of flaterye;  
 3330 Beth war, ye lordes, of hir trecherye.  
 This Chauntecleer stood hye upon his toos,  
 Strecchyng his nekke, and heeld his eyen cloos,  
 And gan to crowe loude for the nones.  
 And daun Russell the fox stirte up atones,  
 And by the gargat hente Chauntecleer,  
 And on his bak toward the wode hym beer,  
 For yet ne was ther no man that hym sewed.  
 O destinee, that mayst nat been eschewed!  
 Allas, that Chauntecleer fleigh fro the bemes!  
 3340 Allas, his wyf ne roghte nat of dremes!  
 And on a Friday fil al this meschaunce.  
 O Venus, that art goddesse of plesaunce,  
 Syn that thy servant was this Chauntecleer,  
 And in thy servyce dide al his poweer,  
 Moore for delit than world to multiplie,  
 Why woldestow suffre hym on thy day to dye?  
 O Gaufred, deere maister soverayn,  
 That whan thy worthy kyng Richard was slayn  
 With shot, compleynedest his deeth so soore,  
 3350 Why ne hadde I now thy sentence and thy loore,  
 The Friday for to chide, as diden ye?  
 For on a Friday, soothly, slayn was he.  
 Thanne wolde I shewe yow how that I koude pleyne  
 For Chauntecleres drede and for his peyne.  
 Certes, swich cry ne lamentacion  
 Was nevere of ladyes maad whan Ylion  
 Was wonne, and Pirrus with his streite swerd,  
 Whan he hadde hent kyng Priam by the berd,  
 And slayn hym, as seith us Eneydos,  
 3360 As maden alle the hennes in the clos,  
 Whan they had seyn of Chauntecleer the sighte.  
 But sovereynly dame Pertelote shrighthe  
 Ful louder than dide Hasdrubales wyf,  
 Whan that hir housbonde hadde lost his lyf

And that the Romayns hadde brend Cartage.  
She was so ful of torment and of rage  
That wilfully into the fyr she sterte  
And brende hirselves with a stedefast herte.  
O woful hennes, right so criden ye  
3370 As whan that Nero brende the citee  
Of Rome cryden senatoures wyves  
For that hir husbondes losten alle hir lyves --  
Withouten gilt this Nero hath hem slayn.  
Now wole I turne to my tale agayn.  
This sely wydwe and eek hir doghtres two  
Herden thise hennes crie and maken wo,  
And out at dores stirten they anon,  
And syen the fox toward the grove gon,  
And bar upon his bak the cok away,  
3380 And cryden, "Out! Harrow and weylaway!  
Ha, ha! The fox!" and after hym they ran,  
And eek with staves many another man.  
Ran Colleoure dogge, and Talbot and Gerland,  
And Malkyn, with a dystaf in hir hand;  
Ran cow and calf, and eek the verray hogges,  
So fered for the berkyng of the dogges  
And shoutyng of the men and wommen eeke  
They ronned so hem thoughte hir herte breeke.  
They yolliden as feendes doon in helle;  
3390 The dokes cryden as men wolde hem quelle;  
The gees for feere flownen over the trees;  
Out of the hyve cam the swarm of bees.  
So hydous was the noyse -- a, benedicitee! --  
Certes, he Jakke Straw and his meynee  
Ne made nevere shoutes half so shrille  
Whan that they wolden any Flemyng kille,  
As thilke day was maad upon the fox.  
Of bras they broghten bemes, and of box,  
Of horn, of boon, in whiche they blewe and powped,  
3400 And therwithal they skriked and they howped.  
It semed as that hevene sholde falle.  
Now, goode men, I prey yow herkneth alle:  
Lo, how Fortune turneth sodeynly  
The hope and pryde eek of hir enemy!  
This cok, that lay upon the foxes bak,  
In al his drede unto the fox he spak,



And seyde, "Sire, if that I were as ye,  
Yet sholde I seyn, as wys God helpe me,  
`Turneth agayn, ye proude cherles alle!  
3410 A verray pestilence upon yow falle!  
Now I am come unto the wodes syde;  
Maugree youre heed, the cok shal heere abyde.  
I wol hym ete, in feith, and that anon!"  
The fox answerde, "In feith, it shal be don."  
And as he spak that word, al sodeynly  
This cok brak from his mouth delyverly,  
And heighe upon a tree he fleigh anon.  
And whan the fox saugh that the cok was gon,  
"Allas!" quod he, "O Chauntecleer, alas!  
3420 I have to yow," quod he, "ydoon trespas,  
In as muche as I maked yow aferd  
Whan I yow hente and broghte out of the yerd.  
But, sire, I dide it in no wikke entente.  
Com doun, and I shal telle yow what I mente;  
I shal seye sooth to yow, God help me so!"  
"Nay thanne," quod he, "I shrewe us bothe two.  
And first I shrewe myself, bothe blood and bones,  
If thou bigyle me ofter than ones.  
Thou shalt namoore thurgh thy flaterye  
3430 Do me to synge and wynke with myn ye;  
For he that wynketh, whan he sholde see,  
Al wilfully, God lat him nevere thee!"  
"Nay," quod the fox, "but God yeve hym meschaunce,  
That is so undiscreet of governaunce  
That jangleth whan he sholde holde his pees."  
Lo, swich it is for to be recchelees  
And necligent, and truste on flaterye.  
But ye that holden this tale a folye,  
As of a fox, or of a cok and hen,  
3440 Taketh the moralite, goode men.  
For Seint Paul seith that al that writen is,  
To oure doctrine it is ywrite, ywis;  
Taketh the fruyt, and lat the chaf be stille.  
Now, goode God, if that it be thy wille,  
As seith my lord, so make us alle goode men,  
And brynge us to his heighe blisse! Amen.



## THE NUN'S PRIEST'S EPILOGUE

["Sire Nonnes Preest," oure Hooste seide anoon,  
"I-blessed be thy breche, and every stoon!  
This was a murie tale of Chauntecleer.  
3450 But by my trouthe, if thou were secular,  
Thou woldest ben a trede-foul aright.  
For if thou have corage as thou hast myght,  
Thee were nede of hennes, as I wene,  
Ya, moo than seven tymes seventene.  
See, whiche braunes hath this gentil preest,  
So gret a nekke, and swich a large breest!  
He loketh as a sperhauk with his yen;  
Him nedeth nat his colour for to dyen  
With brasile ne with greyn of Portyngale.  
3460 Now, sire, faire falle yow for youre tale!"  
And after that he, with ful merie chere,  
Seide unto another, as ye shuln heere.]



## THE SECOND NUN'S PROLOGUE

The ministre and the norice unto vices,  
 Which that men clepe in Englissh Ydelnesse,  
 That porter of the gate is of delices,  
 To eschue, and by hire contrarie hire oppresse --  
 That is to seyn, by leueful bisynesse --  
 Wel oghten we to doon al oure entente,  
 Lest that the feend thurgh ydelnesse us hente.  
 For he that with his thousand cordes slye  
 Continuelly us waiteth to biclappe,  
 10 Whan he may man in ydelnesse espye,  
 He kan so lightly cache hym in his trappe,  
 Til that a man be hent right by the lappe,  
 He nys nat war the feend hath hym in honde.  
 Wel oghte us werche and ydelnesse withstonde.  
 And though men dradden nevere for to dye,  
 Yet seen men wel by resoun, doutelees,  
 That ydelnesse is roten slogardye,  
 Of which ther nevere comth no good n' encrees;  
 And syn that slouthe hire holdeth in a lees  
 20 Oonly to slepe, and for to ete and drynke,  
 And to devouren al that othere swynke,  
 And for to putte us fro swich ydelnesse,  
 That cause is of so greet confusioun,  
 I have heer doon my feithful bisynesse  
 After the legende in translacioun  
 Right of thy glorious lif and passioun,  
 Thou with thy gerland wrought with rose and lilie --  
 Thee meene I, mayde and martyr, Seint Cecilie.  
 And thow that flour of virgines art alle,  
 30 Of whom that Bernard list so wel to write,  
 To thee at my bigynnyng first I calle;  
 Thou confort of us wrecches, do me endite  
 Thy maydens deeth, that wan thurgh hire merite  
 The eterneel lyf and of the feend victorie,  
 As man may after reden in hire storie.  
 Thow Mayde and Mooder, doghter of thy Sone,  
 Thow welle of mercy, synful soules cure,  
 In whom that God for bountee chees to wone,  
 Thow humble, and heigh over every creature,  
 40 Thow nobledest so ferforth oure nature,

That no desdeyn the Makere hadde of kynde  
 His Sone in blood and flessh to clothe and wynde.  
 Withinne the cloistre blisful of thy sydis  
 Took mannes shap the eterneel love and pees,  
 That of the tryne compas lord and gyde is,  
 Whom erthe and see and hevene out of relees  
 Ay heryen; and thou, Virgine wemmelees,  
 Baar of thy body -- and dweltest mayden pure --  
 The Creatour of every creature.

50 Assembled is in thee magnificence  
 With mercy, goodnesse, and with swich pitee  
 That thou, that art the sonne of excellence  
 Nat oonly helpst hem that preyen thee,  
 But often tyme of thy benygnytee  
 Ful frely, er that men thyn help biseche,  
 Thou goost biforn and art hir lyves leche.  
 Now help, thow meeke and blisful faire mayde,  
 Me, flemed wrecche, in this desert of galle;  
 Thynk on the womman Cananee, that sayde  
 60 That whelpes eten somme of the crommes alle  
 That from hir lordes table been yfalle;  
 And though that I, unworthy sone of Eve,  
 Be synful, yet accepte my bileve.  
 And, for that feith is deed withouten werkis,  
 So for to werken yif me wit and space,  
 That I be quit fro thennes that most derk is!  
 O thou, that art so fair and ful of grace,  
 Be myn advocat in that heighe place  
 Theras withouten ende is songe "Osanne,"  
 70 Thow Cristes mooder, doghter deere of Anne!  
 And of thy light my soule in prison lighte,  
 That troubled is by the contagioun  
 Of my body, and also by the wighte  
 Of erthely lust and fals affeccoun;  
 O havene of refut, O salvacioun  
 Of hem that been in sorwe and in distresse,  
 Now help, for to my werk I wol me dresse.  
 Yet preye I yow that reden that I write,  
 Foryeve me that I do no diligence  
 80 This ilke storie subtilly to endite,  
 For bothe have I the wordes and sentence  
 Of hym that at the seintes reverence

The storie wroot, and folwen hire legende,  
And pray yow that ye wole my werk amende.  
First wolde I yow the name of Seint Cecilie  
Expowne, as men may in hir storie see.  
It is to seye in Englissh "hevenes lilie,"  
For pure chaastnesse of virginitee;  
Or, for she whitnesse hadde of honestee,  
90 And grene of conscience, and of good fame  
The soote savour, "lilie" was hir name.  
Or Cecilie is to seye "the wey to blynde,"  
For she ensample was by good techynge;  
Or elles Cecile, as I writen fynde,  
Is joyned, by a manere conjoynyng  
Of "hevene" and "Lia"; and heere, in figuryng,  
The "hevene" is set for thoght of hoolynesse,  
And "Lia" for hire lastyng bisynesse.  
Cecile may eek be seyde in this manere,  
100 "Wantyng of blyndnesse," for hir grete light  
Of sapience and for hire thewes cleere;  
Or elles, loo, this maydens name bright  
Of "hevene" and "leos" comth, for which by right  
Men myghte hire wel "the hevene of peple" calle,  
Ensample of goode and wise werkes alle.  
For "leos" "peple" in Englissh is to seye,  
And right as men may in the hevene see  
The sonne and moone and sterres every weye,  
Right so men goostly in this mayden free  
110 Seyen of feith the magnanymytee,  
And eek the cleernesse hool of sapience,  
And sondry werkes, brighte of excellence.  
And right so as thise philosophres write  
That hevene is swift and round and eek brennyng,  
Right so was faire Cecilie the white  
Ful swift and bisy evere in good werkynge,  
And round and hool in good perseveryng,  
And brennyng evere in charite ful brighte.  
Now have I yow declared what she highte.



## THE SECOND NUN'S TALE

This mayden bright Cecilie, as hir lif seith,  
Was comen of Romayns and of noble kynde,  
And from hir cradel up fostred in the feith  
Of Crist, and bar his gospel in hir mynde.  
She nevere cessed, as I writen fynde,  
Of hir preyere and God to love and drede,  
Bisekyng hym to kepe hir maydenhede.  
And whan this mayden sholde unto a man  
Ywedded be, that was ful yong of age,  
Which that ycleped was Valerian,  
130 And day was comen of hir marriage,  
She, ful devout and humble in hir corage,  
Under hir robe of gold, that sat ful faire,  
Hadde next hire flessch yclad hire in an haire.  
And whil the organs maden melodie,  
To God allone in herte thus sang she:  
"O Lord, my soule and eek my body gye  
Unwemmed, lest that I confounded be."  
And for his love that dyde upon a tree  
Every seconde and thridde day she faste,  
140 Ay biddynge in hire orisons ful faste.  
The nyght cam, and to bedde moste she gon  
With hire housbonde, as ofte is the manere,  
And pryvely to hym she seyde anon,  
"O sweete and wel biloved spouse deere,  
Ther is a conseil, and ye wolde it heere,  
Which that right fayn I wolde unto yow seye,  
So that ye swere ye shul it nat biwreye."  
Valerian gan faste unto hire swere  
That for no cas ne thyng that myghte be,  
150 He sholde nevere mo biwreyen here;  
And thanne at erst to hym thus seyde she:  
"I have an aungel which that loveth me,  
That with greet love, wher so I wake or sleepe,  
Is redy ay my body for to kepe.  
"And if that he may feelen, out of drede,  
That ye me touche, or love in vileynye,  
He right anon wol sle yow with the dede,  
And in youre yowthe thus ye shullen dye;  
And if that ye in clene love me gye,

160 He wol yow loven as me, for youre clenness,  
And shewen yow his joye and his brightnesse."  
Valerian, corrected as God wolde,  
Answerde agayn, "If I shal trusten thee,  
Lat me that aungel se and hym biholde;  
And if that it a verray angel bee,  
Thanne wol I doon as thou hast prayed me;  
And if thou love another man, for sothe  
Right with this swerd thanne wol I sle yow bothe."  
Cecile answerde anon-right in this wise:  
170 "If that yow list, the angel shul ye see,  
So that ye trowe on Crist and yow baptize.  
Gooth forth to Via Apia," quod shee,  
"That fro this toun ne stant but miles three,  
And to the povre folkes that ther dwelle,  
Sey hem right thus, as that I shal yow telle.  
"Telle hem that I, Cecile, yow to hem sente  
To shewen yow the goode Urban the olde,  
For secree nedes and for good entente.  
And whan that ye Seint Urban han biholde,  
180 Telle hym the wordes whiche I to yow tolde;  
And whan that he hath purged yow fro synne,  
Thanne shul ye se that angel, er ye twynne."  
Valerian is to the place ygon,  
And right as hym was taught by his lernynge,  
He foond this hooly olde Urban anon  
Among the seintes buryeles lotynge.  
And he anon withouten tariynge  
Dide his message; and whan that he it tolde,  
Urban for joye his handes gan up holde.  
190 The teeris from his eyen leet he falle.  
"Almyghty Lord, O Jhesu Crist," quod he,  
"Sower of chaast conseil, hierde of us alle,  
The fruyt of thilke seed of chastitee  
That thou hast sowe in Cecile, taak to thee!  
Lo, lyk a bisy bee, withouten gile,  
Thee serveth ay thyn owene thral Cecile.  
"For thilke spouse that she took but now  
Ful lyk a fiers leoun, she sendeth heere,  
As meke as evere was any lomb, to yow!"  
200 And with that word anon ther gan appeere  
An oold man, clad in white clothes cleere,



That hadde a book with lettre of gold in honde,  
And gan bfore Valerian to stonde.  
Valerian as deed fil doun for drede  
Whan he hym saugh, and he up hente hym tho,  
And on his book right thus he gan to rede:  
"O Lord, o feith, o God, withouten mo,  
O Cristendom, and Fader of alle also,  
Aboven alle and over alle everywhere."  
210 This wordes al with gold ywriten were.  
Whan this was rad, thanne seyde this olde man,  
"Leevestow this thyng or no? Sey ye or nay."  
"I leeve al this thyng," quod Valerian,  
"For sother thyng than this, I dar wel say,  
Under the hevene no wight thynke may."  
Tho vanysshed this olde man, he nyste where,  
And Pope Urban hym cristned right there.  
Valerian gooth hoom and fynt Cecilie  
Withinne his chambre with an angel stonde.  
220 This angel hadde of roses and of lilie  
Corones two, the which he bar in honde;  
And first to Cecile, as I understonde,  
He yaf that oon, and after gan he take  
That oother to Valerian, hir make.  
"With body clene and with unwemmed thought  
Kepeth ay wel thise corones," quod he;  
"Fro paradys to yow have I hem broght,  
Ne nevere mo ne shal they roten bee,  
Ne lese hir soote savour, trusteth me;  
230 Ne nevere wight shal seen hem with his ye,  
But he be chaast and hate vileynye.  
"And thow, Valerian, for thow so soone  
Assentedest to good conseil also,  
Sey what thee list, and thou shalt han thy boone."  
"I have a brother," quod Valerian tho,  
"That in this world I love no man so.  
I pray yow that my brother may han grace  
To knowe the trouthe, as I do in this place."  
The angel seyde, "God liketh thy requeste,  
240 And bothe with the palm of martirdom  
Ye shullen come unto his blisful feste."  
And with that word Tiburce his brother coom.  
And whan that he the savour undernoom,

Which that the roses and the lilies caste,  
Withinne his herte he gan to wondre faste,  
And seyde, "I wondre, this tyme of the yeer,  
Whennes that soote savour cometh so  
Of rose and lilies that I smelle heer.  
For though I hadde hem in myne handes two,  
250 The savour myghte in me no depper go.  
The sweete smel that in myn herte I fynde  
Hath chaunged me al in another kynde."  
Valerian seyde: "Two coronas han we,  
Snow white and rose reed, that shynen cleere,  
Whiche that thyne eyen han no myght to see;  
And as thou smellest hem thurgh my preyere,  
So shaltow seen hem, leeve brother deere,  
If it so be thou wolt, withouten slouthe,  
Bileve aright and knowen verray trouthe."  
260 Tiburce answerde, "Seistow this to me  
In soothnesse, or in dreem I herkne this?"  
"In dremes," quod Valerian, "han we be  
Unto this tyme, brother myn, ywis.  
But now at erst in trouthe oure dwellyng is."  
"How woostow this?" quod Tiburce, "and in what wyse?"  
Quod Valerian, "That shal I thee devyse.  
"The aungel of God hath me the trouthe ytaught  
Which thou shalt seen, if that thou wolt reneye  
The ydoles and be clene, and elles naught."  
270 And of the miracle of thise coronas tweye  
Seint Ambrose in his preface list to seye;  
Solempnely this noble doctour deere  
Commendeth it, and seith in this manere:  
"The palm of martirdom for to receyve,  
Seinte Cecile, fulfild of Goddes yifte,  
The world and eek hire chambre gan she weyve;  
Witnesse Tyburces and [Valerians] shrifte,  
To whiche God of his bountee wolde shifte  
Coronas two of floures wel smellynge,  
280 And made his angel hem the coronas brynge.  
"The mayde hath broght thise men to blisse above;  
The world hath wist what it is worth, certeyn,  
Devocioun of chastitee to love."  
Tho shewed hym Cecile al open and pleyn  
That alle ydoles nys but a thyng in veyn,

For they been dombe, and therto they been deve,  
 And charged hym his ydoles for to leve.  
 "Whoso that troweth nat this, a beest he is,"  
 Quod tho Tiburce, "if that I shal nat lye."  
 290 And she gan kisse his brest, that herde this,  
 And was ful glad he koude trouthe espye.  
 "This day I take thee for myn allye,"  
 Seyde this blisful faire mayde deere,  
 And after that she seyde as ye may heere:  
 "Lo, right so as the love of Crist," quod she,  
 "Made me thy brotheres wyf, right in that wise  
 Anon for myn allye heer take I thee,  
 Syn that thou wolt thyne ydoles despise.  
 Go with thy brother now, and thee baptise,  
 300 And make thee clene, so that thou mowe biholde  
 The angels face of which thy brother tolde."  
 Tiburce answerde and seyde, "Brother deere,  
 First tel me whider I shal, and to what man?"  
 "To whom?" quod he, "com forth with right good cheere,  
 I wol thee lede unto the Pope Urban."  
 "Til Urban? Brother myn Valerian,"  
 Quod tho Tiburce, "woltow me thider lede?  
 Me thynketh that it were a wonder dede.  
 "Ne menestow nat Urban," quod he tho,  
 310 "That is so ofte dampned to be deed,  
 And woneth in halkes alwey to and fro,  
 And dar nat ones putte forth his heed?  
 Men sholde hym brennen in a fyr so reed  
 If he were founde, or that men myghte hym spye,  
 And we also, to bere hym compaignye;  
 "And whil we seken thilke divinitee  
 That is yhid in hevene pryvely,  
 Algate ybrend in this world shul we be!"  
 To whom Cecile answerde boldely,  
 320 "Men myghten dreden wel and skilfully  
 This lyf to lese, myn owene deere brother,  
 If this were lyvyng oonly and noon oother.  
 "But ther is bettre lif in oother place,  
 That nevere shal be lost, ne drede thee noght,  
 Which Goddes Sone us tolde thurgh his grace.  
 That Fadres Sone hath alle thyng ywroght,  
 And al that wroght is with a skilful thoght;

The Goost, that fro the Fader gan procede,  
Hath sowled hem, withouten any drede.  
330 "By word and by myracle heigh Goddes Sone,  
Whan he was in this world, declared heere  
That ther was oother lyf ther men may wone."  
To whom answerde Tiburce, "O suster deere,  
Ne seydestow right now in this manere,  
Ther nys but o God, lord in soothfastnesse?  
And now of three how maystow bere witnesse?"  
"That shal I telle," quod she, "er I go.  
Right as a man hath sapiences three --  
Memorie, engyn, and intellect also --  
340 So in o beyng of divinitee,  
Thre persones may ther right wel bee."  
Tho gan she hym ful bisily to preche  
Of Cristes come, and of his peynes teche,  
And manye pointes of his passioun;  
How Goddes Sone in this world was withholde  
To doon mankynde pleyn remissioun,  
That was ybounde in synne and cares colde;  
Al this thyng she unto Tiburce tolde.  
And after this Tiburce in good entente  
350 With Valerian to Pope Urban he wente,  
That thanked God, and with glad herte and light  
He cristned hym and made hym in that place  
Parfit in his lernynge, Goddes knyght.  
And after this Tiburce gat swich grace  
That every day he saugh in tyme and space  
The aungel of God; and every maner boone  
That he God axed, it was sped ful soone.  
It were ful hard by ordre for to seyn  
How manye wondres Jhesus for hem wroghte;  
360 But atte laste, to tellen short and pleyn,  
The sergeantz of the toun of Rome hem soghte,  
And hem biforn Almache, the prefect, broghte,  
Which hem apposed, and knew al hire entente,  
And to the ymage of Juppiter hem sente,  
And seyde, "Whoso wol nat sacrificise,  
Swape of his heed; this my sentence heer."  
Anon thise martirs that I yow devyse,  
Oon Maximus, that was an officer  
Of the prefectes, and his corniculer,

370 Hem hente, and whan he forth the seintes ladde,  
Hymself he weep for pitee that he hadde.  
Whan Maximus had herd the seintes loore,  
He gat hym of the tormentoures leve,  
And ladde hem to his hous withoute moore,  
And with hir prechyng, er that it were eve,  
They gonnen fro the tormentours to reve,  
And fro Maxime, and fro his folk echone,  
The false feith, to trowe in God allone.  
Cecile cam, whan it was woxen nyght,  
380 With preestes that hem cristned alle yfeere;  
And afterward, whan day was woxen light,  
Cecile hem seyde with a ful stedefast cheere,  
"Now, Cristes owene knyghtes leeve and deere,  
Cast alle away the werkes of derknesse,  
And armeth yow in armure of brightnesse.  
"Ye han for sothe ydoon a greet bataille,  
Youre cours is doon, youre feith han ye conserved.  
Gooth to the corone of lif that may nat faille;  
The rightful Juge, which that ye han served,  
390 Shal yeve it yow, as ye han it deserved."  
And whan this thyng was seyde as I devyse,  
Men ledde hem forth to doon the sacrefise.  
But whan they weren to the place broght  
To tellen shortly the conclusioun,  
They nolde encense ne sacrificise right noght,  
But on hir knees they setten hem adoun  
With humble herte and sad devocioun,  
And losten bothe hir hevedes in the place.  
Hir soules wenten to the Kyng of grace.  
400 This Maximus, that saugh this thyng bityde,  
With pitous teeris tolde it anonright,  
That he hir soules saugh to hevene glyde  
With aungels ful of cleernesse and of light,  
And with his word converted many a wight;  
For which Almachius dide hym so bete  
With whippe of leed til he his lif gan lete.  
Cecile hym took and buried hym anon  
By Tiburce and Valerian softely  
Withinne hire buriyng place, under the stoon;  
410 And after this, Almachius hastily  
Bad his ministres fecchen openly

Cecile, so that she myghte in his presence  
 Doon sacrifice and Juppiter encense.  
 But they, converted at hir wise loore,  
 Wepten ful soore, and yaven ful credence  
 Unto hire word, and cryden moore and moore,  
 "Crist, Goddes Sone, withouten difference,  
 Is verray God -- this is al oure sentence --  
 That hath so good a servant hym to serve.  
 420 This with o voys we trowen, thogh we sterve!"  
 Almachius, that herde of this doynge,  
 Bad fecchen Cecile, that he myghte hire see,  
 And alderfirst, lo, this was his axynge.  
 "What maner womman artow?" tho quod he.  
 "I am a gentil womman born," quod she.  
 "I axe thee," quod he, "though it thee greeve,  
 Of thy religioun and of thy bileeve."  
 "Ye han bigonne youre questioun folily,"  
 Quod she, "that wolden two answeres conclude  
 430 In o demande; ye axed lewedly."  
 Almache answerde unto that similitude,  
 "Of whennes comth thyn answeyng so rude?"  
 "Of whennes?" quod she, whan that she was freyned,  
 "Of conscience and of good feith unfeyned."  
 Almachius seyde, "Ne takestow noon heede  
 Of my power?" And she answerde hym this:  
 "Youre myght," quod she, "ful litel is to dreede,  
 For every mortal mannes power nys  
 But lyk a bladdre ful of wynd, ywys.  
 440 For with a nedles poynt, whan it is blowe,  
 May al the boost of it be leyd ful lowe."  
 "Ful wrongfully bigonne thow," quod he,  
 "And yet in wrong is thy perseveraunce.  
 Wostow nat how oure myghty princes free  
 Han thus comanded and maad ordinaunce  
 That every Cristen wight shal han penaunce  
 But if that he his Cristendom withseye,  
 And goon al quit, if he wole it reneye?"  
 "Yowre princes erren, as youre nobleye dooth,"  
 450 Quod tho Cecile, "and with a wood sentence  
 Ye make us gilty, and it is nat sooth.  
 For ye, that knowen wel oure innocence,  
 For as muche as we doon a reverence

To Crist, and for we bere a Cristen name,  
 Ye putte on us a cryme and eek a blame.  
 "But we that knowen thilke name so  
 For vertuous, we may it nat withseye."  
 Almache answerde, "Chees oon of thise two:  
 Do sacrifice, or Cristendom reneye,  
 460 That thou mowe now escapen by that weye."  
 At which the hooly blisful faire mayde  
 Gan for to laughe, and to the juge sayde:  
 "O juge, confus in thy nycetee,  
 Woltow that I reneye innocence,  
 To make me a wikked wight?" quod shee.  
 "Lo, he dissymuleth heere in audience;  
 He stareth, and woodeth in his advertence!"  
 To whom Almachius, "Unsely wrecche,  
 Ne woostow nat how fer my myght may strecche?  
 470 "Han noght oure myghty princes to me yiven,  
 Ye, bothe power and auctoritee  
 To maken folk to dyen or to lyven?  
 Why spekestow so proudly thanne to me?"  
 "I speke noght but stedfastly," quod she;  
 "Nat proudly, for I seye, as for my syde,  
 We haten deedly thilke vice of pryde.  
 "And if thou drede nat a sooth to heere,  
 Thanne wol I shewe al openly, by right,  
 That thou hast maad a ful gret lesyng heere.  
 480 Thou seyst thy princes han thee yeven myght  
 Bothe for to sleen and for to quyken a wight;  
 Thou, that ne mayst but oonly lyf bireve,  
 Thou hast noon oother power ne no leve.  
 "But thou mayst seyn thy princes han thee maked  
 Ministre of deeth; for if thou speke of mo,  
 Thou lvest, for thy power is ful naked."  
 "Do wey thy booldnesse," seyde Almachius tho,  
 "And sacrifice to oure goddes er thou go!  
 I recche nat what wrong that thou me profre,  
 490 For I kan suffre it as a philosophre;  
 "But thilke wronges may I nat endure  
 That thou spekest of oure goddes heere," quod he.  
 Cecile answerde, "O nyce creature!  
 Thou seydest no word syn thou spak to me  
 That I ne knew therwith thy nycetee

And that thou were in every maner wise  
A lewed officer and a veyn justise.  
"Ther lakketh no thyng to thyne outter yen  
That thou n' art blynd; for thyng that we seen alle  
500 That it is stoon -- that men may wel espyen --  
That ilke stoon a god thow wolt it calle.  
I rede thee, lat thyn hand upon it falle  
And taste it wel, and stoon thou shalt it fynde,  
Syn that thou seest nat with thyne eyen blynde.  
"It is a shame that the peple shal  
So scorne thee and laughe at thy folye,  
For comunly men woot it wel overal  
That myghty God is in his hevenes hye;  
And thise ymages, wel thou mayst espye,  
510 To thee ne to hemself mowen noght profite,  
For in effect they been nat worth a myte."  
Thise wordes and swiche othere seyde she,  
And he weex wroth, and bad men sholde hir lede  
Hom til hir hous, and "In hire hous," quod he,  
"Brenne hire right in a bath of flambes rede."  
And as he bad, right so was doon the dede;  
For in a bath they gonne hire faste shetten,  
And nyght and day greet fyr they under betten.  
The longe nyght, and eek a day also,  
520 For al the fyr and eek the bathes heete  
She sat al coold and feeled no wo.  
It made hire nat a drope for to sweete.  
But in that bath hir lyf she moste lete,  
For he Almachius, with ful wikke entente,  
To sleen hire in the bath his sonde sente.  
Thre strokes in the nekke he smoot hire tho,  
The tormentour, but for no maner chaunce  
He myghte noght smyte al hir nekke atwo;  
And for ther was that tyme an ordinaunce  
530 That no man sholde doon man swich penaunce  
The ferthe strook to smyten, softe or soore,  
This tormentour ne dorste do namoore,  
But half deed, with hir nekke ycorven there,  
He lefte hir lye, and on his wey he went.  
The Cristen folk, which that aboute hire were,  
With sheetes han the blood ful faire yhent.  
Thre dayes lyved she in this torment,



And nevere cessed hem the feith to teche  
That she hadde fostred; hem she gan to preche,  
540 And hem she yaf hir moebles and hir thyng,  
And to the Pope Urban bitook hem tho,  
And seyde, "I axed this of hevene kyng,  
To han respit thre dayes and namo  
To recomende to yow, er that I go,  
Thise soules, lo, and that I myghte do werche  
Heere of myn hous perpetuelly a cherche."  
Seint Urban with his deknes prively  
The body fette and buryed it by nyghte  
Among his othere seintes honestly.  
550 Hir hous the chirche of Seint Cecilie highte;  
Seint Urban halwed it, as he wel myghte;  
In which, into this day, in noble wyse,  
Men doon to Crist and to his seint servyse.



## THE CANON'S YEOMAN'S PROLOGUE

Whan ended was the lyf of Seinte Cecile,  
Er we hadde riden fully fyve mile,  
At Boghtoun under Blee us gan atake  
A man that clothed was in clothes blake,  
And undernethe he hadde a whyt surpys.  
His hakeney, that was al pomely grys,  
560 So swatte that it wonder was to see;  
It semed as he had priked miles three.  
The hors eek that his yeman rood upon  
So swatte that unnethe myghte it gon.  
Aboute the peytrel stood the foom ful hye;  
He was of foom al flekked as a pye.  
A male tweyfoold on his croper lay;  
It semed that he caried lite array.  
Al light for somer rood this worthy man,  
And in myn herte wondren I bigan  
570 What that he was til that I understood  
How that his cloke was sowed to his hood,  
For which, whan I hadde longe avysed me,  
I demed hym som chanoun for to be.  
His hat heeng at his bak down by a laas,  
For he hadde riden moore than trot or paas;  
He hadde ay priked lik as he were wood.  
A clote-leef he hadde under his hood  
For swoot and for to keep his heed from heete.  
But it was joye for to seen hym swete!  
580 His forheed dropped as a stillatorie  
Were ful of plantayne and of paritorie.  
And whan that he was come, he gan to crye,  
"God save," quod he, "this joly compaignye!  
Faste have I priked," quod he, "for youre sake,  
By cause that I wolde yow atake,  
To riden in this myrie compaignye."  
His yeman eek was ful of curteisye,  
And seyde, "Sires, now in the morwe-tyde  
Out of youre hostelrie I saugh yow ryde,  
590 And warned heer my lord and my soverayn,  
Which that to ryden with yow is ful fayn  
For his desport; he loveth daliaunce."  
"Freend, for thy warnyng God yeve thee good chaunce,"

Thanne seyde oure Hoost, "for certein it wolde seme  
Thy lord were wys, and so I may wel deme.  
He is ful jocunde also, dar I leye!  
Can he oght telle a myrie tale or tweye,  
With which he glade may this compaignye?"  
"Who, sire? My lord? Ye, ye, withouten lye,  
600 He kan of murthe and eek of jolitee  
Nat but ynough; also, sire, trusteth me,  
And ye hym knewe as wel as do I,  
Ye wolde wondre how wel and craftily  
He koude werke, and that in sondry wise.  
He hath take on hym many a greet emprise,  
Which were ful hard for any that is heere  
To brynge aboute, but they of hym it leere.  
As hoonly as he rit amonges yow,  
If ye hym knewe, it wolde be for youre prow.  
610 Ye wolde nat forgoon his aqueyntaunce  
For muchel good, I dar leye in balaunce  
Al that I have in my possessioun.  
He is a man of heigh discrecioun;  
I warne yow wel, he is a passyng man."  
"Wel," quod oure Hoost, "I pray thee, tel me than,  
Is he a clerk, or noon? Telle what he is."  
"Nay, he is gretter than a clerk, ywis,"  
Seyde this Yeman, "and in wordes fewe,  
Hoost, of his craft somewhat I wol yow shewe.  
620 "I seye, my lord kan swich subtilitee --  
But al his craft ye may nat wite at me,  
And somewhat helpe I yet to his wirkyng --  
That al this ground on which we been ridyng,  
Til that we come to Caunterbury toun,  
He koude al clene turnen up-so-doun,  
And pave it al of silver and of gold."  
And whan this Yeman hadde this tale ytold  
Unto oure Hoost, he seyde, "Benedicitee!  
This thyng is wonder merveillous to me,  
630 Syn that thy lord is of so heigh prudence,  
By cause of which men sholde hym reverence,  
That of his worshipe rekketh he so lite.  
His overslope nys nat worth a myte,  
As in effect, to hym, so moot I go,  
It is al baudy and totore also.

Why is thy lord so sluttissh, I the preye,  
 And is of power bettre clooth to beye,  
 If that his dede accorde with thy speche?  
 Telle me that, and that I thee biseche."  
 640 "Why?" quod this Yeman, "wherto axe ye me?  
 God help me so, for he shal nevere thee!  
 (But I wol nat avowe that I seye,  
 And therefore keepe it secree, I yow preye.)  
 He is to wys, in feith, as I bileeve.  
 That that is overdoon, it wol nat preeve  
 Aright, as clerkes seyn; it is a vice.  
 Wherfore in that I holde hym lewed and nyce.  
 For whan a man hath over-greet a wit,  
 Ful oft hym happeth to mysusen it.  
 650 So dooth my lord, and that me greveth soore;  
 God it amende! I kan sey yow namoore."  
 "Ther-of no fors, good Yeman," quod oure Hoost;  
 "Syn of the konnyng of thy lord thow woost,  
 Telle how he dooth, I pray thee hertely,  
 Syn that he is so crafty and so sly.  
 Where dwelle ye, if it to telle be?"  
 "In the suburbes of a toun," quod he,  
 "Lurkyng in hernes and in lanes blynde,  
 Whereas thise robbours and thise theves by kynde  
 660 Holden hir pryvee fereful residence,  
 As they that dar nat shewen hir presence;  
 So faren we, if I shal seye the sothe."  
 "Now," quod oure Hoost, "yit lat me talke to the.  
 Why artow so discoloured of thy face?"  
 "Peter!" quod he, "God yeve it harde grace,  
 I am so used in the fyr to blowe  
 That it hath chaunged my colour, I trowe.  
 I am nat wont in no mirour to prie,  
 But swynke soore and lerne multiplie.  
 670 We blondren evere and pouren in the fir,  
 And for al that we faille of oure desir,  
 For evere we lakken oure conclusioun.  
 To muchel folk we doon illusioun,  
 And borwe gold, be it a pound or two,  
 Or ten, or twelve, or manye sommes mo,  
 And make hem wenen, at the leeste weye,  
 That of a pound we koude make tweye.

Yet is it fals, but ay we han good hope  
It for to doon, and after it we grope.  
680 But that science is so fer us biforn,  
We mowen nat, although we hadden it sworn,  
It overtake, it slit away so faste.  
It wole us maken beggers atte laste."  
Whil this Yeman was thus in his talkyng,  
This Chanoun drough hym neer and herde al thyng  
Which this Yeman spak, for suspecioun  
Of mennes speche evere hadde this Chanoun.  
For Catoun seith that he that gilty is  
Demeth alle thyng be spoke of hym, ywis.  
690 That was the cause he gan so ny hym drawe  
To his Yeman, to herknen al his sawe.  
And thus he seyde unto his Yeman tho:  
"Hoold thou thy pees and spek no wordes mo,  
For if thou do, thou shalt it deere abyde.  
Thou sclaundrest me heere in this compaignye,  
And eek discoverest that thou sholdest hyde."  
"Ye," quod oure Hoost, "telle on, what so bityde.  
Of al his thretyng rekke nat a myte!"  
"In feith," quod he, "namoore I do but lyte."  
700 And whan this Chanon saugh it wolde nat bee,  
But his Yeman wolde telle his pryvetee,  
He fledde away for verray sorwe and shame.  
"A!" quod the Yeman, "heere shal arise game;  
Al that I kan anon now wol I telle.  
Syn he is goon, the foule feend hym quelle!  
For nevere heerafter wol I with hym meete  
For peny ne for pound, I yow biheete.  
He that me broghte first unto that game,  
Er that he dye, sorwe have he and shame!  
710 For it is ernest to me, by my feith;  
That feele I wel, what so any man seith.  
And yet, for al my smert and al my grief,  
For al my sorwe, labour, and meschief,  
I koude nevere leve it in no wise.  
Now wolde God my wit myghte suffise  
To tellen al that longeth to that art!  
But nathelees yow wol I tellen part.  
Syn that my lord is goon, I wol nat spare;  
Swich thyng as that I knowe, I wol declare.



## THE CANON'S YEOMAN'S TALE

With this Chanoun I dwelt have seven yeer,  
 And of his science am I never the neer.  
 Al that I hadde I have lost therby,  
 And, God woot, so hath many mo than I.  
 Ther I was wont to be right fressh and gay  
 Of clothyng and of oother good array,  
 Now may I were an hose upon myn heed;  
 And wher my colour was bothe fressh and reed,  
 Now is it wan and of a leden hewe --  
 Whoso it useth, soore shal he rewe! --  
 730 And of my swynk yet blered is myn ye.  
 Lo, which advantage is to multiplie!  
 That slidyng science hath me maad so bare  
 That I have no good, wher that evere I fare;  
 And yet I am endetted so therby  
 Of gold that I have borwed, trewely,  
 That whil I lyve I shal it quite nevere.  
 Lat every man be war by me for evere!  
 What maner man that casteth hym therto,  
 If he continue, I holde his thrift ydo.  
 740 For so helpe me God, therby shal he nat wynne,  
 But empte his purs and make his wittes thynne.  
 And whan he thurgh his madnesse and folye  
 Hath lost his owene good thurgh jupartye,  
 Thanne he exciteth oother folk therto,  
 To lesen hir good as he hymself hath do.  
 For unto shrewes joye it is and ese  
 To have hir felawes in peyne and disese.  
 Thus was I ones lerned of a clerk.  
 Of that no charge; I wol speke of oure werk.  
 750 Whan we been there as we shul exercise  
 Oure elvysshe craft, we semen wonder wise,  
 Oure termes been so clergial and so queynte.  
 I blowe the fir til that myn herte feynte.  
 What sholde I tellen ech proporcion  
 Of thynges whiche that we werche upon --  
 As on fyve or sixe ounces, may wel be,  
 Of silver, or som oother quantitee --  
 And bisye me to telle yow the names  
 Of orpyment, brent bones, iren squames,

760 That into poudre grounden been ful smal;  
And in an erthen pot how put is al,  
And salt yput in, and also papeer,  
Biforn thise poudres that I speke of heer;  
And wel ycovered with a lampe of glas;  
And of muche oother thyng which that ther was;  
And of the pot and glasses enlutyng  
That of the eyr myghte passe out nothyng;  
And of the esy fir, and smart also,  
Which that was maad, and of the care and wo  
770 That we hadde in oure matires sublymyng,  
And in amalgamyng and calcenyng  
Of quyksilver, yclept mercurie crude?  
For alle oure sleightes we kan nat conclude.  
Oure orpyment and sublymed mercurie,  
Oure grounden litarge eek on the porfurie,  
Of ech of thise of ounces a certeyn --  
Noght helpeth us; oure labour is in veyn.  
Ne eek oure spirites ascencioun,  
Ne oure materes that lyen al fix adoun,  
780 Mowe in oure werkyng no thyng us availle,  
For lost is al oure labour and travaille;  
And al the cost, a twenty devel waye,  
Is lost also, which we upon it laye.  
Ther is also ful many another thyng  
That is unto oure craft apertenyng.  
Though I by ordre hem nat reherce kan,  
By cause that I am a lewed man,  
Yet wol I telle hem as they come to mynde,  
Thogh I ne kan nat sette hem in hir kynde:  
790 As boole armonyak, verdegrees, boras,  
And sondry vessels maad of erthe and glas,  
Oure urynales and oure descensories,  
Violes, crosletz, and sublymatories,  
Cucurbites and alambikes eek,  
And othere swiche, deere ynough a leek --  
Nat nedeth it for to reherce hem alle --  
Watres rubifyng, and boles galle,  
Arsenyk, sal armonyak, and brymston;  
And herbes koude I telle eek many oon,  
800 As egremoyne, valerian, and lunarie,  
And othere swiche, if that me liste tarie;



Oure lampes brennyng bothe nyght and day,  
 To brynge aboute oure purpos, if we may;  
 Oure fourneys eek of calcinacioun,  
 And of watres albificacioun;  
 Unslekked lym, chalk, and gleyre of an ey,  
 Poudres diverse, assches, donge, pisse, and cley,  
 Cered pokkets, sal peter, vitriole,  
 And diverse fires maad of wode and cole;  
 810 Sal tartre, alkaly, and sal preparat,  
 And combust materes and coagulat;  
 Cley maad with hors or mannes heer, and oille  
 Of tartre, alum glas, berme, wort, and argoille,  
 Resalgar, and oure materes enbibyng,  
 And eek of oure materes encorporyng,  
 And of oure silver citrinacioun,  
 Oure cementyng and fermentacioun,  
 Oure yngottes, testes, and many mo.  
 I wol yow telle, as was me taught also,  
 820 The foure spirites and the bodies sevene,  
 By ordre, as ofte I herde my lord hem nevene.  
 The firste spirit quyksilver called is,  
 The seconde orpyment, the thridde, ywis,  
 Sal armonyak, and the ferthe brymstoon.  
 The bodyes sevene eek, lo, hem heere anoon:  
 Sol gold is, and Luna silver we threpe,  
 Mars iren, Mercurie quyksilver we clepe,  
 Saturnus leed, and Juppiter is tyn,  
 And Venus coper, by my fader kyn!  
 830 This cursed craft whoso wole excercise,  
 He shal no good han that hym may suffise,  
 For al the good he spendeth therabout  
 He lese shal; therof have I no doute.  
 Whoso that listeth outen his folie,  
 Lat hym come forth and lerne multiplie;  
 And every man that oght hath in his cofre,  
 Lat hym appiere and wexe a philosophre.  
 Ascaunce that craft is so light to leere?  
 Nay, nay, God woot, al be he monk or frere,  
 840 Preest or chanoun, or any oother wyght,  
 Though he sitte at his book bothe day and nyght  
 In lernyng of this elvysshe nyce loore,  
 Al is in veyn, and parde, muchel moore.

To lerne a lewed man this subtiltee --  
Fy! Spek nat therof, for it wol nat bee.  
And konne he letterure or konne he noon,  
As in effect, he shal fynde it al oon.  
For bothe two, by my savacioun,  
Concluden in multiplicacioun  
850 Ylike wel, whan they han al ydo;  
This is to seyn, they failen bothe two.  
Yet forgot I to maken rehersaille  
Of watres corosif, and of lymaille,  
And of bodies mollificacioun,  
And also of hire induracioun;  
Oilles, ablucions, and metal fusible --  
To tellen al wolde passen any bible  
That owher is; wherfore, as for the beste,  
Of alle thise names now wol I me reste,  
860 For, as I trowe, I have yow toold ynowe  
To reyse a feend, al looke he never so rowe.  
A! Nay! Lat be; the philosophres stoon,  
Elixer clept, we sechen faste echoon;  
For hadde we hym, thanne were we siker ynow.  
But unto God of hevene I make avow,  
For al oure craft, whan we han al ydo,  
And al oure sleighte, he wol nat come us to.  
He hath ymaad us spenden muchel good,  
For sorwe of which almoost we wexen wood,  
870 But that good hope crepeth in oure herte,  
Supposynge evere, though we sore smerte,  
To be releevyd by hym afterward.  
Swich supposyng and hope is sharp and hard;  
I warne yow wel, it is to seken evere.  
That futur temps hath maad men to dissevere,  
In trust therof, from al that evere they hadde.  
Yet of that art they kan nat wexen sadde,  
For unto hem it is a bitter sweete --  
So semeth it -- for nadde they but a sheete  
880 Which that they myghte wrappe hem inne a-nyght,  
And a brat to walken inne by daylyght,  
They wolde hem selle and spenden on this craft.  
They kan nat stynte til no thyng be laft.  
And everemoore, where that evere they goon,  
Men may hem knowe by smel of brymston.

For al the world they stynken as a goot;  
 Hir savour is so rammyssh and so hoot  
 That though a man from hem a mile be,  
 The savour wole infecte hym, trusteth me.  
 890 Lo, thus by smellyng and threedbare array,  
 If that men liste, this folk they knowe may.  
 And if a man wole aske hem pryvely  
 Why they been clothed so unthriftyly,  
 They right anon wol rownen in his ere,  
 And seyn that if that they espied were,  
 Men wolde hem slee by cause of hir science.  
 Lo, thus this folk bitrayen innocence!  
 Passe over this; I go my tale unto.  
 Er that the pot be on the fir ydo,  
 900 Of metals with a certeyn quantitee,  
 My lord hem tempreth, and no man but he --  
 Now he is goon, I dar seyn boldely --  
 For, as men seyn, he kan doon craftily.  
 Algate I woot wel he hath swich a name;  
 And yet ful ofte he renneth in a blame.  
 And wite ye how? Ful ofte it happeth so  
 The pot tobreketh, and farewel, al is go!  
 Thise metals been of so greet violence  
 Oure walles mowe nat make hem resistence,  
 910 But if they weren wroght of lym and stoon;  
 They percen so, and thurgh the wal they goon.  
 And somme of hem synken into the ground --  
 Thus han we lost by tymes many a pound --  
 And somme are scatered al the floor aboute;  
 Somme lepe into the roof. Withouten doute,  
 Though that the feend noght in oure sighte hym shewe,  
 I trowe he with us be, that ilke shrewe!  
 In helle, where that he is lord and sire,  
 Nis ther moore wo, ne moore rancour ne ire.  
 920 Whan that oure pot is broke, as I have sayd,  
 Every man chit and halt hym yvele apayd.  
 Somme seyde it was long on the fir makyng;  
 Somme seyde nay, it was on the blowyng --  
 Thanne was I fered, for that was myn office.  
 "Straw!" quod the thridde, "ye been lewed and nyce.  
 It was nat tempred as it oghte be."  
 "Nay," quod the fourthe, "stynt and herkne me.

By cause oure fir ne was nat maad of beech,  
 That is the cause and oother noon, so thee 'ch!"  
 930 I kan nat telle wheron it was long,  
 But wel I woot greet strif is us among.  
 "What," quod my lord, "ther is namoore to doone;  
 Of thise perils I wol be war eftsoone.  
 I am right siker that the pot was crased.  
 Be as be may, be ye no thyng amased;  
 As usage is, lat swepe the floor as swithe,  
 Plukke up youre hertes and beeth glad and blithe."  
 The mullok on an heep ysweped was,  
 And on the floor ycast a canevas,  
 940 And al this mullok in a syve ythrowe,  
 And sifted, and ypiked many a throwe.  
 "Pardee," quod oon, "somwhat of oure metal  
 Yet is ther heere, though that we han nat al.  
 And though this thyng myshapped have as now,  
 Another tyme it may be well ynow.  
 Us moste putte oure good in aventure.  
 A marchant, pardee, may nat ay endure,  
 Trusteth me wel, in his prosperitee.  
 Somtyme his good is drowned in the see,  
 950 And somtyme comth it sauf unto the londe."  
 "Pees!" quod my lord, "the nexte tyme I wol fonde  
 To bryngen oure craft al in another plite,  
 And but I do, sires, lat me han the wite.  
 Ther was defaute in somewhat, wel I woot."  
 Another seyde the fir was over-hoot --  
 But, be it hoot or coold, I dar seye this,  
 That we concluden everemoore amys.  
 We faille of that which that we wolden have,  
 And in oure madnesse everemoore we rave.  
 960 And whan we been togidres everichoon,  
 Every man semeth a Salomon.  
 But al thyng which that shineth as the gold  
 Nis nat gold, as that I have herd told;  
 Ne every appul that is fair at eye  
 Ne is nat good, what so men clappe or crye.  
 Right so, lo, fareth it amonges us:  
 He that semeth the wiseste, by Jhesus,  
 Is moost fool, whan it cometh to the preef;  
 And he that semeth trewest is a theef.

970 That shul ye knowe, er that I fro yow wende,  
By that I of my tale have maad an ende.  
Ther is a chanoun of religioun  
Amonges us, wolde infecte al a toun,  
Thogh it as greet were as was Nynyvee,  
Rome, Alisaundre, Troye, and othere three.  
His sleighes and his infinite falsnesse  
Ther koude no man writen, as I gesse,  
Though that he myghte lyve a thousand yeer.  
In al this world of falshede nis his peer,  
980 For in his termes he wol hym so wynde,  
And speke his wordes in so sly a kynde,  
Whanne he commune shal with any wight,  
That he wol make hym doten anonright,  
But it a feend be, as hymselfen is.  
Ful many a man hath he bigiled er this,  
And wole, if that he lyve may a while;  
And yet men ride and goon ful many a mile  
Hym for to seke and have his aqueyntaunce,  
Noght knowynge of his false governaunce.  
990 And if yow list to yeve me audience,  
I wol it tellen heere in youre presence.  
But worshipful chanons religious,  
Ne demeth nat that I sclaundre youre hous,  
Although that my tale of a chanoun bee.  
Of every ordre som shrewe is, pardee,  
And God forbede that al a compaignye  
Sholde rewe o singuleer mannes folye.  
To sclaundre yow is no thyng myn entente,  
But to correcten that is mys I mente.  
1000 This tale was nat oonly toold for yow,  
But eek for othere mo; ye woot wel how  
That among Cristes apostelles twelve  
Ther nas no traytour but Judas hymselfe.  
Thanne why sholde al the remenant have a blame  
That gitlees were? By yow I seye the same,  
Save oonly this, if ye wol herkne me:  
If any Judas in youre covent be,  
Remoeveth hym bitymes, I yow rede,  
If shame or los may causen any drede.  
1010 And beeth no thyng displesed, I yow preye,  
But in this cas herkneth what I shal seye.

In Londoun was a preest, an annueleer,  
That therinne dwelled hadde many a yeer,  
Which was so plesaunt and so servysable  
Unto the wyf, where as he was at table,  
That she wolde suffre hym no thyng for to paye  
For bord ne clothyng, wente he never so gaye,  
And spendyng silver hadde he right ynow.  
Therof no fors; I wol procede as now,  
1020 And telle forth my tale of the chanoun  
That broghte this preest to confusioun.  
This false chanon cam upon a day  
Unto this preestes chambre, wher he lay,  
Bisechyng hym to lene hym a certeyn  
Of gold, and he wolde quite it hym ageyn.  
"Leene me a marc," quod he, "but dayes three,  
And at my day I wol it quiten thee.  
And if so be that thow me fynde fals,  
Another day do hange me by the hals!"  
1030 This preest hym took a marc, and that as swithe,  
And this chanoun hym thanked ofte sithe,  
And took his leve, and wente forth his weye,  
And at the thridde day broghte his moneye,  
And to the preest he took his gold agayn,  
Wherof this preest was wonder glad and fayn.  
"Certes," quod he, "no thyng anoyeth me  
To lene a man a noble, or two, or thre,  
Or what thyng were in my possessioun,  
Whan he so trewe is of condicioun  
1040 That in no wise he breke wole his day;  
To swich a man I kan never seye nay."  
"What!" quod this chanoun, "sholde I be untrewe?  
Nay, that were thyng yfallen al of newe.  
Trouthe is a thyng that I wol evere kepe  
Unto that day in which that I shal crepe  
Into my grave, and ellis God forbede.  
Bileveth this as siker as your Crede.  
God thanke I, and in good tyme be it sayd,  
That ther was nevere man yet yvele apayd  
1050 For gold ne silver that he to me lente,  
Ne nevere falshede in myn herte I mente.  
And sire," quod he, "now of my pryvetee,  
Syn ye so goodlich han been unto me,

And kithed to me so greet gentillesse,  
Somwhat to quyte with youre kyndenesse  
I wol yow shewe, and if yow list to leere,  
I wol yow teche pleyntyly the manere  
How I kan werken in philosophie.  
Taketh good heede; ye shul wel seen at ye  
1060 That I wol doon a maistrie er I go."  
"Ye," quod the preest, "ye, sire, and wol ye so?  
Marie, therof I pray yow hertely."  
"At youre comandement, sire, trewely,"  
Quod the chanoun, "and ellis God forbeede!"  
Loo, how this theef koude his service beede!  
Ful sooth it is that swich profred servyse  
Stynketh, as witnessen thise olde wyse,  
And that ful soone I wol it verifie  
In this chanoun, roote of al trecherie,  
1070 That everemoore delit hath and gladnesse --  
Swiche feendly thoghtes in his herte impresse --  
How Cristes peple he may to meschief brynge.  
God kepe us from his false dissymulynge!  
Noght wiste this preest with whom that he delte,  
Ne of his harm comynge he no thyng felte.  
O sely preest! O sely innocent!  
With coveitise anon thou shalt be blent!  
O gracelees, ful blynd is thy conceite,  
No thyng ne artow war of the deceite  
1080 Which that this fox yshapen hath to thee!  
His wily wrenches thou ne mayst nat flee.  
Wherefore, to go to the conclusion,  
That refereth to thy confusion,  
Unhappy man, anon I wol me hye  
To tellen thyn unwit and thy folye,  
And eek the falsnesse of that oother wrecche,  
As ferforth as that my konnyng wol strecche.  
This chanon was my lord, ye wolden weene?  
Sire hoost, in feith, and by the hevenes queene,  
1090 It was another chanoun, and nat hee,  
That kan an hundred foold moore subtiltee.  
He hath bitrayed folkes many tyme;  
Of his falsnesse it dulleth me to ryme.  
Evere whan that I speke of his falshede,  
For shame of hym my chekes wexen rede.

Al gates they bigynnen for to glowe,  
For reednesse have I noon, right wel I knowe,  
In my visage; for fumes diverse  
Of metals, whiche ye han herd me reherce,  
1100 Consumed and wasted han my reednesse.  
Now taak heede of this chanons cursednesse!  
"Sire," quod he to the preest, "lat youre man gon  
For quyksilver, that we it hadde anon;  
And lat hym bryngen ounces two or three;  
And whan he comth, as faste shal ye see  
A wonder thyng, which ye saugh nevere er this."  
"Sire," quod the preest, "it shal be doon, ywis."  
He bad his servant fecchen hym this thyng,  
And he al redy was at his biddying,  
1110 And wente hym forth, and cam anon agayn  
With this quyksilver, shortly for to sayn,  
And took thise ounces thre to the chanoun;  
And he hem leyde faire and wel adoun,  
And bad the servant coles for to brynge,  
That he anon myghte go to his werkynge.  
The coles right anon weren yfet,  
And this chanoun took out a crosselet  
Of his bosom, and shewed it to the preest.  
"This instrument," quod he, "which that thou seest,  
1120 Taak in thyn hand, and put thyself therinne  
Of this quyksilver an ounce, and heer bigynne,  
In name of Crist, to wexe a filosofre.  
Ther been ful fewe to whiche I wolde profre  
To shewen hem thus muche of my science.  
For ye shul seen heer, by experience,  
That this quyksilver I wol mortifye  
Right in youre sighte anon, withouten lye,  
And make it as good silver and as fyn  
As ther is any in youre purs or myn,  
1130 Or elleswhere, and make it malliable;  
And elles holdeth me fals and unable  
Amonges folk for evere to appeere.  
I have a poudre heer, that coste me deere,  
Shal make al good, for it is cause of al  
My konnyng, which that I yow shewen shal.  
Voyde youre man, and lat hym be theroute,  
And shette the dore, whils we been aboute



Oure pryvetee, that no man us espie,  
Whils that we werke in this philosophie."  
1140 Al as he bad fulfilled was in dede.  
This ilke servant anonright out yede,  
And his maister shette the dore anon,  
And to hire labour spedily they gon.  
This preest, at this cursed chanons biddyng,  
Upon the fir anon sette this thyng,  
And blew the fir, and bisyed hym ful faste.  
And this chanoun into the crosselet caste  
A poudre, noot I wherof that it was  
Ymaad, outhur of chalk, outhur of glas,  
1150 Or somewhat elles, was nat worth a flye,  
To blynde with this preest; and bad hym hye  
The coles for to couchen al above  
The crosselet. "For in tokenyng I thee love,"  
Quod this chanoun, "thyne owene handes two  
Shul werche al thyng which that shal heer be do."  
"Graunt mercy," quod the preest, and was ful glad,  
And couched coles as the chanoun bad.  
And while he bisy was, this feendly wrecche,  
This false chanoun -- the foule feend hym fecche! --  
1160 Out of his bosom took a bechen cole,  
In which ful subtilly was maad an hole,  
And therinne put was of silver lemaille  
An ounce, and stopped was, withouten faille,  
This hole with wex, to kepe the lemaille in.  
And understondeth that this false gyn  
Was nat maad ther, but it was maad bifore;  
And othere thynges I shal tellen moore  
Herafterward, whiche that he with hym broghte.  
Er he cam there, hym to bigile he thoghte,  
1170 And so he dide, er that they wente atwynne;  
Til he had terved hym, koude he nat blyne.  
It dulleth me whan that I of hym speke.  
On his falshede fayn wolde I me wreke,  
If I wiste how, but he is heere and there;  
He is so variaunt, he abit nowhere.  
But taketh heede now, sires, for Goddes love!  
He took his cole of which I spak above,  
And in his hand he baar it pryvely.  
And whiles the preest couched bisily

1180 The coles, as I tolde yow er this,  
This chanoun seyde, "Freend, ye doon amys.  
This is nat couched as it oghte be;  
But soone I shal amenden it," quod he.  
"Now lat me medle therwith but a while,  
For of yow have I pitee, by Seint Gile!  
Ye been right hoot; I se wel how ye swete.  
Have heere a clooth, and wipe away the wete."  
And whiles that the preest wiped his face,  
This chanoun took his cole -- with sory grace! --  
1190 And leyde it above upon the myddeward  
Of the crosselet, and blew wel afterward  
Til that the coles gonne faste brenne.  
"Now yeve us drynke," quod the chanoun thenne;  
"As swithe al shal be wel, I undertake.  
Sitte we doun, and lat us myrie make."  
And whan that this chanounes bechen cole  
Was brent, al the lemaille out of the hole  
Into the crosselet fil anon adoun;  
And so it moste nedes, by resoun,  
1200 Syn it so evene above couched was.  
But therof wiste the preest nothyng, alas!  
He demed alle the coles yliche good,  
For of that sleighte he nothyng understood.  
And whan this alkamystre saugh his tyme,  
"Ris up," quod he, "sire preest, and stondeth by me;  
And for I woot wel ingot have ye noon,  
Gooth, walketh forth, and bryngeth a chalk stoon;  
For I wol make it of the same shap  
That is an ingot, if I may han hap.  
1210 And bryngeth eek with yow a bolle or a panne  
Ful of water, and ye shul se wel thanne  
How that oure bisynesse shal thryve and preeve.  
And yet, for ye shul han no mysbileeve  
Ne wrong conceite of me in youre absence,  
I ne wol nat been out of youre presence,  
But go with yow and come with yow ageyn."  
The chambre dore, shortly for to seyn,  
They opened and shette, and wente hir weye.  
And forth with hem they carieden the keye,  
1220 And coome agayn withouten any delay.  
What sholde I tarien al the longe day?

He took the chalk and shoop it in the wise  
 Of an ingot, as I shal yow devyse.  
 I seye, he took out of his owene sleeve  
 A teyne of silver -- yvele moot he cheeve! --  
 Which that ne was nat but an ounce of weighte.  
 And taaketh heede now of his cursed sleighte!  
 He shoop his ingot in lengthe and in breede  
 Of this teyne, withouten any drede,  
 1230 So slyly that the preest it nat espide,  
 And in his sleve agayn he gan it hide,  
 And fro the fir he took up his mateere,  
 And in th' yngot putte it with myrie cheere,  
 And in the water-vessel he it caste,  
 Whan that hym luste, and bad the preest as faste,  
 "Loke what ther is; put in thyn hand and grope.  
 Thow fynde shalt ther silver, as I hope."  
 What, devel of helle, sholde it elles be?  
 Shaving of silver silver is, pardee!  
 1240 He putte his hand in and took up a teyne  
 Of silver fyn, and glad in every veyne  
 Was this preest, whan he saugh it was so.  
 "Goddess blessing, and his moodres also,  
 And alle halwes, have ye, sire chanoun,"  
 Seyde the preest, "and I hir malisoun,  
 But, and ye vouche-sauf to techen me  
 This noble craft and this subtilitee,  
 I wol be youre in al that evere I may."  
 Quod the chanoun, "Yet wol I make assay  
 1250 The seconde tyme, that ye may taken heede  
 And been expert of this, and in youre neede  
 Another day assaye in myn absence  
 This disciplyne and this crafty science.  
 Lat take another ounce," quod he tho,  
 "Of quyksilver, withouten wordes mo,  
 And do therwith as ye han doon er this  
 With that oother, which that now silver is."  
 This preest hym bisieth in al that he kan  
 To doon as this chanoun, this cursed man,  
 1260 Comanded hym, and faste blew the fir,  
 For to come to th' effect of his desir.  
 And this chanon, right in the meene while,  
 Al redy was this preest eft to bigile,

And for a contenaunce in his hand he bar  
 An holwe stikke -- taak kep and be war! --  
 In the ende of which an ounce, and namoore,  
 Of silver lemaille put was, as bfore  
 Was in his cole, and stopped with wex weel  
 For to kepe in his lemaille every deel.  
 1270 And whil this preest was in his bisynesse,  
 This chanoun with his stikke gan hym dresse  
 To hym anon, and his poudre caste in  
 As he dide er -- the devel out of his skyn  
 Hym terve, I pray to God, for his falshede!  
 For he was evere fals in thoght and dede --  
 And with this stikke, above the crosselet,  
 That was ordeyned with that false jet,  
 He stired the coles til relente gan  
 The wex agayn the fir, as every man,  
 1280 But it a fool be, woot wel it moot nede,  
 And al that in the stikke was out yede,  
 And in the crosselet hastily it fel.  
 Now, good sires, what wol ye bet than wel?  
 Whan that this preest thus was bigiled ageyn,  
 Supposynge noght but treuthe, sooth to seyn,  
 He was so glad that I kan nat expresse  
 In no manere his myrthe and his gladnesse;  
 And to the chanoun he profred eftsoone  
 Body and good. "Ye," quod the chanoun soone,  
 1290 "Though poure I be, crafty thou shalt me fynde.  
 I warne thee, yet is ther moore bihynde.  
 Is ther any copper herinne?" seyde he.  
 "Ye," quod the preest, "sire, I trowe wel ther be."  
 "Elles go bye us som, and that as swithe;  
 Now, goode sire, go forth thy way and hy the."  
 He wente his wey, and with the copper cam,  
 And this chanon it in his handes nam,  
 And of that copper weyed out but an ounce.  
 Al to symple is my tonge to pronounce,  
 1300 As ministre of my wit, the doublenesse  
 Of this chanoun, roote of alle cursednesse!  
 He semed freendly to hem that knewe hym noght,  
 But he was feendly bothe in werk and thoght.  
 It weerieth me to telle of his falsnesse,  
 And nathelees yet wol I it expresse,

To th' entente that men may be war therby,  
And for noon oother cause, trewely.  
He putte this ounce of coper in the crosselet,  
And on the fir as swithe he hath it set,  
1310 And caste in poudre, and made the preest to blowe,  
And in his werkyng for to stoupe lowe,  
As he dide er -- and al nas but a jape;  
Right as hym liste, the preest he made his ape!  
And afterward in the ingot he it caste,  
And in the panne putte it at the laste  
Of water, and in he putte his owene hand,  
And in his sleve (as ye biforen-hand  
Herde me telle) he hadde a silver teyne.  
He slyly took it out, this cursed heyne,  
1320 Unwityng this preest of his false craft,  
And in the pannes botme he hath it laft;  
And in the water rombled to and fro,  
And wonder pryvely took up also  
The coper teyne, noght knowynge this preest,  
And hidde it, and hym hente by the breest,  
And to hym spak, and thus seyde in his game:  
"Stoupeth adoun. By God, ye be to blame!  
Helpeth me now, as I dide yow whileer;  
Putte in youre hand, and looketh what is theer."  
1330 This preest took up this silver teyne anon,  
And thanne seyde the chanoun, "Lat us gon  
With thise thre teynes, whiche that we han wroght,  
To som goldsmyth and wite if they been oght,  
For, by my feith, I nolde, for myn hood,  
But if that they were silver fyn and good,  
And that as swithe preeved it shal bee."  
Unto the goldsmyth with thise teynes three  
They wente and putte thise teynes in assay  
To fir and hamer; myghte no man seye nay,  
1340 But that they weren as hem oghte be.  
This sotted preest, who was gladder than he?  
Was nevere brid gladder agayn the day,  
Ne nyghtyngale, in the sesoun of May,  
Was nevere noon that luste bet to synge;  
Ne lady lustier in carolyng,  
Or for to speke of love and wommanhede,  
Ne knyght in armes to doon an hardy dede,

To stonden in grace of his lady deere,  
Than hadde this preest this soory craft to leere.  
1350 And to the chanoun thus he spak and seyde:  
"For love of God, that for us alle deyde,  
And as I may deserve it unto yow,  
What shal this receite coste? Telleth now!"  
"By oure Lady," quod this chanon, "it is deere,  
I warne yow wel; for save I and a frere,  
In Engelond ther kan no man it make."  
"No fors," quod he, "now, sire, for Goddes sake,  
What shal I paye? Telleth me, I preye."  
"Ywis," quod he, "it is ful deere, I seye.  
1360 Sire, at o word, if that thee list it have,  
Ye shul paye fourty pound, so God me save!  
And nere the freendshipe that ye dide er this  
To me, ye sholde paye moore, ywis."  
This preest the somme of fourty pound anon  
Of nobles fette, and took hem everichon  
To this chanoun for this ilke receite.  
Al his werkyng nas but fraude and deceite.  
"Sire preest," he seyde, "I kepe han no loos  
Of my craft, for I wolde it kept were cloos;  
1370 And, as ye love me, kepeth it secree.  
For, and men knewen al my soutiltee,  
By God, they wolden han so greet envye  
To me by cause of my philosophye  
I sholde be deed; ther were noon oother weye."  
"God it forbeede," quod the preest, "what sey ye?  
Yet hadde I levere spenden al the good  
Which that I have, and elles wexe I wood,  
Than that ye sholden falle in swich mescheef."  
"For youre good wyl, sire, have ye right good preef,"  
1380 Quod the chanoun, "and farwel, grant mercy!"  
He wente his wey, and never the preest hym sy  
After that day; and whan that this preest shoolde  
Maken assay, at swich tyme as he wolde,  
Of this receit, farwel! It wolde nat be.  
Lo, thus byjaped and bigiled was he!  
Thus maketh he his introduccioun,  
To brynge folk to hir destruccioun.  
Considereth, sires, how that, in ech estaat,  
Bitwixe men and gold ther is debaat

1390 So ferforth that unnethes is ther noon.  
This multiplying blent so many oon  
That in good feith I trowe that it bee  
The cause grettest of swich scarsetee.  
Philosophres speken so mystily  
In this craft that men kan nat come therby,  
For any wit that men han now-a-dayes.  
They mowe wel chiteren as doon jayes,  
And in hir termes sette hir lust and peyne,  
But to hir purpos shul they nevere atteyne.  
1400 A man may lightly lerne, if he have aught,  
To multiplie, and brynge his good to naught!  
Lo! swich a lucre is in this lusty game,  
A mannes myrthe it wol turne unto grame,  
And empten also grete and hevye purses,  
And maken folk for to purchacen curses  
Of hem that han hir good therto ylent.  
O, fy, for shame! They that han been brent,  
Allas, kan they nat flee the fires heete?  
Ye that it use, I rede ye it leete,  
1410 Lest ye lese al; for bet than nevere is late.  
Nevere to thryve were to long a date.  
Though ye prolle ay, ye shul it nevere fynde.  
Ye been as boold as is Bayard the blynde,  
That blondreth forth and peril casteth noon.  
He is as boold to renne agayn a stoon  
As for to goon bisides in the weye.  
So faren ye that multiplie, I seye.  
If that youre eyen kan nat seen aright,  
Looke that youre mynde lakke noght his sight.  
1420 For though ye looken never so brode and stare,  
Ye shul nothyng wynne on that chaffare,  
But wasten al that ye may rape and renne.  
Withdraweth the fir, lest it to faste brenne;  
Medleth namoore with that art, I mene,  
For if ye doon, youre thrift is goon ful clene.  
And right as swithe I wol yow tellen heere  
What philosophres seyn in this mateere.  
Lo, thus seith Arnold of the Newe Toun,  
As his Rosarie maketh mencion;  
1430 He seith right thus, withouten any lye:  
"Ther may no man mercurie mortifie

But it be with his brother knowlechyng";  
 How [be] that he which that first seyde this thyng  
 Of philosophres fader was, Hermes;  
 He seith how that the dragon, doutelees,  
 Ne dyeth nat but if that he be slayn  
 With his brother; and that is for to sayn,  
 By the dragon, Mercurie, and noon oother  
 He understood, and brymston by his brother,  
 1440 That out of Sol and Luna were ydrawe.  
 "And therefore," seyde he -- taak heede to my sawe --  
 "Lat no man bisye hym this art for to seche,  
 But if that he th' entencioun and speche  
 Of philosophres understonde kan;  
 And if he do, he is a lewed man.  
 For this science and this konnyng," quod he,  
 "Is of the secree of the secretes, pardee."  
 Also ther was a disciple of Plato,  
 That on a tyme seyde his maister to,  
 1450 As his book Senior wol bere witnesse,  
 And this was his demande in soothfastnesse:  
 "Telle me the name of the privee stoon."  
 And Plato answerde unto hym anon,  
 "Take the stoon that Titanos men name."  
 "Which is that?" quod he. "Magnasia is the same,"  
 Seyde Plato. "Ye, sire, and is it thus?  
 This is ignotum per ignocius.  
 What is Magnasia, good sire, I yow preye?"  
 "It is a water that is maad, I seye,  
 1460 Of elementes foure," quod Plato.  
 "Telle me the roote, good sire," quod he tho,  
 "Of that water, if it be youre wil."  
 "Nay, nay," quod Plato, "certein, that I nyl.  
 The philosophres sworn were everychoon  
 That they sholden discovere it unto noon,  
 Ne in no book it write in no manere.  
 For unto Crist it is so lief and deere  
 That he wol nat that it discovered bee,  
 But where it liketh to his deitee  
 1470 Men for t' enspire, and eek for to deffende  
 Whom that hym liketh; lo, this is the ende."  
 Thanne conclude I thus, sith that God of hevene  
 Ne wil nat that the philosophres nevene



How that a man shal come unto this stoon,  
I rede, as for the beste, lete it goon.  
For whoso maketh God his adversarie,  
As for to werken any thyng in contrarie  
Of his wil, certes, never shal he thryve,  
Thogh that he multiplie terme of his lyve.  
1480 And there a poynt, for ended is my tale.  
God sende every trewe man boote of his bale!



## THE MANCIPLE'S PROLOGUE

Woot ye nat where ther stant a litel toun  
 Which that ycleped is Bobbe-up-and-doun,  
 Under the Blee, in Caunterbury Weye?  
 Ther gan oure Hooste for to jape and pleye,  
 And seyde, "Sires, what! Dun is in the myre!  
 Is ther no man, for preyere ne for hyre,  
 That wole awake oure felawe al bihynde?  
 A theef myghte hym ful lightly robbe and bynde.  
 See how he nappeth! See how, for cokkes bones,  
 10 That he wol falle fro his hors atones!  
 Is that a cook of Londoun, with meschaunce?  
 Do hym come forth, he knoweth his penaunce;  
 For he shal telle a tale, by my fey,  
 Although it be nat worth a botel hey.  
 Awake, thou Cook," quod he, "God yeve thee sorwe!  
 What eyleth thee to slepe by the morwe?  
 Hastow had fleen al nyght, or artow dronke?  
 Or hastow with som quene al nyght yswonke,  
 So that thow mayst nat holden up thyn heed?"  
 20 This Cook, that was ful pale and no thyng reed,  
 Seyde to oure Hoost, "So God my soule blesse,  
 As ther is falle on me swich hevynesse,  
 Noot I nat why, that me were levere slepe  
 Than the beste galon wyn in Chepe."  
 "Wel," quod the Maunciple, "if it may doon ese  
 To thee, sire Cook, and to no wight displese,  
 Which that heere rideth in this campaignye,  
 And that oure Hoost wole, of his curteisye,  
 I wol as now excuse thee of thy tale.  
 30 For, in good feith, thy visage is ful pale,  
 Thyne eyen daswen eek, as that me thynketh,  
 And, wel I woot, thy breeth ful soure stynketh:  
 That sheweth wel thou art nat wel disposed.  
 Of me, certeyn, thou shalt nat been yglosed.  
 See how he ganeth, lo, this drunken wight,  
 As though he wolde swolwe us anonright.  
 Hoold cloos thy mouth, man, by thy fader kyn!  
 The devel of helle sette his foot therin!  
 Thy cursed breeth infecte wole us alle.  
 40 Fy, stynkyng swyn! Fy, foule moote thee falle!

A, taketh heede, sires, of this lusty man.  
Now, sweete sire, wol ye justen atte fan?  
Therto me thynketh ye been wel yshape!  
I trowe that ye dronken han wyn ape,  
And that is whan men pleyen with a straw."  
And with this speche the Cook wax wrooth and wraw,  
And on the Manciple he gan nodde faste  
For lakke of speche, and doun the hors hym caste,  
Where as he lay, til that men hym up took.  
50 This was a fair chyvachee of a cook!  
Allas, he nadde holde hym by his ladel!  
And er that he agayn were in his sadel,  
Ther was greet showvyng bothe to and fro  
To lifte hym up, and muchel care and wo,  
So unweeldy was this sory palled goost.  
And to the Manciple thanne spak oure Hoost:  
"By cause drynke hath dominacioun  
Upon this man, by my savacioun,  
I trowe he lewedly wolde telle his tale.  
60 For, were it wyn or oold or moysty ale  
That he hath dronke, he speketh in his nose,  
And fneseth faste, and eek he hath the pose.  
"He hath also to do moore than ynough  
To kepen hym and his capul out of the slough;  
And if he falle from his capul eftsoone,  
Thanne shal we alle have ynogh to doone  
In lifyng up his hevy dronken cors.  
Telle on thy tale; of hym make I no fors.  
"But yet, Manciple, in feith thou art to nyce,  
70 Thus openly repreve hym of his vice.  
Another day he wole, peraventure,  
Reclayme thee and brynge thee to lure;  
I meene, he speke wole of smale thynges,  
As for to pynchen at thy rekenynges,  
That were nat honest, if it cam to preef."  
"No," quod the Manciple, "that were a greet mescheef!  
So myghte he lightly brynge me in the snare.  
Yet hadde I levere payen for the mare  
Which he rit on, than he sholde with me stryve.  
80 I wol nat wratthen hym, also moot I thryve!  
That that I spak, I seyde it in my bourde.  
And wite ye what? I have heer in a gourde

A draghte of wyn, ye, of a ripe grape,  
And right anon ye shul seen a good jape.  
This Cook shal drynke therof, if I may.  
Up peyne of deeth, he wol nat seye me nay."  
And certeynly, to tellen as it was,  
Of this vessel the Cook drank faste, alas!  
What neded hym? He drank ynough biforn.  
90 And whan he hadde pouped in this horn,  
To the Manciple he took the gourde agayn;  
And of that drynke the Cook was wonder fayn,  
And thanked hym in swich wise as he koude.  
Thanne gan oure Hoost to laughen wonder loude,  
And seyde, "I se wel it is necessarie,  
Where that we goon, good drynke with us carie;  
For that wol turne rancour and disese  
T' acord and love, and many a wrong apese.  
"O Bacus, yblessed be thy name,  
100 That so kanst turnen ernest into game!  
Worshipe and thank be to thy deitee!  
Of that mateere ye gete namoore of me.  
Telle on thy tale, Manciple, I thee preye."  
"Wel, sire," quod he, "now herkneth what I seye.



## THE MANCIPLE'S TALE

Whan Phebus dwelled heere in this erthe adoun,  
 As olde bookes maken mencioun,  
 He was the mooste lusty bachiler  
 In al this world, and eek the beste archer.  
 He slow Phitoun, the serpent, as he lay  
 110 Slepynge agayn the sonne upon a day;  
 And many another noble worthy dede  
 He with his bowe wroghte, as men may rede.  
 Pleyen he koude on every mynstralcie,  
 And syngen that it was a melodie  
 To heeren of his cleere voys the soun.  
 Certes the kyng of Thebes, Amphioun,  
 That with his syngyng walled that citee,  
 Koude nevere syngen half so wel as hee.  
 Therto he was the semelieste man  
 120 That is or was sith that the world bigan.  
 What nedeth it his fetures to discryve?  
 For in this world was noon so faire on-lyve.  
 He was therwith fulfild of gentillesse,  
 Of honour, and of parfit worthynesse.  
 This Phebus, that was flour of bachilrie,  
 As wel in fredom as in chivalrie,  
 For his desport, in signe eek of victorie  
 Of Phitoun, so as telleth us the storie,  
 Was wont to beren in his hand a bowe.  
 130 Now hadde this Phebus in his hous a crowe  
 Which in a cage he fostred many a day,  
 And taughte it speken, as men teche a jay.  
 Whit was this crowe as is a snow-whit swan,  
 And countrefete the speche of every man  
 He koude, whan he sholde telle a tale.  
 Therwith in al this world no nyghtyngale  
 Ne koude, by an hondred thousand deel,  
 Syngen so wonder myrily and weel.  
 Now hadde this Phebus in his hous a wyf  
 140 Which that he lovede moore than his lyf,  
 And nyght and day dide evere his diligence  
 Hir for to plese and doon hire reverence,  
 Save oonly, if the sothe that I shal sayn,  
 Jalous he was, and wolde have kept hire fayn.

For hym were looth byjaped for to be,  
And so is every wight in swich degree;  
But al in ydel, for it availleth noght.  
A good wyf, that is clene of werk and thoght,  
Sholde nat been kept in noon awayt, certayn;  
150 And trewely the labour is in vayn  
To kepe a shrewe, for it wol nat bee.  
This holde I for a verray nycetee,  
To spille labour for to kepe wyves:  
Thus writen olde clerkes in hir lyves.  
But now to purpos, as I first bigan:  
This worthy Phebus dooth al that he kan  
To plesen hire, wenyng for swich plesaunce,  
And for his manhede and his governaunce,  
That no man sholde han put hym from hir grace.  
160 But God it woot, ther may no man embrace  
As to destreyne a thyng which that nature  
Hath natureelly set in a creature.  
Taak any bryd, and put it in a cage,  
And do al thyn entente and thy corage  
To fostre it tendrely with mete and drynke  
Of alle deyntees that thou kanst bithynke,  
And keep it al so clenly as thou may,  
Although his cage of gold be never so gay,  
Yet hath this brid, by twenty thousand foold,  
170 Levere in a forest that is rude and coold  
Goon ete wormes and swich wrecchednesse.  
For evere this brid wol doon his bisynesse  
To escape out of his cage, yif he may.  
His libertee this brid desireth ay.  
Lat take a cat, and fostre hym wel with milk  
And tendre flessh, and make his couche of silk,  
And lat hym seen a mous go by the wal,  
Anon he weyveth milk and flessh and al,  
And every deyntee that is in that hous,  
180 Swich appetit hath he to ete a mous.  
Lo, heere hath lust his dominacioun,  
And appetit fleemeth discrecioun.  
A she-wolf hath also a vileyns kynde.  
The lewedeste wolf that she may fynde,  
Or leest of reputacioun, wol she take,  
In tyme whan hir lust to han a make.

Alle thise ensamples speke I by thise men  
 That been untrewe, and nothyng by wommen.  
 For men han evere a likerous appetit  
 190 On lower thyng to parfourne hire delit  
 Than on hire wyves, be they never so faire,  
 Ne never so trewe, ne so debonaire.  
 Flessh is so newefangel, with meschaunce,  
 That we ne konne in nothyng han plesaunce  
 That sowneth into vertu any while.  
 This Phebus, which that thoghte upon no gile,  
 Deceyved was, for al his jolitee.  
 For under hym another hadde shee,  
 A man of litel reputacioun,  
 200 Nat worth to Phebus in comparisoun.  
 The moore harm is, it happeth ofte so,  
 Of which ther cometh muchel harm and wo.  
 And so bifel, whan Phebus was absent,  
 His wyf anon hath for hir lemman sent.  
 Hir lemman? Certes, this is a knavyssh speche!  
 Foryeve it me, and that I yow biseche.  
 The wise Plato seith, as ye may rede,  
 The word moot nede accorde with the dede.  
 If men shal telle proprely a thyng,  
 210 The word moot cosyn be to the werkyng.  
 I am a boystous man, right thus seye I:  
 Ther nys no difference, trewely,  
 Bitwixe a wyf that is of heigh degree,  
 If of hir body dishonest she bee,  
 And a povre wenche, oother than this --  
 If it so be they werke bothe amys --  
 But that the gentile, in estaat above,  
 She shal be cleped his lady, as in love;  
 And for that oother is a povre womman,  
 220 She shal be cleped his wenche or his lemman.  
 And, God it woot, myn owene deere brother,  
 Men leyn that oon as lowe as lith that oother.  
 Right so bitwixe a titleles tiraunt  
 And an outlawe or a theef erraunt,  
 The same I seye: ther is no difference.  
 To Alisaundre was toold this sentence,  
 That, for the tirant is of gretter myght  
 By force of meynee for to sleen dounright,

And brennen hous and hoom, and make al playn,  
 230 Lo, therfore is he cleped a capitayn;  
 And for the outlawe hath but smal meynne,  
 And may nat doon so greet an harm as he,  
 Ne brynge a contree to so greet mescheef,  
 Men clepen hym an outlawe or a theef.  
 But for I am a man noght textueel,  
 I wol noght telle of textes never a deel;  
 I wol go to my tale, as I bigan.  
 Whan Phebus wyf had sent for hir lemman,  
 Anon they wroghten al hire lust volage.  
 240 The white crowe, that heeng ay in the cage,  
 Biheeld hire werk, and seyde never a word.  
 And whan that hoom was come Phebus, the lord,  
 This crowe sang "Cokkow! Cokkow! Cokkow!"  
 "What, bryd?" quod Phebus. "What song syngestow?  
 Ne were thou wont so myrily to synge  
 That to myn herte it was a rejoysynge  
 To heere thy voys? Allas, what song is this?"  
 "By God," quod he, "I synge nat amys.  
 Phebus," quod he, "for al thy worthynesse,  
 250 For al thy beautee and thy gentillesse,  
 For al thy song and al thy mynstralcye,  
 For al thy waityng, blered is thyn ye  
 With oon of litel reputacioun,  
 Noght worth to thee, as in comparisoun,  
 The montance of a gnat, so moote I thryve!  
 For on thy bed thy wyf I saugh hym swyve."  
 What wol ye moore? The crowe anon hym tolde,  
 By sadde tokenes and by wordes bolde,  
 How that his wyf had doon hire lecherye,  
 260 Hym to greet shame and to greet vileynye,  
 And tolde hym ofte he saugh it with his yen.  
 This Phebus gan awayward for to wryen,  
 And thoughte his sorweful herte brast atwo.  
 His bowe he bente, and sette therinne a flo,  
 And in his ire his wyf thanne hath he slayn.  
 This is th' effect; ther is namoore to sayn;  
 For sorwe of which he brak his mynstralcie,  
 Bothe harpe, and lute, and gyterne, and sautrie;  
 And eek he brak his arwes and his bowe,  
 270 And after that thus spak he to the crowe:



"Traitor," quod he, "with tonge of scorpioun,  
Thou hast me broght to my confusioun;  
Allas, that I was wroght! Why nere I deed?  
O deere wyf! O gemme of lustiheed!  
That were to me so sad and eek so trewe,  
Now listow deed, with face pale of hewe,  
Ful giltelees, that dorste I swere, ywys!  
O rakel hand, to doon so foule amys!  
O trouble wit, O ire recchelees,  
280 That unavysed smyteth gilteles!  
O wantrust, ful of fals suspencion,  
Where was thy wit and thy discrecion?  
O every man, be war of rakelnesse!  
Ne trowe no thyng withouten strong witnesse.  
Smyt nat to soone, er that ye witen why,  
And beeth avysed wel and sobrelly  
Er ye doon any execucion  
Upon youre ire for suspencion.  
Allas, a thousand folk hath rakel ire  
290 Fully fordoon, and broght hem in the mire.  
Allas! For sorwe I wol myselven slee!"  
And to the crowe, "O false thief!" seyde he,  
"I wol thee quite anon thy false tale.  
Thou songe whilom lyk a nyghtyngale;  
Now shaltow, false thief, thy song forgon,  
And eek thy white fetheres everichon,  
Ne nevere in al thy lif ne shaltou speke.  
Thus shal men on a traytour been awreke;  
Thou and thyn ofspryng evere shul be blake,  
300 Ne nevere sweete noyse shul ye make,  
But evere crie agayn tempest and rayn,  
In tokenyng that thurgh thee my wyf is slayn."  
And to the crowe he stirte, and that anon,  
And pulled his white fetheres everychon,  
And made hym blak, and refte hym al his song,  
And eek his speche, and out at dore hym slong  
Unto the devel, which I hym bitake;  
And for this caas been alle crows blake.  
Lordynges, by this ensample I yow preye,  
310 Beth war, and taketh kep what that ye seye:  
Ne telleth nevere no man in youre lyf  
How that another man hath dight his wyf;

He wol yow haten mortally, certeyn.  
 Daun Salomon, as wise clerkes seyn,  
 Techeth a man to kepen his tonge weel.  
 But, as I seyde, I am noght textueel.  
 But nathelees, thus taughte me my dame:  
 "My sone, thenk on the crowe, a Goddes name!  
 My sone, keep wel thy tonge, and keep thy freend.  
 320 A wikked tonge is worse than a feend;  
 My sone, from a feend men may hem blesse.  
 My sone, God of his endelees goodnesse  
 Walled a tonge with teeth and lippes eke,  
 For man sholde hym avyse what he speeke.  
 My sone, ful ofte, for to muche speche  
 Hath many a man been spilt, as clerkes teche,  
 But for litel speche avysely  
 Is no man shent, to speke generally.  
 My sone, thy tonge sholdestow restreyne  
 330 At alle tymes, but whan thou doost thy peyne  
 To speke of God, in honour and preyere.  
 The firste vertu, sone, if thou wolt leere,  
 Is to restreyne and kepe wel thy tonge;  
 Thus lerne children whan that they been yonge.  
 My sone, of muchel spekyng yvele avysed,  
 Ther lasse spekyng hadde ynough suffised,  
 Comth muchel harm; thus was me toold and taught.  
 In muchel speche synne wanteth naught.  
 Wostow wherof a rakel tonge serveth?  
 340 Right as a swerd forkutteth and forkerveth  
 An arm a-two, my deere sone, right so  
 A tonge kutteth freendshipe al a-two.  
 A jangler is to God abhomynable.  
 Reed Salomon, so wys and honorable;  
 Reed David in his psalmes; reed Senekke.  
 My sone, spek nat, but with thyn heed thou bekke.  
 Dissimule as thou were deef, if that thou heere  
 A janglere speke of perilous mateere.  
 The Flemyng seith, and lerne it if thee leste,  
 350 That litel janglyng causeth muchel reste.  
 My sone, if thou no wikked word hast seyde,  
 Thee thar nat drede for to be biwreyd;  
 But he that hath mysseyd, I dar wel sayn,  
 He may by no wey clepe his word agayn.

Thyng that is seyde is seyde, and forth it gooth,  
Though hym repente, or be hym nevere so looth.  
He is his thral to whom that he hath sayde  
A tale of which he is now yvele apayde.  
My sone, be war, and be noon auctour newe  
360 Of tidynges, wheither they been false or trewe.  
Whereso thou come, amonges hye or lowe,  
Kepe wel thy tonge and thenk upon the crowe."



## THE PARSON'S PROLOGUE

By that the Maunciple hadde his tale al ended,  
 The sonne fro the south lyne was descended  
 So lowe that he nas nat, to my sighte,  
 Degrees nyne and twenty as in highte.  
 Foure of the klokke it was tho, as I gesse,  
 For ellevene foot, or litel moore or lesse,  
 My shadwe was at thilke tyme, as there  
 Of swiche feet as my lengthe parted were  
 In sixe feet equal of proporcioun.  
 10 Therwith the moones exaltacioun --  
 I meene Libra -- alwey gan ascende  
 As we were entryng at a thropes ende;  
 For which oure Hoost, as he was wont to gye,  
 As in this caas, oure joly compaignye,  
 Seyde in this wise: "Lordynges everichoon,  
 Now lakketh us no tales mo than oon.  
 Fulfilled is my sentence and my decree;  
 I trowe that we han herd of ech degree;  
 Almost fulfild is al myn ordinaunce.  
 20 I pray to God, so yeve hym right good chaunce,  
 That telleth this tale to us lustily.  
 "Sire preest," quod he, "artow a vicary?  
 Or arte a person? Sey sooth, by thy fey!  
 Be what thou be, ne breke thou nat oure pley;  
 For every man, save thou, hath toold his tale.  
 Unbokele and shewe us what is in thy male;  
 For trewely, me thynketh by thy cheere  
 Thou sholdest knytte up wel a greet mateere.  
 Telle us a fable anon, for cokkes bones!"  
 30 This Persoun answerde, al atones,  
 "Thou getest fable noon ytoold for me,  
 For Paul, that writeth unto Thymothee,  
 Repreveth hem that weyven soothfastnesse  
 And tellen fables and swich wrecchednesse.  
 Why sholde I sowen draf out of my fest,  
 Whan I may sowen whete, if that me lest?  
 For which I seye, if that yow list to heere  
 Moralitee and vertuous mateere,  
 And thanne that ye wol yeve me audience,  
 40 I wol ful fayn, at Cristes reverence,

Do yow plesaunce leefful, as I kan.  
But trusteth wel, I am a Southren man;  
I kan nat geeste `rum, ram, ruf,' by lettre,  
Ne, God woot, rym holde I but litel better;  
And therefore, if yow list -- I wol nat glose --  
I wol yow telle a myrie tale in prose  
To knytte up al this feeste and make an ende.  
And Jhesu, for his grace, wit me sende  
To shewe yow the wey, in this viage,  
50 Of thilke parfit glorious pilgrymage  
That highte Jerusalem celestial.  
And if ye vouche sauf, anon I shal  
Bigynne upon my tale, for which I preye  
Telle youre avys; I kan no better seye.  
"But nathelees, this meditacioun  
I putte it ay under correccioun  
Of clerkes, for I am nat textueel;  
I take but the sentence, trusteth weel.  
Therefore I make protestacioun  
60 That I wol stonde to correccioun."  
Upon this word we han assented soone,  
For, as it seemed, it was for to doone --  
To enden in som vertuous sentence,  
And for to yeve hym space and audience,  
And bade oure Hoost he sholde to hym seye  
That alle we to telle his tale hym preye.  
Oure Hoost hadde the wordes for us alle;  
"Sire preest," quod he, "now faire yow bifalle!  
Telleth," quod he, "your meditatioun.  
70 But hasteth yow; the sonne wole adoun;  
Beth fructuous, and that in litel space,  
And to do wel God sende yow his grace!  
Sey what yow list, and we wol gladly heere."  
And with that word he seyde in this manere.



## THE PARSON'S TALE

Oure sweete Lord God of hevene, that no man wole perisse but wole that

we comen alle to the knoweleche of hym and to the blisful lif that is perdurable,

amonesteth us by the prophete Jeremie, that seith in thys wyse:

"Stondeth upon the weyes, and seeth and axeth of olde pathes (that is to seyn, of olde sentences) which is the goode wey,

and walketh in that wey, and ye shal fynde refresshyng for youre soules, etc."

Manye been the weyes espirituels that leden folk to oure Lord Jhesu Crist and to the regne of glorie.

80 Of whiche weyes ther is a ful noble wey and a ful covenable, which may nat fayle to man ne to womman

80A that thurgh synne hath mysگون fro the righte wey of Jerusalem celestial;

and this wey is cleped Penitence, of which man sholde gladly herknen and enquire with al his herte

to wyten what is Penitence, and whennes it is cleped Penitence, and in how manye maneres been the acciouns or werkynge of Penitence,

and how manye spesces ther been of Penitence, and whiche thynges apertenen and bihoven to Penitence, and whiche thynges destourben Penitence.

Seint Ambrose seith that Penitence is the pleynynge of man for the gilt that he hath doon,

and namoore to do any thyng for which hym oghte to pleyne.

And som doctour seith, "Penitence is the waymentynge of man that sorweth for his synne and pyneth hymself for he hath mysdoon."

Penitence, with certeyne circumstances, is verray repentance of a man that halt hymself in sorwe and oother peyne for his giltes.

And for he shal be verray penitent, he shal first biwaylen the synnes that he hath doon,

and stidefastly purposen in his herte to have shrift of mouthe, and to doon satisfaccioun,

and nevere to doon thyng for which hym oghte moore to biwayle or to compleyne, and to continue in goode werkes, or elles his repentance may nat availle.

For, as seith Seint Ysidre,

"He is a japere and a gabber and no verray repentant that eftsoone dooth thyng for which hym oghte repente."

90 Wepynge, and nat for to stynte to do synne, may nat avayle.

But nathelees, men shal hope that every tyme that man falleth, be it never so ofte,  
that he may arise thurgh Penitence, if he have grace; but certainly it is greet doute.

For, as seith Seint Gregorie, "Unnethe ariseth he out of his synne, that is charged with the charge of yvel usage."

And therefore repentant folk, that stynte for to synne and forlete synne er that synne forlete hem,

hooly chirche holdeth hem siker of hire savacioun.

And he that synneth and verrailly repenteth hym in his laste, hooly chirche yet hopeth his savacioun,

by the grete mercy of oure Lord Jhesu Crist, for his repentaunce; but taak the siker wey.

And now, sith I have declared yow what thyng is Penitence, now shul ye understonde that ther been three acciouns of Penitence.

The firste is that if a man be baptized after that he hath synned.

Seint Augustyn seith, "But he be penytent for his olde synful lyf, he may nat bigynne the newe clene lif."

For, certes, if he be baptized withouten penitence of his olde gilt, he receyveth the mark of baptesme

but nat the grace ne the remission of his synnes, til he have repentance verray.

Another defaute is this: that men doon deedly synne after that they han receyved baptesme.

100 The thridde defaute is that men fallen in venial synnes after hir baptesme fro day to day.

Therof seith Seint Augustyn that penitence of goode and humble folk is the penitence of every day.

The speses of Penitence been three. That oon of hem is solempne, another is commune, and the thridde is privee.

Thilke penance that is solempne is in two maneres;

as to be put out of hooly chirche in Lente for slaughtre of children, and swich maner thyng.

Another is, whan a man hath synned openly, of which synne the fame is openly spoken in the contree,

and thanne hooly chirche by juggement destreyneth hym for to do open penaunce.

Commune penaunce is that preestes enjoynen men comunly in certeyn caas, as for to goon peraventure naked in pilgrimages, or barefoot.

Pryvee penaunce is thilke that men doon alday for privee synnes, of whiche we shryve us prively and receyve privee penaunce.

Now shaltow understande what is bihovely and necessarie to verray parfit Penitence. And this stant on three thynges:

Contricioun of Herte, Confessioun of Mouth, and Satisfaccioun.

For which seith Seint John Crisostom, "Penitence destreyneth a man to accepte benygne every peyne that hym is enjoyned, with contricioun of herte, and shrift of mouth, with satisfaccioun, and in werkynge of alle manere humylitee."

110 And this is fruytful penitence agayn three thynges in which we wratthe oure Lord Jhesu Crist;

this is to seyn, by delit in thynkyng, by reccheleesnesse in spekyng, and by wikked synful werkynge.

And agayns thise wikkede giltes is Penitence, that may be likned unto a tree.

The roote of this tree is Contricioun, that hideth hym in the herte of hym that is verray repentaunt,

right as the roote of a tree hydeth hym in the erthe.

Of the roote of Contricioun spryngeth a stalke that bereth braunches and leves of Confessioun, and fruyt of Satisfaccioun.

For which Crist seith in his gospel, "Dooth digne fruyt of Penitence"; for by this fruyt may men knowe this tree,

and nat by the roote that is hyd in the herte of man, ne by the braunches, ne by the leves of Confessioun.

And therefore oure Lord Jhesu Crist seith thus: "By the fruyt of hem shul ye knowen hem."

Of this roote eek spryngeth a seed of grace, the which seed is mooder of sikernes, and this seed is egre and hoot.

The grace of this seed spryngeth of God thurgh remembrance of the day of doom and on the peynes of helle.

Of this matere seith Salomon that in the drede of God man forleteth his synne.

120 The heete of this seed is the love of God and the desiryng of the joye perdurable.

This heete draweth the herte of a man to God and dooth hym haten his synne.

For soothly ther is nothyng that savoureth so wel to a child as the milk of his norice,

ne nothyng is to hym moore abhomynable than thilke milk whan it is medled with oother mete.

Right so the synful man that loveth his synne, hym semeth that it is to him moost sweete of any thyng;

but fro that tyme that he loveth sadly oure Lord Jhesu Crist,

and desireth the lif perdurable, ther nys to him no thyng moore



abhomynable.

For soothly the lawe of God is the love of God; for which David the prophete seith.

"I have loved thy lawe and hated wikkednesse and hate"; he that loveth God kepeth his lawe and his word.

This tree saugh the prophete Daniel in spirit, upon the avysioun of the kyng Nabugodonosor, whan he conseiled hym to do penitence.

Penaunce is the tree of lyf to hem that it receyven,  
and he that holdeth hym in verray penitence is blessed, after the sentence of Salomon.

In this Penitence or Contricioun man shal understonde foure thynges; that is to seyn, what is Contricioun,

and whiche been the causes that moeven a man to Contricioun, and how he sholde be contrit, and what Contricioun availleth to the soule.

Thanne is it thus: that Contricioun is the verray sorwe that a man receyveth in his herte for his synnes,  
with sad purpos to shryve hym, and to do penaunce, and neveremoore to do synne.

130 And this sorwe shal been in this manere, as seith Seint Bernard:

130A "It shal been hevy and grevous, and ful sharp and poynaunt in herte."

First, for man hath agilt his Lord and his Creatour; and moore sharp and poynaunt for he hath agilt hys Fader celestial;

and yet moore sharp and poynaunt for he hath wrathed and agilt hym that boghte hym, that with his precious blood hath delivered us fro the bondes of synne, and fro the crueltee of the devel, and fro the peynes of helle.

The causes that oghte moeve a man to Contricioun been sixe. First a man shal remembre hym of his synnes;

but looke he that thilke remembraunce ne be to hym no delit by no wey, but greet shame and sorwe for his gilt.

For Job seith, "Synful men doon werkes worthy of confusioun."

And therfore seith Ezechie, "I wol remembre me alle the yeres of my lyf in bitternesse of myn herte."

And God seith in the Apocalypse, "Remembreth yow fro whennes that ye been falle";

for biforn that tyme that ye synned, ye were the children of God and lymes of the regne of God;

but for youre synne ye been woxen thral, and foul, and membres of the feend, hate of aungels, sclaundre of hooly chirche,

and foode of the false serpent, perpetueel matere of the fir of helle; and yet moore foul and abhomynable, for ye trespassen so ofte tyme

as dooth the hound that retourneth to eten his spewyng.

And yet be ye fouler for youre longe continuyng in synne and youre synful usage,

for which ye be roten in youre synne, as a beest in his dong.

140 Swiche manere of thoghtes maken a man to have shame of his synne, and no delit, as God seith by the prophete Ezechiel,

"Ye shal remembre yow of youre weyes, and they shuln displese yow."

Soothly synnes been the weyes that leden folk to helle.

The seconde cause that oghte make a man to have desdeyn of synne is this:

that, as seith Seint Peter, "whoso that dooth synne is thral of synne"; and synne put a man in greet thraldom.

And therefore seith the prophete Ezechiel: "I wente sorweful in desdayn of myself."

Certes, wel oghte a man have desdayn of synne and withdrawe hym from that thraldom and vileynye.

And lo, what seith Seneca in this matere? He seith thus: "Though I wiste that neither God ne man ne sholde nevere knowe it, yet wolde I have desdayn for to do synne."

And the same Seneca also seith, "I am born to gretter thynges than to be thral to my body,

or than for to maken of my body a thral."

Ne a fouler thral may no man ne womman maken of his body than for to yeven his body to synne.

Al were it the fouleste cherl or the fouleste womman that lyveth, and leest of value,

yet is he thanne moore foul and moore in servitude.

Evere fro the hyer degree that man falleth, the moore is he thral, and moore to God and to the world vile and abhomynable.

O goode God, wel oghte man have desdayn of synne, sith that thurgh synne ther he was free now is he maked bonde.

150 And therefore seyth Seint Augustyn: "If thou hast desdayn of thy servant,

150A if he agilte or synne, have thou thanne desdayn that thou thyself sholdest do synne."

Tak reward of thy value, that thou ne be to foul to thyself.

Allas, wel oghten they thanne have desdayn to been servauntz and thralles to synne, and soore been ashamed of hemself

that God of his endelees goodnesse hath set hem in heigh estaat, or yeven hem wit, strengthe of body, heele, beautee, prosperitee,

and boghte hem fro the deeth with his herte-blood,

that they so unkyndely, agayns his gentillesse, quiten hym so vileynsly

to slaughtre of hir owene soules.

O goode God, ye wommen that been of so greet beautee, remembreth yow of the proverbe of Salomon. He seith,

"Likneth a fair womman that is a fool of hire body  
lyk to a ryng of gold that were in the groyn of a soughe."

For right as a soughe wroteth in everich ordure, so wroteth she hire beautee in the stynkyng ordure of synne.

The thridde cause that oghte moeve a man to Contricioun is drede of the day of doom and of the horrible peynes of helle.

For as Seint Jerome seith, "At every tyme that me remembreth of the day of doom I quake;

160 for whan I ete or drynke, or what so that I do, evere semeth me that the trompe sowneth in myn ere:

`Riseth up, ye that been dede, and cometh to the juggement."

O goode God, muchel oghte a man to drede swich a juggement, "ther as we shullen been alle,"

as Seint Poul seith, "biforn the seete of oure Lord Jhesu Crist";

whereas he shal make a general congregacioun, whereas no man may been absent.

For certes there availleth noon esoyne ne excusacioun.

And nat oonly that oure defautes shullen be jugged, but eek that alle oure werkes shullen openly be knowe.

And, as seith Seint Bernard, "Ther ne shal no pledynge availle, ne no sleighte; we shullen yeven rekenynge of everich ydel word."

Ther shul we han a juge that may nat been deceyved ne corrupt. And why?

For, certes, alle oure thoghtes been discovered as to hym, ne for preyere ne for meede he shal nat been corrupt.

And therefore seith Salomon, "The wratthe of God ne wol nat spare no wight, for preyere ne for yifte";

and therefore, at the day of doom ther nys noon hope to escape.

Wherfore, as seith Seint Anselm, "Ful greet angwyssh shul the synful folk have at that tyme;

170 ther shal the stierne and wrothe juge sitte above, and under hym the horrible pit of helle open to destroyen hym

170A that moot biknowen his synnes, whiche synnes openly been shewed biforn God and biforn every creature;

and in the left syde mo develes than herte may bithynke, for to harye and drawe the synful soules to the peyne of helle;

and withinne the hertes of folk shal be the bitynge conscience, and withouteforth shal be the world al brennyng.

Whider shal thanne the wrecched synful man flee to hiden hym?

Certes, he may nat hyden hym; he moste come forth and shewen hym."  
 For certes, as seith Seint Jerome, "the erthe shal casten hym out of  
 hym, and the see also,  
 and the eyr also, that shal be ful of thonder-clappes and lightnynges."  
 Now soothly, whoso wel remembreth hym of thise thynges, I gesse  
 that his synne shal nat turne hym into delit,  
 but to greet sorwe for drede of the peyne of helle.  
 And therefore seith Job to God, "Suffre, Lord, that I may a while biwaille  
 and wepe,  
 er I go withoute returnyng to the derke lond, covered with the  
 derknesse of deeth,  
 to the lond of mysese and of derknesse, whereas is the shadwe of  
 deeth,  
 whereas ther is noon ordre or ordinaunce but grisly drede that evere  
 shal laste."

Loo, heere may ye seen that Job preyde respit a while to biwepe and  
 waille his trespas,  
 for soothly oo day of respit is bettre than al the tresor of this world.  
 And forasmuche as a man may acquiten hymself biforn God by  
 penitence in this world, and nat by tresor,  
 therfore sholde he preye to God to yeve hym respit a while to biwepe  
 and biwailen his trespas.

180 For certes, al the sorwe that a man myghte make fro the  
 bigynnyng of the world

180A nys but a litel thyng at regard of the sorwe of helle.

The cause why that Job clepeth helle the "lond of derkness":  
 understondeth that he clepeth it "lond" or erthe, for it is stable and  
 nevere shal faille; "derk,"  
 for he that is in helle hath defaute of light material.  
 For certes, the derke light that shal come out of the fyr that evere shal  
 brenne

shal turne hym al to peyne that is in helle for it sheweth him to the  
 horrible develes that hym tormenten.

"Covered with the derknesse of deeth" -- that is to seyn, that  
 he that is in helle shal have defaute of the sighte of God, for certes the  
 sighte of God is the lyf perdurable.

"The derknesse of deeth" been the synnes that the wrecched man hath  
 doon, whiche that destourben hym to see the face of God,  
 right as dooth a derk clowde bitwixe us and the sonne.

"Lond of misese," by cause that ther been three maneres of defautes,  
 agayn three thynges that folk of this world han in this present lyf; that  
 is to seyn, honours, delices, and riches.

Agayns honour, have they in helle shame and confusioun.

For wel ye woot that men clepen honour the reverence that man doth to man, but in helle is noon honour ne reverence.

For certes, namoore reverence shal be doon there to a kyng than to a knave.

For which God seith by the prophete Jeremye, "Thilke folk that me despisen shul been in despit."

190 Honour is eek cleped greet lordshipe; ther shal no wight serven other, but of harm

190A and torment. Honour is eek cleped greet dignytee and heighnesse, but in helle shul they been al fortroden of develes.

And God seith, "The horrible develes shulle goon and comen upon the hevedes of the dampned folk." And this is for as muche as the hyer that they were in this present lyf, the moore shulle they been abated and defouled in helle.

Agayns the richesse of this world shul they han mysesse of poverté, and this poverté shal been in foure thynges:

In defaute of tresor, of which that David seith, "The riche folk, that embraceden and oneden al hire herte to tresor of this world, shul slepe in the slepyng of deeth; and nothyng ne shal they fynden in hir handes of al hir tresor."

And mooreover the myseyse of helle shal been in defaute of mete and drinke.

For God seith thus by Moyses: "They shul been wasted with hunger, and the briddes of helle shul devouren hem with bitter deeth, and the galle of the dragon shal been hire drynke, and the venym of the dragon hire morsels."

And forther over, hire myseyse shal been in defaute of clothyng, for they shulle be naked in body as of clothyng, save the fyr in which they brenne, and othere filthes; and naked shul they been of soule, as of alle manere vertues, which that is the clothyng of the soule.

Where been thanne the gaye robes, and the softe shetes, and the smale shertes?

Loo, what seith God of hem by the prophete Ysaye: that "under hem shul been strawed motthes, and hire covertures shulle been of wormes of helle."

And forther over, hir myseyse shal been in defaute of freendes.

For he nys nat povre that hath goode freendes; but there is no frend, 200 for neither God ne no creature shal been freend to hem, and everich of hem shal haten oother with deedly hate.

"The sones and the doghtren shullen rebellen agayns fader and

mooder, and kynrede agayns kynrede, and chiden  
and despisen everich of hem oother bothe day and nyght," as God  
seith by the prophete Michias.

And the lovyng children, that whilom loveden so fleshly everich  
oother, wolden everich of hem eten oother if they myghte.

For how sholden they love hem togidre in the peyne of helle,  
whan they hated everich of hem oother in the prosperitee of this lyf?  
For truste wel, hir fleshly love was deedly hate, as seith the prophete  
David: "Whoso that loveth wikkednesse, he hateth his soule."

And whoso hateth his owene soule, certes, he may love noon oother  
wight in no manere.

And therefore, in helle is no solas ne no freendshipe, but evere the  
moore fleshly kynredes that been in helle,  
the moore cursynges, the more chidynges, and the moore deedly hate  
ther is among hem.

And forther over, they shul have defaute of alle manere delices.

For certes, delices been after the appetites of the fyve wittes, as sighte,  
herynge, smellynge, savorynge, and touchyng.

But in helle hir sighte shal be ful of derknesse and of smoke,  
and therefore ful of teeres; and hir herynge ful of waymentyng and of  
gryntyng of teeth, as seith Jhesu Crist.

Hir nose-thirles shullen be ful of stynkyng stynk; and, as seith Ysaye  
the prophete, "hir savoryng shal be ful of bitter galle";

210 and touchyng of al hir body ycovered with "fir

210A that nevere shal quenche and with wormes that nevere shul  
dyen,"

210B as God seith by the mouth of Ysaye.

And for as muche as they shul nat wene that they may dyen for peyne,  
and by hir deeth flee fro peyne,  
that may they understonden by the word of Job, that seith, "ther as is  
the shadwe of deeth."

Certes, a shadwe hath the liknesse of the thyng of which it is shadwe,  
but shadwe is nat the same thyng of which it is shadwe.

Right so fareth the peyne of helle; it is lyk deeth for the horrible  
angwissh, and why?

For it peyneth hem evere, as though they sholde dye anon; but certes,  
they shal nat dye.

For, as seith Seint Gregorie, "To wrecche caytyves shal be deeth  
without deeth, and ende withouten ende, and defaute withoute  
failyng.

For hir deeth shal alwey lyven, and hir ende shal everemo bigynne,  
and hir defaute shal nat faille."

And therfore seith Seint John the Evaungelist, "They shullen folwe deeth,  
and they shul nat fynde hym; and they shul desiren to dye, and deeth  
shal flee fro hem."

And eek Job seith that in helle is noon ordre of rule.

And al be it so that God hath creat alle thynges in right ordre, and no  
thyng withouten ordre,

but alle thynges been ordeyned and nombred; yet, nathelees, they that  
been dampned been nothyng in ordre, ne holden noon ordre,  
for the erthe ne shal bere hem no fruyt.

220 For, as the prophete David seith, "God shal destroie the fruyt of  
the erthe as fro hem;

220A ne water ne shal yeve hem no moisture, ne the eyr no  
refresshyng, ne fyr no light."

For, as seith Seint Basile, "The brennyng of the fyr of this world shal  
God yeven in helle to hem that been dampned,  
but the light and the cleernesse shal be yeven in hevene to his  
children,"

right as the goode man yeveth flessch to his children and bones to his  
houndes.

And for they shullen have noon hope to escape, seith Seint Job atte  
laste that "ther shal horroure and grisly drede dwellen withouten  
ende."

Horroure is alwey drede of harm that is to come, and this drede shal  
ever dwelle in the hertes of hem that been dampned.

And therfore han they lorn al hire hope, for sevene causes.

First, for God, that is hir juge, shal be withouten mercy to hem; and  
they may nat plese hym ne noon of his halwes;  
ne they ne may yeve no thyng for hir raunsoun;  
ne they have no voys to speke to hym; ne they may nat fle fro peyne;  
ne they have no goodnesse in hem, that they mowe shewe to delivere  
hem fro peyne.

And therfore seith Salomon: "The wikked man dyeth, and whan he is  
deed, he shal have noon hope to escape fro peyne."

Whoso thanne wolde wel understande thise peynes and bithynke hym  
weel that he hath deserved thilke peynes for his synnes,  
certes, he sholde have moore talent to siken and to wepe than for to  
syngen and to pleye.

For, as that seith Salomon, "Whoso that hadde the science to knowe  
the peynes

that been establissed and ordeyned for synne, he wolde make sorwe."

230 "Thilke science," as seith Seint Augustyn, "maketh a man to

waymenten in his herte."

The fourthe point that oghte maken a man to have contricion is the sorweful remembraunce of the good that he hath left to doon heere in erthe, and eek the good that he hath lorn.

Soothly, the goode werkes that he hath lost, outhur they been the goode werkes that he wroghte er he fel into deedly synne or elles the goode werkes that he wroghte while he lay in synne.

Soothly, the goode werkes that he dide biforn that he fil in synne been al mortefied and astoned and dulled by the ofte synnyng.

The othere goode werkes, that he wroghte whil he lay in deedly synne, thei been outrely dede, as to the lyf perdurable in hevene.

Thanne thilke goode werkes that been mortefied by ofte synnyng, whiche goode werkes he dide whil he was in charitee, ne mowe nevere quyken agayn withouten verray penitence.

And therof seith God by the mouth of Ezechiel, that

"if the rightful man returne agayn from his rightwisnesse and werke wikkednesse, shal he lyve?"

Nay, for alle the goode werkes that he hath wroght ne shul nevere been in remembraunce, for he shal dyen in his synne.

And upon thilke chapitre seith Seint Gregorie thus: that "we shulle understonde this principally;

that whan we doon deedly synne,

it is for noght thanne to rehercen or drawen into memorie the goode werkes that we han wroght biforn."

240 For certes, in the werkynge of the deedly synne, ther is no trust to no good werk that we han doon biforn;

240A that is to seyn, as for to have therby the lyf perdurable in hevene.

But nathelees, the goode werkes quyken agayn, and comen agayn, and helpen,

and availen to have the lyf perdurable in hevene, whan we han contricioun.

But soothly, the goode werkes that men doon whil they been in deedly synne,

for as muche as they were doon in deedly synne, they may nevere quyke agayn.

For certes, thyng that nevere hadde lyf may nevere quykene; and nathelees, al be it that they ne availle noght to han the lyf perdurable, yet availen they to abregge of the peyne of helle, or elles to geten temporal richesse,

or elles that God wole the rather enlumyne and lightne the herte of the synful man to have repentaunce;



and eek they availen for to usen a man to doon goode werkes, that the feend have the lasse power of his soule.

And thus the curteis Lord Jhesu Crist ne wole that no good werk be lost, for in somewhat it shal availle.

But, for as muche as the goode werkes that men doon whil they been in good lyf been al mortefied by synne folwyng,

and eek sith that alle the goode werkes that men doon whil they been in deedly synne been outrely dede

as for to have the lyf perdurable,

wel may that man that no good werk ne dooth synge thilke newe Frenshe song, "Jay tout perdu mon temps et mon labour."

For certes, synne bireveth a man bothe goodnesse of nature and eek the goodnesse of grace.

250 For soothly, the grace of the Hooly Goost fareth lyk fyr, that may nat been ydel;

250A for fyr fayleth anon as it forleteth his wirkyng, and right so grace fayleth anon as it forleteth his werkyng.

Then leseth the synful man the goodnesse of glorie, that oonly is bihight to goode men that labouren and werken.

Wel may he be sory thanne, that oweth al his lif to God as longe as he hath lyved, and eek as longe

as he shal lyve, that no goodnesse ne hath to paye with his dette to God to whom he oweth al his lyf.

For trust wel, "He shal yeven acountes," as seith Seint Bernard, "of alle the goodes that han be yeven hym in this present lyf, and how he hath hem despended,

[in] so muche that ther shal nat perisse an heer of his heed, ne a moment of an houre

ne shal nat perisse of his tyme, that he ne shal yeve of it a rekenyng."

The fifthe thyng that oghte moeve a man to contricioun

is remembrance of the passioun that oure Lord Jhesu Crist suffred for oure synnes.

For, as seith Seint Bernard, "Whil that I lyve I shal have remembrance of the travailles that oure Lord Crist suffred in prechyng:

his werynesse in travaillyng, his temptaciouns whan he fasted, his longe wakynges

whan he preyde, hise teeres whan that he weep for pitee of good peple,

the wo and the shame and the filthe that men seyden to hym, of the foule spitting that men spitte in his face,

of the buffettes that men yaven hym, of the foule mowes, and of the repreves that men to hym seyden,

of the nayles with whiche he was nayled to the croys,  
and of al the remenant of his passioun that he suffred for my synnes,  
and no thyng for his gilt."

260 And ye shul understonde that in mannes synne is every manere of  
ordre or ordinaunce turned up-so-down.

For it is sooth that God, and resoun, and sensualitee, and the body of  
man been so ordeyned

that everich of thise foure thynges sholde have lordshipe over that  
oother,

as thus: God sholde have lordshipe over resoun, and resoun over  
sensualitee, and sensualitee over the body of man.

But soothly, whan man synneth, al this ordre or ordinaunce is turned  
up-so-down.

And therefore thanne, for as muche as the resoun of man ne wol nat be  
subget ne obeisant to God, that is

his lord by right, therefore leseth it the lordshipe that it sholde have  
over sensualitee, and eek over the body of man.

And why? For sensualitee rebelleth thanne agayns resoun, and by that  
way leseth resoun the lordshipe over sensualitee and over the body.

For right as resoun is rebel to God, right so is bothe sensualitee rebel  
to resoun and the body also.

And certes this disordinaunce and this rebelloun oure Lord Jhesu  
Crist aboghte upon his precious body ful deere, and herkneth in which  
wise.

For as muche thanne as resoun is rebel to God, therefore is man worthy  
to have sorwe and to be deed.

This suffred oure Lord Jhesu Crist for man, after that he hadde be  
bitrayned of his disciple, and distreyned and bounde

so that his blood brast out at every nayl of his handes, as seith Seint  
Augustyn.

270 And forther over, for as muchel as resoun of man ne wol nat  
daunte sensualitee whan it may,

270A therefore is man worthy to have shame; and this suffred oure  
Lord Jhesu Crist for man, whan they spetten in his visage.

And forther over, for as muchel thanne as the caytyf body of man is  
rebel bothe to resoun and to sensualitee,

therefore is it worthy the deeth.

And this suffred oure Lord Jhesu Crist for man upon the croys,  
where as ther was no part of his body free withouten greet peyne and  
bitter passioun.

And al this suffred Jhesu Crist, that nevere forfeited. And therefore  
resonably may be seyde of Jhesu in this manere:

"To muchel am I peyned for the thynges that I nevere deserved, and to muche defouled for shendshipe that man is worthy to have."

And therefore may the synful man wel seye, as seith Seint Bernard,  
 "Acursed be the bitternesse of my synne, for which ther moste be suffred so muchel bitternesse."

For certes, after the diverse [disordinaunces] of oure wikkednesses was the passioun of Jhesu Crist ordeyned in diverse thynges.

As thus: Certes, synful mannes soule is bitraysed of the devel by coveitise of temporeel prosperitee, and scorned by deceite whan he cheseth fleshly delices; and yet is it tormented by impacience of adversitee and bispet by servage and subjeccioun of synne;

and atte laste it is slayn fynally.

For this disordinaunce of synful man was Jhesu Crist first bitraysed, and after that was he bounde, that cam for to unbynden us of synne and peyne.

Thanne was he byscorned, that oonly sholde han been honoured in alle thynges and of alle thynges.

Thanne was his visage, that oghte be desired to be seyn of al mankynde, in which visage aungels desiren to looke, vileynsly bispet.  
 280 Thanne was he scourged, that no thyng hadde agilt; and finally, thanne was he crucified and slayn.

Thanne was acomplished the word of Ysaye, "He was wounded for oure mysdedes and defouled for oure felonies."

Now sith that Jhesu Crist took upon hymself the peyne of alle oure wikkednesses, muchel oghte synful man wepen and biwayle, that for his synnes Goddes sone of hevene sholde al this peyne endure.

The sixte thyng that oghte moeve a man to contricioun is the hope of three thynges; that is to seyn, foryifnesse of synne, and the yifte of grace wel for to do, and the glorie of hevene, with which God shal gerdone man for his goode dedes.

And for as muche as Jhesu Crist yeveth us thise yiftes of his largesse and of his sovereyn bountee,

therfore is he cleped Jhesus Nazareus rex Judeorum.

Jhesus is to seyn "saveour" or "salvacoun," on whom men shul hope to have foryifnesse of synnes, which that is proprely salvacioun of synnes.

And therfore seyde the aungel to Joseph, "Thou shalt clepen his name Jhesus, that shal saven his peple of hir synnes."

And heerof seith Seint Peter: "Ther is noon oother name under hevene that is yeve to any man, by which a man may be saved, but oonly Jhesus."

Nazarenus is as much for to seye as "florisshynge," in which a man shal hope that  
 he that yeveth hym remissioun of synnes shal yeve hym eek grace wel for to do.

For in the flour is hope of fruyt in tyme comynge, and in foryifnesse of synnes hope of grace wel for to do.

"I was atte dore of thyn herte," seith Jhesus, "and cleped for to entre. He that openeth to me shal have foryifnesse of synne.

290 I wol entre into hym by my grace and soupe with hym," by the goode werkes that he shal doon,

290A whiche werkes been the foode of God; "and he shal soupe with me" by the grete joye that I shal yeven hym.

Thus shal man hope, for his werkes of penaunce that God shal yeven hym his regne, as he bihooteth hym in the gospel.

Now shal a man understonde in which manere shal been his contricioun. I seye that it shal been universal and total.

This is to seyn, a man shal be verray repentaunt for alle his synnes that he hath doon

in delit of his thoght, for delit is ful perilous.

For ther been two manere of consentynges: that oon of hem is cleped consentynge of affeccioun,

whan a man is moeved to do synne, and deliteth hym longe for to thynke on that synne;

and his reson aperceyveth it wel that it is synne agayns the lawe of God,

and yet his resoun refreyneth nat his foul delit or talent, though he se wel apertly that it is agayns the reverence of God.

Although his resoun ne consente noght to doon that synne in dede, yet seyn somme doctours that swich delit that dwelleth longe, it is ful perilous, al be it nevere so lite.

And also a man sholde sorwe namely for al that evere he hath desired agayn the lawe of God

with parfit consentynge of his resoun, for therof is no doute, that it is deedly synne in consentynge.

For certes, ther is no deedly synne that it nas first in mannes thought and after that in his delit, and so forth into consentynge and into dede.

Wherefore I seye that many men ne repenten hem nevere of swiche thoghtes and delites,

ne nevere shryven hem of it, but oonly of the dede of grete synnes outward.

Wherefore I seye that swiche wikked delites and wikked thoghtes been subtile bigileres of hem that shullen be dampned.

300 Moreover, man oghte to sorwe for his wikkede wordes as wel as for his wikkede dedes.

300A For certes, the repentaunce of a synguler synne, and nat repente of alle his othere synnes,

300B or elles repenten hym of alle his othere synnes and nat of a synguler synne, may nat availle.

For certes, God almyghty is al good, and therfore he foryeveth al or elles right noght.

And heerof seith Seint Augustyn,

"I wot certeynly that God is enemy to everich synnere." And how thanne?

He that observeth o synne, shal he have foryifnesse of the remenaunt of his othere synnes? Nay.

And forther over, contricioun sholde be wonder sorweful and angwissous; and therfore yeveth hym God pleyntyly his mercy; and therfore, whan my soule was angwissous withinne me, I hadde remembrance of God that my preyere myghte come to hym.

Forther over, contricioun moste be continueel, and that man have stedefast purpos to shriven hym, and for to amenden hym of his lyf.

For soothly, whil contricioun lasteth, man may evere have hope of foryifnesse;

and of this comth hate of synne, that destroyeth synne, bothe in himself and eek in oother folk at his power.

For which seith David: "Ye that loven God, hateth wikkednesse."

For trusteth wel, to love God is for to love that he loveth, and hate that he hateth.

The laste thyng that men shal understonde in contricioun is this: wherof avayleth contricioun. I seye that somtyme contricioun delivereth a man fro synne;

of which that David seith, "I seye," quod David (that is to seyn, I purposed fermely) "to shryve me, and thow, Lord, relessedest my synne."

310 And right so as contricion availleth noght withouten sad purpos of shrifte,

310A if man have oportunittee, right so litel worth is shrifte or satisfaccioun withouten contricioun.

And mooreover contricion destroyeth the prisoun of helle, and maketh wayk and fieble alle the strengthes of the develes, and restoreth the yiftes of the Hooly Goost and of alle goode vertues; and it clenseth the soule of synne, and delivereth the soule fro the peyne of helle, and fro the compaignye of the devel, and fro the servage of synne, and restoreth it to alle goodes

espirituels, and to the compaignye and comunyoun of hooly chirche.  
And forther over, it maketh hym that whilom was sone of ire to be  
sone of grace;

and alle thise thynges been preved by hooly writ.

And therefore, he that wolde sette his entente to thise thynges, he were  
ful wys;

for soothly he ne sholde nat thanne in al his lyf have corage to synne,  
but yeven his body and al his herte to the service of Jhesu Crist, and  
therof doon hym hommage.

For soothly oure sweete Lord Jhesu Crist hath spared us so debonairly  
in oure folies that

if he ne hadde pitee of mannes soule, a sory song we myghten alle  
synge.

The seconde partie of Penitence is Confessioun, that is signe of  
contricioun.

Now shul ye understonde what is Confessioun,  
and wheither it oghte nedes be doon or noon, and whiche thynges  
been covenable to verray Confessioun.

First shaltow understonde that Confessioun is verray shewynge of  
synnes to the preest.

This is to seyn "verray," for he moste confessen hym of alle the  
condiciouns that bilongen to his synne, as ferforth as he kan.

320 Al moot be seyde, and no thyng excused ne hyd ne forwrapped, and  
nought avaunte thee of thy goode werkes.

And forther over, it is necessarie to understonde whennes that synnes  
sprynge, and how they encreessen, and whiche they been.

Of the spryngynge of synnes seith Seint Paul in this wise: that "Right  
as by a man synne entred first into this world,  
and thurgh that synne deeth, right so thilke deeth entred into alle men  
that synneden."

And this man was Adam, by whom synne entred into this world, whan  
he brak the comaundementz of God.

And therefore, he that first was so myghty that he sholde nat have  
dyed, bicam swich oon that he moste nedes dye,  
wheither he wolde or noon, and al his progenye in this world, that in  
thilke man synneden.

Looke that in th' estaat of innocence, whan Adam and Eve naked  
weren in Paradys, and nothyng ne hadden shame of hir nakednesse,  
how that the serpent, that was moost wily of alle othere beestes that  
God hadde maked, seyde to the womman,

"Why comaunded God to yow ye sholde nat eten of every tree in  
Paradys?"

The womman answerde: "Of the fruyt," quod she, "of the trees in  
Paradys we feden us,  
but soothly, of the fruyt of the tree that is in the myddel of Paradys,  
God forbad us for to ete,  
ne nat touchen it, lest per aventure we sholde dyen."

The serpent seyde to the womman, "Nay, nay, ye shul nat dyen of  
deeth; for sothe, God woot that  
what day that ye eten therof, youre eyen shul opene and ye shul been  
as goddes, knowynge good and harm."

The womman thanne saugh that the tree was good to feedyng, and fair  
to the eyen, and delitable to the sighte.

She took of the fruyt of the tree, and eet it, and yaf to hire housbonde,  
and he eet, and anon the eyen of hem bothe opened.

330 And whan that they knewe that they were naked, they sowed of  
fige leves a maner of breches to hiden hire membres.

There may ye seen that deedly synne hath, first, suggestion of the  
feend, as sheweth heere by the naddre;

and afterward, the delit of the flessch, as sheweth heere by Eve; and  
after that, the consentynge of resoun, as sheweth heere by Adam.

For trust wel, though so were that the feend tempted Eve -- that is to  
seyn, the flessch --

and the flessch hadde delit in the beautee of the fruyt defended, yet  
certes, til that resoun -- that is to seyn, Adam --

consented to the etynge of the fruyt, yet stood he in th' estaat of  
innocence.

Of thilke Adam tooke we thilke synne original,

for of hym flesschly descended be we alle, and engendred of vile and  
corrupt mateere.

And whan the soule is put in oure body, right anon is contract original  
synne;

and that that was erst but oonly peyne of concupiscence is afterward  
bothe peyne and synne.

And therefore be we alle born sones of wratthe and of dampnacioun  
perdurable, if it nere baptesme that we receyven,

which bynymeth us the culpe. But for sothe, the peyne dwelleth with  
us, as to temptacioun, which peyne highte concupiscence.

And this concupiscence, whan it is wrongfully disposed or ordeyned  
in man, it maketh hym coveite, by coveitise of flessch,

flesschly synne, by sighte of his eyen as to erthely thynges, and eek  
coveitise of hynesse by pride of herte.

Now, as for to speken of the firste coveitise, that is concupiscence,  
after the lawe of oure membres

that weren lawefulliche ymaked and by rightful juggement of God,  
 I seye, forasmuche as man is nat obeisaunt to God, that is his lord,  
 therfore is the flessch to hym disobeisaunt thurgh concupiscence,  
 which yet is cleped norrissyng of synne and occasioun of synne.

Therefore, al the while that a man hath in hym the peyne of  
 concupiscence,

it is impossible but he be tempted somtime and moeved in his flessch  
 to synne.

340 And this thyng may nat faille as longe as he lyveth.

340A it may wel wexe fieble and faille by vertu of baptesme and by the  
 grace of God thurgh penitence,

but fully ne shal it nevere quenche, that he ne shal som tyme be  
 moeved in hymself,

but if he were al refreyded by siknesse, or by malefice of sorcerie, or  
 colde drynkes.

For lo, what seith Seint Paul: "The flessch coveiteth agayn the spirit,  
 and the spirit agayn the flessch;

they been so contrarie and so stryven that a man may nat alway doon  
 as he wolde."

The same Seint Paul, after his grete penaunce in water and in lond --  
 in water by nyght and by day in greet peril and in greet peyne;  
 in lond, in famyne and thirst, in coold and cloothlees, and ones stoned  
 almoost to the deeth

-- yet seyde he, "Allas, I caytyf man! Who shal delivere me fro the  
 prisoun of my caytyf body?"

And Seint Jerome, whan he longe tyme hadde woned in desert, where  
 as he hadde no compaignye but of wilde beestes,

where as he ne hadde no mete but herbes, and water to his drynke, ne  
 no bed but the naked erthe,

for which his flessch was blak as an Ethiopeen for heete, and ny  
 destroyed for coold,

yet seyde he that "the brennyng of lecherie boyled in al his body."

Wherfore I woot wel sykerly that they been deceyved that seyn that  
 they ne be nat tempted in hir body.

Witnesse on Seint Jame the Apostel, that seith that "every wight is  
 tempted in his owene concupiscence"; that is to seyn,

that everich of us hath matere and occasioun to be tempted of the  
 norissyng of synne that is in his body.

And therfore seith Seint John the Evaungelist, "If that we seyn that we  
 be withoute synne,

we deceyve us selve, and trouthe is nat in us."

350 Now shal ye understonde in what manere that synne wexeth or



encreesseth in man.

350A The firste thyng is thilke norissynge of synne of which I spak biforn, thilke fleshly concupiscence.

And after that comth the subjeccioun of the devel --  
this is to seyn, the develes bely, with which he bloweth in man the fir of fleshly concupiscence.

And after that, a man bithynketh hym wheither he wol doon or no thilke thing to which he is tempted.

And thanne, if that a man withstonde and weyve the firste entisyng of his flessch and of the feend,  
thanne is it no synne; and if it so be that he do nat so, thanne feeleth he anon a flambe of delit.

And thanne is it good to be war and kepen hym wel,  
or elles he wol falle anon into consentynge of synne; and thanne wol he do it, if he may have tyme and place.

And of this matere seith Moyses by the devel in this manere: "The feend seith,

`I wole chace and pursue the man by wikked suggestioun, and I wole hente hym by moevynge or stiryng of synne.

And I wol departe my prise or my praye by deliberacioun, and my lust shal been acompliced in delit.

I wol drawe my swerd in consentyng." --

for certes, right as a swerd departeth a thyng in two peces, right so consentynge departeth God fro man --

"and thanne wol I sleen hym with myn hand in dede of synne'; thus seith the feend."

For certes, thanne is a man al deed in soule.

And thus is synne acompliced by temptacioun, by delit, and by consentynge; and thanne is the synne cleped actueel.

For sothe, synne is in two maneres; outhere it is venial or deedly synne.

Soothly, whan man loveth any creature moore than Jhesu Crist oure Creatour, thanne is it deedly synne.

And venial synne is it, if man love Jhesu Crist lasse than hym oghte.

For sothe, the dede of this venial synne is ful perilous,  
for it amenuseth the love that men sholde han to God moore and moore.

360 And therefore, if a man charge hymself with manye swiche venial synnes,

360A certes, but if so be that he somtyme discharge hym of hem by shrifte,

360B they mowe ful lightly amenuse in hym al the love that he hath to Jhesu Crist;

and in this wise skippeth venial into deedly synne. For certes, the  
 moore that a man chargeth his soule with venial synnes,  
 the moore is he enclyned to fallen into deedly synne.  
 And therefore lat us nat be negligent to deschargen us of venial synnes.  
 For the proverbe seith that "Manye smale maken a greet."  
 And herkne this ensample. A greet wawe of the see comth som tyme  
 with so greet a violence that it drencheth the ship.  
 And the same harm doon som tyme the smale dropes of water, that  
 entren thurgh a litel crevace into the thurrok,  
 and in the botme of the ship, if men be so negligent that they ne  
 discharge hem nat by tyme.  
 And therefore, although ther be a difference bitwixe thise two causes of  
 drenchyng, algates the ship is dreynt.  
 Right so fareth it somtyme of deedly synne, and of anoyouse veniale  
 synnes,  
 whan they multiplie in a man so greetly that [the love of] thilke  
 worldly thynges that he loveth,  
 thurgh whiche he synneth venyally, is as greet in his herte as the love  
 of God, or moore.  
 And therefore, the love of every thyng that is nat biset in God, ne doon  
 principally for Goddes sake,  
 although that a man love it lasse than God, yet is it venial synne;  
 and deedly synne whan the love of any thyng weyeth in the herte of  
 man as muchel as the love of God, or moore.  
 "Deedly synne," as seith Seint Augustyn, "is whan a man turneth his  
 herte fro God,  
 which that is verray sovereyn bountee, that may nat chaunge, and  
 yeveth his herte to thyng that may chaunge and flitte."  
 And certes, that is every thyng save God of hevene.  
 For sooth is that if a man yeve his love, the which that he oweth al to  
 God with al his herte, unto a creature,  
 certes, as muche of his love as he yeveth to thilke creature, so muche  
 he bireveth fro God;  
 370 and therefore dooth he synne. For he that is dettour to God ne  
 yeldeth nat to God al his dette;  
 370A that is to seyn, al the love of his herte.  
 Now sith man understondeth generally which is venial synne, thanne  
 is it covenable to tellen specially of synnes whiche that many  
 a man peraventure ne demeth hem nat synnes, and ne shryveth him  
 nat of the same thynges, and yet natheless they been synnes  
 soothly, as thise clerkes writen; this is to seyn, that at every tyme that  
 a man eteth or drynketh

moore than suffiseth to the sustenaunce of his body, in certein he dooth synne.

And eek whan he speketh moore than it nedeth, it is synne. Eke whan he herkneth nat benignely the compleint of the povre;

eke whan he is in heele of body and wol nat faste whan other folk faste, withouten cause resonable;

eke whan he slepeth moore than nedeth, or whan he comth by thilke enchesoun to late to chirche, or to othere werkes of charite;

eke whan he useth his wyf withouten sovereyn desir of engendrure to the honour of God

or for the entente to yelde to his wyf the dette of his body;

eke whan he wol nat visite the sike and the prisoner, if he may;

eke if he love wyf or child, or oother worldly thyng, moore than resoun requireth.

eke if he flatere or blandise moore than hym oghte for any necessitee;

eke if he amenuse or withdrawe the almesse of the povre;

eke if he apparailleth his mete moore deliciously than nede is, or ete it to hastily by likerousnesse;

eke if he tale vanytees at chirche or at Goddes service, or that he be a talker

of ydel wordes of folye or of vileynye, for he shal yelden acountes of it at the day of doom;

eke whan he biheteth or assureth to do thynges that he may nat parfourne;

eke whan that he by lightnesse or folie mysseyeth or scorneth his neighebor;

380 eke whan he hath any wikked suspeciouun of thyng ther he ne woot of it no soothfastnesse:

thise thynges, and mo withoute nombre, been synnes, as seith Seint Augustyn.

Now shal men understonde that, al be it so that noon erthely man may eschue alle venial synnes,

yet may he refreyne hym by the brennyng love that he hath to oure Lord Jhesu Crist,

and by preyeres and confessioun and othere goode werkes, so that it shal but litel greve.

For, as seith Seint Augustyn, "If a man love God in swich manere that al that evere he dooth

is in the love of God and for the love of God verrailly, for he brenneth in the love of God,

looke how mucche that a drope of water that falleth in a fourneys ful of fyr anoyeth

or greveth, so muche anyeth a venial synne unto a man that is parfit in the love of Jhesu Crist."

Men may also refreyne venial synne by receyvynge worthily of the precious body of Jhesu Crist;

by receyvynge eek of hooly water, by almesdede, by general confessioun of Confiteor at masse and at complyn, and by blessynge of bisshopes and of preestes, and by oothere goode werkes.

Now is it bihovely thyng to telle whiche been the sevene deedly synnes,

this is to seyn, chieftaynes of synnes. Alle they renne in o lees, but in diverse manneres.

Now been they cleped chieftaynes, for as muche as they been chief and spryng of alle othere synnes.

Of the roote of thise sevene synnes, thanne, is Pride the general roote of alle harmes.

For of this roote spryngen certein braunches, as Ire, Envye, Accidie or Slewthe, Avarice or Coveitise (to commune understandynge), Glotonye, and Lecherye.

And everich of thise chief synnes hath his braunches and his twigges, as shal be declared in hire chapitres folwyng.

390 And thogh so be that no man kan outrely telle the nombre of the twigges and of the harmes that cometh of Pride,

390A yet wol I shewe a partie of hem, as ye shul understonde.

Ther is inobedience, avauntynge, ypocrisie, despit, arrogance, inpudence, swellynge of herte, insolence, elacioun, inpacience, strif, contumacie, presumpcioun, irreverence, pertinacie, veyneglorie, and many another twig that I kan nat declare.

Inobedient is he that disobeyeth for despit to the comandementz of God, and to his sovereigns, and to his goostly fader.

Avauntour is he that bosteth of the harm or of the bountee that he hath doon.

Ypocrite is he that hideth to shewe hym swich as he is and sheweth hym swich as he noght is.

Despitous is he that hath desdeyn of his neighebor --

that is to seyn, of his evene-Cristene -- or hath despit to doon that hym oghte to do.

Arrogant is he that thynketh that he hath thilke bountees in hym that he hath noght,

or weneth that he sholde have hem by his desertes, or elles he demeth that he be that he nys nat.

Inpudent is he that for his pride hath no shame of his synnes.

Swellynge of herte is whan a man rejoyseth hym of harm that he hath doon.

Insolent is he that despiseth in his juggement alle othere folk, as to regard of his value, and of his konnyng, and of his spekyng, and of his beryng.

400 Elacioun is whan he ne may neither suffre to have maister ne felawe.

Inpacienc is he that wol nat been ytaught ne undernome of his vice, and by strif werreieth trouthe wityngly, and deffendeth his folye.

Contumax is he that thurgh his indignacioun is agayns everich auctoritee or power of hem that been his sovereyns.

Presumpcioun is whan a man undertaketh an emprise that hym oghte nat do, or elles that he may nat do;

and this is called surquidrie. Irreverence is whan men do nat honour there as hem oghte to doon, and waiten to be revered.

Pertinacie is whan man deffendeth his folie and trusteth to muchel to his owene wit.

Veyneglorie is for to have pompe and delit in his temporeel hynesse, and glorifie hym in this worldly estaat.

Janglynge is whan a man speketh to mucche biforn folk, and clappeth as a mille, and taketh no keep what he seith.

And yet is ther a privee spece of Pride that waiteth first to be salewed er he wole salewe, al be he lasse worth than that oother is, peraventure;

and eek he waiteth or desireth to sitte, or elles to goon above hym in the wey,

or kisse pax, or been encensed, or goon to offryng biforn his neighebor,

and swiche semblable thynges, agayns his duetee, peraventure, but that he hath his herte

and his entente in swich a proud desir to be magnified and honoured biforn the peple.

Now been ther two maneres of Pride: that oon of hem is withinne the herte of man, and that oother is withoute.

410 Of whiche, soothly, thise forseyde thynges, and mo than I have seyde, apertenen to Pride that is in the herte of man;

410A and that othere spesces of Pride been withoute.

But natheles that oon of thise spesces of Pride is signe of that oother, right as the gaye leefsel atte taverne is signe of the wyn that is in the celer.

And this is in manye thynges: as in speche and contenaunce, and in outrageous array of clothyng.

For certes, if ther ne hadde be no synne in clothyng,  
 Crist wolde nat so soone have noted and spoken of the clothyng of  
 thilke riche man in the gospel.

And, as seith Seint Gregorie, that "precious clothyng is cowpable for  
 the derthe of it, and for his softenesse,  
 and for his strangenesse and degisynesse, and for the superfluitee, or  
 for the inordinat scantnesse of it."

Allas, may man nat seen, as in oure dayes, the synful costlewe array of  
 clothyng,

and namely in to muche superfluite, or elles in to desordinat  
 scantnesse?

As to the first synne, that is in superfluitee of clothyng, which that  
 maketh it so deere, to harm of the peple;

nat oonly the cost of embrowdyng, the degise endentyng or  
 barryng, owndyng, palyng, wyndyng or bendyng, and semblable  
 wast of clooth in vanitee,

but ther is also costlewe furring in hir gownes, so muche  
 pownsonyng of chisels to maken holes, so muche daggyng of sheres;  
 forth-with the superfluitee in lengthe of the forseide gownes, trailyng  
 in the dong and in the mire, on horse and eek on foote,

as wel of man as of womman, that al thilke trailyng is verrailly as in  
 effect wasted, consumed, thredbare, and roten with dong, e  
 rather than it is yeven to the povre, to greet damage of the forseide  
 povre folk.

420 And that in sondry wise; this is to seyn that the moore that clooth  
 is wasted,

420A the moore moot it coste to the peple for the scarsnesse.

And forther over, if so be that they wolde yeven swich pownsoned and  
 dagged clothyng to the povre folk,

it is nat convenient to were for hire estaat, ne suffisant to beete hire  
 necessitee, to kepe hem fro the distemperance of the firmament.

Upon that oother side, to speken of the horrible disordinat scantnesse  
 of clothyng, as been thise kuttid sloppes, or haynselyns,  
 that thurgh hire shortnesse ne covere nat the shameful membres of  
 man, to wikked entente.

Allas, somme of hem shewen the boce of hir shap, and the horrible  
 swollen membres,

that semeth lik the maladie of hirnia, in the wrappyng of hir hoses;  
 and eek the buttokes of hem faren as it were the hyndre part of a she-  
 ape in the fulle of the moone.

And mooreover, the wrecched swollen membres that they shewe  
 thurgh disgisyng,

in departynge of hire hoses in whit and reed, semeth that half hir shameful privee membres weren flayne.

And if so be that they departen hire hoses in othere colours, as is whit and blak, or whit and blew, or blak and reed, and so forth, thanne semeth it, as by variaunce of colour, that half the partie of hire privee membres were corrupt

by the fir of Seint Antony, or by cancre, or by oother swich meschaunce.

Of the hyndre part of hir buttokes, it is ful horrible for to see.

For certes, in that partie of hir body ther as they purgen hir stynkyng ordure,

that foule partie shewe they to the peple prowdly in despit of honestitee,

which honestitee that Jhesu Crist and his freendes observede to shewen in hir lyve.

430 Now, as of the outrageous array of wommen, God woot that though the visages of somme of hem seme ful chaast and debonaire, 430A yet notifie they in hire array of atyr likerousnesse and pride.

I sey nat that honestitee in clothyng of man or womman is uncovenable, but certes the superfluitee or disordinat scantitee of clothyng is reprevable.

Also the synne of aornement or of apparaille is in thynges that apertenen to ridynge,

as in to manye delicat horses that been hoolden for delit, that been so faire, fatte, and costlewe;

and also in many a vicious knave that is sustened by cause of hem; and in to curious harneys,

as in sadeles, in crouperes, peytrels, and bridles covered with precious clothyng, and riche barres and plates of gold and of silver.

For which God seith by Zakarie the prophete, "I wol confounde the rideres of swiche horses."

This folk taken litel reward of the ridynge of Goddes sone of hevene, and of his harneys whan he rood upon the asse,

and ne hadde noon oother harneys but the povre clothes of his disciples;

ne we ne rede nat that evere he rood on oother beest.

I speke this for the synne of superfluitee, and nat for resonable honestitee, whan reson it requireth.

And forther over, certes, pride is greetly notified in holdynge of greet meynnee, whan they be of litel profit or of right no profit,

and namely whan that meynnee is felonous and damageous to the peple by hardynesse of heigh lordshipe or by wey of offices.

For certes, swiche lordes sellen thanne hir lordshipe to the devel of helle, whanne they sustenen the wikkednesse of hir meynee.

440 Or elles, whan this folk of lowe degree, as thilke that holden hostelries, sustenen the thefte of hire hostilers,

440A and that is in many manere of deceites.

Thilke manere of folk been the flyes that folwen the hony,  
or elles the houndes that folwen the careyne. Swich forseide folk stranglen spiritually hir lordshipes;

for which thus seith David the prophete:

"Wikked deeth moote come upon thilke lordshipes, and God yeve that they moote descenden into helle al down,  
for in hire houses been iniquitees and shrewednesses and nat God of hevene."

And certes, but if they doon amendement, right as God yaf his benysoun to [Laban] by the service of Jacob,  
and to [Pharao] by the service of Joseph, right so God wol yeve his malisoun

to swiche lordshipes as sustenen the wikkednesse of hir servauntz, but they come to amendement.

Pride of the table appeereth eek ful ofte; for certes, riche men been cleped to festes, and povre folk been put away and rebuked.

Also in excesse of diverse metes and drynkes, and namely swich manere bake-metes and dissh-metes, brennyng of wilde fir and peynted and castelled with papir, and semblable wast, so that it is abusioun for to thyne.

And eek in to greet preciousnesse of vessel and curiositee of mynstralcie, by whiche a man is stired the moore to delices of luxurie, if so be that he sette his herte the lasse upon oure Lord Jhesu Crist, certeyn it is a synne;

and certainly the delices myghte been so grete in this caas that man myghte lightly falle by hem into deedly synne.

The especes that sourden of Pride, soothly whan they sourden of malice ymagined, avised, and forncast,  
or elles of usage, been deedly synnes, it is no doute.

And whan they sourden by freletee unavysed, and sodeynly withdrawen

ayeyn, al been they grevouse synnes, I gesse that they ne been nat deedly.

450 Now myghte men axe wherof that Pride sourdeth and spryngeth, and I seye,

450A somtyme it spryngeth of the goodes of nature, and somtyme of the goodes of fortune, and somtyme of the goodes of grace.



Certes, the goodes of nature stonden outhur in goodes of body or in goodes of soule.

Certes, goodes of body been heele of body, strengthe, delivernesse, beautee, gentrice, franchise.

Goodes of nature of the soule been good wit, sharp understondynge, subtil engyn, vertu natureel, good memorie.

Goodes of fortune been riches, hyghe degrees of lordshipes, preisynges of the peple.

Goodes of grace been science, power to suffre spiritueel travaille, benigntee, vertuous contemplacioun, withstondynge of temptacioun, and semblable thynges.

Of whiche forseide goodes, certes it is a ful greet folye a man to priden hym in any of hem alle.

Now as for to speken of goodes of nature,

God woot that somtyme we han hem in nature as muche to oure damage as to oure profit.

As for to speken of heele of body, certes it passeth ful lightly, and eek it is ful ofte enchesoun of the siknesse of oure soule.

For, God woot, the flessch is a ful greet enemy to the soule, and therefore, the moore that the body is hool, the moore be we in peril to falle.

Eke for to pride hym in his strengthe of body, it is an heigh folye.

For certes, the flessch coveiteth agayn the spirit, and ay the moore strong that the flessch is, the sorier may the soule be.

460 And over al this, strengthe of body and worldly hardynesse causeth ful ofte many a man to peril and meschaunce.

Eek for to pride hym of his gentrie is ful greet folie; for ofte tyme the gentrie of the body binymeth the gentrie of the soule; and eek we ben alle of o fader and of o mooder; and alle we been of o nature, roten and corrupt, bothe riche and povre.

For sothe, o manere gentrie is for to preise, that apparilleth mannes corage with vertues and moralitees, and maketh hym Cristes child.

For truste wel that over what man that synne hath maistrie, he is a verray cherl to synne.

Now been ther generale signes of gentillesse, as eschewynge of vice and ribaudye and servage of synne, in word, in werk, and contenance, and usynge vertu, curteisye, and clenness, and to be liberal -- that is to seyn, large by mesure, for thilke that passeth mesure is folie and synne.

Another is to remembre hym of bountee that he of oother folk hath receyved.

Another is to be benigne to his goode subgetis; wherfore seith Senek,  
 "Ther is no thing moore covenable to a man of heigh estaat than  
 debonairetee and pitee.

And therefore thise flyes that men clepen bees, whan they maken hir  
 kyng,

they chesen oon that hath no prikke wherwith he may styng."

Another is, a man to have a noble herte and a diligent to attayne to  
 heighe vertuouse thynges.

470 Now certes, a man to pride hym in the goodes of grace is eek an  
 outrageous folie, for thilke

470A yifte of grace that sholde have turned hym to goodnesse and to  
 medicine, turneth hym to venym and to confusioun, as seith Seint  
 Gregorie.

Certes also, whoso prideth hym in the goodes of fortune, he is a ful  
 greet fool;

for somtyme is a man a greet lord by the morwe, that is a caytyf and a  
 wrecche er it be nyght;

and somtyme the richesse of a man is cause of his deth;

somtyme the delices of a man ben cause of the grevous maladye  
 thurgh which he dyeth.

Certes, the commendacioun of the peple is somtyme ful fals and ful  
 brotel for to triste; this day they preyse, tomorwe they blame.

God woot, desir to have commendacioun eek of the peple hath caused  
 deeth to many a bisy man.

Now sith that so is that ye han understonde what is Pride,

and whiche been the spes of it, and whennes Pride sourdeth and  
 spryngeth,

now shul ye understonde which is the remedie agayns the synne of  
 Pride; and that is humylitee, or mekenesse.

That is a vertu thurgh which a man hath verray knoweleche of  
 hymself, and holdeth of hymself no pris ne deyntee,

as in regard of his desertes, considerynge evere his freletee.

Now been ther three maneres of humylitee: as humylitee in herte;  
 another humylitee is in his mouth; the thridde in his werkes.

The humilitee in herte is in foure maneres. That oon is whan a man  
 holdeth hymself as noght worth biforn God of hevene.

Another is whan he ne despiseth noon oother man.

480 The thridde is whan he rekketh nat, though men holde hym noght  
 worth. The ferthe is whan he nys nat sory of his humiliacioun.

Also the humilitee of mouth is in foure thynges:

in attempree speche, and in humblesse of speche, and whan he  
 biknoweth with his owene mouth

that he is swich as hym thynketh that he is in his herte.

Another is whan he preiseth the bountee of another man, and nothyng therof amenuseth.

Humilitee eek in werkes is in foure maneres. The firste is whan he putteth othere men biforn hym.

The seconde is to chese the loweste place over al. The thridde is gladly to assente to good conseil.

The ferthe is to stonde gladly to the award of his sovereigns, or of hym that is in hyer degree. Certein, this is a greet werk of humylitee.

After Pride wol I speken of the foule synne of Envye, which that is, as by the word of the Philosophre,

"sorwe of oother mannes prosperitee"; and after the word of Seint Augustyn, it is "Sorwe

of oother mennes wele, and joye of othere mennes harm."

This foule synne is platly agayns the Hooly Goost. Al be it so that every synne is agayns the Hooly Goost,

yet nathelees, for as muche as bountee aperteneth proprely to the Hooly Goost, and Envye comth proprely of malice,

therefore it is proprely agayn the bountee of the Hooly Goost.

Now hath malice two spes; that is to seyn, hardnesse of herte in wikkednesse,

or elles the flessch of man is so blynd that he considereth nat that he is in synne

or rekketh nat that he is in synne, which is the hardnesse of the devel.

That oother spece of malice is whan a man werreyeth trouthe, whan he woot that it is trouthe;

and eek whan he werreyeth the grace that God hath yeve to his neighebor; and al this is by Envye.

Certes, thanne is Envye the worste synne that is. For soothly, alle othere synnes been somtyme oonly agayns o special vertu,

but certes Envye is agayns alle vertues and agayns alle goodnesses.

For it is sory of alle the bountees of his neighebor, and in this manere it is divers from alle othere synnes.

490 For wel unnethe is ther any synne that it ne hath som delit in itself,

490A save oonly Envye, that evere hath in itself angwissh and sorwe.

The spes of Envye been thise. Ther is first, sorwe of oother mannes goodnesse and of his prosperitee;

and prosperitee is kyndely matere of joye; thanne is Envye a synne agayns kynde.

The seconde spece of Envye is joye of oother mannes harm,

and that is proprely lyk to the devel, that evere rejoyseth hym of mannes harm.

Of thise two speses comth bakbityng; and this synne of bakbityng or detraccion hath certeine speses, as thus:

Som man preiseth his neighebor by a wikked entente,  
for he maketh alwey a wikked knotte atte laste ende. Alwey he maketh a "but" atte laste ende,

that is digne of moore blame than worth is al the preisynge.

The seconde spece is that if a man be good and dooth or seith a thing to good entente,

the bakbitere wol turne al thilke goodnesse up-so-down to his shrewed entente.

The thridde is to amenuse the bountee of his neighebor.

The fourthe spece of bakbityng is this: that if men speke goodnesse of a man, thanne wol the bakbitere seyn,

"Parfey, swich a man is yet bet than he," in dispreisynge of hym that men preise.

The fifte spece is this: for to consente gladly and herkne gladly to the harm that men speke of oother folk.

This synne is ful greet and ay encreesseth after the wikked entente of the bakbitere.

After bakbityng cometh gruchchyng or murmuracioun; and somtyme it spryngeth of inpacience agayns God, and somtyme agayns man.

500 Agayn God it is whan a man gruccheth agayn the peyne of helle, or agayns poverté, or los of catel,

500A or agayn reyn or tempest; or elles gruccheth that shrewes han prosperitee, or elles for that goode men han adversitee.

And alle thise thynges sholde man suffre paciently, for they comen by the rightful juggement and ordinaunce of God.

Somtyme comth gruchching of avarice;

as Judas gruchched agayns the Magdaleyne whan she enoynted the heved of oure Lord Jhesu Crist with hir precious oynement.

This manere murmure is swich as whan man gruccheth of goodnesse that hymself dooth, or that oother folk doon of hir owene catel.

Somtyme comth murmure of Pride, as whan Simon the Pharisee gruchched agayn the Magdaleyne

whan she approached to Jhesu Crist and weep at his feet for hire synnes.

And somtyme gruchchyng sourdeth of Envyé, whan men discovereth a mannes harm that was pryvee or

bereth hym on hond thyng that is fals.

Murmure eek is ofte amonges servauntz that gruchchen whan hir

sovereyns bidden hem doon leweful thynges;  
and forasmuche as they dar nat openly withseye the comaundementz  
of hir sovereigns,  
yet wol they seyn harm, and grucche, and murmure prively for verray  
despit;  
whiche wordes men clepen the develes Pater noster, though so be that  
the devel ne hadde nevere Pater noster,  
but that lewed folk yeven it swich a name.

Somtyme it comth of Ire or prive hate that norisseth rancour in herte,  
as afterward I shal declare.

510 Thanne cometh eek bitterness of herte, thurgh which bitterness  
every good dede of his neighebor semeth to hym bitter and unsavory.

Thanne cometh discord that unbyndeth alle manere of freendshipe.

Thanne comth scornynge of his neighebor, al do he never so weel.

Thanne comth accusynge, as whan man seketh occasioun to anoyen  
his neighebor,

which that is lyk the craft of the devel, that waiteth bothe nyght and  
day to accusen us alle.

Thanne comth malignitee, thurgh which a man anoyeth his neighebor  
prively, if he may;

and if he noght may, algate his wikked wil ne shal nat wante,  
as for to brennen his hous pryvely, or empoysone or sleen his beestes,  
and semblable thynges.

Now wol I speke of remedie agayns this foule synne of Envye. First is  
the love of God principal

and lovyng of his neighebor as hymself, for soothly that oon ne may  
nat been withoute that oother.

And truste wel that in the name of thy neighebor thou shalt  
understonde the name of thy brother;

for certes alle we have o fader fleshly and o mooder -- that is to seyn,  
Adam and Eve --

and eek o fader espiritueel, and that is God of hevene.

Thy neighebor artow holden for to love and wilne hym alle goodnesse;  
and therfore seith God,

"Love thy neighebor as thyselfe" -- that is to seyn, to salvacioun bothe  
of lyf and of soule.

And mooreover thou shalt love hym in word, and in benigne  
amonestyng and chastisyng,

and conforten hym in his anoyes, and preye for hym with al thyn  
herte.

And in dede thou shalt love hym in swich wise that thou shalt doon to  
hym in charitee

as thou woldest that it were doon to thyn owene persone.

520 And therefore thou ne shalt doon hym no damage in wikked word,  
ne harm in his body,

520A ne in his catel, ne in his soule, by entissyng of wikked ensample.

Thou shalt nat desiren his wyf ne none of his thynges. Understood  
eek that in the name of neighebor is comprehended his enemy.

Certes, man shal loven his enemy, by the comandement of God; and  
soothly thy freend shaltow love in God.

I seye, thyn enemy shaltow love for Goddes sake, by his  
commandement.

For if it were reson that man sholde haten his enemy,

for sothe God nolde nat receyven us to his love that been his enemys.

Agayns three manere of wronges that his enemy dooth to hym, he shal  
doon three thynges, as thus:

Agayns hate and rancour of herte, he shal love hym in herte.

Agayns chidyng and wikkede wordes, he shal preye for his enemy.

Agayns the wikked dede of his enemy, he shal doon hym bountee.

For Crist seith, "Loveth youre enemys, and preyeth for hem that speke  
yow harm, and eek for hem that yow chacen and pursewen,  
and dooth bountee to hem that yow haten." Loo, thus comaundeth us  
oure Lord Jhesu Crist to do to oure enemys.

For soothly, nature dryveth us to loven oure freendes, and parfey,  
oure enemys han moore nede to love than oure freendes;  
and they that moore nede have, certes to hem shal men doon  
goodnesse;

and certes, in thilke dede have we remembraunce of the love of Jhesu  
Crist that deyde for his enemys.

And in as mucche as thilke love is the moore grevous to parfourne, so  
mucche is the moore gret the merite;

and therefore the lovyng of oure enemy hath confounded the venym  
of the devel.

530 For right as the devel is disconfited by humylitee, right so is he  
wounded to the deeth by love of oure enemy.

Certes, thanne is love the medicine that casteth out the venym of  
Envye fro mannes herte.

The spes of this paas shullen be moore largely declared in hir  
chapitres folwyng.

After Envye wol I discryven the synne of Ire. For soothly, whoso hath  
envye upon his neighebor,

anon he wole comunly fynde hym a matere of wratthe, in word or in  
dede, agayns hym to whom he hath envye.

And as wel comth Ire of Pride as of Envye, for soothly he that is proud

or envyous is lightly wrooth.

This synne of Ire, after the discryvyng of Seint Augustyn, is wikked wil to been avenged by word or by dede.

Ire, after the Philosophre, is the fervent blood of man yquyked in his herte,

thurgh which he wole harm to hym that he hateth.

For certes, the herte of man, by eschawfyng and moevyng of his blood, wexeth

so trouble that he is out of alle juggement of resoun.

But ye shal understonde that Ire is in two maneres; that oon of hem is good, and that oother is wikked.

The goode Ire is by jalousie of goodnesse,

thurgh which a man is wrooth with wikkednesse and agayns wikkednesse; and therfore seith a wys man that Ire is bet than pley.

540 This Ire is with debonairetee, and it is wrooth withouten bitternesse; nat wrooth agayns the man,

540A but wrooth with the mysdede of the man, as seith the prophete David, "Irascimini et nolite peccare."

Now understondeth that wikked Ire is in two maneres;

that is to seyn, sodeyn Ire or hastif Ire, withouten avisement and consentynge of resoun.

The menyng and the sens of this is that the resoun of a man ne consente nat to thilke sodeyn Ire, and thanne is it venial.

Another Ire is ful wikked, that comth of felonie of herte avysed and cast biforn, with wikked wil to do vengeance,

and therto his resoun consenteth. and soothly this is deedly synne.

This Ire is so displesant to God that it troubleth his hous and chaceth the Hooly Goost out of mannes soule,

and wasteth and destroyeth the liknesse of God -- that is to seyn, the vertu that is in mannes soule --

and put in hym the liknesse of the devel, and bynymeth the man fro God, that is his rightful lord.

This Ire is a ful greet plesaunce to the devel,

for it is the develes fourneys, that is eschawfed with the fir of helle.

For certes, right so as fir is moore mighty to destroyen erthely thynges than any oother element,

right so Ire is myghty to destroyen alle spiritueel thynges.

Looke how that fir of smale gleedes that been almost dede under asshen wollen quike agayn whan they been touched with brymstoon;

right so Ire wol everemo quyken agayn whan it is touched by the pride that is covered in mannes herte.

For certes, fir ne may nat comen out of no thyng, but if it were first in  
the same thyng natureelly,  
as fir is drawen out of flyntes with steel.

550 And right so as pride is ofte tyme matere of Ire, right so is rancour  
norice and kepere of Ire.

Ther is a maner tree, as seith Seint Ysidre, that whan men maken fir of  
thilke tree

and covere the coles of it with asshen, soothly the fir of it wol lasten al  
a yeer or moore.

And right so fareth it of rancour; whan it is ones conceyved in the  
hertes of som men,

certein, it wol lasten peraventure from oon Estre day unto another  
Estre day, and moore.

But certes, thilke man is ful fer fro the mercy of God al thilke while.

In this forseide develes fourneys ther forgen three shrewes: Pride,  
that ay bloweth and encreesseth the fir by chidyng and wikked  
wordes;

thanne stant Envy and holdeth the hote iren upon the herte of man  
with a peire of longe toonges of long rancour;

and thanne stant the synne of Contumelie, or strif and cheeste, and  
batereth and forgeth by vileyns reprevynges.

Certes, this cursed synne anoyeth bothe to the man hymself and eek to  
his neighebor.

For soothly, almoost al the harm that any man dooth to his neighebor  
comth of wratthe.

For certes, outrageous wratthe dooth al that evere the devel hym  
comaundeth, for he ne spareth neither Crist ne his sweete Mooder.

And in his outrageous anger and ire -- alas, alas! --

ful many oon at that tyme feeled in his herte ful wikkedly, bothe of  
Crist and eek of alle his halwes.

560 Is nat this a cursed vice? Yis, certes. Alas! It bynymeth from man  
his wit and his resoun,

560A and al his debonaire lif espiritueel that sholde kepen his soule.

Certes, it bynymeth eek Goddes due lordshipe, and that is mannes  
soule and the love of his neighebores.

It stryveth eek alday agayn trouthe. It reveth hym the quiete of his  
herte and subverteth his soule.

Of Ire comen thise stynkyng engendrures: First, hate, that is oold  
wratthe;

discord, thurgh which a man forsaketh his olde freend that he hath  
loved ful longe;

and thanne cometh werre and every manere of wrong that man dooth



to his neighebor, in body or in catel.

Of this cursed synne of Ire cometh eek manslaughter. And understonde wel that homycide, that is manslaughter, is in diverse wise.

Som manere of homycide is spiritueel, and som is bodily.

Spiritueel manslaughter is in sixe thynges. First by hate, as seith Seint John: "He that hateth his brother is an homycide."

Homycide is eek by bakbitynge, of whiche bakbiteres seith Salomon that "they han two swerdes with whiche they sleen hire neighebores."

For soothly, as wikke is to bynyme his good name as his lyf.

Homycide is eek in yevynge of wikked conseil by fraude, as for to yeven conseil to areysen wrongful custumes and taillages.

Of whiche seith Salomon, "Leon rorynge and bere hongry been like to the cruel lordshipes" in withholdynge or abreggyng of the shepe (or the hyre), or of the wages of servauntz, or elles in usure, or in withdrawynge of the almesse of povre folk.

For which the wise man seith, "Fedeth hym that almoost dyeth for hunger"; for soothly, but if thou feede hym, thou sleest hym; and alle thise been deedly synnes.

570 Bodily manslaughter is, whan thou sleest him with thy tonge in oother manere,

570A as whan thou comandest to sleen a man or elles yevest hym conseil to sleen a man.

Manslaughter in dede is in foure maneres.

That oon is by lawe, right as a justice dampneth hym that is coupable to the deeth.

But lat the justice be war that he do it rightfully, and that he do it nat for delit to spille blood but for kepyng of rightwisnesse.

Another homycide is that is doon for necessitee, as whan o man sleeth another in his defendaunt

and that he ne may noon ootherwise escape from his owene deeth.

But certainly if he may escape withouten slaughtre of his adversarie, and sleeth hym,

he dooth synne and he shal bere penance as for deedly synne.

Eek if a man, by caas or aventure, shete an arwe,

or caste a stoon with which he sleeth a man, he is homycide.

Eek if a womman by negligence overlyeth hire child in hir slepyng, it is homycide and deedly synne.

Eek whan man destourbeth concepcioun of a child, and maketh a womman outhere bareyne

by drynkyng venenouse herbes thurgh which she may nat conceyve,

or sleeth a child by drynkes wilfully, or elles putteth certeine material  
 thynges in hire secree places to slee the child,  
 or elles dooth unkyndely synne, by which man or womman shedeth  
 hire nature in manere or in place  
 ther as a child may nat be conceived, or elles if a woman have  
 conceyved,  
 and hurt hirself and sleeth the child, yet is it homycide.

What seye we eek of wommen that mordren hir children for drede of  
 worldly shame? Certes, an horrible homicide.

Homycide is eek if a man approacheth to a womman by desir of  
 lecherie, thurgh which the child is perissed,  
 or elles smyteth a womman wityngly, thurgh which she leseth hir  
 child. Alle thise been homycides and horrible deedly synnes.

580 Yet comen ther of Ire manye mo synnes, as wel in word as in  
 thoght and in dede;

580A as he that arretteth upon God, or blameth God of thyng of which  
 he is hymself guilty,

580B or despiseth God and alle his halwes, as doon thise cursede  
 hasardours in diverse contrees.

This cursed synne doon they, whan they feelen in hir herte ful  
 wikkedly of God and of his halwes.

Also whan they treten unreverently the sacrement of the auter, thilke  
 synne is so greet that unnethe may it been releessed,  
 but that the mercy of God passeth alle his werkes; it is so greet, and he  
 so benigne.

Thanne comth of Ire attrayng. Whan a man is sharply amonested in  
 his shrifte to forleten his synne,

thanne wole he be angry, and answeren hokerly and angrily, and  
 deffenden or excusen his synne by unstedfastnesse of his flesh;  
 or elles he dide it for to holde compaignye with his felawes; or elles,  
 he seith, the feend enticed hym;

or elles he dide it for his youthe; or elles his compleccioun is so  
 corageous that he may nat forbere;

or elles it is his destinee, as he seith, unto a certein  
 age; or elles, he seith, it cometh hym of gentillesse of his auncestres;  
 and semblable thynges.

Alle thise manere of folk so wrappen hem in hir synnes that they ne  
 wol nat delivere hemself.

For soothly, no wight that excuseth hym wilfully of his synne  
 may nat been delivered of his synne til that he mekely biknoweth his  
 synne.

After this, thanne cometh sweryng, that is expres agayn the

comandement of God; and this bifalleth ofte of anger and of Ire.

God seith, "Thow shalt nat take the name of thy Lord God in veyn or in ydel."

Also oure Lord Jhesu Crist seith, by the word of Seint Mathew,  
"Ne wol ye nat swere in alle manere; neither by hevene, for it is  
Goddess trone;

ne by erthe, for it is the bench of his feet; ne by Jerusalem, for it is the  
citee of a greet kyng;

ne by thyn heed, for thou mayst nat make an heer whit ne blak.

590 But seyeth by youre word `ye, ye,' and `nay, nay'; and what that is  
moore, it is of yvel" -- thus seith Crist.

For Cristes sake, ne swereth nat so synfully in dismembrynge of Crist  
by soule, herte, bones, and body.

For certes, it semeth that ye thynke that the cursede Jewes ne  
dismembred nat ynough the precieuse persone of Crist,  
but ye dismembere hym moore.

And if so be that the lawe compelle yow to swere, thanne rule yow  
after the lawe of God in youre swerying,

as seith Jeremye, quarto capitulo: Thou shalt kepe three condicions:  
thou shalt swere "in trouthe, in doom, and in rightwisnesse."

This is to seyn, thou shalt swere sooth, for every lesynge is agayns  
Crist;

for Crist is verray trouthe. And thynk wel this: that "every greet  
swerere, nat compelled lawefully to

swere, the wounde shal nat departe from his hous" whil he useth  
swich unleveful swerying.

Thou shalt sweren eek in doom, whan thou art constreyned by thy  
domesman to witnessen the trouthe.

Eek thou shalt nat swere for envye, ne for favour, ne for meede, but  
for rightwisnesse, for declaracioun of it,

to the worshipec of God and helpyng of thyne evene-Cristene.

And therefore every man that taketh Goddess name in ydel, or falsly  
swereth with his mouth,

or elles taketh on hym the name of Crist, to be called a Cristen man  
and lyveth agayns Cristes lyvyng and his techyng, alle they taken  
Goddess name in ydel.

Looke eek what Seint Peter seith, Actuum quarto, Non est aliud nomen  
sub celo, etc., "Ther nys noon oother name," seith Seint Peter,

"under hevene yeven to men, in which they mowe be saved"; that is to  
seyn, but the name of Jhesu Crist.

Take kep eek how precious is the name of Crist, as seith Seint Paul, ad  
Philipenses secundo, In nomine Jhesu, etc.,

"That in the name of Jhesu every knee of hevenely creatures, or  
 erthely, or of helle sholde  
 bowe," for it is so heigh and so worshipful that the cursede feend in  
 helle sholde tremblen to heeren it ynempned.

Thanne semeth it that men that sweren so horribly by his blessed  
 name,

that they despise it moore booldely than dide the cursede Jewes or  
 elles the devel, that trembleth whan he heereth his name.

600 Now certes, sith that sweryng, but if it be lawefully doon, is so  
 heighly deffended, mucche worse is forsweryng falsly, and yet nedelee.

What seye we eek of hem that deliten hem in sweryng,  
 and holden it a gentrie or a manly dede to swere grete othes?

And what of hem that of verray usage ne cesse nat to swere grete  
 othes, al be the cause nat worth a straw?

Certes, this is horrible synne.

Swerynge sodeynly withoute avysement is eek a synne.

But lat us go now to thilke horrible sweryng of adjuracioun and  
 conjuracioun,

as doon thise false enchauntours or nigromanciens in bacyns ful of  
 water,

or in a bright swerd, in a cercle, or in a fir, or in a shulder-boon of a  
 sheep.

I kan nat seye but that they doon cursedly and dampnably agayns  
 Crist and al the feith of hooly chirche.

What seye we of hem that bileeven on divynailes, as by flight or by  
 noyse of briddes, or of beestes,

or by sort, by nigromancie, by dremes, by chirkyng of dores or  
 crakkyng of houses, by gnawynge of rattes, and swich manere  
 wrecchednesse?

Certes, al this thyng is deffended by God and by hooly chirche.

For which they been acursed, til they come to amendement, that on  
 swich filthe setten hire bileeve.

Charmes for woundes or maladie of men or of beestes, if they taken  
 any effect,

it may be peraventure that God suffreth it, for folk sholden yeve the  
 moore feith and reverence to his name.

Now wol I speken of lesynges, which generally is fals signyficaunce of  
 word, in entente to deceyven his evene-Cristene.

Som lesynge is of which ther comth noon advantage to no wight;  
 and som lesynge turneth to the ese and profit of o man, and to disese  
 and damage of another man.

610 Another lesynge is for to saven his lyf or his catel. Another

610A lesynge comth of delit for to lye, in which delit they wol forge a long tale

610B and peynten it with alle circumstaunces, where al the ground of the tale is fals.

Som lesynge comth for he wole sustene his word; and som lesynge comth of reccheleesnesse withouten avisement; and semblable thynges.

Lat us now touche the vice of flaterynge, which ne comth nat gladly but for drede or for coveitise.

Flaterye is generally wrongful preisyng. Flatereres been the develes norices, that norissen his children with milk of losengerie.

For sothe, Salomon seith that "Flaterie is wors than detraccioun." For somtyme detraccion maketh an hauteyn man be the moore humble, for he dredeth detraccion; but certes flaterye, that maketh a man to enhauncen his herte and his contenance.

Flatereres been the develes enchauntours; for they make a man to wene of hymself be lyk that he nys nat lyk.

They been lyk to Judas that bitraysen a man to sellen hym to his enemy; that is to the devel.

Flatereres been the develes chapelleyns, that syngen evere Placebo.

I rekene flaterie in the vices of Ire,

for ofte tyme if o man be wrooth with another, thanne wole he flatere som wight to sustene hym in his querele.

Speke we now of swich cursynge as comth of irous herte. Malisoun generally may be seyde every maner power of harm.

Swich cursynge bireveth man fro the regne of God, as seith Seint Paul. 620 And ofte tyme swich cursynge wrongfully retorneth agayn to hym that curseth, as a bryd that retorneth agayn to his owene nest.

And over alle thyng men oghten eschewe to cursen hire children, and yeven to the devel hire engendrure,

as ferforth as in hem is. Certes, it is greet peril and greet synne.

Lat us thanne speken of chidyng and reproche, whiche been ful grete woundes in mannes herte,

for they unsowen the semes of freendshipe in mannes herte.

For certes, unnethes may a man pleyntly been accorded with hym that hath hym openly revyled and reprevd and disclaundred.

This is a ful grisly synne, as Crist seith in the gospel.

And taak kep now, that he that repreveth his neighebor, outhere he repreveth hym by som harm of peyne

that he hath on his body, as "mesel," "croked harlot," or by som synne that he dooth.

Now if he repreveth hym by harm of peyne, thanne turneth the repreveth

to Jhesu Crist,

for peyne is sent by the rightwys sonde of God, and by his suffrance,  
be it meselrie, or maheym, or maladie.

And if he repreve hym uncharitably of synne, as "thou holour," "thou  
dronkelewe harlot," and so forth,  
thanne aperteneth that to the rejoysynge of the devel, that evere hath  
joye that men doon synne.

And certes, chidyng may nat come but out of a vileyns herte.  
For after the habundance of the herte speketh the mouth ful ofte.  
And ye shul understonde that looke, by any wey,  
whan any man shal chastise another, that he be war from chidyng or  
reprevyng.

For trewely, but he be war, he may ful lightly quyken the fir of angre  
and of wratthe,  
which that he sholde quenche, and peraventure sleeth hym which that  
he myghte chastise with benignitee.

For as seith Salomon, "The amyable tonge is the tree of lyf" -- that is to  
seyn, of lyf espiritueel --

and soothly, a deslavee tonge sleeth the spirites of hym that repreveth  
and eek of hym that is repreveth.

630 Loo, what seith Seint Augustyn: "Ther is nothyng so lyk the  
develes child as he that ofte chideth."

630A Seint Paul seith eek, "The servant of God bihoveth nat to chide."  
And how that chidyng be a vileyns thyng bitwixe alle manere folk,  
yet is it certes moost uncovenable bitwixe a man and his wyf,  
for there is nevere reste. And therefore seith Salomon, "An  
hous that is uncovered and droppynge and a chidyng wyf been lyke."  
A man that is in a droppynge hous in manye places,  
though he eschewe the droppynge in o place, it droppeth on hym in  
another place.

So fareth it by a chidyng wyf; but she chide hym in o place, she wol  
chide hym in another.

And therefore, "Bette is a morsel of breed with joye than an hous ful of  
delices with chidyng," seith Salomon.

Seint Paul seith, "O ye wommen, be ye subgetes to youre housbondes  
as bihoveth in God,  
and ye men loveth youre wyves." Ad Colossenses tertio.

Afterward speke we of scornynge, which is a wikked synne, and  
namely whan he scorneth a man for his goode werkes.

For certes, swiche scorneres faren lyk the foule  
tode, that may nat endure to smelle the soote savour of the vyne  
whanne it florisseth.

Thise scorneres been partyng felawes with the devel; for they han  
joye whan the devel wynneth and sorwe whan he leseth.

They been adversaries of Jhesu Crist, for they haten that he loveth --  
that is to seyn, salvacioun of soule.

Speke we now of wikked conseil, for he that wikked conseil yeveth is a  
traytour.

For he deceyveth hym that trusteth in hym, ut Achitofel ad  
Absolonem. But nathelees, yet is his wikked conseil first agayn  
hymself.

640 For, as seith the wise man, "Every fals lyvyng hath this propertee  
in hymself, that

640A he that wole anoye another man, he anoyeth first hymself."

And men shul understonde that man shal nat taken his conseil of fals  
folk, ne of angry folk, or grevous folk,

ne of folk that loven specially to muchel hir owene profit, ne to muche  
worldly folk, namely in conseilyng of soules.

Now comth the synne of hem that sowen and maken discord amonges  
folk, which is a synne that Crist hateth outrely.

And no wonder is, for he deyde for to make concord.

And moore shame do they to Crist than dide they that hym crucifiede,  
for God loveth bettre that freendshipe be amonges folk, than he dide  
his owene body,

the which that he yaf for unitee. Therefore been they likned to the  
devel, that evere is aboute to maken discord.

Now comth the synne of double tonge, swiche as speken faire byforn  
folk and wikkedly bihynde, or elles they maken semblant

as though they speke of good entencioun, or elles in game and pley,  
and yet they speke of wikked entente.

Now comth biwreying of conseil, thurgh which a man is defamed;  
certes, unnethe may he restoore the damage.

Now comth manace, that is an open folye, for he that ofte manaceth,  
he threteth moore than he may parfourne ful ofte tyme.

Now cometh ydel wordes, that is withouten profit of hym that speketh  
tho wordes,

and eek of hym that herkneth tho wordes. Or elles ydel wordes been  
tho that been nedeles or withouten entente of natureel profit.

And al be it that ydel wordes been somtyme venial synne,  
yet sholde men douten hem, for we shul yeve rekenyng of hem bfore  
God.

Now comth janglyng, that may nat been withoute synne. And, as seith  
Salomon, "It is a sygne of apert folye."

650 And therefore a philosophre seyde, whan men axed hym how that

men sholde plese the peple,

650A and he answerde, "Do manye goode werkes, and spek fewe jangles."

After this comth the synne of japeres, that been the develes apes, for they maken folk to laughe at hire japerie as folk doon at the gawdes of an ape.

Swiche japeres deffendeth Seint Paul.

Looke how that vertuouse wordes and hooly conforten hem that travaillen in the service of Crist, right so conforten the vileyns wordes and knakkes of japeris hem that travaillen in the service of the devel.

Thise been the synnes that comen of the tonge, that comen of Ire and of othere synnes mo.

The remedie agayns Ire is a vertu that men clepen mansuetude, that is debonairetee;

and eek another vertu, that men callen pacience or suffrance.

Debonairetee withdraweth and refreyneth the stirynges and the moevynges of mannes corage in his herte,

in swich manere that they ne skippe nat out by angre ne by ire.

Suffrance suffreth swetely alle the anoyaunces and the wronges that men doon to man outward.

Seint Jerome seith thus of debonairetee, that "it dooth noon harm to no wight ne seith.

ne for noon harm that men doon or seyn, he ne eschawfeth nat agayns his resoun."

This vertu somtyme comth of nature, for, as seith the Philosophre,

"A man is a quyk thyng, by nature debonaire and treftable to goodnesse;

but whan debonairetee is enformed of grace, thanne is it the moore worth."

Pacience, that is another remedie agayns Ire, is a vertu that suffreth swetely every mannes goodnesse,

and is nat wrooth for noon harm that is doon to hym.

660 The Philosophre seith that pacience is thilke vertu that suffreth debonairely alle the outrages of adversitee and every wikked word.

This vertu maketh a man lyk to God, and maketh hym Goddes owene deere child, as seith Crist.

This vertu disconfiteth thyn enemy. And therfore seith the wise man, "If thou wolt venquysse thyn enemy, lerne to suffre."

And thou shalt understonde that man suffreth foure manere of grevances in outward thynges,

agayns the whiche foure he moot have foure manere of paciencies.



The firste grevance is of wikkede wordes. Thilke suffrede Jhesu Crist  
 withouten grucchyng, ful paciently,  
 whan the Jewes despised and repreved hym ful ofte.  
 Suffre thou therfore paciently; for the wise man seith, "If thou stryve  
 with a fool,  
 though the fool be wrooth or though he laughe, algate thou shalt have  
 no reste."

That oother grevance outward is to have damage of thy catel.  
 Theragayns suffred Crist ful paciently, whan  
 he was despoyled of al that he hadde in this lyf, and that nas but his  
 clothes.

The thridde grevance is a man to have harm in his body. That suffred  
 Crist ful paciently in al his passioun.

The fourthe grevance is in outrageous labour in werkes.  
 Wherefore I seye that folk that maken hir servantz to travaillen to  
 grevously or out of tyme, as on haly dayes,  
 soothly they do greet synne.

Heer-agayns suffred Crist ful paciently and taughte us pacience, whan  
 he baar upon his blissed shulder

the croys upon which he sholde suffren despitous deeth.

Heere may men lerne to be pacient, for certes noght oonly Cristen  
 men been pacient for love of Jhesu Crist  
 and for gerdoun of the blisful lyf that is perdurable, but  
 certes, the olde payens that nevere were Cristene commendeden and  
 useden the vertu of pacience.

670 A philosophre upon a tyme, that wolde have beten his disciple for  
 his grete trespas,

670A for which he was greetly amoeved, and broghte a yerde to  
 scoure with the child;

and whan this child saugh the yerde, he seyde to his maister,  
 "What thenke ye do?" "I wol bete thee," quod the maister, "for thy  
 correccioun."

"For sothe," quod the child, "ye oghten first correcte youreself,  
 that han lost al youre pacience for the gilt of a child."

"For sothe," quod the maister al wepynge, "thow seyst sooth. Have  
 thow the yerde, my deere sone, and correcte me for myn inpacience."

Of pacience comth obedience, thurgh which a man is obedient to Crist  
 and to alle hem

to whiche he oghte to been obedient in Crist.

And understond wel that obedience is parfit

whan that a man dooth gladly and hastily, with good herte entierly, al  
 that he sholde do.

Obedience generally is to parfourne the doctrine of God and of his  
sovereyns, to whiche hym oghte to ben obeisaunt in alle rightwisnesse.  
After the synne of Envye and of Ire, now wol I speken of the synne of  
Accidie.

For Envye blyndeth the herte of a man, and Ire troubleth a man, and  
Accidie maketh hym hevy, thoughtful, and wraw.

Envye and Ire maken bitternesse in herte, which bitternesse is  
mooder of Accidie, and bynymeth hym the love of alle goodnesse.

Thanne is Accidie the angwissh of troubled herte; and Seint Augustyn  
seith, "It is anoy of goodnesse and joye of harm."

Certes, this is a dampnable synne, for it dooth wrong to Jhesu Crist,  
in as muche as it bynymeth the service that men oghte doon to Crist  
with alle diligence, as seith Salomon.

680 But Accidie dooth no swich diligence. He dooth alle thyng with  
anoy, and with wrawnesse, slaknesse, and excusacioun, and with  
ydelnesse, and unlust;

680A for which the book seith, "Acursed be he that dooth the service  
of God negligently."

Thanne is Accidie enemy to everich estaat of man, for certes the estaat  
of man is in three maneres.

Outher it is th' estaat of innocence, as was th' estaat of Adam biforn  
that he fil into synne,  
in which estaat he was holden to wirche as in heriynge and  
adowrynge of God.

Another estaat is the estaat of synful men, in which estaat men been  
holden to laboure in preiynge to God  
for amendement of hire synnes, and that he wole graunte hem to  
arysen out of hir synnes.

Another estaat is th' estaat of grace, in which estaat he is holden to  
werkes of penitence.

And certes, to alle thise thynges is Accidie enemy and contrarie, for he  
loveth no bisynesse at al.

Now certes this foule synne Accidie is eek a ful greet enemy to the  
liflode of the body,  
for it ne hath no purveaunce agayn temporeel necessitee, for it  
forsleweth and forsluggeth and destroyeth alle goodes temporeles by  
recchelesnesse.

The fourthe thyng is that Accidie is lyk hem that been in the peyne of  
helle, by cause of hir slouthe  
and of hire hevynesse, for they that been dampned been so bounde  
that they ne may neither wel do ne wel thynke.

Of Accidie comth first that a man is anoyed and encombred for to

doon any goodnesse,  
and maketh that God hath abhomynacion of swich Accidie, as seith  
Seint John.

Now comth Slouthe, that wol nat suffre noon hardnesse ne no  
penaunce. For soothly, Slouthe is so tendre and so delicaat,  
as seith Salomon, that he wol nat suffre noon hardnesse ne penaunce,  
and therefore he shendeth al that he dooth.

Agayns this roten-herted synne of Accidie and Slouthe sholde men  
exercise himself to doon goode werkes, and manly  
and vertuously cacchen corage wel to doon, thynkyng that oure Lord  
Jhesu Crist quiteth every good dede, be it never so lite.

690 Usage of labour is a greet thyng, for it maketh, as seith Seint  
Bernard, the laborer to have stronge armes and harde synwes;  
690A and slouthe maketh hem feble and tendre.

Thanne comth drede to bigynne to werke anye goode werkes. For  
certes, he that is enclyned to synne,  
hym thynketh it is so greet an emprise for to undertake to doon  
werkes of goodnesse,  
and casteth in his herte that the circumstaunces of goodnesse been so  
grevouse  
and so chargeant for to suffre, that he dar nat undertake to do  
werkes of goodnesse, as seith Seint Gregorie.

Now comth wanhope, that is despeir of the mercy of God, that comth  
somytyme of to muche outrageous sorwe,  
and somtyme of to muche drede, ymaginyng that he hath doon so  
muche synne that it wol nat availlen hym,  
though he wolde repenten hym and forsake synne,  
thurgh which despeir or drede he abaundoneth al his herte to every  
maner synne, as seith Seint Augustin.

Which dampnable synne, if that it continue unto his ende, it is cleped  
synnyng in the Hooly Goost.

This horrible synne is so perilous that he that is despeired,  
ther nys no felonye ne no synne that he douteth for to do, as shewed  
wel by Judas.

Certes, aboven alle synnes thanne is this synne moost displesant to  
Crist, and moost adversarie.

Soothly, he that despeireth hym is lyk the coward champioun  
recreant, that seith "creant" withoute nede.

Allas, alas, nedeles is he recreant and nedeles despeired.

Certes, the mercy of God is evere redy to the penitent, and is aboven  
alle his werkes.

700 Allas, kan a man nat bithynke hym on the gospel of Seint Luc, 15,

700A where as Crist seith that "as wel shal ther be joye in hevene upon  
a synful man that dooth penitence,

700B as upon nynty and nyne rightful men that neden no penitence."

Looke forther, in the same gospel, the joye and the feeste of the goode  
man that hadde lost his sone,

whan his sone with repentaunce was retourned to his fader.

Kan they nat remembren hem eek that, as seith Seint Luc, 23, how that  
the theef that was hanged bisyde Jhesu Crist seyde,

"Lord, remembre of me, whan thou comest into thy regn."?

"For sothe," seyde Crist, "I seye to thee, to-day shaltow been with me  
in paradys."

Certes, ther is noon so horrible synne of man

that it ne may in his lyf be destroyed by penitence, thurgh vertu of the  
passion and of the deeth of Crist.

Allas, what nedeth man thanne to been despeired, sith that his mercy  
so redy is and large? Axe and have.

Thanne cometh sompnolence, that is sloggy slombrynge, which  
maketh a man be hevy and dul in body and in soule,  
and this synne comth of Slouthe.

And certes, the tyme that, by wey of resoun, men sholde nat slepe, that  
is by the morwe,

but if ther were cause resonable.

For soothly, the morwe tyde is moost covenable a man to seye his  
preyeres, and for to thyngen on God,

and for to honoure God, and to yeven almesse to the povre that first  
cometh in the name of Crist.

Lo, what seith Salomon: "Whoso wolde by the morwe awaken and  
seke me, he shal fynde."

710 Thanne cometh negligence, or recchelesnesse, that rekketh of no  
thyng.

710A And how that ignoraunce be mooder of alle harm, certes,  
negligence is the norice.

Negligence ne dooth no fors, whan he shal doon a thyng, wheither he  
do it weel or baddely.

Of the remedie of thise two synnes, as seith the wise man,  
that "He that dredeth God, he spareth nat to doon that him oghte  
doon."

And he that loveth God, he wol doon diligence to plesse God by his  
werkes

and abaundone hymself, with al his myght, wel for to doon.

Thanne comth ydelnesse, that is the yate of alle harmes. An ydel man  
is lyk to a place that hath no walles;

the develes may entre on every syde, or sheten at hym at discovert, by temptacion on every syde.

This ydelnesse is the thurrok of alle wikked and vileyns thoghtes, and of alle jangles, trufles, and of alle ordure.

Certes, the hevene is yeven to hem that wol labouren, and nat to ydel folk. Eek David seith that

"they ne been nat in the labour of men, ne they shul nat been whipped with men"

-- that is to seyn, in purgatorie.

Certes, thanne semeth it they shul be tormented with the devel in helle, but if they doon penitence.

Thanne comth the synne that men clepen tarditas, as whan a man is to laterede or tariynge er he wole turne to God,

and certes that is a greet folie. He is lyk to hym that falleth in the dych and wol nat arise.

And this vice comth of a fals hope, that he thynketh that he shal lyve longe; but that hope faileth ful ofte.

720 Thanne comth lachesse; that is he that whan he biginneth any good werk

720A anon he shal forleten it and stynten, as doon they that han any wight to governe

720B and ne taken of hym namoore kep anon as they fynden any contrarie or any anoy.

Thise been the newe sheepherdes that leten hir sheep wityngly go renne

to the wolf that is in the breres, or do no fors of hir owene governaunce.

Of this comth poverte and destruccioun, bothe of spiritueel and temporeel thynges.

Thanne comth a manere cooldnesse, that freseth al the herte of a man.

Thanne comth undevocioun, thurgh which a man is so blent, as seith Seint Bernard,

and hath swich langour in soule that he may neither rede ne singe in hooly chirche, ne heere ne thynke of no devocioun,

ne travaille with his handes in no good werk, that it nys hym unsavory and al apalled.

Thanne wexeth he slough and slombry, and soone wol be wrooth, and soone is enclyned to hate and to envye.

Thanne comth the synne of worldly sorwe, swich as is cleped tristicia, that sleeth man, as seith Seint Paul.

For certes, swich sorwe werketh to the deeth of the soule and of the body also;

for therof comth that a man is anoyed of his owene lif.

Wherfore swich sorwe shorteth ful ofte the lif of man, er that his tyme be come by wey of kynde.

Agayns this horrible synne of Accidie, and the branches of the same, ther is a vertu that is called fortitudo or strengthe, that is an affeccioun thurgh which a man despiseth anoyouse thinges.

This vertu is so myghty and so vigerous that it dar withstonde myghtily and wisely kepen hymself fro perils that been wikked, and wrastle agayn the assautes of the devel.

730 For it enhaunceth and enforceth the soule, right as Accidie abateth it and maketh it fieble.

730A For this fortitudo may endure by long suffraunce the travailles that been covenable.

This vertu hath manye speces; and the firste is cleped magnanimitee, that is to seyn, greet corage.

For certes, ther bihoveth greet corage agains Accidie, lest that it ne swolwe the soule by the synne of sorwe, or destroye it by wanhope.

This vertu maketh folk to undertake harde thynges and grevouse thynges, by hir owene wil, wisely and resonably.

And for as muchel as the devel fighteth agayns a man moore by queyntise and by sleighte than by strengthe, therefore men shal withstonden hym by wit and by resoun and by discrecioun.

Thanne arn ther the vertues of feith and hope in God and in his seintes to acheve and acomplise the goode werkes in the whiche he purposeth fermely to continue.

Thanne comth seuretee or sikernes, and that is whan a man ne douteth no travaille in tyme comynge of the goode werkes that a man hath bigonne.

Thanne comth magnificence; that is to seyn, whan a man dooth and parfourneth grete werkes of goodnesse; and that is the ende why that men sholde do goode werkes, for in the acomplissynge of grete goode werkes lith the grete gerdoun.

Thanne is ther constaunce, that is stablenesse of corage, and this sholde been in herte by stedefast feith, and in mouth, and in berynge, and in chiere, and in dede.

Eke ther been mo speciale remedies against Accidie in diverse werkes, and

in consideracioun of the peynes of helle and of the joyes of hevene, and in the trust of the grace of the Holy Goost, that wole yeve hym myght to parfourne his goode entente.

After Accidie wol I speke of Avarice and of Coveitise, of which synne seith

Seint Paul that "the roote of alle harmes is Coveitise." Ad Thimotheum Sexto.

740 For soothly, whan the herte of a man is confounded in itself and troubled, and that

740A the soule hath lost the confort of God, thanne seketh he an ydel solas of worldly thynges.

Avarice, after the descripcioun of Seint Augustyn, is a likerousnesse in herte to have erthely thynges.

Som oother folk seyn that Avarice is for to purchacen manye erthely thynges and no thyng yeve to hem that han nede.

And understood that Avarice ne stant nat oonly in lond ne catel, but somtyme in science and in glorie, and in every manere of outrageous thyng is Avarice and Coveitise.

And the difference bitwixe Avarice and Coveitise is this: Coveitise is for to coveite swiche thynges as thou hast nat;

and Avarice is for to withholde and kepe swiche thynges as thou hast, withoute rightful nede.

Soothly, this Avarice is a synne that is ful dampnable, for al hooly writ curseth it and speketh agayns that vice,

for it dooth wrong to Jhesu Crist.

For it bireveth hym the love that men to hym owen, and turneth it bakward agayns alle resoun,

and maketh that the avaricious man hath moore hope in his catel than in Jhesu Crist,

and dooth moore observance in kepyng of his tresor than he dooth to the service of Jhesu Crist.

And therefore seith Seint Paul Ad Ephesios quinto, that an avaricious man is the thraldom of ydolatrie.

What difference is bitwixe an ydolastre and an avaricious man, but that an ydolastre, per aventure, ne hath but o mawmet or two,

and the avaricious man hath manye? For certes, every floryn in his cofre is his mawmet.

750 And certes, the synne of mawmettrie is the firste thyng

750A that God deffended in the ten comaundementz, as bereth witnesse in Exodi capitulo vicesimo:

"Thou shalt have no false goddes bifore me, ne thou shalt make to thee no grave thyng."

Thus is an avaricious man, that loveth his tresor biforn God, an ydolastre,

thurgh this cursed synne of avarice. Of Coveitise comen thise harde

lordshipes,

thurgh whiche men been distreyned by taylages, custumes, and  
cariages, moore than hire duetee or resoun is.

And eek taken they of hire bonde-men amercimentz, whiche myghten  
moore resonably ben cleped extorcions than amercimentz.

Of whiche amercimentz and raunsonynge of boonde-men somme  
lordes stywardes seyn that it is rightful,  
for as muche as a cherl hath no temporeel thyng that it ne is his  
lordes, as they seyn.

But certes, thise lord-shipes doon wrong  
that bireven hire bonde-folk thynges that they nevere yave hem.  
Augustinus, De Civitate libro nono.

"Sooth is that the condicioun of thraldom and the firste cause of  
thraldom is for synne. Genesis nono.

Thus may ye seen that the gilt disserveth thraldom, but nat nature."  
Wherfore thise lordes ne sholde nat muche glorifien hem in hir  
lordshipes,

sith that by natureel condicion they been nat lordes over thralles, but  
that thraldom comth first by the desert of synne.

And forther over, ther as the lawe seith that temporeel goodes of  
boonde-folk been the goodes of hir lordshipes, ye,  
that is for to understonde, the goodes of the emperour, to deffenden  
hem in hir right,  
but nat for to robben hem ne reven hem.

And therfore seith Seneca, "Thy prudence sholde lyve benignely with  
thy thralles."

760 Thilke that thou clepest thy thralles been Goddes peple, for  
humble folk been Cristes freendes; they been contubernyal with the  
Lord.

Thynk eek that of swich seed as cherles spryngen, of swich seed  
spryngen lordes.

As wel may the cherl be saved as the lord.

The same deeth that taketh the cherl, swich deeth taketh the lord.

Wherfore I rede, do right so with thy cherl, as thou woldest that thy  
lord dide with thee,

if thou were in his plit.

Every synful man is a cherl to synne. I rede thee, certes, that thou,  
lord,

werke in swich wise with thy cherles that they rather love thee than  
drede.

I woot wel ther is degree above degree, as reson is,  
and skile is that men do hir devoir ther as it is due,



but certes, extorcions and despit of youre underlynges is dampnable.  
And forther over, understood wel that thise conquerours or tirauntz  
maken ful ofte thralles  
of hem that been born of as roial blood as been they that hem  
conqueren.

This name of thraldom was nevere erst kowth til  
that Noe seyde that his sone Canaan sholde be thral to his bretheren  
for his synne.

What seye we thanne of hem that pilen and doon extorcions to hooly  
chirche?

Certes, the swerd that men yeven first to a knyght, whan he is newe  
dubbed, signifieth that he sholde deffenden hooly chirche,  
and nat robben it ne pilen it; and whoso dooth is traitour to Crist.  
And, as seith Seint Augustyn, "They been the develes wolves that  
stranglen the sheep of Jhesu Crist," and doon worse than wolves.  
For soothly, whan the wolf hath ful his wombe, he stynteth to strangle  
sheep.

But soothly, the pilours and destroyours of the godes of hooly chirche  
ne do nat so, for they ne stynte nevere to pile.

770 Now as I have seyde, sith so is that synne was first cause of  
thraldom, thanne is it thus:

770A that thilke tyme that al this world was in synne, thanne was al  
this world in thraldom and subjeccioun.

But certes, sith the time of grace cam, God ordeyned that som folk  
sholde be moore heigh in estaat and in degree,  
and som folk moore lough, and that everich sholde be served in his  
estaat and in his degree.

And therefore in somme contrees, ther they byen thralles, whan they  
han turned hem to the feith,

they maken hire thralles free out of thraldom. And therefore,  
certes, the lord oweth to his man that the man oweth to his lord.

The Pope calleth hymself servant of the servantz of God; but  
for as muche as the estaat of hooly chirche ne myghte nat han be, ne  
the commune profit myghte nat han be kept,

ne pees and rest in erthe, but if God hadde ordeyned that som men  
hadde hyer degree and som men lower,

therefore was sovereyntee ordeyned, to kepe and mayntene and  
deffenden hire underlynges or hire subgetz in resoun,  
as ferforth as it lith in hire power, and nat to destroyen hem ne  
confounde.

Wherfore I seye that thilke lordes that been lyk wolves,  
that devouren the possessiouns or the catel of povre folk wrongfully,

withouten mercy or mesure,  
 they shul receyven by the same mesure that they han mesured to  
 povre folk the  
 mercy of Jhesu Crist, but if it be amended.  
 Now comth deceite bitwixe marchaunt and marchant. And thow shalt  
 understonde that marchandise is in manye maneres;  
 that oon is bodily, and that oother is goostly; that oon is honest and  
 leveful, and that oother is deshonest and unleveful.  
 Of thilke bodily marchandise that is leveful and honest is this:  
 that, there as God hath ordeyned that a regne or a contree is suffisaunt  
 to hymself,  
 thanne is it honest and leveful that of habundaunce of this contree,  
 that men helpe another contree that is moore nedy.  
 And therefore ther moote been marchantz to bryngen fro that o  
 contree to that oother hire marchandises.  
 780 That oother marchandise, that men haunten with fraude and  
 trecherie and deceite, with lesynges and false othes, is cursed and  
 dampnable.  
 Espiritueel marchandise is proprely symonye, that is ententif desir to  
 byen thyng espiritueel;  
 that is, thyng that aperteneth to the seintuarie of God and to cure of  
 the soule.  
 This desir, if so be that a man do his diligence to parfournen it,  
 al be it that his desir ne take noon effect, yet is it to hym a deedly  
 synne;  
 and if he be ordred, he is irreguleer.  
 Certes symonye is cleped of Simon Magus, that wolde han boght for  
 temporeel catel  
 the yifte that God hadde yeven by the Hooly Goost to Seint Peter and  
 to the apostles.  
 And therefore understood that bothe he that selleth and he that  
 beyeth thynges espirituels been cleped symonyals,  
 be it by catel, be it by procuryng, or by fleshly preyere of his  
 freendes, fleshly freendes or espiritueel freendes:  
 Fleshly in two maneres; as by kynrede, or othere freendes. Soothly, if  
 they praye for hym that is nat worthy and able,  
 it is symonye, if he take the benefice; and if he be worthy and able,  
 ther nys noon.  
 That oother manere is whan men or wommen preyen for folk to  
 avauncen hem,  
 oonly for wikked fleshly affeccioun that they han unto the persone,  
 and that is foul symonye.

But certes, in service, for which men yeven thynges espirituels unto  
 hir servantz, it moot been understonde that  
 the service moot been honest and elles nat; and eek that it be  
 withouten bargaynyng, and that the persone be able.

For, as seith Seint Damasie, "Alle the synnes of the world, at regard of  
 this synne, arn as thyng of noght."

For it is the gretteste synne that may be, after the synne of Lucifer and  
 Antecrist.

For by this synne God forleseth the chirche and the soule that he  
 boghte with his precious blood,

by hem that yeven chirches to hem that been nat digne.

790 For they putten in theves that stelen the soules of Jhesu Crist and  
 destroyen his patrimoyne.

By swiche undigne preestes and curates han lewed men the lasse  
 reverence of the sacramentz of hooly chirche,

and swiche yeveres of chirches putten out the children of Crist and  
 putten into the chirche the develes owene sone.

They sellen the soules that lambes sholde kepen to the wolf that  
 strangleth hem.

And therefore shul they nevere han part of the pasture of lambes, that  
 is the blisse of hevene.

Now comth hasardrie with his apurtenaunces, as tables and rafles, of  
 which comth deceite, false othes, chidynges, and alle ravynes,

blasphemynge and reneyng of God, and hate of his neighebores,  
 wast of goodes, mysspendynge of tyme, and somtyme manslaughter.

Certes, hasardours ne mowe nat been withouten greet synne whiles  
 they haunte that craft.

Of Avarice comen eek lesynges, thefte, fals witnessse, and false othes.

And ye shul understonde that thise been grete synnes and expres  
 agayn the comaundementz of God, as I have seyde.

Fals witnessse is in word and eek in dede. In word, as for to bireve thy  
 neighebores goode name by thy fals witnessyng,

or bireven hym his catel or his heritage by thy fals witnessyng, whan  
 thou for ire, or for meede,

or for envye, berest fals witnessse, or accusest hym or excusest hym by  
 thy fals witnessse, or elles excusest thyself falsly.

Ware yow, questmongeres and notaries! Certes, for fals witnessyng  
 was Susanna in ful gret sorwe and peyne, and many another mo.

The synne of thefte is eek expres agayns Goddes heeste, and that in  
 two maneres, corporeel or spiritueel.

Corporeel, as for to take thy neighebores catel agayn his wyl,  
 be it by force or by sleight, be it by met or by mesure;

800 by stelyng eek of false enditementz upon hym, and in borwyng of  
thy neighebores catel,

800A in entente nevere to payen it agayn, and semblable thynges.

Espiritueel thefte is sacrilege; that is to seyn, hurtyng of hooly  
thynges, or of thynges sacred to Crist, in two maneres:

by reson of the hooly place, as chirches or chirche-hawes,  
for which every vileyns synne that men doon in swiche places may be  
cleped sacrilege, or every violence in the semblable places;  
also, they that withdrawen falsly the rightes that longen to hooly  
chirche.

And pleyntly and generally, sacrilege is to reven hooly thyng fro hooly  
place,

or unhooly thyng out of hooly place, or hooly thing out of unhooly  
place.

Now shul ye understonde that the releevynge of Avarice is  
misericorde, and pitee largely taken.

And men myghten axe why that misericorde and pitee is releevynge of  
Avarice.

Certes, the avricious man sheweth no pitee ne misericorde to the  
nedeful man, for he deliteth hym

in the keypyng of his tresor, and nat in the rescowynge ne releevynge  
of his evene-Cristen. And therefore speke I first of misericorde.

Thanne is misericorde, as seith the Philosophre, a vertu  
by which the corage of a man is stired by the mysese of hym that is  
mysesed.

Upon which misericorde folweth pitee in parfournynge of charitable  
werkes of misericorde.

And certes, thise thynges moeven a man to the misericorde of Jhesu  
Crist,

that he yaf hymself for oure gilt, and suffred deeth for misericorde,  
and forgaf us oure originale synnes,

and therby releessed us fro the peynes of helle, and amenused the  
peynes of purgatorie by penitence,

and yeveth grace wel to do, and atte laste the blisse of hevene.

810 The spes of misericorde been, as for to lene and for to yeve, and  
to foryeven and relese,

810A and for to han pitee in herte and compassioun of the meschief of  
his evene-Cristene, and eek to chastise, there as nede is.

Another manere of remedie agayns avarice is resonable largesse; but  
soothly, heere bihoveth the consideracioun of the grace of Jhesu Crist,  
and of his temporeel goodes, and eek of the goodes perdurables that  
Crist yaf to us;

and to han remembrance of the deeth that he shal receyve, he noot whanne, where, ne how;

and eek that he shal forgon al that he hath, save oonly that he hath despended in goode werkes.

But for as muche as som folk been unmesurable, men oghten eschue fool-largesse, that men clepen wast.

Certes, he that is fool-large ne yeveth nat his catel, but he leseth his catel.

Soothly, what thyng that he yeveth for veyne glorie, as to mynstrals and to folk for to beren his renoun

in the world, he hath synne therof and noon almesse.

Certes, he leseth foule his good that ne seketh with the yifte of his good nothyng but synne.

He is lyk to an hors that seketh

rather to drynken drovy or trouble water than for to drynken water of the clere welle.

And for as muchel as they yeven ther as they sholde nat yeven, to hem aperteneth

thilke malisoun that Crist shal yeven at the day of doom to hem that shullen been dampned.

After Avarice comth Glotonye, which is expres eek agayn the comandement of God. Glotonye is unmesurable appetit to ete or to drynke,

or elles to doon ynogh to the unmesurable appetit and desordeynee coveitise to eten or to drynke.

This synne corrupped al this world, as is wel shewed in the synne of Adam and of Eve.

Looke eek what seith Seint Paul of Glotonye:

820 "Manye," seith Saint Paul, "goon, of whiche I have ofte seyde to yow, 820A and now I seye it wepynge, that been the enemys of the croys of Crist; of whiche the ende is deeth,

820B and of whiche hire wombe is hire god, and hire glorie in confusioun of hem that so savouren erthely thynges."

He that is usaunt to this synne of glotonye, he ne may no synne withstonde.

He moot been in servage of alle vices, for it is the develes hoord ther he hideth hym and resteth.

This synne hath manye spesces. The firste is dronkenesse, that is the horrible sepulture of mannes resoun;

and therefore, whan a man is drunken, he hath lost his resoun; and this is deedly synne.

But soothly, whan that a man is nat wont to strong drynke, and

peraventure ne knoweth nat the strengthe of the drynke,  
 or hath feblesse in his heed, or hath travailed, thurgh which he  
 drynketh the moore, al be he sodeynly caught with drynke,  
 it is no deedly synne, but venyal.

The seconde spece of glotonye is that the spirit of a man wexeth al  
 trouble,

for dronkenesse bireveth hym the discrecioun of his wit.

The thridde spece of glotonye is whan a man devoureth his mete and  
 hath no rightful manere of etynge.

The fourthe is whan, thurgh the grete habundaunce of his mete, the  
 humours in his body been distempred.

The fifthe is foryetelnesse by to muchel drynkynge, for which  
 somtyme

a man foryeteth er the morwe what he dide at even, or on the nyght  
 biforn.

In oother manere been distinct the speses of Glotonye, after Seint  
 Gregorie. The firste is for to ete biforn tyme to ete.

The seconde is whan a man get hym to delicaat mete or drynke.

The thridde is whan men taken to muche over mesure. The fourthe is  
 curiositee, with greet entente to maken and apparailen his mete.

The fifthe is for to eten to gredily.

830 Thisse been the fyve fynGRES of the develes hand, by whiche he  
 draweth folk to synne.

Agayns Glotonye is the remedie abstinence, as seith Galien; but that  
 holde I nat meritorie,

if he do it oonly for the heele of his body. Seint Augustyn wole that  
 abstinence be doon for vertu and with pacience.

"Abstinence," he seith, "is litel worth but if a man have good wil  
 therto,

and but it be enforced by pacience and by charitee, and that men doon  
 it for Godes sake,

and in hope to have the blisse of hevene."

The felawes of abstinence been attemperaunce, that holdeth the  
 meene in alle thynges; eek shame, that eschueth alle deshonestee;  
 suffisance, that seketh no riche metes ne drynkes, ne dooth no fors of  
 to outrageous apparailynge of mete;

mesure also, that restreyneth by resoun the deslavee appetit of  
 etynge; sobrenesse also, that restreyneth the outrage of drynke;  
 sparynge also, that restreyneth the delicaat ese to sitte longe at his  
 mete and softly,

wherfore some folk stonden of hir owene wyl to eten at the lasse  
 leyser.

After Glotonye thanne comth Lecherie, for thise two synnes been so ny cosyns that ofte tyme they wol nat departe.

God woot, this synne is ful displesaunt thyng to God, for he seyde hymself,

"Do no lecherie." And therfore he putte grete peynes agayns this synne in the olde lawe.

If womman thral were taken in this synne, she sholde be beten with staves to the deeth;

and if she were a gentil womman, she sholde be slayn with stones; and if she were a bisshoppes doghter, she sholde been brent, by Goddes comandement.

Forther over, by the synne of lecherie God dreynte al the world at the diluge.

And after that he brente fyve citees with thonder-leyt, and sank hem into helle.

840 Now lat us speke thanne of thilke stynkyng synne of Lecherie that men clepe avowtrie of wedded folk;

840A that is to seyn, if that oon of hem be wedded, or elles bothe.

Seint John seith that avowtiers shullen been in helle, in a stank brennyng of fyr and of brymston

-- in fyr for hire lecherye, in brymston for the stynk of hire ordure.

Certes, the brekyng of this sacrement is an horrible thyng.

It was maked of God hymself in paradys, and confermed by Jhesu Crist, as witnesseth Seint Mathew in the gospel:

"A man shal lete fader and mooder and taken hym to his wif, and they shullen be two in o flessch."

This sacrement bitokneth the knyttyng togidre of Crist and of hooly chirche.

And nat oonly that God forbad avowtrie in dede, but eek he comanded that thou sholdest nat coveite thy neighebores wyf.

"In this heeste," seith Seint Augustyn, "is forboden alle manere coveitise to doon lecherie." Lo, what seith Seint Mathew in the gospel, that

"whoso seeth a womman to coveitise of his lust, he hath doon lecherie with hire in his herte."

Heere may ye seen that nat oonly the dede of this synne is forboden, but eek the desir to doon that synne.

This cursed synne anoyeth grevousliche hem that it haunten. And first to hire soule,

for he obligeth it to synne and to peyne of deeth that is perdurable.

Unto the body anoyeth it grevously also, for it dreyeth hym, and wasteth him, and shent hym, and of his blood

he maketh sacrifice to the feend of helle. It wasteth eek his catel and his substaunce.

And certes, if it be a foul thyng a man to waste his catel on wommen, yet is it a fouler thyng whan that, for swich ordure, wommen dispenden upon men hir catel and substaunce.

850 This synne, as seith the prophete, bireveth man and womman hir goode fame and al hire honour,

850A and it is ful plesaunt to the devel, for therby wynneth he the mooste partie of this world.

And right as a marchant deliteth hym moost in chaffare that he hath moost advantage of,  
right so deliteth the fend in this ordure.

This is that oother hand of the devel with fyve fynGRES to cacche the peple to his vileynye.

The firste fynger is the fool lookynge of the fool womman and of the fool man; that sleeth, right

as the basilicok sleeth folk by the venym of his sighte, for the coveitise of eyen folweth the coveitise of the herte.

The seconde fynger is the vileyns touchynge in wikkede manere.

And therefore seith Salomon that "whoso toucheth and handleth a womman, he fareth lyk

hym that handleth the scorioun that styngeth and sodeynly sleeth thurgh his envenymynge"; as whoso toucheth warm pych, it shent his fynGRES.

The thridde is foule wordes, that fareth lyk fyr, that right anon brenneth the herte.

The fourthe fynger is the kissynge; and trewely he were a greet fool that wolde kisse the mouth of a brennyng oven or of a fourneys.

And moore fooles been they that kissen in vileynye, for that mouth is the mouth of helle;

and namely thise olde dotardes holours, yet wol they kisse, though they may nat do, and smatre hem.

Certes, they been lyk to houndes; for an hound, whan he comth by the roser or by othere [bushes],

though he may nat pisse, yet wole he heve up his leg and make a contaunce to pisse.

And for that many man weneth that he may nat synne for no likerousnesse that he dooth with his wyf,

certes, that opinion is fals. God woot, a man may sleen hymself with his owene knyf,

and make hymselfe drunken of his owene tonne.

860 Certes, be it wyf, be it child,



860A or any worldly thyng that he loveth biforn God, it is his mawmet, and he is an ydolastre.

Man sholde loven hys wyf by discrecioun, paciently and atemprely, and thanne is she as though it were his suster.

The fifthe fynger of the develes hand is the stynkyng dede of Leccherie.

Certes, the fyve fyngres of Glotonie the feend put in the wombe of a man,

and with his fyve fingres of Lecherie he gripeth hym by the reynes for to throwen hym into the fourneys of helle,

ther as they shul han the fyr and the wormes that evere shul lasten, and wepyng and wailynge, sharp hunger and thirst,

[and] grymnesse of develes, that shullen al totrede hem withouten respit and withouten ende.

Of Leccherie, as I seyde, sourden diverse speces, as fornicacioun, that is bitwixe man and womman that been nat maried,

and this is deedly synne and agayns nature.

Al that is enemy and destruccioun to nature is agayns nature.

Parfay, the resoun of a man telleth eek hym wel that it is deedly synne, for as muche as God forbad leccherie.

And Seint Paul yeveth hem the regne that nys dewe to no wight but to hem that doon deedly synne.

Another synne of Leccherie is to bireve a mayden of hir maydenhede, for he that so dooth,

certes, he casteth a mayden out of the hyeste degree that is in this present lif

and bireveth hire thilke precious fruyt that the book clepeth the hundred fruyt.

I ne kan seye it noon ootherweyes in Englissh, but in Latyn it highte Centesimus fructus.

870 Certes, he that so dooth is cause of manye damages and vileynyes, mo than any man kan rekene;

870A right as he somtyme is cause of alle damages that beestes don in the feeld, that breketh the hegge or the closure,

870B thurgh which he destroyeth that may nat been restooored.

For certes, namoore may maydenhede be restooored than an arm that is smyten fro the body may retourne agayn to wexe.

She may have mercy, this woot I wel, if she do penitence; but nevere shal it be that she nas corrupt.

And al be it so that I have spoken somewhat of avowtrie,

it is good to shewen mo perils that longen to avowtrie, for to eschue that foule synne.

Avowtrie in Latyn is for to seyn approchyng of oother mannes bed,  
thurgh which tho that whilom weren o flessch abawndone hir bodyes  
to othere persones.

Of this synne, as seith the wise man, folwen manye harmes.

First, brekyng of feith, and certes in feith is the keye of Cristendom.

And whan that feith is broken and lorn, soothly Cristendom stant veyn  
and withouten fruyt.

This synne is eek a thefte, for thefte generally is for to reve a wight his  
thyng agayns his wille.

Certes, this is the fouleste thefte that may be, whan a womman steleth  
hir body from hir housbonde

and yeveth it to hire holour to defoulen hire, and steleth hir soule fro  
Crist and yeveth it to the devel.

This is a fouler thefte than for to breke a chirche and stele the chalice,  
for thise avowtiers breken the temple of God spiritually, and stelen  
the vessel of grace, that is the body and the soule,

for which Crist shal destroyen hem, as seith Seint Paul.

880 Soothly, of this thefte douted gretly Joseph, whan that his lordes  
wyf preyed hym of vileynye, whan he seyde,

880A "Lo, my lady, how my lord hath take to me under my warde al  
that he hath in this world,

880B ne no thyng of his thynges is out of my power, but oonly ye, that  
been his wyf.

And how sholde I thanne do this wikkednesse, and synne so horribly  
agayns God and agayns my lord?

God it forbeede!" Allas, al to litel is swich trouthe now yfounde.

The thridde harm is the filthe thurgh which they breken the  
comandement of God, and defoulen the auctour of matrimoyne, that is  
Crist.

For certes, in so muche as the sacrement of mariage is so noble and so  
digne, so muche is it gretter synne

for to breken it, for God made mariage in paradys, in the estaat of  
innocence, to multiplie mankynde to the service of God.

And therefore is the brekyng therof the moore grevous; of which  
brekyng comen false heires ofte tyme, that wrongfully ocupien folkes  
heritages.

And therefore wol Crist putte hem out of the regne of hevene, that is  
heritage to goode folk.

Of this brekyng comth eek ofte tyme that folk unwar wedden or  
synnen with hire owene kynrede, and namely thilke harlotes that  
haunten

bordels of thise fool wommen, that mowe be likned to a commune

gong, where as men purgen hire ordure.

What seye we eek of putours that lyven by the horrible synne of putrie, and constreyne wommen to yelden hem a certeyn rente of hire bodily puterie, ye, somtyme of his owene wyf or his child, as doon thise bawdes? Certes, thise been cursede synnes.

Understood eek that Avowtrie is set gladly in the ten comandementz bitwixe thefte and manslaughter;

for it is the gretteste thefte that may be, for it is thefte of body and of soule.

And it is lyk to homycide, for it kerveth atwo and breketh atwo hem that first were makid o flessch.

And therefore, by the olde lawe of God, they sholde be slayn.

But nathelees, by the lawe of Jhesu Crist, that is lawe of pitee, whan he seyde to the womman

that was founden in avowtrie, and sholde han been slayn with stones, after the wyl of the Jewes, as was hir lawe,

"Go," quod Jhesu Crist, "and have namoore wyl to synne," or, "wille namoore to do synne."

890 Soothly the vengeance of Avowtrie is awarded to the peynes of helle, but if so be that it be destourbed by penitence.

Yet been ther mo speses of this cursed synne; as whan that oon of hem is religious, or elles bothe;

or of folk that been entred into ordre, as subdekne, or dekne, or preest, or hospitaliers.

And evere the hyer that he is in ordre, the gretter is the synne.

The thynges that gretly agreggen hire synne is the brekyng of hire avow of chastitee, whan they receyved the ordre.

And forther over, sooth is that hooly ordre is chief of al the tresorie of God

and his especial signe and mark of chastitee to shewe that they been joyned to chastitee,

which that is the moost precious lyf that is.

And thise ordred folk been specially tited to God, and of the special meignee of God,

for which, whan they doon deedly synne, they been the special traytours of God and of his peple;

for they lyven of the peple, to preye for the peple,

and while they ben suche traitours, here preyer awayleth nat to the peple.

Preestes been aungels, as by the dignitee of hir mysterye;

but for sothe, Seint Paul seith that Sathanas transformeth hym in an aungel of light.

Soothly, the preest that haunteth deedly synne, he may be likned to the aungel of derknesse transformed in the aungel of light. He semeth aungel of light, but for sothe he is aungel of derknesse. Swiche preestes been the sones of Helie, as sheweth in the Book of Kynges, that they weren the sones of Belial - that is, the devel.

Belial is to seyn, "withouten juge." And so faren they; hem thynketh they been free and han no juge, namoore than hath a free bole that taketh which cow that hym liketh in the town.

So faren they by wommen. For right as a free bole is ynough for al a toun, right so is a wikked preest corrupcioun ynough for al a parisshe, or for al a contree.

900 Thise preestes, as seith the book, ne konne nat the mysterie of preesthod to the peple, ne God ne knowe they nat.

900A They ne helde hem nat apayd, as seith the book, of soden flessch that was to hem offred,

900B but they tooke by force the flessch that is rawe.

Certes, so thise shrewes ne holden hem nat apayed of roasted flessch and sode flessch,

with which the peple feden hem in greet reverence, but they wole have raw flessch of folkes wyves and hir doghtres.

And certes, thise wommen that consenten to hire harlotrie doon greet wrong to Crist,

and to hooly chirche, and alle halwes, and to alle soules;

for they bireven alle thise hym that sholde worshipe Crist and hooly chirche and preye for Cristene soules.

And therfore han swiche preestes, and hire lemmanes eek that consenten to hir leccherie,

the malisoun of al the court Cristien, til they come to amendement.

The thridde spece of avowtrie is somtyme bitwixe a man and his wyf, and that is

whan they take no reward in hire assemblynge but oonly to hire fleshly delit, as seith Seint Jerome,

and ne rekken of nothyng but that they been assembled;

by cause that they been married, al is good ynough, as thynketh to hem.

But in swich folk hath the devel power, as seyde the aungel Raphael to Thobie,

for in hire assemblynge they putten Jhesu Crist out of hire herte and yeven himself to alle ordure.

The fourthe spece is the assemblee of hem that been of hire kynrede,

or of hem that been of oon affynyte,  
 or elles with hem with whiche hir fadres or hir kynrede han deled in  
 the synne of lecherie.

This synne maketh hem lyk to houndes, that taken no kep to kynrede.  
 And certes, parentele is in two maneres, outhur goostly or fleshly;  
 goostly, as for to deelen with his godsibbes.

For right so as he that engendreth a child is his fleshly fader, right so  
 is his godfader his fader espiritueel.

For which a womman may in no lasse synne assemblen with hire  
 godsib than with hire owene fleshly brother.

910 The fifthe spece is thilke abhomynable synne, of which that no  
 man unnethe oghte speke ne write;

910A nathelees it is openly reherced in holy writ.

This cursednesse doon men and wommen in diverse entente and in  
 diverse manere; but though that hooly writ speke of horrible synne,  
 certes hooly writ may nat been defouled, namoore than the sonne that  
 shyneth on the mixne.

Another synne aperteneth to leccherie, that comth in slepyng, and  
 this synne cometh ofte to hem that been maydenes,  
 and eek to hem that been corrupt; and this synne men clepen  
 polucioun, that comth in foure maneres.

Somtyme of langwysynge of body, for the humours been to ranke and  
 to habundaunt in the body of man;

somtyme of infermetee, for the fieblesse of the vertu retentif, as phisik  
 maketh mencion; somtyme for surfeet of mete and drynke;

and somtyme of vileyns thoghtes that been enclosed in mannes  
 mynde whan he gooth to slepe, which may nat been withoute synne;  
 for which men moste kepen hem wisely, or elles may men synnen ful  
 greuously.

Now comth the remedie agayns Leccherie, and that is generally  
 chastitee and continence,  
 that restreyneth alle the desordeyne moevynges that comen of  
 fleshly talentes.

And evere the gretter merite shal he han that moost restreyneth the  
 wikkede eschawfynges of the [ardour] of this synne.

And this is in two maneres -- that is to seyn, chastitee in mariage, and  
 chastitee of widwehod.

Now shaltow understonde that matrimoyne is leefful assemblynge of  
 man and of womman that receyven by vertu of the sacrament the  
 boond

thurgh which they may nat be departed in al hir lyf -- that is to seyn,  
 whil that they lyven bothe.

This, as seith the book, is a ful greet sacrament.

God maketh it, as I have seyde, in paradys, and wolde hymself be born in mariage.

And for to halwen mariage he was at a weddyng, where as he turned water into wyn,

which was the firste miracle that he wroghte in erthe bifore his disciples.

920 Trewe effect of mariage clenseth fornicacioun and replenysseth hooly chirche of good lynage, for that is the ende of mariage;

920A and it chaungeth deedly synne into venial synne bitwixe hem that been ywedded,

920B and maketh the hertes al oon of hem that been ywedded, as wel as the bodies.

This is verray mariage, that was establissed by God, er that synne bigan, whan natureel lawe was in his right poynt in paradys;

and it was ordeyned that o man sholde have but o womman, and o womman but o man,

as seith Seint Augustyn, by manye resouns.

First, for mariage is figured bitwixe Crist and holy chirche. And that oother is for a man is heved of a womman;

algate, by ordinaunce it sholde be so.

For if a womman hadde mo men than oon, thanne sholde she have moo hevedes than oon, and

that were an horrible thyng bifore God; and eek a womman ne myghte nat plesse to many folk at oones.

And also ther ne sholde nevere be pees ne reste amonges hem, for everich wolde axen his owene thyng.

And forther over, no man ne sholde knowe his owene engendrure, ne who sholde have his heritage;

and the womman sholde been the lasse biloved fro the tyme that she were conjoynt to many men.

Now comth how that a man sholde bere hym with his wif, and namely in two thynges;

that is to seyn, in suffraunce and reverence, as shewed Crist whan he made first womman.

For he ne made hire nat of the heved of Adam, for she sholde nat clayme to greet lordshipe.

For ther as the womman hath the maistrie, she maketh to muche despayr.

Ther nedn none ensamples of this; the experience of day by day oghte suffise.

Also, certes, God ne made nat womman of the foot of Adam, for she ne

sholde nat been holden to lowe;  
for she kan nat paciently suffre. But God made womman of the ryb of  
Adam, for womman sholde be felawe unto man.

Man sholde bere hym to his wyf in feith, in trouthe, and in love,  
as seith Seint Paul, that a man sholde loven his wyf as Crist loved  
hooly chirche,  
that loved it so wel that he deyde for it. So sholde a man for his wyf, if  
it were nede.

930 Now how that a womman sholde be subget to hire housbonde,  
that telleth Seint Peter. First, in obedience.

And eek, as seith the decree, a womman that is wyf, as longe as she is a  
wyf,

she hath noon auctoritee to swere ne to bere witnesse withoute leve  
of hir housbonde,

that is hire lord; algate, he sholde be so by resoun.

She sholde eek serve hym in alle honestee, and been attempree of  
hire array.

I woot wel that they sholde setten hire entente to plesen hir  
housbondes, but nat by hire queyntise of array.

Seint Jerome seith that "wyves that been apparailled in silk and in  
precious purple ne mowe nat clothen hem in Jhesu Crist."

Loke what seith Seint John eek in thys matere?

Seint Gregorie eek seith that "No wight seketh precious array but  
oonly for veyne glorie, to been honoured the moore biforn the peple."

It is a greet folye, a womman to have a fair array outward and in  
herself be foul inward.

A wyf sholde eek be mesurable in lookynge and in berynge and in  
lawghynge, and discreet in alle hire wordes and hire dedes.

And aboven alle worldly thyng she sholde loven hire housbonde with  
al hire herte, and to hym be trewe of hir body.

So sholde an housbonde eek be to his wyf. For sith that al the body is  
the housbondes,

so sholde hire herte been, or elles ther is bitwixe hem two, as in that,  
no parfit mariage.

Thanne shal men understonde that for thre thynges a man and his wyf  
flesshly mowen assemble.

The firste is in entente of engendrure of children to the service of God,  
for certes that is the cause final of matrimoyne.

940 Another cause is to yelden everich of hem to oother the dette of  
hire bodies,

940A for neither of hem hath power of his owene body. The thridde is  
for to eschewe leccherye and vileynye.

940B The ferthe is for sothe deedly synne.

As to the firste, it is meritorie; the seconde also, for, as seith the decree, that she hath merite of chastitee that yeldeth to hire housbonde the dette of hir body,

ye, though it be agayn hir likynge and the lust of hire herte.

The thridde manere is venyal synne; and, trewely, scarsly may ther any of thise be withoute venial synne, for the corrupcion and for the delit.

The fourthe manere is for to understonde, as if they assemble oonly for amorous love and for noon of the foreseyde causes, but for to accomplice thilke brennyng delit, they rekke nevere how ofte.

Soothly it is deedly synne; and yet, with sorwe, somme folk wol peynen hem moore to doon than to hire appetit suffiseth.

The seconde manere of chastitee is for to been a clene wydewe, and eschue the embracynges of man, and desiren the embracynge of Jhesu Crist.

Thise been tho that han been wyves and han forgoon hire housbondes,

and eek wommen that han doon leccherie and been releevd by penitence.

And certes, if that a wyf koude kepen hire al chaast by licence of hir housbonde,

so that she yeve nevere noon occasion that he agilte, it were to hire a greet merite.

Thise manere wommen that observen chastitee moste be clene in herte as wel as in body and in thought,

and mesurable in clothyng and in contenance, and been abstinent in etyng and drynkynge, in spekyng, and in dede.

They been the vessel or the boyste of the blissed Magdelene, that fulfilleth hooly chirche of good odour.

The thridde manere of chastitee is virginitee, and it bihoveth that she be hooly in herte and clene of body.

Thanne is she spouse to Jhesu Crist, and she is the lyf of angeles.

She is the preisyng of this world, and she is as thise martirs in egalitee;

she hath in hire that tonge may nat telle ne herte thynke.

950 Virginitee baar oure Lord Jhesu Crist, and virgine was hymselfe.

Another remedie agayns Leccherie is specially to withdrawen swiche thynges as yeve occasion to thilke vileynye, as ese, etyng, and drynkynge.



For certes, whan the pot boyleth strongly, the beste remedie is to withdrawe the fyr.

Slepynge longe in greet quiete is eek a greet norice to Leccherie.

Another remedie agayns Leccherie is that a man or a womman eschue the compaignye of hem

by whiche he douteth to be tempted, for al be it so that the dede be withstonden, yet is ther greet temptacioun.

Soothly, a whit wal, although it ne brenne noght fully by stikyng of a candele, yet is the wal blak of the leyt.

Ful ofte tyme I rede that no man truste in his owene perfeccioun, but he be stronger than Sampson, and hoolier than David, and wiser than Salomon.

Now after that I have declared yow, as I kan, the sevene deedly synnes,

and somme of hire braunches and hire remedies, soothly, if I koude, I wolde telle yow the ten comandementz.

But so heigh a doctrine I lete to divines. Nathelees, I hope to God, they been touched in this tretice, everich of hem alle.

Now for as muche as the seconde partie of Penitence stant in confessioun of mouth,

as I bigan in the firste chapitre, I seye, Seint Augustyn seith,

"Synne is every word and every dede, and al that men coveiten, agayn the lawe of Jhesu Crist;

and this is for to synne in herte, in mouth, and in dede, by thy fyve wittes,

that been sighte, herynge, smellynge, tastynge or savourynge, and feelynge."

960 Now is it good to understonde the circumstances that agreggen muchel every synne.

Thou shalt considere what thow art that doost the synne,

wheither thou be male or femele, yong or oold, gentil or thral,

free or servant, hool or syk, wedded or sengle, ordred or unordred, wys or fool, clerk or seculeer;

if she be of thy kynrede, bodily or goostly, or noon;

if any of thy kynrede have synned with hire, or noon; and manye mo thinges.

Another circumstaunce is this: wheither it be doon in fornicacioun or in avowtrie or noon, incest or noon, mayden or noon,

in manere of homicide or noon, horrible grete synnes or smale, and how longe thou hast continued in synne.

The thridde circumstaunce is the place ther thou hast do synne, wheither in oother mennes hous or in thyn owene,

in feeld or in chirche or in chirchewawe, in chirche dedicaat or noon.  
 For if the chirche be halwed, and man or womman  
 spille his kynde inwith that place by wey of synne or by wikked  
 temptacioun,  
 the chirche is entredited til it be reconciled by the bysshop.  
 And the preest sholde be enterdited that dide swich a vileynye; to  
 terme of al his lif he sholde namoore synge masse,  
 and if he dide, he sholde doon deedly synne at every time that he so  
 songe masse.

The fourthe circumstaunce is by whiche mediatours, or by whiche  
 messagers, as for enticement, or for consentement to bere compaignye  
 with felaweshipe;  
 for many a wrecche, for to bere compaignye, wol go to the devel of  
 helle.

Wherefore they that eggen or consenten to the synne been parteners of  
 the synne, and of the dampnacioun of the synnere.

The fifthe circumstaunce is how manye tymes that he hath synned,  
 if it be in his mynde, and how ofte that he hath falle.

970 For he that ofte falleth in synne, he despiseth the mercy of God,  
 and encreesseth hys synne, and is unkynde to Crist;

970A and he wexeth the moore fieble to withstonde synne, and  
 synneth the moore lightly,

and the latter ariseth, and is the moore eschew for to shryven hym,  
 and namely, to hym that is his confessour.

For which that folk, whan they falle agayn in hir olde folies, outhur  
 they forleten hir olde confessours al outrely

or elles they departen hir shrift in diverse places; but soothly, swich  
 departed shrift deserveth no mercy of God of his synnes.

The sixte circumstaunce is why that a man synneth, as by which  
 temptacioun, and if hymself procure thilke temptacioun,

or by the excitynge of oother folk; or if he synne with a womman by  
 force, or by hire owene assent;

or if the womman, maugree hir hed, hath been afforced, or noon. This  
 shal she telle:

for coveitise, or for poverté, and if it was hire procuryng, or noon;  
 and swich manere harneys.

The seventhe circumstaunce is in what manere he hath doon his  
 synne,

or how that she hath suffred that folk han doon to hire.

And the same shal the man telle pleyntly with alle circumstaunces; and  
 wheither he hath synned with comune bordel wommen or noon,

or doon his synne in hooly tymes or noon, in fastyng tymes or noon, or

biforn his shrifte, or after his latter shrifte,  
and hath peraventure broken therfore his penance enjoyned, by whos  
help and whos conseil, by sorcerie or craft; al moste be toold.

Alle thise thynges, after that they been grete or smale, engreggen the  
conscience of man.

And eek the preest, that is thy juge, may the bettre been avysed of his  
juggement

in yevynge of thy penaunce, and that is after thy contricioun.

980 For understond wel that after tyme that a man hath defouled his  
baptisme by synne,

980A if he wole come to salvacioun, ther is noon other wey but by  
penitence and shrifte and satisfaccioun,

and namely by the two, if ther be a confessour to which he may  
shriven hym,

and the thridde, if he have lyf to parfournen it.

Thanne shal man looke and considere that if he wole maken a trewe  
and a profitable confessioun, ther moste be foure condiciouns.

First, it moot been in sorweful bitternesse of herte, as seyde the kyng  
Ezechias to God,

"I wol remembre me alle the yeres of my lif in bitternesse of myn  
herte."

This condicioun of bitternesse hath fyve signes. The firste is that  
confessioun moste be shamefast, nat for to covere ne hyden his synne,  
for he hath agilt his God and defouled his soule.

And herof seith Seint Augustyn, "The herte travaillet for shame of his  
synne";

and for he hath greet shamefastnesse, he is digne to have greet mercy  
of God.

Swich was the confessioun of the publican that wolde nat heven up his  
eyen to hevene,

for he hadde offended God of hevene; for which shamefastnesse he  
hadde anon the mercy of God.

And therof seith Seint Augustyn that swich shamefast folk been next  
foryevenesse and remissioun.

Another signe is humylitee in confessioun, of which seith Seint Peter,  
"Humbleth yow under the myght of God." The hond of God is myghty  
in confessioun, for

therby God foryeveth thee thy synnes, for he allone hath the power.

And this humylitee shal been in herte and in signe outward, for right  
as he hath humylitee to God in his herte,

right so sholde he humble his body outward to the preest, that sit in  
Goddess place.

990 For which in no manere, sith that Crist is sovereyn, and the preest  
meene and mediatour bitwixe Crist and the synnere,

990A and the synnere is the laste by wey of resoun,  
thanne sholde nat the synnere sitte as heighe as his confessour, but  
knele biforn hym or at his feet,

but if maladie destourbe it. For he shal nat taken kep who sit there,  
but in whos place that he sitteth.

A man that hath trespassed to a lord, and comth for to axe mercy and  
maken his accord,

and set him doun anon by the lord,  
men wolde holden hym outrageous, and nat worthy so soone for to  
have remissioun ne mercy.

The thridde signe is how that thy shrift sholde be ful of teeris, if man  
may,

and if man may nat wepe with his bodily eyen, lat hym wepe in herte.  
Swich was the confession of Seint Peter, for after that he hadde  
forsake Jhesu Crist, he wente out and weep ful bitterly.

The fourthe signe is that he ne lette nat for shame to shewen his  
confessioun.

Swich was the confessioun of the Magdalene, that ne spared for no  
shame of hem

that weren atte feeste, for to go to oure Lord Jhesu Crist and biknowe  
to hym hire synne.

The fifthe signe is that a man or a womman be obeisant to receyven  
the penaunce that hym is enjoyned for his synnes,  
for certes, Jhesu Crist, for the giltes of o man, was obedient to the  
deeth.

The seconde condicion of verray confession is that it be hastily doon.

For certes, if a man hadde a deedly wounde, evere the lenger that he  
taryed to warisshe hymself,

the moore wolde it corrupte and haste hym to his deeth, and eek the  
wounde wolde be the wors for to heele.

And right so fareth synne that longe tyme is in a man unshewed.

1000 Certes, a man oghte hastily shewen his synnes for manye causes;  
as for drede of deeth, that cometh ofte sodeynly,

1000A and no certeyn what tyme it shal be, ne in what place; and eek  
the drecchyng of o synne draweth in another;

and eek the lenger that he tarieth, the ferther he is fro Crist. And if he  
abide to his laste day, scarsly

may he shryven hym or remembre hym of his synnes or repenten  
hym, for the grevous maladie of his deeth.

And for as mucche as he ne hath nat in his lyf herkned Jhesu Crist

whanne he hath spoken, he shal crie to Jhesu Crist at his laste day, and scarsly wol he herkne hym.

And understond that this condicioun moste han foure thynges. Thi shrift moste be purveyed bifore and avysed; for wikked haste dooth no profit; and that a man konne shryve hym of his synnes, be it of pride, or of envye, and so forth with the speces and circumstances; and that he have comprehended in hys mynde the nombre and the greetnesse of his synnes, and how longe that he hath leyn in synne; and eek that he be contrit of his synnes, and in stidefast purpos, by the grace of God, nevere eft to falle in synne; and eek that he drede and countrewaite hymself, that he fle the occasiouns of synne to whiche he is enclyned.

Also thou shalt shryve thee of alle thy synnes to o man, and nat a parcel to o man and a parcel to another; that is to understonde, in entente to departe thy confessioun, as for shame or drede, for it nys but stranglynge of thy soule.

For certes Jhesu Crist is entierly al good; in hym nys noon imperfeccioun, and therfore outhur he foryeveth al parfitly or elles never a deel. I seye nat that if thou be assigned to the penitauncer for certein synne,

that thou art bounde to shewen hym al the remenaunt of thy synnes, of whiche thou hast be shryven of thy curaate, but if it like to thee of thyn humylitee; this is no departyng of shrifte. Ne I seye nat, ther as I speke of divisioun of confessioun, that if thou have licence

for to shryve thee to a discreet and an honest preest, where thee liketh, and by licence of thy curaate, that thou ne mayst wel shryve thee to him of alle thy synnes.

1010 But lat no blotte be bihynde; lat no synne been untoold, as fer as thou hast remembraunce.

And whan thou shalt be shryven to thy curaate, telle hym eek alle the synnes that thou hast doon syn thou were last yshryven; this is no wikked entente of divisioun of shrifte.

Also the verray shrifte axeth certeine condiciouns. First, that thou shryve thee by thy free wil, noght constreyned, ne for shame of folk, ne for maladie, ne swiche thynges.

For it is resoun that he that trespaseth by his free wyl, that by his free wyl he confesse his trespas,  
 and that noon oother man telle his synne but he hymself;  
 ne he shal nat nayte ne denye his synne, ne wratthe hym agayn the preest for his amonestynge to lete synne.

The seconde condicioun is that thy shrift be laweful; that is to seyn, that

thow that shryvest thee and eek the preest that hereth thy confessioun been verrailly in the feith of hooly chirche,  
 and that a man ne be nat despeired of the mercy of Jhesu Crist, as Caym or Judas.

And eek a man moot accusen hymself of his owene trespas, and nat another;

but he shal blame and wyten hymself and his owene malice of his synne, and noon oother.

But nathelees, if that another man be occasioun or enticere of his synne,

or the estaat of a persone be swich thurgh which his synne is agregged, or elles that he may nat pleyntly shryven hym but he telle the persone with which he hath synned, thanne may he telle it,

so that his entente ne be nat to bakbite the persone, but oonly to declaren his confessioun.

Thou ne shalt nat eek make no lesynges in thy confessioun, for humylitee,

peraventure, to seyn that thou hast doon synnes of whiche thow were nevere gilty.

1020 For Seint Augustyn seith, "If thou, by cause of thyn humylitee, makest lesynges on thyself,

1020A though thow ne were nat in synne biforn, yet artow thanne in synne thurgh thy lesynges."

Thou most eek shewe thy synne by thyn owene propre mouth, but thow be woxe dowmb, and nat by no lettre;

for thow that hast doon the synne, thou shalt have the shame therfore.

Thow shalt nat eek peynte thy confessioun by faire subtile wordes, to covere the moore thy synne;

for thanne bigilestow thyself, and nat the preest. Thow most tellen it platly, be it nevere so foul ne so horrible.

Thow shalt eek shryve thee to a preest that is discreet to conseil thee; and eek thou shalt nat shryve thee for veyne glorie, ne for ypocrisye, ne for no cause

but oonly for the doute of Jhesu Crist and the heele of thy soule.

Thow shalt nat eek renne to the preest sodeynly to tellen hym lightly thy synne,  
 as whoso telleth a jape or a tale, but avysely and with greet devocioun.  
 And generally, shryve thee ofte. If thou ofte falle, ofte thou arise by confessioun.

And though thou shryve thee ofter than ones of synne of which thou hast be shryven, it is the moore merite.

And, as seith Seint Augustyn, thou shalt have the moore lightly relessyng and grace of God, bothe of synne and of peyne.

And certes, oones a yeere atte leeste wey it is laweful for to been housled, for certes, oones a yeere alle thynges renovellen.

Now have I toold yow of verray Confessioun, that is the seconde partie of Penitence.

The thridde partie of Penitence is Satisfaccioun, and that stant moost generally in almesse and in bodily peyne.

1030 Now been ther thre manere of almesse: contricion of herte, where a man offreth hymself to God;

1030A another is to han pitee of defaute of his neighebores; and the thridde is

1030B in yevynge of good conseil and comfort, goostly and bodily, where men han nede, and namely in sustenaunce of mannes foode.

And tak kep that a man hath nede of thise thinges generally: he hath nede of foode, he hath nede of clothyng and herberwe,

he hath nede of charitable conseil and visitynge in prisone and in maladie, and sepulture of his dede body.

And if thou mayst nat visite the nedeful with thy persone, visite hym by thy message and by thy yiftes.

Thise been general almesses or werkes of charitee of hem that han temporeel riches or discrecioun in conseilynge. Of thise werkes shaltow heren at the day of doom.

Thise almesses shaltow doon of thyne owene propre thynges, and hastily and prively, if thou mayst.

But nathelees, if thou mayst nat doon it prively, thou shalt nat forbere to doon almesse though men seen it, so that it be nat doon for thank of the world, but oonly for thank of Jhesu Crist.

For, as witnesseth Seint Mathew, capitulo quinto, "A citee may nat been hyd that is set on a montayne,

ne men lighte nat a lanterne and put it under a busshel,

but men sette it on a candle-stikke to yeve light to the men in the hous.

Right so shal youre light lighten bifore men, that they may seen youre

goode werkes, and glorifie youre fader that is in hevene."

Now as to speken of bodily peyne, it stant in preyeres, in wakynges, in fastynges, in vertuose techynges of orisouns.

And ye shul understonde that orisouns or preyeres is for to seyn a pitous wyl of herte,

that redresseth it in God and expreseth it by word outward, to remoeven harmes and to han thynges espiritueel and durable, and somtyme temporele thynges; of whiche orisouns, certes, in the orison of the Pater noster hath Jhesu Crist enclosed moost thynges.

1040 Certes, it is privyleged of thre thynges in his dignytee,

1040A for which it is moore digne than any oother preyere, for that Jhesu Crist hymself maked it;

and it is short, for it sholde be koud the moore lightly, and for to withholden it the moore esily in herte, and helpen hymself the ofter with the orisoun,

and for a man sholde be the lasse wery to seyn it, and for a man may nat excusen hym to lerne it,

it is so short and so esy, and for it comprehendeth in it self alle goode preyeres.

The exposicioun of this hooly preyere, that is so excellent and digne, I bitake to thise maistres of theologie,

save thus muchel wol I seyn; that whan thou prayest that God sholde foryeve thee thy giltes as

thou foryevest hem that agilten to thee, be ful wel war that thou ne be nat out of charitee.

This hooly orison amenuseth eek venyal synne, and therfore it aperteneth specially to penitence.

This preyere moste be trewely seyde, and in verray feith, and that men preye to God ordinatly and discretly and devoutly;

and alwey a man shal putten his wyl to be subget to the wille of God.

This orisoun moste eek been seyde with greet humblesse and ful pure, honestly and nat to the anoyauce of any man or womman.

It moste eek been continued with the werkes of charitee.

It avayleth eek agayn the vices of the soule, for, as seith Seint Jerome,

"By fastyng been saved the vices of the flessch, and by preyere the vices of the soule."

After this, thou shalt understonde that bodily peyne stant in wakyng, for Jhesu Crist seith,

"Waketh and preyeth, that ye ne entre in wikked temptacioun."

Ye shul understanden also that fastyng stant in thre thynges: in forberyng of bodily mete and drynke, and in forberyng of worldly jolitee,



and in forberynge of deedly synne; this is to seyn, that a man shal kepen hym fro deedly synne with al his myght.

1050 And thou shalt understanden eek that God ordeyned fastyng, and to fastyng appertenen foure thinges:

largenesse to povre folk, gladnesse of herte espiritueel, nat to been angry ne anoyed, ne grucche for he fasteth, and also resonable houre for to ete; ete by mesure; that is for to seyn, a man shal nat ete in untyme, ne sitte the lenger at his table to ete for he fasteth.

Thanne shaltow understonde that bodily peyne stant in disciplyne or techyng, by word, or by writyng, or in ensample; also in weryng of heyres, or of stamyn, or of haubergeons on hire naked flessh, for Cristes sake, and swiche manere penances.

But war thee wel that swiche manere penaunces on thy flessh ne make nat thyn herte bitter or angry or anoyed of thyself, for bettre is to caste away thyn heyre, than for to caste away the swetenesse of Jhesu Crist.

And therefore seith Seint Paul, "Clothe yow, as they that been chosen of God, in herte of misericorde, debonairetee, suffraunce, and swich manere of clothyng," of whiche Jhesu Crist is moore apayed than of heyres, or haubergeouns, or hauberkes.

Thanne is discipline eek in knockyng of thy brest, in scourgyng with yerdes, in knelynges, in tribulacions, in suffryng paciently wronges that been doon to thee, and eek in pacient suffraunce of maladies, or lesyng of worldly catel, or of wyf, or of child, or othere freendes.

Thanne shaltow understonde whiche thynges destourben penaunce; and this is in foure maneres:

that is, drede, shame, hope, and wanhope, that is desperacion.

And for to speke first of drede, for which he weneth that he may suffre no penaunce;

ther-agayns is remedie for to thynke that bodily penaunce is but short and litel at regard of the peyne of helle,

that is so crueel and so long that it lasteth withouten ende.

1060 Now again the shame that a man hath to shryven hym,

1060A and namely thise ypocrites that wolden been holden so parfite that they han no nede to shryven hem;

agayns that shame sholde a man thynke that, by wey of resoun, that he that hath nat been shamed to doon foule thinges,

certes hym oghte nat been ashamed to do faire thynges, and that is confessiouns.

A man sholde eek thynke that God seeth and woot alle his thoghtes

and alle his werkes,  
to hym may no thyng been hyd ne covered.  
Men sholden eek remembren hem of the shame that is to come at the  
day of doom  
to hem that been nat penitent and shryven in this present lyf.  
For alle the creatures in hevene, in erthe, and in helle shullen seen  
apertly al that they hyden in this world.  
Now for to speken of the hope of hem that been negligent and slowe to  
shryven hem, that stant in two maneres.  
That oon is that he hopeth for to lyve longe and for to purchacen  
muche richesse for his delit,  
and thanne he wol shryven hym; and, as he seith, hym semeth thanne  
tymely ynough to come to shrifte.  
Another is of surquidrie that he hath in Cristes mercy.  
Agayns the firste vice, he shal thynke that oure lif is in no sikernesse,  
and eek that alle the riches in this world ben in aventure and  
passen as a shadwe on the wal;  
and, as seith Seint Gregorie, that it aperteneth to the grete  
rightwisnesse of God that  
nevere shal the peyne stynte of hem that nevere wolde withdrawen  
hem fro synne, hir thanks,  
but ay continue in synne; for thilke perpetueel wil to do synne shul  
they han perpetueel peyne.  
1070 Wanhope is in two maneres: the firste wanhope is in the mercy  
of Crist;  
1070A that oother is that they thynken that they ne myghte nat longe  
persevere in goodnesse.  
The firste wanhope comth of that he demeth that he hath synned so  
greetly and so ofte,  
and so longe leyn in synne, that he shal nat be saved.  
Certes, agayns that cursed wanhope sholde he thynke that  
the passion of Jhesu Crist is moore strong for to unbynde than synne  
is strong for to bynde.  
Agayns the seconde wanhope he shal thynke that as ofte as he falleth  
he may arise agayn by penitence.  
And though he never so longe have leyn in synne, the mercy of Crist is  
alwey redy to receiven hym to mercy.  
Agayns the wanhope that he demeth that he sholde nat longe  
persevere in goodnesse,  
he shal thynke that the feblesse of the devel may nothyng doon, but if  
men wol suffren hym;  
and eek he shal han strengthe of the help of God,

and of al hooly chirche, and of the proteccioun of aungels, if hym list.  
 Thanne shal men understonde what is the fruyt of penaunce; and,  
 after the word of Jhesu Crist,  
 it is the endelees blisse of hevene,  
 ther joye hath no contrarioustee of wo ne grevaunce; ther alle harmes  
 been passed of this present lyf;  
 ther as is the sikernes fro the peyne of helle; ther as is the blisful  
 compaignye  
 that rejoysen hem everemo, everich of otheres joye;  
 ther as the body of man, that whilom was foul and derk, is moore cleer  
 than the sonne;  
 ther as the body, that whilom was syk, freele, and fieble, and mortal, is  
 immortal,  
 and so strong and so hool that ther may no thyng apeyren it;  
 ther as ne is neither hunger, thurst, ne coold, but every soule  
 replenyssed with the sighte of the parfit knowynge of God.  
 1080 This blisful regne may men purchase by poverté espiritueel, and  
 the glorie by lowenesse, the plentee of joye  
 1080A by hunger and thurst, and the reste by travaille, and the lyf by  
 deeth and mortificacion of synne.  
 Now preye I to hem alle that herkne this litel tretys or rede,  
 that if ther be any thyng in it that liketh hem,  
 that therof they thanken oure Lord Jhesu Crist, of whom procedeth al  
 wit and al goodnesse.  
 And if ther be any thyng that displese hem, I preye hem also that they  
 arrette it to the defaute  
 of myn unkonnyng and nat to my wyl, that wolde ful fayn have seyde  
 better if I hadde had konnyng.  
 For oure book seith, "Al that is writen is writen for oure doctrine,"  
 and that is myn entente.  
 Wherfore I biseke yow mekely, for the mercy of God,  
 that ye preye for me that Crist have mercy on me and foryeve me my  
 giltes;  
 and namely of my translacions and enditynges of worldly vanitees, the  
 whiche I revoke in my retracciouns:  
 as is the book of Troilus; the book also of Fame;  
 the book of the XXV. Ladies; the book of the Duchesse;  
 the book of Seint Valentynes day of the Parlement of Briddes; the tales  
 of Caunterbury, thilke that sownen into synne;  
 the book of the Leoun; and many another book, if they were in my  
 remembrance, and many a song  
 and many a leccherous lay, that Crist for his grete mercy foryeve me

the synne.

But of the translacion of Boece de Consolacione, and othere bookes of legendes of seintes, and omelies, and moralitee, and devocioun, that thanke I oure Lord Jhesu Crist and his blisful Mooder, and alle the seintes of hevene,

1090 bisekynges hem that they from hennes forth unto my lyves ende sende me grace to biwayle my giltes and to studie

1090A to the salvacioun of my soule, and graunte me grace of verray penitence, confessioun and satisfaccioun to doon in this present lyf, thurgh the benigne grace of hym that is kyng of kynges and preest over alle preestes,

that boghte us with the precious blood of his herte,  
so that I may been oon of hem at the day of doom that shulle be saved.  
Qui cum Patre et Spiritu Sancto vivit et regnat Deus per omnia secula.  
Amen.



## CHAUCER'S RETRACTION

Now preye I to hem alle that herkne this litel tretys or rede,  
that if ther be any thyng in it that liketh hem,  
that therof they thanken oure Lord Jhesu Crist, of whom al wit and al  
goodnesse.

And if ther be any thyng that displese hem, I preye hem that they  
arrette it to the defaute  
of myn unkonnyng and nat to my wyl, that wolde ful fayn seyde better  
if I hadde had konnyng.

For oure book seith, "Al that is writen is writen for doctrine,"  
and that is myn entente.

Wherfore I biseke yow mekely, for the mercy of God,  
that ye preye for me that Crist have mercy on me and me my giltes;  
and namely of my translacions and enditynges of worldly vanitees, the  
whiche I revoke in my retracciouns:

as is the book of Troilus; the book also of Fame;  
the book of the XXV. Ladies; the book of the Duchesse;  
the book of Seint Valentynes day of the Parlement of Briddes; the tales  
of Caunterbury, thilke that sownen into synne;  
the book of the Leoun; and many another book, if they were in my  
remembrance, and many a song  
and many a lecherous lay, that Crist for his grete mercy foryeve me  
the synne.

But of the translacion of Boece de Consolacione, and othere bookes of  
legendes of seintes, and omelies, and moralitee, and devocioun,  
that thanke I oure Lord Jhesu Crist and his blisful Mooder, and alle the  
seintes of hevene,

1090 bisekyng hem that they from hennes forth unto my lyves ende  
sende me grace to biwayle my giltes and to studie

1090A to the salvacioun of my soule, and graunte me grace of verray  
penitence, confessioun and satisfaccioun to doon in this present lyf,  
thurgh the benigne grace of hym that is kyng of kynges and preest  
over alle preestes,

that boghte us with the precious blood of his herte,  
so that I may been oon of hem at the day of doom that shulle be saved.  
Qui cum Patre et Spiritu Sancto vivit et regnat Deus per omnia secula.  
Amen.



## OTHER WORKS

### THE BOOK OF THE DUCHESS

I have gret wonder, be this lyght,  
 How that I lyve, for day ne nyght  
 I may nat slepe wel nygh noght;  
 I have so many an ydel thocht  
 Purely for defaute of slep  
 That, by my trouthe, I take no kep  
 Of nothing, how hyt cometh or gooth,  
 Ne me nys nothyng leef nor looth.  
 Al is ylyche good to me --  
 10 Joye or sorowe, wherso hyt be --  
 For I have felynge in nothyng,  
 But as yt were a mased thyng,  
 Alway in poynt to falle a-doun;  
 For sorwful ymagynacioun  
 Ys alway hooly in my mynde.  
 And wel ye woot, agaynes kynde  
 Hyt were to lyven in thys wyse,  
 For nature wolde nat suffyse  
 To noon erthly creature  
 20 Nat longe tyme to endure  
 Withoute slep and be in sorwe.  
 And I ne may, ne nyght ne morwe,  
 Slepe; and [thus] melancolye  
 And drede I have for to dye.  
 Defaute of slep and hevynesse  
 Hath sleyn my spirit of quyknesse  
 That I have lost al lustyhede.  
 Suche fantasies ben in myn hede  
 So I not what is best to doo.  
 30 But men myght axe me why soo  
 I may not slepe and what me is.  
 But natheles, who aske this  
 Leseth his asking trewely.  
 Myselfen can not telle why  
 The sothe; but trewly, as I gesse,  
 I holde hit be a sicknesse  
 That I have suffred this eight yeer;  
 And yet my boote is never the ner,

For there is phisicien but oon  
40 That may me hele; but that is don.  
Passe we over untill eft;  
That wil not be mot nede be left;  
Our first mater is good to kepe.  
So whan I saw I might not slepe  
Til now late this other night,  
Upon my bed I sat upright  
And bad oon reche me a book,  
A romaunce, and he it me tok  
To rede and drive the night away;  
50 For me thoughte it better play  
Then playe either at ches or tables.  
And in this bok were written fables  
That clerkes had in olde tyme,  
And other poetes, put in rime  
To rede and for to be in minde,  
While men loved the lawe of kinde.  
This bok ne spak but of such thinges,  
Of quenes lives, and of kinges,  
And many other thinges smale.  
60 Amonge al this I fond a tale  
That me thoughte a wonder thing.  
This was the tale: There was a king  
That highte Seys, and had a wif,  
The beste that mighte bere lyf,  
And this quene highte Alcyone.  
So it befil thereafter soone  
This king wol wenden over see.  
To tellen shortly, whan that he  
Was in the see thus in this wise,  
70 Such a tempest gan to rise  
That brak her mast and made it falle,  
And clefte her ship, and dreinte hem alle,  
That never was founde, as it telles,  
Bord ne man, ne nothing elles.  
Right thus this king Seys loste his lif.  
Now for to speke of Alcyone, his wif:  
This lady, that was left at hom,  
Hath wonder that the king ne com  
Hom, for it was a longe terme.  
80 Anon her herte began to [erme];



And for that her thoughte evermo  
It was not wele [he dwelte] so,  
She longed so after the king  
That certes it were a pitous thing  
To telle her hertely sorowful lif  
That she had, this noble wif,  
For him, alas, she loved alderbest.  
Anon she sent bothe eest and west  
To seke him, but they founde nought.  
90 "Alas!" quod she, "that I was wrought!  
And wher my lord, my love, be deed?  
Certes, I nil never ete breed,  
I make avow to my god here,  
But I mowe of my lord here!"  
Such sorowe this lady to her tok  
That trewly I, that made this book,  
Had such pittee and such rowthe  
To rede hir sorwe that, by my trowthe,  
I ferde the worse al the morwe  
100 Aftir to thenken on hir sorwe.  
So whan this lady koude here noo word  
That no man myghte fynde hir lord,  
Ful ofte she swouned, and sayed "Alas!"  
For sorwe ful nygh wood she was,  
Ne she koude no reed but oon;  
But down on knees she sat anoon  
And wepte that pittee was to here.  
"A, mercy, swete lady dere!"  
Quod she to Juno, hir goddesse,  
110 "Helpe me out of thys distresse,  
And yeve me grace my lord to se  
Soone or wite wher-so he be,  
Or how he fareth, or in what wise,  
And I shal make yow sacrifice,  
And hooly youres become I shal  
With good wille, body, herte, and al;  
And but thou wilt this, lady swete,  
Send me grace to slepe and mete  
In my slep som certeyn sweven  
120 Wherthourgh that I may knowen even  
Whether my lord be quyk or ded."  
With that word she heng doun the hed

And fel a-swowne as cold as ston.  
Hyr women kaught hir up anoon  
And broghten hir in bed al naked,  
And she, forweped and forwaked,  
Was wery; and thus the dede slep  
Fil on hir or she tooke kep,  
Throgh Juno, that had herd hir bone,  
130 That made hir to slepe sone.  
For as she prayede, ryght so was don  
In dede; for Juno ryght anon  
Called thus hir messenger  
To doo hir erande, and he com ner.  
Whan he was come, she bad hym thus:  
"Go bet," quod Juno, "to Morpheus --  
Thou knowest hym wel, the god of slep.  
Now understond wel and tak kep!  
Sey thus on my half: that he  
140 Go faste into the Grete Se,  
And byd hym that, on alle thyng,  
He take up Seys body the kyng,  
That lyeth ful pale and nothyng rody.  
Bid hym crepe into the body  
And doo hit goon to Alcione  
The quene, ther she lyeth allone,  
And shewe hir shortly, hit ys no nay,  
How hit was dreynt thys other day;  
And do the body speke ryght soo,  
150 Ryght as hyt was woned to doo  
The whiles that hit was alyve.  
Goo now faste, and hye the blyve!"  
This messenger tok leve and wente  
Upon hys wey, and never ne stente  
Til he com to the derke valeye  
That stant betwixe roches tweye  
Ther never yet grew corn ne gras,  
Ne tre, ne noght that ought was,  
Beste, ne man, ne noght elles,  
160 Save ther were a fewe welles  
Came rennyng fro the clyves adoun,  
That made a dedly slepyng soun,  
And ronnen down ryght by a cave  
That was under a rokke ygrave

Amydde the valey, wonder depe.  
There these goddes lay and slepe,  
Morpheus and Eclympasteyr,  
That was the god of slepes heyr,  
That slep and dide noon other werk.  
170 This cave was also as derk  
As helle-pit overal aboute.  
They had good leyser for to route,  
To envye who myghte slepe best.  
Somme henge her chyn upon hir brest  
And slept upryght, hir hed yhed,  
And somme lay naked in her bed  
And slepe whiles the dayes laste.  
This messenger com fleyng faste  
And cried, "O, how! Awake anon!"  
180 Hit was for noght; there herde hym non.  
"Awake!" quod he, "whoo ys lyth there?"  
And blew his horn ryght in here eere,  
And cried "Awaketh!" wonder hye.  
This god of slep with hys oon ye  
Cast up, and axed, "Who clepeth ther?"  
"Hyt am I," quod this messenger.  
"Juno bad thow shuldest goon" --  
And tolde hym what he shulde doon  
(As I have told yow here-to-fore;  
190 Hyt ys no nede reherse hyt more)  
And went hys wey whan he had sayd.  
Anoon this god of slep abrayd  
Out of hys slep, and gan to goon,  
And dyde as he had bede hym doon:  
Took up the dreynte body sone  
And bar hyt forth to Alcione,  
Hys wif the quene, ther as she lay  
Ryght even a quarter before day,  
And stood ryght at hyr beddes fet,  
200 And called hir ryght as she het  
By name, and sayde, "My swete wyf,  
Awake! Let be your sorwful lyf,  
For in your sorwe there lyth no red;  
For, certes, swete, I am but ded.  
Ye shul me never on lyve yse.  
But, goode swete herte, that ye

Bury my body, for such a tyde  
Ye mowe hyt fynde the see besyde;  
And farewel, swete, my worldes blysse!  
210 I praye God youre sorwe lysse.  
To lytel while oure blysse lasteth!"  
With that hir eyen up she casteth  
And saw noght. "Allas!" quod she for sorwe,  
And deyede within the thridde morwe.  
But what she sayede more in that swow  
I may not telle yow as now;  
Hyt were to longe for to dwelle.  
My first matere I wil yow telle,  
Wherfore I have told this thyng  
220 Of Alcione and Seys the kyng,  
For thus moche dar I saye wel:  
I had be dolven everydel  
And ded, ryght thurgh defaute of slep,  
Yif I ne had red and take kep  
Of this tale next before.  
And I wol telle yow wherfore:  
For I ne myghte, for bote ne bale,  
Slepe or I had red thys tale  
Of this dreynthe Seys the kyng  
230 And of the goddes of slepyng.  
Whan I had red thys tale wel  
And overloked hyt everydel,  
Me thoghte wonder yf hit were so,  
For I had never herd speke or tho  
Of noo goddes that koude make  
Men to slepe, ne for to wake,  
For I ne knew never god but oon.  
And in my game I sayde anoon  
(And yet me lyst ryght evel to pleye)  
240 Rather then that y shulde deye  
Thorgh defaute of slepyng thus,  
I wolde yive thilke Morpheus,  
Or hys goddesse, dame Juno,  
Or som wight elles, I ne roghte who --  
"To make me slepe and have som reste  
I wil yive hym the alderbeste  
Yifte that ever he abod hys lyve.  
And here on warde, ryght now as blyve,

Yif he wol make me slepe a lyte,  
250 Of down of pure dowves white  
I wil yive hym a fether-bed,  
Rayed with gold and ryght wel cled  
In fyn blak satyn doutremer,  
And many a pilowe, and every ber  
Of cloth of Reynes, to slepe softe --  
Hym thar not nede to turnen ofte --  
And I wol yive hym al that falles  
To a chambre, and al hys halles  
I wol do peynte with pure gold  
260 And tapite hem ful many fold  
Of oo sute; this shal he have  
(Yf I wiste where were hys cave),  
Yf he kan make me slepe sone,  
As did the goddesse quene Alcione.  
And thus this ylke god, Morpheus,  
May wynne of me moo fees thus  
Than ever he wan; and to Juno,  
That ys hys goddesse, I shal soo do,  
I trow, that she shal holde hir payd."  
270 I hadde unneth that word ysayd  
Ryght thus as I have told hyt yow,  
That sodeynly, I nyste how,  
Such a lust anon me took  
To slepe that ryght upon my book  
Y fil aslepe, and therwith even  
Me mette so ynly swete a sweven,  
So wonderful that never yit  
Y trowe no man had the wyt  
To konne wel my sweven rede;  
280 No, not Joseph, withoute drede,  
Of Egipte, he that redde so  
The kynges metynge Pharao,  
No more than koude the lest of us;  
Ne nat skarsly Macrobeus  
(He that wrot al th' avysyoun  
That he mette, kyng Scipioun,  
The noble man, the Affrikan --  
Suche marvayles fortunéd than),  
I trowe, arede my dremes even.  
290 Loo, thus hyt was; thys was my sweven.

Me thoghte thus: that hyt was May,  
And in the dawenyng I lay  
(Me mette thus) in my bed al naked  
And loked forth, for I was waked  
With smale foules a gret hep  
That had affrayed me out of my slep  
Thorgh noyse and swetnesse of her song.  
And, as me mette, they sate among  
Upon my chambre roof wythoute,  
300 Upon the tyles, overal aboute,  
And songe, everych in hys wyse,  
The moste solempne servise  
By noote that ever man, y trowe,  
Had herd, for som of hem song lowe,  
Som high, and al of oon acord.  
To telle shortly, att oo word,  
Was never herd so swete a steven  
But hyt had be a thyng of heven --  
So mery a soun, so swete entewnes,  
310 That certes, for the toun of Tewnes  
I nolde but I had herd hem synge;  
For al my chambre gan to rynge  
Thurgh syngyng of her armonye;  
For instrument nor melodye  
Was nowhere herd yet half so swete,  
Nor of acord half so mete;  
For ther was noon of hem that feyned  
To synge, for ech of hem hym peyned  
To fynde out mery crafty notes.  
320 They ne spared not her throttes.  
And sooth to seyn, my chambre was  
Ful wel depeynted, and with glas  
Were al the wyndowes wel yglased  
Ful clere, and nat an hoole ycrased,  
That to beholde hyt was gret joye.  
For hooly al the story of Troye  
Was in the glasyng ywroght thus,  
Of Ector and of kyng Priamus,  
Of Achilles and of kyng Lamedon,  
330 And eke of Medea and of Jason,  
Of Paris, Eleyne, and of Lavyne.  
And alle the walles with colours fyne

Were peynted, bothe text and glose,  
[Of] al the Romaunce of the Rose.  
My wyndowes were shette echon,  
And throgh the glas the sonne shon  
Upon my bed with bryghte bemes,  
With many glade gilde stremes;  
And eke the welken was so fair --  
340 Blew, bryght, clere was the ayr,  
And ful attempre for sothe hyt was;  
For nother to cold nor hoot yt nas,  
Ne in al the welken was a clowde.  
And as I lay thus, wonder lowde  
Me thocht I herde an hunte blowe  
T' assay hys horn and for to knowe  
Whether hyt were clere or hors of soun.  
And I herde goynge bothe up and doun  
Men, hors, houndes, and other thyng;  
350 And al men speken of huntynge,  
How they wolde slee the hert with strengthe,  
And how the hert had upon lengthe  
So moche embosed -- y not now what.  
Anoon ryght whan I herde that,  
How that they wolde on-huntynge goon,  
I was ryght glad, and up anoon  
Took my hors, and forth I wente  
Out of my chambre; I never stente  
Til I com to the feld withoute.  
360 Ther overtok y a gret route  
Of huntres and eke of foresteres,  
With many relayes and lymeres,  
And hyed hem to the forest faste  
And I with hem. So at the laste  
I asked oon, ladde a lymere:  
"Say, felowe, who shal hunte here?"  
Quod I, and he answered ageyn,  
"Syr, th' emperour Octovyen,"  
Quod he, "and ys here faste by."  
370 "A Goddes half, in good tyme!" quod I,  
"Go we faste!" and gan to ryde.  
Whan we came to the forest syde,  
Every man dide ryght anoon  
As to huntynge fil to doon.

The mayster-hunte anoon, fot-hot,  
With a gret horn blew thre mot  
At the uncouplynge of hys houndes.  
Withynne a while the hert yfounded ys,  
Yhalowed, and rechased faste  
380 Longe tyme; and so at the laste  
This hert rused and staal away  
Fro alle the houndes a privy way.  
The houndes had overshote hym alle  
And were on a defaute yfalle.  
Therwyth the hunte wonder faste  
Blew a forloyn at the laste.  
I was go walked fro my tree,  
And as I wente, ther cam by mee  
A whelp, that fauned me as I stood,  
390 That hadde yfolowed and koude no good.  
Hyt com and crepte to me as lowe  
Ryght as hyt hadde me yknowe,  
Helde doun hys hed and joyned hys eres,  
And leyde al smothe doun hys heres.  
I wolde have kaught hyt, and anoon  
Hyt fledde and was fro me goon;  
And I hym folwed, and hyt forth wente  
Doun by a floury grene wente  
Ful thikke of gras, ful softe and swete.  
400 With floures fele, faire under fete,  
And litel used; hyt semed thus,  
For both Flora and Zephirus,  
They two that make floures growe,  
Had mad her dwellynge ther, I trowe;  
For hit was, on to beholde,  
As thogh the erthe envye wolde  
To be gayer than the heven,  
To have moo floures, swiche seven,  
As in the welken sterres bee.  
410 Hyt had forgete the povertie  
That wynter, thorgh hys colde morwes,  
Had mad hyt suffre, and his sorwes;  
All was forgotten, and that was sene,  
For al the woode was waxen grene;  
Swetnesse of dew had mad hyt waxe.  
Hyt ys no nede eke for to axe



Wher there were many grene greves,  
Or thikke of trees, so ful of leves;  
And every tree stood by hymselfe  
420 Fro other wel ten foot or twelve --  
So grete trees, so huge of strengthe,  
Of fourty or fifty fadme lengthe,  
Clene withoute bowgh or stikke,  
With croppes brode, and eke as thikke --  
They were nat an ynche asonder --  
That hit was shadewe overal under.  
And many an hert and many an hynde  
Was both before me and behynde.  
Of founes, sowres, bukkes, does  
430 Was ful the woode, and many roes,  
And many sqwirelles that sete  
Ful high upon the trees and ete,  
And in hir maner made festes.  
Shortly, hyt was so ful of bestes  
That thogh Argus, the noble countour,  
Sete to rekene in hys countour,  
And rekene with his figures ten --  
For by tho figures mowe al ken,  
Yf they be crafty, rekene and noumbre,  
440 And telle of every thing the noumbre --  
Yet shoulde he fayle to rekene even  
The wondres me mette in my sweven.  
But forth they romed ryght wonder faste  
Doun the woode; so at the laste  
I was war of a man in blak,  
That sat and had yturned his bak  
To an ook, an huge tree.  
"Lord," thought I, "who may that be?  
What ayleth hym to sitten her?"  
450 Anoon-ryght I wente ner;  
Than found I sitte even upryght  
A wonder wel-farynge knyght --  
By the maner me thoghte so --  
Of good mochel, and ryght yong therto,  
Of the age of foure and twenty yer,  
Upon hys berd but lytel her,  
And he was clothed al in blak.  
I stalked even unto hys bak,

And there I stood as stille as ought,  
460 That, soth to saye, he saw me nought;  
For-why he heng hys hed adoun,  
And with a dedly sorwful soun  
He made of rym ten vers or twelve  
Of a compleynte to hymselfe --  
The moste pitee, the moste rowthe,  
That ever I herde; for, by my trowthe,  
467 Hit was gret wonder that Nature  
Myght suffre any creature  
To have such sorwe and be not ded.  
470 Ful pitous pale and nothyng red,  
He sayd a lay, a maner song,  
Withoute noote, withoute song;  
And was thys, for ful wel I kan  
Reherse hyt; ryght thus hyt began:  
"I have of sorwe so gret won  
That joye gete I never non,  
Now that I see my lady bryght,  
Which I have loved with al my myght,  
Is fro me ded and ys agoon.  
"Allas, deth, what ayleth the,  
That thou noldest have taken me,  
Whan thou toke my lady swete,  
That was so fair, so fresh, so fre,  
So good that men may wel se  
Of al goodnesse she had no mete!"  
Whan he had mad thus his complaynte,  
Hys sorwful hert gan faste faynte  
And his spirites wexen dede;  
490 The blood was fled for pure drede  
Doun to hys herte, to make hym warm --  
For wel hyt feled the herte had harm --  
To wite eke why hyt was adrad  
By kynde, and for to make hyt glad,  
For hit ys membre principal  
Of the body; and that made al  
Hys hewe chaunge and wexe grene  
And pale, for ther noo blood ys sene  
In no maner lym of hys.  
500 Anoon therwith whan y sawgh this --  
He ferde thus evel there he set --

I went and stood ryght at his fet,  
And grette hym; but he spak noght,  
But argued with his owne thoght,  
And in hys wyt disputed faste  
Why and how hys lyf myght laste;  
Hym thoughte hys sorwes were so smerte  
And lay so colde upon hys herte.  
So, throgh hys sorwe and hevy thoght,  
510 Made hym that he herde me noght;  
For he had wel nygh lost hys mynde,  
Thogh Pan, that men clepeth god of kynde,  
Were for hys sorwes never so wroth.  
But at the last, to sayn ryght soth,  
He was war of me, how y stood  
Before hym and did of myn hood,  
And had ygret hym as I best koude,  
Debonayrly, and nothyng lowde.  
He sayde, "I prey the, be not wroth.  
520 I herde the not, to seyn the soth,  
Ne I sawgh the not, syr, trewely."  
"A, goode sir, no fors," quod y,  
"I am ryght sory yif I have ought  
Destroubled yow out of your thought.  
Foryive me, yif I have mystake."  
"Yis, th' amendes is lyght to make,"  
Quod he, "for ther lyeth noon therto;  
There ys nothyng myssayd nor do."  
Loo, how goodly spak thys knyght,  
530 As hit had be another wyght;  
He made hyt nouthur towgh ne queynte.  
And I saw that, and gan me aqueynte  
With hym, and fond hym so trefable,  
Ryght wonder skylful and resonable,  
As me thoghte, for al hys bale.  
Anoon ryght I gan fynde a tale  
To hym, to loke wher I myght ought  
Have more knowynge of hys thought.  
"Sir," quod I, "this game is doon.  
540 I holde that this hert be goon;  
These huntres konne hym nowher see."  
"Y do no fors therof," quod he;  
"My thought ys theron never a del."

"By oure Lord," quod I, "y trow yow wel;  
Ryght so me thinketh by youre chere.  
But, sir, oo thyng wol ye here?  
Me thynketh in gret sorowe I yow see;  
But certes, sire, yif that yee  
Wolde ought discure me youre woo,  
550 I wolde, as wys God helpe me soo,  
Amende hyt, yif I kan or may.  
Ye mowe preve hyt be assay;  
For, by my trouthe, to make yow hool  
I wol do al my power hool.  
And telleth me of your sorwes smerte;  
Paraunter hyt may ese youre herte,  
That semeth ful sek under your syde."  
With that he loked on me asyde,  
As who sayth, "Nay, that wol not be."  
560 "Graunt mercy, goode frend," quod he,  
"I thanke the that thow woldest soo,  
But hyt may never the rather be doo.  
No man may my sorwe glade,  
That maketh my hewe to falle and fade,  
And hath myn understandyng lorn  
That me ys wo that I was born!  
May noght make my sorwes slyde,  
Nought al the remedyes of Ovyde,  
Ne Orpheus, god of melodye,  
570 Ne Dedalus with his playes slye;  
Ne hele me may no phisicien,  
Noght Ypocras ne Galyen;  
Me ys wo that I lyve houres twelve.  
But whooso wol assay hymselfe  
Whether his hert kan have pitee  
Of any sorwe, lat hym see me.  
Y wrecche, that deth hath mad al naked  
Of al the blysse that ever was maked,  
Yworthe worste of alle wyghtes,  
580 That hate my dayes and my nyghtes!  
My lyf, my lustes, be me loothe,  
For al welfare and I be wroothe.  
The pure deth ys so ful my foo  
That I wolde deye, hyt wolde not soo;  
For whan I folwe hyt, hit wol flee;

I wolde have hym, hyt nyl nat me.  
This ys my peyne wythoute red,  
Alway deyng and be not ded,  
That Cesiphus, that lyeth in helle,  
590 May not of more sorwe telle.  
And whoso wiste al, by my trouthe,  
My sorwe, but he hadde rowthe  
And pitee of my sorwes smerte,  
That man hath a fendly herte;  
For whoso seeth me first on morwe  
May seyn he hath met with sorwe,  
For y am sorwe, and sorwe ys y.  
"Allas! and I wol tel the why:  
My [song] ys turned to pleynynge,  
600 And al my laughtre to wepyng,  
My glade thoghtes to hevynesse;  
In travayle ys myn ydelnesse  
And eke my reste; my wele is woo,  
My good ys harm, and evermoo  
In wrathe ys turned my pleyng  
And my delyt into sorwyng.  
Myn hele ys turned into seknesse,  
In drede ys al my sykernesse;  
To derke ys turned al my lyght,  
610 My wyt ys foly, my day ys nyght,  
My love ys hate, my slep wakyng,  
My myrthe and meles ys fastyng,  
My countenaunce ys nycete  
And al abaved, where so I be;  
My pees in pledyng and in werre.  
Allas, how myghte I fare werre?  
My boldnesse ys turned to shame,  
For fals Fortune hath pleyd a game  
Atte ches with me, allas the while!  
620 The trayteresse fals and ful of gyle,  
That al behoteth and nothyng halt,  
She goth upryght and yet she halt,  
That baggeth foule and loketh faire,  
The dispitouse debonaire  
That skorneth many a creature!  
An ydole of fals portrayture  
Ys she, for she wol sone wrien;

She is the monstres hed ywrien,  
 As fylthe over-ystrawed with floures.  
 630 Hir moste worshippe and hir flour ys  
 To lyen, for that ys hyr nature;  
 Withoute feyth, lawe, or mesure  
 She ys fals, and ever laughynge  
 With oon eye, and that other wepynge.  
 That ys broght up she set al doun.  
 I lykne hyr to the scorioun,  
 That ys a fals, flatteryng beste,  
 For with his hed he maketh feste,  
 But al amyddde hys flatteryng  
 640 With hys tayle he wol styng  
 And envenyme; and so wol she.  
 She ys th' envyouse charite  
 That ys ay fals and semeth wel;  
 So turneth she hyr false whel  
 About, for hyt ys nothyng stable --  
 Now by the fire, now at table;  
 For many oon hath she thus yblent.  
 She ys pley of enchauntement,  
 That semeth oon and ys not soo.  
 650 The false thef! What hath she doo,  
 Trowest thou? By oure Lord I wol the seye:  
 "At the ches with me she gan to pleye;  
 With hir false draughtes dyvers  
 She stal on me and tok my fers.  
 And whan I sawgh my fers awaye,  
 Allas, I kouthe no lenger playe,  
 But seyde, 'Farewel, swete, ywys,  
 And farewel al that ever ther ys!'  
 "Therwith Fortune seyde 'Chek her!  
 660 And mat in the myd poynt of the chekker,  
 With a poun errant!' Allas,  
 Ful craftier to pley she was  
 Than Athalus, that made the game  
 First of the ches, so was hys name.  
 But God wolde I had oones or twyes  
 Ykoud and knowe the jeupardyes  
 That kowde the Grek Pictagores!  
 I shulde have pleyd the bet at ches  
 And kept my fers the bet therby.

670 And thogh wherto? For trewely  
I holde that wyssh nat worth a stree!  
Hyt had be never the bet for me,  
For Fortune kan so many a wyle  
Ther be but fewe kan hir begile;  
And eke she ys the lasse to blame;  
Myself I wolde have do the same,  
Before God, hadde I ben as she;  
She oghte the more excused be.  
For this I say yet more therto:  
680 Had I be God and myghte have do  
My wille whan she my fers kaughte,  
I wolde have drawe the same draughte.  
For, also wys God yive me reste,  
I dar wel swere she took the beste.  
But through that draughte I have lorn  
My blysse; alas, that I was born!  
For evermore, y trowe trewly,  
For al my wille, my lust holly  
Ys turned; but yet, what to doone?  
690 Be oure Lord, hyt ys to deye soone.  
For nothyng I leve hyt noght,  
But lyve and deye ryght in this thoght;  
For there nys planete in firmament,  
Ne in ayr ne in erthe noon element,  
That they ne yive me a yifte echone  
Of wepyng whan I am allone.  
For whan that I avise me wel  
And bethenke me every del  
How that ther lyeth in rekenyng,  
700 In my sorwe, for nothyng,  
And how ther leveth no gladnesse  
May glade me of my distresse,  
And how I have lost suffisance,  
And therto I have no plesance,  
Than may I say I have ryght noght.  
And whan al this falleth in my thoght,  
Allas, than am I overcome!  
For that ys doon ys not to come.  
I have more sorowe than Tantale."  
710 And whan I herde hym tel thys tale  
Thus pitously, as I yow telle,

Unnethe myght y lenger dwelle,  
Hyt dyde myn herte so moche woo.  
"A, goode sir," quod I, "say not soo!  
Have som pitee on your nature  
That formed yow to creature.  
Remembre yow of Socrates,  
For he ne counted nat thre strees  
Of noght that Fortune koude doo."  
720 "No," quod he, "I kan not soo."  
"Why so, good syr? Yis parde!" quod y;  
"Ne say noght soo, for trewely,  
Thogh ye had lost the ferses twelve,  
And ye for sorwe mordred yourselve,  
Ye sholde be dampned in this cas  
By as good ryght as Medea was,  
That slough hir children for Jasoun;  
And Phyllis also for Demophoun  
Heng himself -- so weylaway! --  
730 For he had broke his terme-day  
731 To come to hir. Another rage  
Had Dydo, the quene eke of Cartage,  
That slough himself for Eneas  
Was fals -- which a fool she was!  
And Ecquo died for Narcisus  
Nolde nat love hir, and ryght thus  
Hath many another folly doon;  
And for Dalida died Sampson,  
That slough hymself with a piler.  
740 But ther is no man alyve her  
Wolde for a fers make this woo!"  
"Why so?" quod he, "hyt ys nat soo.  
Thou wost ful lytel what thou menest;  
I have lost more than thow wenest."  
"Loo, [sey] how that may be?" quod y;  
"Good sir, telle me al hooly  
In what wyse, how, why, and wherfore  
That ye have thus youre blysse lore."  
"Blythely," quod he; "com sytte adoun!"  
750 I telle the upon a condicioun  
That thou shalt hooly, with al thy wyt,  
Doo thyn entent to herkene hit."  
"Yis, syr." "Swere thy trouthe therto."



"Gladly." "Do thanne holde hereto!"  
"I shal ryght blythely, so God me save,  
Hooly, with al the wit I have,  
Here yow as wel as I kan."  
"A Goddes half!" quod he, and began:  
"Syr," quod he, "sith first I kouthe  
760 Have any maner wyt fro youthe,  
Or kyndely understandyng  
To comprehende in any thyng  
What love was, in myn owne wyt,  
Dredeles, I have ever yit  
Be tributarye and yive rente  
To Love, hooly with good entente,  
And throgh plesaunce become his thral  
With good wille, body, hert, and al.  
Al this I putte in his servage,  
770 As to my lord, and dide homage;  
And ful devoutly I prayed hym to  
He shulde besette myn herte so  
That hyt plesance to hym were  
And worship to my lady dere.  
"And this was longe, and many a yer  
Or that myn herte was set owher,  
That I dide thus, and nyste why;  
I trowe hit cam me kyndely.  
Paraunter I was therto most able,  
780 As a whit wal or a table,  
For hit ys redy to cacche and take  
Al that men wil theryn make,  
Whethir so men wil portreye or peynte,  
Be the werkes never so queynte.  
"And thilke tyme I ferde ryght so,  
I was able to have lerned tho,  
And to have kend as wel or better,  
Paraunter, other art or letre;  
But for love cam first in my thoght,  
790 Therefore I forgat hyt noght.  
I ches love to my firste craft;  
Therefore hit ys with me laft,  
For-why I tok hyt of so yong age  
That malyce hadde my corage  
Nat that tyme turned to nothyng

Thorgh to mochel knowlechyng.  
For that tyme Yowthe, my maistresse,  
Governed me in ydelnesse;  
For hyt was in my firste youthe,  
800 And thoo ful lytel good y couthe,  
For al my werkes were flyttynge  
That tyme, and al my thoght varyinge.  
Al were to me ylyche good  
That I knew thoo; but thus hit stood:  
"Hit happed that I cam on a day  
Into a place ther that I say  
Trewly the fayrest companye  
Of ladyes that evere man with ye  
Had seen togedres in oo place.  
810 Shal I clepe hyt hap other grace  
That broght me there? Nay, but Fortune,  
That ys to lyen ful comune,  
813 The false trayteresse pervers!  
God wolde I koude clepe hir wers,  
For now she worcheth me ful woo,  
And I wol telle sone why soo.  
"Among these ladyes thus echon,  
Soth to seyen, y sawgh oon  
That was lyk noon of the route;  
820 For I dar swere, withoute doute,  
That as the someres sonne bryght  
Ys fairer, clerer, and hath more lyght  
Than any other planete in heven,  
The moone or the sterres seven,  
For al the world so hadde she  
Surmounted hem alle of beaute,  
Of maner, and of comlynesse,  
Of stature, and of wel set gladnesse,  
Of goodlyhede so wel beseye --  
830 Shortly, what shal y more seye?  
By God and by his halwes twelve,  
Hyт was my swete, ryght as hirselve.  
She had so stedfast countenaunce,  
So noble port and meyntenaunce,  
And Love, that had wel herd my boone,  
Had espyed me thus soone,  
That she ful sone in my thoght,

As helpe me God, so was ykaught  
So sodenly that I ne tok  
840 No maner counseyl but at hir lok  
And at myn herte; for-why hir eyen  
So gladly, I trow, myn herte seyen  
That purely tho myn owne thoght  
Seyde hit were beter serve hir for noght  
Than with another to be wel.  
And hyt was soth, for everydel  
I wil anoon ryght telle thee why.  
"I sawgh hyr daunce so comlily,  
Carole and synge so swetely,  
850 Laughe and pleye so womanly,  
And loke so debonairly,  
So goodly speke and so frendly,  
That certes y trowe that evermor  
Nas seyn so blysful a tresor.  
For every heer on hir hed,  
Soth to seyne, hyt was not red,  
Ne nouthur yelowne ne broun hyt nas;  
Me thoghte most lyk gold hyt was.  
"And whiche eyen my lady hadde!  
860 Debonaire, goode, glade, and sadde,  
Symple, of good mochel, noght to wyde.  
Therto hir look nas not asyde  
Ne overthwert, but beset so wel  
Hyt drew and took up everydel  
Al that on hir gan beholde.  
Hir eyen semed anoon she wolde  
Have mercy -- fooles wenden soo --  
But hyt was never the rather doo.  
Hyt nas no countrefeted thyng;  
870 Hyt was hir owne pure lokyng  
That the goddesse, dame Nature,  
Had mad hem opene by mesure  
And close; for were she never so glad,  
Hyr lokynge was not folly sprad,  
Ne wildely, thogh that she pleyde;  
But ever, me thoght, hir eyen seyde,  
'Be God, my wrathe ys al foryive!'  
"Therwith hir lyste so wel to lyve,  
That dulnesse was of hir adrad.

880 She nas to sobre ne to glad;  
In alle thynges more mesure  
Had never, I trowe, creature.  
But many oon with hire lok she herte,  
And that sat hyr ful lyte at herte,  
For she knew nothyng of her thoght;  
But whether she knew or knew it nowght  
Algate she ne roughete of hem a stree! --  
To gete her love no ner nas he  
That woned at hom than he in Ynde;  
890 The formest was alway behynde.  
But goode folk, over al other,  
She loved as man may do hys brother;  
Of which love she was wonder large,  
In skilful places that bere charge.  
"But which a visage had she thertoo!  
Allas, myn herte ys wonder woo  
That I ne kan discryven hyt!  
Me lakketh both Englyssh and wit  
For to undo hyt at the fulle;  
900 And eke my spirites be so dulle  
So gret a thyng for to devyse.  
I have no wit that kan suffise  
To comprehende hir beaute.  
But thus moche dar I sayn, that she  
Was whit, rody, fressh, and lyvely hewed,  
And every day hir beaute newed.  
And negh hir face was alderbest,  
For certes Nature had swich lest  
To make that fair that trewly she  
910 Was hir chef patron of beaute,  
And chef ensample of al hir werk,  
And moustre; for be hyt never so derk,  
Me thynketh I se hir ever moo.  
And yet moreover, thogh alle thoo  
That ever livede were now alyve,  
Ne sholde have founde to discryve  
Yn al hir face a wikked sygne,  
For hit was sad, symple, and benygne.  
"And which a goodly, softe speche  
920 Had that swete, my lyves leche!  
So frendly, and so wel ygrounded,

Up al resoun so wel yfounded,  
And so trefable to alle goode  
That I dar swere wel, by the roode,  
Of eloquence was never founde  
So swete a sownynge facounde,  
Ne trewer tonged, ne skorned lasse,  
Ne bet koude hele -- that, by the masse  
I durste swere, thogh the pope hit songe,  
930 That ther was never yet thogh hir tonge  
Man ne woman gretly harmed;  
As for her, was al harm hyd --  
Ne lasse flaterynge in hir word,  
That purely hir symple record  
Was founde as trewe as any bond  
Or trouthe of any mannes hond;  
Ne chyde she koude never a del;  
That knoweth al the world ful wel.  
"But swich a fairnesse of a nekke  
940 Had that swete that boon nor brekke  
Nas ther non sene that myssat.  
Hyt was whit, smothe, streght, and pure flat,  
Wythouten hole or canel-boon,  
As be semyng had she noon.  
Hyr throte, as I have now memoyre,  
Semed a round tour of yvoyre,  
Of good gretnesse, and noght to gret.  
"And goode faire White she het;  
That was my lady name ryght.  
950 She was bothe fair and bryght;  
She hadde not hir name wrong.  
Ryght faire shuldres and body long  
She had, and armes, every lyth  
Fattyssh, flesshy, not gret therwith;  
Ryght white handes, and nayles rede;  
Rounde brestes; and of good brede  
Hyr hippes were; a streight flat bak.  
I knew on hir noon other lak  
That al hir lymmes nere pure sewynge  
960 In as fer as I had knowynge.  
"Therto she koude so wel pleye,  
Whan that hir lyst, that I dar seye  
That she was lyk to torche bryght

That every man may take of lyght  
Ynogh, and hyt hath never the lesse.  
Of maner and of comlynesse  
Ryght so ferde my lady dere,  
For every wight of hir manere  
Myght cacche ynogh, yif that he wolde,  
970 Yif he had eyen hir to beholde;  
For I dar swere wel, yif that she  
Had among ten thousand be,  
She wolde have be, at the leste,  
A chef myrour of al the feste,  
Thogh they had stonden in a rowe,  
To mennes eyen that koude have knowe;  
For wher-so men had pleyd or waked,  
Me thoghte the felawsshyppe as naked  
Withouten hir that sawgh I oones  
980 As a corowne withoute stones.  
981 Trewly she was, to myn ye  
The soleyn fenix of Arabye,  
For ther livyth never but oon,  
Ne swich as she ne knowe I noon.  
"To speke of godnesse, trewly she  
Had as moche debonairte  
As ever had Hester in the Bible,  
And more, yif more were possyble.  
And soth to seyne, therwythal  
990 She had a wyt so general,  
So hool enclyned to alle goode,  
That al hir wyt was set, by the rode,  
Withoute malyce, upon gladnesse;  
And therto I saugh never yet a lesse  
Harmful than she was in doynge.  
I sey nat that she ne had knowynge  
What harm was, or elles she  
Had koud no good, so thinketh me.  
"And trewly for to speke of trouthe,  
1000 But she had had, hyt hadde be routhe.  
Therof she had so moche hyr del --  
And I dar seyn and swere hyt wel --  
That Trouthe hymself over al and al  
Had chose hys maner principal  
In hir that was his restyng place.

Therto she hadde the moste grace  
To have stedefast perseveraunce  
And esy, atempre governaunce  
That ever I knew or wyste yit,  
1010 So pure suffraunt was hir wyt;  
And reson gladly she understood;  
Hyt folowed wel she koude good.  
She used gladly to do wel;  
These were hir maners everydel.  
"Therwith she loved so wel ryght  
She wrong do wolde to no wyght.  
No wyght myghte do hir noo shame,  
She loved so wel hir owne name.  
Hyr lust to holde no wyght in honde,  
1020 Ne, be thou siker, she wolde not fonde  
To holde no wyght in balaunce  
By half word ne by countenaunce --  
But if men wolde upon hir lye --  
Ne sende men into Walakye,  
To Pruyse, and into Tartarye,  
To Alysandre, ne into Turkye,  
And byd hym faste anon that he  
Goo hoodles into the Drye Se  
And come hom by the Carrenar,  
1030 And seye, `Sir, be now ryght war  
That I may of yow here seyn  
Worshyp or that ye come ageyn!'  
She ne used no suche knakkes smale.  
"But wherfore that y telle my tale?  
Ryght on thys same, as I have seyde,  
Was hooly al my love leyde;  
For certes she was, that swete wif,  
1038 My suffisaunce, my lust, my lyf,  
Myn hap, myn hele, and al my blesse,  
1040 My worldes welfare, and my goddesse,  
And I hooly hires and everydel."  
"By oure Lord," quod I, "y trowe yow wel!  
Hardely, your love was wel beset;  
I not how ye myghte have do bet."  
"Bet? Ne no wyght so wel," quod he.  
"Y trowe hyt wel, sir," quod I, "parde!"  
"Nay, leve hyt wel!" "Sire, so do I;

I leve yow wel, that trewely  
Yow thoghte that she was the beste  
1050 And to beholde the alderfayreste,  
Whoso had loked hir with your eyen."  
"With myn? Nay, alle that hir seyen  
Seyde and sworn hyt was soo.  
And thogh they ne hadde, I wolde thoo  
Have loved best my lady free,  
Thogh I had had al the beaute  
That ever had Alcipyades,  
And al the strengthe of Ercules,  
And therto had the worthynesse  
1060 Of Alysaunder, and al the rychesse  
That ever was in Babyloyne,  
In Cartage, or in Macedoyne,  
1063 Or in Rome, or in Nynyve;  
And therto also hardy be  
As was Ector, so have I joye,  
That Achilles slough at Troye --  
And therfore was he slayn alsoo  
In a temple, for bothe twoo  
Were slayne, he and Antylegyus  
1070 (And so seyth Dares Frygius),  
For love of Polixena --  
Or ben as wis as Mynerva,  
I wolde ever, withoute drede,  
Have loved hir, for I moste nede.  
'Nede?' Nay, trewly, I gabbe now;  
Noght 'nede,' and I wol tellen how:  
For of good wille myn herte hyt wolde,  
And eke to love hir I was holde  
As for the fairest and the beste.  
1080 She was as good, so have I reste,  
As ever was Penelopee of Grece,  
Or as the noble wif Lucrece,  
That was the beste -- he telleth thus,  
The Romain, Tytus Lyvyus --  
She was as good, and nothyng lyk  
(Thogh hir stories be autentyk),  
Algate she was as trewe as she.  
"But wherfore that I telle thee  
Whan I first my lady say?



1090 I was ryght yong, soth to say,  
And ful gret nede I hadde to lerne;  
Whan my herte wolde yerne  
To love, hyt was a gret empryse.  
But as my wyt koude best suffise,  
After my yonge childly wyt,  
Withoute drede, I besette hyt  
To love hir in my beste wyse,  
To do hir worship and the servise  
That I koude thoo, be my trouthe,  
1100 Withoute feynynge outhur slouthe,  
For wonder feyn I wolde hir se.  
So mochel hyt amended me  
That whan I saugh hir first a-morwe  
I was warished of al my sorwe  
Of al day after; til hyt were eve  
Me thoghte nothyng myghte me greve,  
Were my sorwes never so smerte.  
And yet she syt so in myn herte  
That, by my trouthe, y nolde noght  
1110 For al thys world out of my thoght  
Leve my lady; noo, trewely!"  
"Now, by my trouthe, sir," quod I,  
"Me thynketh ye have such a chaunce  
As shryfte wythoute repentaunce."  
"Repentaunce? Nay, fy!" quod he,  
"Shulde y now repente me  
To love? Nay, certes, than were I wel  
Wers than was Achitofel,  
Or Anthenor, so have I joye,  
1120 The traytor that betraysed Troye,  
Or the false Genelloun,  
He that purchased the tresoun  
Of Rowland and of Olyver.  
Nay, while I am alyve her,  
I nyl foryete hir never moo."  
"Now, goode syre," quod I thoo,  
"Ye han wel told me herebefore;  
Hyт ys no nede to rehearse it more,  
How ye sawe hir first, and where.  
1130 But wolde ye tel me the manere  
To hire which was your firste speche --

Therof I wolde yow beseche --  
 And how she knewe first your thoght,  
 Whether ye loved hir or noght?  
 And telleth me eke what ye have lore,  
 I herde yow telle herebefore."  
 "Yee!" seyde he, "thow nost what thow menest;  
 I have lost more than thou wenest."  
 "What los ys that?" quod I thoo;  
 1140 "Nyl she not love yow? Ys hyt soo?  
 Or have ye oght doon amys,  
 That she hath left yow? Ys hyt this?  
 For Goddes love, telle me al."  
 "Before God," quod he, "and I shal.  
 I saye ryght as I have seyde,  
 On hir was al my love leyde,  
 And yet she nyste hyt nat, never a del  
 Noght longe tyme, leve hyt wel!  
 For be ryght siker, I durste noght  
 1150 For al this world telle hir my thoght,  
 Ne I wolde have wraththed hir, trewely.  
 For wostow why? She was lady  
 Of the body; she had the herte,  
 And who hath that may not asterte.  
 But for to kepe me fro ydelnesse,  
 Trewly I dide my besynesse  
 To make songes, as I best koude,  
 And ofte tyme I song hem loude;  
 And made songes thus a gret del,  
 1160 Althogh I koude not make so wel  
 Songes, ne knewe the art al,  
 As koude Lamekes sone Tubal,  
 That found out first the art of songe;  
 For as hys brothres hamers ronge  
 Upon hys anvelt up and down,  
 Therof he took the firste soun --  
 But Grekes seyn Pictagoras,  
 That he the firste fynder was  
 Of the art (Aurora telleth so);  
 1170 But therof no fors of hem two.  
 Algates songes thus I made  
 Of my felynge, myn herte to glade;  
 And, lo, this was [the] altherferste --

I not wher hyt were the werste.  
 `Lord, hyt maketh myn herte lyght  
 Whan I thenke on that swete wyght  
 That is so semely on to see;  
 And wisshe to God hit myghte so bee  
 That she wolde holde me for hir knyght,  
 1180 My lady, that is so fair and bryght!  
 "Now have I told thee, soth to say,  
 My firste song. Upon a day  
 I bethoghte me what woo  
 And sorwe that I suffred thoo  
 For hir, and yet she wyste hyt noght,  
 Ne telle hir durste I nat my thoght.  
 `Allas,' thoghte I, `y kan no red;  
 And but I telle hir, I [nam] but ded;  
 And yif I telle hyr, to seye ryght soth,  
 1190 I am adred she wol be wroth.  
 Allas, what shal I thanne do?'  
 "In this debat I was so wo  
 Me thoghte myn herte braste atweyne!  
 So at the laste, soth to sayne,  
 I bethoghte me that Nature  
 Ne formed never in creature  
 So moche beaute, trewely,  
 And bounte, wythoute mercy.  
 In hope of that, my tale I tolde  
 1200 With sorwe, as that I never sholde,  
 For nedes, and mawgree my hed,  
 I most have told hir or be ded.  
 I not wel how that I began;  
 Ful evel rehersen hyt I kan;  
 And eke, as helpe me God withal,  
 I trowe hyt was in the dismal,  
 That was the ten woundes of Egipte --  
 For many a word I over-skippte  
 In my tale, for pure fere  
 1210 Lest my wordes mysset were.  
 With sorweful herte and woundes dede,  
 Softe and quakyng for pure drede  
 And shame, and styntyng in my tale  
 For ferde, and myn hewe al pale --  
 Ful ofte I wex bothe pale and red --

Bowynge to hir, I heng the hed;  
I durste nat ones loke hir on,  
For wit, maner, and al was goon.  
I seyde 'Mercy!' and no more.  
1220 Hyt nas no game; hyt sat me sore.  
"So at the laste, soth to seyn,  
Whan that myn hert was come ageyn,  
To telle shortly al my speche,  
With hool herte I gan hir beseche  
That she wolde be my lady swete;  
And swor, and gan hir hertely hete  
Ever to be stedfast and trewe,  
And love hir alwey fresshly newe,  
And never other lady have,  
1230 And al hir worship for to save  
As I best koude. I swor hir this:  
'For youres is alle that ever ther ys  
For evermore, myn herte swete!  
And never to false yow, but I mete,  
I nyl, as wys God helpe me soo!"  
"And whan I had my tale y-doo,  
God wot, she acounted nat a stree  
Of al my tale, so thoghte me.  
To telle shortly ryght as hyt ys,  
1240 Trewly hir answeere hyt was this --  
I kan not now wel counterfete  
Hir wordes, but this was the grete  
Of hir answeere: she sayde 'Nay'  
Al outerly. Allas, that day  
The sorowe I suffred and the woo  
That trewly Cassandra, that soo  
Bewayled the destruccioun  
Of Troye and of Ilyoun,  
Had never swich sorwe as I thoo.  
1250 I durste no more say thertoo  
For pure fere, but stal away;  
1252 And thus I lyved ful many a day,  
That trewely I hadde no ned  
Ferther than my beddes hed  
Never a day to seche sorwe;  
I fond hyt redy every morwe,  
For-why I loved hyr in no gere.

"So hit befel, another yere  
I thoughte ones I wolde fonde  
1260 To do hir knowe and understonde  
My woo; and she wel understod  
That I ne wilned thyng but god,  
And worship, and to kepe hir name  
Over alle thynges, and drede hir shame,  
And was so besy hyr to serve,  
And pitee were I shulde sterve,  
Syth that I wilned noon harm, ywis.  
So whan my lady knew al this,  
My lady yaf me al hooly  
1270 The noble yifte of hir mercy,  
Savyngge hir worship by al weyes --  
Dredles, I mene noon other weyes.  
And therwith she yaf me a ryng;  
I trowe hyt was the firste thyng;  
But if myn herte was ywaxe  
Glad, that is no nede to axe!  
As helpe me God, I was as blyve  
Reysed as fro deth to lyve --  
Of al happes the alderbeste,  
1280 The gladdest, and the moste at reste.  
For trewely that swete wyght,  
Whan I had wrong and she the ryght,  
1283 She wolde alway so goodly  
Foryeve me so debonairly.  
In al my yowthe, in al chaunce,  
She took me in hir governaunce.  
Therwyth she was alway so trewe  
Our joye was ever ylyche newe;  
Oure hertes wern so evene a payre  
1290 That never nas that oon contrayre  
To that other for no woo.  
For sothe, ylyche they suffred thoo  
Oo blysse and eke oo sorwe bothe;  
Ylyche they were bothe glad and wrothe;  
Al was us oon, withoute were.  
And thus we lyved ful many a yere  
So wel I kan nat telle how."  
"Sir," quod I, "where is she now?"  
"Now?" quod he, and stynte anoon.

1300 Therwith he wax as ded as stoon  
And seyde, "Allas, that I was bore!  
That was the los that here-before  
I tolde the that I hadde lorn.  
Bethenke how I seyde here-beforn,  
'Thow wost ful lytel what thow menest;  
I have lost more than thow wenest.'  
God wot, allas! Ryght that was she!"  
"Allas, sir, how? What may that be?"  
"She ys ded!" "Nay!" "Yis, be my trouthe!"  
1310 "Is that youre los? Be God, hyt ys routhe!"  
And with that word ryght anoon  
They gan to strake forth; al was doon,  
For that tyme, the hert-huntyng.  
With that me thoghte that this kyng  
Gan homwarde for to ryde  
Unto a place, was there besyde,  
Which was from us but a lyte --  
A long castel with walles white,  
Be Seynt Johan, on a ryche hil,  
1320 As me mette; but thus hyt fil.  
Ryght thus me mette, as I yow telle,  
That in the castell ther was a belle,  
As hyt hadde smyten houres twelve.  
Therwyth I awook myselve  
And fond me lyinge in my bed;  
And the book that I hadde red,  
Of Alcione and Seys the kyng,  
And of the goddes of slepyng,  
I fond hyt in myn hond ful even.  
1330 Thoghte I, "Thys ys so queynt a sweven  
That I wol, be processe of tyme,  
Fonde to put this sweven in ryme  
As I kan best, and that anoon."  
This was my sweven; now hit ys doon.



## THE HOUSE OF FAME

God turne us every drem to goode!  
For hyt is wonder, be the roode,  
To my wyt, what causeth swevenes  
Eyther on morwes or on evenes,  
And why th' effect folweth of somme,  
And of somme hit shal never come;  
Why that is an avision  
And why this a revelacion,  
Why this a drem, why that a sweven,  
10 And noght to every man lyche even;  
Why this a fantome, why these oracles,  
I not; but whoso of these miracles  
The causes knoweth bet then I,  
Devyne he, for I certainly  
Ne kan hem noght, ne never thinke  
To besily my wyt to swinke  
To knowe of hir signiffiaunce  
The gendres, neyther the distaunce  
Of tymes of hem, ne the causes,  
20 Or why this more then that cause is --  
As yf folkys complexions  
Make hem dreame of reflexions,  
Or ellys thus, as other sayn,  
For to gret feblenesse of her brayn,  
By abstinence or by seknesse,  
Prison-stewe or gret distresse,  
Or ellys by dysordynaunce  
Of naturel acostumaunce,  
That som man is to curious  
30 In studye, or melancolyous,  
Or thus so inly ful of drede  
That no man may hym bote bede;  
Or elles that devocion  
Of somme, and contemplacion  
Causeth suche dremes ofte;  
Or that the cruel lyf unsofte  
Which these ilke lovers leden  
That hopen over-muche or dreden,  
That purely her impressions  
40 Causeth hem avisions;

Or yf that spirites have the myght  
To make folk to dreme a-nyght;  
Or yf the soule of propre kynde  
Be so parfit, as men fynde,  
That yt forwot that ys to come,  
And that hyt warneth alle and some  
Of everych of her adventures  
Be avisions or be figures,  
But that oure flessh ne hath no myght  
50 To understonde hyt aryght,  
For hyt is warned to derkly --  
But why the cause is, noght wot I.  
Wel worth of this thyng grete clerkys  
That trete of this and other werkes,  
For I of noon opinion  
Nyl as now make mensyon,  
But oonly that the holy roode  
Turne us every drem to goode!  
For never sith that I was born,  
60 Ne no man elles me beforne,  
Mette, I trowe stedfastly,  
So wonderful a drem as I  
The tenthe day now of Decembre,  
The which, as I kan now remembre,  
I wol yow tellen everydel.  
But at my gynnyng, trusteth wel,  
I wol make invocacion,  
With special devocion,  
Unto the god of slep anon,  
70 That duelleth in a cave of stoon  
Upon a strem that cometh fro Lete,  
That is a flood of helle unswete,  
Besyde a folk men clepeth Cymerie --  
There slepeth ay this god unmerie  
With his slepy thousand sones,  
That alwey for to slepe hir wone is.  
And to this god that I of rede  
Prey I that he wol me spede  
My sweven for to telle aryght,  
80 Yf every drem stonde in his myght.  
And he that mover ys of al,  
That is and was and ever shal,



So yive hem joye that hyt here  
Of alle that they dreme to-yere,  
And for to stonden alle in grace  
Of her loves, or in what place  
That hem were levest for to stonde,  
And shelde hem fro poverte and shonde,  
And from unhap and ech disece,  
90 And sende hem al that may hem plese,  
That take hit wel and skorne hyt noght,  
Ne hyt mysdemen in her thoght  
Thorgh malicious entencion.  
And whoso thorgh presumpcion,  
Or hate, or skorn, or thorgh envye,  
Dispit, or jape, or vilanye,  
Mysdeme hyt, pray I Jesus God  
That (dreme he barefot, dreme he shod),  
That every harm that any man  
100 Hath had syth the world began  
Befalle hym therof or he sterve,  
And graunte he mote hit ful deserve,  
Lo, with such a conclusion  
As had of his avision  
Cresus, that was kyng of Lyde,  
That high upon a gebet dyde.  
This prayer shal he have of me;  
I am no bet in charyte!  
Now herkeneth, as I have yow seyde,  
110 What that I mette or I abreyde.  
Of Decembre the tenthe day,  
Whan hit was nyght to slepe I lay  
Ryght ther as I was wont to done,  
And fil on slepe wonder sone,  
As he that wery was forgo  
On pilgrymage myles two  
To the corseynt Leonard,  
To make lythe of that was hard.  
But as I slepte, me mette I was  
120 Withyn a temple ymad of glas,  
In which ther were moo ymages  
Of gold, stondynge in sondry stages,  
And moo ryche tabernacles,  
And with perre moo pynacles,

And moo curiouse portreytures,  
And queynte maner of figures  
Of olde werk, then I saugh ever.  
For certeynly, I nyste never  
Wher that I was, but wel wyste I  
130 Hyt was of Venus redely,  
The temple; for in portreyture  
I sawgh anoon-ryght hir figure  
Naked fletyng in a see,  
And also on hir hed, pardee,  
Hir rose garlond whit and red,  
And hir comb to kembe hyr hed,  
Hir dowves, and daun Cupido  
Hir blynde sone, and Vulcano,  
That in his face was ful broun.  
140 But as I romed up and doun,  
I fond that on a wall ther was  
Thus writen on a table of bras:  
"I wol now synge, yif I kan,  
The armes and also the man  
That first cam, thurgh his destinee,  
Fugityf of Troy contree,  
In Itayle, with ful moche pyne  
Unto the strondes of Lavyne."  
And tho began the story anoon,  
150 As I shal telle yow echon.  
First sawgh I the destruction  
Of Troye thurgh the Grek Synon,  
[That] with his false forswerynge,  
And his chere and his lesyng,  
Made the hors broght into Troye,  
Thorgh which Troyens loste al her joye.  
And aftir this was grave, allas,  
How Ilyon assayled was  
And wonne, and kyng Priam yslayn  
160 And Polytes his sone, certayn,  
Dispitously, of daun Pirrus.  
And next that sawgh I how Venus,  
Whan that she sawgh the castel brende,  
Doun fro the heven gan descende,  
And bad hir sone Eneas flee;  
And how he fledde, and how that he

Escaped was from al the pres,  
And took his fader Anchises,  
And bar hym on hys bak away,  
170 Cryinge, "Allas, and welaway!"  
The whiche Anchises in hys hond  
Bar the goddes of the lond,  
Thilke that unbrende were.  
And I saugh next, in al thys fere,  
How Creusa, daun Eneas wif,  
Which that he lovede as hys lyf,  
And hir yonge sone Iulo,  
And eke Askanius also,  
Fledden eke with drery chere,  
180 That hyt was pitee for to here;  
And in a forest as they wente,  
At a turnynge of a wente,  
How Creusa was ylost, allas,  
That ded, not I how, she was;  
How he hir soughte, and how hir gost  
Bad hym to flee the Grekes host,  
And seyde he moste unto Itayle,  
As was hys destinee, sauns faille;  
That hyt was pitee for to here,  
190 When hir spirit gan appere,  
The wordes that she to hym seyde,  
And for to kepe hir sone hym preyde.  
Ther sawgh I graven eke how he,  
Hys fader eke, and his meynee,  
With hys shippes gan to saylle  
Towardes the contree of Itaylle  
As streight as that they myghte goo.  
Ther saugh I thee, cruel Juno,  
That art daun Jupiteres wif,  
200 That hast yhated al thy lyf  
Al the Troianyssh blood,  
Renne and crye as thou were wood  
On Eolus, the god of wyndes,  
To blowen oute, of alle kyndes,  
So lowde that he shulde drenche  
Lord and lady, grom and wenche,  
Of al the Troian nacion,  
Withoute any savacion.

Ther saugh I such tempeste aryse  
210 That every herte myght agryse  
To see hyt peynted on the wal.  
Ther saugh I graven eke withal,  
Venus, how ye, my lady dere,  
Wepyng with ful woful chere,  
Prayen Jupiter on hye  
To save and kepe that navye  
Of the Troian Eneas,  
Syth that he hir sone was.  
Ther saugh I Joves Venus kysse,  
220 And graunted of the tempest lysse.  
Ther saugh I how the tempest stente,  
And how with alle pyne he wente,  
And prively tok arryvage  
In the contree of Cartage;  
And on the morwe, how that he  
And a knyght highte Achate  
Mette with Venus that day,  
Goyng in a queynt array  
As she had ben an hunteresse,  
230 With wynd blowyng upon hir tresse;  
How Eneas gan hym to pleyne,  
When that he knew hir, of his peyne;  
And how his shippes dreynte were,  
Or elles lost, he nyste where;  
How she gan hym comforte thoo,  
And bad hym to Cartage goo,  
And ther he shulde his folk fynde,  
That in the see were left behynde.  
And, shortly of this thyng to pace,  
240 She made Eneas so in grace  
Of Dido, quene of that contree,  
That, shortly for to tellen, she  
Becam hys love and let him doo  
Al that weddyng longeth too.  
What shulde I speke more queynte,  
Or peyne me my wordes peynte  
To speke of love? Hyt wol not be;  
I kan not of that faculte.  
And eke to telle the manere  
250 How they aqueynteden in fere,

Hyt were a long proces to telle,  
And over-long for yow to dwelle.  
Ther sawgh I grave how Eneas  
Tolde Dido every caas  
That hym was tyd upon the see.  
And after grave was how shee  
Made of hym shortly at oo word  
Hyr lyf, hir love, hir lust, hir lord,  
And dide hym al the reverence  
260 And leyde on hym al the dispence  
That any woman myghte do,  
Wenyng hyt had al be so  
As he hir swor; and herby demed  
That he was good, for he such semed.  
Allas! what harm doth apparence,  
Whan hit is fals in existence!  
For he to hir a traytour was;  
Wherefore she slow hirself, alas!  
Loo, how a woman doth amys  
270 To love hym that unknowen ys.  
For, be Cryste, lo, thus yt fareth.  
"Hyt is not al gold that glareth."  
For also browke I wel myn hed,  
Ther may be under godlyhed  
Kevered many a shrewed vice.  
Therefore be no wyght so nyce  
To take a love oonly for chere,  
Or speche, or for frendly manere,  
For this shal every woman fynde,  
280 That som man, of his pure kynde,  
Wol shewen outward the fayreste,  
Tyl he have caught that what him leste;  
And thanne wol he causes fynde  
And swere how that she ys unkynde,  
Or fals, or privy, or double was.  
Al this seye I be Eneas  
And Dido, and hir nyce lest,  
That loved al to sone a gest;  
Therefore I wol seye a proverbe,  
290 That "he that fully knoweth th' erbe  
May saufly leye hyt to his ye" --  
Withoute drede, this ys no lye.

But let us speke of Eneas,  
 How he betrayed hir, alas,  
 And lefte hir ful unkyndely.  
 So when she saw al utterly  
 That he wolde hir of trouthe fayle,  
 And wende fro hir to Itayle,  
 She gan to wringe hir hondes two.  
 300 "Allas," quod she, "what me ys woo!  
 Allas, is every man thus trewe,  
 That every yer wolde have a newe,  
 Yf hit so longe tyme dure,  
 Or elles three, peraventure?  
 As thus: of oon he wolde have fame  
 In magnyfyinge of hys name;  
 Another for frendshippe, seyth he;  
 And yet ther shal the thridde be  
 That shal be take for delyt,  
 310 Loo, or for synguler profit"  
 In suche wordes gan to pleyne  
 Dydo of hir grete peyne,  
 As me mette redely --  
 Non other auctour alegge I.  
 "Allas!" quod she, "my swete herte,  
 Have pitee on my sorwes smerte,  
 And slee mee not! Goo noght away!  
 O woful Dido, wel-away!"  
 Quod she to hirselve thoo.  
 320 "O Eneas, what wol ye doo?  
 O that your love, ne your bond  
 That ye have sworn with your ryght hond,  
 Ne my crewel deth," quod she,  
 "May holde yow stille here with me!  
 O haveth of my deth pitee!  
 Iwys, my dere herte, ye  
 Knowen ful wel that never yit,  
 As ferforth as I hadde wyt,  
 Agylte [I] yow in thoght ne dede.  
 330 O, have ye men such godlyhede  
 In speche, and never a del of trouthe?  
 Allas, that ever hadde routhe  
 Any woman on any man!  
 Now see I wel, and telle kan,

We wretched wymmen konne noon art;  
For certeyn, for the more part,  
Thus we be served everychone.  
How sore that ye men konne groone,  
Anoon as we have yow receyved,  
340 Certaynly we ben deceyvyd!  
For, though your love laste a seson,  
Wayte upon the conclusyon,  
And eke how that ye determynen,  
And for the more part diffynen.  
"O wel-away that I was born!  
For thorgh yow is my name lorn,  
And alle myn actes red and songe  
Over al thys lond, on every tonge.  
O wikke Fame! -- for ther nys  
350 Nothing so swift, lo, as she is.  
O, soth ys, every thing ys wyst,  
Though hit be kevered with the myst.  
Eke, though I myghte duren ever,  
That I have don rekever I never,  
That I ne shal be seyde, alas,  
Yshamed be thourgh Eneas,  
And that I shal thus juged be:  
'Loo, ryght as she hath don, now she  
Wol doo eft-sones, hardely' --  
360 Thus seyth the peple prively."  
But that is don, is not to done;  
Al hir compleynt ne al hir moone,  
Certeyn, avayleth hir not a stre.  
And when she wiste sothly he  
Was forth unto his shippes goon,  
She into hir chambre wente anoon,  
And called on hir suster Anne,  
And gan hir to compleyne thanne,  
And seyde that she cause was  
370 That she first loved him, alas,  
And thus counseyllled hir thertoo.  
But what! When this was seyde and doo,  
She rof hirselve to the herte  
And deyde thorgh the wounde smerte.  
And al the maner how she deyde,  
And alle the wordes that she seyde,

Whoso to knowe hit hath purpos,  
Rede Virgile in Eneydos  
Or the Epistle of Ovyde,  
380 What that she wrot or that she dyde;  
And nere hyt to long to endyte,  
Be God, I wolde hyt here write.  
But wel-away, the harm, the routhe,  
That hath betyd for such untrouthe,  
As men may ofte in bokes rede,  
And al day sen hyt yet in dede,  
That for to thynken hyt, a tene is.  
Loo Demophon, duk of Athenys,  
How he forswor hym ful falsly,  
390 And traysed Phillis wikkidly,  
That kynges doghtre was of Trace,  
And falsly gan hys terme pace;  
And when she wiste that he was fals,  
She heng herself ryght be the hals,  
For he had doon hir such untrouthe.  
Loo, was not this a woo and routhe?  
Eke lo how fals and reccheles  
Was to Breseyda Achilles,  
And Paris to Oenone,  
400 And Jason to Isiphile,  
And eft Jason to Medea,  
And Ercules to Dyanira,  
For he left hir for Yole,  
That made hym cache his deth, parde.  
How fals eke was he Theseus,  
That, as the story telleth us,  
How he betrayed Adriane --  
The devel be hys soules bane!  
For had he lawghed, had he loured,  
410 He moste have ben al devoured,  
Yf Adriane ne had ybe.  
And for she had of hym pite,  
She made hym fro the deth escape,  
And he made hir a ful fals jape;  
For aftir this, withyn a while,  
He lefte hir slepynge in an ile  
Desert allone, ryght in the se,  
And stal away and let hir be,



And took hir suster Phedra thoo  
420 With him, and gan to shippe goo.  
And yet he had yswore to here  
On al that ever he myghte swere  
That, so she saved hym hys lyf,  
He wolde have take hir to hys wif;  
For she desired nothing ellis,  
In certeyn, as the book us tellis.  
But to excusen Eneas  
Fullyche of al his grete trespas,  
The book seyth Mercurie, sauns fayle,  
430 Bad hym goo into Itayle,  
And leve Auffrikes regioun,  
And Dido and hir faire toun.  
Thoo sawgh I grave how to Itayle  
Daun Eneas is goo to sayle;  
And how the tempest al began,  
And how he loste hys sterisman,  
Which that the stere, or he tok kep,  
Smot over bord, loo, as he slep.  
And also sawgh I how Sybile  
440 And Eneas, besyde an yle,  
To helle wente for to see  
His fader, Anchyses the free;  
How he ther fond Palinurus,  
And Dido, and eke Deiphebus;  
And every turment eke in helle  
Saughe he, which is longe to telle;  
Which whoso willeth for to knowe,  
He moste rede many a rowe  
On Virgile or on Claudian,  
450 Or Daunte, that hit telle kan.  
Tho saugh I grave al the aryvayle  
That Eneas had in Itayle;  
And with kyng Latyne hys tretee  
And alle the batayles that hee  
Was at hymself, and eke hys knyghtis,  
Or he had al ywonne his ryghtis;  
And how he Turnus reft his lyf,  
And wan Lavina to his wif;  
And alle the mervelous signals  
460 Of the goddys celestials;

How, mawgree Juno, Eneas,  
For al hir sleight and hir compas,  
Acheved al his aventure,  
For Jupiter took of hym cure  
At the prayer of Venus --  
The whiche I preye alwey save us,  
And us ay of oure sorwes lyghte!  
When I had seen al this syghte  
In this noble temple thus,  
470 "A, Lord," thoughte I, "that madest us,  
Yet sawgh I never such noblesse  
Of ymages, ne such richesse,  
As I saugh graven in this chirche;  
But not wot I whoo did hem wirche,  
Ne where I am, ne in what contree.  
But now wol I goo out and see,  
Ryght at the wicket, yf y kan  
See owhere any stiryng man  
That may me telle where I am."  
480 When I out at the dores cam,  
I faste aboute me beheld.  
Then sawgh I but a large feld,  
As fer as that I myghte see,  
Withouten toun, or hous, or tree,  
Or bush, or grass, or eryd lond;  
For al the feld nas but of sond  
As smal as man may se yet lye  
In the desert of Lybye.  
Ne no maner creature  
490 That ys yformed be Nature  
Ne sawgh I, me to rede or wisse.  
"O Crist," thoughte I, "that art in blysse,  
Fro fantome and illusion  
Me save!" And with devocion  
Myn eyen to the hevene I caste.  
Thoo was I war, lo, at the laste,  
That faste be the sonne, as hye  
As kenne myghte I with myn ye,  
Me thoughte I sawgh an egle sore,  
500 But that hit semed moche more  
Then I had any egle seyn.  
But this as sooth as deth, certeyn,

Hyt was of gold, and shon so bryghte  
That never sawe men such a syghte,  
But yf the heven had ywonne  
Al newe of gold another sonne;  
So shone the egles fethers bryghte,  
And somewhat downward gan hyt lyghte.  
Now herkeneth every maner man  
510 That Englissh understonde kan  
And [listeth. of my drem to lere,  
For now at erste shul ye here  
So sely an avisyon,  
That Isaye, ne Scipion,  
Ne kyng Nabugodonosor,  
Pharoo, Turnus, ne Elcanor,  
Ne mette such a drem as this.  
Now faire blisfull, O Cipris,  
So be my favour at this tyme!  
520 And ye, me to endite and ryme  
Helpeth, that on Parnaso duelle,  
Be Elicon, the clere welle.  
O Thought, that wrot al that I mette,  
And in the tresorye hyt shette  
Of my brayn, now shal men se  
Yf any vertu in the be  
To tellen al my drem aryght.  
Now kythe thyn engyn and myght!  
This egle, of which I have yow told,  
530 That shon with fethres as of gold,  
Which that so hye gan to sore,  
I gan beholde more and more  
To se the Beaute and the wonder;  
But never was ther dynt of thonder,  
Ne that thyng that men calle foudre,  
That smot somtyme a tour to powder  
And in his swifte comynge brende,  
That so swithe gan descende  
As this foul, when hyt beheld  
540 That I a-roume was in the feld.  
And with hys grymme pawes stronge,  
Withyn hys sharpe nayles longe,  
Me, fleynge, in a swap he hente,  
And with hys sours ayen up wente,

Me caryinge in his clawes starke  
As lyghtly as I were a larke,  
How high, I can not telle yow,  
For I cam up, y nyste how.  
For so astonyed and asweved  
550 Was every vertu in my heved,  
What with his sours and with my drede,  
That al my felynge gan to dede,  
For-whi hit was to gret affray.  
Thus I longe in hys clawes lay,  
Til at the laste he to me spak  
In mannes vois, and seyde, "Awak!  
And be not agast so, for shame!"  
And called me tho by my name,  
And for I shulde the bet abreyde,  
560 Me mette "Awak," to me he seyde  
Ryght in the same vois and stevene  
That useth oon I koude nevene;  
And with that vois, soth for to seyn,  
My mynde cam to me ageyn,  
For hyt was goodly seyde to me,  
So nas hyt never wont to be.  
And here-withal I gan to stere,  
And he me in his fet to bere,  
Til that he felte that I had hete,  
570 And felte eke tho myn herte bete.  
And thoo gan he me to disporte,  
And with wordes to comforte,  
And sayde twyes, "Seynte Marye,  
Thou art noyous for to carye!  
And nothyng nedeth it, pardee,  
For also wis God helpe me,  
As thou noon harm shalt have of this;  
And this caas that betyd the is,  
Is for thy lore and for thy prow.  
580 Let see! Darst thou yet loke now?  
Be ful assured, boldely,  
I am thy frend." And therwith I  
Gan for to wondren in my mynde.  
"O God," thoughte I, "that madest kynde,  
Shal I noon other weyes dye?  
Wher Joves wol me stellyfye,

Or what thing may this signyfye?  
I neyther am Ennok, ne Elye,  
Ne Romulus, ne Ganymede,  
590 That was ybore up, as men rede,  
To hevene with daun Jupiter,  
And mad the goddys botiller."  
Loo, this was thoo my fantasye.  
But he that bar me gan espye  
That I so thoughte, and seyde this:  
"Thow demest of thyself amys,  
For Joves ys not therabout --  
I dar wel putte the out of doute --  
To make of the as yet a sterre;  
600 But er I bere the moche ferre,  
I wol the telle what I am,  
And whider thou shalt, and why I cam  
To do thys, so that thou take  
Good herte, and not for fere quake."  
"Gladly," quod I. "Now wel," quod he,  
"First, I, that in my fet have the,  
Of which thou hast a fere and wonder,  
Am dwellynge with the god of thonder,  
Which that men callen Jupiter,  
610 That dooth me flee ful ofte fer  
To do al hys comaundement.  
And for this cause he hath me sent  
To the. Now herke, be thy trouthe:  
Certeyn, he hath of the routhe  
That thou so longe trewely  
Hast served so ententyfly  
Hys blynde nevew Cupido,  
And faire Venus also,  
Withoute guerdon ever yit,  
620 And never-the-lesse hast set thy wit --  
Although that in thy hed ful lyte is --  
To make bookys, songes, dytees,  
In ryme or elles in cadence,  
As thou best canst, in reverence  
Of Love and of hys servantes eke,  
That have hys servyse soght, and seke;  
And peynest the to preyse hys art,  
Although thou haddest never part.

Wherfore, also God me blesse,  
630 Joves halt hyt gret humblesse  
And vertu eke, that thou wolt make  
A-nyght ful ofte thyn hed to ake  
In thy studye, so thou writest,  
And ever mo of love enditest,  
In honour of hym and in preysynges,  
And in his folkes furtherynges,  
And in hir matere al devisest,  
And noght hym nor his folk dispisest,  
Although thou maist goo in the daunce  
640 Of hem that hym lyst not avaunce.  
"Wherfore, as I seyde, ywys,  
Jupiter considereth this,  
And also, beau sir, other thynges:  
That is, that thou hast no tydynges  
Of Loves folk yf they be glade,  
Ne of noght elles that God made;  
And noght oonly fro fer contree  
That ther no tydyng cometh to thee,  
But of thy verray neyghebores,  
650 That duellen almost at thy dores,  
Thou herist neyther that ne this;  
For when thy labour doon al ys,  
And hast mad alle thy rekenynges,  
In stede of reste and newe thynges  
Thou goost hom to thy hous anoon,  
And, also domb as any stoon,  
Thou sittest at another book  
Tyl fully daswed ys thy look;  
And lyvest thus as an heremyte,  
660 Although thyn abstynence ys lyte.  
"And therfore Joves, thorgh hys grace,  
Wol that I bere the to a place  
Which that hight the Hous of Fame,  
To do the som disport and game,  
In som recompensacion  
Of labour and devocion  
That thou hast had, loo causeles,  
To Cupido the rechcheles.  
And thus this god, thorgh his merite,  
670 Wol with som maner thing the quyte,

So that thou wolt be of good chere.  
 For truste wel that thou shalt here,  
 When we be come there I seye,  
 Mo wonder thynges, dar I leye,  
 And of Loves folk moo tydynges,  
 Both sothe sawes and lesinges,  
 And moo loves newe begonne,  
 And longe yserved loves wonne,  
 And moo loves casuely  
 680 That ben betyd, no man wot why,  
 But as a blynd man stert an hare;  
 And more jolytee and fare  
 While that they fynde love of stel,  
 As thinketh hem, and over-al wel;  
 Mo discordes, moo jelousies,  
 Mo murmures and moo novelries,  
 And moo dissymulacions,  
 And feyned reparacions,  
 And moo berdys in two houres  
 690 Withoute rasour or sisoures  
 Ymad then greynes be of sondes;  
 And eke moo holdyng in hondes,  
 And also moo renovelaunces  
 Of olde forleten aqueyntaunces;  
 Mo love-dayes and acordes  
 Then on instrumentes be cordes;  
 And eke of loves moo eschaunges  
 Then ever cornes were in graunges --  
 Unnethe maistow trowen this?"  
 700 Quod he. "Noo, helpe me God so wys,"  
 Quod I. "Noo? why?" quod he. "For hyt  
 Were impossible, to my wit,  
 Though that Fame had alle the pies  
 In al a realme, and alle the spies,  
 How that yet she shulde here al this,  
 Or they espie hyt." "O yis, yis!"  
 Quod he to me, "that kan I preve  
 Be reson worthy for to leve,  
 So that thou yeve thyn advertence  
 710 To understonde my sentence.  
 "First shalt thou here where she duelleth,  
 And so thyn oun bok hyt tellith.

Hir paleys stant, as I shal seye,  
Ryght even in myddes of the weye  
Betwixen hevene and erthe and see,  
That what so ever in al these three  
Is spoken, either privy or apert,  
The way therto ys so overt,  
And stant eke in so juste a place  
720 That every soun mot to hyt pace;  
Or what so cometh from any tonge,  
Be hyt rouned, red, or songe,  
Or spoke in suerte or in drede,  
Certeyn, hyt moste thider nede.  
"Now herkene wel, for-why I wille  
Tellen the a propre skille  
And a worthy demonstracion  
In myn ymagynacion.  
"Geffrey, thou wost ryght wel this,  
730 That every kyndely thyng that is  
Hath a kyndely stede ther he  
May best in hyt conserved be;  
Unto which place every thyng  
Thorgh his kyndely enclynynge  
Moveth for to come to  
Whan that hyt is away therfro;  
As thus: loo, thou maist alday se  
That any thing that hevy be,  
As stoon, or led, or thyng of wighte,  
740 And bere hyt never so hye on highte,  
Lat goo thyn hand, hit falleth down.  
Ryght so seye I be fyr or soun,  
Or smoke or other thynges lyghte;  
Alwey they seke upward on highte,  
While ech of hem is at his large:  
Lyght thing upward, and downward charge.  
And for this cause mayst thou see  
That every ryver to the see  
Enclyned ys to goo by kynde,  
750 And by these skilles, as I fynde,  
Hath fyssh duellynge in flood and see,  
And trees eke in erthe bee.  
Thus every thing, by thys reson,  
Hath his propre mansyon



To which hit seketh to repaire,  
Ther-as hit shulde not apaire.  
Loo, this sentence ys knowen kouth  
Of every philosophres mouth,  
As Aristotile and daun Platon,  
760 And other clerkys many oon;  
And to confirme my resoun,  
Thou wost wel this, that spech is soun,  
Or elles no man myghte hyt here;  
Now herke what y wol the lere.  
"Soun ys noght but eyr ybroken;  
And every speche that ys spoken,  
Lowd or pryvee, foul or fair,  
In his substaunce ys but air;  
For as flaumbe ys but lyghted smoke,  
770 Ryght soo soun ys air ybroke.  
But this may be in many wyse,  
Of which I wil the twoo devyse,  
As soun that cometh of pipe or harpe.  
For whan a pipe is blowen sharpe  
The air ys twyst with violence  
And rent -- loo, thys ys my sentence.  
Eke whan men harpe-strynges smyte,  
Whether hyt be moche or lyte,  
Loo, with the strok the ayr tobreketh.  
780 And ryght so breketh it when men speketh.  
Thus wost thou wel what thing is speche.  
"Now hennesforth y wol the teche  
How every speche, or noyse, or soun,  
Thurgh hys multiplicacioun,  
Thogh hyt were piped of a mous,  
Mot nede come to Fames Hous.  
I preve hyt thus -- take hede now --  
Be experience; for yf that thou  
Throwe on water now a stoon,  
790 Wel wost thou hyt wol make anoon  
A litel roundell as a sercle,  
Paraunter brod as a covercle;  
And ryght anoon thou shalt see wel  
That whel wol cause another whel,  
And that the thridde, and so forth, brother,  
Every sercle causynge other

Wydder than hymselfe was;  
And thus fro roundel to compas,  
Ech aboute other goynge  
800 Causeth of othres sterynge  
And multiplynge ever moo,  
Til that hyt be so fer ygoo  
That hyt at bothe brynkes bee.  
Although thou mowe hyt not ysee  
Above, hyt gooth yet alway under,  
Although thou thenke hyt a gret wonder.  
And whoso seyth of trouthe I varye,  
Bid hym proven the contrarye.  
And ryght thus every word, ywys,  
810 That lowd or pryvee spoken ys,  
Moveth first an ayr aboute,  
And of thys movynge, out of doute,  
Another ayr anoon ys meved;  
As I have of the watir preved,  
That every cercle causeth other,  
Ryght so of ayr, my leve brother:  
Everych ayr another stereth  
More and more, and speche up bereth,  
Or voys, or noyse, or word, or soun,  
820 Ay through multiplicacioun,  
Til hyt be atte Hous of Fame --  
Take yt in ernest or in game.  
"Now have I told, yf thou have mynde,  
How speche or soun, of pure kynde,  
Enclyned ys upward to meve --  
This mayst thou fele wel I preve --  
And that same place, ywys,  
That every thyng enclyned to ys  
Hath his kyndelyche stede:  
830 That sheweth hyt, withouten drede,  
That kyndely the mansioun  
Of every speche, of every soun,  
Be hyt eyther foul or fair,  
Hath hys kynde place in ayr.  
And syn that every thyng that is  
Out of hys kynde place, ywys,  
Moveth thidder for to goo,  
Yif hyt aweye be therfroo --

As I have before preved the --  
840 Hyt seweth, every soun, parde,  
Moveth kyndely to pace  
Al up into his kyndely place.  
And this place of which I telle,  
Ther as Fame lyst to duelle,  
Ys set amyddys of these three,  
Heven, erthe, and eke the see,  
As most conservatyf the soun.  
Than ys this the conclusyoun:  
That every speche of every man,  
850 As y the telle first began,  
Moveth up on high to pace  
Kyndely to Fames place.  
"Telle me this now feythfully,  
Have y not preved thus symply,  
Withoute any subtilite  
Of speche, or gret prolixite  
Of termes of philosophie,  
Of figures of poetrie,  
Or colours of rethorike?  
860 Pardee, hit oughte the to lyke,  
For hard langage and hard matere  
Ys encombrous for to here  
Attones; wost thou not wel this?"  
And y answered and seyde, "Yis."  
"A ha," quod he, "lo, so I can  
Lewedly to a lewed man  
Speke, and shewe hym swyche skiles  
That he may shake hem be the biles,  
So palpable they shulden be.  
870 But telle me this, now praye y the,  
How thinketh the my conclusyon?"  
[Quod he]. "A good persuasion,"  
Quod I, "hyt is, and lyk to be  
Ryght so as thou hast preved me."  
"Be God," quod he, "and as I leve,  
Thou shalt have yet, or hit be eve,  
Of every word of thys sentence  
A preve by experience,  
And with thyne eres heren wel,  
880 Top and tayl and everydel,

That every word that spoken ys  
Cometh into Fames Hous, ywys,  
As I have seyde; what wilt thou more?"  
And with this word upper to sore  
He gan, and seyde, "Be Seynt Jame,  
Now wil we speken al of game!"  
"How farest thou?" quod he to me.  
"Wel," quod I. "Now see," quod he,  
"By thy trouthe, yond adoun,  
890 Wher that thou knowest any toun,  
Or hous, or any other thing.  
And whan thou hast of ought knowyng,  
Looke that thou warne me,  
And y anoon shal telle the  
How fer that thou art now therfro."  
And y adoun gan loken thoo,  
And beheld feldes and playnes,  
And now hilles, and now mountaynes,  
Now valeyes, now forestes,  
900 And now unnethes grete bestes,  
Now ryveres, now citees,  
Now tounes, and now grete trees,  
Now shippes seylynge in the see.  
But thus sone in a while he  
Was flowen fro the ground so hye  
That al the world, as to myn ye,  
No more semed than a prikke;  
Or elles was the air so thikke  
That y ne myghte not discernen.  
910 With that he spak to me as yerne,  
And seyde, "Seest thou any [toun]  
Or ought thou knowest yonder doun?"  
I sayde, "Nay." "No wonder nys,"  
Quod he, "for half so high as this  
Nas Alixandre Macedo;  
Ne the kyng, Daun Scipio,  
That saw in drem, at poynt devys,  
Helle and erthe and paradys;  
Ne eke the wrechche Dedalus,  
920 Ne his child, nyce Ykarus,  
That fleigh so highe that the hete  
Hys wynges malt, and he fel wete

In myd the see, and ther he dreynte,  
For whom was maked moch compleynte.  
"Now turn upward," quod he, "thy face,  
And behold this large space,  
This eyr, but loke thou ne be  
Adrad of hem that thou shalt se,  
For in this region, certeyn,  
930 Duelleth many a citezeyn,  
Of which that speketh Daun Plato;  
These ben the eyryssh bestes, lo!"  
And so saw y all that meynee  
Boothe goon and also flee.  
"Now," quod he thoo, "cast up thyn ye.  
Se yonder, loo, the Galaxie,  
Which men clepeth the Milky Wey  
For hit ys whit (and somme, parfey,  
Kallen hyt Watlynge Strete),  
940 That ones was ybrent with hete,  
Whan the sonnes sone the rede,  
That highte Pheton, wolde lede  
Algate hys fader carte, and gye.  
The carte-hors gonne wel espye  
That he koude no governaunce,  
And gonne for to lepe and launce,  
And beren hym now up, now down,  
Til that he sey the Scorpioun,  
Which that in heven a sygne is yit.  
950 And he for ferde loste hys wyt  
Of that, and let the reynes gon  
Of his hors; and they anon  
Gonne up to munte and doun descende,  
Til bothe the eyr and erthe brende,  
Til Jupiter, loo, atte laste,  
Hym slow, and fro the carte caste.  
Loo, ys it not a gret myschaunce  
To lete a fool han governaunce  
Of thing that he can not demeyne?"  
960 And with this word, soth for to seyne,  
He gan alway upper to sore,  
And gladded me ay more and more,  
So feythfully to me spak he.  
Tho gan y loken under me

And beheld the ayerissh bestes,  
 Cloudes, mystes, and tempestes,  
 Snowes, hayles, reynes, wyndes,  
 And th' engendrynge in hir kyndes,  
 All the wey thurgh which I cam.  
 970 "O God," quod y, "that made Adam,  
 Moche ys thy myght and thy noblesse!"  
 And thoo thoughte y upon Boece,  
 That writ, "A thought may flee so hye  
 Wyth fetheres of Philosophye,  
 To passen everych element,  
 And whan he hath so fer ywent,  
 Than may be seen behynde hys bak  
 Cloude" -- and al that y of spak.  
 Thoo gan y wexen in a were,  
 980 And seyde, "Y wot wel y am here,  
 But wher in body or in gost  
 I not, ywys, but God, thou wost,"  
 For more clere entendement  
 Nas me never yit ysent.  
 And than thoughte y on Marcian,  
 And eke on Antecaudian,  
 That sooth was her descripsion  
 Of alle the hevenes region,  
 As fer as that y sey the preve;  
 990 Therfore y kan hem now beleve.  
 With that this egle gan to crye,  
 "Lat be," quod he, "thy fantasye!  
 Wilt thou lere of sterres aught?"  
 "Nay, certeynly," quod y, "ryght naught."  
 "And why?" "For y am now to old."  
 "Elles I wolde the have told,"  
 Quod he, "the sterres names, lo,  
 And al the hevenes sygnes therto,  
 And which they ben." "No fors," quod y.  
 1000 "Yis, pardee," quod he; "wostow why?  
 For when thou redest poetrie,  
 How goddes gonne stellifye  
 Bridd, fissh, best, or him or here,  
 As the Raven or eyther Bere,  
 Or Arionis harpe fyn,  
 Castor, Pollux, or Delphyn,

Or Athalantes doughtres sevene,  
How alle these arn set in hevene;  
For though thou have hem ofte on honde,  
1010 Yet nostow not wher that they stonde."  
"No fors," quod y, "hyt is no nede.  
I leve as wel, so God me spede,  
Hem that write of this matere,  
As though I knew her places here;  
And eke they shynen here so bryghte,  
Hyт shulde shenden al my syghte  
To loke on hem." "That may wel be,"  
Quod he. And so forth bar he me  
A while, and than he gan to crye,  
1020 That never herde I thing so hye,  
"Now up the hed, for al ys wel;  
Seynt Julyan, loo, bon hostel!  
Se here the Hous of Fame, lo!  
Maistow not heren that I do?"  
"What?" quod I. "The grete soun,"  
Quod he, "that rumbleth up and doun  
In Fames Hous, full of tydynges,  
Bothe of feir speche and chidynges,  
And of fals and soth compounded.  
1030 Herke wel; hyт is not rouned.  
Herestow not the grete swogh?"  
"Yis, parde," quod y, "wel ynogh."  
"And what soun is it lyk?" quod hee.  
"Peter, lyk betynge of the see,"  
Quod y, "ayen the roches holowe,  
Whan tempest doth the shippes swalowe,  
And lat a man stonde, out of doute,  
A myle thens, and here hyт route;  
Or elles lyk the last humblynge  
1040 After the clappe of a thundringe,  
Whan Joves hath the air ybete.  
But yt doth me for fere swete."  
"Nay, dred the not therof," quod he;  
"Hyт is nothing will byten the;  
Thou shalt non harm have trewely."  
And with this word both he and y  
As nygh the place arryved were  
As men may casten with a spere.

Y nyste how, but in a strete  
1050 He sette me fair on my fete,  
And seyde, "Walke forth a pas,  
And tak thyn aventure or cas  
That thou shalt fynde in Fames place."  
"Now," quod I, "while we han space  
To speke, or that I goo fro the,  
For the love of God, telle me --  
In sooth, that wil I of the lere --  
Yf thys noyse that I here  
Be, as I have herd the tellen,  
1060 Of folk that doun in erthe duellen,  
And cometh here in the same wyse  
As I the herde or this devyse;  
And that there lives body nys  
In al that hous that yonder ys,  
That maketh al this loude fare."  
"Noo," quod he, "by Seynte Clare,  
And also wis God rede me;  
But o thing y will warne the,  
Of the whiche thou wolt have wonder.  
1070 Loo, to the Hous of Fame yonder,  
Thou wost now how, cometh every speche --  
Hyt nedeth noght eft the to teche.  
But understond now ryght wel this:  
Whan any speche ycomen ys  
Up to the paleys, anon-ryght  
Hyt wexeth lyk the same wight  
Which that the word in erthe spak,  
Be hyt clothed red or blak;  
And hath so verray hys lyknesse  
1080 That spak the word, that thou wilt gesse  
That it the same body be,  
Man or woman, he or she.  
And ys not this a wonder thyng?"  
"Yis," quod I tho, "by heven kyng!"  
And with this word, "Farewel," quod he,  
"And here I wol abyden the;  
And God of heven sende the grace  
Some good to lernen in this place."  
And I of him tok leve anon,  
1090 And gan forth to the paleys gon.



O God of science and of lyght,  
 Appollo, thurgh thy grete myght,  
 This lytel laste bok thou gye!  
 Nat that I wilne, for maistrye,  
 Here art poetical be shewed,  
 But for the rym ys lyght and lewed,  
 Yit make hyt sumwhat agreable,  
 Though som vers fayle in a syllable;  
 And that I do no diligence  
 1100 To shewe craft, but o sentence.  
 And yif, devyne vertu, thou  
 Wilt helpe me to shewe now  
 That in myn hed ymarked ys --  
 Loo, that is for to menen this,  
 The Hous of Fame for to descryve --  
 Thou shalt se me go as blyve  
 Unto the nexte laure y see,  
 And kysse yt, for hyt is thy tree.  
 Now entre in my brest anoon!  
 1110 Whan I was fro thys egle goon,  
 I gan beholde upon this place.  
 And certein, or I ferther pace,  
 I wol yow al the shap devyse  
 Of hous and [site], and al the wyse  
 How I gan to thys place aproche  
 That stood upon so hygh a roche,  
 Hier stant ther non in Spayne.  
 But up I clomb with alle payne,  
 And though to clymbe it greved me,  
 1120 Yit I ententyf was to see,  
 And for to powren wonder lowe,  
 Yf I koude any weyes knowe  
 What maner stoon this roche was.  
 For hyt was lyk alum de glas,  
 But that hyt shoon ful more clere;  
 But of what congeled matere  
 Hyt was, I nyste redely.  
 But at the laste aspied I,  
 And found that hit was every del  
 1130 A roche of yse, and not of stel.  
 Thoughte I, "By Seynt Thomas of Kent,  
 This were a feble fundament

To bilden on a place hye.  
He ought him lytel glorifye  
That hereon bilt, God so me save!"  
Tho sawgh I al the half ygrave  
With famous folkes names fele,  
That had iben in mochel wele,  
And her fames wide yblowe.  
1140 But wel unnethes koude I knowe  
Any lettres for to rede  
Hir names by; for, out of drede,  
They were almost ofthowed so  
That of the lettres oon or two  
Was molte away of every name,  
So unfamous was woxe hir fame.  
But men seyn, "What may ever laste?"  
Thoo gan I in myn herte caste  
That they were molte away with hete,  
1150 And not away with stormes bete.  
For on that other syde I say  
Of this hil, that northward lay,  
How hit was writen ful of names  
Of folkes that hadden grete fames  
Of olde tyme, and yet they were  
As fressh as men had writen hem here  
The selve day ryght, or that houre  
That I upon hem gan to poure.  
But wel I wiste what yt made;  
1160 Hyt was conserved with the shade  
Of a castel that stood on high --  
Al this writynge that I sigh --  
And stood eke on so cold a place  
That hete myghte hit not deface.  
Thoo gan I up the hil to goon,  
And fond upon the cop a woon,  
That al the men that ben on lyve  
Ne han the kunnyng to describe  
The Beaute of that ylke place,  
1170 Ne coude casten no compace  
Swich another for to make,  
That myght of Beaute ben hys make,  
Ne so wonderlych ywrought;  
That hit astonyeth yit my thought,

And maketh al my wyt to swynke,  
On this castel to bethynke,  
So that the grete craft, beaute,  
The cast, the curiosite  
Ne kan I not to yow devyse;  
1180 My wit ne may me not suffise.  
But natheles al the substance  
I have yit in my remembrance;  
For whi me thoughte, be Seynt Gyle,  
Al was of ston of beryle,  
Bothe the castel and the tour,  
And eke the halle and every bour,  
Wythouten peces or joynynges.  
But many subtil compassinges,  
[Babewynnes] and pynacles,  
1190 Ymageries and tabernacles  
I say; and ful eke of wyndowes  
As flakes falle in grete snowes.  
And eke in ech of the pynacles  
Weren sondry habitacles,  
In which stoden, al withoute --  
Ful the castel, al aboute --  
Of alle maner of mynstralles  
And gestiours that tellen tales  
Both of wepinge and of game,  
1200 Of al that longeth unto Fame.  
Ther herde I pleyen on an harpe,  
That sowned bothe wel and sharpe,  
Orpheus ful craftely,  
And on his syde, faste by,  
Sat the harper Orion,  
And Eacides Chiron,  
And other harpers many oon,  
And the Bret Glascurion;  
And smale harpers with her glees  
1210 Sate under hem in dyvers sees,  
And gunne on hem upward to gape,  
And countrefete hem as an ape,  
Or as craft countrefeteth kynde.  
Tho saugh I stonden hem behynde,  
Afer fro hem, al be hemselfe,  
Many thousand tymes twelve,

That maden lowde mynstralcies  
In cornemuse and shalemyes,  
And many other maner pipe,  
1220 That craftely begunne to pipe,  
Bothe in doucet and in rede,  
That ben at festes with the brede;  
And many flowte and liltyng horn,  
And pipes made of grene corn,  
As han thise lytel herde-gromes  
That kepen bestis in the bromes.  
Ther saugh I than Atiteris,  
And of Athenes daun Pseustis,  
And Marcia that loste her skyn,  
1230 Bothe in face, body, and chyn,  
For that she wolde envien, loo,  
To pipen bet than Appolloo.  
Ther saugh I famous, olde and yonge,  
Pipers of the Duche tonge,  
To lerne love-daunces, sprynges,  
Reyes, and these straunge thynges.  
Tho saugh I in an other place  
Stonden in a large space,  
Of hem that maken blody soun  
1240 In trumpe, beme, and claryoun;  
For in fight and blod-shedyng  
Ys used gladly clarionynge.  
Ther herde I trumpen Messenus,  
Of whom that speketh Virgilius.  
There herde I trumpe Joab also,  
Theodomas, and other mo;  
And alle that used clarion  
In Cataloigne and Aragon,  
That in her tyme famous were  
1250 To lerne, saugh I trumpe there.  
There saugh I sitte in other sees,  
Pleyinge upon sondry gleees,  
Whiche that I kan not nevene,  
Moo than sterres ben in hevene,  
Of whiche I nyl as now not ryme,  
For ese of yow and los of tyme.  
For tyme ylost, this knowen ye,  
Be no way may recovered be.

Ther saugh I pleye jugelours,  
1260 Magiciens, and tregetours,  
And Phitonesses, charmeresses,  
Olde wicches, sorceresses,  
That use exorsisacions,  
And eke these fumygacions;  
And clerkes eke, which konne wel  
Al this magik naturel,  
That craftely doon her ententes  
To make, in certeyn ascendentes,  
Ymages, lo, thurgh which magik  
1270 To make a man ben hool or syk.  
Ther saugh I the, quene Medea,  
And Circes eke, and Calipsa;  
Ther saugh I Hermes Ballenus,  
Limote, and eke Symon Magus.  
There saugh I, and knew hem by name,  
That by such art don men han fame.  
Ther saugh I Colle tregetour  
Upon a table of sycamour  
Pleye an uncouth thyng to telle --  
1280 Y saugh him carien a wynd-melle  
Under a walsh-note shale.  
What shuld I make lenger tale  
Of alle the pepil y ther say,  
Fro hennes into domes day?  
Whan I had al this folk beholde,  
And fond me lous and nought yholde,  
And eft imused longe while  
Upon these walles of berile,  
That shoone ful lyghter than a glas  
1290 And made wel more than hit was  
To semen every thing, ywis,  
As kynde thyng of Fames is,  
I gan forth romen til I fond  
The castel-yate on my ryght hond,  
Which that so wel corven was  
That never such another nas;  
And yit it was be aventure  
Iwrought, as often as be cure.  
Hyt nedeth noght yow more to tellen,  
1300 To make yow to longe duellen,

Of this yates florissinges,  
Ne of compasses, ne of kervynges,  
Ne how they hatte in masoneries,  
As corbetz, ful of ymageries.  
But Lord, so fair yt was to shewe,  
For hit was al with gold behewe.  
But in I wente, and that anoon.  
Ther mette I cryinge many oon,  
"A larges, larges, hold up wel!  
1310 God save the lady of thys pel,  
Our oun gentil lady Fame,  
And hem that wilnen to have name  
Of us!" Thus herde y crien alle,  
And faste comen out of halle  
And shoken nobles and sterlynges.  
And somme corouned were as kynges,  
With corounes wroght ful of losenges;  
And many ryban and many frenges  
Were on her clothes trewely.  
1320 Thoo atte last aspyed y  
That pursevantes and heraudes,  
That crien ryche folkes laudes,  
Hyt weren alle; and every man  
Of hem, as y yow tellen can,  
Had on him throwen a vesture  
Which that men clepe a cote-armure,  
Enbrowded wonderliche ryche,  
Although they nere nought ylyche.  
But noght nyl I, so mote y thryve,  
1330 Ben aboute to dyscryve  
Alle these armes that ther weren,  
That they thus on her cotes beren,  
For hyt to me were impossible;  
Men myghte make of hem a bible  
Twenty foot thykke, as y trowe.  
For certeyn, whoso koude iknowe  
Myghte ther alle the armes seen  
Of famous folk that han ybeen  
In Auffrike, Europe, and Asye,  
1340 Syth first began the chevalrie.  
Loo, how shulde I now telle al thys?  
Ne of the halle eke what nede is

To tellen yow that every wal  
Of hit, and flor, and roof, and al  
Was plated half a foote thikke  
Of gold, and that nas nothyng wikke,  
But for to prove in alle wyse,  
As fyn as ducat in Venyse,  
Of which to lite al in my pouche is.  
1350 And they were set as thik of nouchis  
Ful of the fynest stones faire  
That men rede in the Lapidaire,  
As grasses growen in a mede.  
But hit were al to longe to rede  
The names, and therfore I pace.  
But in this lusty and ryche place  
That Fames halle called was,  
Ful moche prees of folk ther nas,  
Ne crowdyng for to mochil prees.  
1360 But al on hye, above a dees,  
Sitte in a see imperiall,  
That mad was of a rubee all,  
Which that a carbuncle ys ycalled,  
Y saugh, perpetually ystalled,  
A femynyne creature,  
That never formed by Nature  
Nas such another thing yseye.  
For alther-first, soth for to seye,  
Me thoughte that she was so lyte  
1370 That the lengthe of a cubite  
Was lengere than she semed be.  
But thus sone in a whyle she  
Hir tho so wonderliche streighte  
That with hir fet she erthe reighte,  
And with hir hed she touched hevene,  
Ther as shynen sterres sevene,  
And therto eke, as to my wit,  
I saugh a gretter wonder yit,  
Upon her eyen to beholde;  
1380 But certeyn y hem never tolde,  
For as feele eyen hadde she  
As fetheres upon foules be,  
Or weren on the bestes foure  
That Goddis trone gunne honoure,

As John writ in th' Apocalips.  
Hir heer, that oundy was and crips,  
As burned gold hyt shoon to see;  
And soth to tellen, also she  
Had also fele upstondyng eres  
1390 And tonges, as on bestes heres;  
And on hir fet woxen saugh Y  
Partriches wynges redely.  
But Lord, the perry and the richesse  
I saugh sitting on this godesse!  
And Lord, the hevenyssh melodye  
Of songes ful of armonye  
I herde aboute her trone ysonge,  
That al the paleys-walles ronge.  
So song the myghty Muse, she  
1400 That cleped ys Caliope,  
And hir eighte sustren eke,  
That in her face semen meke;  
And ever mo, eternally,  
They songe of Fame, as thoo herd y:  
"Heryed be thou and thy name,  
Goddesse of Renoun or of Fame!"  
Tho was I war, loo, atte laste,  
As I myne eyen gan up caste,  
That thys ylke noble quene  
1410 On her shuldres gan sustene  
Bothe th' armes and the name  
Of thoo that hadde large fame:  
Alexander and Hercules,  
That with a sherte hys lyf les.  
And thus fond y syttyng this goddesse  
In nobley, honour, and rychesse;  
Of which I stynte a while now,  
Other thing to tellen yow.  
Tho saugh I stonde on eyther syde,  
1420 Streight down to the dores wide,  
Fro the dees, many a peler  
Of metal that shoon not ful cler;  
But though they nere of no rychesse,  
Yet they were mad for gret noblesse,  
And in hem hy and gret sentence;  
And folk of digne reverence,



Of which I wil yow telle fonde,  
Upon the piler saugh I stonde.  
Alderfirst, loo, ther I sigh  
1430 Upon a piler stonde on high,  
That was of led and yren fyn,  
Hym of secte saturnyn,  
The Ebrayk Josephus the olde,  
That of Jewes gestes tolde;  
And he bar on hys shuldres hye  
The fame up of the Jewerye.  
And by hym stoden other sevene,  
Wise and worthy for to nevene,  
To helpen him bere up the charge,  
1440 Hyt was so hevy and so large.  
And for they writen of batayles,  
As wel as other olde mervayles,  
Therfor was, loo, thys piler  
Of which that I yow telle her,  
Of led and yren bothe, ywys,  
For yren Martes metal ys,  
Which that god is of bataylle;  
And the led, withouten faille,  
Ys, loo, the metal of Saturne,  
1450 That hath a ful large whel to turne.  
Thoo stoden forth on every rowe  
Of hem which that I koude knowe,  
Though I hem noght be ordre telle,  
To make yow to longe to duelle,  
These of whiche I gynne rede.  
There saugh I stonden, out of drede,  
Upon an yren piler strong  
That peynted was al endelong  
With tiges blod in every place,  
1460 The Tholosan that highte Stace,  
That bar of Thebes up the fame  
Upon his shuldres, and the name  
Also of cruel Achilles.  
And by him stood, withouten les,  
Ful wonder hy on a piler  
Of yren, he, the gret Omer;  
And with him Dares and Tytus  
Before, and eke he Lollius,

And Guydo eke de Columpnis,  
1470 And Englyssh Gaufride eke, ywis;  
And ech of these, as have I joye,  
Was besy for to bere up Troye.  
So hevy therof was the fame  
That for to bere hyt was no game.  
But yet I gan ful wel espie,  
Betwex hem was a litil envye.  
Oon seyde that Omer made lyes,  
Feynyng in hys poetries,  
And was to Grekes favorable;  
1480 Therfor held he hyt but fable.  
Tho saugh I stonde on a piler,  
That was of tynned yren cler,  
The Latyn poete Virgile,  
That bore hath up a longe while  
The fame of Pius Eneas.  
And next hym on a piler was,  
Of coper, Venus clerk Ovide,  
That hath ysowen wonder wide  
The grete god of Loves name.  
1490 And ther he bar up wel hys fame  
Upon this piler, also hye  
As I myghte see hyt with myn ye;  
For-why this halle, of which I rede,  
Was woxen on highte, length, and brede,  
Wel more be a thousand del  
Than hyt was erst, that saugh I wel.  
Thoo saugh I on a piler by,  
Of yren wroght ful sternely,  
The grete poete daun Lucan,  
1500 And on hys shuldres bar up than,  
As high as that y myghte see,  
The fame of Julius and Pompe.  
And by him stoden alle these clerkes  
That writen of Romes myghty werkes,  
That yf y wolde her names telle,  
Al to longe most I dwelle.  
And next him on a piler stood  
Of soulfre, lyk as he were wood,  
Daun Claudian, the sothe to telle,  
1510 That bar up al the fame of helle,

Of Pluto, and of Proserpyne,  
That quene ys of the derke pyne.  
What shulde y more telle of this?  
The halle was al ful, ywys,  
Of hem that writen olde gestes  
As ben on trees rokes nestes;  
But hit a ful confus matere  
Were alle the gestes for to here  
That they of write, or how they highte.  
1520 But while that y beheld thys syghte,  
I herde a noyse aprochen blyve,  
That ferde as been don in an hive  
Ayen her tyme of out-fleyng;  
Ryght such a maner murmuryng,  
For al the world, hyt semed me.  
Tho gan I loke aboute and see  
That ther come entryng into the halle  
A ryght gret companye withalle,  
And that of sondry regions,  
1530 Of alleskynnes condiciouns  
That dwelle in erthe under the mone,  
Pore and ryche. And also sone  
As they were come in to the halle,  
They gonne down on knees falle  
Before this ilke noble quene,  
And seyde, "Graunte us, lady shene,  
Ech of us of thy grace a bone!"  
And somme of hem she graunted sone,  
And somme she werned wel and faire,  
1540 And some she graunted the contraire  
Of her axyng outterly.  
But thus I seye yow, trewely,  
What her cause was, y nyste.  
For of this folk ful wel y wiste  
They hadde good fame ech deserved,  
Although they were dyversly served;  
Ryght as her suster, dame Fortune,  
Ys wont to serven in comune.  
Now herke how she gan to paye  
1550 That gonne her of her grace praye;  
And yit, lo, al this companye  
Seyden sooth, and noght a lye.

"Madame," seyde they, "we be  
Folk that here besechen the  
That thou graunte us now good fame,  
And let our werkes han that name.  
In ful recompensacioun  
Of good werkes, yive us good renoun."  
"I werne yow hit," quod she anon;  
1560 "Ye gete of me good fame non,  
Be God, and therfore goo your wey."  
"Allas," quod they, "and welaway!  
Telle us what may your cause be."  
"For me lyst hyt noght," quod she;  
"No wyght shal speke of yow, ywis,  
Good ne harm, ne that ne this."  
And with that word she gan to calle  
Her messenger, that was in halle,  
And bad that he shulde faste goon,  
1570 Upon peyne to be blynd anon,  
For Eolus the god of wynde --  
"In Trace, ther ye shal him fynde,  
And bid him bringe his clarioun,  
That is ful dyvers of his soun,  
And hyt is cleped Clere Laude,  
With which he wont is to heraude  
Hem that me list ypreised be.  
And also bid him how that he  
Brynge his other clarioun,  
1580 That highte Sklaundre in every toun,  
With which he wont is to diffame  
Hem that me liste, and do hem shame."  
This messenger gan faste goon,  
And found where in a cave of ston,  
In a contree that highte Trace,  
This Eolus, with harde grace,  
Held the wyndes in distresse,  
And gan hem under him to presse,  
That they gonne as beres rore,  
1590 He bond and pressed hem so sore.  
This messenger gan faste crie,  
"Rys up," quod he, "and faste hye,  
Til thou at my lady be;  
And tak thy clariouns eke with the,

And sped the forth." And he anon  
Tok to a man that highte Triton  
Hys clarions to bere thoo,  
And let a certeyn wynd to goo,  
That blew so hydously and hye  
1600 That hyt ne lefte not a skye  
In alle the welken long and brod.  
This Eolus nowhere abod  
Til he was come to Fames fet,  
And eke the man that Triton het;  
And ther he stod, as stille as stoon.  
And her-withal ther come anoon  
Another huge companye  
Of goode folk, and gunne crie,  
"Lady, graunte us now good fame,  
1610 And lat oure werkes han that name  
Now in honour of gentilesse,  
And also God your soule blesse!  
For we han wel deserved hyt,  
Therefore is ryght that we ben quyt."  
"As thryve I," quod she, "ye shal faylle!  
Good werkes shal yow noght availle  
To have of me good fame as now.  
But wite ye what? Y graunte yow  
That ye shal have a shrewed fame,  
1620 And wikkyd loos, and worse name,  
Though ye good loos have wel deserved.  
Now goo your wey, for ye be served.  
And thou, dan Eolus, let see,  
Tak forth thy trumpe anon," quod she,  
"That is ycleped Sklaundre lyght,  
And blow her loos, that every wight  
Speke of hem harm and shrewednesse  
In stede of good and worthynesse.  
For thou shalt trumpe alle the contrayre  
1630 Of that they han don wel or fayre."  
"Allas," thoughte I, "what adventures  
Han these sory creatures!  
For they, amonges al the pres,  
Shul thus be shamed gilteles.  
But what, hyt moste nedes be."  
What dide this Eolus, but he

Tok out hys blake trumpe of bras,  
That fouler than the devel was,  
And gan this trumpe for to blowe,  
1640 As al the world shulde overthowe,  
That throughtout every regioun  
Wente this foule trumpes soun,  
As swifte as pelet out of gonne  
Whan fyr is in the poudre ronne.  
And such a smoke gan out wende  
Out of his foule trumpes ende,  
Blak, bloo, grenyssh, swartish red,  
As doth where that men melte led,  
Loo, al on high fro the tuel.  
1650 And therto oo thing saugh I wel,  
That the ferther that hit ran,  
The gretter wexen hit began,  
As dooth the ryver from a welle,  
And hyt stank as the pit of helle.  
Allas, thus was her shame yronge,  
And gilteles, on every tonge!  
Tho come the thridde companye,  
And gunne up to the dees to hye,  
And doun on knees they fille anon,  
1660 And seyde, "We ben everychon  
Folk that han ful trewely  
Deserved fame ryghtfully,  
And praye yow, hit mote be knowe  
Ryght as hit is, and forth yblowe."  
"I graunte," quod she, "for me list  
That now your goode werkes be wist,  
And yet ye shul han better loos,  
Right in dispit of alle your foos,  
Than worthy is, and that anoon.  
1670 Lat now," quod she, "thy trumpe goon,  
Thou Eolus, that is so blak;  
And out thyn other trumpe tak  
That highte Laude, and blow yt soo  
That thugh the world her fame goo  
Al esely, and not to faste,  
That hyt be knownen atte laste."  
"Ful gladly, lady myn," he seyde;  
And out hys trumpe of gold he brayde

Anon, and sette hyt to his mouth,  
1680 And blew it est, and west, and south,  
And north, as lowde as any thunder,  
That every wight hath of hit wonder,  
So brode hyt ran or than hit stente.  
And, certes, al the breth that wente  
Out of his trumpes mouth it smelde  
As men a pot of bawme helde  
Among a basket ful of roses.  
This favour dide he til her loses.  
And ryght with this y gan aspye,  
1690 Ther come the ferthe companye --  
But certeyn they were wonder fewe --  
And gunne stonden in a rewe,  
And seyden, "Certes, lady bryght,  
We han don wel with al our myght,  
But we ne kepen have no fame.  
Hyde our werkes and our name,  
For Goddys love; for certes we  
Han certeyn doon hyt for bounte,  
And for no maner other thing."  
1700 "I graunte yow alle your askyng,"  
Quod she; "let your werkes be ded."  
With that aboute y clew myn hed,  
And saugh anon the fifte route  
That to this lady gunne loute,  
And doun on knes anon to falle;  
And to hir thoo besoughten alle  
To hide her goode werkes ek,  
And seyden they yeven noght a lek  
For fame ne for such renoun;  
1710 For they for contemplacioun  
And Goddes love hadde ywrought,  
Ne of fame wolde they nought.  
"What?" quod she, "and be ye wood?  
And wene ye for to doo good,  
And for to have of that no fame?  
Have ye dispit to have my name?  
Nay, ye shul lyven everychon!  
Blow thy trumpes, and that anon,"  
Quod she, "thou Eolus, y hote,  
1720 And ryng this folkes werk be note,

That al the world may of hyt here."  
And he gan blowe her loos so clere  
In his golden clarioun  
That thugh the world wente the soun  
Also kenely and eke so softe;  
But atte last hyt was on-lofte.  
Thoo come the sexte companye,  
And gunne faste on Fame crie.  
Ryght verraily in this manere  
1730 They seyden: "Mercy, lady dere!  
To tellen certeyn as hyt is,  
We han don neither that ne this,  
But ydel al oure lyf ybe.  
But natheles yet preye we  
That we mowe han as good a fame,  
And gret renoun and knowen name,  
As they that han doon noble gestes,  
And acheved alle her lestes,  
As wel of love as other thyng.  
1740 Al was us never broche ne ryng,  
Ne elles noght, from wymmen sent,  
Ne ones in her herte yment  
To make us oonly frendly chere,  
But myghten temen us upon bere;  
Yet lat us to the peple seme  
Suche as the world may of us deme  
That wommen loven us for wod.  
Hyt shal doon us as moche good,  
And to oure herte as moche avaylle  
1750 To countrepese ese and travaylle,  
As we had wonne hyt with labour;  
For that is dere boght honour  
At regard of oure grete ese.  
And yet thou most us more plese:  
Let us be holden eke therto  
Worthy, wise, and goode also,  
And riche, and happy unto love.  
For Goddes love, that sit above,  
Thogh we may not the body have  
1760 Of wymmen, yet, so God yow save,  
Leet men gliwe on us the name --  
Sufficeth that we han the fame."



"I graunte," quod she, "be my trouthe!  
Now, Eolus, withouten slouthe,  
Tak out thy trumpe of gold, let se,  
And blow as they han axed me,  
That every man wene hem at ese,  
Though they goon in ful badde lese."  
This Eolus gan hit so blowe  
1770 That thurgh the world hyt was yknowe.  
Thoo come the seventh route anon,  
And fel on knees everychoon,  
And seyde, "Lady, graunte us sone  
The same thing, the same bone,  
That [ye] this nexte folk han doon."  
"Fy on yow," quod she, "everychon!  
Ye masty swyn, ye ydel wrechches,  
Ful of roten, slowe techches!  
What? False theves! Wher ye wolde  
1780 Be famous good, and nothing nolde  
Deserve why, ne never ye roughete?  
Men rather yow to hangen oughte!  
For ye be lyke the sweynte cat  
That wolde have fissh; but wostow what?  
He wolde nothing wete his clowes.  
Yvel thrift come to your jowes,  
And eke to myn, if I hit graunte,  
Or do yow favour, yow to avaunte!  
Thou Eolus, thou kyng of Trace,  
1790 Goo blowe this folk a sory grace,"  
Quod she, "anon; and wostow how?  
As I shal telle thee ryght now.  
Sey: 'These ben they that wolde honour  
Have, and do noskynnes labour,  
Ne doo no good, and yet han lawde;  
And that men wende that bele Isawde  
Ne coude hem noght of love werne,  
And yet she that grynt at a querne  
Ys al to good to ese her herte.'"  
1800 This Eolus anon up sterte,  
And with his blake clarioun  
He gan to blasen out a soun  
As lowde as beloweth wynd in helle;  
And eke therwith, soth to telle,

This soun was so ful of japes,  
As ever mowes were in apes.  
And that wente al the world aboute,  
That every wight gan on hem shoute  
And for to lawghe as they were wod,  
1810 Such game fonde they in her hod.  
Tho come another companye,  
That had ydoon the trayterye,  
The harm, the grettest wikkednesse  
That any herte kouth. gesse;  
And prayed her to han good fame,  
And that she nolde doon hem no shame,  
But yeve hem loos and good renoun,  
And do hyt blowe in a clarioun.  
"Nay, wis," quod she, "hyt were a vice.  
1820 Al be ther in me no justice,  
Me lyste not to doo hyt now,  
Ne this nyl I not graunte yow."  
Tho come ther lepyng in a route,  
And gunne choppen al aboute  
Every man upon the crowne,  
That al the halle gan to sowne,  
And seyden: "Lady, leef and dere,  
We ben suche folk as ye mowe here.  
To tellen al the tale aryght,  
1830 We ben shrewes, every wyght,  
And han delyt in wikkednesse,  
As goode folk han in godnesse;  
And joye to be knowen shrewes,  
And ful of vice and wikked thewes;  
Wherefore we praye yow, a-rowe,  
That oure fame such be knowe  
In alle thing ryght as hit ys."  
"Y graunte hyt yow," quod she, "ywis.  
But what art thou that seyst this tale,  
1840 That werest on thy hose a pale,  
And on thy tipet such a belle?"  
"Madame," quod he, "soth to telle,  
I am that ylke shrewe, ywis,  
That brende the temple of Ysidis  
In Athenes, loo, that citee."  
"And wherfor didest thou so?" quod she.

"By my thrift," quod he, "madame,  
I wolde fayn han had a fame,  
As other folk hadde in the toun,  
1850 Although they were of gret renoun  
For her vertu and for her thewes.  
Thoughte y, as gret a fame han shrewes,  
Though hit be for shrewednesse,  
As goode folk han for godnesse;  
And sith y may not have that oon,  
That other nyl y noght forgoon.  
And for to gette of Fames hire,  
The temple sette y al afire.  
Now do our loos be blowen swithe,  
1860 As wisly be thou ever blythe!"  
"Gladly," quod she; "thow Eolus,  
Herestow not what they prayen us?"  
"Madame, yis, ful wel," quod he,  
"And I wil trumpen it, parde!"  
And tok his blake trumpe faste,  
And gan to puffen and to blaste,  
Til hyt was at the worldes ende.  
With that y gan aboute wende,  
For oon that stood ryght at my bak,  
1870 Me thoughte, goodly to me spak,  
And seyde, "Frend, what is thy name?  
Artow come hider to han fame?"  
"Nay, for sothe, frend," quod y;  
"I cam noght hyder, graunt mercy,  
For no such cause, by my hed!  
Sufficeth me, as I were ded,  
That no wight have my name in honde.  
I wot myself best how y stonde;  
For what I drye, or what I thynke,  
1880 I wil myselven al hyt drynke,  
Certeyn, for the more part,  
As fer forth as I kan myn art."  
"But what doost thou here than?" quod he.  
Quod y, "That wyl y tellen the,  
The cause why y stonde here:  
Somme newe tydynges for to lere,  
Somme newe thinges, y not what,  
Tydynges, other this or that,

Of love or suche thynges glade.  
1890 For certeynly, he that me made  
To comen hyder, seyde me,  
Y shulde bothe here and se  
In this place wonder thynges;  
But these be no suche tydynges  
As I mene of." "Noo?" quod he.  
And I answered, "Noo, parde!  
For wel y wiste ever yit,  
Sith that first y hadde wit,  
That somme folk han desired fame  
1900 Diversly, and loos, and name.  
But certeynly, y nyste how  
Ne where that Fame duelled, er now,  
And eke of her descripcioun,  
Ne also her condicioun,  
Ne the ordre of her dom,  
Unto the tyme y hidder com."  
"[Whych] than be, loo, these tydynges,  
That thou now [thus] hider brynges,  
That thou hast herd?" quod he to me;  
1910 "But now no fors, for wel y se  
What thou desirest for to here.  
Com forth and stond no lenger here,  
And y wil thee, withouten drede,  
In such another place lede  
Ther thou shalt here many oon."  
Tho gan I forth with hym to goon  
Out of the castel, soth to seye.  
Tho saugh y stonde in a valeye,  
Under the castel, faste by,  
1920 An hous, that Domus Dedaly,  
That Laboryntus cleped ys,  
Nas mad so wonderlych, ywis,  
Ne half so queyntelych ywrought.  
And ever mo, as swyft as thought,  
This queynte hous aboute wente,  
That never mo hyt stille stente.  
And therout com so gret a noyse  
That, had hyt stonden upon Oyse,  
Men myghte hyt han herd esely  
1930 To Rome, y trowe sikerly.

And the noyse which that I herde,  
 For al the world ryght so hyt ferde  
 As dooth the rowtyng of the ston  
 That from th' engyn ys leten gon.  
 And al thys hous of which y rede  
 Was mad of twigges, falwe, rede,  
 And grene eke, and somme weren white,  
 Swiche as men to these cages thwite,  
 Or maken of these panyers,  
 1940 Or elles [hottes] or dossers;  
 That, for the swough and for the twygges,  
 This hous was also ful of gygges,  
 And also ful eke of chirkynges,  
 And of many other werkynge;  
 And eke this hous hath of entrees  
 As fele as of leves ben in trees  
 In somer, whan they grene been;  
 And on the roof men may yet seen  
 A thousand holes, and wel moo,  
 1950 To leten wel the soun out goo.  
 And be day, in every tyde,  
 Been al the dores opened wide,  
 And be nyght echon unshette;  
 Ne porter ther is noon to lette  
 No maner tydynge in to pace.  
 Ne never rest is in that place  
 That hit nys fild ful of tydynge,  
 Other loude or of whisprynge;  
 And over alle the houses angles  
 1960 Ys ful of rounynges and of jangles  
 Of werres, of pes, of mariages,  
 Of reste, of labour, of viages,  
 Of abood, of deeth, of lyf,  
 Of love, of hate, acord, of stryf,  
 Of loos, of lore, and of wynnynges,  
 Of hele, of seknesse, of bilynges,  
 Of faire wyndes, and of tempestes,  
 Of qwalm of folk, and eke of bestes;  
 Of dyvers transmutacions  
 1970 Of estats, and eke of regions;  
 Of trust, of drede, of jelousye,  
 Of wit, of wynnyng, of folye;

Of plente, and of gret famyne,  
 Of chepe, of derthe, and of ruyne;  
 Of good or mys gouvernement,  
 Of fyr, and of dyvers accident.  
 And loo, thys hous, of which I write,  
 Syker be ye, hit nas not lyte,  
 For hyt was sixty myle of lengthe.  
 1980 Al was the tymber of no strengthe,  
 Yet hit is founded to endure  
 While that hit lyst to Aventure,  
 That is the moder of tydynges,  
 As the see of welles and of sprynges;  
 And hyt was shapen lyk a cage.  
 "Certys," quod y, "in al myn age,  
 Ne saugh y such an hous as this."  
 And as y wondred me, ywys,  
 Upon this hous, tho war was y  
 1990 How that myn egle faste by  
 Was perched hye upon a stoon;  
 And I gan streghte to hym gon,  
 And seyde thus: "Y preye the  
 That thou a while abide me,  
 For Goddis love, and lete me seen  
 What wondres in this place been;  
 For yit, paraunter, y may lere  
 Som good theron, or sumwhat here  
 That leef me were, or that y wente."  
 2000 "Petre, that is myn entente,"  
 Quod he to me; "therfore y duelle.  
 But certeyn, oon thyng I the telle,  
 That but I bringe the therinne,  
 Ne shalt thou never kunne gynne  
 To come into hyt, out of doute,  
 So faste hit whirleth, lo, aboute.  
 But sith that Joves, of his grace,  
 As I have seyde, wol the solace  
 Fynally with these thinges,  
 2010 Unkouth the syghtes and tydynges,  
 To passe with thyn hevynesse,  
 Such routhe hath he of thy distresse,  
 That thou suffrest debonairly --  
 And wost thyselfen outtirly

Disesperat of alle blys,  
Syth that Fortune hath mad amys  
The [fruit] of al thyn hertys reste  
Languisshe and eke in poynt to breste --  
That he, thugh hys myghty merite,  
2020 Wol do the an ese, al be hyt lyte,  
And yaf in expres commaundement,  
To which I am obedient,  
To further the with al my myght,  
And wisse and teche the aryght  
Where thou maist most tidynges here.  
Shaltow here anoon many oon lere."  
With this word he ryght anoon  
Hente me up bytwene hys toon,  
And at a wyndowe yn me broghte,  
2030 That in this hous was, as me thoghte --  
And therwithalle, me thoughte hit stente,  
And nothing hyt aboute wente --  
And me sette in the flor adoun.  
But which a congregacioun  
Of folk, as I saugh rome aboute,  
Some wythin and some wythoute,  
Nas never seen, ne shal ben eft;  
That, certys, in the world nys left  
So many formed be Nature,  
2040 Ne ded so many a creature;  
That wel unnethe in that place  
Hadde y a fote-brede of space.  
And every wight that I saugh there  
Rounded everych in others ere  
A newe tydyng prively,  
Or elles tolde al openly  
Ryght thus, and seyde: "Nost not thou  
That ys betyd, lo, late or now?"  
"No," quod he, "telle me what."  
2050 And than he tolde hym this and that,  
And swor therto that hit was soth --  
"Thus hath he sayd," and "Thus he doth,"  
"Thus shal hit be," "Thus herde y seye,"  
"That shal be founde," "That dar I leye" --  
That al the folk that ys alyve  
Ne han the kunnyng to discryve

The thinges that I herde there,  
What aloude, and what in ere.  
But al the wondermost was this:  
2060 Whan oon had herd a thing, ywis,  
He com forth ryght to another wight,  
And gan him tellen anon-ryght  
The same that to him was told,  
Or hyt a forlong way was old,  
But gan somewhat for to eche  
To this tydyng in this speche  
More than hit ever was.  
And nat so sone departed nas  
Tho fro him, that he ne mette  
2070 With the thridde; and or he lette  
Any stounde, he told him als;  
Were the tydyng soth or fals,  
Yit wolde he telle hyt natheles,  
And evermo with more encres  
Than yt was erst. Thus north and south  
Wente every tydyng fro mouth to mouth,  
And that encresing ever moo,  
As fyr ys wont to quyke and goo  
From a sparke spronge amys,  
2080 Til al a citee brent up ys.  
And whan that was ful yspronge,  
And woxen more on every tonge  
Than ever hit was, [hit] wente anoon  
Up to a wyndowe out to goon;  
Or, but hit myghte out there pace,  
Hyт gan out crepe at som crevace,  
And flygh forth faste for the nones.  
And somtyme saugh I thoo at ones  
A lesyng and a sad soth sawe,  
2090 That gonне of aventure drawe  
Out at a wyndowe for to pace;  
And, when they metten in that place,  
They were achekked bothe two,  
And neyther of hem moste out goo  
For other, so they gonне crowde,  
Til ech of hem gan crien lowde,  
"Lat me go first!" "Nay, but let me!  
And here I wol ensuren the,



Wyth the nones that thou wolt do so,  
2100 That I shal never fro the go,  
But be thyn owne sworn brother!  
We wil medle us ech with other,  
That no man, be they never so wrothe,  
Shal han on [of us] two, but bothe  
At ones, al besyde his leve,  
Come we a-morwe or on eve,  
Be we cried or stille yrouned."  
Thus saugh I fals and soth compouned  
Togeder fle for oo tydyng.  
2110 Thus out at holes gunne wringe  
Every tydyng streight to Fame,  
And she gan yeven ech hys name,  
After hir disposicioun,  
And yaf hem eke duracioun,  
Somme to wexe and wane sone,  
As doth the faire white mone,  
And let hem goon. Ther myghte y seen  
Wynged wondres faste fleen,  
Twenty thousand in a route,  
2120 As Eolus hem blew aboute.  
And, Lord, this hous in alle tymes  
Was ful of shipmen and pilgrimes,  
With scrippes bret-ful of lesinges,  
Entremedled with tydynges,  
And eek allone be hemselfe.  
O, many a thousand tymes twelve  
Saugh I eke of these pardoners,  
Currours, and eke messagers,  
With boystes crammed ful of lyes  
2130 As ever vessel was with lyes.  
And as I alther-fastest wente  
About, and dide al myn entente  
Me for to pleyen and for to lere,  
And eke a tydyng for to here,  
That I had herd of som contre  
That shal not now be told for me --  
For hit no nede is, redely;  
Folk kan synge hit bet than I;  
For al mot out, other late or rathe,  
2140 Alle the sheves in the lathe --

I herde a gret noyse withalle  
In a corner of the halle,  
Ther men of love-tydynges tolde,  
And I gan thiderward beholde;  
For I saugh rennyng every wight  
As faste as that they hadden myght,  
And everych cried, "What thing is that?"  
And somme sayde, "I not never what."  
And whan they were alle on an hepe,  
2150 Tho behynde begunne up lepe,  
And clamben up on other faste,  
And up the nose and yen kaste,  
And troden fast on others heles,  
And stampen, as men doon aftir eles.  
Atte laste y saugh a man,  
Which that y [nevene] nat ne kan;  
But he semed for to be  
A man of gret auctorite. . . .



## ANELIDA AND ARCITE

Thou ferse god of armes, Mars the rede,  
That in the frosty contre called Trace,  
Within thy grisly temple ful of drede  
Honoured art as patroun of that place;  
With thy Bellona, Pallas, ful of grace,  
Be present and my song contynue and guye;  
At my begynnyng thus to the I crye.  
For hit ful depe is sonken in my mynde,  
With pitous hert in Englyssh to endyte  
10 This olde storie, in Latyn which I fynde,  
Of quene Anelida and fals Arcite,  
That elde, which that al can frete and bite,  
As hit hath freten mony a noble storie,  
Hath nygh devoured out of oure memorie.  
Be favorable eke, thou Polymya,  
On Parnaso that with thy sustres glade,  
By Elycon, not fer from Cirrea,  
Singest with vois memorial in the shade,  
Under the laurer which that may not fade,  
20 And do that I my ship to haven wyne.  
First folowe I Stace, and after him Corynne.  
When Theseus with werres longe and grete  
The aspre folk of Cithe had overcome,  
With laurer corouned, in his char gold-bete,  
Hom to his contre-houses is he come,  
For which the peple, blisful al and somme,  
So cryeden that to the sterres hit wente,  
And him to honouren dide al her entente.  
Beforn this duk, in signe of victorie,  
30 The trompes come, and in his baner large  
The ymage of Mars, and in tokenyng of glorie  
Men myghte sen of tresour many a charge,  
Many a bright helm, and many a spere and targe,  
Many a fresh knyght, and many a blysful route,  
On hors, on fote, in al the feld aboute.  
Ipolita his wif, the hardy quene  
Of Cithia, that he conquered hadde,  
With Emelye her yonge suster shene,  
Faire in a char of gold he with him ladde,  
40 That al the ground about her char she spradde

With brightnesse of the beaute in her face,  
Fulfilled of largesse and of alle grace.  
With his tryumphe and laurer-corouned thus,  
In al the flour of Fortunes yevynge,  
Let I this noble prince Theseus  
Toward Athenes in his wey rydinge,  
And founde I wol in shortly for to bringe  
The slye wey of that I gan to write,  
Of quene Anelida and fals Arcite.  
50 Mars, which that through his furious cours of ire,  
The olde wrathe of Juno to fulfille,  
Hath set the peples hertes bothe on fire  
Of Thebes and Grece, everich other to kille  
With bloody speres, ne rested never stille,  
But throng now her, now ther, among hem bothe,  
That everych other slough, so were they wrothe.  
For when Amphiorax and Tydeus,  
Ipomedon, Parthonope also  
Were ded, and slayn proude Campaneus,  
60 And when the wrecched Thebans, bretheren two,  
Were slayn, and kyng Adrastus hom ago,  
So desolat stod Thebes and so bare  
That no wight coude remedie of his fare.  
And when the olde Creon gan espye  
How that the blood roial was broght a-doun,  
He held the cite by his tyrannye  
And dyde the gentils of that regioun  
To ben his frendes and wonnen in the toun.  
So, what for love of him and what for awe,  
70 The noble folk were to the toun idrawe.  
Among al these Anelida, the quene  
Of Ermony, was in that toun dwellynge,  
That fairer was then is the sonne shene.  
Thurghout the world so gan her name springe  
That her to seen had every wyght likynge,  
For, as of trouthe, is ther noon her lyche  
Of al the women in this worlde riche.  
Yong was this quene, of twenty yer of elde,  
Of mydel stature, and of such fairenesse  
80 That Nature had a joye her to behelde;  
And for to speken of her stidfastnesse,  
She passed hath Penelope and Lucesse;

And shortly, yf she shal be comprehended,  
In her ne myghte no thing been amended.  
This Theban knyght Arcite eke, soth to seyn,  
Was yong and therwithal a lusty knyght,  
But he was double in love and no thing pleyn,  
And subtil in that craft over any wyght,  
And with his kunnyng wan this lady bryght;  
90 For so ferforth he gan her trouthe assure  
That she him trusted over any creature.  
What shuld I seyn? She loved Arcite so  
That when that he was absent any throwe,  
Anon her thoghte her herte brast a-two;  
For in her sight to her he bar hym lowe,  
So that she wende have al his hert yknowe;  
But he was fals; hit nas but feyned chere --  
As nedeth not to men such craft to lere.  
But nevertheles ful mykel besynesse  
100 Had he er that he myghte his lady wynne,  
And swor he wolde dyen for distresse  
Or from his wit he seyde he wolde twynne.  
Alas, the while! For hit was routhe and synne  
That she upon his sorowes wolde rewe;  
But nothing thinketh the fals as doth the trewe.  
Her fredom fond Arcite in such manere  
That al was his that she hath, moche or lyte;  
Ne to no creature made she chere  
Ferther then that hit lyked to Arcite.  
110 Ther nas no lak with which he myghte her wite;  
She was so ferforth yeven hym to plese  
That al that lyked hym hit dyde her ese.  
Ther nas to her no maner lettre sent  
That touched love, from any maner wyght,  
That she ne shewed hit him er hit was brent;  
So pleyn she was and dide her fulle myght  
That she nyl hiden nothing from her knyght,  
Lest he of any untrouthe her upbreyde.  
Withoute bode his heste she obeyde.  
120 And eke he made him jelous over here,  
That what that any man had to her seyde  
Anoon he wolde preyen her to swere  
What was that word or make him evel apaid.  
Then wende she out of her wyt have breyd;

But al this nas but sleght and flaterie;  
Withoute love he feyned jelousye.  
And al this tok she so debonerly  
That al his wil her thoghte hit skilful thing,  
And ever the lenger she loved him tendirly  
130 And dide him honour as he were a kyng.  
Her herte was to him wedded with a ring;  
So ferforth upon trouthe is her entente  
That wher he gooth her herte with him wente.  
When she shal ete, on him is so her thought  
That wel unnethe of mete tok she kep;  
And when that she was to her reste broght,  
On him she thoghte alwey til that she slep;  
When he was absent, prevely she wep:  
Thus lyveth feire Anelida the quene  
140 For fals Arcite, that dide her al this tene.  
This fals Arcite, of his newfanglenesse,  
For she to him so lowly was and trewe,  
Tok lesse deynte of her stidfastnesse  
And saw another lady, proud and newe,  
And ryght anon he cladde him in her hewe --  
Wot I not whethir in white, rede, or grene --  
And falsed fair Anelida the quene.  
But neverthesse, gret wonder was hit noon  
Thogh he were fals, for hit is kynde of man  
150 Sith Lamek was, that is so longe agoon,  
To ben in love as fals as evere he can;  
He was the firste fader that began  
To loven two, and was in bigamye,  
And he found tentes first, but yf men lye.  
This fals Arcite, sumwhat moste he feyne,  
When he wex fals, to covere his traitorie,  
Ryght as an hors that can both bite and pleyne,  
For he bar her on honde of trecherie,  
And swor he coude her doublenesse espie,  
160 And al was falsnes that she to him mente.  
Thus swor this thef, and forth his way he wente.  
Alas, what herte myght endure hit,  
For routhe and wo, her sorwe for to telle?  
Or what man hath the cunnyng or the wit?  
Or what man mighte within the chambre dwelle,  
Yf I to him rehersen sholde the helle

That suffreth fair Anelida the quene  
For fals Arcite, that dide her al this tene.  
She wepith, waileth, swowneth pitously;  
170 To grounde ded she falleth as a ston;  
Craumpyssheth her lymes crokedly;  
She speketh as her wit were al agon;  
Other colour then asshen hath she noon;  
Non other word speketh she, moche or lyte,  
But 'Merci, cruel herte myn, Arcite!'  
And thus endureth til that she was so mat  
That she ne hath foot on which she may sustene,  
But forth languisshing evere in this estat,  
Of which Arcite hath nouthen routhe ne tene.  
180 His herte was elleswhere, newe and grene,  
That on her wo ne deyneth him not to thinke;  
Him rekketh never wher she flete or synke.  
His newe lady holdeth him so narowe  
Up by the bridil, at the staves ende,  
That every word he dredeth as an arowe;  
Her daunger made him bothe bowe and bende,  
And as her liste, made him turne or wende,  
For she ne graunted him in her lyvyng  
No grace whi that he hath lust to singe,  
190 But drof hym forth. Unnethe liste her knowe  
That he was servaunt unto her ladishippe;  
But lest that he were proud, she held him lowe.  
Thus serveth he withoute fee or shipe;  
She sent him now to londe, now to shippe;  
And for she yaf him daunger al his fille,  
Therfor she hadde him at her owne wille.  
Ensample of this, ye thrifty wymmen alle,  
Take her of Anelida and Arcite,  
That for her liste him 'dere herte' calle  
200 And was so meke, therfor he loved her lyte.  
The kynde of mannes herte is to delyte  
In thing that straunge is, also God me save!  
For what he may not gete, that wolde he have.  
Now turne we to Anelida ageyn,  
That pyneth day be day in langwisshinge,  
But when she saw that her ne gat no geyn,  
Upon a day, ful sorowfully wepinge,  
She caste her for to make a compleynyng,

And of her owne hond she gan hit write,  
210 And sente hit to her Theban knyght, Arcite.  
So thirleth with the poynt of remembraunce  
The swerd of sorowe, ywhet with fals plesaunce,  
Myn herte, bare of blis and blak of hewe,  
That turned is in quakyng al my daunce,  
My surete in awhaped countenaunce,  
Sith hit availeth not for to ben trewe;  
For whoso trewest is, hit shal hir rewe  
That serveth love and doth her observaunce  
Alwey til oon, and chaungeth for no newe.  
220 I wot myself as wel as any wight,  
For I loved oon with al myn herte and myght,  
More then myself an hundred thousand sithe,  
And called him myn hertes lif, my knyght,  
And was al his, as fer as hit was ryght;  
And when that he was glad, then was I blithe,  
And his disese was my deth as swithe;  
And he ayein his trouthe hath me plyght  
For evermore, his lady me to kythe.  
Now is he fals, alas, and causeles,  
230 And of my wo he is so routheles  
That with a word him list not ones deyne  
To bringe ayen my sorowful herte in pes,  
For he is caught up in another les.  
Ryght as him list, he laugheth at my peyne,  
And I ne can myn herte not restreyne  
For to love him alwey neveretheles;  
And of al this I not to whom me pleyne.  
And shal I pleyne -- alas, the harde stounde! --  
Unto my foo that yaf myn herte a wounde  
240 And yet desireth that myn harm be more?  
Nay, certis, ferther wol I never founde  
Non other helpe, my sores for to sounde.  
My destinee hath shapen hit so ful yore;  
I wil non other medecyne ne lore;  
I wil ben ay ther I was ones bounde.  
That I have seid, be seid for evermore!  
Alas! Wher is become your gentillesse,  
Youre wordes ful of plesaunce and humblesse,  
Youre observaunces in so low manere,  
250 And your awayting and your besynesse



Upon me, that ye calden your maistresse,  
Your sovereyne lady in this world here?  
Alas! Is ther now nother word ne chere  
Ye vouchen sauf upon myn hevynesse?  
Alas! Youre love, I bye hit al to dere.  
Now, certis, swete, thogh that ye  
Thus causeles the cause be  
Of my dedly adversyte,  
Your manly resoun oghte hit to respite  
260 To slen your frend, and namely me,  
That never yet in no degre  
Offended yow, as wisly He  
That al wot, out of wo my soule quyte!  
But for I shewed yow, Arcite,  
Al that men wolde to me write,  
And was so besy yow to delyte --  
Myn honor save -- meke, kynde, and fre,  
Therfor ye put on me this wite,  
And of me rekke not a myte,  
270 Thogh that the swerd of sorwe byte  
My woful herte through your cruelte.  
My swete foo, why do ye so, for shame?  
And thenke ye that furthered be your name  
To love a newe, and ben untrewe? Nay!  
And putte yow in sclaunder now and blame,  
And do to me adversite and grame,  
That love yow most -- God, wel thou wost -- alway?  
Yet come ayein, and yet be pleyn som day,  
And than shal this, that now is mys, be game,  
280 And al foryive, while that I lyve may.  
Lo, herte myn, al this is for to seyne  
As whether shal I preye or elles pleyne?  
Which is the way to doon yow to be trewe?  
For either mot I have yow in my cheyne  
Or with the deth ye mote departe us tweyne;  
Ther ben non other mene weyes newe.  
For God so wisly upon my soule rewe,  
As verrayly ye sleen me with the peyne;  
That may ye se unfeyned of myn hewe.  
290 For thus ferforth have I my deth y-soght?  
Myself I mordre with my privy thoght;  
For sorowe and routhe of your unkyndenesse

I wepe, I wake, I faste; al helpeth noght;  
I weyve joye that is to speke of oght,  
I voyde companye, I fle gladnesse.  
Who may avaunte her beter of hevynesse  
Then I? And to this plyte have ye me broght,  
Withoute gilt -- me nedeth no witnesse.  
And shal I preye, and weyve womanhede? --  
300 Nay! Rather deth then do so foul a dede! --  
And axe merci, gilteles -- what nede?  
And yf I pleyne what lyf that I lede,  
Yow rekketh not; that knowe I, out of drede;  
And if that I to yow myne othes bede  
For myn excuse, a skorn shal be my mede.  
Your chere floureth, but it wol not sede;  
Ful longe agoon I oghte have taken hede.  
For thogh I hadde yow to-morowe ageyn,  
I myghte as wel holde Aperill fro reyn  
310 As holde yow, to make yow be stidfast.  
Almyghty God, of trouthe sovereyn,  
Wher is the trouthe of man? Who hath hit slayn?  
Who that hem loveth, she shal hem fynde as fast  
As in a tempest is a roten mast.  
Is that a tame best that is ay feyn  
To fleen away when he is lest agast?  
Now merci, swete, yf I mysseye!  
Have I seyde oght amys, I preye?  
I noot; my wit is al aweye.  
320 I fare as doth the song of Chaunte-pleure;  
For now I pleyne, and now I pleye;  
I am so mased that I deye;  
Arcite hath born away the keye  
Of al my world, and my good aventure.  
For in this world nis creature  
Wakyng in more discomfiture  
Then I, ne more sorowe endure.  
And yf I slepe a furlong wey or tweye,  
Then thynketh me that your figure  
330 Before me stont, clad in asure,  
To profren eft and newe assure  
For to be trewe, and merci me to preye.  
The longe nyght this wonder sight I drye,  
And on the day for thilke afray I dye,

And of al this ryght noght, iwis, ye reche.  
Ne nevere mo myn yen two be drie,  
And to your routhe, and to your trouthe, I crie.  
But welaway! To fer be they to feche;  
Thus holdeth me my destinee a wreche.  
340 But me to rede out of this drede, or guye,  
Ne may my wit, so weyk is hit, not streche.  
Then ende I thus, sith I may do no more.  
I yeve hit up for now and evermore,  
For I shal never eft putten in balaunce  
My sekernes, ne lerne of love the lore.  
But as the swan, I have herd seyde ful yore,  
Ayeins his deth shal singen his penaunce,  
So singe I here my destinee or chaunce,  
How that Arcite Anelida so sore  
350 Hath thirled with the poynt of remembraunce.  
When that Anelida, this woful quene,  
Hath of her hand ywriten in this wise,  
With face ded, betwixe pale and grene,  
She fel a-swowe; and sith she gan to rise,  
And unto Mars avoweth sacrificise  
Withinne the temple, with a sorowful chere,  
That shapen was as ye shal after here....??



## THE PARLIAMENT OF FOWLS

The lyf so short, the craft so long to lerne,  
Th' assay so hard, so sharp the conquerynge,  
The dredful joye alwey that slit so yerne:  
Al this mene I by Love, that my felynge  
Astonyeth with his wonderful werkynge  
So sore, iwis, that whan I on hym thynke  
Nat wot I wel wher that I flete or synke.  
For al be that I knowe nat Love in dede,  
Ne wot how that he quiteth folk here hyre,  
10 Yit happeth me ful ofte in bokes reede  
Of his myrakles and his crewel yre.  
There rede I wel he wol be lord and syre;  
I dar nat seyn, his strokes been so sore,  
But "God save swich a lord!" -- I can na moore.  
Of usage -- what for lust and what for lore --  
On bokes rede I ofte, as I yow tolde.  
But wherfore that I speke al this? Nat yoore  
Agon it happede me for to beholde  
Upon a bok, was write with lettres olde,  
20 And therupon, a certeyn thing to lerne,  
The longe day ful faste I redde and yerne.  
For out of olde feldes, as men seyth,  
Cometh al this newe corn from yer to yere,  
And out of olde bokes, in good feyth,  
Cometh al this newe science that men lere.  
But now to purpos as of this matere:  
To rede forth hit gan me so delite  
That al that day me thoughte but a lyte.  
This bok of which I make mencion  
30 Entitled was al ther, as I shal telle:  
"Tullyus of the Drem of Scipioun."  
Chapitres sevene it hadde, of hevene and helle  
And erthe, and soules that therinne dwelle,  
Of whiche, as shortly as I can it trete,  
Of his sentence I wol yow seyn the greete.  
Fyrst telleth it, whan Scipion was come  
In Affrike, how he meteth Massynisse,  
That hym for joie in armes hath inome;  
Thanne telleth [it] here speche and al the blysse  
40 That was betwix hem til the day gan mysse,

And how his auncestre, Affrycan so deere,  
Gan in his slep that nyght to hym apere.  
Thanne telleth it that, from a sterry place,  
How Affrycan hath hym Cartage shewed,  
And warnede hym befor of al his grace,  
And seyde hym what man, lered other lewed,  
That lovede commune profyt, wel ithewed,  
He shulde into a blysful place wende  
There as joye is that last withouten ende.  
50 Thanne axede he if folk that here been dede  
Han lyf and dwellynge in another place.  
And Affrican seyde, "Ye, withouten drede,"  
And that oure present worldes lyves space  
Nis but a maner deth, what wey we trace;  
And rightful folk shul gon, after they dye,  
To hevene; and shewede hym the Galaxye.  
Thanne shewede he hym the lytel erthe that here is,  
At regard of the hevenes quantite;  
And after shewede he hym the nyne speres;  
60 And after that the melodye herde he  
That cometh of thilke speres thryes thre,  
That welle is of musik and melodye  
In this world here, and cause of armonye.  
Than bad he hym, syn erthe was so lyte,  
And dissevable and ful of harde grace,  
That he ne shulde hym in the world delyte.  
Thanne tolde he hym, in certeyn yeres space  
That every sterre shulde come into his place  
Ther it was first, and al shulde out of mynde  
70 That in this world is don of al mankynde.  
Thanne preyede hym Scipion to telle hym al  
The wey to come into that hevene blisse.  
And he seyde, "Know thyself first immortal,  
And loke ay besyly thow werche and wysse  
To commune profit, and thow shalt not mysse  
To comen swiftly to that place deere  
That ful of blysse is and of soules cleere.  
"But brekers of the lawe, soth to seyne,  
And likerous folk, after that they ben dede,  
80 Shul whirle aboute th' erthe alwey in peyne,  
Tyl many a world be passed, out of drede,  
And than, foryeven al hir wikked dede,

Than shul they come into that blysful place,  
To which to comen God the sende his grace."  
The day gan faylen, and the derke nyght,  
That reveth bestes from here besynesse,  
Berafte me my bok for lak of lyght,  
And to my bed I gan me for to dresse,  
Fulfyld of thought and busy hevynesse;  
90 For bothe I hadde thyng which that I nolde,  
And ek I ne hadde that thyng that I wolde.  
But fynally my spirit at the laste,  
For wery of my labour al the day,  
Tok reste, that made me to slepe faste;  
And in my slep I mette, as that I lay,  
How Affrican, ryght in the selve aray  
That Scipion hym say byfore that tyde,  
Was come and stod right at my beddes syde.  
The wery hunttere, slepyng in his bed,  
100 To wode ayeyn his mynde goth anon;  
The jугe dremeth how his plees been sped;  
The cartere dremeth how his cart is gon;  
The riche, of gold; the knyght fyght with his fon;  
The syke met he drynketh of the tonne;  
The love-re met he hath his lady wonne.  
Can I not seyn if that the cause were  
For I hadde red of Affrican byforn  
That made me to mete that he stod there;  
But thus seyde he: "Thow hast the so wel born  
110 In lokyng of myn olde bok totorn,  
Of which Macrobye rough-te nat a lyte,  
That sumdel of thy labour wolde I quyte."  
Cytherea, thow blysful lady swete,  
That with thy fyrbrond dauntest whom the lest  
And madest me this sweven for to mete,  
Be thow myn helpe in this, for thow mayst best!  
As wisly as I sey the north-north-west,  
Whan I began my sweven for to write,  
So yif me myght to ryme, and endyte!  
120 This forse-yde Affrican me hente anon  
And forth with hym unto a gate broughte,  
Ryght of a park walled with grene ston;  
And over the gate, with lettres large iwroughte,  
There were vers i-writen, as me thoughte,

On eyther half, of ful gret difference,  
Of which I shal yow seyn the pleyn sentence:  
"Thorgh me men gon into that blyful place  
Of hertes hele and dedly woundes cure;  
Thorgh me men gon unto the welle of grace,  
130 There grene and lusty May shal evere endure.  
This is the wey to al good aventure.  
Be glad, thow redere, and thy sorwe of-caste;  
Al open am I -- passe in, and sped thee faste!"  
"Thorgh me men gon," than spak that other side,  
"Unto the mortal strokes of the spere  
Of which Disdayn and Daunger is the gyde,  
Ther nevere tre shal fruyt ne leves bere.  
This strem yow ledeth to the sorweful were  
There as the fish in prysoun is al drye;  
140 Th' eschewing is only the remedye!"  
These vers of gold and blak iwriten were,  
Of whiche I gan astoned to beholde.  
For with that oon encresede ay my fere  
And with that other gan myn herte bolde;  
That oon me hette, that other dide me colde;  
No wit hadde I, for errour, for to chese  
To entre or flen, or me to save or lese.  
Right as betwixen adamauntes two  
Of evene myght, a pece of yren set  
150 Ne hath no myght to meve to ne fro --  
For what that oon may hale, that other let --  
Ferde I, that nyste whether me was bet  
To entre or leve, til Affrycan, my gide,  
Me hente and shof in at the gates wide,  
And seyde, "It stondeth writen in thy face,  
Thyn errour, though thow telle it not to me;  
But dred the not to come into this place,  
For this writyng nys nothyng ment bi the,  
Ne by non but he Loves servaunt be:  
160 For thow of love hast lost thy tast, I gesse,  
As sek man hath of swete and bytternesse.  
"But natheles, although that thow be dul,  
Yit that thow canst not do, yit mayst thow se.  
For many a man that may nat stonde a pul  
Yet liketh hym at wrastlyng for to be,  
And demen yit wher he do bet or he.

And if thow haddest connyng for t' endite,  
I shal the shewe mater of to wryte."  
With that myn hand in his he tok anon,  
170 Of which I confort caughte, and wente in faste.  
But, Lord, so I was glad and wel begoon!  
For overal where that I myne eyen caste  
Were trees clad with leves that ay shal laste,  
Ech in his kynde, of colour fresh and greene  
As emeraude, that joye was to seene.  
The byldere ok, and ek the hardy asshe;  
The piler elm, the cofre unto carayne;  
The boxtre pipere, holm to whippes lashe;  
The saylynge fyr; the cipresse, deth to playne;  
180 The shetere ew; the asp for shaftes pleyne;  
The olyve of pes, and eke the dronke vyne;  
The victor palm, the laurer to devyne.  
A gardyn saw I ful of blosmy bowes  
Upon a ryver, in a grene mede,  
There as swetnesse everemore inow is,  
With floures white, blewe, yelwe, and rede,  
And colde welle-stremes, nothyng dede,  
That swymmen ful of smale fishes lighte,  
With fynnes rede and skales sylver bryghte.  
190 On every bow the bryddes herde I synge,  
With voys of aungel in here armonye;  
Some besyede hem here bryddes forth to brynge;  
The litel conyes to here pley gonne hye;  
And ferther al aboute I gan aspye  
The dredful ro, the buk, the hert and hynde,  
Squyrels, and bestes smale of gentil kynde.  
Of instruments of strenges in acord  
Herde I so pleye a ravyshyng swetnesse,  
That God, that makere is of al and lord,  
200 Ne herde nevere beter, as I gesse.  
Therwith a wynd, unnethe it myghte be lesse,  
Made in the leves grene a noyse softe  
Acordaunt to the foules song alofte.  
Th' air of that place so attempre was  
That nevere was grevaunce of hot ne cold.  
There wex ek every holsom spice and gras;  
No man may there waxe sek ne old;  
Yit was there joye more a thousandfold



Than man can telle; ne nevere wolde it nyghte,  
210 But ay cler day to any mannes syghte.  
Under a tre, besyde a welle, I say  
Cupide, oure lord, his arwes forge and file;  
And at his fet his bowe al redy lay;  
And Wille, his doughter, temprede al this while  
The hevedes in the welle, and with hire wile  
She couchede hem, after they shulde serve  
Some for to sle, and some to wounde and kerve.  
Tho was I war of Plesaunce anon-ryght,  
And of Aray, and Lust, and Curteysie,  
220 And of the Craft that can and hath the myght  
To don by force a wyght to don folye --  
Disfigurat was she, I nyl nat lye;  
And by hymself, under an ok, I gesse,  
Saw I Delyt, that stod with Gentilesse.  
I saw Beute withouten any atyr,  
And Youthe, ful of game and jolyte;  
Foolhardynesse, Flaterye, and Desyr,  
Messagerye, and Meede, and other thre --  
Here names shul not here be told for me --  
230 And upon pilers greete of jasper longe  
I saw a temple of bras ifounded stronge.  
Aboute the temple daunsedyn alwey  
Women inowe, of whiche some ther weere  
Fayre of hemself, and some of hem were gay;  
In kertels, al dishevele, wente they there:  
That was here offyce alwey, yer by yeere.  
And on the temple, of dowves white and fayre  
Saw I syttyng many an hundred peyre.  
Byfore the temple-dore ful soberly  
240 Dame Pees sat, with a curtyn in hire hond,  
And by hire syde, wonder discretly,  
Dame Pacience syttyng there I fond,  
With face pale, upon an hil of sond;  
And aldernext, withinne and ek withoute,  
Byheste and Art, and of here folk a route.  
Withinne the temple, of sykes hoothe as fyr  
I herde a swogh that gan aboute renne,  
Whiche sikes were engendered with desyr,  
That maden every auter for to brenne  
250 Of newe flaume; and wel espyed I thenne

That al the cause of sorwes that they drye  
Cam of the bittere goddesse Jelosye.  
The god Priapus saw I, as I wente,  
Withinne the temple in sovereyn place stonde,  
In swich aray as whan the asse hym shente  
With cri by nighte, and with hys sceptre in honde.  
Ful besyly men gonne assaye and fonde  
Upon his hed to sette, of sondry hewe,  
Garlondes ful of freshe floures newe.

260 And in a prive corner in disport  
Fond I Venus and hire porter Richesse,  
That was ful noble and hautayn of hyre port --  
Derk was that place, but afterward lightnesse  
I saw a lyte, unnethe it myghte be lesse --  
And on a bed of gold she lay to reste,  
Til that the hote sonne gan to weste.  
Hyre gilte heres with a golden thred  
Ibounden were, untressed as she lay,  
And naked from the brest unto the hed  
270 Men myghte hire sen; and, sothly for to say,  
The remenaunt was wel kevered to my pay,  
Ryght with a subtyl coverchef of Valence --  
Ther was no thikkere cloth of no defense.  
The place yaf a thousand savours sote,  
And Bachus, god of wyn, sat hire besyde,  
And Ceres next, that doth of hunger boote,  
And, as I seyde, amyddes lay Cypride,  
To whom on knees two yonge folk ther cryde  
To ben here helpe. But thus I let hire lye,  
280 And ferther in the temple I gan espie  
That, in dispit of Dyane the chaste,  
Ful many a bowe ibroke heng on the wal  
Of maydenes swiche as gonne here tymes waste  
In hyre servyse; and peynted overal  
Ful many a story, of which I touche shal  
A fewe, as of Calyخته and Athalante,  
And many a mayde of which the name I wante.  
Semyramis, Candace, and Hercules,  
Biblis, Dido, Thisbe, and Pirus,  
290 Tristram, Isaude, Paris, and Achilles,  
Eleyne, Cleopatre, and Troylus,  
Silla, and ek the moder of Romulus:

Alle these were peynted on that other syde,  
And al here love, and in what plyt they dyde.  
Whan I was come ayeyn into the place  
That I of spak, that was so sote and grene,  
Forth welk I tho myselven to solace.  
Tho was I war wher that ther sat a queene  
That, as of lyght the somer sonne shene  
300 Passeth the sterre, right so over mesure  
She fayrer was than any creature.  
And in a launde, upon an hil of floures,  
Was set this noble goddessse Nature.  
Of braunches were here halles and here boures  
Iwrought after here cast and here mesure;  
Ne there nas foul that cometh of engendrure  
That they ne were prest in here presence  
To take hire dom and yeve hire audyence.  
For this was on Seynt Valentynes day,  
310 Whan every foul cometh there to chese his make,  
Of every kynde that men thynke may,  
And that so huge a noyse gan they make  
That erthe, and eyr, and tre, and every lake  
So ful was that unethe was there space  
For me to stonde, so ful was al the place.  
And right as Aleyn, in the Pleynt of Kynde,  
Devyseth Nature of aray and face,  
In swich aray men myghte hire there fynde.  
This noble emperesse, ful of grace,  
320 Bad every foul to take his owne place,  
As they were woned alwey fro yer to yeere,  
Seynt Valentynes day, to stonden theere.  
That is to seyn, the foules of ravyne  
Weere hiest set, and thanne the foules smale  
That eten, as hem Nature wolde enclyne,  
As worm or thyng of which I telle no tale;  
And water-foul sat lowest in the dale;  
But foul that lyveth by sed sat on the grene,  
And that so fele that wonder was to sene.  
330 There myghte men the royal egle fynde,  
That with his sharpe lok perseth the sonne,  
And othere egles of a lowere kynde,  
Of whiche that clerkes wel devyse conne.  
Ther was the tiraunt with his fetheres donne

And grey -- I mene the goshawk that doth pyne  
 To bryddes for his outrageous ravyne.  
 The gentyl faucoun, that with his feet distrayneth  
 The kynges hand; the hardy sperhawk eke,  
 The quayles foo; the merlioun, that payneth  
 340 Hymself ful ofte the larke for to seke;  
 There was the douve with hire yen meke;  
 The jelous swan, ayens his deth that syngeth.  
 The oule ek, that of deth the bode bryngeth.  
 The crane, the geaunt, with his trompes soun;  
 The thef, the chough; and ek the janglynge pye;  
 The skornynge jay; the eles fo, heroun;  
 The false lapwynge, ful of trecherye;  
 The stare, that the conseyl can bewrye;  
 The tame ruddok, and the coward kyte;  
 350 The kok, that orloge is of thorpes lyte;  
 The sparwe, Venus sone; the nyghtyngale,  
 That clepeth forth the grene leves newe;  
 The swalwe, mortherere of the foules smale  
 That maken hony of floures freshe of hewe;  
 The wedded turtil, with hire herte trewe;  
 The pekok, with his aungels fetheres bryghte;  
 The fesaunt, skornere of the cok by nyghte;  
 The waker goos; the cukkow ever unkynde;  
 The popynjay, ful of delicasye;  
 360 The drake, stroyere of his owene kynde;  
 The stork, the wrekere of avouterye;  
 The hote cormeraunt of glotenye;  
 The raven wys; the crowe with vois of care;  
 The throstil old; the frosty feldefare.  
 What shulde I seyn? Of foules every kynde  
 That in this world han fetheres and stature  
 Men myghten in that place assembled fynde  
 Byfore the noble goddesse Nature,  
 And ech of hem dide his besy cure  
 370 Benygnely to chese or for to take,  
 By hire acord, his formel or his make.  
 But to the poynt: Nature held on hire hond  
 A formel egle, of shap the gentilleste  
 That evere she among hire werkes fond,  
 The moste benygne and the goodlieste.  
 In hire was everi vertu at his reste,

So ferforth that Nature hireself hadde blysse  
To loke on hire, and ofte hire bek to kysse.  
Nature, the vicaire of the almyghty Lord,  
380 That hot, cold, hevy, lyght, moyst, and dreye  
Hath knyght by evene noumbres of acord,  
In esy voys began to speke and seye,  
"Foules, tak hed of my sentence, I preye,  
And for youre ese, in fortheryng of youre nede,  
As faste as I may speke, I wol yow speede.  
"Ye knowe wel how, Seynt Valentynes day,  
By my statut and thorgh my governaunce,  
Ye come for to cheese -- and fle youre wey --  
Your makes, as I prike yow with plesaunce;  
390 But natheles, my ryghtful ordenaunce  
May I nat lete for al this world to wynne,  
That he that most is worthi shal begynne.  
"The tersel egle, as that ye knowe wel,  
The foul royal, above yow in degre,  
The wyse and worthi, secre, trewe as stel,  
Which I have formed, as ye may wel se,  
In every part as it best liketh me --  
It nedeth not his shap yow to devyse --  
He shal first chese and speken in his gyse.  
400 "And after hym by ordre shul ye chese,  
After youre kynde, everich as yow lyketh,  
And, as youre hap is, shul ye wynne or lese.  
But which of yow that love most entriketh,  
God sende hym hire that sorest for hym syketh!"  
And therewithal the tersel gan she calle,  
And seyde, "My sone, the choys is to the falle.  
"But natheles, in this condicioun  
Mot be the choys of everich that is heere,  
That she agre to his eleccioun,  
410 Whoso he be that shulde be hire feere.  
This is oure usage alwey, fro yer to yeere,  
And whoso may at this tyme have his grace  
In blisful tyme he cam into this place!"  
With hed enclyned and with humble cheere  
This royal tersel spak, and tariede noght:  
"Unto my soverayn lady, and not my fere,  
I chese, and chese with wil, and herte, and thought,  
The formel on youre hond, so wel iwrought,

Whos I am al, and evere wol hire serve,  
420 Do what hire lest, to do me lyve or sterve;  
"Besekynge hire of merci and of grace,  
As she that is my lady sovereyne;  
Or let me deye present in this place.  
For certes, longe may I nat lyve in payne,  
For in myn herte is korven every veyne.  
Havynge reward only to my trouthe,  
My deere herte, have on my wo som routhe.  
"And if that I be founde to hyre untrewē,  
Disobeysaunt, or wilful negligent,  
430 Avauntour, or in proces love a newe,  
I preye to yow this be my jugement:  
That with these foules I be al torent,  
That ilke day that evere she me fynde  
To hir untrewē, or in my gilt unkynde.  
"And syn that non loveth hire so wel as I,  
Al be she nevere of love me behette,  
Thanne oughte she be myn thourgh hire mercy,  
For other bond can I non on hire knette.  
Ne nevere for no wo ne shal I lette  
440 To serven hire, how fer so that she wende;  
Say what yow list, my tale is at an ende."  
Ryght as the freshe, rede rose newe  
Ayeyn the somer sonne coloured is,  
Ryght so for shame al wexen gan the hewe  
Of this formel, whan she herde al this;  
She neyther answerde wel, ne seyde amys,  
So sore abasht was she, tyl that Nature  
Seyde, "Doughter, drede yow nought, I yow assure."  
Another tersel egle spak anon,  
450 Of lower kynde, and seyde, "That shal nat be!  
I love hire bet than ye don, by Seint John,  
Or at the leste I love hire as wel as ye,  
And lenger have served hire in my degre;  
And if she shulde have loved for long lovyngē,  
To me allone hadde be the guerdonyngē.  
"I dar ek seyn, if she me fynde fals,  
Unkynde, janglere, or rebel any wyse,  
Or jelous, do me hangen by the hals!  
And, but I bere me in hire servyse  
460 As wel as that my wit can me suffyse,

From poynt in poynt, hyre honour for to save,  
 Take she my lif and al the good I have!"  
 The thridde tercel egle answerde tho,  
 "Now, sires, ye seen the lytel leyser heere;  
 For every foul cryeth out to ben ago  
 Forth with his make, or with his lady deere;  
 And ek Nature hireself ne wol not heere,  
 For tarynge here, not half that I wolde seye;  
 And but I speke, I mot for sorwe deye.  
 470 "Of long servyse avaunte I me nothing;  
 But as possible is me to deye to-day  
 For wo as he that hath ben languysshyng  
 This twenty wynter, and wel happen may;  
 A man may serven bet and more to pay  
 In half a yer, although it were no moore,  
 Than som man doth that hath served ful yoore.  
 "I seye not this by me, for I ne can  
 Don no servyse that may my lady plese;  
 But I dar seyn, I am hire treweste man  
 480 As to my dom, and faynest wolde hire ese.  
 At shorte wordes, til that deth me sese  
 I wol ben heres, whether I wake or wynke,  
 And trewe in al that herte may bethynke."  
 Of al my lyf, syn that day I was born,  
 So gentil ple in love or other thyng  
 Ne herde nevere no man me beforn --  
 Who that hadde leyser and connyng  
 For to rehearse hire chere and hire spekyng;  
 And from the morwe gan this speche laste  
 490 Tyl downward went the sonne wonder faste.  
 The noyse of foules for to ben delyvered  
 So loude rong, "Have don, and lat us wende!"  
 That wel wende I the wode hadde al to-shyvered.  
 "Com of!" they criede, "allas, ye wol us shende!  
 Whan shal youre cursede pletynge have an ende?  
 How sholde a juge eyther parti leve  
 For ye or nay withouten any preve?"  
 The goos, the cokkow, and the doke also  
 So cryede, "Kek kek! kokkow! quek quek!" hye,  
 500 That thourgh myne eres the noyse wente tho.  
 The goos seyde, "Al this nys not worth a flye!  
 But I can shape herof a remedie,

And I wol seye my verdict fayre and swythe  
For water-foul, whoso be wroth or blythe!"  
"And I for worm-foul," seyde the fol kokkow,  
"For I wol of myn owene autorite,  
For comune spede, take on the charge now,  
For to delyvere us is gret charite."  
"Ye may abyde a while yit, parde!"  
510 Quod the turtel, "If it be youre wille  
A wight may speke, hym were as fayr be style.  
"I am a sed-foul, oon the unworthieste,  
That wot I wel, and litel of connyng.  
But bet is that a wyghtes tonge reste  
Than entermeten hym of such doinge,  
Of which he neyther rede can ne synge;  
And whoso hit doth ful foule hymself acloyeth,  
For office uncommytted ofte anoyeth."  
Nature, which that alwey hadde an ere  
520 To murmur of the lewednesse behynde,  
With facound voys seyde, "Hold youre tonges there!  
And I shal sone, I hope, a conseil fynde  
Yow to delyvere, and fro this noyse unbynde:  
I juge, of every folk men shul oon calle  
To seyn the verdict for yow foules alle."  
Assented were to this conclusioun  
The briddes alle; and foules of ravyne  
Han chosen fyrst, by pleyn eleccioun,  
The tercelet of the faucoun to diffyne  
530 Al here sentence, and as him lest, termyne;  
And to Nature hym gonne to presente,  
And she accepteth hym with glad entente.  
The terslet seyde thanne in this manere:  
"Ful hard were it to preve by resoun  
Who loveth best this gentil formel heere;  
For everych hath swich replicacioun  
That non by skilles may be brought adoun.  
I can not se that argumentes avayle:  
Thanne semeth it there moste be batayle."  
540 "Al redy!" quod these egles tercels tho.  
"Nay, sires," quod he, "if that I durste it seye,  
Ye don me wrong, my tale is not ido!  
For, sires -- ne taketh not agref I preye --  
It may not gon as ye wolde in this weye;



Oure is the voys that han the charge in honde,  
And to the juges dom ye moten stonde.  
"And therfore pes! I seye, as to my wit,  
Me wolde thynke how that the worthieste  
Of knyghthod, and lengest had used it,  
550 Most of estat, of blod the gentilleste,  
Were sittynge for hire, if that hir leste;  
And of these thre she wot hireself, I trowe,  
Which that he be, for it is light to knowe."  
The water-foules han here hedes leid  
Togedere, and of a short avysement,  
Whan everych hadde his large golee seyd,  
They seyden sothly, al by oon assent,  
How that the goos, with here facounde gent,  
"That so desyreth to pronounce oure nede,  
560 Shal telle oure tale," and preyede "God hire spede!"  
And for these water-foules tho began  
The goos to speke, and in hire kakelynge  
She seyde, "Pes! Now tak kep every man,  
And herkeneth which a resoun I shal forth brynge!  
My wit is sharp; I love no tarynge;  
I seye I rede hym, though he were my brother,  
But she wol love hym, lat hym love another!"  
"Lo, here a parfit resoun of a goos!"  
Quod the sperhawk; "Nevere mot she thee!  
570 Lo, swich it is to have a tonge loos!  
Now parde, fol, yit were it bet for the  
Han holde thy pes than shewed thy nycete.  
It lyth nat in his wit, ne in his wille,  
But soth is seyde, `a fol can not be stille.'"  
The laughter aros of gentil foules alle,  
And right anon the sed-foul chosen hadde  
The turtle trewe, and gonne hire to hem calle,  
And preyeden hire to seyn the sothe sadde  
Of this matere, and axede what she radde.  
580 And she answerde that pleyntly hire entente  
She wolde shewe, and sothly what she mente.  
"Nay, God forbede a lovere shulde chaunge!"  
The turtle seyde, and wex for shame al red,  
"Though that his lady everemore be straunge,  
Yit lat hym serve hire ever, til he be ded.  
Forsothe, I preyse nat the goeses red;

'For, though she deyede, I wolde non other make;  
 I wol ben hires, til that the deth me take."  
 "Wel bourded," quod the doke, "by myn hat!  
 590 That men shulde loven alwey causeles!  
 Who can a resoun fynde or wit in that?  
 Daunseth he murye that is myrtheles?  
 Who shulde recche of that is recheles?"  
 "Ye queke," seyde the goos, "ful wel and fayre!  
 There been mo sterres, God wot, than a payre!"  
 "Now fy, cherl!" quod the gentil tercelet,  
 "Out of the donghil cam that word ful right!  
 Thow canst nat seen which thyng is wel beset!  
 Thow farst by love as oules don by lyght:  
 600 The day hem blent, ful wel they se by nyght.  
 Thy kynde is of so low a wrechednesse  
 That what love is, thow canst nouthur seen ne gesse."  
 Tho gan the kokkow putte hym forth in pres  
 For foul that eteth worm, and seyde blyve: --  
 "So I," quod he, "may have my make in pes,  
 I reche nat how longe that ye stryve.  
 Lat ech of hem be soleyn al here lyve!  
 This is my red, syn they may nat acorde;  
 This shorte lessoun nedeth nat recorde."  
 610 "Ye, have the glotoun fild inow his paunche,  
 Thanne are we wel!" seyde the merlioun;  
 "Thow mortherere of the heysoge on the braunche  
 That broughte the forth, thow reufullest glotoun!  
 Lyve thow soleyn, wormes corrupcioun,  
 For no fors is of lak of thy nature!  
 Go, lewed be thow whil the world may dure!"  
 "Now pes," quod Nature, "I comaunde heer!  
 For I have herd al youre opynyoun,  
 And in effect yit be we nevere the neer.  
 620 But fynally, this is my conclusioun,  
 That she hireself shal han hir eleccioun  
 Of whom hire lest; whoso be wroth or blythe,  
 Hym that she cheest, he shal hire han as swithe.  
 "For sith it may not here discussed be  
 Who loveth hire best, as seyde the tercelet,  
 Thanne wol I don hire this favour, that she  
 Shal han right hym on whom hire herte is set,  
 And he hire that his herte hath on hire knet:

Thus juge I, Nature, for I may not lye;  
630 To non estat I have non other ye.  
"But as for counseyl for to chese a make,  
If I were Resoun, thanne wolde I  
Conseyle yow the royal tercel take,  
As seyde the tercelet ful skylfully,  
As for the gentilleste and most worthi,  
Which I have wrought so wel to my plesaunce  
That to yow hit oughte to been a suffisaunce."  
With dredful vois the formel hire answerde,  
"My rightful lady, goddesse of Nature!  
640 Soth is that I am evere under youre yerde,  
As is everich other creature,  
And mot be youres whil my lyf may dure;  
And therefore graunteth me my firste bone,  
And myn entente I wol yow sey right sone."  
"I graunte it yow," quod she; and right anon  
This formel egle spak in this degre:  
"Almyghty queen, unto this yer be don,  
I axe respit for to avise me,  
And after that to have my choys al fre.  
650 This al and som that I wol speke and seye;  
Ye gete no more, although ye do me deye!  
"I wol nat serve Venus ne Cupide,  
Forsothe as yit, by no manere weye."  
"Now, syn it may non otherwise betyde,"  
Quod Nature, "heere is no more to seye.  
Thanne wolde I that these foules were aweye,  
Ech with his make, for tarynge lengere heere!"  
And seyde hem thus, as ye shul after here.  
"To yow speke I, ye tercelets," quod Nature,  
660 "Beth of good herte, and serveth alle thre.  
A yer is nat so longe to endure,  
And ech of yow peyne him in his degre  
For to do wel, for, God wot, quyt is she  
Fro yow this yer; what after so befalle,  
This entremes is dressed for yow alle."  
And whan this werk al brought was to an ende,  
To every foul Nature yaf his make  
By evene acord, and on here way they wende.  
And, Lord, the blisse and joye that they make!  
670 For ech of hem gan other in wynges take,

And with here nekkes ech gan other wynde,  
Thankynge alwey the noble goddesse of kynde.  
But fyrst were chosen foules for to synge,  
As yer by yer was alwey hir usaunce  
To synge a roundel at here departynge,  
To don Nature honour and plesaunce.  
The note, I trowe, imaked was in Fraunce,  
The wordes were swiche as ye may heer fynde,  
The nexte vers, as I now have in mynde.

680 "Now welcome, somer, with thy sonne softe,  
That hast thes wintres wedres overshake,  
And driven away the longe nyghtes blake!  
"Saynt Valentyn, that art ful hy on-lofte,  
Thus synge smale foules for thy sake:  
Now welcome, somer, with thy sonne softe,  
That hast thes wintres wedres overshake.

"Wel han they cause for to gladen ofte,  
Sith ech of hem recovered hath hys make,  
Ful blissful mowe they synge when they wake:  
690 Now welcome, somer, with thy sonne softe,  
That hast thes wintres wedres overshake,  
And driven away the longe nyghtes blake!"  
And with the shoutyng, whan the song was do  
That foules maden at here flyght away,  
I wok, and othere bokes tok me to,  
To reede upon, and yit I rede alwey.  
I hope, ywis, to rede so som day  
That I shal mete som thyng for to fare  
The bet, and thus to rede I nyl nat spare.



## BOECE

### BOOK 1

Allas! I wepynge, am constreyned to bygynnen  
 vers of sorwful matere, that whilom in florysschyng  
 studie made delitable ditees. For  
 lo, rendyng muses of poetes enditen to me  
 thynges to ben writen, and drery vers of wretchidnesse  
 weten my face with verray teres. At  
 the leeste, no drede ne myghte overcomen  
 tho muses, that thei ne were felawes, and folwyden  
 my wey (that is to seyn, whan  
 10 I was exiled). They that weren glorie of  
 my youthe, whilom weleful and grene,  
 conforten now the sorwful wyerdes of me, olde  
 man. For eelde is comyn unwarly uppon me,  
 hasted by the harmes that Y have, and sorwe  
 hath comandid his age to ben in me. Heeris hore  
 arn schad overtymeliche upon myn heved, and  
 the slakke skyn trembleth of myn emptid body.  
 Thilke deth of men is weleful that ne comyth  
 noght in yeeris that ben swete, but  
 20 cometh to wrecches often yclepid. Allas,  
 allas! With how deef an ere deth, cruwel,  
 turneth away fro wrecches and nayteth to  
 closen wepyng eien. Whil Fortune, unfeithful,  
 favourede me with lyghte goodes, the sorwful  
 houre (that is to seyn, the deth) hadde almoost  
 dreynt myn heved. But now, for Fortune  
 cloudy hath chaunged hir deceyvable  
 chere to meward, myn unpietous lif draweth  
 along unagreable duellynges in me. O ye,  
 30 my frendes, what or wherto avaunted ye  
 me to be weleful? For he that hath fallen stood  
 noght in stedefast degre.  
 In the mene while that I, stille, recordede  
 these thynges with myself and merkid my weply  
 compleynte with office of poyntel, I saw,  
 stondyng aboven the heghte of myn heved, a  
 womman of ful greet reverence by semblaunt,  
 hir eien brennyng and cleer-seynge over the

comune myghte of men; with a lifly colour  
and with swich vigour and strengthe that it ne  
myghte nat ben emptid, al were it so  
10 that sche was ful of so greet age that men  
ne wolden nat trowen in no manere that  
sche were of our elde. The stature of hire was  
of a doutous jugement, for somtyme sche constreyned  
and schronk hirselves lik to the comune  
mesure of men, and somtyme it semede  
that sche touchede the hevene with the heghte  
of here heved. And whan sche hef hir heved  
heyere, sche percede the selve hevene so that  
the sighte of men lokynge was in ydel.

20 Hir clothes weren makid of right delye  
thredes and subtil craft of perdurable matere;  
the whiche clothes sche hadde woven with  
hir owene handes, as I knew wel aftir by hirselve  
declarynge and schewynge to me. The  
beaute [of] the whiche clothes a derknesse of a  
forleten and despised elde hadde duskid and  
dirked, as it is wont to dirken besmokede  
ymages. In the nethereste hem or bordure of  
thise clothes, men redden ywoven in a  
30 Grekissch P (that signifieth the lif actif);  
and aboven that lettre, in the heieste  
bordure, a Grekyssh T (that signifieth the lif  
contemplatif). And bytwixen thise two lettres  
ther were seyn degrees nobly ywrought in  
manere of laddres, by whiche degrees men  
myghten clymben fro the nethereste lettre to the  
uppereste. Natheles handes of some men hadden  
korve that cloth by violence and by  
strengthe, and everich man of hem hadde  
40 boren away swiche peces as he myghte  
geten. And forsothe this forseide womman bar  
smale bokis in hir right hand, and in hir left hand  
sche bar a ceptre.

And whan she saughe thise poetical muses  
aprochen aboute my bed and enditynge wordes  
to my wepynges, sche was a litil amoeved, and  
glowede with cruel eighen. "Who," quat sche,  
"hath suffred aprochen to this sike man thise

comune strompettis of swich a place that  
 50 men clepen the theatre? The whiche nat  
 oonly ne asswagen noght his sorwes with  
 none remedies, but thei wolden fedyn and  
 norysen hym with sweete venym. Forsothe  
 thise ben tho that with thornes and prikkynge  
 of talentz or affeccions, whiche that ne bien  
 nothyng fructifyenge nor profitable, destroyen  
 the corn plentyvous of fruytes of resoun. For  
 thei holden hertes of men in usage, but thei  
 delyvre noght folk fro maladye. But yif ye  
 60 muses hadden withdrawen fro me with  
 youre flateries any unkunynge and unprofitable  
 man, as men ben wont to fynde  
 comonly among the peple, I wolde wene suffre  
 the lasse grevosly; forwhi, in swych an unprofitable  
 man, myne ententes weren nothyng  
 endamaged. But ye withdrawen me this man,  
 that hath ben norysed in the studies or scoles of  
 Eliaticis and Achademycis in Grece. But goth  
 now rather away, ye mermaydenes, whiche  
 70 that ben swete til it be at the laste, and  
 suffreth this man to ben cured and heeled  
 by myne muses (that is to seyn, by noteful  
 sciences)."

And thus this companye of muses, iblamed,  
 casten wrothly the chere downward to the erthe,  
 and, schewynge by rednesse hir schame, thei  
 passeden sorwfully the thresschefold. And I, of  
 whom the sighte, ploungid in teeres, was dirked  
 so that Y ne myghte noght knowen what  
 80 that womman was of so imperial auctorite,  
 I wax al abayssched and astoned, and caste  
 my syghte down to the erthe, and bygan stille for  
 to abide what sche woolde doon aftirward. Tho  
 com sche ner and sette her down uppon the  
 uttereste corner of my bed; and sche, byholdynge  
 my chere that was cast to the erthe  
 hevy and grevous of wepynge, compleynede  
 with thise wordis that I schal seyn the perturbacion thought.  
 "Allas! How the thought of this man, dreynt  
 in overthrowng depnesse, dulleth and forleteth

his propre clernesse, myntyng to gon into  
 foreyne dirknesses as ofte as his anoyos  
 bysynes waxeth withoute mesure, that is  
 dryven with werldly wyndes. This man, that  
 whilom was fre, to whom the hevene was  
 opyn and knowen, and was wont to gon in  
 hevenliche pathes, and saughe the lyghtnesse  
 10 of the rede sonne, and saughe the  
 sterres of the coolde mone, and whiche  
 sterre in hevene useth wandryng recourses  
 iflyt by diverse speeris -- this man, overcomere,  
 hadde comprehendid al this by nombre (of  
 acontyng in astronomye). And, over this, he  
 was wont to seken the causes whennes the sounyng  
 wyndes moeven and bysien the smothe  
 watir of the see; and what spirit turneth the  
 stable hevene; and why the sterre ariseth  
 20 out of the rede est, to fallen in the westrene  
 wawes; and what attemprith the lusty  
 houres of the firste somer sesoun, that highteth  
 and apparailleth the erthe with rosene  
 floures; and who maketh that plentyvous  
 autumpne in fulle [yere] fletith with hevy  
 grapes. And eek this man was wont to tellen  
 the diverse causes of nature that weren yhidd.  
 Allas! Now lyth he emptid of lyght of his  
 thoght, and his nekke is pressyd with hevy  
 30 cheynes, and bereth his chere enclyned  
 adoun for the grete weyghte, and is constreyned  
 to loken on the fool erthe!"

"But tyme is now," quod sche, "of medycyne  
 more than of compleynte." Forsothe thanne  
 sche, entyndyng to meward with al the lookyng  
 of hir eien, seyde: "Art nat thou he,"  
 quod sche, "that whilom, norissched with my  
 melk and fostred with myne metes, were escaped  
 and comyn to corage of a parfit man?  
 Certes I yaf the swiche armures that, yif thou  
 thiselve ne haddest first cast hem away,  
 10 they schulden han defended the in sekernesse  
 that mai nat ben overcomyn. Knowestow  
 me nat? Why arttow stille? Is it for



schame or for astonynge? It were me levere  
 that it were for schame, but it semeth me that  
 astonynge hath oppresside the." And whan sche  
 say me nat oonly stille but withouten office  
 of tunge and al downbe, sche leyde hir hand  
 sooftly uppon my breest and seide: "Here nys  
 no peril," quod sche; "he is fallen into a  
 20 litargye, whiche that is a comune seknesse  
 to hertes that been desceyved. He hath a  
 litil foryeten hymselfe, but certes he schal  
 lightly remembren hymself yif so be that he  
 hath knowen me or now; and that he may so  
 doon, I will wipe a litil his eien that ben  
 dirked by the cloude of mortel thynges." Thise  
 woordes seide sche, and with the lappe of hir  
 garnement yplited in a frownce sche dryede  
 myn eien, that weren fulle of the wawes of wepynges.  
 Thus, whan that nyght was discussed and  
 chased away, dirknesses forleten me, and to  
 myn eien repeyred ayen hir firste strengthe.  
 And ryght by ensauple as the sonne is hydd  
 whan the sterres ben clustred (that is to seyn,  
 whan sterres ben covered with cloudes) by  
 a swyft wynd that hyghte Chorus, and that  
 the firmament stant dirked with wete plowngy  
 cloudes; and that the sterres nat apeeren  
 10 upon hevene, so that the nyght semeth  
 sprad upon erthe: yif thanne the wynde that  
 hyghte Boreas, isent out of the kaves of the  
 cuntre of Trace, betith this nyght (that is to  
 seyn, chaseth it away) and discovereth the  
 closed day, thanne schyneth Phebus ischaken  
 with sodeyn light and smyteth with his beemes  
 in merveylynge eien.  
 Ryght so, and noon other wise, the cloudes  
 of sorwe dissolved and doon away, I took hevene,  
 and resceyved mynde to knowe the face  
 of my fisycien; so that [whan] [that] I sette myne  
 eien on hir and fastned my lookynge, I byholde  
 my noryce, Philosophie, in whoos houses I  
 hadde conversed and haundyd fro my youthe;  
 and I seide thus: "O thou maystresse of alle

vertues, descended from the sovereyne  
10 sete, whi arttow comen into this solitarie  
place of myn exil? Artow comen for thou  
art maad coupable with me of false blames?"  
"O," quod sche, "my nory, schulde I forsake  
the now, and schulde I nat parten with the by  
comune travaile the charge that thow hast  
suffred for envye of my name? Certes it nere nat  
leveful ne syttyng thyng to Philosophie to leten  
withouten companye the weye of hym that is  
innocent. Schulde I thanne redowte my  
20 blame and agrysen as though ther were  
byfallen a newe thyng? For trowestow that  
Philosophie be now alderferst assailed in periles  
by folk of wykkide maneris? Have I noght  
stryven with ful greet strif in old tyme, byfor the  
age of my Plato, ayens the foolhardynesse  
of folye? And eek, the same Plato lyvyng, his  
mayster Socrates desserved victorie of unryghtful  
deth in my presence. The heritage of  
the whiche Socrates (the heritage is to  
30 seyn the doctryne of the whiche Socrates  
in his opinyoun of felicite, that I clepe  
welefulnesse) whan that the peple of Epycuriens  
and Stoyciens and manye othere enforceden  
hem to gon ravyssche everyche man for his part  
(that is to seyn, that everych of hem wolde  
drawen to the deffense of his opinyoun the  
wordes of Socrates), they as in partye of hir  
preye todrowen me, cryinge and debatying  
ther-ayens, and korven and torente my  
40 clothes that I hadde woven with myn  
handes; and with tho cloutes that thei  
hadden arased out of my clothes thei wenten  
away wenyng that I hadde gon with hem every  
del. In whiche Epycuriens and Stoyciens for as  
myche as ther semede some traces or steppes of  
myn abyte, the folie of men wenyng tho  
Epycuriens and Stoyciens my familiers pervertede  
some thurw the errour of the wikkide  
or unkunnyng multitude of hem.  
50 (This is to seyn, that for they semeden

philosophres thei weren pursuyed to the  
deth and slayn.)

"So yif thou ne hast noght knowen the  
exilynge of Anaxogore, ne the empoisonynge of  
Socrates, ne the turmentz of Zeno, for they  
weren straungiers, yit myghtestow han knowen  
the Senecciens and the Canyos and the Soranas,  
of whiche folk the renoun is neyther over-oold  
ne unsollempne. The whiche men nothyng  
60 elles ne broght hem to the deeth but oonly  
for thei weren enformyd of myne maneris,  
and semyde moost unlyk to the studies of  
wykkid folk. And forthi thou oughtest noght to  
wondren thoughe that I, in the byttere see of this  
lif, be fordryven with tempestes blowynge  
aboute, in the whiche this is my moste purpoos,  
that is to seyn to displesen to wikkide men. Of  
whiche schrewes al be the oost nevere so greet,  
it es to despise; for it nys nat governyd with  
70 no ledere (of resoun), but it es ravyssched  
oonly by fleetynge errour folylly and  
lyghtly; and yif they somtyme, makynge an oost  
ayens us, assayle us as strengere, our ledere  
draweth togidre his riches into his tour, and  
they ben ententyf aboute sarpleris or sachelis,  
unprofitable for to taken. But we that ben heghe  
above, syker fro alle tumolte and wood noyse,  
warnstoryd and enclosed in swiche a palys  
whider as that chaterynge or anoyinge  
80 folye ne may nat atayne, we scorne swyche  
ravyneres and henteres of fouleste thynges.

"Whoso it be that is cleer of vertue, sad and  
wel ordynat of lyvyng, that hath put under  
fote the proude wierdes, and loketh upryght  
upon either fortune, he may holden his chere  
undesconfited. The rage ne the manaces of the  
see, commoevyng or chasyng upward hete  
fro the botme, ne schal nat moeve that man.  
Ne the unstable mowntaigne that highte Visevus,  
that writhith out thurw his brokene  
10 chemeneyes smokyng fieres, ne the wey of  
thonderleit, that is wont to smyten hye

toures, ne schal nat moeve that man. Wharto  
 thanne, o wrecches, drede ye tirauntz that ben  
 wode and felenous withouten ony strengthe?  
 Hope aftir no thyng, ne drede nat; and so  
 schaltow desarmen the ire of thilke unmyghty  
 tiraunt. But whoso that, qwakyng, dredeth  
 or desireth thyng that nys noght stable of his  
 ryght, that man that so dooth hath cast  
 20 away his scheeld, and is remoeved from  
 his place, and enlaceth hym in the cheyne  
 with whiche he mai ben drawen.

"Felistow," quod sche, "thise thynges, and  
 entren thei aughte in thy corage? Artow like  
 an asse to the harpe? Why wepistow, why  
 spillestow teeris? Yif thou abidest after helpe  
 of thi leche, the byhoveth discovre thy  
 wownde."

Tho I, that hadde gaderyd strengthe in my  
 corage, answeride and seide: "And nedeth it  
 yit," quod I, "of rehersynge or of ammonicioun?  
 10 And scheweth it nat ynoghe by  
 hymselfe the scharpnesse of Fortune, that  
 waxeth wood ayens me? Ne moeveth it nat  
 the to seen the face or the manere of this place?  
 Is this the librarye which that thou haddest  
 chosen for a ryght certein sege to the in myn  
 hous, there as thow disputedest ofte with me  
 of the sciences of thynges touchynge dyvinyte  
 and mankynde? Was thanne myn habit  
 swiche as it is now? Was my face or my  
 20 chere swyche as now whan I soghte with  
 the the secretis of nature, whan thow enformedest  
 my maneris and the resoun of al my  
 lif to the ensauple of the ordre of hevene? Is  
 noght this the gerdouns that I referre to the, to  
 whom I have ben obeisaunt?

"Certes thou confermedest by the mouth of  
 Plato this sentence, that is to seyn that comune  
 thynges or comunalties weren blisful yif they  
 that hadden studied al fully to wysdom  
 30 governeden thilke thynges; or elles yif it so  
 befille that the governours of comunalties

studieden to geten wysdom. Thou seidest eek by  
the mouth of the same Plato that it was a  
necessarie cause wise men to taken and desire  
the governance of comune thynges, for that the  
gouvernementz of cites, ilefte in the handes of  
felonous turmentours citezeens, ne schulde  
noght bryngen in pestilence ande destruccioun  
to good folk. And therfore I, folwyng  
40 thilke auctorite, desired to putten forth in  
execucion and in acte of comune administracioun  
thilk thynges that I hadde lernyd  
of the among my secre restyng-whiles.  
"Thow and God, that putte the in the  
thoughtes of wise folk, ben knowynge with me  
that nothyng ne brought me to maistrie or  
dignyte but the comune studie of alle goodnesse.  
And therof cometh it that bytwixen  
wikkid folk and me han ben grevous  
50 discordes, that ne myghte nat ben relessed  
by preyeris; for this liberte hath the fredom  
of conscience, that the wraththe of more myghty  
folk hath alwey ben despised of me for savacioun  
of right. How ofte have I resisted and withstonden  
thilke man that highte Connigaste, that  
made alwey assawtes ayens the propre fortunes  
of pore feble folk! How ofte eek have I put of  
or cast out hym Trygwille, provoste of the  
kyngis hous, bothe of the wronges that he  
60 hadde bygunne to doon, and ek fully  
performed! How ofte have I covered and  
defended by the auctorite of me put ayens perils  
(that is to seyn, put myn auctorite in peril for)  
the wrecche pore folk, that the covetise of  
straungiers unpunyschid tormentyde alwey with  
myseses and grevances out of nombre! Nevere  
man ne drow me yit fro right to wrong. Whan  
I say the fortunes and the riches of the peple  
of the provinces ben harmed or amenuced  
70 outhere be pryve ravynes or by comune  
tributz or cariages, as sory was I as they  
that suffriden the harm. (Glosa. Whan that  
Theodoric, the kyng of Gothes, in a dere yeer,

hadde his gerneeris ful of corn, and comaundede  
 that no man schulde byen no coorn til  
 his corn were soold, and that at a grevous dere  
 prys, Boece withstood that ordenaunce and  
 overcome it, knowynge al this the kyng hymselfe.  
 Coempcioun is to seyn comune  
 80 achat or beyinge togidre, that were establissed  
 upon the peple by swich a  
 manere imposicioun, as whoso boughte a  
 busschel corn, he most yyve the kyng the fyfte  
 part.) Textus. Whan it was in the sowre hungry  
 tyme, ther was establissed or cryed grevous and  
 unplitable coempcioun, that men sayen wel it  
 schulde gretly tormenten and endamagen al the  
 provynce of Campayne, I took stryf ayens the  
 provost of the pretorie for comune profit;  
 90 and, the kyng knowynge of it, Y overcom  
 it, so that the coempcioun ne was nat axid  
 ne took effect. Paulyn, a conseiller of Rome, the  
 riches of the whiche Paulyn the howndes of  
 the paleys (that is to seyn, the officeres) wolden  
 han devoured by hope and covetyse, yit drowe  
 I hym out of the jowes of hem that gapeden. And  
 for as moche as the peyne of the accusacioun  
 ajugid byforn ne schulde noght sodeynli henten  
 ne punyssche wrongfully Albyn, a  
 100 conseiller of Rome, I putte me ayens the  
 hates and indignacions of the accusour  
 Cyprian. Is it nat thanne inoghe isene that I have  
 purchaced grete discordes ayens myself? But I  
 oughte be the more asseured ayens alle othere  
 folk, that for the love of rightwisnesse I ne  
 reservede nevere nothyng to myselve to hemward  
 of the kyngis halle, by whiche I were the  
 more syker. But thurw tho same accusours accusynge  
 I am condempned.  
 110 "Of the nombre of whiche accusours,  
 oon Basilius, that whilom was chased out of  
 the kyngis servyse, is now compelled in accusynge  
 of my name for nede of foreyne moneye.  
 Also Opilion and Gaudencius han accused me,  
 al be it so that the justise regal hadde whilom

demed hem bothe to gon into exil for hir trecheries  
and frawdес withouten nombre, to whiche  
juggement they nolden nat obeye, but defendeden  
hem by the sikernesse of holi

120 houses (that is to seyn, fledden into  
seyntewarie); and whan this was aperceyved  
to the kyng, he comandide that, but they  
voydide the cite of Ravenne by certeyn day  
assigned, that men scholde marken hem on the  
forheved with an hoot iren and chasen hem out  
of towne. Now what thyng semyth myghte ben  
likned to this cruelte? For certes thilke same day  
was resceyved the accusynge of myn name by  
thilke same accusours. What may ben seyd  
130 herto? Hath my studie and my kunnyng  
disserved thus? Or elles the forseide  
dampnacioun of me -- made that hem ryghtfulle  
accusours or no? Was noght Fortune  
aschamed of this? Certes, al hadde noght  
Fortune ben aschamed that innocence was  
accused, yit oughte sche han hadde schame of  
the fylthe of myn accusours.

"But axestow in somme of what gylt I am  
accused? Men seyn that I wolde saven  
140 the companye of the senatours. And  
desirestow to heren in what manere? I am  
accused that I schulde han disturbed the  
accusour to beren lettres, by whiche he scholde  
han makid the senatours gylty ayens the kynges  
real majeste. O Maystresse, what demestow of  
this? Schal I forsake this blame, that Y ne be no  
schame to the? Certes I have wolde it (that is to  
seyn, the savacioun of the senat), ne I schal  
nevere letten to wilne it. And that I  
150 confesse and am aknowe; but the entente of  
the accusour to ben disturbed schal cese.  
For schal I clepe it thanne a felonye or a synne  
that I have desired the savacioun of the ordre of  
the senat? And certes yit hadde thilke same senat  
don by me thurw hir decretz and hir jugementz  
as thoughe it were a synne and a felonye (that  
is to seyn, to wilne the savacioun of hem). But

folye, that lyeth alwey to hymselfe, may noght  
 chaunge the merite of thynges, ne I trowe  
 160 nat by the jugement of Socrates that it were  
 lefevel to me to hide the sothe ne assente  
 to lesynges.

"But certes, how so evere it be of this, I putte  
 it to gessen or prisen to the jugement of the and  
 of wys folk. Of whiche thyng al the ordenaunce  
 and the sothe, for as moche as folk that been to  
 comen aftir our dayes schullen knowen it, I have  
 put it in scripture and in remembraunce. For  
 touchynge the lettres falsly maked, by  
 170 whiche lettres I am accused to han hoped  
 the fredom of Rome, what aperteneth me  
 to speken therof? Of whiche lettres the fraude  
 hadde ben schewed apertely, yif I hadde had  
 liberte for to han used and ben at the confessioun  
 of myn accusours, the whiche thyng in  
 alle nedes hath greet strengthe. For what other  
 fredom mai men hopen? Certes I wolde that som  
 other fredom myghte ben hoped; I wolde  
 thanne han answeyrd by the wordys of a  
 180 man that hyghte Canus. For whan he was  
 accused by Gaius Cesar, Germaines sone,  
 that he was knowynge and consentynge of a  
 conjuracioun ymaked ayens hym, this Canus  
 answeride thus: 'Yif I hadde wist it, thou  
 haddest noght wist it.'

"In whiche thyng sorwe hath noght so dullid  
 my wyt that I pleyne oonly that schrewed folk  
 apparailen felonyes ayens vertu; but I wondre  
 gretly how that thei may performe thynges  
 190 that thei han hoped for to doon. Forwhy to  
 wylne schrewydnese -- that cometh peraventure  
 of our defaute; but it is lyk a monstre  
 and a merveyle how that, in the presente  
 sight of God, may ben acheved and performed  
 swiche thynges as every felonous man  
 hath conceyved in his thought ayens innocentz.  
 For whiche thyng oon of thy familiers  
 noght unskilfully axed thus: 'Yif God  
 is, whennes comen wikkide thyngis? And



200 yif God ne is, whennes comen gode  
 thynges?' But al hadde it ben leveful that  
 felonous folk, that now desiren the blood and  
 the deeth of alle gode men and ek of al the senat,  
 han wilned to gon destroyen me, whom they han  
 seyn alwey bataylen and defenden gode men  
 and eek al the senat, yit hadde I nought  
 disservyd of the faderes (that is to seyn, of  
 the senatours) that they schulden wilne my  
 destruccioun.

210 "Thow remembrest wel, as I gesse, that  
 whan I wolde doon or seyn any thyng,  
 thow thiselve alwey present reuledest me. [And]  
 [wel] [thow] [remembrest] at the cite of Verone,  
 whan that the kyng, gredy of comune slaughtre,  
 caste hym to transporten upon al the ordre of the  
 senat the gilt of his real majeste, of the whiche  
 gilt that Albyn was accused, with how gret  
 sykernesse of peril to me defended I al the senat!  
 Thow woost wel that I sey sooth, ne

220 I n' avawntede me nevere in preysynge  
 of myselve. For alwey whan any wyght  
 resceyveth precious renoun in avauntynge  
 hymselfe of his werkes, he amenuseth the secre  
 of his conscience. But now thow mayst wel seen  
 to what eende I am comen for myn innocence;  
 I resceyve peyne of fals felonye for guerdoun of  
 verrai vertue. And what opene confessioun of  
 felonye hadde evere juges so accordaunt in  
 cruelte (that is to seyn, as myn accusynge

230 hath. that either errour of mannys wit, or  
 elles condicion of fortune, that is uncerteyn  
 to alle mortel folk, ne submyttede some of hem  
 (that is to seyn, that it ne enclynede som juge  
 to have pite or compassioun)? For althoughe I  
 hadde ben accused that I wolde brenne holi  
 houses and straungle preestis with wykkid  
 sweerd, or that I hadde greythed deth to alle  
 gode men, algates the sentence scholde han  
 punysshed me present, confessed or convict.

240 But now I am remuwed fro the cite of  
 Rome almost fyve hundred thowsand paas,

I am withoute deffense dampnyd to proscipcion  
and to the deth for the studie and  
bountes that I have doon to the senat. But, O,  
wel ben thei wurthy of meryte (as who seith,  
nay), ther myghte nevere yit noon of hem ben  
convicte of swiche a blame as myn is. Of whiche  
trespas myne accusours sayen ful wel the  
dignete; the whiche dignyte, for thei  
250 wolden derken it with medlynge of some  
felonye, they bare me on hande and lieden  
that I hadde pollut and defouled my conscience  
with sacrilegie for covetise of dignyte. And  
certes thou thiselve, that art plaunted in me,  
chacedest out of the sege of my corage alle  
covetise of mortel thynges, ne sacrilege ne  
hadde no leve to han a place in me byforn  
thyne eien. For thou droppiddest every day  
in myn eris and in my thought thilke  
260 comaundement of Pictagoras, that is to  
seyn, men schal serven to God and noght  
to goddes. Ne it was noght convenient ne no  
nede to taken help of the fouleste spiritz -- I,  
that thou hast ordeyned and set in swiche  
excellence, that thou makedest me lyk to God.  
And over this, the right clene secre chaumbre of  
myn hous (that is to seyn, my wif), and the  
companye of myne honeste freendes, and  
my wyves fadir, as wel holi as worthy to  
270 ben reverenced thurw his owene dedes,  
defenden me fro alle suspeciouun of swiche  
blame. But O malice! For they that accusen me  
taken of the, Philosophie, feith of so greet  
blame, for they trowen that I have had affinyte  
to malefice or enchauntement, bycause that I am  
replenysshid and fulfild with thy techynges, and  
enformed of thi maneris. And thus it suffiseth nat  
oonly that thi reverence ne avayle me nat, but yif  
that thou of thy free wil rather be  
280 blemessched with myne offencioun.  
"But certes, to the harmes that I have,  
ther bytideth yit this encrees of harm, that the  
gessynge and the jugement of moche folk ne

loken nothyng to the desertes of thynges, but  
oonly to the aventure of fortune; and jugen  
that oonly swiche thynges ben purveied of  
God, whiche that temporel welefulnesse  
commendeth. (Glose. As thus: that yif a  
wyght have prosperite, he is a good man  
290 and worthy to han that prosperite; and  
whoso hath adversite, he is a wikkid  
man, and God hath forsake hym, and he is  
worthy to han that adversite. This is the  
opinyoun of some folk.) Textus. And therof  
cometh that good gessynge, first of alle thyng,  
forsaketh wrecches. Certes it greveth me to  
thynke ryght now the diverse sentences that the  
peple seith of me. And thus moche I seie, that  
the laste charge of contrarious fortune is  
300 this: that whan eny blame is leid upon a  
caytif, men wenen that he hath desservyd  
that he suffreth. And I, that am put away fro  
gode men, and despoyled of dignytes, and  
defouled of myn name by gessynge, have  
suffride torment for my gode dedes. Certes me  
semyth that I se the felonous covynes of wykkid  
men habounden in joye and in gladnesse; and I  
se that every lorel schapeth hym to fynde out  
newe fraudes for to accuse good folk; and  
310 I se that goode men [lien] overthrowen for  
drede of my peril, and every luxurious  
turmentour dar doon alle felonye unpunysschyd,  
and ben excited therto by yiftes; and  
innocentz ne ben noght oonly despoiled of  
sikernes, but of defense; and therefore me lyst manere:  
"O thow makere of the wheel that bereth  
the sterres, whiche that art festnyd to thi perdurable  
chayer, and turnest the hevene with a  
ravysschyng sweighe, and constreynest the  
sterres to suffren thi lawe; so that the moone  
somytyme, schynyng with hir fulle hornes metyng  
with alle the beemes of the sonne hir  
brothir, hideth the sterres that ben lasse; and  
somytyme, whan the moone pale with hir  
10 derke hornes aprocheth the sonne, leeseth

hir lyghtes; and that the eve sterre, Hesperus,  
 whiche that in the first tyme of the nyght  
 bryngeth forth hir colde arysynges, cometh eft  
 ayen hir used cours, and is pale by the morwe  
 at rysynge of the sonne, and is thanne clepid  
 Lucyfer! Thow restreynest the day by schortere  
 duellynge in the tyme of coold wynter that  
 maketh the leeves falle. Thow devydest the  
 swyfte tydes of the nyght, whan the hote  
 20 somer is comen. Thy myghte attempreth  
 the variauntz sesouns of the yer, so that  
 Zephirus, the debonere wynd, bryngeth ayen  
 in the first somer sesoun the leeves that the  
 wynd that hyghte Boreas hath reft away in  
 autumpne (that is to seie, in the laste ende of  
 somer); and the seedes that the sterre that  
 highte Arcturus saugh ben waxen heye cornes  
 whan the sterre Syrius eschaufeth hem. Ther  
 nys no thyng unbounde from his olde lawe,  
 30 ne forleteth the werk of his propre estat.  
 "O thou governour, governynge alle  
 thynges by certein ende, whi refusestow oonly  
 to governe the werkes of men by duwe manere?  
 Why suffrestow that slydyng Fortune turneth  
 so grete enterchaungynges of thynges? So  
 that anoyous peyne, that scholde duweliche  
 punysche felons, punyssheth innocentz; and  
 folk of wikkide maneres sitten in heie chayeres;  
 and anoyinge folk treden, and that unrightfully,  
 40 on the nekkes of holi men; and  
 vertu, cleer and schynyng naturely, is  
 hidde in derke derknesses; and the rightful man  
 bereth the blame and the peyne of the feloun; ne  
 the forswerynge ne the fraude covered and  
 kembd with a false colour, ne anoieth nat to  
 schrewes? The whiche schrewes, whan hem list  
 to usen hir strengthe, they rejoyssen hem to  
 putten undir hem the sovereyne kynges, whiche  
 that peple withouten nombre dreden. O  
 50 thou, what so evere thou be that knytttest  
 alle boondes of thynges, loke on thise  
 wrecchide erthes. We men, that ben noght a foul

partie, but a fair partie of so greet a werk, we  
ben turmented in this see of fortune. Thow  
governour, withdraughe and restreyne the  
ravysschyng flodes, and fastne and ferme thise  
erthes stable with thilke boond by whiche thou  
governest the hevene that is so large."

Whan I hadde with a contynuel sorwe  
sobbyd or borken out thise thynges, sche, with  
hir cheere pesible and nothyng amoeved with  
my compleyntes, seide thus: "Whan I saugh  
the," quod sche, "sorwful and wepyng, I  
wiste anon that thou were a wrecche and  
exiled; but I wyste nevere how fer thyn exil  
was yif thy tale ne hadde schewid it me. But  
certes, al be thou fer fro thy cuntre, thou  
10 n' art nat put out of it, but thou hast fayled  
of thi weye and gon amys. And yif thou  
hast levere for to wene that thou be put out  
of thy cuntre, thanne hastow put out thyselfe  
rather than any other wyght hath. For no  
wyght but thyselfe ne myghte nevere han doon  
that to the. For yif thou remembre of what  
cuntre thou art born, it nys nat governed by  
emperoures, ne by gouvernement of multitude,  
as weren the cuntrees of hem of Atthenes;  
20 but o lord and o kyng, and that is God, that  
is lord of thi cuntre, whiche that rejoisseth  
hym of the duellynge of his citezeens, and nat  
for to putten hem in exil; of the whiche lord  
it is a sovereyn fredom to ben governed by the  
brydel of hym and obeye to his justice. Hastow  
foryeten thilke ryghte oolde lawe of thi citee, in  
the whiche cite it es ordeyned and establysschid  
that what wyght that hath levere  
founden therin his sete or his hous than  
30 elleswhere, he may nat ben exiled by no  
ryght fro that place? For whoso that is  
contened inwith the palys and the clos of  
thilke cite, ther nys no drede that he mai deserve  
to ben exiled; but who that leteth the  
wil for to enhabyten there, he forleteth also  
to deserve to ben citezen of thilke cite. So that

I seie that the face of this place ne moeveth  
me noght so mochel as thyn owene face, ne  
I ne axe nat rather the walles of thy librarye,  
40 apparayled and wrought with yvory  
and with glas, than after the sete of thi  
thought, in whiche I put noght whilom bookes,  
but I putte that that maketh bokes wurthy  
of prys or precyous, that is to seyn the sentence  
of my bookes.

"And certeynly of thy dessertes bystowed in  
comune good thou hast seyde soth, but after the  
multitude of thy gode dedes thou hast seyde  
fewe. And of the honestete or of the falsnesse  
50 of thynges that ben opposed ayens  
the, thou hast remembred thynges that ben  
knownen to alle folk. And of the felonyes and  
fraudes of thyn accusours, it semeth the have  
touched it for sothe ryghtfully and schortly, al  
myghten tho same thynges betere and more  
plenteuously ben couth in the mouth of the  
peple that knoweth al this. Thou hast eek  
blamed gretly and compleyned of the wrongdede  
of the senat, and thou hast sorwyd  
60 for my blame, and thou hast wepen for  
the damage of thi renoun that is apayred;  
and thi laste sorwe eschaufede ayens Fortune,  
and compleyndest that guerdouns ne ben nat  
eveneliche yolden to the dessertes of folk. And  
in the lattare eende of thy wode muse, thou  
preydest that thilke pees that governeth the  
hevene schulde governe the erthe.

"But for that many [turbacions] of affecciouns  
han assailed the, and sorwe and ire and  
70 wepyng to drawen the diversely, as thou  
art now feble of thought, myghtyere remedies  
ne schullen noght yit touchen the. For  
wyche we wol usen somdel lyghtere medicynes,  
so that thilke passiouns that ben waxen hard in  
swellynge by perturbacions flowynge into thy  
thought, mowen waxen esy and softe to resceyven  
the strengthe of a more myghty and  
more egre medicine, by an esyere touchynge.

"Whan that the hevy sterre of the Cancre  
 eschaufeth by the bemes of Phebus (that is to  
 seyn, whan that Phebus the sonne is in the  
 sygne of the Cancre), whoso yeveth thanne  
 largely his seedes to the feeldes that refusen  
 to resceyven hem, lat hym gon, begiled of trust  
 that he hadde to his corn, to accornes of okes.  
 Yif thow wolt gadere vyolettes, ne go thow  
 nat to the purple wode whan the feeld,  
 10 chirkyng, agryseth of cold by the felnesse  
 of the wynd that hyghte Aquilon. Yif thou  
 desirest or wolt usen grapes, ne seek thou nat  
 with a glotonos hand to streyne and presse the  
 stalkes of the vyne in the first somer sesoun;  
 for Bachus, the god of wyn, hath rather yyven  
 his yiftes to autumpne (the latter end of  
 somer). God tokneth and assigneth the tymes,  
 ablynge hem to hir propre offices, ne he ne suffreth  
 nat the stowndes whiche that hymself  
 20 hath devyded and constreyned to ben  
 imedled togidre. And forthy he that forleteth  
 certain ordenaunce of doynge by overthrowng  
 wey, he hath no glad issue or ende of his  
 werkes.

"First wiltow suffre me to touche and assaye  
 th' estaat of thi thought by a fewe demaundes,  
 so that I may understande what be the manere  
 of thi curacioun?"

"Axe me," quod I, "at thi wille what thou  
 wolt, and I schal answeere." Tho seyde sche  
 thus: "Whethir wenestow," quod sche, "that  
 this world be governed by foolyssche happes  
 and fortunows, or elles wenestow that ther  
 10 be inne it ony gouvernement of resoun?"

"Certes," quod I, "I ne trowe nat in no  
 manere that so certeyn thynges schulden be  
 moeved by fortunows [folie]; but I woot wel  
 that God, makere and maister, is governour of  
 his werk, ne nevere nas yit day that myghte  
 putte me out of the sothnesse of that sentence."

"So it is," quod sche, "for the same thyng  
 songe thow a litil herebyforn, and bywayledest

and byweppest, that oonly men weren  
20 put out of the cure of God; for of alle othere  
thynges thou ne doutedest the nat that they  
nere governed by resoun. But owgh! I wondre  
gretly, certes, whi that thou art sik, syn that  
thow art put in so holsome a sentence. But lat  
us seken deppere; I coniecte that ther lakketh  
Y not what. But sey me this: syn that thow  
ne doutest noght that this world be governed  
by God, with whiche governayles takestow  
heede that it is governed?"

30 "Unnethes," quod I, "knowe I the sentence  
of thy questioun, so that I ne may  
nat yit answeren to thy demandes."

"I nas nat desseyved," quod sche, "that ther  
ne faileth somewhat, by whiche the maladye of  
perturbacion is crept into thi thought, so as  
[by] the strengthe of the palys chynynge  
[and] open. But sey me this: remembrestow  
what is the ende of thynges, and whider that  
the entencion of alle kende tendeth?"

40 "I have herd tolde it somtyme," quod I,  
"but drerynesse hath dulled my memorie."

"Certes," quod sche, "thou wost wel whennes  
that alle thynges bien comen and proceded?"

"I woot wel," quod I, and answerede that  
God is bygynnyng of al.

"And how may this be," quod sche, "that,  
syn thow knowest the bygynnyng of thynges,  
that thow ne knowest nat what is the eende  
of thynges? But swiche ben the customes  
50 of perturbaciouns, and this power they han,  
that they mai moeve a man from his place  
(that is to seyn, fro the stabelnesse and perfeccion  
of his knowynge); but certes, thei mai nat  
al arrace hym, ne aliene hym in al. But I wolde  
that thou woldest answer to this: Remembrestow  
that thow art a man?"

Boece. "Whi schulde I nat remembren that?"  
quod I.

Philosophie. "Maystow noght telle me

60 thanne," quod sche, "what thyng is a man?"



"Axestow me nat," quod I, "whethir  
that I [woot wel that I] be a resonable mortel  
beste? I woot wel, and I confesse wel that I am  
it."

"Wystestow nevere yit that thow were ony  
othir thyng?" quod sche.

"No," quod I.

"Now woot I," quod sche, "other cause of thi  
maladye, and that ryght greet: thow hast  
70 left for to knowen thyselfe what thou art.  
Thurw whiche I have pleyndly fownde the  
cause of thi maladye, or elles the entree of  
recoverynge of thyn hele. For-why, for thow art  
confunded with foryetyng of thiself, forthi  
sorwestow that thow art exiled [and] [despoiled]  
of thy propre goodes; and for thow ne woost  
what is the eende of thynges, forthy demestow  
that felonous and wikkide men ben myghty and  
weleful; and for thow hast foryeten by  
80 whiche governementz the world is governed,  
forthy weenestow that thise mutacions  
of fortunes fleten withouten governour.  
Thise ben grete causes, noght oonly to  
maladye, but certes gret causes to deth. But I  
thanke the auctour and the makere of hele, that  
nature hath nat al forleten the. I have gret  
noryssynges of thyn hele, and that is, the sothe  
sentence of governance of the world, that thou  
bylevest that the governynge of it nis nat  
90 subgit ne underput to the folye of thise  
happes adventurous, but to the resoun of  
God. And therefore doute the nothing, for of this  
litel spark thine heet of liif schal shine.

"But for as moche as it is nat tyme yet of  
fastere remedies, and the nature of thoughtes  
desceyved is this, that, as ofte as they casten away  
sothe opynyouns, they clothen hem in false  
opynyouns, of the whiche false opynyouns the  
derknesse of perturbacion waxeth up, that  
100 confowndeth the verray insyghte -- [that]  
derknesse schal I assaie somewhat to maken  
thynne and wayk by lyghte and meneliche

remedies; so that, aftir that the derknesse of  
desceyvynge desyrynges is doon away, thow  
mowe knowe the schynynge of verraye light.  
"The sterres, covred with blake cloudes, ne  
owen yeten adoun no lyght. Yif the truble  
wynd that hyghte Auster, turnynge and walwynge  
the see, edleth the heete (that is to  
seyn, the boylynge up fro the bote), the  
wawes, that whilo weren clere as glas and  
lyk to the fayre bryghte dayes, withstande  
anon the syghtes of en by the filthe and  
ordure that is resolved. And the fleetyng  
10 stree, that royleth doun diversely fro heye  
ontaygues, is areestid and resisted ofte  
tye by the encountryng of a stoon that is  
departed and fallen fro soe roche. And forthy,  
yif thou wolt loken and deen soth with cleer  
lyght, and hoolden the weye with a ryght path,  
weyve thow joie, dryf fro the drede, flee thow  
hope, ne lat no sorwe aproche (that is to seyn,  
lat non of thise foure passious overcoen the  
or blenden the). For cloudy and derk is  
20 thilke thoght, and bownde with bridelis,  
where as thise thynges reignen."



## BOOK 2

Aftir this sche stynte a lytel; and after that  
sche hadde ygadrede by atempre stillenesse myn  
attencioun, she seyde thus (as who so myghte  
seyn thus: after thise thynges sche stynte a  
litol, and whan sche aperceyved by atempre  
stillenesse that I was ententyf to herkne hire,  
sche bygan to speke in this wyse): "If I," quod  
sche, "have undirstonden and knowen outrely  
the causes and the habyt of thy maladye,  
10 thow languyssest and art desfeted for desir  
and talent of thi rather fortune. Sche (that  
ilke Fortune) oonly, that is chaunged, as  
thow feynest, to the-ward, hath perverted the  
cleernesse and the estat of thi corage. I  
undirstonde the felefolde colours and desceytes  
of thilke merveyulous monstre Fortune and how  
sche useth ful flatteryng famylarite with hem  
that sche enforceth to bygyle, so longe, til that  
sche confounde with unsuffrable sorwe  
20 hem that sche hath left in despeir unpurveied.  
And yif thou remembrest wel the  
kende, the maneris, and the desserte of thilke  
Fortune, thou shalt wel knowe that, as in hir,  
thow nevere ne haddest ne hast ylost any fair  
thyng. But, as I trowe, I schal nat greetly  
travailen to don the remembren on thise  
thynges. For thow were wont to hurtlen and  
despysen hir with manly woordes whan sche  
was blaundyssching and present, and  
30 pursuydest hir with sentences that weren  
drawen out of myn entre (that is to seyn,  
of myn enformacioun). But no sodeyn mutacioun  
ne bytideth noght withouten a manere  
chaungyng of corages; and so is it byfallen  
that thou art a litil departed fro the pees of thi  
thought.

"But now is tyme that thou drynke and ataste  
some softe and delitable thynges, so that whanne  
thei ben entred withynne the, it mowe  
40 maken wey to strengere drynkes of medycines.

Com now forth, therfore, the  
suasyoun of swetnesse rethorien, whiche that  
goth oonly the righte wey while sche forsaketh  
nat myn estatutz. And with Rethorice com forth  
Musice, a damoysele of our hous, that syngeth  
now lightere moedes or prolacions, now  
hevyere. What eyleth the, man? What is it that  
hath cast the into moornynge and into wepyng?  
I trow that thou hast seyn some newe thyng  
50 and unkouth. Thou wenest that Fortune be  
chaunged ayens the; but thou wenest  
wrong (yif thou that wene): alway thou ben hir  
maneres. Sche hath rather kept, as to the-ward,  
hir propre stablenesse in the chaungynge of  
herself. Ryght swiche was sche whan sche  
flatelyd the and desseyved the with unfeul  
lykynge of false welefulnesse. Thou hast now  
known and ateynt the doutous or double visage  
of thilke blynde goddesse Fortune. Sche,  
60 that yet covereth and wympleth hir to other  
folk, hath schewyd hir every del to the. Yif  
thou approvest here (and thynkest that sche is  
good), use hir maneris and pleyne the nat; and  
yif thou agrisest hir false trecherie, despise and  
cast away hir that pleyeth so harmfully. For sche,  
that is now cause of so moche sorwe to the,  
sholde ben cause to the of pees and of joye. Sche  
hath forsaken the, forsothe, the whiche that  
never man mai ben siker that sche ne schal  
70 forsaken hym. (Glose. But natheles some  
bookes han the texte thus: forsothe sche  
hath forsaken the, ne ther nys no man siker  
that sche ne hath nat forsake.) Holdestow  
thanne thilke welefulnesse precious to the, that  
schal passen? And is present Fortune dereworth  
to the, whiche that nys nat feithful for to duelle,  
and whan sche goth away that sche bryngeth a  
wyght in sorwe? For syn she may nat ben  
withholden at a mannys wille, [and] sche  
80 maketh hym a wrecche whan sche departeth  
fro hym, what other thyng is  
flyttinge Fortune but a maner schewynge of

wrecchidnesse that is to comen? Ne it suffiseth  
 nat oonly to loken on thyng that is present  
 byforn the eien of a man; but wisdom loketh and  
 mesureth the ende of thynges. And the same  
 chaungynge from oon into another (that is to  
 seyn, fro adversite into prosperite) maketh that  
 the manaces of Fortune ne ben nat for to  
 90 dreden, ne the flaterynges of hir to ben  
 desired. Thus, at the laste, it byhoveth the  
 to suffren wyth evene wil in pacience al that is  
 doon inwith the floor of Fortune (that is to seyn,  
 in this world), syn thou hast oonys put thy nekke  
 undir the yok of hir. For yif thou wilt writen a  
 lawe of wendynge and of duellynge to Fortune,  
 whiche that thou hast chosen frely to ben thi  
 lady, artow nat wrongful in that, and makest  
 Fortune wroth and aspre by thyn  
 100 inpacience? And yit thou mayst nat  
 chaungen hir. Yif thou committest and  
 betakest thi seyles to the wynd, thou schalt ben  
 shoven, nat thider that thou woldest, but whider  
 that the wynd schouveth the. Yif thou castest thi  
 seedes in the feeldes, thou sholdest han in  
 mynde that the yeres ben amonges, outhwhile  
 plentevous and outhwhile bareyne. Thow hast  
 bytaken thiself to the governaunce of Fortune  
 and forthi it byhoveth the to ben obeisaunt  
 110 to the maneris of thi lady. Enforcestow the  
 to aresten or withholden the swyftnesse  
 and the sweighe of hir turnynge wheel? O thou  
 fool of alle mortel foolis! Yif Fortune bygan to  
 duelle stable, she cessede thanne to ben Fortune.  
 "Whan Fortune with a proud ryght hand hath  
 turned hir chaungynge stowndes, sche fareth  
 lyke the maneres of the boylynge Eurippe.  
 (Glosa. Eurippe is an arm of the see that ebbeth  
 and floweth, and somtyme the streem is on  
 o side, and somtyme on the tothir.) Textus.  
 She, cruel Fortune, casteth adoun kynges that  
 whilom weren ydradd; and sche, desceyvable,  
 enhaunceth up the humble chere of hym  
 10 that is discounfited. Ne sche neither heereth

ne rekketh of wrecchide wepynges; and  
 she is so hard that sche leygheth and scorneth  
 the wepynges of hem, the whiche sche hath  
 made wepe with hir free wille. Thus sche  
 pleyeth, and thus sche prooeveth hir strengthes,  
 and scheweth a greet wonder to alle hir servauntz  
 yif that a wyght is seyn weleful and  
 overthrowe in an houre.

"Certes I wolde pleten with the a fewe  
 thynges, usynge the woordes of Fortune. Tak  
 hede now thyselfe, yif that sche asketh ryght:  
 'O thou man, wherfore makestow me gyltyf by  
 thyne every dayes pleynnynges? What wrong  
 have I don the? What godes have I byreft the  
 that weren thyne? Stryf or pleet with me byforn  
 what juge that thou wolt of the possessioun  
 of rychesses or of dignytees; and yif  
 10 thou maist schewen me that ever any mortel  
 man hath resceyved ony of tho thynges  
 to ben hise in propre, thanne wil I graunte freely  
 that thilke thynges weren thyne whiche that  
 thou axest.

"Whan that nature brought the foorth out of  
 thi modir wombe, I resceyved the nakid and  
 nedy of alle thynges, and I norissched the with  
 my richesses, and was redy and ententyf thurwe  
 my favour to sustene the -- and that maketh  
 20 the now inpacient ayens me; and I  
 envyrounde the with al the habundaunce  
 and schynyng of alle goodes that ben in my  
 ryght. Now it liketh me to withdrawe myn  
 hand. Thou hast had grace as he that hath  
 used of foreyne goodes; thou hast no ryght to  
 pleyne the, as though thou haddest outrely  
 forlorn alle thy thynges. Why pleynestow  
 thanne? I have doon the no wrong. Richesses,  
 honours, and swiche othere thinges ben of  
 30 my right. My servauntz knowen me for  
 hir lady; they comen with me, and departen  
 whan I wende. I dar wel affermen hardely  
 that, yif tho thynges of whiche thou pleynest  
 that thou hast forlorn [hem] hadden ben

thyne, thow ne haddest nat lorn hem. Schal  
I thanne, oonly, be defended to usen my ryght?  
"Certes it is leveful to the hevene to maken  
clere dayes, and after that to coveren tho same  
dayes with dirke nyghtes. The yeer hath  
40 eek leve to apparaylen the visage of the  
erthe, now with floures, and now with  
fruyt, and to confownden hem somtyme with  
reynes and with coldes. The see hath eek his  
ryght to ben somtyme calm and blaundysschyng  
with smothe watir, and somtyme to ben  
horrible with waves and with tempestes. But  
the covetise of men, that mai nat be stawnched  
-- schal it bynde me to ben stedfast, syn that  
stidfastnesse is uncouth to my maneris?  
50 Swiche is my strengthe, and this pley  
I pleye continuely. I torne the whirlynge  
wheel with the turnynge sercle; I am glad to  
chaungen the loweste to the heyeste, and the  
heyeste to the loweste. Worth up yif thow  
wolt, so it be by this lawe, that thow ne holde  
nat that I do the wroong, though thow descende  
adown whan the resoun of my pley axeth it.  
Wystestow nat how Cresus, kyng of Lydyens,  
of whiche kyng Cirus was ful sore agast a  
60 lytil byforn -- that this rewliche Cresus  
was caught of Cirus and lad to the fyer to  
ben brend; but that a rayn descendede down  
fro hevene that rescowyde hym? And is it out  
of thy mynde how that Paulus, consul of Rome,  
whan he had taken the kyng of Percyens, weep  
pitously for the captivityte of the selve kyng?  
What other thyng bywaylen the crynges of  
tragedyes but oonly the dedes of Fortune, that  
with an unwar strook overturneth the  
70 realmes of greet nobleye? (Glose. Tragedye  
is to seyn a dite of a prosperite for a  
tyme, that endeth in wrecchidnesse.) Lersedest  
nat thow in Greek whan thow were yong, that  
in the entre or in the seler of Juppiter ther ben  
cowched two tonnes, the toon is ful of good,  
and the tother is ful of harm? What ryght

hastow to pleyne, yif thou hast taken more  
 plenteuously of the gode side (that is to seyn,  
 of my riches and prosperites)? And  
 80 what ek yif Y ne be nat al departed fro  
 the? What eek yif my mutabilite yeveth  
 the ryghtful cause of hope to han yit bettere  
 thynges? Natheles dismaye the nat in thi  
 thought; and thow that art put in the comune  
 realme of alle, desire nat to lyven by thyn oonly  
 propre ryght.

"Though Plente that is goddess of rychesses  
 hielde adoun with ful horn, and withdraweth  
 nat hir hand, as many riches as the  
 see torneth upward sandes whan it is moeved  
 with ravysshynge blastes, or elles as manye  
 rychesses as ther schynen bryghte sterres in  
 hevene on the sterry nyghtes; yit, for al that,  
 mankende nolde nat cese to wepe wrecchide  
 pleyntes. And al be it so that God resceyveth  
 10 gladly hir preiers, and yyveth hem, as  
 fool-large, moche gold, and apparayleth  
 coveytous folk with noble or cleer honours;  
 yit semeth hem haven igeten nothyng, but  
 alwey hir cruel ravyne, devourynge al that  
 they han geten, scheweth othere gapynges (that  
 is to seyn, gapyn and desiren yit after mo rychesses).  
 What brydles myghte withholden to  
 any certeyn ende the disordene covetise of  
 men, whan evere the rather that it fletith  
 20 in large yiftes, the more ay brenneth in  
 hem the thurst of havynge? Certes he that  
 qwakyng and dredful weneth hymselfen  
 nedy, he ne lyveth nevermo ryche.

"Therefore, yif that Fortune spake with the  
 for himself in this manere, forsothe thow ne  
 haddest noght what thou myghtest answer.  
 And yif thow hast any thyng wherwith thow  
 mayst rightfully defenden thi compleynte, it  
 behoveth the to schewen it, and I wol yyve  
 the space to tellen it."

"Serteynly," quod I thanne, "thise ben faire  
 thynges and enoynted with hony swetnesse



10 of Rethorik and Musike; and oonly  
whil thei ben herd thei ben delycious, but  
to wrecches is a deppere felyng of harm  
(this is to seyn, that wrecches felen the harmes  
that thei suffren more grevously than the remedies  
or the delites of thise wordes mowen gladen  
or conforten hem). So that, whanne thise  
thynges stynten for to sounen in eris, the sorwe  
that es inset greveth the thought."

"Right so is it," quod sche. "For thise ne  
20 ben yit none remedies of thy maladye, but  
they ben a maner norisschynges of thi  
sorwe, yit rebel ayen thi curacioun. For whan  
that tyme is, I schal moeve and ajuste swiche  
thynges that percen hemselve depe. But natheles  
that thou schalt noght wilne to leten thiself  
a wrecche, hastow foryeten the nowmbre  
and the maner of thi welefulnesse? I holde  
me stille how that the sovereyn men of the  
cite token the in cure and in kepyng,  
30 whan thou were orphelyn of fadir and of  
modir, and were chose in affynite of  
prynces of the cite; and thou bygonne rather  
to ben leef and deere than for to been a  
neyghebour, the whiche thyng is the moste  
precyous kende of any propinquyte or alliaunce  
that mai ben. Who is it that ne seide tho that  
thou neere right weleful, with so gret a nobleye  
of thi fadres-in-lawe, and with the chastete  
of thy wyf, and with the oportunyte  
40 and noblesse of thyne masculyn children  
(that is to seyn, thy sones)? And over al this  
me list to passen of comune thynges, how  
thou haddest in thy youthe dignytees that  
weren wernd to oolde men; but it deliteth  
me to comen now to the synguler uphepyng  
of thi welefulnesse. Yif any fruyt of mortel  
thynges mai han any weyghte or pris of welefulnesse,  
myghtestow evere forgeten, for any  
charge of harm that myghte byfalle the, remembraunce  
50 of thilke day that thou seye  
thi two sones maked conseileris and iladde

togidre fro thyn hous under so greet assemble  
 of senatours and under the blithnesse of peple,  
 and whan thow saye hem set in the court in  
 hir chayeres of dignytes? Thow, rethorien or  
 pronouncere of kynges preysynges, desservedest  
 glorie of wit and of eloquence whan thow, syttyng  
 bytwixen thi two sones conseylers, in the  
 place that highte Circo, fulfildest the abydyng  
 60 of the multitude of peple that was  
 sprad abouten the with so large preysynge  
 and laude as men synge in victories. Tho  
 yave thow woordes to Fortune, as I trowe, (that  
 is to seyn, tho feffedestow Fortune with glosynge  
 wordes and desceyvedest hir) whan sche  
 accoyede the and noryside the as hir owne  
 delices. Thow bare away of Fortune a yifte  
 (that is to seye, swich guerdoun) that sche  
 nevere yaf to prive man. Wiltow therfore  
 70 leye a reknyng with Fortune? Sche hath  
 now twynkled first upon the with a wikkid  
 eye. If thow considere the nowmbre and the  
 maner of thy blisses and of thy sorwes, thow  
 mayst noght forsaken that thow nart yit blisful.  
 For yif thou therfore wenest thiself nat  
 weleful, for thynges that tho semeden joyeful  
 ben passed, ther nys nat why thow sholdest  
 wene thiself a wrecche; for thynges that semen  
 now sory passen also. Artow now comen  
 80 first, a sodeyn gest, into the schadowe or  
 tabernacle of this lif? Or trowestow that  
 any stedfastnesse be in mannes thynges, whan  
 ofte a swyft hour dissolveth the same man (that  
 is to seyn, whan the soule departeth fro the  
 body)? For although that zelde is ther any  
 feith that fortunous thynges wollen dwellen,  
 yet natheles the laste day of a mannes lif is  
 a maner deth to Fortune, and also to thilke  
 that hath dwelt. And therfore what wenestow  
 90 dar rekke, yif thow forleete hir in  
 deyng, or elles that sche, Fortune, forleete away?  
 "Whan Phebus, the sonne, bygynneth to  
 spreden his clernesse with rosene chariettes,

thanne the sterre, ydymmed, paleth hir white  
 cheeres by the flambes of the sonne that overcometh  
 the sterre lyght. (This to seyn, whan  
 the sonne is rysen, the day-sterre waxeth pale,  
 and leeseth hir lyght for the grete bryghtnesse  
 of the sonne.) Whan the wode waxeth rody  
 of rosene floures in the fyrst somer sesoun  
 10 thurw the breeth of the wynd Zephirus that  
 waxeth warm, yif the cloudy wynd Auster  
 blowe felliche, than goth away the fairnesse  
 of thornes. Ofte the see is cleer and calm  
 without moevynge flodes, and ofte the horrible  
 wynd Aquylon moeveth boylynge tempestes,  
 and overwhelveth the see. Yif the forme  
 of this world is so zeeld stable, and yif it torneth  
 by so manye entrechaungynges, wiltow  
 thanne trusten in the tumbenge fortunes of  
 20 men? Wiltow trowen on flyttynge goodes?  
 It is certeyn and establissched by lawe perdurable,  
 that nothyng that is engendred nys  
 stedfast ne stable."

Thanne seide I thus: "O norysshe of alle vertues,  
 thou seist ful sooth; ne I mai noght forsake  
 the ryght swyfte cours of my prosperite  
 (that is to seyn, that prosperite ne be comen  
 to me wonder swyftli and sone); but this is a  
 thyng that greetly smerteth me whan it remembreth  
 me. For in alle adversites of fortune  
 the moost unzeely kynde of contrarious  
 fortune is to han ben weleful."

10 "But that thow," quod sche, "abyest thus  
 the torment of thi false opynioun, that  
 maistow nat ryghtfully blamen ne aretten to  
 thynges. (As who seith, for thow hast yit  
 manye habundances of thynges.) Textus. For  
 al be it so that the ydel name of aventuros  
 welefulnesse moeveth the now, it is leveful that  
 thow rekne with me of how many grete thynges  
 thow hast yit plente. And therfore yif that  
 thilke thyng that thow haddest for moost  
 20 precyous in al thy rychesse of fortune be  
 kept to the yit by the grace of God unwemmed

and undefouled, maistow thanne  
pleyne ryghtfully upon the mescheef of Fortune,  
syn thow hast yit thi beste thynges?  
Certes yit lyveth in good poynt thilke precyous  
honour of mankynde, Symacus, thi wyves fader,  
whiche that is a man maked al of sapience and  
of vertu, the whiche man thow woldest byen  
redyly with the pris of thyn owene lif. He  
30 bywayleth the wronges that men don to  
the, and nat for hymself; for he lyveth in  
sikernesse of anye sentences put ayens hym.  
And yit lyveth thi wyf, that is atempre of wyt  
and passynge othere wommen in clenness of  
chastete; and, for I wol closen schortly hir  
bountes, sche is lyk to hir fadir. I telle the wel  
that sche lyveth, loth of this lyf, and kepeth  
to the oonly hir goost, and is al maat and overcomen  
by wepyng and sorwe for desir of  
40 the; in the whiche thyng oonly I moot  
graunten that thi welefulnesse is amenused.  
What schal I seyn eek of thi two sones conseylours,  
of whiche, as of children of hir age,  
ther shyneth the liknesse of the wit of hir fadir  
or of hir eldefader! And syn the sovereyne  
cure of al mortel folk is to saven hir owene  
lyves, O how weleful artow, if thow knowe  
thy goodes! For yit ben ther thynges dwelled  
to the-ward that no man douteth that they  
50 ne be more derworthe to the than thyn  
owene lif. And forthy drye thi teeris, for  
yit nys nat every fortune al hateful to theward,  
ne overgreet tempest hath nat yit fallen  
upon the, whan that thyne ances clyven faste,  
that neither wolen suffren the counfort of this  
tyme present ne the hope of tyme comyng to  
passen ne to faylen."  
"And I preie," quod I, "that faste mote thei  
halden; for, whiles that thei halden, how so  
60 evere that thynges been, I shal wel fleetyn  
forth and escapyn: but thou mayst wel seen  
how grete apparailes and array that me lakketh,  
that ben passed away fro me."

"I have somewhat avaunced and forthred  
 the," quod sche, "yif that thow anoye nat, or  
 forthynke nat of al thy fortune. (As who seith,  
 I have somewhat confortd the, so that thou  
 tempeste the nat thus with al thy fortune, syn  
 thow hast yit thy beste thynges.) But I mai  
 70 nat suffren thi delices, that pleynest the so  
 wepynge and angwysschous for that ther  
 lakketh somewhat to thy welefulnesse. For what  
 man is so sad or of so parfite welefulnesse, that  
 he ne stryveth and pleyneþ on some halfe  
 ayen the qualite of his estat? Forwhy ful anguysschous  
 thing is the condicioun of mannes  
 goodes; for eyther it cometh nat altogidre to  
 a wyght, or elles it ne last nat perpetuel. For  
 som man hath gret rychesse, but he is  
 80 aschamed of his ungentil lynage; and som  
 man is renomyd of noblesse of kynrede, but  
 he is enclosed in so greet angwyssche of nede  
 of thynges that hym were levere that he were  
 unknowe; and som man haboundeth bothe in  
 rychesse and noblesse, but yit he bewayleth his  
 chaste lyf, for he ne hath no wyf; and som man  
 is wel and zelily ymariyd, but he hath no children,  
 and norissheth his rychesse to the eyres  
 of straunge folk; and som man is gladed  
 90 with children, but he wepeth ful sory for  
 the trespas of his sone or of his doughter.  
 And for this ther ne accordeth no wyght lyghtly  
 to the condicioun of his fortune; for alwey to  
 every man ther is in somewhat that, unassayed,  
 he ne woot nat, or elles he dredeth that he hath  
 assaied. And adde this also, that every weleful  
 man hath a ful delicaat feelynge; so that, but  
 yif alle thynges byfalle at his owene wil, for  
 he is impacient or is nat used to have noon  
 100 adversite, anon he is throwen adoun for  
 every litil thyng. And ful litel thynges ben  
 tho that withdrawen the somme or the perfeccioun  
 of blisfulnesse fro hem that been most  
 fortunat. How manye men trowestow wolde  
 demen hemself to ben almoste in hevene, yif

thei myghten atayne to the leste partye of the  
remenaunt of thi fortune? This same place  
that thow clepest exil is contre to hem that  
enhabiten here, and forthi nothyng [is.  
110 wrecchide but whan thou wenest it. (As  
who seith, thow thiself ne no wyght elles  
nis a wrecche but whanne he weneth hymself  
a wrechche by reputacion of his corage.) And  
ayenward, alle fortune is blisful to a man by  
the aggreablete or by the egalyte of hym that  
suffreth it. What man is that that is so weleful  
that nolde chaunge his estat whan he hath lost  
pacience? The swetnesse of mannes welefulnesse  
is spraynd with many bitternesses;  
120 the whiche welefulnesse although it seme  
swete and joieful to hym that useth it, yit  
mai it nat ben withholden that it ne goth away  
whan it wole. Thanne is it wele seene how  
wrecchid is the blisfulnesse of mortel thynges,  
that neyther it dureth perpetuel with hem that  
every fortune resceyven agreablely or egaly, ne  
it deliteth nat in al to hem that ben angwyssous.  
"O ye mortel folk, what seeke ye thanne blisfulnesse  
out of yourself whiche that is put  
130 in yowrself? Errour and folie confoundeth  
yow. I schal schewe the schortly the  
poynt of soverayn blisfulnesse. Is there anythyng  
more precyous to the than thiself? Thow  
wolt answe, 'nay.' Thanne, yif it so be that  
thow art myghty over thyself (that is to seyn,  
by tranquillite of thi soule), than hastow thyng  
in thi powere that thow noldest nevere leesen,  
ne Fortune may nat bynymen it the. And that  
thow mayst knowe that blisfulnesse ne mai  
140 nat standen in thynges that ben fortunous  
and temporel, now undirstond and gadere  
it togidre thus: yif blisfulnesse be the soverayn  
good of nature that lyveth by resoun,  
ne thilke thyng nys nat soverayn good that  
may ben taken away in any wise (for more  
worthy thyng and more dygne is thilke thyng  
that mai nat ben take away); than scheweth

it wel that the unstablenesse of fortune may  
nat atayne to resceyven verray blisfulnesse.  
150 And yit more over, what man that this  
towmblynge welefulnesse ledeth, eyther  
he woot that it is chaungeable, or elles he woot  
it nat. And yif he woot it nat, what blisful  
fortune may ther ben in the blyndnesse of ignoraunce?  
And yif he woot that it is chaungeable,  
he mot alwey ben adrad that he ne lese  
that thyng that he ne douteth nat but that he  
may leesen it (as who seith he mot bien alwey  
agast lest he lese that he woot wel he may  
160 lese it); for whiche the contynuel drede that  
he hath ne suffreth hym nat to ben weleful --  
or elles yif he lese it he weneth to ben  
despised and forleten. Certes eek that is a  
ful litel good that is born with evene herte  
whan it es lost (that is to seyn, that men do no  
more force of the lost than of the havynge).  
And for as moche as thow thiself art he to  
whom it hath be [sewed] and proved by ful  
many demonstracyons, as I woot wele that  
170 the soules of men ne mowen nat deyen in  
no wyse; and ek syn it es cleer and certeyn  
that fortunous welefulnesse endeth by the deth  
of the body; it mai nat be douteth that, yif that  
deth may take away blisfulnesse, that al the  
kynde of mortel thyng ne descendeth into  
wrecchidnesse by the ende of the deth. And  
syn we knowe wel that many a man hath  
sought the fruyt of blysfulnesse, nat oonly with  
suffrynge of deeth, but eek with suffrynge  
180 of peynes and tormentz, how myghte  
thanne this present lif make men blisful,  
syn that whanne thilke selve lif es ended it  
ne maketh folk no wrechches?  
"What maner man stable and war, that wol  
fownden hym a perdurable seete, and ne wol  
nought ben cast down with the lowde blastes of  
the wynd Eurus, and wole despise the see  
manasyng with flodes; lat hym eschuwen to  
bilde on the cop of the mountaigne, or in the

moyste sandes; for the felle wynd Auster tormenteth  
 the cop of the mountaigne with alle  
 hise strengthes, and the lause sandes refusen  
 10 to beren the hevy weyghte. And  
 forthi, yif thow wolt fleen the perilous  
 aventure (that is to seyn, of the world) have  
 mynde certeynly to fycchen thin hous of a  
 myrie sete in a low stoon. For although the  
 wynd troublunge the see thondre with overthrownges,  
 thou, that art put in quiete and  
 weleful by strengthe of thi palys, schalt leden  
 a cler age, scornynge the woodnesses and the  
 ires of the eyr.

"But for as mochel as the norisschynges of  
 my resouns descenden now into the, I trowe it  
 were tyme to usen a litel strengere medicynes.  
 Now undirstand heere; al were it so that the  
 yiftes of Fortune ne were noght brutel ne transitorie,  
 what is ther in hem that mai be thyn  
 in any tyme, or elles that it nys fowl, yif that  
 it be considered and lookyd parfitely? Richesses  
 ben they precieuse by the nature of hemself,  
 10 or elles by the nature of the? What is  
 most worth of rychesses? Is it nat gold or  
 myght of moneye assembled? Certes thilke  
 gold and thilke moneye schyneth and yeveth  
 bettre renoun to hem that dispenden it than  
 to thilke folk that mokeren it; for avaryce maketh  
 alwey mokereres to ben hated, and largesse  
 maketh folk cleer of renoun. For, syn that  
 swiche thyng as is transferred fro o man to an  
 othir ne may nat duellen with no man,  
 20 certes thanne is thilke moneye precyous  
 whan it is translated into other folk and  
 stynteth to ben had by usage of large yvyngge  
 of hym that hath yeven it. And also yif al the  
 moneye that is overal in the world were gadryd  
 toward o man, it scholde make alle othere men  
 to be nedy as of that. And certes a voys al hool  
 (that is to seyn, withouten amenusynge) fulfilleth  
 togydre the herynge of moche folk. But  
 certes your rychesses ne mowen noght



30 passen unto moche folk withouten amenusynge;  
 and whan they ben apassed, nedes  
 they maken hem pore that forgoon tho rychesses.  
 O streyte and nedy clepe I this richesse,  
 syn that many folk ne mai nat han it al, ne al  
 mai it nat comen to o man withoute povert  
 of alle othere folk. And the schynyng of  
 gemmes (that I clepe precyous stones) draweth  
 it nat the eighen of folk to hem-ward (that  
 is to seyn, for the beautes)? But certes, yif  
 40 ther were beaute or bountee in the schynyng  
 of stones, thilke clernesse is of the  
 stones hemselfe, and nat of men; for whiche I  
 wondre gretly that men merveylen on swiche  
 thynges. Forwhi what thyng is it that, yif it  
 wanteth moevyng and joynture of soule and  
 body, that by right myghte semen a fair creature  
 to hym that hath a soule of resoun? For  
 al be it so that gemmes drawen to hemself a  
 litel of the laste beaute of the world thurw  
 50 the entente of hir creatour and thurw the  
 distinccioun of hemself, yit, for as mochel  
 as thei ben put under yowr excellence, thei ne  
 han nat desserved by no way that ye schulde  
 merveylen on hem. And the beaute of feeldes,  
 deliteth it nat mochel unto yow?"

Boece. "Why schulde it nat deliten us, syn  
 that it is a [fayr] porcioun of the ryght fair  
 werk (that is to seyn, of this worlde)? And  
 right so ben we gladed somtyme of the  
 60 face of the see whan it es cleer; and also  
 merveylen we on the hevene, and on the  
 sterres, and on the sonne, and on the moone."  
 Philosophie. "Aperteneth," quod sche, "any  
 of thilke thynges to the? Why darstow glorifye  
 the in the shynyng of any swiche thynges?  
 Artow distyngwed and embelysed by the  
 spryngyng floures of the first somer sesoun,  
 or swelleth thi plente in frutes of somer? Whi  
 artow ravyssched with idel joies? Why enbracest  
 70 thow straunge goodes as they weren  
 thyne? Fortune ne schal nevere maken that

swiche thynges ben thyne that nature of thynges  
hath maked foreyne fro the. Soth is that, withouten  
doute, the fruites of the erthe owen to  
be to the norysynge of beestis; and yif thou  
wilt fulfille thyn nede after that it suffiseth to  
nature, thanne is it no nede that thou seke  
aftir the superfluyte of fortune. For [with]  
fewe thynges and with ful litel thynges nature  
80 halt hir apayed; and yif thou wolt  
achoken the fulfillynge of nature with superfluytees,  
certes thilke thynges that thou  
wolt thresten or powren into nature schulle  
ben unjoyeful to the, or elles anoyous. Wenestow  
eek that it be a fair thyng to schyne with  
diverse clothynge? Of whiche clothynge yif the  
beaute be agreeable to loken uppon, I wol  
merveylen on the nature of the matiere of  
thilke clothes, or elles on the werkman that  
90 wroughte hem. But also a long route of  
meyne, maketh that a blisful man? The  
whiche servantz yif thei ben vicyous of condyciouns,  
it is a gret charge and a destruccioun  
to the hous, and a gret enemy to the lord hymself;  
and yif they ben gode men, how schal  
straunge or foreyne goodnesse ben put in the  
nowmbre of thi riches? So that by alle thise  
forseide thynges it es cleerly schewed, that nevere  
oon of thilke thynges that thou acountedest  
100 for thyne goodes nas nat thi good.  
"In the whiche thynges yif ther be no  
beaute to ben desired, why scholdestow ben sorry  
yif thou leese hem, or whi scholdestow rejoysen  
the for to holden hem? For yif thei ben faire  
of hir owene kynde, what aperteneth that to  
the? For al so wel scholde they han ben fayre  
by hemselfe, though thei were departed fro  
alle thyne rychesses. Forwhy fair ne precyous  
were thei nat for that thei comen among  
110 thi rychesses; but for they semeden fair  
and precyous, therfore thou haddest levere  
rekne hem among thi rychesses. But what  
desirestow of Fortune with so greet a noyse

and with so greet [affraie]? I trowe thou seeke  
to dryve away nede with habundaunce of  
thynges, but certes it turneth to you al in the  
contrarie. Forwhy certes it nedeth of ful manye  
helpynges to kepyn the diversite of precious  
ostelementz; and sooth it es that of many  
120 thynges han they nede, that many thynges  
han; and ayenward of litel nedeth hem  
that mesuren hir fille after the nede of kynde,  
and nat after the oultrage of covetyse.

"Is it thanne so, that ye men ne han no propre  
good iset in yow, for whiche ye mooten seke  
outward your goodes in foreyne and subgit  
thynges? So is thanne the condicion of thynges  
turned up-so-doun, that a man, that is a devyne  
beest be meryte of his resoun, thynketh  
130 that hymself nys neyther fair ne noble but  
yif it be thurw possessioun of ostelementz  
that ne han no soules. And certes alle othere  
thynges ben apayed of hir owene beautes, but ye  
men that ben semlable to God by yowr  
resonable thought, desiren to apparailen your  
excellent kynde of the loweste thynges; ne ye  
undirstanden nat how greet a wrong ye don to  
your creatour. For he wolde that mankynde  
were moost wurthy and noble of any  
140 othere erthly thynges, and ye thresten  
adoun yowre dignytes bynethen the loweste  
thynges. For yif that al the good of every  
thyng be more precyous than is thilke thyng  
whos that the good es, syn ye demen that the  
fowleste thynges ben your goodes, thanne  
submitten ye and putten yourselven undir the  
fouleste thynges by your estimacioun; and certes  
this betydeth nat withouten your desert. For  
certes swiche is the condicioun of alle mankynde,  
150 that oonly whan it hath knowynge  
of itself, thanne passeth it in noblesse alle  
othere thynges; and whan it forletith the  
knowynge of itself, thanne is it brought  
bynethen alle beestes. Forwhi alle othere lyvyng  
beestes han of kynde to knowe nat hemself;

but whan that men leeten the knowynge  
 of hemself, it cometh hem of vice. But  
 how broode scheweth the errour and the folie of  
 yow men, that wenen that anythyng mai  
 160 ben apparaild with straunge apparailementz!  
 But forsothe that mai nat be done.

For yif a wyght schyneth with thynges that  
 ben put to hym (as thus, yif thilke thynges  
 schynen with whiche a man is aparayled),  
 certes thilke thynges ben comended and preysed  
 with whiche he is apparayled; but natheles, the  
 thyng that is covered and wrapped under that  
 duelleth in his felthe.

"And I denye that thilke thyng be good  
 170 that anoyeth hym that hath it. Gabbe I of  
 this? Thow wolt sey `nay.' Sertes rychesses  
 han anoyed ful ofte hem that han tho rychesses,  
 syn that every wikkide schrewe -- and for his  
 wikkidnesse the more gredy aftir othir folkes  
 rychesses, wher so evere it be in ony place, be  
 it gold or precyous stones -- [weneth. hym  
 oonly most worthy that hath hem. Thow thanne,  
 that so bysy dredest now the swerd and the  
 spere, yif thou haddest entred in the path  
 180 of this lif a voyde weyfarynge man, thanne  
 woldestow synge byfor the theef. (As  
 who seith, a pore man that bereth no rychesse  
 on hym by the weie may boldely synge byforn  
 theves, for he hath nat whereof to be robbed.)  
 O precyous and rygth cleer is the blisfulnesse of  
 mortel rychesses, that, whan thow hast geten it,  
 thanne hastow lorn thi sekernesse!

"Blisful was the firste age of men. They  
 heelden hem apayed with the metes that the  
 trewe feeldes broughten forth. They ne destroyeden  
 ne desseyvede nat hemself with outrage.  
 They weren wont lyghtly to slaken hir  
 hungir at even with accornes of ookes. They  
 ne coude nat medle the yift of Bachus to the  
 cleer hony (that is to seyn, they coude make  
 no pyement or clarree), ne they coude nat  
 10 medle the bryghte fleeces of the contre of

Seryens with the venym of Tyrie (this  
 to seyn, thei coude nat deyen white fleeces  
 of Syrien contre with the blood of a maner  
 schellefyssche that men fynden in Tirie, with  
 whiche blood men deyen purpre). They  
 slepen holsome slepes uppon the gras, and  
 dronken of the rennyng watres, and layen  
 undir the schadwes of the heye pyn-trees. Ne  
 no gest ne straunger ne karf yit the heye  
 20 see with oores or with schipes; ne thei ne  
 hadden seyn yit none newe stroondes to  
 leden marchandise into diverse contrees. Tho  
 weren the cruele claryouns ful hust and ful  
 stille. Ne blood ischad by egre hate ne hadde  
 nat deyed yit armures. For wherto or which  
 woodnesse of enemys wolde first moeven  
 armes whan thei seyen cruele wowndes, ne  
 none medes be of blood ischad? I wolde that  
 our tymes sholde torne ayen to the oolde  
 30 maneris! But the anguysschous love of  
 havynge brenneth in folk more cruely than  
 the fyer of the mountaigne of Ethna that ay  
 brenneth. Allas! What was he that first dalf  
 up the gobbettes or the weyghtes of gold covered  
 undir erthe and the precyous stones that  
 wolden han be hydd? He dalf up precious  
 periles. (That is to seyn, that he that hem  
 firsst up dalf, he dalf up a precious peril;  
 for-why, for the preciousnesse of swich  
 40 thyng hath many man ben in peril.)  
 "But what schal I seye of dignytes and of  
 powers, the whiche ye men, that neither  
 knowen verray dignyte ne verray powere,  
 areysen hem as heyghe as the hevene? The  
 whiche dignytees and poweres yif thei comen  
 to any wikkid man, thei doon as greet damages  
 and destrucciouns as dooth. the flaumbe  
 of the mountaigne Ethna whan the flaumbe  
 walweth up, ne no deluge ne doth so cruele  
 10 harmes. Certes the remembreth wel, as I  
 trowe, that thilke dignyte that men clepyn  
 the imperie of consulers, the whiche that

whilom was begynnyng of fredom, yowr eldres  
 coveyteden to han don away that dignyte for  
 the pride of the consulers. And ryght for the  
 same pride yowr eldres byforn that tyme hadden  
 doon away out of the cite of Rome the  
 kynges name (that is to seyn, thei nolden han  
 no lengere no kyng).

20 "But now, if so be that dignytees and poweris  
 ben yyven to gode men, the whiche  
 thyng is ful zelde, what aggreable thynges is  
 ther in tho dignytees or powers but oonly the  
 goodnesse of folk that usen hem? And therfore  
 it is thus that honour ne cometh nat to  
 vertu for cause of dygnite, but, ayenward, honour  
 cometh to dignyte for cause of vertu. But  
 whiche is thilke your derworthe power that is  
 so cleer and so requerable? O, ye erthliche  
 30 bestes, considere ye nat over whiche thyng  
 that it semeth that ye han power? Now yif  
 thou saye a mows among othere mysz that chalanged  
 to hymself-ward ryght and power over  
 alle othere mysz, how gret scorn woldestow han  
 of it! (Glosa. So fareth it by men [that the  
 wikkid men have power over the wikkid men;  
 that is to seye], the body hath power over the  
 body.) For yif thou looke wel upon the body of  
 a wyght, what thyng schaltow fynde more  
 40 freele than is mankynde; the whiche men  
 ful ofte ben slayn with bytyng of smale  
 flyes, or elles with the entrynge of crepyng  
 wormes into the pryvetees of mannes body?  
 But wher schal men fynden any man that mai  
 exercen or haunten any ryght upon another  
 man, but oonly on his body, or elles upon  
 thynges that ben lowere than the body, the  
 whiche I clepe fortunous possessiouns? Maystow  
 evere have any comaundement over a free  
 50 corage? Maystowe remuwen fro the estat  
 of his propre reste a thought that is  
 clyvyng togidre in hymself by stedfast resoun?  
 As whilom a tyraunt wende to confownde a fre  
 man of corage, and wende to constreyne hym by

torment to maken hym discoveren and accusen  
 folk that wisten of a conjuracioun (which I clepe  
 a confederacye) that was cast ayens this tyraunt;  
 but this fre man boot of his owene tonge, and  
 caste it in the visage of thilk wode tyraunt.

60 So that the tormentz that this tyraunt  
 wende to han maked matere of cruelte, this  
 wise man maked it matere of vertu. But what  
 thing is it that a man may doon to an other man,  
 that he ne may resceyven the same thyng of  
 other folk in hymself? (Or thus: what may a  
 man don to folk, that folk ne may don hym  
 the same?) I have herd told of Busyrides, that  
 was wont to sleen his gestes that herberweden  
 in his hous, and he was slayn hymself of  
 70 Hercules that was his gest. Regulus hadde  
 taken in bataile manye men of Affryke  
 and cast hem into feteres, but sone after he  
 most yyve hise handes to ben bownde with  
 the cheynes of hem that he hadde whilom  
 overcomen. Wenestow thanne that he be  
 myghty that hath no power to doon a thyng that  
 othere ne mai doon in hym that he doth in  
 othere?

"And yit moreover, yif it so were that  
 80 thise dygnytes or poweris hadden any  
 propre or naturel goodnesse in hemself,  
 nevere nolde they comen to schrewes. For  
 contrarious thynges ne ben nat wont to ben  
 ifelaschiped togydre. Nature refuseth that contrarious  
 thynges ben ijoygned. And so, as I am  
 in certeyn that ryght wykkyd folk han  
 dignytees ofte tyme, thanne scheweth it wel that  
 dignytees and poweres ne ben nat gode of  
 hir owene kynde, syn that they suffren  
 90 hemselfe to cleven or joynen hem to  
 schrewes. And certes the same thyng mai I  
 most digneliche juggen and seyn of alle the  
 yiftes of Fortune that most plenteuously comen  
 to schrewes. Of the whiche yiftes I trowe that it  
 oughte ben considered, that no man douteth that  
 he ne is strong in whom he seeth strengthe; and

in whom that swyftnesse is, sooth it is that he  
 is swyft; also musyke maketh mucisyens, and  
 phisyk maketh phisicyeens, and rethoryke,  
 100 rethoriens. Forwhy the nature of every  
 thyng maketh his proprete, ne it is nat  
 entremedlyd with the effectz of contrarious  
 thynges, and as of wil it chaseth out thynges that  
 to it ben contrarie. But certes rychesse mai nat  
 restreyne avarice unstaunched; ne power ne  
 maketh nat a man myghty over hymselfe,  
 whiche that vicyous lustes holden destreyned  
 with cheynes that ne mowen nat ben  
 unbownden. And dignytees that ben yyven  
 110 to schrewe folk nat oonly ne maketh hem  
 nat digne, but it scheweth rather al opynly  
 that they been unworthy and undigne. And whi  
 is it thus? Certes for ye han joie to clepen  
 thynges with false names, that beren hem al in  
 the contrarie; the whiche names ben ful [ethe]  
 reproved by the effect of the same thynges; so  
 that thise ilke rychesse ne oughten nat by ryghte  
 to ben cleped rychesse, ne swyche power ne  
 aughte nat ben clepyd power, ne swiche  
 120 dignyte ne aughte nat ben clepyd dignyte.  
 And at the laste, I may conclude the same  
 thyng of alle the yyftes of Fortune, in whiche  
 ther nys nothyng to ben desired, ne that hath in  
 hymselfe naturel bownte, as it es ful wel yseene.  
 For neither thei ne joygnen hem nat alwey to  
 gode men, ne maken hem alwey gode to whom  
 they been ijoynd.

"We han wel knownen how many grete harmes  
 and destrucciouns weren idoon by the emperour  
 Nero. He leet brennen the cite of Rome,  
 and made sleen the senatours; and he cruel  
 whilom sloughe his brothir, and he was maked  
 moyst with the blood of his modir (that is to  
 seyn, he leet sleen and slitten the body of his  
 modir to seen wher he was conceyved); and he  
 lookede on every halve uppon hir cold  
 10 deed body, ne no teer ne wette his face,  
 but he was so hardherted that he myghte



ben domesman or juge of hir dede beaute. And  
 natheles yit governed this Nero by septre alle  
 the peples that Phebus, the sonne, may seen,  
 comynge fro his uttreste arysynge til he hide  
 his bemes undir the wawes. (That is to seyn  
 he governede al the peples by ceptre imperial  
 that the sonne goth aboute from est to west.)  
 And ek this Nero governyde by ceptre alle  
 20 the peples that ben undir the colde sterres  
 that lighten the septemtryones. (This is  
 to seyn he governede alle the peples that ben  
 under the partye of the north.) And eek Nero  
 governede alle the peples that the vyolent  
 wynd Nothus scorklith, and baketh the brennyng  
 sandes by his drye heete (that is to seyn,  
 al the peples in the south). But yit ne myghte  
 nat al his heie power torne the woodnesse of  
 this wikkid Nero? Allas! It is grevous fortune  
 30 as ofte as wikkid sweerd is joyned to  
 cruel venym (that is to seyn, venymows  
 cruelte to lordschipe)."

Thanne seyde I thus: "Thow woost wel thiselve  
 that the covetise of mortel thynges ne  
 hadde nevere lordschipe of me, but I have wel  
 desired matere of thynges to done (as who  
 seith, I desirede to have matiere of governaunce  
 over comunalites), for vertue stille sholde nat  
 elden (that is to seyn, that list that or he  
 waxe oold, his vertu, that lay now ful stille, ne  
 schulde nat perysshe unexercised in  
 10 governaunce of comune, for whiche men  
 myghten speken or wryten of his gode  
 gouvernement)."

Philosophie. "For sothe," quod sche, "and  
 that is [o] thyng that mai drawen to governaunce  
 swiche hertes as ben worthy and noble of hir  
 nature, but natheles it may nat drawen or tollen  
 swiche hertes as ben ibrought to the ful perfeccioun  
 of vertue; that is to seyn, covetise of  
 glorie and renoun to han wel adminystred  
 20 the comune thynges, or doon gode desertes  
 to profyt of the comune. For see now

and considere how litel and how voyde of alle  
prys is thylk glorye. Certeyn thyng es, as thou  
hast leerned by the demonstracioun of astronomye,  
that al the envyrounyng of the erthe  
aboute ne halt but the resoun of a prykke at  
regard of the gretnesse of hevene; that is to  
seyn that, yif ther were maked comparysoun of  
the erthe to the gretnesse of hevene, men  
30 wolde juggen in al that the erthe ne heelde  
no space. Of the whiche litel regioun of  
this world, the ferthe partye is enhabited with  
lyvyng beestes that we knowen, as thou hast  
thyselve leerned by Tholome that proveth it.  
And yif thow haddest withdrawen and abated  
in thy thought fro thilke ferthe partie as moche  
space as the see and the mareys contene and  
overgoon, and as moche space as the regioun  
of drowghte overstreccheth (that is to  
40 seyn, sandes and desertes), wel unnethe  
sholde ther duellen a ryght streyte place to the  
habitacioun of men. And ye thanne, that ben  
envyrouned and closed withynne the leeste  
prykke of thilke prykke, thynken ye to manyfesten  
or publisschen your renoun and doon  
yowr name for to be born forth? But yowr  
glorye that is so narwe and so streyt ithrungen  
into so litel bowndes, how mochel conteneth it  
in largesse and in greet doynge? And also  
50 set this therto: that manye a nacioun, diverse  
of tonge and of maneris and ek of resoun  
of hir lyvyng, ben enhabited in the cloos  
of thilke lytel habitacle; to the whiche nacyons,  
what for difficulte of weyes, and what for diversite  
of langages, and what for defaute of  
unusage [of] entrecomunynge of marchandise,  
nat oonly the names of synguler men ne may  
nat strecchen, but eek the fame of citees ne  
may nat strecchen. At the laste, certes, in  
60 the tyme of Marcus Tulyus, as hymselfe  
writ in his book, that the renoun of the  
comune of Rome ne hadde nat yit passid ne  
clomben over the montaigne that highte Caucasus;

and yit was thilke tyme Rome wel waxen,  
and greetly redouted of the Parthes and eek of  
the othere folk enhabitynge aboute. Seestow  
nat thanne how streyte and how compressid is  
thilke glorie that ye travailen aboute to schewe  
and to multeplie? May thanne the glorie  
70 of a synguler Romeyn stretchen thider  
as the fame of the name of Rome may nat  
clymben ne passen? And ek seestow nat that the  
maneris of diverse folk and ek hir lawes ben  
discordaunt among hemselfe, so that thilke  
thyng that som men juggen worthy of preysynge,  
other folk juggen that it is worthy of torment?  
And therof comyth it that, though a  
man delyte hym in preysynge of his renoun, he  
ne mai nat in no wyse bryngen forthe ne  
80 spreden his name to many manere peples.  
And therefore every maner man aughte to  
ben apayed of his glorie that is publysschid among  
his owene neygheours; and thilke noble renoun  
schal ben restreyned withynne the boundes of  
o manere folk.  
"But how many a man, that was ful noble in  
his tyme, hath the wrecchid and nedy foryetynge  
of writeris put out of mynde and doon away; al  
be it so that, certes, thilke wrytynges  
90 profiten litel, the whiche wrytynges long  
and dirk eelde doth away, bothe hem and  
ek hir auctours! But yow men semeth to geten  
yow a perdurablete, whan ye thynken that in  
tyme comynge your fame schal lasten. But  
natheles yif thow wolt maken comparysoun to  
the endles spaces of eternyte, what thyng hastow  
by whiche thow mayst rejoisen the of long  
lastynge of thi name? For yif ther were makyd  
comparysoun of the abydyng of a moment  
100 to ten thowsand wynter, for as mochel as  
bothe tho spaces ben endyd, [yit] hath the  
moment som porcioun of it, although it litel be.  
But natheles thilke selve nowmbre of yeeris, and  
eek as many yeris as therto mai be multiplyed, ne  
mai nat certes be comparysoned to the

perdurablete that is endlees; for of thinges that  
 han ende may ben maked comparysoun, but of  
 thynges that ben withouten ende to thynges that  
 han ende may be makid no comparysoun.

110 And forthi is it that, although renome, of as  
 longe tyme as evere the list to thynken,  
 were thought to the regard of eternyte, that is  
 unstaunchable and infynyt, it ne sholde nat only  
 semen litel, but pleyntliche ryght noght.

"But ye men, certes, ne konne doon no thyng  
 aryght, but yif it be for the audience of peple and  
 for idel rumours; and ye forsaken the grete  
 worthynesse of conscience and of vertu, and ye  
 seeken yowr gerdouns of the smale wordes

120 of straunge folk. Have now here and  
 undirstand, in the lyghtnesse of swiche  
 pryde and veyne glorye, how a man scornede  
 festyvaly and myriely swich vanyte. Whilom ther  
 was a man that hadde [assailed] with stryvynge  
 wordes another man, the whiche, nat for usage  
 of verray vertu but for proud veyn glorie, had  
 taken upon hym falsly the name of a philosophre.

This rather man that I spak of thoughte  
 he wolde assaie where he, thilke, were a  
 130 philosophre or no; that is to seyn, yif that  
 he wolde han suffride lyghtly in pacience  
 the wronges that weren doon unto hym. This  
 feynede philosophre took pacience a litel while;  
 and whan he hadde resceyved wordes of  
 outrage, he, as in stryvynge ayen and rejoysynge  
 of hymself, seide at the laste ryght thus: `undirstondistow  
 nat that I am a philosophre?' The  
 tother man answerede ayen ful bytyngely and  
 seyde: `I hadde wel undirstonden it yif thou  
 140 haddest holde thi tonge stille.'

"But what is it to thise noble worthy men  
 (for, certes, of swych folk speke I) that seken  
 glorie with vertue? What is it?" quod sche.

"What atteyneth fame to swiche folk, whan the  
 body is resolved by the deeth at the laste? For if  
 it so be that men dyen in all (that is to seyn,  
 body and soule), the whiche thing our reson

defendeth us to byleeven, thanne is ther no  
 glorie in no wyse; for what schulde thilke  
 150 glorie ben, whan he, of whom thilke glorie  
 is seyde to be, nys ryght naught in no wise?  
 And yif the soule, whiche that hath in itself  
 science of gode werkes, unbownden fro the  
 prysone of the erthe, weendeth frely to the  
 hevene, despiseth it nat thanne al erthly  
 ocupacioun; and [usynge] hevene rejoyseth that  
 it is exempt fro alle erthly thynges? (As who  
 seith, thanne rekketh the soule of no glorye of  
 renoun of this world.)

"Whoso that with overthrowng thought  
 oonly seketh glorie of fame, and weneth that  
 it be sovereyn good, lat hym looke upon the  
 brode schewyng contrees of the hevene, and  
 upon the streyte sete of this erthe; and he schal  
 be asschamed of the encres of his name, that  
 mai nat fulfille the litel compas of the erthe.  
 O, what coveyten proude folk to lyften up hir  
 nekkes on idel in the dedly yok of this  
 10 world? For although that renoun ysprad,  
 passynge to ferne peples, goth by diverse  
 tonges; and although that greet houses or  
 kynredes shynen with cleer titles of honours;  
 yit natheles deth despiseth al heye glorie of  
 fame, and deth wrappeth togidre the heyghe  
 heved and the lowe, and maketh egal and  
 evene the heygheste to the loweste. Where  
 wonen now the bones of trewe Fabricius?  
 What is now Brutus or stierne Catoun? The  
 20 thynne fame yit lastynge of here idel names  
 is marked with a fewe lettres. But althoughe  
 that we han knowen the fayre wordes  
 of the fames of hem, it is nat yyven to knowen  
 hem that ben dede and consumpt. Liggeth  
 thanne stille, al outrely unknowable, ne fame  
 ne maketh yow nat knowe. And yif ye wene to  
 lyve the lengere for wynd of yowr mortel name  
 whan o cruel day schal ravyssche yow, than is  
 the seconde deth duellynge unto yow."  
 30 (Glose. The first deeth he clepeth here departynge

of the body and the soule, and  
the seconde deth he clepeth as here the styntyng  
of the renoun of fame.)

"But for as mochel as thow schalt nat  
wenen," quod sche, "that I bere an untretable  
batayle ayens Fortune, yit somtyme it byfalleth  
that sche desceyvable desserveth to han ryght  
good thank of men. And that is whan sche herself  
opneth, and whan sche discovereth hir  
frownt and scheweth hir maneris. Peraventure  
yit undirstandestow nat that I schal seie. It is  
a wonder that I desire to telle, and forthi  
10 unnethe may I unplyten my sentence with  
wordes. For I deme that contrarious Fortune  
profiteth more to men than Fortune debonayre.  
For alwey, whan Fortune semeth debonayre,  
thanne sche lieth, falsly byhetyng the  
hope of welefulnesse; but forsothe contraryous  
Fortune is alwey sothfast, whan sche scheweth  
herself unstable thurw hir chaungyng. The  
amyable Fortune desceyveth folk; the contrarie  
Fortune techeth. The amyable Fortune  
20 byndeth with the beaute of false goodes  
the hertes of folk that usen hem: the contrarye  
Fortune unbyndeth hem by the knowyng  
of freel welefulnesse. The amyable Fortune  
maystow seen alwey wyndy and flowyng,  
and evere mysknowyng of herself; the contrarie  
Fortune is atempre and restreyned and  
wys thurw exercise of hir adversite. At the  
laste, amyable Fortune with hir flatterynges  
draweth myswandryng men fro the sovereyne  
30 good; the contrarious Fortune ledeth  
ofte folk ayen to sothfast goodes, and  
haleth hem ayen as with an hook. Wenestow  
thanne that thow aughtest to leeten this a litel  
thyng, that this aspre and horrible Fortune  
hath discovered to the the thoughtes of thi  
trewe freendes? Forwhy this ilke Fortune hath  
departed and uncovered to the bothe the certein  
visages and eek the doutous visages of thi  
felawes. Whan she departed away fro the,

40 she took away hir freendes and lefte the  
thyne freendes. Now whanne thow were  
ryche and weleful, as the semede, with how  
mochel woldestow han bought the fulle knowynge  
of thys (that is to seyn, the knowynge of  
thyne verray freendes)? Now pleyne the nat  
thanne of rychesse ylorn, syn thow hast  
fownden the moste precyous kynde of rychesse,  
that is to seyn, thi verray freendes.

"That the world with stable feyth varieth  
accordable chaungynges; that the contrarious  
qualites of elementz holden among hemself  
allyaunce perdurable; that Phebus, the sonne,  
with his goldene chariet bryngeth forth the  
rosene day; that the moone hath comaundement  
over the nyghtes, whiche nyghtes Esperus,  
the eve-sterre, hath brought; that the  
see, gredy to flowen, constreyneth with a  
10 certain eende his floodes, so that it is nat  
leveful to strecche his brode termes or  
bowndes uppon the erthes (that is to seyn, to  
coveren al the erthe) -- al this accordaunce  
[and] ordenaunce of thynges is bounde with  
love, that governeth erthe and see, and hath also  
comandement to the hevene. And yif this love  
slakede the bridelis, alle thynges that now loven  
hem togidres wolden make batayle contynuely,  
and stryven to fordo the fassoun of this  
20 world, the which they now leden in  
accordable feith by fayre moevynges. This  
love halt togidres peples joyned with an holy  
boond, and knytteth sacrament of mariages of  
chaste loves; and love enditeth lawes to trewe  
felawes. O weleful were mankynde, yif thilke  
love that governeth hevene governede yowr  
corages."



## BOOK 3

By this sche hadde ended hir song, whan the  
 swetnesse of here dite hadde thurw-perced me,  
 that was desyrus of herknyng, and I astoned  
 hadde yit streyghte myn eres (that is to seyn, to  
 herkne the bet what sche wolde seye). So that  
 a litel hereafter I seide thus: "O thow that art  
 sovereyne confort of angwyssous corages, so  
 thow hast remounted and norysshed me with  
 the weyghte of thi sentences and with delyt  
 10 of thy syngynge; so that I trowe nat  
 now that I be unparygal to the strokes of  
 Fortune (as who seith, I dar wel now suffren  
 alle the assautes of Fortune and wel defende  
 me fro hir). And tho remedies whiche that  
 thou seydest herbyforn that weren ryght  
 scharpe, nat oonly that I ne am nat agrisen of  
 hem now, but I, desiros of herynge, axe gretly  
 to heren tho remedies."

Thanne seyde sche thus: "That feeled I  
 20 ful wel," quod sche, "whan that thow ententyf  
 and stille ravysschedest my wordes,  
 and I abood til that thou haddest swich habite  
 of thi thought as thou hast now, or elles til that  
 I myself hadde maked to the the same habite,  
 whiche that is a more verray thyng. And certes  
 the remenant of thynges that ben yet to seie  
 ben swiche that first whan men tasten hem they  
 ben bytyng; but whan they ben resceyved  
 withynne a wyght, thanne ben thei swete.  
 30 But for thou seyst that thow art so desyrus  
 to herkne hem, with how greet brennyng  
 woldestow glowen, yif thow wistest whider I  
 wol leden the!"

"Whider is that?" quod I.

"To thilke verraye welefulnesse," quod sche,  
 "of whiche thyn herte dremeth. but forasmoche  
 as thi syghte is occupyed and destourbed by  
 imagynacioun of erthly thynges, thow mayst  
 nat yit seen thilke selve welefulnesse."

40 "Do," quod I, "and schewe me what is



thilke verray welefulnesse, I preie the,  
withoute taryinge."

"That wol I gladly do," quod sche, "for the  
cause of the. But I wol first marken the by  
woordes, and I wol enforcen me to enforme the,  
thilke false cause of blisfulnesse that thou more  
knowest; so that whanne thou hast fully byhoolden  
thilke false goodes and torned thin  
eighen to the tother syde, thou mowe  
50 knowe the cleernesse of verray blisfulnesse.

"Whoso wole sowe a feld plenteuous, let hym  
first delyvren it of thornes, and kerve asondir  
with his hook the bussches and the feern, so  
that the corn may comen hevy of erys and of  
greynes. Hony is the more swete, if mouthes  
han first tasted savours that ben wykke. The  
sterres schynen more aggreablely whan the  
wynd Nothus leteth his plowngy blastes; and  
aftir that Lucifer, the day-sterre, hath  
10 chased away the dirke nyght, the day the  
fairere ledeth the rosene hors (of the  
sonne). And ryght so thou, byhooldyng ferst the  
false goodes, bygyn to withdrawe thy nekke  
fro the yok (of erthely affeccions); and  
afterward the verray goodes schullen entren into  
thy corage."

Tho fastnede sche a litel the syghte of hir  
eyen, and withdrowghe hir ryght as it were into  
the streyte seete of here thought, and bygan to  
speke ryght thus: "Alle the cures," quod sche,  
"of mortel folk, whiche that travailen hem in  
many manere studies, gon certes by diverse  
weyes; but natheles thei enforcen hem alle to  
comyn oonly to oon ende of blisfulnesse. And  
blisfulnesse is swiche a good, that whoso  
10 that hath geten it, he ne may over that  
nothyng more desire. And this thyng forsothe  
is the soverayn good that conteneth in  
hymself alle maner goodes; to the whiche goode  
if ther fayled any thyng, it myghte nat ben  
sovereyn good, for thanne wer ther som good  
out of thilke sovereyn good, that myghte ben

desired. Now is it cleer and certeyne thanne,  
that blisfulnesse is a parfyt estat by the congregacioun  
of alle goodes; the whiche blisfulnesse,  
20 as I have seyde, alle mortel folk enforcen  
hem to geten by diverse weyes.

Forwhy the covetise of verray good is naturely  
iplauntyd in the hertes of men, but the myswandrynge  
errour mysledeth hem into false

goodes. Of the whiche men, some of hem  
wenen that sovereyn good be to lyven withoute  
nede of any thyng, and travaylen hem to ben  
habundaunt of rychesses. And some othere  
men demen that sovereyn good be for to be

30 ryght digne of reverence, and enforcen  
hem to ben revered among hir neyghbours  
by the honours that thei han igeten. And  
some folk ther ben that holden that ryght heye  
power be sovereyn good, and enforcen hem for  
to reighen or elles to joygnen hem to hem that  
reighen. And it semeth to some other folk, that  
noblesse of renoun be the sovereyn good, and  
hasten hem to geten hem gloryouse name by the  
artz of werre or of pees. And many folk

40 mesuren and gessen that the sovereyne  
good be joye and gladnesse, and wenen  
that it be ryght blisful thyng to plowngen hem  
in voluptuous delyt. And ther ben folk that  
entrechaungen the causes and the endes of  
thise forseide goodes, as they that desiren  
rychesses to han power and delitz, or elles they  
desiren power for to have moneye or for cause  
of renoun. In thise thynges and in swiche other  
thynges is torned al the entencioun of desyrynges  
50 and werkes of men; as thus:

noblesse and favour of peple, whiche that  
yyveth to men, as it semeth hem, a maner  
cleernesse of renoun; and wyf and children,  
that men desiren for cause of delyt and myrnesse.

But forsothe freendes ne schulde nat ben  
rekned among the goodes of fortune, but of  
vertu, for it is a ful hooly maner thyng; alle  
thise othere thinges forsothe ben taken for

cause of power or elles for cause of delyt.  
60 Certes now am I redy to referren the  
goodes of the body to thise forseide thynges  
aboven; for it semeth that strengthe and gretnesse  
of body yyven power and worthynesse,  
and that beaute and swyftnesse yyven noblesse  
and glorie of renoun; and heele of body semeth  
yyven delyt. In alle thise thynges it semeth  
oonly that blisfulnesse is desyred; forwhy thilk  
thing that every man desireth moost over alle  
thynges he demeth that it be the sovereyn  
70 good; but I have diffyned that blisfulnesse  
is the sovereyn good; for whiche every  
wyght demeth that thilke estat that he desireth  
over alle thynges, that it be blisfulnesse.  
"Now hastow thanne byforn thyne eien almost  
al the purposede forme of the welefulnesse  
of mankynde: that is to seyn rychesses,  
honours, power, glorie, and delitz. The whiche  
delit oonly considered Epicurus, and juggid  
and establissyde that delyt is the soverayn  
80 good, for as moche as alle othere thynges,  
as hym thoughte, byrefte away joye and  
myrthe from the herte. But I retorne ayen to  
the studies of men, of whiche men the corage  
alwey reherceth and seketh the sovereyne good,  
al be it so that it be with a dyrkyd memorie;  
but he not by whiche path, ryght as a dronke  
man not nat by whiche path he may retourne  
hom to his hous. Semeth it thanne that folk  
foleyen and erren, that enforcen hem to  
90 have nede of nothyng? Certes ther nys  
noon other thyng that mai so wel performe  
blisfulnesse, as an estat plentevous of alle godes,  
that ne hath nede of noon other thyng, but  
that it is suffisant of hymself unto hymself.  
And foleyen swiche folk, thanne, that wenen  
that thilk thyng that is ryght good, that it be  
eek ryght worthy of honour and of reverence?  
Certes, nay. For that thyng nis neither foul ne  
worthy to ben despysed that wel neyghe al  
100 the entencioun of mortel folk [travayleth.

for to geten it. And power, aughte nat that  
 ek to ben rekned amonge goodes? What elles?  
 For it nys nat to wene that thilke thyng that is  
 most worthy of alle thynges be feble and  
 withoute strengthe. And cleernesse of renoun,  
 aughte that to ben despysed? Certes ther may no  
 man forsake, that alle thyng that is right  
 excellent and noble, that it ne semeth to ben  
 ryght cleer and renommed. For certes it  
 110 nedeth nat to saie that blisfulnesse be  
 [n'] [angwyssous] ne drery, ne subgit to  
 grevaunces ne to sorwes; syn that in ryght litele  
 thynges folk seken to haven and to usen that may  
 delyten hem. Certes thise ben the thynges that  
 men wolen and desiren to geten, and for this  
 cause desiren they rychesses, dignytes, reignes,  
 glorie, and delices; for therby wenen they to  
 han suffysaunce, honour, power, renoun, and  
 gladnesse. Thanne is it good that men  
 120 seken thus, by so manye diverse studies; in  
 whiche desir it mai lyghtly be schewyd how  
 greet is the strengthe of nature. For how so that  
 men han diverse sentences and discordynge,  
 algates men accorden alle in lovyng the eende  
 of good.

"It liketh me to schewe by subtil soong, with  
 slakke and delytable sown of strenges, how  
 that Nature, myghty, enclyneth and flytteth the  
 governmentz of thynges, and by whiche lawes  
 sche, purveiable, kepith the grete world; and  
 how sche, byndynge, restreyneth alle thynges  
 by a boond that may nat be unbownde. Al be  
 it so that the lyouns of the contre of Pene beren  
 the fayre chaynes, and taken metes of the  
 10 handes of folk that yeven it hem, and  
 dreden hir stourdy [maistre] of whiche thei  
 ben wont to suffre betynges; yif that hir horrible  
 mouthes ben bybled (that is to seyn, of  
 beestes devoured), hir corage of tyme passed,  
 that hath ben idel and rested, repeireth ayen,  
 and thei roren grevously, and remembren on  
 hir nature, and slaken hir nekkes from hir

cheynes unbownde; and hir mayster fyrst,  
totorn with bloody tooth, assaieth the wode  
20 wratthes of hem (this to seyn, thei freten  
hir maister). And the janglynge brid that  
syngeth on the heghe braunches (that is to  
seyn, in the wode), and after is enclosed in a  
streyte cage, althoughe that the pleyinge bysynes  
of men yeveth [hym] honyed drynkes and large  
metes with swete studye, yit natheles yif thilke  
bryd skippynge out of hir streyte cage seith the  
agreables schadwes of the wodes, sche defouleth  
with hir feet hir metes ischad, and seketh  
30 mornynge oonly the wode, and twytereth  
desyrynge the wode with hir swete voys.  
The yerde of a tree, that is haled adoun by  
myghty strengthe, boweth redily the crop  
adown; but yif that the hand of hym that it bente  
leet it goon ageyn, anoon the crop loketh upryght  
to hevene. The sonne, Phebus, that falleth  
at even in the westrene wawes, retorneth  
ayen eftsones his cart, by a pryve path, there  
as it is wont t' aryse. Alle thynges seken  
40 ayen to hir propre cours, and alle thynges  
rejoysen hem of hir retornynge ayen to  
hir nature. Ne noon ordenaunce is bytaken to  
thynges, but that that hath joyned the endynge  
to the bygynnyng, and hath maked the cours  
of itself stable (that it chaunge nat from his  
propre kynde).

"Certes also ye men, that ben erthliche  
beestes, dremen alwey your bygynnyng, althoughe  
it be with a thynne ymaginacioun; and  
by a maner thought, al be it nat clerly ne parfitely,  
ye loken from afer to thilke verray fyn of  
blisfulnesse. And therfore naturel entencioun  
ledeth yow to thilke verray good, but many  
maner errors mystorneth yow therfro. Considere  
now yif that by thilke thynges by  
10 whiche a man weneth to geten hym blisfulnesse,  
yif that he mai comen to thilk ende  
that he weneth to come by nature. For yif that  
moneye, or honours, or thise othere forseide

thynges, brynge to men swiche a thyng that no  
good ne fayle hem ne semeth faile, certes  
thanne wol I graunte that they ben maked blisful  
by thilke thynges that thei han geten. But  
yif so be that thilke thynges ne mowen nat performen  
that they byheten, and that there

20 be defaute of manye goodis, scheweth it  
nat thanne clerly that false beute of blysfulnesse  
is knowen and ataynt in thilke thynges?

First and forward thow thiself, that haddest  
haboundances of rychesses nat longe agoon, I  
aske the yif that, in the habowndance of alle  
thilke rychesses, thow were nevere angwysous  
ne sory in thy corage of any wrong or grevance  
that bytydde the on any side?"

"Certes," quod I, "it ne remembreth me

30 nat that evere I was so fre of my thought  
that I ne was alwey in angwyse of somewhat."

"And was nat that," quod sche, "for that the  
lakkide somewhat that thow noldest nat han  
lakkid, or elles thou haddest that thow noldest  
nat han had?"

"Ryght so is it," quod I.

"Than desiredest thow the presence of the  
toon and the absence of the tothir?"

40 "I graunte wel," quod I.

"Forsothe," quod sche, "thanne nedeth  
ther somewhat that every man desireth?"

"Yee, ther nedeth," quod I.

"Certes," quod sche, "and he that hath lak or  
nede of aught nys nat in every wey suffisant to  
hymself?"

"No," quod I.

"And thow," quod sche, "in al the plente of  
thy riches haddest thilke lakke of suffisaunce?"

"What elles?" quod I.

"Thanne mai nat riches maken that a man  
nys nedy, ne that he be suffisaunt to hymself;  
and yit that was it that thei byhighten, as it  
semeth. And eek certes I trow that this be  
gretly to considere, that moneye ne hath nat in  
his owene kynde that it ne mai ben bynomen

of hem that han it, maugre hem."

"I byknowe it wel," quod I.

60 "Whi sholdestow nat byknowen it,"

quod sche, "whan every day the strengere  
folk bynynmen it fro the feblere maugre hem?  
For whennes comen elles alle thise [forense]  
compleyntes or quereles of pledynges but  
for that men axen ayen hir moneye that hath  
ben bynomen hem by force or by gyle, and  
alwey maugre hem?"

"Right so is it," quod I.

"Than," quod sche, "hath a man nede to  
70 seken hym foreyne help by whiche he may  
defenden his moneye?"

"Who mai seie nay?" quod I.

"Certes," quod sche, "and hym nedide noon  
help yif he ne hadde no moneye that he myghte  
leese."

"That is douteles," quod I.

"Than is this thyng torned into the contrarie,"  
quod sche; "for rychesses, that men  
wenen scholde maken suffisaunce, they  
80 maken a man rather have nede of foreyne  
help. Whiche is the maner or the gyse,"  
quod sche, "that rychesse mai dryve away  
nede? Riche folk, mai they neyther han hungir  
ne thurst? Thise riche men, may they fele no  
cold on hir lymes in wynter? But thow wolt  
answeren that ryche men han inoghe wherwith  
thei mai staunchen hir hungir, and slaken hir  
thurst, and don away cold. In this wise mai  
nede be confortd by riches, but certes  
90 nede ne mai nat al outrely be doon away;  
for thoughe this nede that is alwey gapynge  
and gredy, be fulfild with riches, and axe any  
thyng, yit duelleth thanne a nede that myghte be  
fulfild. I holde me stille and telle nat how that  
litel thyng suffiseth to nature; but certes to  
avarice inowghe ne suffiseth nothyng. For syn  
that rychesse ne mai nat al doon away nede, but  
richesses maken nede, what mai it thanne be that  
ye wenen that riches mowen yyven yow

100 suffisaunce?

"Al weere it so that a riche coveytous man  
hadde a ryver or a goter fletynge al of gold, yit  
sholde it nevere staunchen his covetise; and  
thoughe he hadde his nekke charged with precyous  
stones of the Rede See, and thoughe he  
do ere his feeldes plentevous with an hundred  
oxen, nevere ne schal his bytynge bysynesse  
forleeten hym whil he lyveth, ne the lyghte  
richesses ne schal nat beren hym companye  
10 whan he is deed.

"But dignytees, to whom thei ben comen,  
make they hym honourable and reverent? Han  
thei nat so gret strengthe that thei mai putten  
vertus in the hertes of folk that usen the lordschipes  
of hem, or elles may they don away the  
vices? Certes thei ben nat wont to don away  
wikkidnesse, but thei ben wont rather to  
schewen wykkydnesse. And therof cometh it  
that Y have right gret disdayn that dignytes  
10 ben yyven ofte to wikkide men. For  
which thyng Catullus clepid a consul of  
Rome that hyghte Nonyus 'postum' or 'boch'  
(as who seith, he clepid hym a congregacioun  
of vices in his brest, as a postum is ful of corrupcioun),  
al were this Nonyus set in chayere  
of dygnite. Sestow nat thanne how grete  
vylenye dignytes don to wikkide men? Certes  
unworthynesse of wikkide men schulde ben the  
lesse isene if thei neere renommed of none  
20 honours. Certes thou thiself ne myghtest  
nat ben broght, with as many perils as  
thow myghtest suffren, that thow woldest beren  
the magistrat with Decorat (that is to seyn,  
that for no peril that myghte byfallen the by  
offence of the kyng Theodorik, thou noldest nat  
be felawe in governaunce with Decorat), whan  
thow seye that he hadde wikkide corage of a  
likerous schrewe and of an accusour. Ne I ne  
mai nat for swiche honours juggen hem  
30 worthy of reverence that I deme and holde  
unworthy to han thilke same honours.



Now yif thou seie a man that were fulfild of  
 wysdom, certes thou ne myghtest nat deme  
 that he were unworthy to the honour or elles  
 to the wisdom of whiche he is fulfild?"

"No," quod I.

"Certes dignytees," quod sche, "aperteignen  
 properly to vertu, and vertu transporteth dignyte  
 anoon to thilke man to whiche sche

40 himself is conjoined. And for as moche as  
 honours of peple ne mai nat maken folk  
 digne of honour, it is wel seyn cleerly that thei  
 ne han no propre beaute of dignyte. And yet  
 men aughten taken more heede in this. For yif  
 a wykkyd wyght be in so mochel the fowlere  
 and the more outcast that he is despysed of  
 moost folk, so as dignyte ne mai nat maken  
 schrewes worthy of no reverence, the whiche  
 schrewes dignyte scheweth to moche folk;  
 50 than maketh dignyte schrewes rather so  
 much more despised than preysed, and  
 forsothe nat unpunyssched (that is for to seyn  
 that schrewes revengen hem ayenward uppon  
 dignytes), for thei yelden ayen to dignytees  
 as greet gerdoun, whan they byspotten and  
 defoulen dignytes with hir vylenye. And for as  
 mochel as thou now knowe that thilke verray  
 reverence ne mai nat comen by thise schadwy  
 transitorie dignytes, undirstond now thus:

60 yif that a man hadde used and had manye  
 maner dignytees of consules, and weere  
 comen peraventure among straunge nacions,  
 scholde thilke honour maken hym worschipful  
 and redouted of straunge folk? Certes yif  
 that honour of peple were a natureel yifte to  
 dignytes, it ne myghte nevere cesen nowhere  
 amonges no maner folk to don his office; right  
 as fyer in every contre ne stynteth nat to  
 eschaufen and to ben hoot. But for as  
 70 mochel as for to be holden honorable or  
 reverent ne cometh nat to folk of hir  
 propre strengthe of nature, but oonly of the false  
 opynyoun of folk (that is to seyn, that weenen

that dignytees maken folk digne of honour),  
 anon therfore, whan that thei comen there as  
 folk ne knowen nat thilke dignytees, hir honours  
 vanysschen away, and that anon. But that is  
 amonges straunge folk, maystow seyn. Ne  
 amonges hem ther thei weren born, ne  
 80 duren nat thilke dignytes alwey? Certes the  
 dignyte of the provostrye of Rome was  
 whilom a greet power; now nys it no thyng but  
 an idel name, and the rente of the senatorie a  
 greet charge; and yif a wyght whilom hadde the  
 office to taken heede to the vitayles of the peple,  
 as of corn and othere thynges, he was holden  
 amonges grete; but what thyng is now more  
 outcast than thilke provostrye? And, as I have  
 seyde a litel herebyfore, that thilke thyng  
 90 that hath no propre beute of hymself  
 resceyveth somtyme prys and schynyng,  
 and somtyme leeseth it, by the opinyoun of  
 usaunces. Now yif that dignytes thanne ne  
 mowen nat make folk digne of reverence, and if  
 that dignytees waxen foule of hir wil by the  
 filthe of schrewes, and yif dignytees leesen hir  
 schynyng by chaungyng of tymes, and yif thei  
 waxen foule by estimacion of peple, what is it  
 that they han in hemself of beaute that  
 100 oughte ben desired? (As who seith noon;  
 thanne ne mowen they yeven no beute of  
 dignyte to noone othere.)

"Al be it so that the proude Nero, with al his  
 wode luxure, kembde hym and apparayled  
 hym with faire purpres of Tyrie and with white  
 peerles, algates yit throf he haatful to alle folk  
 (this is to seyn that, al was he byhated of alle  
 folk, yit this wikkide Nero hadde gret lordschipe),  
 and yaf whilom to the reverentz senatours  
 the unworschipful seetis of dignytees.  
 (Unworschipful seetes he clepeth here, for that  
 10 Nero, that was so wikkide, yaf tho dignytees.)  
 Who wolde thanne resonably  
 wenen that blisfulnesse were in swiche honours  
 as ben yyven by vycious schrewes?

"But regnes, and familiarites of kynges, mai  
thei maken a man to ben myghti? How elles,  
whan hir blisfulnesse dureth perpetuely? But  
certes the olde age of tyme passed, and ek the  
present tyme now, is ful of ensaumples how  
that kynges han chaungyd into wrecchidnesse  
out of hir welefulnesse. O, a noble thyng and  
a cleer thyng is power, that is nat fownden  
myghty to kepe itself! And yif that power  
10 of remes be auctour and makere of blisfulnesse,  
yif thilke power lakketh on any syde,  
amenueth it nat thilke blisfulnesse and bryngeth  
in wrecchidnesse? But yit, al be it so that  
the remes of mankynde stretchen broode, yit  
moot ther nede ben moche folk over whiche  
that every kyng ne hath no lordschipe ne  
comaundement. And certes uppon thilke syde  
that power fayleth, whiche that maketh folk blisful,  
ryght on that same syde noun-power  
20 entreth undirnethe, that maketh hem  
wrecches. In this manere thanne moten  
kynges han more porcioun of wrecchidnesse  
than of welefulnesse. A tyraunt, that was kyng  
of Sysile, that hadde assayed the peril of his  
estat, schewede by simylitude the dredes of  
remes by gastnesse of a swerd that heng over  
the heved of his familyer. What thyng is  
thanne this power, that mai nat done away the  
bytynges of bysynesse, ne eschewe the  
30 prykkes of drede? And certes yit wolde  
thei lyven in sykernesse, but thei may nat,  
and yit they glorifien hem in hir power. Holdestow  
thanne that thilke man be mighty, that  
thow seest that he wolde doon that he may nat  
done? And holdestow thanne hym a myghti  
man, that hath envyrowned his sydes with men  
of armes or sergeantz, and dredeth more hem  
that he maketh agast thanne thei dreden hym,  
and that is put in the handes of hise servauntz  
40 for he scholde seme myghty? But of  
familiers or servantz of kynges, what  
scholde I telle the any thyng, syn that I myself

have schewyd the that rewmes hemself ben  
ful of greet feblesse? The whiche famylieres,  
certes, the real power of kynges, in hool estat  
and in estaat abated, ful ofte throweth adoun.  
Nero constreynede Senek, his familyer and his  
mayster, to chesen on what deeth he wolde  
deye. Antonyus comaundede that knyghtes  
50 slowen with here swerdes Papynian (his  
famylier) [whiche] that had ben long  
tyme ful myghty amonges hem of the court.  
And yet certes thei wolden bothe han renounced  
hir power; of whiche two Senek enforcede  
hym to yeven to Nero his riches, and  
also to han gon into solitarie exil. But whan the  
grete weyghte (that is to seyn, of lordes power  
or of fortune) draweth hem that schullen falle,  
neither of hem ne myghte don that he  
60 wolde. What thyng is thanne thilke powere,  
that though men han it, yit thei ben agast;  
and whanne thou woldest han it, thou nart nat  
siker; and yif thou woldest forleeten it, thou  
mayst nat eschuen it? But whethir swiche men  
ben freendes at nede, as ben [consyled] by fortune  
and nat be vertu? Certes swiche folk as  
weleful fortune maketh frendes, contraryous  
fortune maketh hem enemys. And what pestilence  
is more myghty for to anoye a wyght  
70 than a famylier enemy?  
"Whoso wol ben myghti he moot daunten his  
cruel corages, ne putte nat his nekke, overcomen,  
undir the foule reynes of leccherie. For  
al be it so that thi lordschipe strecche so fer  
that the contre of Ynde quaketh at thy comaundementz  
or at thi lawes, and that the laste  
ile in the see that highte Tyle be thral to the,  
yit yif thou maist nat putten away thi foule  
dirke desires, and dryven out fro the  
10 wrecchide compleyntes, certes it nys no  
power that thou hast.  
"But glorie, how deceyvable and how foul is  
it ofte! For which thyng nat unskilfully a tragedien  
(that is to seyn, a makere of dytees that

highten tragedies) cride and seide: 'O glorie,  
 glorie,' quod he, 'thow nart nothyng elles to  
 thousandes of folk but a greet swellere of eres!  
 For manye han had ful greet renoun by the  
 false opinyoun of the peple, and what thyng  
 mai ben thought foulere than swiche preysynge?

10 For thilke folk that ben preysed  
 falsly, they mote nedes han schame of hire  
 preysynge. And yif that folk han geten hem  
 thonk or preysynge by here dissertes, what  
 thyng hath thilke pris echid or encreded to the  
 conscience of wise folk, that mesuren hir good,  
 nat by the rumour of the peple, but by the  
 sothfastnesse of conscience? And yif it seme a  
 fair thyng a man to han encreded and sprad his  
 name, thanne folweth it that it is demed to  
 20 ben a foul thyng yif it ne be yspradde and  
 encreded. But, as I seide a litil herebyforn,  
 that syn ther moot nedes ben many folk to  
 whiche folk the renoun of [o] man ne mai nat  
 comen, it byfalleth that he that thow wenest be  
 glorious and renommed semeth in the nexte  
 partie of the erthes to ben withouten glorie and  
 withouten renoun. And certes amonges thise  
 thynges I ne trowe nat that the pris and the  
 grace of the peple nys neyther worthi to  
 30 ben remembred, ne cometh of wys jugement,  
 ne is ferme perdurably.

"But now of this name of gentilesse, what  
 man is it that ne may wele seen how veyn and  
 how flyttynge a thyng it es? For yif the name  
 of gentilesse be referred to renoun and cleernesse  
 of lynage, thanne is gentil name but a  
 foreyne thyng (that is to seyn, to hem that gloryfien  
 hem of hir lynage.) For it semeth that  
 gentilesse be a maner preysynge that cometh  
 40 of the dessertes of auncestres; and yif  
 preysynge make gentilesse, thanne mote  
 they nedes ben gentil that been preysed. For  
 whiche thing it folweth that yif thou ne have no  
 gentilesse of thiself (that is to seyn, prys that  
 cometh of thy deserte), foreyne gentilesse ne

maketh the nat gentil. But certes yif ther be  
 ony good in gentillesse, I trowe it be al only  
 this, that it semeth as that a maner necessite  
 be imposed to gentil men for that thei ne  
 50 schulde nat owtrayen or forlynen fro the  
 vertus of hir noble kynrede.

"Alle the lynage of men that ben in erthe ben  
 of semblable byrthe. On allone is fadir of  
 thynges; on allone mynystreth alle thynges.  
 He yaf to the sonne his bemes, he yaf to the  
 moone hir hornes, he yaf the men to the erthe,  
 he yaf the sterres to the hevene. He encloseth  
 with membres the soules that comen from his  
 heye sete. Thanne comen alle mortel folk of  
 noble seed. Why noysen ye or bosten of  
 10 your eldres? For yif thow loke youre bygynnyng,  
 and God your auctour and yowr  
 makere, thanne nis ther none forlyned wyght or  
 ongentil, but if he norysse his corage unto  
 vices and forlete his propre byrthe.

"But what schal I seye of delyces of body, of  
 whiche delices the desirynges ben ful of anguyssch,  
 and the fulfillynges of hem ben ful of  
 penance? How grete seknesses and how grete  
 sorwes unsuffrable, ryght as a maner fruyt  
 of wykkidnesse, ben thilke delices wont to  
 bryngen to the bodyes of folk that usen hem!  
 Of whiche delices I not what joie mai ben had  
 of here moevynge, but this woot I wel, that  
 10 whosoevere wol remembren hym of hise  
 luxures, he schal wel undirstonden that the  
 issues of delices ben sorweful and sorye. And  
 yif thilke delices mowen maken folk blisful,  
 thanne by the same cause moten thise beestis  
 ben clepid blisful, of whiche beestis al the entencioun  
 hasteth to fulfille here bodily jolyte.

And the gladnesse of wyf and children were an  
 honest thyng, but it hath ben seyde that it is  
 overmochel ayens kynde that children han  
 20 ben fownden tormentours to here fadris, I  
 not how manye; of whiche children how  
 bytynge is every condicioun, it nedeth nat to

tellen it the that hast er this tyme assayed it,  
and art yit now angwysshous. In this approve  
I the sentence of my disciple Euripidis, that  
seide that he that hath no children is weleful  
by infortune.

"Every delit hath this, that it angwisscheth  
hem with prykkes that usen it. It resembleth  
to thise flyenge flyes that we clepen ben; that,  
aftir that the be hath sched hise agreable honyes,  
he fleeth away, and styngeth the hertes of hem  
that ben ysmyte, with bytynge overlonge holdynge.

"Now is it no doute thanne that thise weyes  
ne ben a maner mysledynges to blisfulnesse, ne  
that they ne mowen nat leden folk thider as  
thei byheeten to leden hem. But with how grete  
harmes thise forseide weyes ben enlaced, I  
schal schewe the shortly. Forwhy yif thou enforcest  
the to assemble moneye, thow must byreven  
hym his moneye that hath it; and yif  
thow wolt schynen with dignytees, thow  
10 must bysechen and supplyen hem that  
yyven tho dignytees; and yif thow coveytest  
be honour to gon byfore othere folk, thow  
schalt defoule thiself thurw humblesse of axynge.  
Yif thou desirest power, thow schalt, be  
awaytes of thy subgetis, anoyously ben cast undir  
by manye periles. Axestow glorie? Thow  
schalt so bien distract by aspere thynges that  
thow schalt forgon sykernesse. And yif thow  
wolt leden thi lif in delyces, every wyght  
20 schal despysen the and forleeten the, as  
thow that art thral to thyng that is right  
foul and brutyl (that is to seyn, servaunt to thi  
body). Now is it thanne wel yseyn how lital  
and how brotel possessioun thei coveyten that  
putten the goodes of the body aboven hir  
owene resoun. For maystow surmounten thise  
olifauntes in gretnesse or weighte of body? Or  
maistow ben strengere than the bole? Maystow  
ben swyftere than the tigre? Byhoold the  
30 spaces and the stablenesse and the swyft  
cours of the hevene, and stynt somtyme to

wondren on foule thynges. The whiche hevene  
certes nys nat rathere for thise thynges to ben  
wondryd upon, than for the resoun by whiche it  
is governed. But the schynyng of thi forme  
(that is to seyn, the beute of thi body), how  
swyftly passyng is it, and how transitorie!

"Certes it es more flyttyng than the mutabilite  
of floures of the somer sesoun. For so as  
40 Aristotle telleth, that if that men hadden  
eyghen of a beeste that highte lynx, so that  
the lokyng of folk myghte percen thurw the  
thynges that withstonden it, whoso lokide  
thanne in the entrayles of the body of Alcibiades,  
that was ful fair in the superfice withoute,  
it schulde seme ryght foul. And forthi yif  
thow semest fair, thy nature ne maketh nat  
that, but the deceyvaunce or the feblesse of the  
eighen that loken. But preise the goodes of  
50 the body as mochil as evere the lyst, so that  
thow knowe algatis that, whatso it be (that  
is to seyn, of the godes of the body) whiche that  
thou wondrist uppon, mai ben destroyed or dissolvid  
by the heete of a fevere of thre dayes.

Of alle whiche forseide thynges Y mai reducen  
this schortly in a somme: that thise worldly  
goodes, whiche that ne mowen nat yeven that  
they byheeten, ne ben nat parfite by the congregacioun  
of alle goodis, that they ne ben

60 nat weyes ne pathes that bryngen men to  
blisfulnesse, ne maken men to ben blisful.

"Allas! Whiche folie and whiche ignorance  
mysledeth wandryng wreccis fro the path of  
verray good! Certes ye ne seke no gold in  
grene trees, ne ye gadere nat precyous stones in  
the vynes, ne ye ne hiden nat yowre gynnes in  
heye mountaignes to kacchen fyssche of whiche  
ye mai maken riche festes. And if yow liketh  
to hunte to roos, ye ne gon nat to the foordes  
of the watir that highte Tyrene. And over  
10 this, men knowen wel the krikes and the  
cavernes of the see yhidde in the flodes,  
and knowen ek whiche watir is moost plentevous



of white peerlis, and knowen whiche watir  
 haboundeth moost of reed purple (that is to  
 seyn, of a maner schellefyssche with whiche men  
 deien purple), and knowen whiche strondes  
 habunden most of tendre fysches, or of scharpe  
 fyssches that hyghten echynnys. But folk suffren  
 hemselfe to ben so blynde, that hem

20 ne reccheth nat to knowe where thilke  
 goodes ben yhud whiche that thei coveyten,  
 but ploungen hem in erthe, and seken  
 there thilke good that surmounteth the hevene  
 that bereth the sterris. What preyere mai I  
 make, that be digne to the nyce thoughtes of  
 men? But I preie that thei coveyten rychesses  
 and honours, so that, whanne thei han geten  
 tho false goodes with greet travaile, that therby  
 they mowen knowen the verray goodes.

"It suffiseth that I have schewyd hiderto the  
 forme of fals welefulnesse, so that yif thou loke  
 now cleerly, the ordre of myn entencioun requireth  
 from hennes forth to schewe the verray  
 welefulnesse."

"Forsothe," quod I, "I se wel now that suffisaunce  
 may nat comen by rychesse, ne power  
 by remes, ne reverence by dignites, ne gentillesse  
 by glorie, ne joie be delices."

10 "And hastow wel knowen the causes,"  
 quod sche, "whi it es?"

"Certes me semeth," quod I, "that Y see hem  
 ryght as thouge it were thurw a litil clyfte, but  
 me were levere knowen hem more opynly of  
 the."

"Certes," quod sche, "the resoun is al redy.  
 For thilke thyng that symply is o thyng withouten  
 ony devysioun, the errour and folie of  
 mankynde departeth and divideth it, and  
 20 mysledeth it and transporteth from verray  
 and parfit good to godes that ben false and  
 inparfit. But seye me this. Wenestow that he  
 that hath nede of power, that hym ne lakketh  
 nothyng?"

"Nay," quod I.

"Certes," quod sche, "thou seyst aryght; for  
if so be that ther is a thyng that in ony partie  
be feblere of power, certes, as in that, it moot  
nedes be nedy of foreyne help."

30 "Ryght so is it," quod I.

"Suffisaunce and power ben thanne of  
o kynde?"

"So semeth it," quod I.

"And demestow," quod sche, "that a thyng  
that is of this manere (that is to seyn, suffisaunt  
and myghty) oughte ben despised, or ellis that  
it be right digne of reverence aboven alle  
thynges?"

"Certes," quod I, "it nys no doute that it  
40 nys right worthy to ben reverenced."

"Lat us," quod sche, "adden thanne reverence  
to suffisaunce and to power, so that we  
demen that thise thre thynges be al o thyng."

"Certes," quod I, "lat us adden it, yif we  
wiln graunten the sothe."

"What demestow thanne," quod sche, "is  
that a dirk thyng and nat noble that is suffisaunt,  
reverent, and myghty; or elles that it is  
ryght noble and ryght cleer by celebrete of  
50 renoun? Considere thanne," quod sche, "as  
we han grauntide hirbyfore that he that ne  
hath nede of no thyng and is moost myghty  
and moost digne of honour, if hym nedeth ony  
cleernesse of renoun, whiche clernesse he myght  
nat graunten of hymself; so that for lak of  
thilke cleernesse he myghte seme the feblere  
on any side, or the more outcast." (Glose. This  
to seyn, nay; for whoso that is suffisaunt,  
myghty, and reverent, clernesse of renoun  
60 folweth of the forseyde thynges; he hath it  
al redy of his suffisaunce.)

Boece. "I mai nat," quod I, "denye it, but I  
moot granten, as it is, that this thyng be ryght  
celebrable by clernesse of renoun and noblesse."

"Thanne folweth it," quod sche, "that we  
adden clernesse of renoun to the thre forseyde  
thynges, so that there ne be amonges hem no

difference."

"This a consequence," quod I.

70 "This thyng thanne," quod sche, "that ne  
hath nede of no foreyne thyng, and that  
may don alle thynges by hise strengthis, and  
that is noble and honourable, nys nat that a  
myry thyng and a joyful?"

Boece. "But whennes," quod I, "that any sorwe  
myghte comen to this thyng that is swiche,  
certes I mai nat thynke."

Philosophie. "Thanne mote we graunten,"  
quod sche, "that this thing be ful of gladnesse,  
80 if the forseide thynges ben sothe;  
and certes also mote we graunten that suffisaunce,  
power, noblesse, reverence, and gladnesse  
be oonly diverse by names, but hir substaunce  
hath no diversite."

Boece. "It moot nedly ben so," quod I.

Philosophie. "Thilke thyng thanne," quod  
sche, "that is oon and symple in his nature, the  
wikkidnesse of men departeth it and divideth  
it; and whanne thei enforcen hem to gete  
90 partie of a thyng that ne hath no part, thei  
ne geten hem neyther thilke partie that nis  
noon, ne the thyng al hool that thei ne desire  
nat."

Boece. "In whiche manere?" quod I.

Philosophie. "Thilke man," quod sche, "that  
seketh richesse to fleen poverte, he ne travailleth  
hym nat for to geten power, for he hath  
lever ben dirk and vyl; and eek withdraweth  
from hymself manye naturel delites, for he  
100 nolde leese the moneie that he hath assembled.  
But certes in this manere he ne  
geteth hym nat suffisance, that power forleteth,  
and that moleste prikketh, and that filthe maketh  
outcaste, and that dirknesse hideth. And  
certes he that desireth oonly power, he wasteth  
and scatereth rychesse, and despyseth delices  
and eek honour that is withoute power, ne he  
ne preiseth glorie nothyng. Certes thus seestow  
wel that manye thynges failen to hym, for

110 he hath som tyme defaute of manye necessites,  
and manye anguysshes byten hym;  
and whan he ne mai nat do tho defautes away,  
he forletith to ben myghty, and that is the  
thyng that he moost desireth. And ryght thus  
mai I make semblable resouns of honours, and  
of glorie, and of delyces; for so as every of  
thise forseide thynges is the same that thise  
othere thynges ben (that is to seyn, al oon  
thyng), whoso that evere seketh to geten  
120 the toon of thise, and nat the tothir, he ne  
geteth nat that he desireth."

Boece. "What seystow thanne, yif that a  
man coveyte to geten alle thise thynges togidre?"

Philosophie. "Certes," quod sche, "I wolde  
seye that he wolde geten hym sovereyn blisfulnesse;  
but that schal he nat fynde in tho  
thynges that I have schewed that ne mowen  
nat yeven that thei byheeten?"

130 Boece. "Certes no," quod I.

"Thanne," quod sche, "ne sholde men  
nat by no weye seken blisfulnesse in siche  
thynges as men wenen that they ne mowen  
yeven but o thyng sengly of al that men  
seken."

Boece. "I graunte wel," quod I, "ne no  
sothere thyng ne may be seyde."

Philosophie. "Now hastow thanne," quod  
sche, "the forme and the causes of fals  
140 welefulnesse. Now torne and flytte the  
eighen of thi thought, for ther shaltow  
seen anon thilke verray blisfulnesse that I  
have behyght the."

Boece. "Certes," quod I, "it is cler and opene,  
theyghe it were to a blynd man; and that  
schewedestow me ful wel a litel herbyforn,  
whan thou enforcedest the to schewe me the  
causes of the fals blisfulnesse. For, but if I be  
begiled, thanne is thilke the verray parfit  
150 blisfulnesse that parfitly maketh a man suffisaunt,  
myghty, honourable, noble, and  
ful of gladnesse. And for thou schalt wel

knowe that I have wel undirstonden thise  
 thinges withynne myn herte, I knowe wel that  
 thilke blisfulnesse that may verrayly yeven on  
 of the forseide thynges, syn thei ben alle oon  
 -- I knowe dowtelees that thilke thyng is the  
 ful blysfulnesse."

Philosophie. "O my nory," quod sche,  
 160 "by this opynyoun I seie that thow art  
 blisful, yif thow putte this therto that I  
 schal seyn."

"What is that?" quod I.

"Trowestow that ther be any thyng in this  
 erthly, mortel, toumblynge thynges that may  
 brynge this estat?"

"Certes," quod I, "Y trowe it nought; and  
 thow hast schewyd me wel that over thilke good  
 ther nys no thyng more to ben desired."

170 Philosophie. "Thise thynges thanne,"  
 quod sche (that is to seyn, erthly  
 suffysaunce and power and swiche thynges),  
 "outhur thei semen lyknesses of verray good, or  
 elles it semeth that thei yeve to mortel folk a  
 maner of goodes that ne be nat parfyt. But thilke  
 good that is verray and parfyt, that mai thei nat  
 yeven."

Boece. "I accorde me wel," quod I.

Philosophie. "Thanne," quod sche, "for as  
 180 moche as thou hast knowen whiche is thilke  
 verray blisfulnesse, and eek whiche thilke  
 thynges ben that lyen falsly blisfulnesse (that is  
 to seyn, that be deceyte semen verray goodes),  
 now byhoveth the to knowe, whennes and  
 where thow mowe seke thilke verrai blisfulnesse."

"Certes," quod I "that desire I gretly and  
 have abyden longe tyme to herkne it."

"But for as moche," quod sche, "as it  
 190 liketh to my disciple Plato, in his book of  
 In Thymeo, that in ryght litel thynges men  
 schulde byseche the help of God, what juggestow  
 that be now to done, so that we may  
 desserve to fynde the seete of thilk sovereyn  
 good?"

Boece. "Certes," quod I, "Y deme that we  
schul clepe to the Fadir of alle [thyng], for  
withouten hym nis ther no [begynnyng] founded  
aryght."

200 "Thow seyst aryght," quod sche, and  
bygan anoon to syngen right thus:

"O thow Fadir, soowere and creatour of  
hevene and of erthes, that governest this world  
by perdurable resoun, that comaundest the  
tymes to gon from syn that age hadde bygynnyng;  
thow that duellest thiselve ay stedefast  
and stable, and yevest alle othere thynges to  
ben meved, ne foreyne causes necesseden the  
nevere to compounne werk of floterynge matere,  
but oonly the forme of sovereyn good iset

10 within the withoute envye, that moevede  
the frely. Thow, that art althir-fayrest,  
berynge the faire world in thy thought, formedest  
this world to the lyknesse semblable of  
that faire world in thy thought. Thou drawest  
alle thyng of thy sovereyn ensaumpler and  
comaundest that this world, parfytely ymakid,  
have frely and absolut hise parfyte parties.

Thow byndest the elementis by nombres proporcionables,  
that the coolde thinges

20 mowen accorde with the hote thinges, and  
the drye thinges with the moyste; that the  
fuyer, that is purest, ne fle nat over-heye, ne that  
the hevynesse ne drawe nat adoun over-lowe the  
erthes that ben ploungid in the watris. Thow  
knytttest togidere the mene soule of treble  
kynde moevynge alle thingis, and divydest it  
by membrys accordynge; and whan it es thus  
divyded [and] hath assembled a moevynge  
into two rowndes, it gooth to torne ayen

30 to hymself, and envyrouneth a ful deep  
thought and turneth the hevene by semblable  
ymage. Thow by evene-lyke causes enhauncest  
the soules and the lasse lyves; and,  
ablynge hem heye by lyghte waynes or cartes,  
thow sowest hem into hevene and into erthe.

And whan thei ben convertyd to the by thi

benygne lawe, thow makest hem retourne ayen  
 to the by ayen-ledynge fyer. O Fadir, yyve  
 thou to the thought to steven up into the  
 40 streyte seete; and graunte hym to enviroune  
 the welle of good; and, the lyght  
 ifounde, graunte hym to fycchen the clere  
 syghtes of his corage in the; and skatere thou  
 and tobreke the weyghtes and the cloudes of  
 erthly hevynesse; and schyn thou by thi bryghtnesse,  
 for thou art cleernesse, thow art pesible  
 reste to debonayre folk; thow thiself art bygynnyng,  
 berere, ledere, path, and terme; to looke  
 on the, that is our ende.

"For as moche thanne as thow hast seyn  
 whiche is the fourme of good that nys nat parfit,  
 and whiche is the forme of good that is parfit,  
 now trowe I that it were good to schewe in  
 what this perfeccioun of blisfulnesse is set.  
 And in this thing I trowe that we schulde first  
 enquire for to witen, yf that any swich maner  
 good as thilke good that thow hast dyffynysshed  
 a litel herebyforn (that is to seyn, sovereyn  
 10 good) may be founde in the nature of  
 thinges, for that veyn ymagynacioun of  
 thought ne desceyve us nat, and put us out of  
 the sothfastnesse of thilke thing that is summytted  
 to us. But it may nat be denyed that  
 thilke good ne is, and that it nys ryght as a  
 welle of alle goodes. For alle thing that is  
 cleped inparfyt is proevid inparfit be the  
 amenusynge of perfeccioun or of thing that is  
 parfit. And herof cometh it that in every  
 20 thing general, yif that men seen any thing  
 that is inparfit, certes in thilke general ther  
 moot ben som thing that is parfit. For yif so be  
 that perfeccioun is don away, men may nat  
 thinke ne say fro whennes thilke thing is that  
 is cleped inparfyt. For the nature of thinges ne  
 took nat hir begynnyng of thinges amenused  
 and inparfit, but it procedith of thinges that  
 ben alle hole and absolut, and descendith so  
 doun into uttereste thinges and into thinges

30 empty and withouten fruyt. But, as I have  
 schewid a litel herebyforn that yif ther be  
 a blisfulnesse that be freel and veyn and inparfyt,  
 ther may no man doute that ther nys  
 som blisfulnesse that is sad, stedefast, and  
 parfyt."

Boece. "This is concluded," quod I, "feermely  
 and soothfastly."

Philosophie. "But considere also," quod sche,  
 "in whom this blissefulnes enhabiteth. The  
 40 comune accordaunce and conceyt of the  
 corages of men proveth and graunteth that  
 God, prince of alle thinges, is good. For, so as  
 nothyng mai ben thought betere than God, it  
 mai nat ben douteth thanne that he that no  
 thinge nys betere, that he nys good. Certes resoun  
 scheweth that God is so good that it  
 proeveth by verray force that parfyt good is in  
 hym. For yif God nys swyche, he ne mai nat be  
 prince of alle thinges; for certes somthing  
 50 possessyng in itself parfyt good schulde be  
 more worthy than God, and it scholde  
 semen that thilke thing were first and eldere than  
 God. For we han schewyd apertely that alle  
 thinges that ben parfyt ben first er thynges that  
 ben inparfit; and forthy, for as moche as that  
 my resoun or my proces ne go nat away withouten  
 an ende, we owe to graunte that the  
 sovereyn God is ryght ful of sovereyn parfit  
 good. And we han establissched that the  
 60 sovereyne good is verray blisfulnesse.  
 Thanne moot it nedis be that verray blisfulnesse  
 is set in sovereyn God."

Boece. "This take I wel," quod I, "ne this  
 ne mai nat be withseid in no manere."

"But I preye the," quod sche, "see now how  
 thou mayst proeven holily and withoute corrupcioun  
 this that I have seid, that the sovereyn  
 God is ryght ful of sovereyne good."

"In whiche manere?" quod I.

70 "Wenestow aught," quod sche, "that this  
 prince of alle thynges have itake thilke sovereyne



good anywher out of hymself, of whiche  
 sovereyne good men proeveth that he is ful;  
 ryght as thou myghtest thenken that God, that  
 hath blisfulnesse in hymself, and thilke blisfulnesse  
 that is in hym, were divers in substaunce?  
 For yif thow wene that God have resseyved  
 thilke good out of hymself, thow mayst wene  
 that he that yaf thilke good to God be more  
 80 worth than is God. But I am beknowe and  
 confesse, and that ryght dignely, that God  
 is ryght worthy aboven alle thinges. And yif  
 so be that this good be in hym by nature, but  
 that it is dyvers from hym by wenyng resoun,  
 syn we speke of God prynce of alle thynges,  
 feyne who so feyne mai who was he that  
 hath conjoynd thise divers thynges togidre.  
 And eek at the laste se wel that a thing that is  
 divers from any thing, that thilke thing nys  
 90 nat that same thing fro whiche it es undirstonden  
 to be diverse. Thanne folweth it  
 that thilke thing that be his nature is divers  
 from sovereyn good, that that thyng nys nat  
 sovereyn good; but certes it were a felenous  
 cursydnesse to thinken that of hym that no  
 thing nys more worth. For alwey, of alle  
 thinges, the nature of hem ne may nat ben betere  
 thanne hir begynnyng. For whiche I mai concluden  
 by ryght verray resoun that thilke  
 100 that is begynnyng of alle thinges, thilke  
 same thing is sovereyn good in his substaunce."  
 Boece. "Thow hast seyde ryghtfully," quod I.  
 Philosophie. "But we han graunted," quod  
 sche, "that the sovereyn good is blisfulnesse."  
 "That is sooth," quod I.  
 "Thanne," quod sche, "moten we nedes  
 granten and confessen that thilke same sovereyn  
 good be God."  
 110 "Certes," quod I, "Y ne may nat denye  
 ne withstonde the resouns purposed; and  
 I se wel that it folweth by strengthe of the  
 premisses."  
 "Loke now," quod sche, "yif this be proevid

yet more fermely thus, that there ne mowen not  
ben two sovereyn goodis that ben divers among  
hemselve. For certes the goodis that ben divers  
among hemselve, the toon is nat that that the  
tothir is. thanne ne mowen neither of hem  
120 ben parfit, so as eyther of hem lakketh to  
othir. But that that nys nat parfit, men  
mai seen apertely that it nys not sovereyn. The  
thinges thanne that ben sovereynly gode ne  
mowe by no weie be divers. But I have wel  
concluded that blisfulnesse and God ben the  
sovereyn good; for whiche it mote nedes be that  
sovereyne blisfulnesse is sovereyn devynite."  
"No thing," quod I, "nys more sothfaste than  
this, ne more ferme by resoun, ne a more  
130 worthy thing than God mai not ben concluded."  
Philosophie. "Upon thise thynges thanne," quod  
sche, "ryght as thise geometriens whan thei han  
schewed her proposicions ben wont to bryngen  
yn thinges that thei clepen porismes or declaracions  
of forseide thinges, right so wol I yeve  
the here as a corolarie or a meede of coroune.  
Forwhy, for as moche as by the getyng of blisfulnesse  
men ben makid blisful, and blisfulnesse  
140 is dyvinite, than is it manifest and  
opene that by the getyng of dyvinite men  
ben makid blisful. Right as by the getyng of  
justise [men ben maked just], and be the getyng  
of sapience thei ben maked wise, ryght so  
nedes by the semblable resoun, whan they han  
geten dyvinite thei ben maked goddes. Thanne  
is every blisful man God. But certes by nature  
ther nys but o God; but by the participacioun  
of dyvinite ther ne let ne distourbeth nothyng  
150 that ther ne ben many goddis."  
"This ys," quod I, "a fair thing and a  
precious, clepe it as thou wilt, be it corolarie, or  
porisme, or meede of coroune, or declarynges."  
"Certes," quod sche, "nothing nys fairere  
than is the thing that by resoun schulde ben  
addide to thise forseide thinges."  
"What thing?" quod I.

"So," quod sche, "as it semeth that blisfulnesse  
conteneth many thinges, it weere for  
160 to witen whether that alle thise thinges  
maken or conjoynen as a maner body of  
blisfulnesse by diversite of parties or membres,  
or elles yif ony of alle thilke thinges be swich  
that it acomplise by hymself the substaunce of  
blisfulnesse, so that alle thise othere thynges  
ben referrid and brought to blisfulnesse (that  
is to seyn, as to the cheef of hem)."

"I wolde," quod I, "that thow madest me  
clerly to undirstonde what thou seist, and  
170 that thou recordidest me the forseide  
thinges."

"Have I not jugged," quod sche, "that blisfulnesse  
is good?"

"Yys for sothe," quod I, "and that sovereyn  
good."

"Adde thanne," quod sche, "thilke good that  
is maked blisfulnesse to alle the forseide  
thinges. For thilke same blisfulnesse [is.  
demed to ben sovereyn suffisaunce, thilke  
180 selve is sovereyn power, sovereyn reverence,  
sovereyn clernesse or noblesse, and  
sovereyn delyt. What seistow thanne of alle  
thise thinges, that is to seyn, suffisaunce, power,  
and thise othere thinges, -- ben thei thanne as  
membris of blisfulnesse, or ben they reffered  
and brought to sovereyne good ryght as alle  
thinges [ben] brought to the cheef of hem?"

Boece. "I undirstonde wel," quod I, "what  
thou purposest to seke, but I desire for  
190 to herkne that thow schew it me."

Philosophie. "Tak now thus the discrecioun  
of this questioun," quod sche; "yif alle thise  
thinges," quod sche, "weren membris to felicite,  
thanne weren thei dyverse that on fro that  
othir. And swich is the nature of parties or of  
membres, that diverse membris compounen a  
body."

"Certes," quod I, "it hath wel ben schewyd  
herebyforn that alle thise thinges ben

200 al o thyng."

"Thanne ben thei none membres," quod  
sche, "for elles it schulde seme that blisfulnesse  
were conjoyned al of o membre allone;  
but that is a thing that mai not ben don."

"This thing," quod I, "nys not doutous; but  
I abide to herkennen the remenaunt of the question."

"This is opene and cler," quod sche, "that  
alle othere thinges ben referrid and

210 brought to good. For therfore is suffisaunce  
requerid, for it is demyd to ben

good; and forthy is power requirid, for men  
trowen also that it be good; and this same thing  
mowen we thinken and coniecten of reverence,  
and of noblesse, and of delyt. Thanne is sovereyn  
good the somme and the cause of al that  
oughte ben desired; forwhy thilke thing that  
withholdeth no good in itselfe, ne semblance  
of good, it ne mai not wel in no

220 manere be desired ne requerid. And the  
contrarie; for thoughe that thinges by here  
nature ne ben not gode, algates yif men wene  
that thei ben gode, yet ben thei desired as  
theigh that thei were verrayliche gode; and  
therefore is it that men oughte to wene by ryghte  
that bounte be the sovereyn fyn and the cause  
of alle the thinges that ben to requiren. But  
certes thilke that is cause for whiche men  
requiren any thing, it semeth that thilke

230 same thing be moost desired. As thus: yf  
that a wyght wolde ryden for cause of hele,  
he ne desireth not so mochel the moevyng to  
ryden, as the effect of his hele. Now thanne,  
syn that alle thynges ben required for the grace  
of good, thei ne ben not desired of alle folk  
more than the same good. But we han grauntide  
that blisfulnesse is that thing for whiche that  
alle thise othere thinges ben desired; thanne  
is it thus that certes oonly blysfulnesse is  
240 requered and desired. By whiche thing it  
scheweth cleerly that of good and of blisfulnesse  
is al on and the same substaunce."

"I se nat," quod I, "wherfore that men  
myghten discorden in this."

"And we han schewed that God and verray  
blisfulnesse is al o thing."

"That is sooth," quod I.

"Thanne mowen we concluden sykerly, that  
the substaunce of God is set in thilke same  
250 good, and in noon other place.

"Cometh alle to-gidre now, ye that ben  
ykaught and ybounde with wikkide cheynes by  
the desceyvable delyt of erthly thynges enhabitynge  
in yowr thought! Her schal ben the  
reste of your labours, her is the havene stable  
in pesible quiete; this allone is the open refut  
to wrechis. (Glose. This to seyn, that ye that  
ben combryd and disseyvid with worldly  
affeccions, cometh now to this sovereyn  
10 good, that is God, that is refut to hem  
that wolen come to hym.) Textus. Alle the  
thinges that the ryver Tagus yyveth yow with  
his goldene gravelis, or elles alle the thinges  
that the ryver Hermus yeveth with his rede  
brinke, or that Indus yyveth, that is next the  
hote partie of the world, that medleth the grene  
stones with the white, ne scholden not cleren  
the lookyng of your thought, but hiden rather  
your blynde corages withynne here derknesse.

20 Al that liketh yow here, and exciteth  
and moeveth your thoughtes, the  
erthe hath noryschid it in his lowe caves. But  
the schynyng by whiche the hevene is governed  
and whennes that it hath his strengthe, that  
eschueth the derke overthrowng of the soule;  
and whosoevere may knowen thilke light (of  
blisfulnesse), he schal wel seyn that the white  
beemes of the sonne ne ben nat cleer."

Boece. "I assente me," quod I, "for alle thise  
thinges ben strongly bounden with ryght ferme  
resouns."

"How mychel wiltow preysen it," quod sche,  
"yif that thow knowe what thilke good is?"

"I wol preyse it," quod I, "be pris withouten

ende, yif it schal betyde me to knowe also togidre  
God that is good."

"Certes," quod sche, "that schal I [undo]

10 the be verray resoun, yif that tho  
things that I have concluded a litel herebyforn  
duellen only in hir first grauntynge."

Boece. "Thei dwellen graunted to the," quod  
I. (This to seyn as who seith, "I graunte thi  
forseide conclusyouns.")

"Have I nat schewed the," quod sche, "that  
the thinges that ben required of many folk ne  
ben not verray goodis ne parfite, for thei ben  
divers that on fro that othir; and so as iche  
20 of hem is lakkyng to othir, thei ne han no  
power to bryngen a good that is ful and  
absolut; but thanne at erste ben thei verraye  
good, whan thei ben gadred togidre [als] into o  
forme and into oon werkynge, so that thilke  
thing that is suffisaunce, thilke same be power,  
and reverence, and noblesse, and myrthe; and  
for sothe, but yif alle thise thinges ben alle o  
same thing, thei ne han not wherby that thei  
mowen be put in the nombre of thinges  
30 that oughten ben required or desired?"

Boece. "It is schewyd," quod I, "ne herof  
mai ther no man douten."

Philosophie. "The thinges thanne," quod sche,  
"that ne ben none goodis whan thei ben diverse,  
and whanne thei bygynnen to ben al o thing,  
thanne ben thei goodes -- ne cometh it hem nat  
thanne be the getynge of unyte that thei ben  
maked goodes?"

Boece. "So it semeth," quod I.

40 "But alle thing that is good," quod sche,  
"grauntestow that it be good by the participacioun  
of good, or no?"

"I graunte it," quod I.

"Thanne mustow graunten," quod sche, "by  
semblable resoun that oon and good be o same  
thing; for of thinges of whiche that the effect nys  
nat naturely divers, nedes the substaunce moot  
be oo same thing."

"I ne may nat denye it," quod I.

50 "Hastow nat knowen wel," quod sche,  
"that alle thing that is hath so longe his  
duellynge and his substaunce as longe as it es  
oon, but whanne it forletith to be oon, it moot  
nedys deien and corruppen togidres?"

"In whiche manere?" quod I.

"Ryght as in beestes," quod sche, "whanne  
the soule and the body ben conjoined in oon  
and dwellen togidre, it es cleped a beeste; and  
whanne her unyte is destroyed be the  
60 disseveraunce the toon fro the tothir,  
thanne scheweth it wel that it is a deed  
thing, and that it nys no lengere no beeste. And  
the body of a wyght, while it duelleth in oo  
fourme be conjunccion of membris, it is wel  
seyn that it is a figure of mankynde; and yif  
the parties of the body ben so devyded and  
disseverid the ton fro the tother that thei destroyen  
unite, the body forletith to ben that it was  
beforn. And whoso wolde renne in the  
70 same manere be alle thinges, he scholde  
seen that withouten doute every thing is in  
his substaunce as longe as it is oon; and whanne  
it forletith to ben oon, it dyeth and peryssheth."  
Boece. "Whanne I considere," quod I, "many  
thinges, I se noon other."

"Is ther any thing thanne," quod sche, "that,  
in as moche as it lyveth naturely, that forletith  
the talent or the appetyt of his beyng and  
desireth to come to deth and to corrupcioun?"

"Yif I considere," quod I, "the beestes  
that han any maner nature of wyllynge and of  
nyllynge, I ne fynde no beeste, but if it be  
constreyned fro withoute-forth, that forletith or  
despiseth the entencion to lyven and to duren;  
or that wole, his thanks, hasten hym to dyen.  
For every beest travaileth hym to defende and  
kepe the savacion of his lif, and eschueth deeth  
and destruccioun. But certes I doute me of  
90 herbes and of trees [and] I am in a doute  
of swiche thinges [as] ne han no felyng

soules (ne no naturel werkynge servynge to  
appetites as beestes han, whether thei han  
appetyt to duellen and to duren).

"Certes," quod sche, "ne therof thar the nat  
doute. Now looke upon thise herbes and thise  
trees. They wexen first in suche places as ben  
covenable to hem, in whiche places thei mowen  
nat sone deye ne dryen, as longe as hir  
100 nature mai defenden hem. For some of  
hem waxen in feeldis, and some in mountaynes,  
and othere waxen in mareys, and  
othre cleven on roches, and some wexen  
plentyvous in soondes; and yif any wyght  
enforce hym to bere hem into other places, thei  
wexen drye. For nature yeveth to every thing  
that that is convenient to hym, and travailleth  
that they ne deie nat, as longe as thei han power  
to duellen and to lyven. What wiltow seyn  
110 of this, that thei drawen alle here  
norysschynges by here rootes, ryght as thei  
hadden here mouthes yplounded withynne the  
erthes, and sheden be hir maryes hir wode and  
hir bark? And what wyltow seyn of this, that  
thilke thing that is ryght softe, as the marie is,  
that it is alwey hyd in the seete al withinne, and  
that it is defended fro withoute by the  
stedfastnesse of wode, and that the outreste bark  
is put ayens the distemperaunce of the  
120 hevene as a deffendour myghty to suffren  
harm? And thus certes maistow wel seen  
how greet is the diligence of nature; for alle  
thinges renovelene and publysschen hem with  
seed ymultiplied, ne ther nys no man that ne  
woot wel that they ne ben ryght as a foundement  
and edifice for to duren, noght oonly for a tyme,  
but ryght as for to dure perdurably by  
generacion.

"And the thinges eek that men wenen ne  
130 haven none soules, ne desire thei nat, iche  
of hem, by semblable resoun to kepyn that  
that is hirs (that is to seyn, that is accordynge  
to hir nature in conservacioun of hir beynge



and enduryng)? For wherfore ellis bereth  
lightnesse the flaumbes up, and the weyghte  
presseth the erthe adoun, but for as moche as  
thilke places and thilke moevynges ben covenable  
to everyche of hem? And forsothe every  
thing kepeth thilke that is accordyng  
140 and propre to hym, ryght as thinges that  
ben contrarious and enemys corruppen  
hem. And yet the harde thinges, as stones,  
clyven and holden here parties togidere ryght  
faste and harde, and defenden hem in  
withstondyng that thei ne departe nat lyghtly  
atwynne. And the thinges that ben softe and  
fletyng, as is watir and eyr, thei departen  
lyghtly and yeven place to hem that breken or  
divyden hem; but natheles they retorne  
150 sone ageyn into the same thinges fro  
whennes thei ben arraced; but fyer fleeth  
and refuseth alle dyvisioun.

"Ne I ne trete not here now of willeful  
moevynges of the soule that is knowyng, but of  
the naturel entencioun of thinges, as thus: ryght  
as we swolwen the mete that we resseyven and  
ne thinke nat on it, and as we drawen our breeth  
in slepyng that we witen it nat while we slepyn.  
For certes in the beestis the love of hire  
160 lyvynges ne of hire beynges ne cometh  
not of the wilnynges of the soule, but of  
the bygynnynges of nature. For certes, thurw  
constreynyng causes, wil desireth and embraceth  
ful ofte tyme the deeth that nature  
dredeth. (That is to seyn as thus: that a man  
may be constreyned so, by som cause, that his  
wille desireth and taketh the deeth whiche  
that nature hateth and dredeth ful sore.) And  
somtyme we seen the contrarye, as thus:  
170 that the wil of a wyght distourbeth and  
constreyneth that that nature desireth and  
requirith alwey, that is to seyn the werk of  
generacioun, by whiche generacioun only  
duelleth and is susteyned the longe durablete of  
mortel thinges. And thus this charite and this

love, that every thing hath to hymself, ne cometh not of the moevynge of the soule, but of the entencioun of nature. For the purveaunce of God hath yeven to thinges that ben creat of  
 180 hym this, that is a ful grete cause to lyven and to duren, for whiche they desiren naturely here lif as longe as evere thei mowen. For which thou mayst not drede be no manere that alle the thinges that ben anywhere, that thei ne requiren naturely the ferme stablenesse of perdurable duellynge, and eek the eschuyng of destruccioun."

Boece. "Now confesse I wel," quod I, "that Y see wel now certeynly withouten doutes  
 190 the thinges that whilom semeden uncerteyn to me."

Philosophie. "But," quod sche, "thilke thing that desireth to be and to duelle perdurably, he desireth to ben oon. For yif that oon were destroyed, certes, beyng schulde ther noon duellen to no wyght."

"That is sooth," quod I.

"Thanne," quod sche, "desiren alle thinges oon."

200 "I assente," quod I.

"And I have schewed," quod sche, "that thilke same oon is thilke that is good."

Boece. "Ye, forsothe," quod I.

"Alle thinges thanne," quod sche, "requiren good; and thilke good thow mayst descryven ryght thus: good is thilk thing that every wyght desireth."

"Ther ne may be thought," quod I, "no more verraye thing. For eyther alle thinges ben  
 210 referrid and brought to noght, and floteren withouten governour, despoyled of oon as of hire propre heved; or elles, yif ther be any thing to whiche that alle thinges tenden and hyen to, that thing muste ben the sovereyn good of alle goodes."

Philosophie. Thanne seide sche thus: "O my nory," quod sche, "I have greet gladnesse of

the, for thow hast fycched in thyn herte the  
 [marke] [of] [the] myddel sothfastnesse, (that  
 220 is to seyn, the prykke). But [in] this thing  
 hath ben discoveryd to the [that] thow  
 seydest that thow wistest not a litel herbyforn."

"What was that?" quod I.

"That thou ne wistest noght," quod sche,  
 "whiche was the ende of thinges. And certes that  
 is the thyng that every wyght desireth. and for  
 as mochel as we han gadrid and comprehendid  
 that good is thilke thing that is desired of alle,  
 thanne mote we nedys confessen that good  
 230 is the fyn of alle thinges.

"Whoso that seketh sooth by a deep thought,  
 and coveyteth not to ben disseyvid by no mysweyes,  
 lat hym rollen and trenden withynne  
 hymself the lyght of his ynwarde sighte; and  
 let hym gaderyn ayein, enclynyng into a compas,  
 the longe moevynges of his thoughtes; and  
 let hym techyn his corage that he hath enclosid  
 and hid in his tresors al that he compasseth or  
 secheth fro withoute. And thanne thilke  
 10 thing that the blake cloude of errour  
 whilom hadde ycovered schal lighte more  
 clerly than Phebus hymself ne schyneth.

(Glosa. Whoso wol seke the depe ground of  
 soth in his thought, and wil nat ben disseyvid  
 by false proposiciouns that goon amys fro the  
 trouthe, lat hym wel examine and rolle withynne  
 hymself the nature and the propretes of  
 the thing; and let hym yet eftsones examinen  
 and rollen his thoughtes by good deliberacioun  
 20 or that he deme, and lat hym techyn  
 his soule that it hath, by naturel principles  
 kyndeliche yhud withynne itself, al the trouthe  
 the whiche he ymagineth to ben in thinges  
 withoute. And thanne al the derknesse of his  
 mysknowynge shall [schewen] more evydently  
 to the sighte of his undirstondynge then the  
 sonne ne semeth to the sighte withoute-forth.)  
 For certes the body, bryngynge the weighte of  
 foryetynge, ne hath nat chased out of your

30 thought al the cleernesse of your knowyng;  
for certeynli the seed of soth haldeth and  
clyveth within yowr corage, and it is awaked  
and excited by the wynde and by the blastes  
of doctrine. For wherfore elles demen ye of  
your owene wil the rygthes, whan ye ben axid,  
but if so were that the norysschynges of resoun  
ne lyvede yplounded in the depe of your herte?  
(This to seyn, how schulde men deme the sothe  
of any thing that were axid, yif ther nere a  
40 rote of sothfastnesse that were yploundid  
and hyd in the naturel principles, the  
whiche sothfastnesse lyvede within the depnesse  
of the thought?) And if so be that the  
Muse and the doctrine of Plato syngeth soth,  
al that every wyght leerneth, he ne doth no  
thing elles thanne but recordeth, as men recorden  
thinges that ben foryeten."

Thanne seide I thus: "I accorde me gretly to  
Plato, for thou recordist and remembrist me  
thise thinges yet the seconde tyme; that is to  
seye, first whan I loste my memorie be the contagious  
conjunccioun of the body with the  
soule, and eftsones aftirward, whan Y lost it  
confounded by the charge and be the burdene  
of my sorwe."

And thanne seide sche thus: "Yif thou  
10 loke," quod sche, "first the thynges that  
thou hast graunted, it ne schal nat ben  
ryght fer that thou ne schalt remembren thilke  
thing that thou seidest that thou nystist nat."

"What thing?" quod I.

"By whiche gouvernement," quod sche, "that  
this world is governed."

"Me remembreth it wel," quod I; "and I confesse  
wel that I ne wyste it nat. But al be it so  
that I see now from afer what thou purposist,  
20 algates I desire yit to herkennen it of  
the more pleynly."

"Thou ne wendest nat," quod sche, "a litel  
herebyforn, that men schulde doute that this  
world nys governed by God."

"Certes," quod I, "ne yet ne doute I it  
naught, ne I nyl nevere wene that it were to  
doute" (as who seith, "but I woot wel that God  
governeth this world"); "and I schal shortly  
answeren the be what resouns I  
30 am brought to this. This world," quod I,  
"of so manye diverse and contraryous  
parties, ne myghte nevere han ben assembled  
in o forme, but yif ther ne were oon that conjoyned  
so manye diverse thinges; and the same  
diversite of here natures, that so discorden the  
ton fro that other, most departen and unjoynen  
the thinges that ben conjoynid, yif ther ne were  
oon that contenyde that he hath conjoynid and  
ybounden. Ne the certein ordre of nature ne  
40 schulde not brynge forth so ordene moevynges  
by places, by tymes, by doynge, by  
spaces, by qualites, yif ther ne were on, that  
were ay stedfaste duellynge, that ordeynide and  
disponyde thise diversites of moevynges. And  
thilke thing, whatsoever it be, by whiche that  
alle thinges ben ymaked and ilad, Y clepe hym  
'God,' that is a word that is used to alle folk."  
Thanne seide sche: "Syn thou feelist thus  
thise thinges," quod sche, "I trowe that I  
50 have litel more to done that thou, myghty  
of welefulnesse, hool and sound, ne see  
eftsones thi contre. But let us loken the thinges  
that we han purposed herebyforn. Have I nat  
nombrid and seid," quod sche, "that suffisaunce  
is in blisfulnesse, and we han accorded that  
God is thilke same blisfulnesse?"  
"Yis, forsothe," quod I.  
"And that to governen this world," quod  
sche, "ne schal he nevere han nede of noon  
60 help fro withoute? For elles, yif he hadde  
nede of any help, he ne schulde nat have  
no ful suffisaunce?"  
"Yys, thus it moot nedes be," quod I.  
"Thanne ordeyneth he be hymself alone alle  
thinges?" quod sche.  
"That may noght ben denyed," quod I.

"And I have schewyd that God is the same good?"

"It remembreth me wel," quod I.

70 "Thanne ordeigneth he alle thinges by  
thilke good," quod sche, "syn he, whiche  
that we han accordid to ben good, governeth  
alle thinges by hymself; and he is as a keye and  
a styere, by whiche that the edifice of this world  
is kept stable and withouten corruppyng."

"I accorde me greetly," quod I. "And I  
aperceyvede a litil herebyforn that thow woldest  
seyn thus, al be it so that it were by a  
thynne suspecioun."

80 "I trowe it wel," quod sche; "for, as I  
trowe, thou ledist now more ententyfliche  
thyn eyen to loken the verray goodes. But natheles  
the thing that I schal telle the yet ne  
scheweth not lesse to loken."

"What is that?" quod I.

"So as men trowen," quod sche, "and that  
ryghtfully, that God governeth alle thinges by  
the keye of his goodnesse, and alle thise same  
thinges, as I have taught the, hasten hem  
90 by naturel entencioun to come to good,  
ther may no man douten that thei ne  
ben governed voluntariely, and that they ne  
converten hem of here owene wil to the wil of  
here ordeynour, as thei that ben accordyng  
and enclynynge to here governour and here  
kyng."

"It moot nedes be so," quod I, "for the reume  
ne schulde nat seme blisful yif ther were a yok  
of mysdrawynges in diverse parties, ne the  
100 savynge of obedient thynges ne scholde  
nat be."

"Thanne is ther nothyng," quod sche, "that  
kepith his nature, that enforceth hym to gon  
ayen God."

"No," quod I.

"And yif that any thing enforcede hym to  
withstonde God, myghte it avayle at the laste  
ayens hym that we han graunted to ben almyghty

by the ryght of blisfulnesse?"

110 "Certes," quod I, "al outrely it ne  
myghte nat avaylen hym."

"Thanne is ther nothing," quod she, "that  
either mai or wole withstonden to this sovereyn  
good."

"I trowe nat," quod I.

"Thanne is thilke the sovereyn good," quod  
sche, "that alle thinges governeth strongly  
and ordeyneth hem softly?"

Thanne seide I thus: "I delite me,"

120 quod I, "nat oonly in the eendes or in the  
somme of the resouns that thou hast concluded  
and proved, but thilke woordes that  
thou usest deliten me moche more. So that, at  
the laste, foolis that somtyme reenden grete  
thinges oughten ben asschamid of himself  
(that is to seyn, that we foolis that reprehenden  
wikkidly the thinges that touchen Godis  
governaunce, we aughten ben asschamid of  
oursel), as I, that seide that God refuseth  
130 oonly the werkis of men and ne entremettith  
nat of it."

Philosophie. "Thow hast wel herd," quod  
sche, "the fables of the poetis, how the geauntis  
assaileden hevene with the goddis, but forsothe  
the debonayre force of God disposide hem as it  
was worthy (that is to sey, destroyed the  
geauntes, as it was worthy). But wiltow that  
we joynen togidres thilke same resouns, for  
paraventure of swiche conjunccioun may  
140 sterten up som fair sparcle of soth?"

"Do," quod I, "as the list."

"Wenestow," quod sche, "that God ne be  
almyghty? No man is in doute of it."

"Certes," quod I, "no wyght ne douteth it,  
yif he be in his mynde."

"But he," quod sche, "that is almyghti, ther  
nys no thyng that he ne may?"

"That is sooth," quod I.

"May God don evel?" quod sche.

150 "Nay, forsothe," quod I.

"Thanne is evel nothing," quod sche,  
"syn that he ne may not don evel, that mai  
doon alle thinges."

"Scornestow me," quod I, "or elles, pleyestow  
or disseyvistow me, that hast so woven  
me with thi resouns the hous of Didalus,  
so entrelaced that it is unable to ben unlaced,  
thow that otherwhile entrust ther thow issist,  
and other while issist ther thow entrest?

160 Ne fooldist thou nat togidre by replicacioun  
of wordes a manere wondirful sercle  
or enviroynunge of the simplicité devyne?

For certes a litel herebyforne, whanne thou bygunne  
at blisfulnesse, thou seidest that it is  
sovereyn good, and seidest that it is set in sovereign  
God; and seidest that God hymself is  
sovereyn good, and that God is the ful blisfulnesse;  
for whiche thou yave me as a covenable  
yifte, that is to seyn, that no wyght nis  
170 blisful, but yif he be God also therwith.

And seidest eke that the forme of good is  
the substaunce of God and of blisfulnesse; and  
seidest that thilke same oon is thilke same good  
that is required and desired of al the kynde of  
thinges. And thou provedest in disputynge that  
God governeth alle the thinges of the world by  
the governmentis of bounte, and seidest that  
alle thinges wolen obeyen to hym, and seidest  
that the nature of yvel nys no thing. And

180 thise thinges ne schewedest thou naught  
with noone resouns ytaken fro withouten,  
but by proeves in cercles and homliche knowen,  
the whiche proeves drawen to hemself heer  
feyth and here accord everiche of hem of othir."

Thanne seide sche thus: "I ne scorne the nat,  
ne pleie, ne disceyve the; but I have schewed  
the the thing that is grettest over alle thinges,  
by the yifte of God that we whelome prayeden.

For this is the forme of the devyne substaunce,  
190 that is swiche that it ne slideth nat  
into uttreste foreyne thinges, ne ne resceyveth  
noone straunge thinges in hym; but



ryght as Parmanydes seide in Grees of thilke  
 devyne substaunce -- he seide thus: that thilke  
 devyne substaunce tornith the world and the  
 moevable sercle of thinges, while thilke devyne  
 substaunce kepith itself withouten moevynge  
 (that is to seyn, that it ne moeveth nevere mo,  
 and yet it moeveth alle othere thinges).

200 But natheles, yif I have styred resouns  
 that ne ben nat taken from withouten the compas  
 of the thing of whiche we treten, but resouns  
 that ben bystowyd withinne that compas,  
 ther nys nat why that thou schuldest merveillen,  
 sith thou hast lernyd by the sentence  
 of Plato that nedes the wordis moot be cosynes  
 to the thinges of whiche thei speken.

"Blisful is that man that may seen the clere  
 welle of good! Blisful is he that mai unbynden  
 hym fro the boondes of the hevy erthe! The  
 poete of Trace, Orpheus, that whilome hadde  
 ryght greet sorwe for the deth of his wyf, aftir  
 that he hadde makid by his weeply songes the  
 wodes moevable to renne, and hadde makid  
 the ryveris to stonden stille, and hadde maked  
 the hertes and the hyndes to joynen dreedles  
 10 here sydes to cruel lyouns for to herknen  
 his song, and hadde maked that the  
 hare was nat agast of the hound, whiche was  
 plesed by his song; so, whanne the moste ardaunt  
 love of his wif brende the entrayles of his  
 breest, ne the songes that hadden overcomen  
 alle thinges ne mighten nat asswagen hir lord  
 Orpheus, he pleynid hym of the hevene  
 goddis that weren cruel to hym.

"He wente hym to the houses of helle,  
 20 and ther he tempride his blaundysschinge  
 songes by resounynge strenges, and spak  
 and song in wepynge al that evere he hadde  
 resceyved and lavyd out of the noble welles of  
 his modir Callyope the goddesse. And he sang  
 with as mochel as he myghte of wepynge, and  
 with as moche as love that doublide his sorwe  
 myghte yeve hym and teche hym, and he

commoevde the helle, and requyred and bysoughte  
by swete preyere the lordes of

30 soules in helle of relessynge, that is to seyn,  
to yelden hym his wyf. Cerberus, the porter  
of helle, with hise thre hevedes, was caught and  
al abasschid of the newe song. And the thre  
goddesses, furiis and vengeresses of felonyes,  
that tormenten and agasten the soules by anoy,  
woxen sorweful and sory, and wepyn teeris for  
pite. Tho was nat the heved of Yxion ytormented  
by the overthrowng wheel. And Tantalus, that  
was destroyed by the woodnesse of long  
40 thirst, despyseth the floodes to drynken.

The foul that highte voltor, that etith the  
stomak or the gyser of Tycius, is so fulfild of  
his song that it nil eten ne tiren no more. At the  
laste the lord and juge of soules was moevid to  
misericordes, and cryede: 'We ben overcomen,'  
quod he; 'yyve we to Orpheus his wif to beren  
hym compaignye; he hath wel ybought hire by  
his faire song and his ditee. But we wolen putten  
a lawe in this and covenant in the yifte;  
50 that is to seyn that, til he be out of helle, yif  
he loke byhynde hym, that his wyf schal  
comen ageyn unto us.' But what is he that may  
yeven a lawe to loverys? Love is a grettere lawe  
and a strengere to hymself thanne any lawe that  
men mai yyven. Allas! Whanne Orpheus and his  
wif weren almost at the termes of the nyght  
(that is to seyn, at the laste boundes of helle),  
Orpheus lokede abakward on Erudyce his wif,  
and lost hire, and was deed.

60 "This fable apertenith to yow alle, whosoever  
desireth or seketh to lede his  
thought into the sovereyn day, that is to seyn, to  
cleernesse of sovereyn good. For whoso that  
ever be so overcomen that he ficche his eien  
into the put of helle, that is to seyn, whoso sette  
his thoughtes in erthly thinges, al that ever he  
hath drawen of the noble good celestial he lesith  
it, whanne he looketh the helles, that is to seyn,  
into lowe thinges of the erthe.



## BOOK 4

Whanne Philosophie hadde songen softly  
 and delitably the forseide thinges, kepyng the  
 dignyte of hir cheere and the weyghte of hir  
 wordes, I, thanne, that ne hadde nat al outrely  
 foryeten the wepyng and the moornyng that  
 was set in myn herte, forbrak the entencioun of  
 hir that entendede yit to seyn some othere  
 thinges. "O," quod I, "thou that art gyderesse  
 of verray light, the thinges that thou hast  
 10 seid me hidirto ben to me so cleer and so  
 schewyng by the devyne lookyng of hem,  
 and by thy resouns, that they ne mowen nat  
 ben overcomen. And thilke thinges that thou  
 toldest me, al be it so that I hadde whilom foryeten  
 hem for the sorwe of the wrong that hath  
 ben don to me, yet nathales thei ne weren not  
 al outrely unknownen to me. But this same is  
 namely a ryght gret cause of my sorwe: that so  
 as the governour of thinges is good, yif  
 20 that eveles mowen ben by any weyes,  
 or elles yif that evelis passen withouten  
 punysshynge. The whiche thing oonly, how  
 worthy it es to ben wondrid uppon, thou considerest  
 it wel thiselve certeynly. But yit to this  
 thing ther is yit another thing ijoynd more to  
 ben wondrid uppon: for felonye is emperisse,  
 and floureth ful of riches, and vertu nis nat al  
 oonly withouten meedes, but it is cast undir  
 and fortroden undir the feet of felenous  
 30 folk, and it abyeth the tormentz in stede of  
 wikkide felouns. Of alle whiche thinges  
 ther nys no wyght that may merveillen ynowghe  
 ne compleyne that swiche thinges ben don in  
 the reigne of God, that alle things woot and  
 alle thinges may and ne wole nat but only  
 gode thinges."

Thanne seide sche thus: "Certes," quod sche,  
 "that were a greet merveille and an abaysschinge  
 withouten ende, and wel more horrible than  
 40 alle monstres, yif it were as thou wenest;

that is to seyn, that in the ryght ordene  
hous of so mochel a fadir and an ordeynour of  
meyne, that the vesselis that ben foule and vyl  
schulden ben honoured and heryed, and the  
precious vesselis schulden ben defouled and  
vyl. But it nys nat so. For yif the thinges that  
I have concluded a litel herebyforn ben kept  
hoole and unaraced, thou schalt wel knowe by  
the auctorite of God, of the whos reigne I  
50 speke, that certes the gode folk ben alwey  
myghty and schrewes ben alwey outcast  
and feble; ne the vices ben neveremo withouten  
peyne, ne the vertus ne ben nat withouten  
mede; and that blisfulnesses comen alwey  
to good folk, and infortune comith alwey to  
wykkide folk. And thou schalt wel knowe  
manye thinges of this kynde, that schullen  
cesen thi pleyntis and strengthen the with stedfaste  
sadnesse. And for thou hast seyn the  
60 forme of the verray blisfulnesse by me that  
have whilom yschewid it the, and thow  
hast knowen in whom blisfulnesse is yset, alle  
thingis ytreted that I trowe ben necessarie to  
putten forth, I schal schewe the the weye that  
schal bryngen the ayen unto thyn hous; and I  
schal fycchen fetheris in thi thought, by whiche  
it mai arisen in heighte; so that, alle tribulacioun  
idon away, thow, by my gyding and by  
my path and by my sledys, shalt mowen  
70 retourne hool and sownd into thi contree.  
"I have, forthi, swifte fetheris that surmounten  
the heighte of the hevene. Whanne  
the swift thoght hath clothid itself in tho  
fetheris, it despiseth the hateful erthes, and surmounteth  
the rowndenesse of the gret ayr; and  
it seth the clowdes byhynde his bak, and passeth  
the heighte of the regioun of the fir, that  
eschaufeth by the swifte moevynge of the firmament,  
til that he areyseth hym into the  
10 houses that beren the sterres, and joyneth  
his weies with the sonne, Phebus, and  
felawschipeth the weie of the olde colde Saturnus;

and he, imaked a knyght of the clere  
 sterre (that is to seyn, whan the thought is  
 makid Godis knyght by the sekyng of  
 trouthe to comen to the verray knowleche of  
 God) -- and thilke soule renneth by the cercle  
 of the sterres in alle the places there as the  
 schynynge nyght is ypainted (that is to  
 20 sey, the nyght that is cloudeles; for on  
 nyghtes that ben cloudeles it semeth as  
 the hevene were peynted with diverse ymages  
 of sterres). And whan [that] he hath gon there  
 inoghe, he schal forleten the laste point of the  
 hevene, and he schal pressen and wenden on  
 the bak of the swifte firmament, and he schal  
 be makid parfit of the worschipful lyght [or]  
 dredefulle clerenesse of God. There halt the  
 lord of kynges the septe of his myght and  
 30 atemprith the governementz of the world,  
 and the schynynge juge of thinges, stable in  
 hymself, governeth the swifte cart or wayn (that  
 is to seyn, the circuler moevynge of the sonne).  
 And yif thi wey ledeth the ayein so that thou be  
 brought thider, thanne wiltow seye now that  
 that is the contre that thou requerist, of whiche  
 thow ne haddest no mynde -- `but now it  
 remembreth me wel, here was I born, her wol  
 I fastne my degree, here wol I duelle.' But  
 40 yif the liketh thanne to looken on the  
 derknesse of the erthe that thou hast  
 forleten, thanne shaltow seen that these felonous  
 tirantz, that the wrecchide peple dredeth now,  
 schullen ben exiled fro thilke faire contre."  
 Thanne seide I thus: "Owh! I wondre me  
 that thow byhetist me so grete thinges. Ne I  
 ne doute nat that thou ne maist wel parforme  
 that thow behetist; but I preie the oonly this,  
 that thow ne tarie nat to telle me thilke thinges  
 that thou hast moevid."  
 "First," quod sche, "thow most nedes knowen  
 that good folk ben alwey strong and myghti,  
 and the schrewes ben feble and desert and  
 10 naked of alle strengthes. And of thise

thinges, certes, everiche of hem is declared  
 and schewed by other. For so as good and  
 yvel ben two contraries, yif so be that good be  
 stedfast, thanne scheweth the feblesse of yvel  
 al opynly; and yif thow knowe clerly the freelnesse  
 70-ch 16 of yvel, the stedfastnesse of good is  
 knowen. But for as moche as the fey of my  
 sentence schal ben the more ferme and haboundant,  
 I wil gon by the to weye and by the  
 20 tothir, and I wil conferme the thinges that  
 ben purposed, now on this side and now on  
 that side.

"Two thinges ther ben in whiche the effect of  
 alle the dedes of mankynde standeth (that is to  
 seyn, wil and power); and yif that oon of thise  
 two faileth, ther nys nothing that may be doon.  
 For yif that wille lakketh, ther nys no wyght that  
 undirtaketh to done that he wol nat doon; and  
 yif power faileth, the wil nys but in idel and  
 30 stant for naught. And therof cometh it that  
 yif thou see a wyght that wolde geten that  
 he mai not geten, thow maist nat douter that  
 power ne faileth hym to have that he wolde."

"This is open and cler," quod I, "ne it ne mai  
 70-ch 35 nat be denyed in no manere."

"And yif thou se a wyght," quod sche, "that  
 hath doon that he wolde doon, thow nilt nat  
 douter that he ne hath had power to doon it?"

"No," quod I.

40 "And in that that every wyght may, in  
 that men may holden hym myghti. (As  
 who seith, in so moche as a man is myghty to  
 doon a thing, in so mochel men halt hym  
 myghti.) And in that that he ne mai, in that men  
 demen hym to ben feble."

"I confesse it wel," quod I.

"Remembreth the," quod sche, "that I have  
 70-ch 48 gaderid and ischewid by forseide resouns that al  
 the entencioun of the wil of mankynde,  
 50 whiche that is lad by diverse studies,  
 hasteth to comen to blisfulnesse."

70-ch 52 "It remembreth me wel," quod I, "that it hath

ben schewed."

"And recordeth the nat thanne," quod sche,  
"that blisfulnesse is thilke same good that men  
requiren, so that whanne that blisfulnesse is  
required of alle, that good also is required and  
desired of alle?"

70-ch 59 "It ne recordeth me noght," quod I, "for  
60 I have it gretly alwey ficched in my memorie."

"Alle folk thanne," quod sche, "goode and  
eek badde, enforcen hem withoute difference of  
entencioun to comen to good."

"This is a verray consequence," quod I.

"And certein is," quod sche, "that by the  
70-ch 67 getyng of good ben men ymakid gode."

"This is certein," quod I.

"Thanne geten gode men that thei desiren?"

"So semeth it," quod I.

"But wikkide folk," quod sche, "yif thei geten  
the good that thei desiren, thei ne mowe nat  
ben wikkid."

"So is it," quod I.

"Than so as the ton and the tothir," quod  
sche, "desiren good, and the gode folk geten  
good and not the wikkide folk, than is it no  
doute that the gode folk ne ben myghty  
80 and wikkid folk ben feble."

"Whoso that evere," quod I, "douteth  
of this, he ne mai nat considere the nature of  
thinges ne the consequence of resouns."

"And over this," quod sche, "if that ther ben  
two thinges that han o same purpos by kynde,  
and that oon of hem pursuweth and performeth  
thilke same thing by naturel office, and the  
tother mai nat doon thilke naturel office, but  
folweth, by other manere than is covenable  
90 to nature, hym that acomplisseth his purpos  
70-ch 91 kyndely, and yit he ne acomplisseth  
nat his owene purpos -- whethir of thise two  
demestow for more myghti?"

"Yif that I conjecte," quod I, "that thou wilt  
seie, algates yit I desire to herkne it more  
pleynly of the."



"Thou nilt nat thanne denye," quod sche,  
 "that the moevement of goynge nys in men by  
 kynde?"

100 "No, forsothe," quod I.

"Ne thou ne doutest nat," quod sche,  
 "that thilke naturel office of goinge ne be the  
 office of feet?"

"I ne doute it nat," quod I.

"Thanne," quod sche, "yif that a wight be  
 myghti to moeve, and goth uppon hise feet, and  
 another, to whom thilke naturel office of feet  
 lakketh, enforceth hym to gone crepinge uppon  
 70-ch 109 his handes, whiche of thise two oughte to  
 110 ben holden the more myghty by right?"

"Knyt forth the remenaunt," quod I,

"for no wight ne douteth that he that mai gon  
 70-ch 113 by naturel office of feet ne be more myghti than  
 he that ne may nat."

"But the sovereign good," quod sche, "that is  
 eveneliche purposed to the good folk and to  
 badde, the gode folk seken it by naturel office of  
 vertus, and the schrewes enforcen hem to getin  
 it by diverse coveytise of erthly thinges,  
 70-ch 120 whiche that nys noon naturel office to gete  
 thilke same sovereign good. Trowestow that  
 it be any other wise?"

"Nai," quod I, "for the consequence is opene  
 and schewynge of thinges that I have graunted,  
 70-ch 125 that nedes good folk moten be myghty, and  
 schrewes feble and unmyghti."

"Thou rennist aryght byforn me," quod sche,  
 "and this is the jugement (that is to sein, I juge  
 70-ch 129 of the), ryght as thise leches ben wont to  
 130 hopin of sike folk, whan thei aperceyven  
 that nature is redressed and withstondeth  
 to the maladye. But for I se the now al redy to  
 the undirstondynge, I schal schewe the more  
 thikke and contynuel resouns. For loke now,  
 how greetly scheweth the feblesse and infirmite  
 of wikkid folk, that ne mowen nat comen to that  
 hir naturel entencioun ledeth hem; and yit  
 almost thilke naturel entencioun constreyneth

hem. And what were to demen thanne of  
140 schrewes, yif thilk naturel help hadde  
forleten hem, the whiche naturel help of  
70-ch 142 entencioun goth alwey byforn hem and is so gret  
that unnethe it mai ben overcome? Considere  
thanne how gret defaute of power and how gret  
feblesse ther is in wikkide felonous folke. (As  
who seith, the grettere thing that is coveyted  
and the desir nat acomplissed, of the lasse  
myght is he that coveyteth it and mai nat  
acomplisse; and forthi Philosophie seith  
150 thus be sovereyn good.) Ne schrewes ne  
requeren not lighte meedes ne veyne  
games, whiche thei ne mai nat folwen ne holden;  
but thei failen of thilke somme and of the  
heighte of thinges (that is to seyn, soverein  
good). Ne these wrecches ne comen nat to the  
effect of sovereyn good, the whiche thei enforcen  
hem oonly to geten by nyghtes and by  
70-ch 158 dayes. In the getyng of whiche good the  
strengthe of good folk is ful wel yseene.  
160 For ryght so as thou myghtest demen hym  
myghty of goinge that goth on his feet til  
70-ch 162 he myghte comen to thilke place fro the whiche  
place ther ne laye no weie forthere to be gon,  
ryght so mostow nedes demen hym for ryght  
myghty, that geteth and atteyneth to the ende of  
alle thinges that ben to desire, byyonde the  
whiche ende ther nys no thing to desire. Of the  
whiche power of good folk men mai conclude  
70-ch 169 that the wikkide men semen to be bareyne  
170 and naked of alle strengthe.  
"For whi forleten thei vertus and folwen  
vices? Nys it nat for that thei ne knowen nat the  
godes? But what thing is more feble and more  
caytif than is the blyndnesse of ignorance? Or  
elles thei knowen ful wel whiche thinges that  
thei oughten folwe, but lecherie and covetise  
overthroweth hem mystorned. And certes so  
doth distempraunce to feble men, that ne  
mowen nat wrastlen ayen the vices. Ne  
180 knowen thei nat thanne wel that thei

forleten the good wilfully, and turnen hem  
wilfully to vices?

"And in this wise thei ne forleten nat oonly to  
ben myghti, but thei forleten al outrely in any  
wise for to been. For thei that forleten the  
comune fyn of alle thinges that ben, thei forleten  
also therwithal for to been. And peraventure  
70-ch 188 it scholde seme to som folk that this were  
a merveile to seien, that schrewes, whiche  
190 that contenen the more partie of men, ne  
ben nat ne han no beynge; but natheles it  
70-ch 192 is so, and thus stant this thing. For thei that Bo4 p2 ben  
schrewes I denye nat that they ben schrewes, but  
I denye and seie simply and pleyedly that thei ne  
ben nat, ne han no beynge. For right as thou  
myghtest seyn of the careyne of a man, that it  
were a deed man, but thou ne myghtest nat  
symply callen it a man; so graunte I wel forsothe  
70-ch 199 that vycious folk ben wikkid, but I ne may  
200 nat graunten absolutly and symply that thei  
ben. For thilke thing that withholdeth  
ordre and kepeth nature, thilke thing es, and  
hath beinge; but what thing that faileth of  
that (that is to seyn, he that forleteth naturel  
ordre), he forleteth thilke beinge that is set in his  
70-ch 206 nature.

"But thow wolt seyn that schrewes mowen.  
Certes, that ne denye I nat; but certes hir  
power ne desscendeth nat of strengthe,  
210 but of feblesse. For thei mowen don  
wikkydnesses, the whiche thei ne myghten  
nat don yif thei myghten duellen in the forme  
and in the doynge of good folk. And thilke  
power scheweth ful evidently that they ne  
70-ch 215 mowen ryght nat. For so as I have gadrid  
and proevid a litil herebyforn that evel is  
nawght, and so as schrewes mowen oonly but  
schrewednesses, this conclusion is al cler, that  
schrewes ne mowen ryght nat, ne han no  
220 power.

"And for as moche as thou undirstonde  
which is the strengthe of this power of schrewes,

I have diffynysched a litil herbyforn that no thing  
is so myghti as sovereyn good."

"That is soth," quod I.

"And thilke same sovereyn good may don  
noon yvel?"

"Certes, no," quod I.

"Is ther any wyght thanne," quod sche,  
230 "that weneth that men mowen don alle  
thinges?"

"No man," quod I, "but yif he be out of his  
wyt."

"But certes schrewes mowen don evel?" quod  
sche.

"Ye. Wolde God," quod I, "that thei ne  
myghten don noon!"

"Thanne," quod sche, "so as he that is myghty  
to doon oonly but goode thinges mai doon  
240 alle thinges, and thei that ben myghti to  
doon yvele thinges ne mowen nat alle  
thinges, thanne is it open thing and manyfest  
that thei that mowen doon yvele ben of lasse  
power.

"And yit to proeve this conclusioun ther  
helpeth me this, that I have schewed herebyforn,  
that alle power is to be noumbred among  
thinges that men oughten requere; and I have  
schewed that alle thinges that oughten ben  
250 desired ben referred to good, ryght as to a  
maner heighte of hir nature. But for to  
mowen don yvel and felonye ne mai nat ben  
referrid to good; thanne nys nat yvel of the  
nombre of thinges that oughten ben desired.  
But alle power aughte ben desired and requerid;  
thanne is it open and cler that the power ne the  
mowyng of schrewes nis no power.

"And of alle thise thinges it scheweth wel that  
the gode folk ben certeinli myghty, and the  
260 schrewes doutelees ben unmyghty. And  
it is cler and opene that thilke sentence  
of Plato is verray and soth, that seith that  
oonly wise men may doon that thei desiren,  
and schrewes mowen haunten that hem liketh,

but that thei desiren (that is to seyn, to come  
to sovereyn good), thei ne han no power to  
acomplissen that. For schrewes don that hem lyst  
whan, by tho thinges in whiche thei deliten, thei  
wenen to ateynen to thilke good that thei  
270 desiren; but thei ne geten ne ateyne nat  
therto, for vices ne comen nat to blisfulnesse.

"Whoso that the coverturis of hir veyn apparailes  
myghte strepen of thise proude kynges,  
that thow seest sitten an hye in here chayeres,  
gliterynge in schynyng purpre, envyrowned  
with sorwful armures, manasyng with cruel  
mowth, blowyng by woodnesse of herte, he  
schulde seen thanne that thilke lordis berin  
withynne hir corages ful streyte cheynes. For  
lecherye tormenteth hem on that o side  
10 with gredy venymes; and trowblable ire,  
that areyseth in hem the floodes of trowblynges,  
tormenteth upon that othir side hir  
thought; or sorwe halt hem wery and icawght,  
or slidyng and desceyvynge hope turmenteth  
hem. And therefore, syn thow seest on heved  
(that is to seyn, o tiraunt) beren so manye  
tyranyes, than ne doth thilke tyraunt nat that he  
desireth, syn he is cast down with so manye  
wikkid lordes (that is to seyn, with so  
20 manye vices that han so wikkidly lordschipes  
over hym).

"Seestow nat thanne in how greet filthe thise  
schrewes been iwrapped, and with which clernesse  
thise gode folk schynen? In this scheweth  
it wel that to good folk ne lakketh neveremo  
hir meedes, ne schrewes ne lakken neveremo  
turmentes. For of alle thinges that ben idoon,  
thilke thing for which any thing is doon, it  
semeth as by ryght that thilke thing be the  
mede of that; as thus, yif a man renneth in  
10 the stadye or in the forlonge for the  
corone, thanne lith the mede in the coroune  
for whiche he renneth. And I have schewed  
that blisfulnesse is thilke same good for whiche  
that alle thinges ben doon; thanne is thilke

same good purposed to the werkes of mankynde  
right as a comune mede, which mede ne  
may nat ben disseveryd fro good folk. For no  
wight as by ryght, fro thennesforth that hym  
lakketh goodnesse, ne schal ben cleped  
20 good. For whiche thing folk of gode maneres,  
hir medes ne forsaken hem neveremo.  
For al be it so that schrewes waxen as wode  
as hem lyst ayein good folk, yit natheles the  
coroune of wise men ne schal nat fallen ne  
faden; for foreyne schrewednesse ne bynemeth  
nat fro the corages of good folk hir propre  
honour. But yif that any wyght rejoysede hym  
of goodnesse that he hadde taken fro withoute  
(as who seith, yif any man hadde his goodnesse  
30 of any other man than of hymself),  
certes he that yaf hym thilke goodnesse, or  
elles som other wyght, myghte benymen it  
hym. But for as moche as to every wyght his  
owene propre bounte yeveth hym his mede,  
thanne at erste schal he failen of mede whan  
he forletith to ben good. And at the laste, so  
as alle medes ben requerid for men wenen that  
thei ben gode, who is he that nolde deme that  
he that is ryght myghti of good were partlees  
40 of the mede? And of what mede schal  
he ben gerdoned? Certes of ryght fair  
mede and ryght greet aboven alle medes. Remembre  
the of thilke noble corrolarie that I  
yaf the a litel herebyforn, and gadre it togidre  
in this manere: so as good [hytself] is blisfulnesse,  
thanne is it cler and certein that alle  
gode folk ben imaked blisful for thei ben gode;  
and thilke folk that ben blisful it accordeth and  
is covenable to ben goddes. Thanne is the  
50 mede of good folk swych that no day ne  
schal empeiren it, ne no wikkidnesse schal  
derkne it, ne power of no wyght ne schal nat  
amenusen it; that is to seyn, to ben maked  
goddes. And syn it is thus (that gode men ne  
failen neveremo of hir mede), certes no wise man  
ne may doute of the undepartable peyne of

schrewes (that is to seyn, that the peyne of  
schrewes ne departeth nat from hemself neveremo).  
For so as good and yvel, and peyne and  
60 medes, ben contrarie, it moot nedes ben  
that, ryght as we seen betyden in guerdoun  
of gode, that also moot the peyne of yvel answeere  
by the contrarie partie to schrewes. Now  
thanne, so as bounte and pruesse ben the mede  
to good folk, also is schrewidnesse itself torment  
to schrewes. Thanne whoso that evere is  
entecchid or defouled with peyne, he ne douteth  
nat that he nys entecchid and defouled  
with yvel. Yif schrewes thanne wol preysen  
70 himself, may it semen to hem that thei ben  
withouten parti of torment, syn thei ben  
swiche that the uttreste wikkidnesse (that is to  
seyn, wikkide thewes, which that is the uttereste  
and the worst kynde of schrewednesse)  
ne defouleth ne enteccheth nat hem oonly, but  
enfeteth and envenymeth hem greetly? And  
also loke on schrewes, that ben the contrarie  
partie of gode men, how gret peyne felawshipith  
and folweth hem! For thou hast  
80 lerned a litil herebyforn that alle thing that  
is and hath beyng is oon, and thilke same  
oon is good: than is this the consequence, that  
it semeth wel that al that is and hath beyng  
is good. (This is to seyn, as who seith that  
beinge and unite and goodnesse is al oon.)  
And in this manere it folweth thanne that alle  
thing that fayleth to ben good, it stynteth for  
to be and for to han any beyng. Wherefore it  
es that schrewes stynten for to ben that  
90 thei weeren. But thilke othir forme [of] [the]  
[body] of mankynde (that is to seyn, the  
[forme] withowte) scheweth yit that thise  
schrewes weren whilom men. Wherefore, whan  
thei ben perverted and turned into malice,  
certes, thanne have thei forlorn the nature of  
mankynde. But so as oonly bownte and prowesse  
may enhawnsen every man over othere  
men, than moot it nedes be that schrewes,

whiche that schrewednesse hath cast out of  
 100 the condicion of mankynde, ben put undir  
 the merit and the dissert of men. Than  
 betidith it that, yif thou seest a wyght that be  
 transformed into vices, thow ne mayst nat wene  
 that he be a man. For if he be ardaunt in avaryce,  
 and that he be a ravynour by violence of foreyne  
 riches, thou schalt seyn that he is lik to the  
 wolf; and if he be felonows and withoute reste,  
 and exercise his tonge to chidynges, thow schalt  
 likne hym to the hownd; and if he be a  
 110 pryve awaytour yhid, and rejoiseth hym to  
 ravyssche be wiles, thow schalt seyn hym  
 lik to the fox whelpes; and yif he be distempre,  
 and quakith for ire, men schal wene that he  
 bereth the corage of a lyoun; and yif he be  
 dredful and fleyng, and dredith thinges that ne  
 aughte nat to ben dredd, men schal holden hym  
 lik to the hert; and yf he be slow, and astonyd,  
 and lache, he lyveth as an asse; yif he be lyght  
 and unstedfast of corage and chaungith ay  
 120 his studies, he is likned to briddes; and if he  
 be ploungid in fowle and unclene luxuris,  
 he is withholden in the foule delices of the fowle  
 sowe. Than folweth it that he that forleteth  
 bounte and prowess, he forletith to ben a man;  
 syn he ne may nat passe into the condicion of  
 God, he is torned into a beeste.

"Eurus, the wynd, aryved the sayles of Ulixes,  
 duc of the cuntre of Narice, and his wandrynge  
 shippes by the see, into the ile theras  
 Cerces, the faire goddess, dowhter of the  
 sonne, duelleth, that medleth to hir newe  
 gestes drynkes that ben touchid and makid  
 with enchaumentz. And aftir that hir hand,  
 myghti over the erbes, hadde chaunged hir  
 gestes into diverse maneres, that oon of  
 10 hem is coverid his face with forme of a  
 boor; the tother is chaungid into a lyoun  
 of the contre of Marmoryke, and his nayles and  
 his teth waxen; that oother of hem is newliche  
 chaunged into a wolf, and howleth whan he



wolde wepe; that other goth debonayrely in  
 the hows as a tigre of Inde. But al be it so  
 that the godhede of Mercurie, that is cleped  
 the bridde of Arcadye, hath had merci of the  
 duc Ulixes, bysegid with diverse yveles,  
 20 and hath unbownden hym fro the pestilence  
 of his oostesse, algates the rowerys  
 and the maryneres hadden by this idrawen into  
 hir mouthes and dronken the wikkide drynkes.  
 Thei that weren woxen swyn hadden by this  
 ichaunged hir mete of breed for to eten akkornes  
 of ookes. Noon of hir lymes ne duelleth  
 with hem hool, but thei han lost the voys  
 and the body; oonly hir thought duelleth with  
 hem stable, that wepeth and bywayleth the  
 30 monstrous chaungynge that thei suffren.  
 O overlyght hand! (As who seith. O  
 feble and light is the hand of Circes the enchaunteresse,  
 that chaungith the bodies of  
 folk into beestes, to regard and to comparysoun  
 of mutacioun that is makid by vices!)  
 Ne the herbes of Circes ne ben nat myghty.  
 For al be it so that thei mai chaungen the  
 lymes of the body, algates yit thei may nat  
 chaungen the hertes. For withinne is ihidd  
 40 the strengthe and the vygour of men, in the  
 secre tour of hir hertes, (that is to seyn, the  
 strengthe of resoun); but thilke venyms of vices  
 todrawen a man to hem more myghtely than  
 the venym of Circes. For vices ben so cruel  
 that they percen and thurw-passen the corage  
 withinne; and, thoughe thei ne anoye nat the  
 body, yit vices woden to destroyen men by  
 wounde of thought."  
 Thanne seide I thus: "I confesse and am  
 aknowe it," quod I, "ne I ne se nat that men  
 may seyn as by ryght that schrewes ne ben  
 chaunged into beestes by the qualite of hir  
 soules, al be it so that thei kepin yit the forme  
 of the body of mankynde. But I nolde nat of  
 schrewes, of whiche the thought crwel woodeth  
 alwey into destruccion of gode men, that

it were leueful to hem to don that."

10 "Certes," quod sche, "ne it is nat leueful  
to hem, as I schal wel schewen the in covenable  
place. But natheles, yif so were that  
thilke that men wenen ben leueful to schrewes  
were bynomyn hem, so that they ne myghte  
nat anoyen or doon harm to gode men, certes  
a gret partie of the peyne to schrewes scholde  
ben alegged and releved. For al be it so that  
this ne seme nat credible thing peraventure to  
some folk, yit moot it nedes be that

20 schrewes ben more wrecches and unsely  
whan thei mai doon and parforme that  
thei coveyten, than yif thei ne myghte nat  
acomplissen that thei coveiten. For yif so  
be that it be wrecchidnesse to wilne to doon  
yvel, thanne is it more wrecchidnesse to mowe  
don yvel, withoute whiche mowynge the wrecchid  
wil scholde langwisse withouten effect.

Thanne syn that everiche of thise thinges hath his  
wrecchidnesse (that is to seyn, wil to don  
30 ivel and mowynge to don yvel), it moot  
nedes be that schrewes ben constreyned by  
thre unselynesses, that wolen, and mowen, and  
parformen felonyes and schrewednesses."

"I acorde me," quod I; "but I desire gretly  
that schrewes losten sone thilke unselynesses,  
that is to seyn, that schrewes weren despoyled  
of mowynge to don yvel."

"So schollen thei," quod sche, "sonnere peraventure  
than thou woldest, or sonnere

40 than they hemselfe wene. For ther nis  
nothing so late, in so schorte bowndes of  
this lif, that is long to abyde, nameliche to a corage  
immortel. Of whiche schrewes the grete  
hope and the heye compassynges of schrewednesses  
is ofte destroyed by a sodeyn ende, or  
thei ben war; and that thing establisseth to  
schrewes the ende of hir schrewednesse. For  
yf that schrewednesse makith wrecches, than  
mot he nedes ben moost wrecchide that  
50 lengest is a schrewe. The whiche wikkide

schrewes wolde I demen althermost unsely  
 and kaytifs, yif that hir schrewednesse ne were  
 fynissched at the leste weye by the owtreste  
 deth; for yif I have concluded soth of the unselynesse  
 of schrewednesse, thanne schewith it  
 clerly that thilke wrecchidnesse is withouten  
 ende the whiche is certein to ben perdurable."

"Certes," quod I, "this conclusioun is hard and  
 wondirful to graunte; but I knowe wel  
 60 that it accordeth moche to the thinges that  
 I have grauntid herebiforn."

"Thou hast," quod sche, "the ryght estimacion  
 of this. But whosoevere wene that it be  
 an hard thing to accorde hym to a conclusioun,  
 it is ryght that he schewe that some  
 of the premysses ben false, or elles he mot  
 schewe that the collacioun of proposicions  
 nis nat spedful to a necessarie conclusioun;  
 and yif it ne be nat so, but that the premisses  
 70 ben ygraunted, ther nys nat why he  
 scholde blame the argument. For this thing  
 that I schal telle the now ne schal nat seme  
 lesse wondirful, but of the thingis that ben  
 taken also it is necessarie." (As who seith, it  
 folweth of that which that is purposed byforn.)

"What is that?" quod I.

"Certes," quod sche, "that is that thise wikkid  
 schrewes ben more blisful, or elles  
 80 lasse wrecches, that abyen the tormentz  
 that thei han desservid, than if no peyne of  
 justise ne chastisede hem. Ne this ne seie I  
 nat now for that any man myghte thinke that  
 the maneris of schrewes ben coriged and chastised  
 by vengeaunce and that thei ben brought  
 to the ryghte weye by the drede of the torment,  
 ne for that they yeven to other folk ensauple  
 to fleen fro vices; but I undirstonde yit in another  
 manere that schrewes ben more unsely  
 90 whan thei ne ben nat punyssched, al  
 be it so that ther ne be hadde no resoun or  
 lawe of correccioun, ne noon ensample of  
 lokynge."

"And what manere schal that be," quod I,  
"other than hath ben told herbyforn?"  
"Have we nat thanne graunted," quod sche,  
"that good folk ben blisful and schrewes ben  
wrecches?"

"Yis," quod I.

100 "Thanne," quod sche, "yif that any good  
were added to the wrecchidnesse of any  
wyght, nis he nat more blisful than he that  
ne hath no medlynge of good in his solitarie  
wrecchidnesse?"

"So semeth it," quod I.

"And what seistow thanne," quod sche, "of  
thilke wrecche that lakketh alle goodes so that  
no good nys medlyd in his wrecchidnesse,  
and yit over al his wikkidnesse, for which  
110 he is a wrecche, that ther be yit another  
yvel anexed and knyht to hym -- schal nat  
men demen hym more unsely thanne thilke  
wrecche of whiche the unselynesse is relevid by  
the participacioun of som good?"

"Why sholde he nat?" quod I.

"Thanne certes," quod sche, "han schrewes,  
whan thei ben punyschid, somewhat of good  
anexid to hir wrecchidnesse (that is to seyn, the  
same peyne that thei suffren, which that is  
120 good by the resoun of justice); and whanne  
thilke same schrewes ascapen withouten  
torment, than han they somewhat more of yvel  
yit over the wikkidnesse that thei han don, that  
is to seyn, defaute of peyne, whiche defaute of  
peyne thou hast grauntid is yvel for the disserte  
of felonye?"

"I ne may nat denye it," quod I.

"Moche more thanne," quod sche, "ben  
schrewes unsely whan thei ben wrongfully  
130 delivred fro peyne, thanne whan thei  
ben punyschid by ryghtful vengeaunce.  
But this is opene thing and cleer, that it is ryght  
that schrewes ben punyschid, and it is wikkidnesse  
and wrong that thei escapen unpunyschid."

"Who myghte denye that?" quod I.

"But," quod sche, "may any man denye that  
al that is ryght nis good, and also the contrarie,  
that al that is wrong is wikke?"

140 "Certes," quod I, "thise thinges ben  
clere ynowe, and [folwen that] that we han  
concluded a lytel herebyforn. But I preye the  
that thou telle me, yif thou accorded to leten  
no torment to the soules aftir that the body is  
ended by the deeth?" (This to seyn, "Undirstonde thou  
aught that soules han any  
torment aftir the deeth of the body?")

"Certes," quod sche, "ye, and that ryght  
greet. Of whiche soules," quod sche, "I

150 trowe that some ben tormented by asprenesse  
of peyne, and some soules I trowe  
ben excercised by a purgynge mekenesse; but  
my conseil nys nat to determyne of thise peynes.

"But I have travailed and told yit hiderto for  
thou scholdest knowe that the mowynge of  
schrewes, whiche mowynge the semeth to ben  
unworthy, nis no mowynge; and ek of schrewes,  
of whiche thou pleyndest that they ne were nat  
punysshid, that thou woldest seen that

160 thei ne were neveremo withouten the  
tormentz of hir wikkidnesse; and of the  
licence of mowynge to don yvel that thou  
preyedest that it myghte sone ben ended, and  
that thou woldest fayn lerne that it ne sholde  
nat longe endure, and that schrewes ben more  
unsely yif thei were of lengere durynge, and  
most unsely yif thei weren perdurable. And aftir  
this I have schewyd the that more unsely ben  
schrewes whan thei escapen withouten hir  
170 ryghtful peyne thanne whan thei ben  
punyschid by ryghtful venjaunce; and of  
this sentence folweth it that thanne ben schrewes  
constreyned at the laste with most grevous  
torment, whan men wene that thei ne ben nat  
punysshid."

"Whan I considere thi resouns," quod I, "I ne  
trowe nat that men seyn any thing more  
verrayly. And yif I turne ayein to the studies of

men, who is he to whom it sholde seme that  
180 he ne scholde nat oonly leven thise thinges,  
but ek gladly herkne hem?"

"Certes," quod sche, "so it es -- but men may  
nat. For they have hir eien so wont to the  
derknesse of erthly thinges that they ne may nat  
lyften hem up to the light of cler sothfastnesse,  
but thei ben lyk to briddes of whiche the nyght  
lightneth hir lokynge and the day blendith hem.  
For whan men loke nat the ordre of thinges, but  
hir lustes and talentz, they wene that either  
190 the leve or the mowynge to don wikkidnesse,  
or elles the scapyng withouten  
peyne be weleful.

"But considere the jugement of the perdurable  
lawe. For yif thou conferme thi corage to the  
beste thinges, thou ne hast noon nede of no juge  
to yeven the prys or mede; for thou hast joyned  
thiself to the most excellent thing. And yif thou  
have enclyned thi studies to the wikkide thinges,  
ne seek no foreyne wrekere out of thiself;  
200 for thou thiself hast thrist thiself into wikke  
thinges, ryght as thou myghtest loken by  
diverse tymes the fowle erthe and the hevene,  
and that alle othere thinges stynten fro withoute,  
so that thou nere neyther in [hevene] ne in  
erthe, ne saye no thyng more; thanne scholde it  
semen to the as by oonly resoun of lokynge that  
thou were now in the sterres, and now in the  
erthe. But the peple ne loketh nat on these  
thinges. What thanne? Schal we thanne  
210 approchen us to hem that I have schewed  
that thei ben lyke to beestes? And what  
wyltow seyn of this: yif that a man hadde al  
forlorn his syghte, and hadde foryeten that he  
evere sawhe, and wende that no thing ne faylede  
hym of perfeccioun of mankynde; now we that  
myghten sen the same thinges -- wolde we nat  
wene that he were blynd? Ne also ne accordeth  
nat the peple to that I schal seyn, the whiche  
thing is sustenyd by as stronge foundementz  
220 of resouns, that is to seyn, that

more unsely ben they that doon wrong to  
othere folk, than they that the wrong suffren."

"I wolde here thilke same resouns," quod I.

"Denyestow," quod sche, "that alle schrewes  
ne ben worthy to han torment?"

"Nay," quod I.

"But," quod sche, "I am certein by many  
resouns that schrewes ben unsely."

"It accordeth," quod I.

230 "Thanne ne dowtestow nat," quod sche,

"that thilke folk that ben worthy of  
torment, that they ne ben wrecches?"

"It accordeth wel," quod I.

"Yif thou were thanne iset a juge or a  
knowere of thinges, whethir trowestow that men  
scholden tormenten, hym that hath don the  
wrong or elles hym that hath suffred the  
wrong?"

"I ne doute nat," quod I, "that I nolde

240 doon suffisaunt satisfaccioun to hym that

hadde suffrid the wrong, by the sorwe of  
hym that hadde doon the wrong."

"Thanne semeth it," quod sche, "that the  
doere of wrong is more wrecche than he that  
hath suffride wrong?"

"That folweth wel," quod I.

"Than," quod sche, "by thise causes and by  
othere causes that ben enforced by the same  
roote, that filthe [of] synne be the propre

250 nature of it maketh men wrecches, [it]

scheweth wel that the wrong that men

doon nis nat the wrecchidnesse of hym that  
resceyveth the wrong, but the wrecchidnesse of  
hym that dooth the wrong. But certes," quod

sche, "thise oratours or advocattes don al the  
contrarie; for thei enforcen hem to commoeve  
the juges to han pite of hem that han suffrid  
and resceyved the thinges that ben grevous  
and aspre, and yit men scholden more

260 ryghtfully han pite of hem that doon the

grevances and the wronges: the whiche

schrewes it were a more covenable thing that the

accusours or advocattes, nat wrooth but pytous  
 and debonayre, ledden tho schrewes that han  
 don wrong to the jugement ryght as men leden  
 syke folk to the leche, for that thei sholden seken  
 out the maladyes of synne by torment. And  
 by this covenant, eyther the entent of the  
 deffendours or advocatz sholde fayle and  
 270 cesen in al, or elles, yif the office of  
 advocatz wolde betre profiten to men, it  
 sholde be torned into the habyte of accusacioun.  
 (That is to seyn, thei scholden accuse  
 schrewes, and nat excusen hem.) And eek the  
 schrewes hemself, yif it were leveful to hem to  
 seen at any clifte the vertu that thei han forleten,  
 and sawen that they scholden putten adoun the  
 filthes of hir vices by the tormentz of peynes,  
 they ne aughten nat, ryght for the  
 280 recompensacioun for to geten hem bounte  
 and prowessse whiche that thei han lost,  
 demen ne holden that thilke peynes weren  
 tormentz to hem; and eek thei wolden refuse the  
 attendaunce of hir advocattz, and taken hemself  
 to hir juges and to hir accusours. For whiche it  
 betyde that, as to the wise folk, ther nis no  
 place yleten to hate (that is to seyn, that hate  
 ne hath no place among wise men); for no  
 wyght nil haten gode men, but yif he were  
 290 overmochel a fool, and for to haten  
 schrewes it nis no resoun. For ryght so as  
 langwissynge is maladye of body, ryght so ben  
 vices and synne maladye of corage; and so as we  
 ne deme nat that they that ben sike of hir body  
 ben worthy to ben hated, but rather worthy of  
 pite; wel more worthy nat to ben hated, but  
 for to ben had in pite, ben thei of whiche  
 the thoughtes ben constreyned by felonous  
 wikkidnesse, that is more crwel than any  
 300 langwissynge of body.

"What deliteth yow to exciten so grete moevynges  
 of hatredes, and to hasten and bysien  
 the fatal disposicioun of your deth with your  
 propre handes (that is to seyn, by batayles or



contek)? For yif ye axen the deth, it hasteth  
 hym of his owene wil, ne deth ne taryeth nat  
 his swifte hors. And the men that the serpent,  
 and the lyoun, and the tigre, and the  
 bere, and the boor, seken to sleen with hir  
 10 teeth, yit thilke same men seken to sleen  
 everiche of hem oothir with swerd. Lo, for  
 hir maneres ben diverse and discordaunt, thei  
 moeven unryghtful oostes and cruel batayles,  
 and wilnen to perise by entrechaungynge of  
 dartes! But the resoun of cruelte nis nat inowhe  
 ryghtful. Wiltow thanne yelden a covenable  
 gerdoun to the dissertes of men? Love ryghtfully  
 good folk, and have pite on schrewes."

"Thus se I wel," quod I, "eyther what blisfulnesse  
 or elles what unselynesse is establisshid  
 in the dissertes of gode men and of  
 schrewes. But in this ilke fortune of peple I  
 se somewhat of good and somewhat of yvel. For  
 no wise man hath nat levere ben exiled, pore  
 and nedy and nameles, thanne for to duellen  
 in his cyte, and flouren of rychesses, and be  
 redowtable by honour and strong of power.  
 10 For in this wise more clerly and more witnesfully  
 is the office of wise men ytreted,  
 whanne the blisfulnesse and the pouste of  
 gouvernours is, as it ware, ischadde among peples  
 that ben neyghbors and subgitz; syn that  
 namely prisown, lawe, and thise othere tormentz  
 of laweful peynes ben rather owed to  
 felonous citezeins, for the whiche felonous citezeins  
 tho peynes ben establisschid than for  
 good folk.

20 "Thanne I merveile me gretly," quod I,  
 "why that the thinges ben so mysentrechaunged  
 that tormentz of felonyes pressen and  
 confounden good folk, and schrewes ravysschen  
 medes of vertu and ben in honours  
 and in grete estat; and I desire eek for to  
 witen of the what semeth the to be the resoun  
 of this so wrongful a confusioun; for I wolde  
 wondre wel the lasse, yif I trowede that alle

thise thinges weren medled by fortunows  
 30 hap. But now hepith and encreseth myn  
 astonyenge God, governour of thinges,  
 that, so as God yyveth ofte tymes to gode men  
 godes and myrthes, and to schrewes yvelis and  
 aspre thinges, and yeveth ayeinward to good  
 folk hardnesses, and to schrewes he graunteth  
 hem hir wil and that they desiren -- what difference  
 thanne may ther be bytwixen that that  
 God doth and the hap of fortune, yif men ne  
 knowe nat the cause why that it is?"

40 "Ne it nis no merveile," quod sche,  
 "thowh that men wenen that ther be somewhat  
 foolisshe and confus, whan the resoun of  
 the ordre is unknowe. But although that thou  
 ne knowe nat the cause of so gret a disposicioun,  
 natheles for as moche as God, the gode  
 governour, atempreth and governeth the world,  
 ne doute the nat that alle thinges ne ben don  
 aryght.

"Whoso that ne knowe nat the sterres of  
 Arctour, yturned neyghe to the sovereyne centre  
 or poynt (that is to seyn, yturned neyghe to  
 the sovereyne pool of the firmament), and wot  
 nat why the sterre Boetes passeth or gadreth  
 his waynes and drencheth his late flaumbes in  
 the see; and whi that Boetes, the sterre, unfooldeth  
 hise overswifte arysynges, thanne schal  
 he wondryn of the lawe of the heie eyr.

10 And eek yif that he ne knowe nat why that  
 the hornes of the fulle mone waxen pale  
 and infect by bowndes of the derk nyght, and  
 how the mone derk and confus discovereth the  
 sterres that sche hadde covered by hir clere  
 vysage. The comune errour moeveth folk, and  
 [the Coribantes maken hir tabours sounen and  
 maken] weery hir basyns of bras by thikke  
 strokes. (That is to seyn, that ther is a maner  
 peple that hyghte Coribantes, that wenen  
 20 that whan the mone is in the eclips that  
 it be enchaunted, and therfore for to  
 rescowe the mone thei betyn hir basyns with

thikke strokes.) Ne no man ne wondreth  
 whanne the blastes of the wynd Chorus beten  
 the strondes of the see by quakyng floodes; ne  
 no man ne wondrith whan the weighte of the  
 snowh, ihardid by the cold, is resolvyd by the  
 brennyng hete of Phebus, the sonne; for her  
 seen men redily the causes. But [ther] the  
 30 causes yhidd (that is to seyn, in hevene)  
 trowblen the brestes of men. The  
 moevable peple is astoned of alle thinges that  
 comen seelde and sodeynly in our age; but yif  
 the trubly errour of our ignoraunce departed fro  
 us, so that we wisten the causes why that swiche  
 thinges bytyden, certes thei scholde cesen to  
 seme wondres."

"Thus is it," quod I. "But so as thou hast  
 yeven or byhyght me to unwrappen the hidde  
 causes of thinges, and to discovere me the  
 resouns covered with derknes, I preie the that  
 thou devyse and juge me of this matere, and  
 that thou do me to undirstonden it. For this  
 miracle or this wonder trowbleth me ryght  
 gretly."

And thanne sche, a litelwhat smylinge,  
 10 seide: "Thou clepist me," quod sche, "to  
 telle thing that is gretteste of alle thingis  
 that mowen ben axed, and to the whiche questioun  
 unnethes is ther aught inowh to laven  
 it. (As who seith, unnethes is ther suffisauntly  
 any thing to answeren parfitly to thy questioun.)  
 For the matere of it is swich, that  
 whan o doute is determined and kut away, ther  
 waxen othere doutes withoute nombre, ryght  
 as the hevedes wexen of Idre, the serpent  
 20 that Hercules slowh. Ne ther ne were no  
 manere ne noon ende, but if that a wyght  
 constreynede tho doutes by a ryght lifly and  
 quyk fir of thought (that is to seyn, by vigour  
 and strengthe of wit). For in this matere  
 men weren wont to maken questiouns of the  
 symplicite of the purveaunce of God, and of  
 the ordre of destyne, and of sodeyn hap, and

of the knowynge and predestinacioun devyne,  
 and of the liberte of fre wil; the whiche  
 30 thinges thou thiself aperceyvest wel of  
 what weighte thei ben. But for as moche  
 as the knowynge of thise thinges is a maner  
 porcioun of the medycyne to the, al be it so  
 that I have litil tyme to doon it, yit natheles  
 Y wol enforcen me to schewe somewhat of it.  
 But although the norysynges of dite of musyk  
 deliteth the, thou most suffren and forberen a  
 litel of thilke delit, whil that I weve to the resouns  
 yknyt by ordre."

40 "As it liketh to the," quod I, "so do."

Tho spak sche ryght as by another bygynnyng,  
 and seide thus: "The engendryng  
 of alle thinges," quod sche, "and alle the progressiouns  
 of muable nature, and al that moeveth  
 in any manere, taketh hise causes, his ordre,  
 and his formes, of the stablenesse of the devyne  
 thought. And thilke devyne thought that  
 is iset and put in the tour (that is to seyn, in  
 the heighte) of the simplicite of God, stablissith  
 50 many maner gises to thinges that ben  
 to done; the whiche manere whan that  
 men looken it in thilke pure clenness of the  
 devyne intelligence, it is ycleped purveaunce;  
 but whanne thilke manere is referred by men  
 to thinges that it moeveth and disponyth, than  
 of olde men it was clepyd destyne. The whiche  
 thinges yif that any wyght loketh wel in his  
 thought the strengthe of that oon and of that  
 oothir, he schal lyghtly mowen seen that  
 60 thise two thinges ben dyvers. For purveaunce  
 is thilke devyne resoun that is establissid  
 in the sovereyn prince of thinges, the  
 whiche purveaunce disponith alle thinges; but,  
 certes, destyne is the disposicioun and ordenance  
 clyvyng to moevable thinges, by the  
 whiche disposicion the purveaunce knytteth  
 alle thingis in hir ordres; for purveaunce enbraceth  
 alle thinges to-hepe, althoghe that thei  
 ben diverse and although thei ben infinit.

70 But destyne, certes, departeth and ordeyneth  
alle thinges singulerly and devyded in  
moevynges in places, in formes, in tymes, as  
thus: lat the unfoldynge of temporel ordenaunce,  
assembled and oonyd in the lokynge  
of the devyne thought, be cleped purveaunce,  
and thilke same assemblynge and oonyng, devyded  
and unfolden by tymes, lat that ben  
called destyne.

"And al be it so that thise thinges ben  
80 diverse, yit natheles hangeth that oon of  
that oother; forwhi the ordre destynal  
procedith of the simplicite of purveaunce. For  
ryght as a werkman that aperceyveth in his  
thought the forme of the thing that he wol make,  
and moeveth the effect of the werk, and ledith  
that he hadde lookid byforn in his thought  
symplely and presently by temporel ordenaunce;  
certes, ryght so God disponith in his  
purveaunce singulerly and stablely the  
90 thinges that ben to doone; but he  
amynistreth in many maneris and in diverse  
tymes by destyne thilke same thinges that he  
hath disponyd. Thanne, whethir that destyne be  
exercised outhir by some devyne spiritz,  
servantz to the devyne purveaunce, or elles by  
some soule, or elles by alle nature servynge to  
God, or elles by the celestial moevynges of  
sterres, or ellis by vertu of aungelis, or elles by  
divers subtilite of develis, or elles by any of  
100 hem, or elles by hem alle the destinal  
ordenaunce is ywoven and acomplissid,  
certes, it es opene thing that the purveaunce is  
an unmoevable and symple forme of thinges  
to doone, and the moevable bond and the  
temporel ordenaunce of thinges whiche that the  
devyne symplite of purveaunce hath ordeyned  
to doone, that is destyne.

"For whiche it is that alle thinges that ben  
put undir destyne ben certes subgitz to  
110 purveaunce, to whiche purveaunce destyne  
itself is subgit and under. But some thinges

ben put undir purveaunce, that sourmounten  
 the ordenance of destyne; and tho ben thilke  
 that stablye ben ifycchid neyghe to the first  
 godhede. They surmounten the ordre of  
 destynal moevablete. For ryght as of cerklis that  
 tornen aboute a same centre or aboute a poynt,  
 thilke cerkle that is innerest or most withinne  
 joyneth to the symplesse of the myddle,  
 120 and is, as it were, a centre or a poynt to the  
 tothere cerklis that tornen abouten hym;  
 and thilke that is utterest, compased by a largere  
 envyrownynge, is unfolden by largere spaces in  
 so moche as it is ferthest fro the myddel  
 symplite of the poynt; and yif ther be any thing  
 that knytteth and felawschipeth hymself to thilke  
 myddel poynt, it is constreyned into simplicite  
 (that is to seyn, into unmoevablete), and it  
 ceseth to ben schad and to fleten diversely;  
 130 ryght so, by semblable reson, thilke thing  
 that departeth ferrest fro the firste thought  
 of God, it is unfolden and summittid to grettere  
 bondes of destyne; and in so moche is the thing  
 more fre and laus fro destyne, as it axeth and  
 hooldeth hym neer to thilke centre of thinges  
 (that is to seyn, to God); and yif the thing  
 clyveth to the stedfastnesse of the thought of  
 God and be withoute moevynge, certes it  
 surmounteth the necessite of destyne.

140 Thanne ryght swich comparysoun as is of  
 skillynge to undirstondyng, and of thing  
 that ys engendrid to thing that is, and of tyme to  
 eternite, and of the cercle to the centre; ryght so  
 is the ordre of moevable destyne to the stable  
 symplite of purveaunce.

"Thilke ordenaunce moveth the hevene and  
 the sterres, and atemprith the elementz togidre  
 amonges hemself, and transformeth hem by  
 entrechaungeable mutacioun. And thilke  
 150 same ordre neweth ayein alle thinges  
 growynge and fallynge adoun, by semblable  
 progressions of sedes and of sexes (that  
 is to seyn, male and femele). And this ilke

ordre constreyneth the fortunes and the dedes of  
men by a bond of causes nat able to ben  
unbownde; the whiche destynal causes, whan  
thei passen out fro the bygynnynges of the  
unmoevable purveaunce, it moot nedes be that  
thei ne be nat mutable. And thus ben the  
160 thinges ful wel igoverned yif that the  
symplicite duellynge in the devyne thoght  
scheweth forth the ordre of causes unable to ben  
ibowed. And this ordre constreyneth by his  
propre stablete the moevable thingis, or elles  
thei scholden fleten follyly.

"For whiche it es that alle thingis semen to  
ben confus and trouble to us men, for we ne  
mowen nat considere thilke ordenaunce.  
Natheles the propre maner of every thing,  
170 dressynge hem to gode, disponith hem alle,  
for ther nys no thing doon for cause of yvel,  
ne thilk thing that is doon by wikkid folk nys nat  
doon for yvel, the whiche schrewes, as I have  
schewed ful plentyvously, seken good, but  
wikkid errour mystorneth hem; ne the ordre  
comynge fro the poynt of sovereyn good ne  
declyneth nat fro his bygynnyng.

"But thou mayst seyn, 'What unreste may ben  
a worse confusioun than that gode men  
180 han somtyme adversite and somtyme  
prosperite, and schrewes also han now  
thingis that they desiren and now thinges that  
thei haten?' Whethir men lyven now in swich  
holnesse of thought (as who seith, ben men now  
so wyse) that swiche folk as thei demen to ben  
gode folk or schrewes, that it moste nedes ben  
that folk ben swiche as thei wenen? But in this  
manere the domes of men discorden, that thilke  
men that som folk demen worthy of mede,  
190 other folk demen hem worthy of torment.  
But lat us graunten, I pose, that som man  
may wel demen or knowen the good folk and  
the badde; may he thanne knowen and seen  
thilke innereste atempaunce of corages as it  
hath ben wont to ben seyde of bodyes? (As who

seith, may a man speken and determinen of  
atempaunce in corages, as men were wont to  
demen or speken of complexions and atempaunces  
of bodies?) Ne it ne is nat an

200 unlike miracle to hem that ne knowen it nat  
(as who seith, but it is lik a mervayle or  
miracle to hem that ne knowen it nat) whi  
that swete thinges ben covenantable to some bodies  
that ben hole, and to some bodies byttere  
thinges ben covenantable; and also why that some  
syk folk ben holpen with lyghte medicynes, and  
some folk ben holpen with sharpe medicynes.

But natheles the leche, that knoweth the manere  
and the atempaunce of hele and of

210 maladye, ne mervyleth of it nothyng. But  
what othir thing semeth hele of corages but  
bounte and prowessse? And what othir thing  
semeth maladye of corages but vices? Who is  
elles keper of good or dryvere away of yvel but  
God, governour and lechere of thoughtes? The  
whiche God, whan he hath byholden from the  
hye tour of his purveaunce, he knoweth what is  
covenantable to every wight, and lenyth hem that  
he woot that is covenantable to hem. Lo, herof  
220 comyth and herof is don this noble miracle  
of the ordre destynal, whan God, that al  
knoweth, dooth swiche thing, of whiche thing  
unknowynge folk ben astonyd.

"But for to constreyne (as who seith, but for  
to comprehende and to telle) a fewe thingis of  
the devyne depnesse the whiche that mannys  
resoun may undirstonde, thilke man that thow  
wenest to ben ryght just and ryght kepyng of  
equite, the contrarie of that semeth to the  
230 devyne purveaunce, that al woot. And  
Lucan, my famylier, telleth that the  
victorious cause likide to the goddes, and the  
cause overcomen likide to Catoun. Thanne  
whatsoever thou mayst seen that is doon in this  
world unhopid or unwened, certes it es the  
ryghte ordre of thinges, but as to thi wikkid  
opynioun it is a confusioun. But I suppose that



som man be so wel ithewed that the devyne  
jugement and the jugement of mankynde  
240 accorden hem togidre of hym; but he is so  
unstidfast of corage that, yif any adversite  
come to hym, he wol forleten peraventure to  
continue innocence by the whiche he ne may  
nat withholden fortune. Thanne the wise  
dispensacion of God sparith hym, the whiche  
man adversite myghte enpeyren; for that God  
wol nat suffren hym to travaile to whom that  
travaile nis nat covenable. Anothir man is parfit  
in alle vertus, and is an holi man and neigh  
250 to God, so that the purveaunce of God  
wolde deme that it were a felonie that he  
were touched with any adversites; so that he wol  
nat suffre that swich a man be moeved with any  
bodily maladye. But so as seyde a philosophre,  
the more excellent by me -- he seyde in Grec  
that `vertues han edified the body of the holi  
man.'

"And ofte tyme it betydeth that the somme of  
thingis that ben to done is taken to governe  
260 to good folk, for that the malice  
haboundaunt of schrewes scholde ben  
abated. And God yeveth and departeth to other  
folk prosperites and adversites imedled to-hepe  
aftir the qualite of hir corages, and remordith  
some folk by adversite, for thei ne scholden nat  
waxen proude by long welefulnesse; and other  
folk he suffreth to ben travailed with harde  
thinges for that thei scholden confermen the  
vertues of corage by the usage and the  
270 exercitacioun of pacience. And other folk  
dreden more than thei oughten the whiche  
thei myghte wel beren, and thilke folk God  
ledeth into experience of hemself by aspre and  
sorweful thingis. And many other folk han  
bought honourable renoun of this world by the  
prys of glorious deth; and som men, that ne  
mowen nat ben overcomen by torment, han  
yeven ensample to other folk that vertu mai nat  
ben overcomyn by adversites. And of alle

280 thise thinges ther nis no doute that thei ne  
ben doon ryghtfully and ordeynly, to the  
profit of hem to whom we seen thise thingis  
betyde.

"For certes, that adversite cometh somtyme to  
schrewes and somtyme that that they desiren, it  
comith of thise forseide causes. And of sorweful  
thinges that betyden to schrewes, certes, no man  
ne wondreth. for alle men wenen that thei han  
wel desservid it, and that thei ben of wykkid  
290 meryt. Of whiche schrewes the torment  
somtyme agasteth othere to don felonyes,  
and somtyme it amendeth hem that suffren the  
tormentz; and the prosperite that is yeven to  
schrewes scheweth a gret argument to good  
folk what thing thei scholde demen of thilke  
welefulnesse, the whiche prosperite men seen  
ofte serven to schrewes. In the whiche thing I  
trowe that God dispenseth. For peraventure the  
nature of som man is so overthrowng to  
300 yvel, and so uncovenable, that the nedy  
poverte of his houshold myghte rather  
egren hym to don felonyes; and to the maladye  
of hym God putteth remedye to yeven hym  
rychesses. And som othir man byholdeth his  
conscience defouled with synnes, and makith  
comparysoun of his fortune and of hymself, and  
dredith peraventure that his blisfulnesse, of  
whiche the usage is joyeful to hym, that the  
lesynge of thilke blisfulnesse ne be nat  
310 sorwful to hym; and therefore he wol  
chaunge his maneris, and, for he dredith to  
lesen his fortune, he forletith his wikkidnesse.  
To other folke is welefulnesse iyeven unworthely,  
the whiche overthroweth hem into  
destruccioun, that thei han disservid; and to som  
othir folk is yeven power to punysshyn, for  
that it schal be cause of contynuacioun and  
exercisyng to good folk, and cause of torment  
to schrewes. For so as ther nis noon  
320 alliaunce bytwixe good folk and schrewes,  
ne schrewes ne mowen nat acorden among

himself. And whi nat? For schrewes discorden  
of himself by hir vices, the whiche vices al  
toreenden her consciences, and doon ofte time  
thinges the whiche thingis, whan thei han doon  
hem, they demen that tho thinges ne scholden  
nat han ben doon.

"For whiche thing thilke sovereyne purveaunce  
hath makid ofte tyme fair

330 myracle, so that schrewes han makid  
schrewes to ben gode men. For whan that  
some schrewes seen that they suffren wrongfully  
felonyes of othere schrewes, they wexen  
eschaufed into hate of hem that anoyed hem,  
and retornen to the fruyt of vertu, whan thei  
studien to ben unlyke to hem that thei han hated.  
Certis oonly this is the devyne myght to the  
whiche myghte yvelis ben thanne gode whan it  
useth the yvelis covenantly and draweth out  
340 the effect of any good. (As who seith that  
yvel is good only to the myghte of God, for  
the myght of God ordeyneth thilke yvel to  
good.)

"For oon ordre enbraseth alle thinges, so that  
what wyght that departeth fro the resoun of  
thilke ordre whiche that is assigned to hym,  
algatis yit he slideth into an othir ordre; so that  
no thing nis leveful to folye in the reaume of the  
devyne purveaunce (as who seith, no

350 thing nis withouten ordenaunce in the  
reame of the devyne purveaunce), syn that  
the ryght strong God governeth alle thinges in  
this world. For it nis nat leveful to man to  
comprenden by wit, ne unfolden by word,  
alle the subtil ordenaunces and disposiciounis of  
the devyne entente. For oonly it owghte suffise  
to han lokid that God hymself, makere of alle  
natures, ordeineth and dresseth alle thingis to  
gode; whil that he hasteth to withholden  
360 the thingis that he hath makid into his  
semblaunce (that is to seyn, for to withholden  
thingis into gode, for he hymself is  
good), he chasith out alle yvel fro the boundes

of his comynalite by the ordre of necessite  
 destinalite. For whiche it folweth that, yif thou  
 loke the purveaunce ordeynynge the thinges  
 that men wenen ben outraious or haboundaunt  
 in erthis, thou ne schalt nat seen in no place no  
 thing of yvel.

370 "But I se now that thou art charged with  
 the weyghte of the questioun, and wery  
 with the lengthe of my resoun, and that thou  
 abydest som swetnesse of songe. Tak thanne this  
 drawght, and, whanne thou art wel reffressched  
 and relect, thou schalt be more stedfast to styte  
 into heyere questions or thinges.

"Yif thou, wys, wilt demen in thi pure thought  
 the ryghtes or the lawes of the heye thondrere  
 (that is to seyn, of God), loke thou and byhoolde  
 the heightes of the sovereyn hevene.

Ther kepin the sterres, be ryghtful alliaunce of  
 thinges, hir oolde pees. The sonne, imoevid by  
 his rody fyr, ne distorbeth nat the colde cercle  
 of the mone. Ne the sterre yclepid the Bere,  
 that enclyneth his ravysschyng cours

10 abowte the sovereyn heighte of the world  
 -- ne the same sterre Ursa nis nevere mo  
 wasschen in the depe westrene see, ne coveteth  
 nat to deeyen his flaumbes in the see  
 of the Occian, although it see othere sterres  
 iplowngid in the see. And Hesperus the sterre  
 bodith and telleth alwey the late nyghtes, and  
 Lucyfer the sterre bryngeth ayein the clere  
 day.

"And thus maketh Love entrechaungeable  
 20 the perdurable courses; and thus is discordable  
 bataile yput out of the contre of  
 the sterres. This accordaunce atemptryth by evenelyke  
 maneres the elementz, that the moiste  
 thingis, stryvynge with the drye thingis, yeven  
 place by stoundes; and that the colde thingis  
 joynen hem by feyth to the hote thingis; and  
 that the lyghte fyr ariseth into heighte, and  
 the hevye erthes avalen by her weyghtes. By  
 thise same causes the floury yer yeldeth

30 swote smelles in the first somer sesoun  
warmynge; and the hote somer dryeth the  
cornes; and autumpne comith ayein hevy of  
apples; and the fletyng reyn bydweth the  
wynter. This atempraunce noryscheth and  
bryngeth forth alle thinges that brethith lif  
in this world; and thilke same atempraunce,  
ravysschyng, hideth and bynymeth, and  
drencheth undir the laste deth, alle thinges  
iborn.

40 "Among thise thinges sitteth the heye  
makere, kyng and lord, welle and bygynnyng,  
lawe and wys juge to don equite, and  
governeth and enclyneth the brydles of thinges.  
And tho thinges that he stireth to gon by  
moevynge, he withdraweth and aresteth, and  
affermethe the moevable or wandryng thinges.  
For yif that he ne clepide nat ayein the ryght  
goyng of thinges, and yif that he ne constreynede  
hem nat eftsones into roundnesses

50 enclyned, the thinges that ben now  
contynued by stable ordenaunce, thei scholden  
departen from hir welle (that is to seyn,  
from hir bygynnyng), and failen (that is to  
seyn, tornen into noght). This is the comune  
love to alle thingis, and alle thinges axen to ben  
holden by the fyn of good. For elles ne  
myghten they nat lasten yif thei ne comen nat  
eftsones ayein, by love retorned, to the cause  
that hath yeven hem beinge (that is to  
60 seyn, to God).

"Sestow nat thanne what thing folweth alle  
the thingis that I have seyd?"

"What thing?" quod I.

"Certes," quod sche, "al outrely that alle fortune  
is good."

"And how may that be?" quod I.

"Now undirstand," quod sche. "So as al fortune,  
whethir so it be joyeful fortune or aspre  
fortune, is yeven eyther by cause of gerdonyng  
10 or elles of exercisyng of good  
folk or elles by cause to punysshyn or elles

chastisen schrewes; thanne is alle fortune good,  
the whiche fortune is certeyn that it be either  
ryghtful or elles profitable."

"Forsothe this is a ful verray resoun," quod  
I; "and yif I considere the purveaunce and the  
destyne that thou taughtest me a litel herebyforn  
this sentence is sustenyd by stedfast  
resouns. But yif it like unto the, lat us  
20 nombren [hyt] amonges thilke thingis, of  
whiche thou seydest a litel herebyforn that  
thei ne were nat able to ben wened to the  
peple."

"Why so?" quod sche.

"For that the comune word of men," quod I,  
"mysuseth this manere speche of fortune, and  
seyn ofte tymes that the fortune of som wyght  
is wikkid."

"Woltow thanne," quod sche, "that I approche  
30 a litil to the wordis of the peple,  
so that it seme nat to hem that I be overmoche  
departed as fro the usage of mankynde?"

"As thou wilt," quod I.

"Demestow nat," quod sche, "that alle thing  
that profiteth is good?"

"Yis," quod I.

"And certes thilke thing that exerciseth or  
corrigith profitith?"

"I confesse it wel," quod I.

40 "Thanne is it good," quod sche.

"Why nat?" quod I.

"But this is the fortune," quod sche, "of hem  
that eyther ben put in vertu and batayllen  
ayein aspre thingis, or elles of hem that eschuen  
and declynen fro vices and taken the  
weye of vertu."

"This ne mai I nat denye," quod I.

"But what seistow of the merye fortune that  
is yeven to good folk in gerdoun -- demeth  
50 aught the peple that it is wikkid?"

"Nay forsothe," quod I; "but thei  
demen, as it soth is, that it is ryght good."

"And what seistow of that othir fortune,"

quod sche, "that, although it be aspre and  
restreyneth the schrewes by ryghtful torment,  
weneth aught the peple that it be good?"

"Nay," quod I, "but the peple demeth that  
it is moost wrecchid of alle thingis that mai  
ben thought."

60 "War now and loke wel," quod sche,  
"lest that we, in folwyng the opynioun of  
the peple, have confessid and concluded thing  
that is unable to be wened to the peple."

"What is that?" quod I.

"Certis," quod sche, "it folweth or comith of  
thingis that ben grauntid that alle fortune, what  
so evere it be, of hem that ben eyther in possessioun  
of vertu, or in the encres of vertu, or  
elles in the purchasyng of vertu, that thilke

70 fortune is good; and that alle fortune is  
ryght wikkid to hem that duellen in  
schrewidnesse." (As who seith. "And thus  
weneth nat the peple.")

"That is soth," quod I, "al be it so that no  
man dar confessen it ne byknowen it."

"Whi so?" quod sche; "for ryght as the  
stronge man ne semeth nat to abaissen or disdaignen  
as ofte tyme as he herith the noyse  
of the bataile, ne also it ne semeth nat to

80 the wise man to beren it grevously as ofte  
as he is lad into the stryf of fortune. For,  
bothe to the to man and eek to the tothir thilke  
difficulte is the matere, to the to man of encres  
of his glorious renoun, and to the tothir man  
to confermen his sapience (that is to seyn, to the  
asprenesse of his estat). For therfore it is  
called `vertu,' for that it sustenith and enforceth  
by hise strengthes that it nis nat overcomen by  
adversites. Ne certes thou, that art put in  
90 the encres or in the heyghte of vertu, ne  
hast nat comen to fleten with delices, and  
for to welken in bodily lust; thou sowest or  
plawntest a ful egre bataile in thy corage ayeins  
every fortune, for that the sorwful fortune ne  
confownde the nat, ne that the myrie fortune

ne corruppe the nat. Ocupye the mene by stidefast  
 strengthes; for al that evere is undir the  
 mene, or elles al that overpasseth the mene,  
 despyseth welefulnesse (as who seith, it  
 100 is vycious), and ne hath no mede of his  
 travaile. For it is set in your hand (as who  
 seith, it lyth in your power) what fortune yow  
 is levest (that is to seyn, good or yvel). For  
 alle fortune that semeth scharp or aspre, yif it  
 ne exercise nat the good folk ne chastiseth the  
 wikkide folk, it punysseth.

"The wrekere Attrides (that is to seyn, Agamenon),  
 that wrought and contynued the batailes  
 by ten yer, recovered and purgide in  
 wrekyng, by the destruccioun of Troye, the  
 loste chaumbris of mariage of his brothir.

(That is to seyn, that he, Agamenon, wan ayein  
 Eleyne that was Menelaus wif his brothir.)

In the mene while that thilke Agamenon desirede  
 to yeven sayles to the Grykkyssche

10 naveye, and boughte ayein the wyndes by  
 blood, he unclothide hym of pite of fadir;  
 and the sory preest yeveth in sacrifyenge the  
 wrecchide kuttinge of throte of the doughter.

(That is to seyn that Agamenon leet kутten the  
 throte of his doughter by the preest, to maken  
 alliaunce with his goddes and for to han wynd  
 with whiche he myghte wenden to Troye.)

"Ytakus (that is to seyn, Ulixes) bywepete his  
 felawes ilorne, the whiche felawes the

20 fyerse Poliphemus, ligginge in his grete cave,  
 had fretyn and dreynt in his empty wombe.

But natheles Poliphemus, wood for his blynde  
 visage, yald to Ulixes joye by his sorwful  
 teres. (This to seyn, that Ulixes smoot out the  
 eye of Poliphemus, that stood in his forheed,  
 for whiche Ulixes hadde joye whan he say Poliphemus  
 wepyng and blynd).

"Hercules is celebrable for his harde travailes.

He dawntide the proude Centauris (half  
 30 hors, half man), and he byrafte the dispoilynge  
 fro the cruel lyoun (that is to seyn, he



slouhe the lyoun and rafte hym his skyn); he  
 smot the briddes that hyghten Arpiis with certein  
 arwes; he ravysschide applis fro the wakyng  
 dragoun, and his hand was the more hevy  
 for the goldene metal; he drowh Cerberus, the  
 hound of helle, by his treble cheyne; he, overcomer,  
 as it is seyde, hath put an unmeke lord  
 foddre to his crwel hors (this to seyn, that  
 40 Hercules slowh Diomedes, and made his  
 hors to freten hym); and he, Hercules,  
 slowh Idra the serpent, and brende the venym;  
 and Acheleous the flod, defowled in his forheed,  
 dreynte his schamefast visage in his  
 strondes (that is to seyn, that Achaleous coude  
 transfiguren hymself into diverse liknesse, and,  
 as he faughte with Hercules, at the laste he  
 torned hym into a bole, and Hercules brak of  
 oon of his hornes, and he for schame hidde  
 50 hym in his ryver); and he, Hercules, caste  
 adoun Antheus the geaunt in the [sondes]  
 of Libye; and Kacus apaysede the wratthes of  
 Evander (this to seyn, that Hercules slouh the  
 monstre Kacus, and apaysed with that deth the  
 wratthe of Evander); and the bristiled boor  
 markide with scoms the scholdres of Hercules,  
 the whiche scholdres the heye cercle of  
 hevene sholde thriste; and the laste of his labours  
 was that he susteynede the hevene  
 60 uppon his nekke unbowed; and he disservide  
 eftsones the hevene to ben the pris  
 of his laste travaile.

"Goth now thanne, ye stronge men, ther as  
 the heye wey of the greet ensauple ledith  
 yow. O nyce men! why nake ye your bakkes?  
 (As who seith, "O ye slowe and delicat men!  
 whi flee ye adversites, and ne fyghte nat ayeins  
 hem by vertu, to wynnen the mede of the hevene?")  
 For the erthe overcomen yeveth the  
 70 sterres." (This to seyn, that whan that  
 erthly lust is overcomyn, a man is makid  
 worthy to the hevene.)



## BOOK 5

Sche hadde seyde, and tordned the cours of  
 hir resoun to some othere thingis to ben tured  
 and to ben ispedd. Thanne seide I, "Certes  
 ryghtful is thin amonestynge and ful digne by  
 auctorite. But that thou seydest whilom that  
 the questioun of the devyne purveaunce is enlaced  
 with many othere questiouns, I undirstande  
 wel and prove it by the same thing.

But I axe yif that thou wenest that hap be  
 10 anything in any weys; and yif thou wenest  
 that hap be anything, what is it?"

Thanne quod sche, "I haste me to yelden  
 and assoilen to the the dette of my byheste, and  
 to schewen and openen the the  
 wey, by whiche wey thou maist comen ayein to thi contre. But  
 al be it so that the thingis whiche that thou axest  
 ben ryght profitable to knowe, yit ben thei  
 divers somewhat fro the path of my purpos; and  
 it is to douten that thou ne be makid weery  
 20 by mysweyes, so that thou ne maist nat  
 suffise to mesuren the ryghte weie."

"Ne doute the therof nothing," quod I; "for  
 for to knowen thilke thingis togidre, in the  
 whiche thinges I delite me gretly -- that schal  
 ben to me in stede of reste, syn it nis nat to  
 douten of the thingis folwynge, whan every syde  
 of thi disputesoun schal han ben stedfast to me  
 by undoutous feyth."

"Thanne," seide sche, "that manere wol  
 30 I don the," and bygan to speken ryght thus:  
 "Certes," quod sche, "yif any wyght  
 diffynisse hap in this manere, that is to seyn that  
 `hap is bytydynge ibrought forth by foolisshe  
 moevynge and by no knyttyng of causes,' I  
 conferme that hap nis ryght naught in no wise;  
 and I deme al outrely that hap nis but an idel  
 voys (as who seith, but an idel word), withouten  
 any significacioun of thing summitted  
 to that voys. For what place myght ben  
 40 left or duellynge to folie and to disordenaunce,

syn that God ledeth and  
 constreyneth alle thingis by ordre? For this  
 sentence is verray and soth, that `no thing hath  
 his beyng of naught,' to the whiche sentence  
 noon of thise oolde folk ne withseide nevere; al  
 be it so that they ne undirstoden ne meneden it  
 nat by God, prince and bygynnere of wirkynges,  
 but thei casten as a maner foundement of subject  
 material (that is to seyn, of the nature of  
 50 alle resouns). And yif that any thing is  
 woxen or comen of no causes, thanne schal  
 it seme that thilke thing is comen or woxen of  
 nawght; but yif this ne mai nat ben don, thanne  
 is it nat possible that hap be any swich thing as  
 I have diffynysschid a litil herebyforn."

"How schal it thanne be?" quod I. "Nys ther  
 thanne nothing that by right may ben clepid  
 other hap or elles aventure of fortune; or is ther  
 awght, al be it so that it is hidd fro the  
 60 peple, to whiche thing thise wordes ben  
 covenable?"

"Myn Aristotle," quod sche, "in the book of  
 his Phisic diffynysseth this thing by schort  
 resoun, and nyghe to the sothe."

"In whiche manere?" quod I.

"As ofte, quod sche, "as men don any thing  
 for grace of any other thing, and another thing  
 than thilke thing that men entenden to don  
 bytideth by some causes, it is clepid hap.

70 Ryght as a man dalf the erthe bycause of  
 tylyinge of the feld, and founde ther a  
 gobet of gold bydolven; thanne wenen folk  
 that it is byfalle by fortunous bytydynges. But  
 forsothe it nis nat of naught, for it hath his  
 propre causes, of whiche causes the cours unforseyn  
 and unwar semeth to han makid hap.

For yif the tiliere of the feeld ne dulve nat in the  
 erthe, and yif the hidere of the gold ne hadde  
 hyd the gold in thilke place, the gold ne  
 80 hadde nat ben founde. Thise ben thanne  
 the causes of the abregginge of fortuit hap,  
 the whiche abreggynges of fortuit hap cometh of

causes encontrynge and flowynge togidere to  
 hemself, and nat by the entencioun of the doere.  
 For neither the hidere of the gold ne the delvere  
 of the feeld ne undirstoden nat that the gold  
 sholde han ben founde; but, as I seide, it bytidde  
 and ran togidre that he dalf thare as that oothir  
 had hid the gold. Now mai I thus diffinyssh

90 hap: hap is an unwar betydinge  
 of causes assembled in thingis that ben  
 doon for som oothir thing; but thilke ordre,  
 procedinge by an uneschuable byndinge togidre,  
 whiche that descendeth fro the welle of  
 purveaunce that ordeyneth alle thingis in hir  
 places and in hir tymes, makith that the causes  
 rennen and assemblen togidre.

"Tigrys and Eufrates resoven and springen  
 of o welle in the craggis of the roche of the  
 contre of Achemenye, ther as the fleinge bataile  
 ficcheth hir dartes retorned in the breestis  
 of hem that folwen hem. And sone aftir the  
 same ryverys, Tigris and Eufrates, unjoignen  
 and departen hir watres. And if thei comen togidre  
 and ben assemblid and clepid togidre  
 into o cours, thanne moten thilke thingis  
 10 fleten togidre whiche that the watir of  
 the entrechaungynge flood bryngeth. The  
 schippes and the stokkes araced with the flood  
 moten assemblen; and the watris imedled  
 wrappeth or emplieth many fortunel happes  
 or maneris; the whiche wandrynge happes  
 natheles thilke enclynyng lowenesse of the  
 erthe and the flowinge ordre of the slydinge  
 watir governeth. Right so fortune, that semeth  
 as it fletith with slakid or ungoverned  
 20 bridles, it suffreth bridelis (that is to seyn,  
 to ben governed), and passeth by thilke  
 lawe (that is to seyn, by the devyne ordenaunce)."

"This undirstonde I wel," quod I, "and I accorde  
 me that it is ryght as thou seist. But I  
 axe yif ther be any liberte of fre wille in this  
 ordre of causes that clyven thus togidre in  
 hemself, or elles I wolde witen yif that the

destinal cheyne constrenith the moevynges of  
the corages of men."

"Yis," quod sche, "ther is liberte of fre wil,  
ne ther ne was nevere no nature of resoun  
10 that it ne hadde liberte of fre wil. For every  
thing that may naturely usen resoun,  
it hath doom by whiche it discernith and demeth  
every thing; thanne knoweth it by itself  
thinges that ben to fleen and thinges that ben  
to desiren. And thilke thing that any wight  
demeth to ben desired, that axeth or desireth  
he; and fleeth thilke thing that he troweth be  
to fleen. Wherefore in alle thingis that resoun  
is, in hem also is liberte of willynge and of  
20 nillynge. But I ne ordeyne nat (as who  
seith, I ne graunte nat) that this liberte be  
evenelyk in alle thinges. Forwhy in the sovereynes  
devynes substaunces (that is to seyn,  
in spiritz) jugement is more cleer, and wil nat  
icorrupted, and myght redy to speden thinges  
that ben desired. But the soules of men moten  
nedes be more fre whan thei loken hem in the  
speculacioun or lokynge of the devyne thought;  
and lasse fre whan thei slyden into the bodyes;  
30 and yit lasse fre whan thei ben gadrid  
togidre and comprehended in erthli  
membres; but the laste servage is whan that  
thei ben yeven to vices and han ifalle fro the  
possessioun of hir propre resoun. For aftir that  
thei han cast away hir eyghen fro the lyght  
of the sovereyn sothfastnesse to lowe thingis  
and derke, anon thei derken by the cloude of  
ignoraunce and ben troubled by felonous talentz;  
to the whiche talentz whan thei approchen  
40 and assenten, thei helpen and  
encrecen the servage whiche thei han  
joyned to hemself; and in this manere thei ben  
caytifs fro hir propre liberte. The whiche thingis  
natheles the lokynge of the devyne purveaunce  
seth, that alle thingis byholdeth and seeth fro  
eterne, and ordeyneth hem everiche in here  
merites as thei ben predestinat; and it is seid in

Greke that `alle thinges he seeth and alle thinges  
he herith.'

"Homer with the hony mouth (that is to seyn,  
Homer with the swete ditees) singeth that the  
sonne is cler by pure light; natheles yit ne  
mai it nat, by the infirme light of his bemes,  
breken or percen the inward entrayles of the  
erthe or elles of the see. So ne seth nat God,  
makere of the grete werld. To hym, that loketh  
alle thinges from an hey, ne withstondeth  
no thinges by hevynesse of erthe, ne the  
10 nyght ne withstondeth nat to hym by the  
blake cloudes. Thilke God seeth in o strok  
of thought alle thinges that ben, or weren, or  
schollen comen; and thilke God, for he loketh  
and seeth alle thingis alone, thou maist seyn  
that he is the verrai sonne."

Thanne seide I, "Now am I confowndide by  
a more hard doute than I was."

"What doute is that?" quod sche, "for certes I  
conjecte now by whiche thingis thou art trubled."

"It semeth," quod I, "to repugnen and to  
contrarien gretly, that God knoweth byforn alle  
thinges and that ther is any fredom of liberte.  
For yif so be that God loketh alle thinges  
byforn, ne God ne mai nat ben desceyved  
10 in no manere, thanne moot it nedes ben that  
alle thinges betyden the whiche that the  
purveaunce of God hath seyn byforn to comen.  
For whiche, yif that God knoweth byforn nat  
oonly the werkes of men, but also hir conseilles  
and hir willes, thanne ne schal ther be no liberte  
of arbitrie; ne certes ther ne may be noon  
othir dede, ne no wil, but thilke whiche that the  
devyne purveaunce, that ne mai nat ben disseyved,  
hath felid byforn. For yif that thei  
20 myghten writen away in othere manere  
than thei ben purveyed, thanne ne sholde  
ther be no stedefast prescience of thing to  
comen, but rather an uncerteyn opynioun; the  
whiche thing to trowen of God, I deme it felonye  
and unleveful.

"Ne I ne proeve nat thilke same resoun (as who  
 seith, I ne allowe nat, or I ne preyse nat, thilke  
 same resoun) by whiche that som men wenen  
 that thei mowe assoilen and unknyttten the  
 30 knotte of this questioun. For certes thei  
 seyn that thing nis nat to comen for that the  
 purveaunce of God hath seyn byforn that it is to  
 comen, but rathir the contrarie; and that is this:  
 that, for that the thing is to comen, that therefore  
 ne mai it nat ben hidd fro the purveaunce of  
 God; and in this manere this necessite slideth  
 ayein into the contrarie partie: ne it ne byhoveth  
 nat nedes that thinges betiden that ben  
 ipurveied, but it byhoveth nedes that thinges  
 40 that ben to comen ben ipurveied -- but as  
 it were Y travailed (as who seith, that  
 thilke answeere procedith ryght as though men  
 travaileden or weren besy) to enqueren the  
 whiche thing is cause of the whiche thing, as  
 whethir the prescience is cause of the necessite  
 of thinges to comen, or elles that the necessite of  
 thinges to comen is cause of the purveaunce. But  
 I ne enforce me nat now to schewen it, that  
 the bytydyng of thingis iwyst byforn is  
 50 necessarie, how so or in what manere that  
 the ordre of causes hath itself; although  
 that it ne seme naught that the prescience bringe  
 in necessite of bytydyng to thinges to comen.  
 "For certes yif that any wyght sitteth, it byhoveth  
 by necessite that the opynioun be soth of  
 hym that conjecteth that he sitteth. and  
 ayeinward also is it of the contrarie: yif the  
 opynioun be soth of any wyght for that he sitteth,  
 it byhoveth by necessite that he sitte.  
 60 Thanne is here necessite in the toon and in  
 the tothir; for in the toon is necessite of  
 syttyng, and certes in the tothir is necessite of  
 soth. But therefore ne sitteth nat a wyght for that  
 the opynioun of the sittynge is soth, but the  
 opynioun is rather soth for that a wyght sitteth  
 byforn. And thus, althoughe that the cause of the  
 soth cometh of that other side (as who seith,



that althoughe the cause of soth cometh of the  
sittyng, and nat of the trewe opinioun),  
70 algatis yit is ther comune necessite in that  
oon and in that othir. Thus scheweth it that  
Y may make semblable skiles of the purveaunce  
of God and of thingis to comen. For althoughe  
that for that thingis ben to comen therfore ben  
thei purveied, and nat certes for thei be purveied  
therfore ne bytide thei nat; yit natheles byhoveth  
it by necessite that eyther the thinges to comen  
ben ipurveied of God, or elles that the thinges  
that ben ipurveied of God betyden. And  
80 this thing oonly suffiseth inow to destroien  
the fredom of oure arbitre (that is to seyn,  
of our fre wil).

"But certes now schewith it wel how fer fro  
the sothe and how up-so-doun is this thing that  
we seyn, that the betydyng of temporel thingis  
is cause of the eterne prescience. But for to  
wenen that God purveieth the thinges to comen  
for thei ben to comen -- what oothir thing is it  
but for to wene that thilke thinges that  
90 bytidden whilom ben cause of thilke  
soverein purveaunce that is in God? And  
herto I adde yit this thing: that ryght as whanne  
that I woot that a thing is, it byhoveth by  
necessite that thilke selve thing be; and eek  
whan I have knowen that any thing schal  
betyden; so byhovith it by necessite that thilke  
same thing betide; so folweth it thanne that the  
betydyng of the thing iwyste byforn ne may nat  
ben eschued. And at the laste, yif that any  
100 wyght wene a thing to ben oothir weyes  
than it is, it nis nat oonly unscience, but it  
is desceyvable opynioun ful divers and fer fro  
the sothe of science. Wherefore, yif any thing be  
so to comen that the betidyng of it ne be nat  
certein ne necessarie, who mai witen byforn that  
thilke thing is to comen? For ryght as science ne  
may nat ben medled with falsnesse (as who  
seith, that yif I woot a thing, it ne mai nat  
ben fals that I ne woot it), ryght so thilke

110 thing that is conceyved by science ne may  
nat ben noon other weies than as it is  
conceyved. For that is the cause why that science  
wanteth lesynge (as who seith, why that  
wytynge ne resceyveth nat lesynge of that it  
woot); for it byhoveth by necessite that every  
thing be ryght as science comprehendeth it  
to be.

"What schal I thanne seyn? In whiche manere  
knoweth God byforn the thinges to comen,  
120 yif thei ne ben nat certein? For yif that he  
deme that thei ben to comen uneschewably,  
and so may be that it is possible that thei  
ne schollen nat comen, God is disseyved. But  
not oonly to trowe that God is disseyved, but for  
to speke it with mouthe, it is a felonous synne.  
But yif that God woot that ryght so as thinges  
ben to comen, so schollen they comen, so that he  
wite egaly (as who seith, indifferently) that  
thingis mowen ben doon or elles nat  
130 idoon, what is thilke prescience that ne  
comprehendeth no certein thing ne stable?  
Or elles what difference is ther bytwixe the  
prescience and thilke japeworthi devynyng of  
Tyresie the divynour, that seide, 'Al that I seie,'  
quod he, 'either it schal be or elles it ne schal nat  
be?' Or elles how mochel is worth the devyne  
prescience more than the opinioun of mankynde,  
yif so be that it demeth the thinges  
uncertayn, as men doon, of the whiche  
140 domes of men the betydinge nis nat  
certein? But yif so be that noon uncertein  
thing ne mai ben in hym that is right certeyn  
welle of alle thingis, than is the betydinge  
certein of thilke thingis whiche he hath wist  
byforn fermely to comen. For whiche it folweth  
that the fredom of the conseiles and of the  
werkis of mankynde nis noon, syn that the  
thought of God, that seeth alle thinges withouten  
errour of falsnesse, byndeth and  
150 constreyneth hem to o bytidynge by  
necessite.

"And yif this thing be oonys igrauntid and  
resceyved (that is to seyn, that ther nis no fre  
wil), thanne scheweth it wel how gret destruccioun  
and how gret damages ther folwen of  
thingis of mankynde. For in idel ben ther thanne  
purposed and byhyght medes to good folk, and  
peynes to badde folk, syn that no moevynge of  
fre corage and voluntarie ne hath nat  
160 disservid hem (that is to seyn, neither  
mede ne peyne). And it scholde seme  
thanne that thilke thing is alther-worst whiche  
that is now demed for alther-moost just  
and moost ryghtful, that is to seyn that schrewes ben  
punysshid or elles that good folk ben  
igerdoned, the whiche folk syn that hir propre  
wil ne sent hem nat to the toon ne to that othir  
(that is to seyn, neither to good ne to harm), but  
constreyneth hem certein necessite of  
170 thingis to comen. Thanne ne schulle ther  
nevere be, ne nevere were, vice ne vertu,  
but it scholde rather ben confusion of alle  
dissertes medlid withouten discrecioun. And yit  
ther folweth anothir inconvenient, of the whiche  
ther ne mai be thought no more felonous ne  
more wikke, and that is this: that, so as the ordre  
of thingis is iled and cometh of the purveaunce  
of God, ne that nothing is lefevel to the  
conseiles of mankynde (as who seith that  
180 men han no power to don nothing ne wilne  
nothing), thanne folweth it that oure vices  
ben ferrid to the makere of alle good  
(as who seith, thanne folweth it that God  
oughte han the blame of our vices), syn he  
constreyneth us by necessite to doon vices.  
"Than nis ther no resoun to han hope in God,  
ne for to preien to God. For what scholde any  
wyght hopen to God, or why scholde he preien  
to God, syn that the ordenance of destyne  
190 whiche that mai nat ben enclyned knytteth  
and streyneth alle thingis that men mai  
desiren? Thanne scholde ther be don away  
thilke oonly alliaunce bytwixen God and men

(that is to seyn, to hopen and to preien). But by the pris of ryghtwisnesse and of verray mekenesse we disserven the gerdon of the devyne grace whiche that is inestimable (that is to seyn, that it is so greet that it ne mai nat ben ful ipreysed). And this is oonly the manere  
 200 (that is to seyn, hope and preieris) for whiche it semeth that men mowen spekyn with God, and by resoun of supplicacion be conjoynd to thilke cleernesse that nis nat aprochid no rather or that men byseken it and impetren it. And yif men ne wene nat that hope ne preieris ne han no strengthis by the necessite of thingis to comen iresceyved, what thing is ther thanne by whiche we mowen ben conjoynd and clyven to thilke sovereyne  
 210 prince of thingis? For whiche it byhoveth by necessite that the lynage of mankynde, as thou songe a litil herebyforn, be departed and unjoynd from his welle, and failen of his bygynnyng (that is to seyn, God).

"What discordable cause hath torent and unjoynd the byndynge or the alliaunce of thingis (that is to seyn, the conjunccions of God and of man)? Whiche god hath establisschid so gret bataile bytwixen these two sothfast or verreie thinges (that is to seyn, bytwyxen the purveaunce of God and fre wil) that thei ben singuler and dyvided, ne that they ne wole nat ben medled ne couplid togidre? But  
 10 ther nis no discord to the verray thinges, but thei clyven alwey certein to hemself; but the thought of man, confownded and over-throwen by the derke membres of the body, ne mai nat be fyr of his derked lookynge (that is to seyn, by the vigour of his insyghte while the soule is in the body) knowen the thynne sutile knyttynges of thinges. But wherfore eschaufeth it so by so gret love to fynden thilke notes of soth icovered? (That is to  
 20 seyn, wherfore eschaufeth the thought of man by so gret desir to knowen thilke notificaciouns

that ben ihid undir the covertures of  
 soth?) Woot it aught thilke thing that it angwisshous  
 desireth to knowe? (As who seith,  
 nay; for no man ne travaileth for to witen  
 thingis that he wot. And therfore the texte  
 seith thus:) But who travaileth to wite thingis  
 iknowe? And yif that he ne knoweth hem nat,  
 what sekith thilke blynde thoght? What is  
 30 he that desireth any thyng of which he wot  
 right naught? (As who seith, whoso desireth  
 any thing, nedes somewhat he knoweth of it,  
 or elles he ne coude nat desiren it.) Or who may  
 folwen thinges that ne ben nat iwist? And  
 thoughe that he seke tho thingis, wher schal  
 he fynde hem? What wyght that is al unkunnyng  
 and ignoraunt may knowe the forme  
 that is ifounde? But whanne the soule byholdeth  
 and seeth the heye thought (that is to  
 40 seyn, God), thanne knoweth it togidre the  
 somme and the singularites (that is to seyn,  
 the principles and everyche by hymself)? But  
 now, while the soule is hidd in the cloude and  
 in the derknesse of the membres of the body,  
 it ne hath nat al foryeten itself, but it withholdeth  
 the somme of thinges and lesith the  
 singularites. Thanne who so that sekith sothnesse,  
 he nis in neyther nother habite, for he  
 not nat al, ne he ne hath nat al foryeten;  
 50 but yit hym remembreth the somme of  
 thinges that he withholdeth, and axeth conseile,  
 and retrethith deepliche thinges iseyn byforne  
 (that is to seyn, the grete somme in his  
 mynde) so that he mowe adden the parties  
 that he hath foryeten to thilke that he hath  
 withholden."

Than seide sche, "This is," quod sche, "the  
 olde questioun of the purveaunce of God. And  
 Marcus Tullius, whan he devyded the divynaciouns  
 (that is to seyn, in his book that he wrot  
 of dyvynaciouns), he moevede gretly this questioun;  
 and thou thiself hast ysought it mochel  
 and outrely and longe. But yit ne hath it nat

ben determined ne isped fermely and diligently  
 of any of yow. And the cause of this dirknesse  
 10 and of this difficulte is, for that the  
 moevynge of the resoun of mankynde ne  
 may nat moeven to (that is to seyn, applien  
 or joignen to) the simplicite of the devyne prescience;  
 the whiche symplicite of the devyne  
 prescience, yif that men myghte thinken it  
 in any manere (that is to seyn, that yif  
 men myghten thinken and comprehenden the  
 thinges as God seeth hem), thanne ne scholde  
 ther duelle outrely no doute. The whiche  
 20 resoun and cause of difficulte I schal assaye  
 at the laste to schewe and to speden, whan  
 I have first ispendid and answerd to the resouns  
 by whiche thou art ymoeved.

"For I axe whi thou wenest that thilke resoun  
 of hem that assoilen this questioun ne be  
 nat speedful inow ne sufficient; the whiche solucioun,  
 or the whiche resoun, for that it demeth  
 that the prescience nis nat cause of necessite  
 to thinges to comen, than ne weneth it  
 30 nat that fredom of wil be distorbed or  
 ylet be prescience. For ne drawestow nat  
 argumentz fro elleswhere of the necessite of  
 thingis to comen (as who seith, any oothir wey  
 than thus) but that thilke thinges that the  
 prescience woot byforn ne mowen nat unbetyde  
 (that is to seyn, that thei moten betide)?  
 But thanne, yif that prescience ne putteth  
 no necessite to thingis to comen, as thou thiself  
 hast confessed it and byknowen a litel  
 40 herebyforn, what cause or what is it (as  
 who seith, ther may no cause be) by  
 whiche that the endes voluntarie of thinges  
 myghten be constreyned to certein bytydyng?  
 For by grace of posicioun, so that thou mowe the  
 betere undirstonde this that folweth, I pose that  
 ther ne be no prescience. Thanne axe I," quod  
 sche, "in as moche as aperteneth to that,  
 scholden thanne thingis that comen of fre wil  
 ben constreyned to bytiden by necessite?"

50 Boecius. "Nay," quod I.

"Thanne ayeinward," quod sche, "I  
suppose that ther be prescience, but that it ne  
putteth no necessite to thingis; thanne trowe I  
that thilke selve fredom of wil schal duellen al  
hool and absolut and unbounden. But thou wolt  
seyn that, al be it so that prescience nis nat cause  
of the necessite of bytydyng to thingis to  
comen, algatis yit it is a signe that the thingis ben  
to bytyden by necessite. By this manere  
60 thanne, althoughe the prescience ne hadde  
nevere iben, yit algate, or at the leste wey,  
it is certain thing that the endes and bytydinges  
of thingis to comen scholden ben necessarie. For  
every signe scheweth and signifieth oonly what  
the thing is, but it ne makith nat the thing that  
it signifieth. For whiche it byhoveth first to  
schewen that nothing ne bytideth that it ne  
betideth by necessite, so that it mai apiere that  
the prescience is signe of this necessite; or  
70 elles, yif ther nere no necessite, certes  
thilke prescience ne myghte nat ben signe  
of thing that nis nat. But certes, it is now certain  
that the proeve of this, isusteyned by stedfast  
resoun, ne schal nat ben lad ne proeved by  
signes, ne by argumentz itaken fro withoute, but  
by causes covenable and necessarie.

"But thou mayst seyn, 'How may it be that the  
thingis ne betyden nat that ben ipurveied to  
comen? But certes, ryght as we troweden  
80 that tho thingis whiche that the purveaunce  
woot byforn to comen, ne ben nat to  
bytiden!' But that ne scholde we nat demen; but  
rathir, althoughe that thei schal betyden, yit ne  
have thei no necessite of hir kynde to betyden.  
And this maystow lyghtly aperceyven by this  
that I schal seyn. For we seen many thingis whan  
thei ben done byforn oure eyen, ryght as men  
seen the cartere worken in the tornynge and in  
atemprynge or adressynge of hise cartes or  
90 chariottes, and by this manere (as who  
seith, maistow undirstonden) of alle othere

werkmen. Is ther thanne any necessite (as who seith, in our lookynge) that constreynith or compelleth any of thilke thingis to ben don so?" Boece. "Nay," quod I, "for in idel and in veyn were al the effect of craft, yif that alle thingis weren moeved by constreynynge (that is to seyn, by constreinyng of our eyen or of our sighte)."

Philosophie. "The thingis thanne," quod  
100 she, "that, whan men doon hem, ne han no necessite that men doon hem, eek tho same thingis, first or thei ben don, thei ben to comen withoute necessite. Forwhy ther ben some thingis to betyden, of whiche the eendes and the bytydynges of hem ben absolut and quit of alle necessite. For certes I ne trowe nat that any man wolde seyn this: that tho thingis that men don now, that thei ne weren to bytiden first or thei weren idoon; and thilke same thinges,  
110 althoughe that men hadden iwyst hem byforn, yit thei han fre bytydynges. For ryght as science of thingis present ne bryngith in no necessite to thingis that men doon, right so the prescience of thinges to comen ne bryngith in no necessite to thinges to bytiden.

"But thou maist seyn that of thilke same it is idouted, as whethir that of thilke thingis that ne han noon issues and bytydynges necessities, yif therof mai ben any prescience. For certes  
120 thei semen to discorden, for thou wenest that yif that thingis ben iseyn byfore, that necessite folwith hem; and yif necessite faileth hem, thei ne myghten nat ben wist byforn; and that nothing may be comprehended by science but certein. And yif tho thinges that ne han no certein bytydingis ben ipurveied as certein, it scholde ben dirknesse of opinioun, nat sothfastnesse of science. And thou wenest that it be dyvers fro the holnesse of science that any  
130 man scholde deme a thing to ben otherwyse than it is itself.

"And the cause of this errour is that of alle the thingis that every wyght hath iknowe,



thei wenen that tho thingis ben iknowe al only by the  
strengthe and by the nature of the thinges that  
ben iwyst or iknowe. And it is al the contrarye;  
for al that evere is iknowe, it is rather  
comprehendid and knowen, nat aftir his  
strengthe and his nature, but aftir the  
140 faculte (that is to seyn, the power and the  
nature) of hem that knowen. And, for  
that this schal mowen schewen by a schort  
ensaumple, the same rowndnesse of a body,  
otherweys the sighte of the eighe knoweth it,  
and otherweys the touchynge. The lookynge, by  
castynge of his bemys, waiteth and seeth fro afer  
al the body togidre, withoute moevynge of  
itself; but the touchynge clyveth and conjoyneth  
to the rounde body, and moeveth aboute  
150 the envyrounynge, and comprehendeth by  
parties the roundnesse. And the man  
hymself, ootherweys wit byholdeth hym, and  
ootherweys ymaginacioun, and otherweyes  
resoun, and ootherweies intelligence. For the  
wit comprehendith withoute-forth the figure of  
the body of the man that is establisschid in the  
matere subgett; but the ymaginacioun comprehendith  
oonly the figure withoute the  
matere; resoun surmountith ymaginacioun  
160 and comprehendith by an universel lokynge  
the comune spece that is in the  
singuler peces. But the eighe of intelligence is  
heyere, for it surmountith the envyrounynge of  
the universite, and loketh over that bi pure  
subtilte of thought thilke same symple forme of  
man that is perdurablely in the devyne thought.  
In whiche this oughte gretly to ben considered,  
that the heyeste strengthe to comprehenden  
thinges enbraseth and contienith the  
170 lower strengthe; but the lower strengthe  
ne ariseth nat in no manere to the heyere  
strengthe. For wit ne mai no thing comprehende  
out of matere ne the ymaginacioun ne loketh nat  
the universel spesces, ne resoun ne taketh nat the  
symple forme so as intelligence takith it; but

intelligence, that lookith as aboven, whanne it  
hath comprehended the forme, it knowith and  
demyth alle the thinges that ben undir that  
foorme; but sche knoweth hem in thilke  
180 manere in the whiche it comprehendith  
thilke same symple forme that ne may  
nevere ben knowen to noon of that othere (that  
is to seyn, to none of tho thre forseide strengthis  
of the soule). For it knoweth the universite of  
resoun, and the figure of ymaginacioun, and the  
sensible material conceyved by wit; ne it ne  
useth nat nor of resoun ne of ymaginacioun ne  
of wit withoute-forth; but it byholdeth alle  
thingis, so as I schal seie, by o strook of  
190 thought formely (withoute discours or  
collacioun). Certes resoun, whan it lokith  
any thing universel, it ne useth nat of  
ymaginacioun, nor of wit; and algatis yit it  
comprehendith the thingis ymaginable and  
sensible. For reson is she that diffynyscheth the  
universel of here conceyte ryght thus: man is a  
reasonable two-foted beest. And how so that this  
knowynge is universel, yit nis ther no wyght that  
ne wot wel that a man is a thing ymaginable  
200 and sensible; and this same considereth wel  
resoun; but that nis nat by ymaginacioun  
nor by wit, but it lookith it by reasonable  
concepcioun. Also ymaginacioun, albeit so that  
it takith of wit the bygynnynges to seen and to  
formen the figures, algates althoughe that wit ne  
were nat present, yit it envyrowneth and  
comprehendith alle thingis sensible, nat by  
resoun sensible of demynge, but by resoun  
ymaginatyf. Seestow nat thanne that alle  
210 the thingis in knowynge usen more of hir  
faculte or of hir power than thei don of the  
faculte or power of thingis that ben iknowe? Ne  
that nis nat wrong; for so as every jugement is  
the dede or the doying of hym that demeth, it  
byhoveth that every wyght performe the werk  
and his entencioun, nat of foreyne power, but of  
his propre power.

"The porche (that is to seyn, a gate of the  
 toun of Athenis there as philosophris hadden  
 hir congregacioun to desputen) -- thilke porche  
 broughte somtyme olde men, ful dirke in hir  
 sentences (that is to seyn, philosophris that  
 hyghten Stoycienis), that wenden that ymages  
 and sensibilities (that is to seyn, sensible ymaginaciouns  
 or ellis ymaginaciouns of sensible  
 thingis) weren enprientid into soules fro  
 10 bodyes withoute-forth (as who seith that  
 thilke Stoycienis wenden that the sowle  
 had ben nakid of itself, as a mirour or a clene  
 parchemyn, so that alle figures most first  
 comen fro thinges fro withoute into soules,  
 and ben emprientid into soules); (Textus)  
 ryght as we ben wont somtyme by a swift  
 poyntel to fycchen lettres emprientid in the  
 smothnesse or in the pleynesse of the table of  
 wex or in parchemyn that ne hath no figure  
 20 ne note in it. (Glose. But now argueth  
 Boece ayens that opynioun and seith  
 thus:) But yif the thryvyng soule ne unpliteth  
 nothing (that is to seyn, ne doth nothing) by his  
 propre moevynges, but suffrith and lith subgit  
 to the figures and to the notes of bodies  
 withoute-forth, and yeldith ymages ydel and  
 vein in the manere of a mirour, whennes  
 thryveth thanne or whennes comith thilke  
 knowynge in our soule, that discernith and  
 30 byholdith alle thinges? And whennes is  
 thilke strengthe that byholdeth the singuler  
 thinges? Or whennes is the strengthe that  
 devydeth thinges iknowe; and thilke strengthe  
 that gadreth togidre the thingis devyded; and  
 the strengthe that chesith his entrechaunged  
 wey? For somtyme it hevyth up the heved (that  
 is to seyn, that it hevyth up the entencioun) to  
 ryght heye thinges, and somtyme it descendith  
 into ryght lowe thinges; and whan  
 40 it retorneth into hymself it reproveth and  
 destroyeth the false thingis by the trewe  
 thinges. Certes this strengthe is cause more

efficient, and mochel more myghty to seen and  
 to knowe thinges, than thilke cause that suffrith  
 and resceyveth the notes and the figures  
 empressid in manere of matere. Algatis the  
 passion (that is to seyn, the suffraunce or the wit)  
 in the quyke body goth byforn, excitynge and  
 moevynge the strengthes of the thought,  
 50 ryght so as whan that cleernesse smyteth  
 the eyen and moeveth hem to seen, or  
 ryght so as voys or soun hurteleth to the eres  
 and commoeveth hem to herkne; than is the  
 strengthe of the thought imoevid and excited,  
 and clepith forth to semblable moevyngis the  
 spesces that it halt withynne itself, and addith  
 tho spesces to the notes and to the thinges  
 withoute-forth, and medleth the ymagis of  
 thinges withoute-forth to the foormes ihidd  
 60 withynne hymself.

"But what yif that in bodyes to ben feled  
 (that is to seyn, in the takynge of knowlechyng  
 of bodily thinges), and albeit so that the  
 qualites of bodies that ben object fro withoute-forth  
 moeven and entalenten the instrumentz  
 of the wittes, and albeit so that the passioun  
 of the body (that is to seyn, the wit or the suffraunce)  
 goth toforn the strengthe of the wirkyng  
 corage, the whiche passioun or  
 10 sufraunce clepith forth the dede of the  
 thought in hymself and moeveth and exciteth  
 in this menewhile the formes that resten  
 within-forth, and yif that in sensible bodies,  
 as I have seid, our corage nis nat ytaught or  
 emprianted by passioun to knowe thise thinges,  
 but demeth and knoweth of his owne strengthe  
 the passioun or suffrance subject to the body --  
 moche more than tho thingis that ben absolut  
 and quit fro alle talentz or affeccions of  
 20 bodyes (as God or his aungelis) ne folwen  
 nat in discernynge thinges object fro withoute-forth,  
 but thei acomplissen and speden  
 the dede of hir thought. By this resoun,  
 thanne, ther comen many maner knowynges to

dyverse and differynge substaunces. For the  
 wit of the body, the whiche wit is naked and  
 despoiled of alle oothre knowynges -- thilke  
 wit cometh to beestis that ne mowen nat  
 moeven hemself her and ther, as oistres  
 30 and muscles and oothir swich schellefyssche  
 of the see that clyven and ben norisschid  
 to roches. But the ymaginacioun cometh  
 to remuable bestis, that semen to han talent to  
 fleen or to desiren any thing. But resoun is al  
 oonly to the lynage of mankynde, ryght as  
 intelligence is oonly the devyne nature. Of  
 whiche it folweth that thilke knowyng is more  
 worth than thise oothre, syn it knoweth by his  
 propre nature nat oonly his subget (as who  
 40 seith, it ne knoweth nat al oonly that apertenith  
 properly to his knowinge) but it knoweth  
 the subjectz of alle othre knowynges.

"But how schal it thanne be, yif that wit and  
 ymaginacioun stryven ayein resonyng and seyn  
 that, of thilke universel thingis that resoun  
 weneth to seen, that it nis ryght naught? For wit  
 and ymaginacioun seyn that that that is sensible  
 or ymaginable, it ne mai nat ben universel;  
 thanne is either the jugement of resoun  
 50 soth, ne that ther nis no thing sensible; or  
 elles, for that resoun woot wel that many  
 thinges ben subject to wit and to ymaginacioun,  
 thanne is the concepcioun of resoun veyn and  
 fals, whiche that lokith and comprehendith that  
 that is sensible and singuler as universel. And yif  
 that resoun wolde answeere ayein to thise two  
 (that is to seyn, to wit and to ymaginacioun),  
 and seyn that sothly sche hirselve (that is to  
 seyn, resoun) lokith and comprehendith,  
 60 by resoun of universalite, bothe that that is  
 sensible and that that is ymaginable;  
 and that thilke two (that is to seyn, wit and  
 ymaginacioun) ne mowen nat strecchen ne  
 enhaunsen hemself to knowyng of universalite,  
 for that the knowyng of hem ne mai exceden ne  
 surmounten the bodily figures: certes of the

knowynge of thinges, men oughten rather yeven  
credence to the more stidfast and to the mor  
parfit jugement; in this manere stryvynge,  
70 thanne, we that han strengthe of resonyng  
and of ymagynyng and of wit (that is to  
seyn, by resoun and by imagynacioun and by  
wit), we scholde rathir preise the cause of resoun  
(as who seith, than the cause of wit and of  
ymaginacioun).

"Semblable thing is it, that the resoun of  
mankynde ne weneth nat that the devyne  
intelligence byholdeth or knoweth thingis to  
comen, but ryght as the resoun of  
80 mankynde knoweth hem. For thou arguist  
and seist thus: that if it ne seme nat to men  
that some thingis han certeyn and necessarie  
bytydynges, thei ne mowen nat ben wist byforn  
certainly to betyden, and thanne nis ther no  
prescience of thilke thinges; and yif we trowe  
that prescience be in thise thingis, thanne is ther  
nothing that it ne bytydeth by necessite. But  
certes yif we myghten han the jugement of  
the devyne thoght, as we ben parsoners of  
90 resoun, ryght so as we han demyd that it  
byhovith that ymaginacioun and wit ben  
bynethe resoun, ryght so wolde we demen that  
it were ryghtfull thing that mannys resoun  
oughte to summytten itself and to ben bynethe  
the devyne thought. For whiche yif that we  
mowen (as who seith that, if that we mowen,  
I conseile that) we enhaunse us into the heighte  
of thilke sovereign intelligence; for ther schal  
resoun wel seen that that it ne mai nat  
100 byholden in itself, and certes that is this:  
in what manere the prescience of God  
seeth alle thinges certains and diffinyssched,  
althoughe thei ne han no certein issues or  
bytydyngis; ne this nis noon opinioun, but it is  
rather the simplicite of the sovereign science,  
that nis nat enclosed nor ischet withinne none  
boundes.

"The beestes passen by the erthes be ful

diverse figures. For some of hem han hir bodyes  
 straught, and crepyn in the dust, and drawen  
 aftir hem a traas or a furwe icontynued (that  
 is to sein, as naddres or snakes); and oothre  
 beestis by the wandrynge lyghtnesse of hir  
 wynges beten the wyndes, and overswymmen  
 the spaces of the longe eir by moyst fleynge;  
 and oothre beestes gladen hemself to diggen  
 10 hir traas or hir steppys in the erthe  
 with hir goinges or with hir feet, and to  
 gon either by the grene feeldes or elles to  
 walken undir the wodes. And al be it so that  
 thou seest that thei alle discorden by diverse  
 foormes, algatis hir faces enclyned hevyeth hir  
 dulle wittes. Only the lynage of man heveth  
 heyest his heie heved, and stondith light with  
 his upryght body, and byholdeth the erthes  
 undir hym. And, but yif thou, erthly man,  
 20 waxest yvel out of thi wit, this figure  
 amonesteth the, that axest the hevene with  
 thi ryghte visage and hast areised thi forheved,  
 to beren up an hye thi corage, so that thi thought  
 ne be nat ihevied ne put lowe undir fote, syn  
 that thi body is so heyghe areysed.

"Therefore thanne, as I have schewed a litel  
 herebyforne that alle thing that is iwist nis nat  
 knownen by his nature propre, but by the nature  
 of hem that comprehenden it, lat us loke  
 now, in as mochil as it is leveful to us (as who  
 seith, lat us loke now as we mowen) whiche that  
 the estat is of the devyne substaunce; so that  
 we mowe eek knownen what his science is. The  
 comune jugement of alle creatures resonables  
 10 thanne is this: that God is eterne.

Lat us considere thanne what is eternite;  
 for certes that schal schewen us togidre the  
 devyne nature and the devyne science. Eternite,  
 thanne, is parfit possessioun and al togidre  
 of lif interminable; and that scheweth. more  
 cleerly by the comparysoun or collacioun of  
 temporel thinges. For alle thing that lyveth in  
 tyme, it is present and procedith fro preteritz

into futures (that is to seyn, fro tyme passed  
 20 into tyme comynge), ne ther nis nothing  
 establisshed in tyme that mai enbrasen togidre  
 al the space of his lif. For certis yit ne  
 hath it nat taken the tyme of tomorwe, and it  
 hath lost that of yusterday, and certes in the  
 lif of this dai ye ne lyve namore but right  
 as in this moevable and transitorie moment.  
 Thanne thilke thing that suffreth temporel condicioun,  
 althoughe that it nevere bygan to  
 be, ne thoughe it nevere ne cese for to be,  
 30 as Aristotile deemed of the world, and  
 althoughe that the lif of it be strecchid with  
 infinite of tyme; yit algatis nis it no swich thing  
 that men mighten trowen by ryght that it is  
 eterne. For althouhe that it comprehende and  
 embrase the space of lif infinit, yit algatis ne  
 enbraseth it nat the space of the lif al togidre; for  
 it ne hath nat the futuris (that ne ben nat yit),  
 ne it ne hath no lengere the preteritz (that  
 ben idoon or ipassed). But thilke thing,  
 40 thanne, that hath and comprehendith  
 togidre al the plente of the lif interminable,  
 to whom ther ne faileth naught of the future, and  
 to whom ther nis noght of the preteryt escaped  
 nor ipassed, thilke same is iwitnessed and  
 iproovid by right to ben eterne; and it byhovith  
 by necessite that thilke thing be alwey present to  
 hymself and compotent (as who seith, alwey  
 present to hymselfe and so myghty that al be  
 right at his plesaunce), and that he have al  
 50 present the infinit of the moevable tyme.  
 "Wherfore som men trowen wrongfully  
 that, whan thei heren that it semede to Plato that  
 this world ne hadde nevere bygynnyng of  
 tyme, ne that it nevere schal han failynge, thei  
 wenen in this manere that this world be makid  
 coeterne with his makere. (As who seith, thei  
 wene that this world and God ben makid  
 togidre eterne, and that is a wrongful wenyng.)  
 For other thing is it to ben ilad  
 60 by lif interminable, as Plato grauntide to



the world, and oothir is it to embrace  
 togidre al the presence of the lif intermynable,  
 the whiche thing it is cleer and manyfest that it  
 is propre to the devyne thought. Ne it ne  
 scholde nat semen to us that God is eldere than  
 thinges that ben imaked by quantite of tyme, but  
 rathir by the proprete of his simple nature. For  
 this ilke infinit moevyng of temporel thinges  
 folweth this presentarie estat of the lif  
 70 inmoevable; and, so as it ne mai nat  
 contrefetin it ne feynen it, ne be evene lik  
 to it, [fro] the immoevablete (that is to sein, that  
 is in the eternite of God) it faileth and fallith into  
 moevyng, [and] fro the simplicitie of the  
 presence of [God] disencresith into the infinit  
 quantite of future and of preterit; and so as it ne  
 mai nat han togidre al the plente of the lif,  
 algates yit, for as moche as it ne ceseth nevere for  
 to ben in som manere, it semyth somdel to  
 80 us that it folwith and resembleth thilke  
 thing that it ne mai nat atayne to ne  
 fulfillen, and byndeth itself to som maner  
 presence of this litle and swift moment, the  
 whiche presence of this litle and swifte moment,  
 for that it bereth a maner ymage or liknesse of  
 the ai duellynge presence of God, it grauntith to  
 swich manere thinges as it betydith to that it  
 semeth hem that thise thinges han iben and ben.  
 And for that the presence of swiche lital  
 90 moment ne mai nat duelle, therfore it  
 ravysschide and took the infynit wey of  
 tyme (that is to seyn, by successioun). And by  
 this manere is it idoon for that it sholde contynue  
 the lif in goinge, of the whiche lif it ne myght nat  
 embrace the plente in duelling. And forthi yif  
 we wollen putten worthi names to thinges and  
 folwen Plato, lat us seyen thanne sothly that God  
 is `eterne,' and that the world is `perpetuel.'  
 "Thanne, syn that every jugement knoweth  
 100 and comprehendith by his owne nature  
 thinges that ben subget unto hym,  
 ther is sothly to God always an eterne

and presentarie estat; and the science of hym, that  
 overpasseth alle temporel moevement, duelleth  
 in the simplicitie of his presence, and embraceth  
 and considereth alle the infynit spaces of tymes  
 preteritz and futures, and lokith in his simple  
 knowynge alle thinges of preterit ryght as thei  
 weren idoon presently ryght now. Yif

110 thou wolt thanne thinken and avise the  
 prescience by whiche it knoweth alle  
 thinges, thou ne schalt naught demen it as  
 prescience of thinges to comen, but thou schalt  
 demen more ryghtfully that it is science of  
 presence or of instaunce that nevere ne faileth.  
 For whiche it nis nat ycleped 'previdence,' but it  
 sholde rathir ben clepid 'purveaunce,' that is  
 establissed ful fer fro ryght lowe thinges, and  
 byholdeth fro afer alle thingis, right as it  
 120 were fro the heye heighte of thinges.

"Why axestow thanne, or whi desputestow  
 thanne, that thilke thingis ben doon  
 by necessite whiche that ben yseyn and knowen  
 by the devyne sighte, syn that forsothe men ne  
 maken nat thilke thinges necessarie whiche that  
 thei seen ben idoon in hir sighte? For addith thi  
 byholdynge any necessite to thilke thinges that  
 thou byholdest present?"

"Nay," quod I.

130 Philosophie. "Certes, thanne, yif men  
 myghte maken any digne comparysoun or  
 collacioun of the presence devyne and of the  
 presence of mankynde, ryght so as ye seen some  
 thinges in this temporel present, ryght so seeth  
 God alle thinges by his eterne present.

"Wherfore this devyne prescience ne chaungeth  
 nat the nature ne the proprete of thinges,  
 but byholdeth swiche thingis present to hym-ward  
 as thei shollen betyde to yow-ward

140 in tyme to comen. Ne it ne confowndeth  
 nat the jugementz of thingis; but by o  
 sight of his thought he knoweth the thinges  
 to comen, as wel necessarie as nat necessarie.  
 Ryght so as whan ye seen togidre a man walke

on the erthe and the sonne arisen in the  
hevene, albeit so that ye seen and byholden the  
ton and the tothir togidre, yit natheles ye demen  
and discerne that the toon is voluntarie  
and the tothir is necessarie. Ryght so  
150 thanne the devyne lookynge, byholdynge  
alle thinges undir hym, ne trowbleth nat  
the qualite of thinges that ben certainly present  
to hym-ward but, as to the condicioun of tyme,  
forsothe thei ben futur. For which it folwith that  
this nis noon opynioun, but rathir a stidfast  
knowynge istrengthid by soothnesse that, whan  
that God knoweth any thing to be, he ne unwot  
not that thilke thing wantith necessite to be.  
(This is to sein that whan that God knoweth  
160 any thing to betide, he wot wel that it ne  
hath no necessite to betyde.)

"And yif thou seist here that thilke thing that  
God seeth to betide, it ne may nat unbytide (as  
who seith, it moot bytide), and thilke thing that  
ne mai nat unbytide, it mot bytiden by necessite,  
and that thou streyne me to this name of  
necessite, certes I wol wel confessen and  
byknowen a thing of ful sad trouthe. But  
unnethe schal ther any wight mowe seen it  
170 or come therto, but yif that he be  
byholdere of the devyne thought. For I wol  
answeren the thus: that thilke thing that is futur,  
whan it is referred to the devyne knowynge,  
than is it necessarie; but certis whan it is  
undirstonden in his owene kynde, men seen it  
outrely fre and absolut fro alle necessite.

"For certes ther ben two maneris of  
necessites: that oon necessite is symple, as thus:  
that it byhovith by necessite that alle men  
180 ben mortal or dedly; anothir necessite is  
condicional, as thus: yif thow wost that a  
man walketh, it byhovith by necessite that he  
walke. Thilke thing, thanne, that any wight hath  
iknowe to be, it ne mai ben noon oothir weys  
thanne he knowith it to be. But this condicion ne  
draweth nat with hir thilke necessite simple; for

certes this necessite condicionel -- the propre  
 nature of it ne makith it nat, but the adjeccioun  
 of the condicioun makith it. For no necessite  
 190 ne constreyneth a man to gon that  
 goth by his propre wil, al be it so that whan  
 he goth that it is necessarie that he goth. Ryght  
 on this same manere thanne, yf that the  
 purveaunce of God seeth any thyng present,  
 than moot thilke thing ben by necessite,  
 althoghe that it ne have no necessite of his owne  
 nature. But certes the futures that bytiden by  
 fredom of arbitrie, God seth hem alle togidre  
 presentz. Thise thinges thanne, yif thei ben  
 200 referrid to the devyne sighte, than ben they  
 maked necessarie by the condicioun of the  
 devyne knowynge. But certes yif thilke thingis  
 ben considered by hemself, thei ben absolut of  
 necessite, and ne forleten nat ne cesen nat of  
 the liberte of hir owne nature. Thanne certes  
 withoute doute alle the thinges shollen ben  
 doon whiche that God woot byforn that thei ben  
 to comen. But some of hem comen and bytiden  
 of fre arbitrie or of fre wil, that, al be it so  
 210 that thei bytiden, yit algates ne lese thei nat  
 hir propre nature in beinge, by the whiche,  
 first or that thei weren idon, thei hadden power  
 noght to han bytyd."

Boece. "What is this to seyn thanne," quod I,  
 "that thinges ne ben nat necessarie by hir propre  
 nature, so as thei comen in alle maneris in the  
 liknesse of necessite by the condicioun of the  
 devyne science?"

Philosophie. "This is the difference,"  
 220 quod sche, "that tho thinges that I purposide  
 the a litil herbyforn -- that is to seyn,  
 the sonne arysynge and the man walkynge --  
 that ther-whiles that thilke thinges ben idoon,  
 they ne myghte nat ben undoon; natheles that  
 oon of hem, or it was idoon, it byhoveide by  
 necessite that it was idoon, but nat that oothir.  
 Ryght so is it here, that the thinges that God  
 hath present, withoute doute thei shollen ben.

But some of hem descendith of the nature  
 230 of thinges (as the sonne arysynge); and  
 some descendith of the power of the doeris  
 (as the man walkynge). Thanne seide I no wrong  
 that, yif that thise thinges ben referred to the  
 devyne knowynge, thanne ben thei necessarie;  
 and yif thei ben considered by hemself, than ben  
 thei absolut fro the boond of necessite. Right so  
 as alle thingis that apiereth or scheweth to the  
 wittes, yif thou referre it to resoun, it is  
 universel; and yif thou loke it or referre it  
 240 to itself, than is it singuler.

"But now yif thou seist thus: that, 'If it be  
 in my power to chaunge my purpos, than schal  
 I voiden the purveaunce of God, whan paraventure  
 I schal han chaungid the thingis that  
 he knoweth byforn,' thanne schal I answeren  
 the thus: 'Certes thou maist wel chaungen thi  
 purpos; but for as mochil as the present  
 sothnesse of the devyne purveaunce byholdeth  
 that thou maist chaunge thi purpos, and  
 250 whethir thou wolt chaunge it or no, and  
 whider-ward that thou torne it, thou ne  
 maist nat eschuen the devyne prescience, ryght  
 as thou ne maist nat fleen the sighte of the  
 present eye, althoghe that thou torne thiself by  
 thi fre wil into diverse acciouns.' But thou maist  
 sein ayein: 'How schal it thanne be -- schal nat  
 the devyne science ben chaunged by my  
 disposicioun whan that I wol o thing now and  
 now anothis? And thilke prescience -- ne  
 260 semeth it nat to entrechaunge stoundis of  
 knowynge?'" (As who seith, ne schal it nat  
 seme to us that the devyne prescience entrechaungith  
 hise diverse stoundes of knowynge,  
 so that it knowe somtyme o thing, and somtyme  
 the contrarie?)

"No, forsothe," quod she, "for the devyne  
 sighte renneth toforn and seeth alle futures, and  
 clepith hem ayen and retorneth hem to the  
 presence of his propre knowynge; ne he ne  
 270 entrechaungith nat, so as thou wenest, the

stoundes of foreknowynge, as now this,  
now that; but he ay duellynge cometh byforn,  
and enbraseth at o strook alle thi mutaciouns.  
And this presence to comprehenden and to seen  
alle thingis -- God ne hath nat taken it of the  
bytidynge of thinges to come, but of his propre  
symplicite. And herby is assoiled thilke thing  
that thou putttest a litel herebyforn; that is to  
seyn, that it is unworthy thing to seyn that  
280 our futures yeven cause of the science of  
God. For certis this strengthe of the devyne  
science, whiche that embraseth alle thinges by  
his presentarie knowynge, establissbeth manere  
to alle thinges, and it ne oweth nawht to lattere  
thinges.

"And syn that thise thinges ben thus (that is  
to seyn, syn that necessite nis nat in thinges by  
the devyne prescience), thanne is ther fredom of  
arbitrie, that duelleth hool and unwemmed  
290 to mortal men; ne the lawes ne purposen  
nat wikkidly medes and peynes to the  
willynges of men that ben unbownden and quyt  
of alle necessite; and God, byholdere and  
forwytere of alle thingis, duelleth above, and the  
present eternite of his sighte renneth alwey with  
the diverse qualite of our dedes, dispensynge  
and ordeynynge medes to gode men and  
tormentz to wikkide men. Ne in ydel ne in veyn  
ne ben ther put in God hope and preyeris  
300 that ne mowen nat ben unspedful ne  
withouten effect whan they been ryghtful.

"Withstond thanne and eschue thou vices;  
worschipe and love thou vertues; areise thi  
corage to ryghtful hopes; yilde thou humble  
preieres an heyhe. Gret necessite of prowesse  
and vertu is encharged and comaunded to yow,  
yif ye nil nat dissimulen; syn that ye worken and  
don (that is to seyn, your dedes or your werkes)  
byforn the eyen of the juge that seeth and  
310 demeth alle thinges."



# TROILUS AND CRISEYDE

## BOOK 1

The double sorwe of Troilus to tellen,  
That was the kyng Priamus sone of Troye,  
In lovyng, how his aventures fellen  
Fro wo to wele, and after out of joie,  
My purpos is, er that I parte fro ye.  
Thesiphone, thow help me for t' endite  
Thise woful vers, that wepen as I write.  
To the clepe I, thow goddesse of torment,  
Thow cruwel Furie, sorwyng evere in peyne,  
10 Help me, that am the sorwful instrument,  
That helpeth loveres, as I kan, to pleyne;  
For wel sit it, the sothe for to seyne,  
A woful wight to han a drery feere,  
And to a sorwful tale, a sory chere.  
For I, that God of Loves servantz serve,  
Ne dar to Love, for myn unliklynesse,  
Preyen for speed, al sholde I therfore sterve,  
So fer am I from his help in derknesse.  
But natheles, if this may don gladnesse  
20 Unto any lovere, and his cause availle,  
Have he my thonk, and myn be this travaille!  
But ye loveres, that bathen in gladnesse,  
If any drope of pyte in yow be,  
Remembreth yow on passed hevynesse  
That ye han felt, and on the adversite  
Of othere folk, and thynketh how that ye  
Han felt that Love dorste yow displese,  
Or ye han wonne hym with to gret an ese.  
And preieth for hem that ben in the cas  
30 Of Troilus, as ye may after here,  
That Love hem brynge in hevene to solas;  
And ek for me preieth to God so dere  
That I have myght to shewe, in som manere,  
Swich peyne and wo as Loves folk endure,  
In Troilus unsely aventure.  
And biddeth ek for hem that ben despeired  
In love, that nevere nyl recovered be,  
And ek for hem that falsly ben apeired



Thorough wikked tonges, be it he or she;  
40 Thus biddeth God, for his benignite,  
So graunte hem soone owt of this world to pace,  
That ben despeired out of Loves grace.  
And biddeth ek for hem that ben at ese,  
That God hem graunte ay good perseveraunce,  
And sende hem myght hire ladies so to plese  
That it to Love be worship and plesaunce.  
For so hope I my sowle best avaunce,  
To prey for hem that Loves servauntz be,  
And write hire wo, and lyve in charite,  
50 And for to have of hem compassioun,  
As though I were hire owne brother dere.  
Now herkneth with a good entencioun,  
For now wil I gon streght to my matere,  
In which ye may the double sorwes here  
Of Troilus in lovyng of Criseyde,  
And how that she forsook hym er she deyde.  
Yt is wel wist how that the Grekes stronge  
In armes with a thousand shippes wente  
To Troiewardes, and the cite longe  
60 Assegeden, neigh ten yer er they stente,  
And in diverse wise and oon entente,  
The ravysshying to wreken of Eleyne,  
By Paris don, they wroughten al hir peyne.  
Now fel it so that in the town ther was  
Dwellynge a lord of gret auctorite,  
A gret devyn, that clepid was Calkas,  
That in science so expert was that he  
Knew wel that Troie sholde destroyed be,  
By answeere of his god, that highte thus:  
70 Daun Phebus or Appollo Delphicus.  
So whan this Calkas knew by kalkulynge,  
And ek by answer of this Appollo,  
That Grekes sholden swich a peple brynge,  
Thorough which that Troie moste ben fordo,  
He caste anon out of the town to go;  
For wel wiste he by sort that Troye sholde  
Destroyed ben, ye, wolde whoso nolde.  
For which for to departen softly  
Took purpos ful this forknowynge wise,  
80 And to the Grekes oost ful pryvely

He stal anon; and they, in curteys wise,  
Hym diden bothe worship and servyce,  
In trust that he hath konnyng hem to rede  
In every peril which that is to drede.  
Gret rumour gan, whan it was first aspied  
Thorugh al the town, and generaly was spoken,  
That Calkas traitour fled was and allied  
With hem of Grece, and casten to be wroken  
On hym that falsly hadde his feith so broken,  
90 And seyden he and al his kyn at-ones  
Ben worthi for to brennen, fel and bones.  
Now hadde Calkas left in this meschaunce,  
Al unwist of this false and wikked dede,  
His doughter, which that was in gret penaunce,  
For of hire lif she was ful sore in drede,  
As she that nyste what was best to rede;  
For bothe a widewe was she and allone  
Of any frend to whom she dorste hir mone.  
Criseyde was this lady name al right.  
100 As to my doom, in al Troies cite  
Nas non so fair, forpassynge every wight,  
So aungelik was hir natif beaute,  
That lik a thing inmortal semed she,  
As doth an hevenyssh perfit creature,  
That down were sent in scornynge of nature.  
This lady, which that alday herd at ere  
Hire fadres shame, his falsnesse and tresoun,  
Wel neigh out of hir wit for sorwe and fere,  
In widewes habit large of samyt broun,  
110 On knees she fil biforn Ector adown  
With pitous vois, and tendrely wepyng,  
His mercy bad, hirselves excusynge.  
Now was this Ector pitous of nature,  
And saugh that she was sorwfully bigon,  
And that she was so fair a creature;  
Of his goodnesse he gladede hire anon,  
And seyde, "Lat youre fadres treson gon  
Forth with meschaunce, and ye youreself in joie  
Dwelleth with us, whil yow good list, in Troie.  
120 "And al th' honour that men may don yow have,  
As ferforth as youre fader dwelled here,  
Ye shul have, and youre body shal men save,

As fer as I may ought enquire or here."  
And she hym thonked with ful humble chere,  
And ofter wolde, and it hadde ben his wille,  
And took hire leve, and hom, and held hir stille.  
And in hire hous she abood with swich meyne  
As til hire honour nede was to holde;  
And whil she was dwellynge in that cite,  
130 Kepte hir estat, and both of yonge and olde  
Ful wel biloved, and wel men of hir tolde.  
But wheither that she children hadde or noon,  
I rede it naught, therfore I late it goon.  
The thynges fellen, as they don of werre,  
Bitwixen hem of Troie and Grekes ofte;  
For som day boughten they of Troie it derre,  
And eft the Grekes founden nothing softe  
The folk of Troie; and thus Fortune on lofte  
And under eft gan hem to whielen bothe  
140 Aftir hir course, ay whil that thei were wrothe.  
But how this town com to destruccion  
Ne falleth naught to purpos me to telle,  
For it were a long digression  
Fro my matere, and yow to long to dwelle.  
But the Troian gestes, as they felle,  
In Omer, or in Dares, or in Dite,  
Whoso that kan may rede hem as they write.  
But though that Grekes hem of Troie shetten,  
And hir cite biseged al aboute,  
150 Hire olde usage nolde they nat letten,  
As for to honoure hir goddes ful devoute;  
But aldirst in honour, out of doute,  
Thei hadde a relik, heet Palladion,  
That was hire trist aboven everichon.  
And so bifel, whan comen was the tyme  
Of Aperil, whan clothed is the mede  
With newe grene, of lusty Veer the pryme,  
And swote smellen floures white and rede,  
In sondry wises shewed, as I rede,  
160 The folk of Troie hire observaunces olde,  
Palladiones feste for to holde.  
And to the temple, in al hir beste wise,  
In general ther wente many a wight,  
To herkennen of Palladions servyce;

And namely, so many a lusty knyght,  
So many a lady fressh and mayden bright,  
Ful wel arayed, both meeste, mene, and leste,  
Ye, bothe for the seson and the feste.  
Among thise othere folk was Criseyda,  
170 In widewes habit blak; but natheles,  
Right as oure firste lettre is now an A,  
In beaute first so stood she, makeles.  
Hire goodly lokyng gladed al the prees.  
Nas nevere yet seyn thyng to ben preysed derre,  
Nor under cloude blak so bright a sterre  
As was Criseyde, as folk seyde everichone  
That hir behelden in hir blake wede.  
And yet she stood ful lowe and stille allone,  
Byhynden other folk, in litel brede,  
180 And neigh the dore, ay undre shames drede,  
Simple of atir and debonaire of chere,  
With ful assured lokyng and manere.  
This Troilus, as he was wont to gide  
His yonge knyghtes, lad hem up and down  
In thilke large temple on every side,  
Byholding ay the ladies of the town,  
Now here, now there; for no devocioun  
Hadde he to non, to reven hym his reste,  
But gan to preise and lakken whom hym leste.  
190 And in his walk ful faste he gan to wayten  
If knyght or squyer of his compaignie  
Gan for to syke, or lete his eighen baiten  
On any womman that he koude espye.  
He wolde smyle and holden it folye,  
And seye hym thus, "God woot, she slepeth softe  
For love of the, whan thou turnest ful ofte!  
"I have herd told, pardieux, of youre lyvyng,  
Ye loveres, and youre lewed observaunces,  
And which a labour folk han in wynnynge  
200 Of love, and in the kepyng which doutaunces;  
And whan youre prey is lost, woo and penaunces.  
O veray fooles, nyce and blynde be ye!  
Ther nys nat oon kan war by other be."  
And with that word he gan caste up the browe,  
Ascaunces, "Loo! is this naught wisely spoken?"  
At which the God of Love gan loken rowe

Right for despit, and shop for to ben wroken.  
He kidde anon his bowe nas naught broken;  
For sodeynly he hitte hym atte fulle --  
210 And yet as proud a pekok kan he pulle.  
O blynde world, O blynde entencioun!  
How often falleth al the effect contraire  
Of surquidrie and foul presumpcioun;  
For kaught is proud, and kaught is debonaire.  
This Troilus is clomben on the staire,  
And litel weneth that he moot descenden;  
But alday failleth thing that fooles wenden.  
As proude Bayard gynneth for to skippe  
Out of the weye, so pryketh hym his corn,  
220 Til he a lasshe have of the longe whippe --  
Than thynketh he, "Though I prauce al byforn  
First in the trays, ful fat and newe shorn,  
Yet am I but an hors, and horses lawe  
I moot endure, and with my feres drawe" --  
So ferde it by this fierse and proude knyght:  
Though he a worthy kynges sone were,  
And wende nothing hadde had swich myght  
Ayeys his wille that shuld his herte stere,  
Yet with a look his herte wex a-fere,  
230 That he that now was moost in pride above,  
Wax sodeynly moost subgit unto love.  
Forthy ensample taketh of this man,  
Ye wise, proude, and worthi folkes alle,  
To scornen Love, which that so soone kan  
The fredom of youre hertes to hym thralle;  
For evere it was, and evere it shal byfalle,  
That Love is he that alle thing may bynde,  
For may no man fardon the lawe of kynde.  
That this be soth, hath preved and doth yit.  
240 For this trowe I ye knowen alle or some,  
Men reden nat that folk han gretter wit  
Than they that han be most with love ynome;  
And strengest folk ben therwith overcome,  
The worthiest and grettest of degree:  
This was, and is, and yet men shall it see.  
And trewelich it sit wel to be so,  
For alderwisest han therwith ben plesed;  
And they that han ben aldermost in wo,

With love han ben comforted moost and esed;  
250 And ofte it hath the cruel herte apesed,  
And worthi folk maad worthier of name,  
And causeth moost to dreden vice and shame.  
Now sith it may nat goodly ben withstonde,  
And is a thing so vertuous in kynde,  
Refuseth nat to Love for to ben bonde,  
Syn, as hymselfen liste, he may yow bynde;  
The yerde is bet that bowen wole and wynde  
Than that that brest, and therefore I yow rede  
To folowen hym that so wel kan yow lede.  
260 But for to tellen forth in special  
Of this kynges sone of which I tolde,  
And leten other thing collateral,  
Of hym thenke I my tale forth to holde,  
Both of his joie and of his cares colde;  
And al his werk, as touching this matere,  
For I it gan, I wol therto refere.  
Withinne the temple he wente hym forth pleyinge,  
This Troilus, of every wight aboute,  
On this lady, and now on that, lokynge,  
270 Wher so she were of town or of withoute;  
And upon cas bifel that thorough a route  
His eye percede, and so depe it wente,  
Til on Criseyde it smot, and ther it stente.  
And sodeynly he wax therwith astoned,  
And gan hir bet biholde in thrifty wise.  
"O mercy, God," thoughte he, "wher hastow woned,  
That art so feyr and goodly to devise?"  
Therwith his herte gan to sprede and rise,  
And softe sighed, lest men myghte hym here,  
280 And caught ayeyn his firste pleyinge chere.  
She nas nat with the leste of hire stature,  
But alle hire lymes so wel answeyng  
Weren to wommanhod, that creature  
Was nevere lasse mannyssh in semyng;  
And ek the pure wise of hire mevyng  
Shewed wel that men myght in hire gesse  
Honour, estat, and wommanly noblesse.  
To Troilus right wonder wel with alle  
Gan for to like hire mevyng and hire chere,  
290 Which somdel deignous was, for she let falle

Hire look a lite aside in swich manere,  
Ascaunces, "What, may I nat stonden here?"  
And after that hir lokynge gan she lighte,  
That nevere thoughte hym seen so good a syghte.  
And of hire look in him ther gan to quyken  
So gret desir and such affeccioun,  
That in his herte botme gan to stiken  
Of hir his fixe and depe impressioun.  
And though he erst hadde poured up and down,  
300 He was tho glad his hornes in to shrinken:  
Unnethes wiste he how to loke or wynke.  
Lo, he that leet hymselfen so konnyng,  
And scorned hem that Loves peynes dryen,  
Was ful unwar that Love hadde his dwellynge  
Withinne the subtile stremes of hire yen;  
That sodeynly hym thoughte he felte dyen,  
Right with hire look, the spirit in his herte:  
Blissed be Love, that kan thus folk converte!  
She, this in blak, likynge to Troilus  
310 Over alle thing, he stood for to biholde;  
Ne his desir, ne wherfore he stood thus,  
He neither chere made, ne word tolde;  
But from afer, his manere for to holde,  
On other thing his look som tyme he caste,  
And eft on hire, whil that servyse laste.  
And after this, nat fullich al awhaped,  
Out of the temple al esilich he wente,  
Repentyng hym that he hadde evere ijaped  
Of Loves folk, lest fully the descente  
320 Of scorn fille on hymself; but what he mente,  
Lest it were wist on any manere syde,  
His woo he gan dissimilen and hide.  
Whan he was fro the temple thus departed,  
He streght anon unto his paleys torneth.  
Right with hire look thorough-shoten and thorough-darted,  
Al feyneth he in lust that he sojorneth,  
And al his chere and speche also he borneth,  
And ay of Loves servantz every while,  
Hymself to wrye, at hem he gan to smyle,  
330 And seyde, "Lord, so ye lyve al in lest,  
Ye loveres! For the konnyngeste of yow,  
That serveth most ententiflich and best,

Hym tit as often harm therof as prow.  
Youre hire is quyt ayeyn, ye, God woot how!  
Nought wel for wel, but scorn for good servyse.  
In feith, youre ordre is ruled in good wise!  
"In nouncerteyn ben alle youre observaunces,  
But it a sely fewe pointes be;  
Ne no thing asketh so gret attendaunces  
340 As doth youre lay, and that knowe alle ye;  
But that is nat the worste, as mote I the!  
But, tolde I yow the worste point, I leve,  
Al seyde I soth, ye wolden at me greve.  
"But take this: that ye loveres ofte eschuwe,  
Or elles doon, of good entencioun,  
Ful ofte thi lady wol it mysconstruwe,  
And deme it harm in hire oppynyoun;  
And yet if she, for other enchesoun,  
Be wroth, than shaltow have a groyn anon.  
350 Lord, wel is hym that may ben of yow oon!"  
But for al this, whan that he say his tyme,  
He held his pees -- non other boote hym gayned --  
For love bigan his fetheres so to lyme  
That wel unnethe until his folk he fayned  
That other besy nedes hym destrayned;  
For wo was hym, that what to doon he nyste,  
But bad his folk to gon wher that hem liste.  
And whan that he in chambre was allone,  
He doun upon his beddes feet hym sette,  
360 And first he gan to sike, and eft to grone,  
And thought ay on hire so, withouten lette,  
That, as he sat and wook, his spirit mette  
That he hire saugh a-temple, and al the wise  
Right of hire look, and gan it newe avise.  
Thus gan he make a mirour of his mynde  
In which he saugh al holly hire figure,  
And that he wel koude in his herte fynde.  
It was to hym a right good aventure  
To love swich oon, and if he dede his cure  
370 To serven hir, yet myghte he falle in grace,  
Or ellis for oon of hire servantz pace.  
Imagenynge that travaille nor grame  
Ne myghte for so goodly oon be lorn  
As she, ne hym for his desir no shame,



Al were it wist, but in pris and up-born  
Of alle lovers wel more than biforn,  
Thus argumented he in his gynnynge,  
Ful unavysed of his woo comynge.  
Thus took he purpos loves craft to suwe,  
380 And thoughte he wolde werken pryvely,  
First to hiden his desir in muwe  
From every wight yborn, al outrely,  
But he myghte ought recovered be therby,  
Remembryng hym that love to wide yblowe  
Yelt bittre fruyt, though swete seed be sowe.  
And over al this, yet muchel more he thoughte  
What for to speke, and what to holden inne;  
And what to arten hire to love he soughte,  
And on a song anon-right to bygynne,  
390 And gan loude on his sorwe for to wynne;  
For with good hope he gan fully assente  
Criseyde for to love, and nought repente.  
And of his song naught only the sentence,  
As writ myn auctour called Lollius,  
But plainly, save oure tonges difference,  
I dar wel seyn, in al, that Troilus  
Seyde in his song, loo, every word right thus  
As I shal seyn; and whoso list it here,  
Loo, next this vers he may it fynden here.  
400 "If no love is, O God, what fele I so?  
And if love is, what thing and which is he?  
If love be good, from whennes cometh my woo?  
If it be wikke, a wonder thynketh me,  
When every torment and adversite  
That cometh of hym may to me savory thinke,  
For ay thirst I, the more that ich it drynke.  
"And if that at myn owen lust I brenne,  
From whennes cometh my waillynge and my pleynte?  
If harm agree me, wherto pleyne I thenne?  
410 I noot, ne whi unwery that I feynte.  
O quike deth, O swete harm so queynte,  
How may of the in me swich quantite,  
But if that I consente that it be?  
"And if that I consente, I wrongfully  
Compleyne, iwis. Thus possed to and fro,  
Al sterelees withinne a boot am I

Amydde the see, bitwixen wyndes two,  
That in contrarie stonden evere mo.  
Allas, what is this wondre maladie?  
420 For hote of cold, for cold of hote, I dye."  
And to the God of Love thus seyde he  
With pitous vois, "O lord, now youres is  
My spirit, which that oughte youres be.  
Yow thanke I, lord, that han me brought to this.  
But wheither goddesse or womman, iwis,  
She be, I not, which that ye do me serve;  
But as hire man I wol ay lyve and sterve.  
"Ye stonden in hir eighen myghtily,  
As in a place unto youre vertu digne;  
430 Wherefore, lord, if my service or I  
May liken yow, so beth to me benigne;  
For myn estat roial I here resigne  
Into hire hond, and with ful humble chere  
Bicome hir man, as to my lady dere."  
In hym ne deyned spare blood roial  
The fyr of love -- wherfro God me blesse --  
Ne him forbar in no degree, for al  
His vertu or his excellent prowesse,  
But held hym as his thral lowe in destresse,  
440 And brende hym so in soundry wise ay newe,  
That sexti tyme a day he loste his hewe.  
So muche, day by day, his owene thought,  
For lust to hire, gan quiken and encresse,  
That every other charge he sette at nought.  
Forthi ful ofte, his hote fir to cesse,  
To sen hire goodly lok he gan to presse;  
For therby to ben esed wel he wende,  
And ay the ner he was, the more he brende.  
For ay the ner the fir, the hotter is --  
450 This, trowe I, knoweth al this compaignye;  
But were he fer or ner, I dar sey this:  
By nyght or day, for wisdom or folye,  
His herte, which that is his brestez ye,  
Was ay on hire, that fairer was to sene  
Than evere were Eleyne or Polixene.  
Ek of the day ther passed nought an houre  
That to hymself a thousand tyme he seyde,  
"Good goodly, to whom serve I and laboure

As I best kan, now wolde God, Criseyde,  
460 Ye wolden on me rewe, er that I deyde!  
My dere herte, alas, myn hele and hewe  
And lif is lost, but ye wol on me rewe!"  
Alle other dredes weren from him fledde,  
Both of th' assege and his savacioun;  
N' yn him desir noon other fownes bredde,  
But argumentes to his conclusioun:  
That she of him wolde han compassioun,  
And he to ben hire man while he may dure.  
Lo, here his lif, and from the deth his cure!  
470 The sharpe shoures felle of armes preve  
That Ector or his othere brethren didnen  
Ne made hym only therfore ones meve;  
And yet was he, where so men wente or riden,  
Founde oon the beste, and longest tyme abiden  
Ther peril was, and dide ek swich travaille  
In armes, that to thenke it was merveille.  
But for non hate he to the Grekes hadde,  
Ne also for the rescous of the town,  
Ne made hym thus in armes for to madde,  
480 But only, lo, for this conclusioun:  
To liken hire the bet for his renoun.  
Fro day to day in armes so he spedde  
That the Grekes as the deth him dredde.  
And fro this forth tho refte hym love his slep,  
And made his mete his foo, and ek his sorwe  
Gan multiplie, that, whoso tok kep,  
It shewed in his hewe both eve and morwe.  
Therfor a title he gan him for to borwe  
Of other siknesse, lest men of hym wende  
490 That the hote fir of love hym brende,  
And seyde he hadde a fevere and ferde amys.  
But how it was, certeyn, kan I nat seye,  
If that his lady understood nat this,  
Or feynede hire she nyste, oon of the tweye;  
But wel I rede that, by no manere weye,  
Ne semed it that she of hym roughte,  
Or of his payne, or whatsoevere he thoughte.  
But thanne felte this Troilus swich wo  
That he was wel neigh wood; for ay his drede  
500 Was this, that she som wight hadde loved so,

That nevere of hym she wolde han taken hede,  
For which hym thoughte he felte his herte blede;  
Ne of his wo ne dorste he nat bygynne  
To tellen hir, for al this world to wyne.  
But whan he hadde a space from his care,  
Thus to hymself ful ofte he gan to pleyne;  
He seyde, "O fool, now artow in the snare,  
That whilom japedest at loves peyne.  
Now artow hent, now gnaw thin owen cheyne!  
510 Thow were ay wont ech love-reprehende  
Of thing fro which thou kanst the nat defende.  
"What wol now every love-reprende of the,  
If this be wist, but evere in thin absence  
Laughen in scorn, and seyn, 'Loo, ther goth he  
That is the man of so gret sapience,  
That held us loveres leest in reverence.  
Now, thanked God, he may gon in the daunce  
Of hem that Love list feebly for to avaunce.'  
"But, O thow woful Troilus, God wolde,  
520 Sith thow most loven thorough thi destine,  
That thow beset were on swich oon that sholde  
Know al thi wo, al lakked hir pitee!  
But also cold in love towardes the  
Thi lady is as frost in wynter moone,  
And thow fordon as snow in fire is soone.  
"God wold I were aryved in the port  
Of deth, to which my sorwe wol me lede!  
A, Lord, to me it were a gret comfort;  
Than were I quyt of languisshyng in drede;  
530 For, be myn hidde sorwe iblowe on brede,  
I shal byjaped ben a thousand tyme  
More than that fol of whos folie men ryme.  
"But now help, God, and ye, swete, for whom  
I pleyne, ikaught, ye, nevere wight so faste!  
O mercy, dere herte, and help me from  
The deth, for I, whil that my lyf may laste,  
More than myself wol love yow to my laste;  
And with som frendly lok gladeth me, swete,  
Though nevere more thing ye me byheete."  
540 Thise wordes, and ful many an other to,  
He spak, and called evere in his compleynte  
Hire name, for to tellen hire his wo,

Til neigh that he in salte teres dreynte.  
Al was for nought: she herde nat his pleynte;  
And whan that he bythought on that folie,  
A thousand fold his wo gan multiplie.  
Bywayling in his chambre thus allone,  
A frend of his that called was Pandare  
Com oones in unwar, and herde hym groone,  
550 And say his frend in swich destresse and care:  
"Allas," quod he, "who causeth al this fare?  
O mercy, God! What unhap may this meene?  
Han now thus soone Grekes maad yow leene?  
"Or hastow som remors of conscience,  
And art now falle in som devocioun,  
And wailest for thi synne and thin offence,  
And hast for ferde caught attricioun?  
God save hem that biseged han oure town,  
That so kan leye oure jolite on presse,  
560 And bringe oure lusty folk to holynesse!"  
Thise wordes seyde he for the nones alle,  
That with swich thing he myght hym angry maken,  
And with angre don his wo to falle,  
As for the tyme, and his corage awaken.  
But wel he wist, as fer as tonges spaken,  
Ther nas a man of gretter hardinesse  
Thanne he, ne more desired worthinesse.  
"What cas," quod Troilus, "or what aventure  
Hath gided the to sen me langwisshinge,  
570 That am refus of every creature?  
But for the love of God, at my preyinge,  
Go hennes away; for certes my deyinge  
Wol the disese, and I mot nedes deye;  
Therefore go wey, ther is na more to seye.  
"But if thow wene I be thus sik for drede,  
It is naught so, and therefore scorne nought.  
Ther is another thing I take of hede  
Wel more than aught the Grekes han yet wrought,  
Which cause is of my deth, for sorowe and thought;  
580 But though that I now telle it the ne leste,  
Be thow naught wroth; I hide it for the beste."  
This Pandare, that neigh malt for wo and routhe,  
Ful ofte seyde, "Allas, what may this be?  
Now frend," quod he, "if evere love or trouthe

Hath ben, or is, bitwixen the and me,  
Ne do thow nevere swich a crueltee  
To hiden fro thi frend so gret a care!  
Wostow naught wel that it am I, Pandare?  
"I wol parten with the al thi peyne,  
590 If it be so I do the no comfort,  
As it is frendes right, soth for to seyne,  
To entreparten wo as glad desport.  
I have, and shal, for trewe or fals report,  
In wrong and right iloved the al my lyve:  
Hid nat thi wo fro me, but telle it blyve."  
Than gan this sorwful Troylus to syke,  
And seide hym thus: "God leve it be my beste  
To telle it the; for sith it may the like,  
Yet wol I telle it, though myn herte breste.  
600 And wel woot I thow mayst do me no reste;  
But lest thow deme I truste nat to the,  
Now herke, frend, for thus it stant with me.  
"Love, ayeins the which whoso defendeth  
Hymselfen most, hym alderlest avaylleth,  
With disespeyr so sorwfulli me offendeth,  
That streight unto the deth myn herte sailleth.  
Therto desir so brennyngly me assailleth,  
That to ben slayn it were a gretter joie  
To me than kyng of Grece ben and Troye.  
610 "Suffiseth this, my fulle frend Pandare,  
That I have seyde, for now wostow my wo;  
And for the love of God, my colde care,  
So hide it wel -- I tolde it nevere to mo,  
For harmes myghten folwen mo than two  
If it were wist -- but be thow in gladnesse,  
And lat me sterve, unknowe, of my destresse."  
"How hastow thus unkyndely and longe  
Hid this fro me, thow fol?" quod Pandarus.  
"Paraunter thow myghte after swich oon longe,  
620 That myn avys anon may helpen us."  
"This were a wonder thing," quod Troilus;  
"Thow koudest nevere in love thiselven wisse.  
How devel maistow brynge me to blisse?"  
"Ye, Troilus, now herke," quod Pandare;  
"Though I be nyce, it happeth often so,  
That oon that excesse doth ful yvele fare

By good counseil kan kepe his frend therfro.  
 I have myself ek seyn a blynd man goo  
 Ther as he fel that couth. loken wide;  
 630 A fool may ek a wis-man ofte gide.  
 "A wheston is no kervyng instrument,  
 But yet it maketh sharppe kervyng tolis;  
 And there thow woost that I have aught myswent,  
 Eschuw thow that, for swich thing to the scole is.  
 Thus often wise men ben war by foolys.  
 If thow do so, thi wit is wel bewared;  
 By his contrarie is every thyng declared.  
 "For how myghte evere swetnesse han ben knowe  
 To him that nevere tasted bitternesse?  
 640 Ne no man may ben inly glad, I trowe,  
 That nevere was in sorwe or som destresse.  
 Eke whit by blak, by shame ek worthinesse,  
 Ech set by other, more for other semeth,  
 As men may se, and so the wyse it demeth.  
 "Sith thus of two contraries is o lore,  
 I, that have in love so ofte assayed  
 Grevances, oughte konne, and wel the more,  
 Counseillen the of that thow art amayed.  
 Ek the ne aughte nat ben yvel appayed,  
 650 Though I desyre with the for to bere  
 Thyn hevy charge; it shal the lasse dere.  
 "I woot wel that it fareth thus be me  
 As to thi brother, Paris, an herdesse  
 Which that icleped was Oenone  
 Wrot in a compleynte of hir hevynesse.  
 Yee say the lettre that she wrot, I gesse?"  
 "Nay, nevere yet, ywys," quod Troilus.  
 "Now," quod Pandare, "herkne, it was thus:  
 "'Phebus, that first fond art of medicyne,'  
 660 Quod she, 'and couth. in every wightes care  
 Remedye and reed, by herbes he knew fyne,  
 Yet to hymself his konnyng was ful bare,  
 For love hadde hym so bounden in a snare,  
 Al for the doughter of the kyng Amete,  
 That al his craft ne koude his sorwes bete.'  
 "Right so fare I, unhappyly for me.  
 I love oon best, and that me smerteth sore;  
 And yet, peraunter, kan I reden the

And nat myself; repreve me na more.  
670 I have no cause, I woot wel, for to sore  
As doth an hauk that listeth for to pleye;  
But to thin help yet somewhat kan I seye.  
"And of o thing right siker maistow be,  
That certein, for to dyen in the peyne,  
That I shal nevere mo discoveren the;  
Ne, by my trouthe, I kepe nat restreyne  
The fro thi love, theigh that it were Eleyne  
That is thi brother wif, if ich it wiste:  
Be what she be, and love hire as the liste!  
680 "Therefore, as frend, fullich in me assure,  
And tel me plat what is th' enchesoun  
And final cause of wo that ye endure;  
For douteth nothyng, myn entencioun  
Nis nat to yow of reprehencioun,  
To speke as now, for no wight may byreve  
A man to love, tyl that hym list to leve.  
"And witteth wel that bothe two ben vices:  
Mistrusten alle, or elles alle leve.  
But wel I woot, the mene of it no vice is,  
690 For to trusten som wight is a preve  
Of trouth; and forthi wolde I fayn remeve  
Thi wrong conseyte, and do the som wyght triste  
Thi wo to telle; and tel me, if the liste.  
"The wise seith, 'Wo hym that is allone,  
For, and he falle, he hath non helpe to ryse';  
And sith thow hast a felawe, tel thi mone;  
For this nys naught, certein, the nexte wyse  
To wynnen love -- as techen us the wyse --  
To walwe and wepe as Nyobe the queene,  
700 Whos teres yet in marble ben yseene.  
"Lat be thy wepyng and thi drerynesse,  
And lat us lissen wo with oother speche;  
So may thy woful tyme seme lesse.  
Delyte nat in wo thi wo to seche,  
As don thise foles that hire sorwes eche  
With sorwe, whan thei han mysaventure,  
And listen naught to seche hem other cure.  
"Men seyn, 'to wrecche is consolacioun  
To have another felawe in hys peyne.'  
710 That owghte wel ben oure opynyoun,



For bothe thow and I of love we pleyne.  
So ful of sorwe am I, soth for to seyne,  
That certainly namore harde grace  
May sitte on me, for-why ther is no space.  
"If God wol, thow art nat agast of me,  
Lest I wolde of thi lady the bygyle!  
Thow woost thyself whom that I love, parde,  
As I best kan, gon sithen longe while.  
And sith thow woost I do it for no wyle,  
720 And sith I am he that thow trustest moost,  
Tel me somewhat, syn al my wo thow woost."  
Yet Troilus for al this no word seyde,  
But longe he ley as styлле as he ded were;  
And after this with sikynge he abreyde,  
And to Pandarus vois he lente his ere,  
And up his eighen caste he, that in feere  
Was Pandarus, lest that in frenesie  
He sholde falle, or elles soone dye;  
And cryde "Awake!" ful wonderlich and sharpe;  
730 "What! Slombrestow as in a litargie?  
Or artow lik an asse to the harpe,  
That hereth sown whan men the strynges plye,  
But in his mynde of that no melodie  
May sinken hym to gladen, for that he  
So dul ys of his bestialite?"  
And with that, Pandare of his wordes stente;  
And Troilus yet hym nothyng answerde,  
For-why to tellen nas nat his entente  
To nevere no man, for whom that he so ferde;  
740 For it is seyd, "Men maketh ofte a yerde  
With which the maker is hymself ybeten  
In sondry manere," as thise wyse treten,  
And namelich in his counseil tellynge  
That toucheth love that oughte ben secree;  
For of himself it wol ynough out sprynge,  
But if that it the bet governed be.  
Ek som tyme it is a craft to seme fle  
Fro thyng whych in effect men hunte faste;  
Al this gan Troilus in his herte caste.  
750 But natheles, whan he hadde herd hym crye  
"Awake!" he gan to syken wonder soore,  
And seyde, "Frend, though that I styлле lye,

I am nat deaf. Now pees, and crye namore,  
 For I have herd thi wordes and thi lore;  
 But suffre me my meschief to bywaille,  
 For thy proverbes may me naught availle.  
 "Nor other cure kanstow non for me;  
 Ek I nyl nat ben cured; I wol deye.  
 What knowe I of the queene Nyobe?  
 760 Lat be thyne olde ensaumples, I the preye."  
 "No," quod Pandarus, "therfore I seye,  
 Swych is delit of foles to bywepe  
 Hire wo, but seken bote they ne kepe.  
 "Now knowe I that ther reson in the failleth.  
 But tel me, if I wiste what she were  
 For whom that the al this mysaunter ailleth,  
 Dorstestow that I tolde in hire ere  
 Thi wo, sith thow darst naught thiself for feere,  
 And hire bysoughte on the to han som routhe?"  
 770 "Why, nay," quod he, "by God and by my trouthe!"  
 "What, nat as bisyly," quod Pandarus,  
 "As though myn owene lyf lay on this nede?"  
 "No, certes, brother," quod this Troilus,  
 "And whi? For that thow scholdest nevere spede."  
 "Wostow that wel?" -- "Ye, that is out of drede,"  
 Quod Troilus; "for al that evere ye konne,  
 She nyl to noon swich wrecche as I ben wonne."  
 Quod Pandarus, "Allas! What may this be,  
 That thow dispeired art thus causeles?  
 780 What! lyveth nat thi lady, bendiste?  
 How wostow so that thow art graceles?  
 Swich yvel is nat alwey booteles.  
 Why, put nat impossible thus thi cure,  
 Syn thyng to come is oft in aventure.  
 "I graunte wel that thow endurest wo  
 As sharp as doth he Ticius in helle,  
 Whos stomak foughles tiren evere moo  
 That hightyn volturis, as bokes telle;  
 But I may nat endure that thow dwelle  
 790 In so unskilful an oppynyoun  
 That of thi wo is no curacioun.  
 "But oones nyltow, for thy coward herte,  
 And for thyn ire and folissh wilfulnesse,  
 For wantrust, tellen of thy sorwes smerte,

Ne to thyn owen help don bysynesse  
As muche as speke a resoun moore or lesse,  
But list as he that lest of nothyng recche.  
What womman koude loven swich a wrecche?  
"What may she demen oother of thy deeth,  
800 If thow thus deye, and she not why it is,  
But that for feere is yolden up thy breth,  
For Grekes han biseged us, iwys?  
Lord, which a thonk than shaltow han of this!  
Thus wol she seyn, and al the town attones,  
'The wrecche is ded, the devel have his bones!'  
"Thow mayst allone here wepe and crye and knele --  
But love a womman that she woot it nought,  
And she wol quyte it that thow shalt nat fele;  
Unknowe, unkist, and lost that is unsought.  
810 What, many a man hath love ful deere ybought  
Twenty wynter that his lady wiste,  
That nevere yet his lady mouth he kiste.  
"What sholde he therfore fallen in dispayr,  
Or be recreant for his owne tene,  
Or slen hymself, al be his lady fair?  
Nay, nay, but evere in oon be fressh and grene  
To serve and love his deere hertes queene,  
And thyngk it is a guerdon hire to serve,  
A thousand fold moore than he kan deserve."  
820 Of that word took hede Troilus,  
And thoughte anon what folie he was inne,  
And how that soth hym seyde Pandarus,  
That for to slen hymself myght he nat wynne,  
But bothe don unmanhod and a synne,  
And of his deth his lady naught to wite;  
For of his wo, God woot, she knew ful lite.  
And with that thought he gan ful sore syke,  
And seyde, "Allas! What is me best to do?"  
To whom Pandare answered, "If the like,  
830 The beste is that thow telle me al thi wo;  
And have my trouthe, but thow it fynde so  
I be thi boote, er that it be ful longe,  
To pieces do me drawe and sithen honge!"  
"Ye, so thow seyst," quod Troilus tho, "allas!  
But, God woot, it is naught the rather so.  
Ful hard were it to helpen in this cas,

For wel fynde I that Fortune is my fo;  
Ne al the men that riden konne or go  
May of hire cruel whiel the harm withstonde;  
840 For as hire list she pleyeth with free and bonde."  
Quod Pandarus, "Than blamestow Fortune  
For thow art wroth; ye, now at erst I see.  
Woost thow nat wel that Fortune is comune  
To everi manere wight in som degree?  
And yet thow hast this comfort, lo, parde,  
That, as hire joies moten overgon,  
So mote hire sorwes passen everechon.  
"For if hire whiel stynte any thyng to torne,  
Than cessed she Fortune anon to be.  
850 Now, sith hire whiel by no way may sojourne,  
What woostow if hire mutabilite  
Right as thyselfen list wol don by the,  
Or that she be naught fer fro thyn helpynge?  
Paraunter thow hast cause for to synge.  
"And therfore wostow what I the biseche?  
Lat be thy wo and tornyng to the grounde;  
For whoso list have helyng of his leche,  
To hym byhoveth first unwre his wownde.  
To Cerberus yn helle ay be I bounde,  
860 Were it for my suster, al thy sorwe,  
By my wil she sholde al be thyn to-morwe.  
"Look up, I seye, and telle me what she is  
Anon, that I may gon about thy nede.  
Knowe ich hire aught? For my love, telle me this.  
Thanne wolde I hopen rather for to spede."  
Tho gan the veyne of Troilus to blede,  
For he was hit, and wax al reed for shame.  
"A ha!" quod Pandare; "Here bygynneth game."  
And with that word he gan hym for to shake,  
870 And seyde, "Thef, thow shalt hyre name telle."  
But tho gan sely Troilus for to quake  
As though men sholde han led hym into helle,  
And seyde, "Allas, of al my wo the welle,  
Thanne is my swete fo called Criseyde!"  
And wel neigh with the word for feere he deide.  
And whan that Pandare herde hire name nevene,  
Lord, he was glad, and seyde, "Frend so deere,  
Now far aright, for Joves name in hevene.

Love hath byset the wel; be of good cheere!  
880 For of good name and wisdom and manere  
She hath ynough, and ek of gentillesse.  
If she be fayr, thow woost thyself, I gesse,  
"Ne nevere saugh a more bountevous  
Of hire estat, n' a gladder, ne of speche  
A frendlyer, n' a more gracious  
For to do wel, ne lasse hadde nede to seche  
What for to don; and al this bet to eche,  
In honour, to as fer as she may strecche,  
A kynges herte semeth by hyrs a wrecche.  
890 "And forthi loke of good comfort thow be;  
For certainly, the ferste poynt is this  
Of noble corage and wel ordeyne,  
A man to have pees with hymself, ywis.  
So oghtist thow, for noht but good it is  
To love wel, and in a worthy place;  
The oghte not to clepe it hap, but grace.  
"And also thynk, and therwith glade the,  
That sith thy lady vertuous is al,  
So foloweth it that there is some pitee  
900 Amonges alle thise other in general;  
And forthi se that thow, in special,  
Requere naught that is ayeyns hyre name;  
For vertu streccheth naught hymself to shame.  
"But wel is me that evere that I was born,  
That thow biset art in so good a place;  
For by my trouthe, in love I dorste have sworn  
The sholde nevere han tid thus fayr a grace.  
And wostow why? For thow were wont to chace  
At Love in scorn, and for despit him calle  
910 'Seynt Idiot, lord of thise foles alle.'  
"How often hastow maad thi nyce japes,  
And seyde that Loves servantz everichone  
Of nycete ben verray Goddes apes;  
And some wolde mucche hire mete allone,  
Liggyng abedde, and make hem for to grone;  
And som, thow seydest, hadde a blaunche fevere,  
And preydest God he sholde nevere kevere.  
"And som of hem took on hym, for the cold,  
More than ynough, so seydestow ful ofte.  
920 And som han feyned ofte tyme, and told

How that they waken, whan thei slepen softe;  
And thus they wolde han brought hemself alofte,  
And natheles were under at the laste.  
Thus seydestow, and japedest ful faste.  
"Yet seydestow that for the moore part  
Thise loveres wolden speke in general,  
And thoughten that it was a siker art,  
For faylyng, for t' assaien overal.  
Now may I jape of the, if that I shal;  
930 But natheles, though that I sholde deye,  
That thow art non of tho, I dorste saye.  
"Now bet thi brest, and sey to God of Love,  
'Thy grace, lord, for now I me repente,  
If I mysspak, for now myself I love.'  
Thus sey with al thyn herte in good entente."  
Quod Troilus, "A, lord! I me consente,  
And preye to the my japes thow foryive,  
And I shal nevere more whyle I live."  
"Thow seist wel," quod Pandare, "and now I hope  
940 That thow the goddes wrathe hast al apesed;  
And sithen thow hast wopen many a drope,  
And seyde swych thyng wherwith thi god is plesed,  
Now wolde nevere god but thow were esed!  
And thyng wel, she of whom rist al thi wo  
Hereafter may thy comfort be also.  
"For thilke grownd that bereth the wedes wikke  
Bereth ek thise holsom herbes, as ful ofte  
Next the foule netle, rough and thikke,  
The rose waxeth swoote and smothe and softe;  
950 And next the valeye is the hil o-lofte;  
And next the derke nyght the glade morwe;  
And also joie is next the fyn of sorwe.  
"Now loke that atempre be thi bridel,  
And for the beste ay suffre to the tyde,  
Or elles al oure labour is on ydel:  
He hasteth wel that wisely kan abyde.  
Be diligent and trewe, and ay wel hide;  
Be lusty, fre; persevere in thy servyse,  
And al is wel, if thow werke in this wyse.  
960 "But he that departed is in everi place  
Is nowher hol, as writen clerkes wyse.  
What wonder is, though swich oon have no grace?

Ek wostow how it fareth of som servise,  
As plaunte a tree or herbe, in sondry wyse,  
And on the morwe pulle it up as blyve!  
No wonder is, though it may nevere thryve.  
"And sith that God of Love hath the bistowed  
In place digne unto thi worthinesse,  
Stond faste, for to good port hastow rowed;  
970 And of thiself, for any hevynesse,  
Hope alwey wel; for, but if drerinesse  
Or over-haste oure bothe labour shende,  
I hope of this to maken a good ende.  
"And wostow why I am the lasse afered  
Of this matere with my nece trete?  
For this have I herd seyde of wyse lered,  
Was nevere man or womman yet bigete  
That was unapt to suffren loves hete,  
Celestial, or elles love of kynde;  
980 Forthi som grace I hope in hire to fynde.  
"And for to speke of hire in specyal,  
Hire beaute to bithynken and hire youthe,  
It sit hire naught to ben celestial  
As yet, though that hire liste bothe and kowthe;  
But trewely, it sate hire wel right nowthe  
A worthi knyght to loven and cherice,  
And but she do, I holde it for a vice.  
"Wherefore I am, and wol ben, ay redy  
To payne me to do yow this servyse;  
990 For bothe yow to plesse thus hope I  
Hereafterward; for ye ben bothe wyse,  
And konne it counseil kepe in swych a wyse  
That no man shal the wiser of it be;  
And so we may ben gladed alle thre.  
"And, by my trouthe, I have right now of the  
A good conceyte in my wit, as I gesse,  
And what it is, I wol now that thow se.  
I thanke, sith that Love, of his goodnesse,  
Hath the converted out of wikkednesse,  
1000 That thow shalt ben the beste post, I leve,  
Of al his lay, and moost his foos to greve.  
"Ensample why, se now thise wise clerkes,  
That erren aldermost ayeyn a lawe,  
And ben converted from hire wikked werkes

Thorough grace of God that list hem to hym drawe,  
 Thanne arn thise folk that han moost God in awe,  
 And strengest feythed ben, I undirstonde,  
 And konne an errowr alderbest withstonde."  
 Whan Troilus hadde herd Pandare assented  
 1010 To ben his help in lovynge of Cryseyde,  
 Weex of his wo, as who seith, untormented,  
 But hotter weex his love, and thus he seyde,  
 With sobre chere, although his herte pleyde:  
 "Now blisful Venus helpe, er that I sterve,  
 Of the, Pandare, I mowe som thank deserve.  
 "But, deere frend, how shal my wo be lesse  
 Til this be doon? And good, ek telle me this:  
 How wiltow seyn of me and my destresse,  
 Lest she be wroth -- this drede I moost, ywys --  
 1020 Or nyl nat here or trowen how it is.  
 Al this drede I, and ek for the manere  
 Of the, hire em, she nyl no swich thyng here."  
 Quod Pandarus, "Thow hast a ful gret care  
 Lest that the cherl may falle out of the moone!  
 Whi, Lord! I hate of the thi nyce fare!  
 Whi, entremete of that thow hast to doone!  
 For Goddes love, I bidde the a boone:  
 So lat m' alone, and it shal be thi beste."  
 "Whi, frend," quod he, "now do right as the leste.  
 1030 "But herke, Pandare, o word, for I nolde  
 That thow in me wendest so gret folie,  
 That to my lady I desiren sholde  
 That toucheth harm or any vilenye;  
 For dredeles me were levere dye  
 Than she of me aught elles understode  
 But that that myghte sownen into goode."  
 Tho lough this Pandare, and anon answerde,  
 "And I thi borugh? Fy! No wight doth but so.  
 I roughte naught though that she stood and herde  
 1040 How that thow seist! but farewell, I wol go.  
 Adieu! Be glad! God spede us bothe two!  
 Yef me this labour and this bisynesse,  
 And of my spede be thyn al that swetnesse."  
 Tho Troilus gan doun on knees to falle,  
 And Pandare in his armes hente faste,  
 And seyde, "Now, fy on the Grekes alle!



Yet, parde, God shal helpe us atte laste.  
And dredelees, if that my lyf may laste,  
And God toforn, lo, som of hem shal smerte;  
1050 And yet m' athenketh that this avant m' asterte!  
"Now, Pandare, I kan na more seye,  
But, thow wis, thow woost, thow maist, thow art al!  
My lif, my deth, hol in thyn hond I leye.  
Help now!" Quod he, "Yis, by mi trowthe, I shal."  
"God yelde the, frend, and this in special,"  
Quod Troilus, "that thow me recomande  
To hire that to the deth me may comande."  
This Pandarus, tho desirous to serve  
His fulle frend, than seyde in this manere:  
1060 "Farwell, and thenk I wol thi thank deserve!  
Have here my trowthe, and that thow shalt wel here."  
And went his wey, thenkyng on this matere,  
And how he best myghte hire biseche of grace,  
And fynde a tyme therto, and a place.  
For everi wight that hath an hous to founde  
Ne renneth naught the werk for to bygynne  
With rakel hond, but he wol bide a stounde,  
And sende his hertes line out fro withinne  
Aldirfirst his purpos for to wyne.  
1070 Al this Pandare in his herte thoughte,  
And caste his werk ful wisely or he wroughte.  
But Troilus lay tho no lenger down,  
But up anon upon his stede bay,  
And in the feld he pleyde tho leoun;  
Wo was that Grek that with hym mette a-day!  
And in the town his manere tho forth ay  
So goodly was, and gat hym so in grace,  
That ecch hym loved that loked on his face.  
For he bicom the frendlieste wight,  
1080 The gentilest, and ek the mooste fre,  
The thriftiest, and oon the beste knyght  
That in his tyme was or myghte be;  
Dede were his japes and his cruelte,  
His heighe port and his manere estraunge,  
And ecch of tho gan for a vertu chaunge.  
Now lat us stynte of Troilus a stounde,  
That fareth lik a man that hurt is soore,  
And is somdeel of akyngge of his wownde

Ylissed wel, but heeled no deel moore,  
1090 And, as an esy pacyent, the loore  
Abit of hym that gooth aboute his cure;  
And thus he dryeth forth his aventure.



## BOOK 2

Owt of thise blake wawes for to saylle,  
O wynd, o wynd, the weder gynneth clere;  
For in this see the boot hath swych travaylle,  
Of my connyng, that unneth I it steere.  
This see clepe I the tempestous matere  
Of disespeir that Troilus was inne;  
But now of hope the kalendes bygynne.  
O lady myn, that called art Cleo,  
Thow be my speed fro this forth, and my Muse,  
10 To ryme wel this book til I have do;  
Me nedeth here noon other art to use.  
Forwhi to every lovere I me excuse,  
That of no sentement I this endite,  
But out of Latyn in my tonge it write.  
Wherfore I nyl have neither thank ne blame  
Of al this werk, but prey yow mekely,  
Disblameth me if any word be lame,  
For as myn auctour seyde, so sey I.  
Ek though I speeke of love unfelyngly,  
20 No wondre is, for it nothyng of newe is.  
A blynd man kan nat juggen wel in hewis.  
Ye knowe ek that in forme of speche is chaunge  
Withinne a thousand yeer, and wordes tho  
That hadden pris, now wonder nyce and straunge  
Us thinketh hem, and yet thei spake hem so,  
And spedde as wel in love as men now do;  
Ek for to wynnen love in sondry ages,  
In sondry londes, sondry ben usages.  
And forthi if it happe in any wyse,  
30 That here be any lovere in this place  
That herkneth, as the storie wol devise,  
How Troilus com to his lady grace,  
And thenketh, "So nold I nat love purchase,"  
Or wondreth on his speche or his doynge,  
I noot; but it is me no wonderynge.  
For every wight which that to Rome went  
Halt nat o path, or alwey o manere;  
Ek in som lond were al the game shent,  
If that they ferde in love as men don here,  
40 As thus, in opyn doynge or in chere,

In visityng in forme, or seyde hire sawes;  
Forthi men seyn, "Ecch contree hath his lawes."  
Ek scarsly ben ther in this place thre  
That have in love seid lik, and don, in al;  
For to thi purpos this may liken the,  
And the right nought; yet al is seid or schal;  
Ek som men grave in tree, some in ston wal,  
As it bitit. But syn I have bigonne,  
Myn auctour shal I folwen, if I konne.

50 In May, that moder is of monthes glade,  
That fresshe floures, blew and white and rede,  
Ben quike agayn, that wynter dede made,  
And ful of bawme is fletyng every mede,  
Whan Phebus doth his bryghte bemes sprede  
Right in the white Bole, it so bitidde,  
As I shal synge, on Mayes day the thrydde,  
That Pandarus, for al his wise speche,  
Felt ek his part of loves shotes keene,  
That, koude he nevere so wel of lovyng preche,  
60 It made his hewe a-day ful ofte greene.  
So shop it that hym fil that day a teene  
In love, for which in wo to bedde he wente,  
And made, er it was day, ful many a wente.  
The swalowe Proigne, with a sorowful lay,  
Whan morwen com, gan make hire waymentynge  
Whi she forshapen was; and evere lay  
Pandare abedde, half in a slomberynge,  
Til she so neigh hym made hire cheterynge  
How Tereus gan forth hire suster take,  
70 That with the noyse of hire he gan awake,  
And gan to calle, and dresse hym up to ryse,  
Remembryng hym his erand was to doone  
From Troilus, and ek his grete emprise;  
And caste and knew in good plit was the moone  
To doon viage, and took his way ful soone  
Unto his neces palays ther biside.  
Now Janus, god of entree, thow hym gyde!  
Whan he was come unto his neces place,  
"Wher is my lady?" to hire folk quod he;  
80 And they hym tolde, and he forth in gan pace,  
And fond two othere ladys sete and she,  
Withinne a paved parlour, and they thre

Herden a mayden reden hem the geste  
 Of the siege of Thebes, while hem leste.  
 Quod Pandarus, "Madame, God yow see,  
 With youre book and all the compaignie!"  
 "Ey, uncle myn, welcome iwys," quod she;  
 And up she roos, and by the hond in hye  
 She took hym faste, and seyde, "This nyght thrie,  
 90 To goode mot it turne, of yow I mette."  
 And with that word she down on bench hym sette.  
 "Ye, nece, yee shal faren wel the bet,  
 If God wol, al this yeer," quod Pandarus;  
 "But I am sory that I have yow let  
 To herken of youre book ye preysen thus.  
 For Goddes love, what seith it? telle it us!  
 Is it of love? O, som good ye me leere!"  
 "Uncle," quod she, "youre maistresse is nat here."  
 With that thei gonnen laughe, and tho she seyde,  
 100 "This romaunce is of Thebes that we rede;  
 And we han herd how that kyng Layus deyde  
 Thorough Edippus his sone, and al that dede;  
 And here we stynten at thise lettres rede --  
 How the bisshop, as the book kan telle,  
 Amphiorax, fil thorough the ground to helle."  
 Quod Pandarus, "Al this knowe I myselve,  
 And al th' assege of Thebes and the care;  
 For herof ben ther maked bookes twelve.  
 But lat be this, and telle me how ye fare.  
 110 Do wey youre barbe, and shew youre face bare;  
 Do wey youre book, rys up, and lat us daunce,  
 And lat us don to May som observaunce."  
 "I! God forbede!" quod she. "Be ye mad?  
 Is that a widewes lif, so God yow save?  
 By God, ye maken me ryght soore adrad!  
 Ye ben so wylde, it semeth as ye rave.  
 It satte me wel bet ay in a cave  
 To bidde and rede on holy seyntes lyves;  
 Lat maydens gon to daunce, and yonge wyves."  
 120 "As evere thrive I," quod this Pandarus,  
 "Yet koude I telle a thyng to doon yow pleye."  
 "Now, uncle deere," quod she, "telle it us  
 For Goddes love; is than th' assege aweye?  
 I am of Grekes so fered that I deye."

"Nay, nay," quod he, "as evere mote I thryve,  
It is a thing wel bet than swyche fyve."  
"Ye, holy God," quod she, "what thyng is that?  
What! Bet than swyche fyve? I! Nay, ywys!  
For al this world ne kan I reden what  
130 It sholde ben; some jape I trowe is this;  
And but youreselven telle us what it is,  
My wit is for t' arede it al to leene.  
As help me God, I not nat what ye meene."  
"And I youre borugh, ne nevere shal, for me,  
This thyng be told to yow, as mote I thryve!"  
"And whi so, uncle myn? Whi so?" quod she.  
"By God," quod he, "that wol I telle as blyve!  
For proudder womman is ther noon on lyve,  
And ye it wiste, in al the town of Troye.  
140 I jape nought, as evere have I joye!"  
Tho gan she wondren moore than biforn  
A thousand fold, and down hire eyghen caste;  
For nevere, sith the tyme that she was born,  
To knowe thyng desired she so faste;  
And with a syk she seyde hym atte laste,  
"Now, uncle myn, I nyl yow nought displese,  
Nor axen more that may do yow disese."  
So after this, with many wordes glade,  
And frendly tales, and with merie chiere,  
150 Of this and that they pleide, and gonnen wade  
In many an unkouth, glad, and dep matere,  
As frendes doon whan thei ben mette yfere,  
Tyl she gan axen hym how Ector ferde,  
That was the townes wal and Grekes yerde.  
"Ful wel, I thonk it God," quod Pandarus,  
"Save in his arm he hath a litel wownde;  
And ek his fresshe brother Troilus,  
The wise, worthi Ector the secounde,  
In whom that alle vertu list habounde,  
160 As alle trouthe and alle gentillesse,  
Wisdom, honour, fredom, and worthinesse."  
"In good feith, em," quod she, "that liketh me  
Thei faren wel; God save hem bothe two!  
For trewelich I holde it gret deynte  
A kynges sone in armes wel to do,  
And ben of goode condiciouns therto;

For gret power and moral vertu here  
Is selde yseyn in o persone yfeere."  
"In good faith, that is soth," quod Pandarus.  
170 "But, by my trouthe, the kyng hath sones tweye --  
That is to mene, Ector and Troilus --  
That certeynly, though that I sholde deye,  
Thei ben as voide of vices, dar I seye,  
As any men that lyven under the sonne:  
Hire myght is wyde yknowe, and what they konne.  
"Of Ector nedeth it namore for to telle:  
In al this world ther nys a bettre knyght  
Than he, that is of worthynesse welle;  
And he wel moore vertu hath than myght;  
180 This knoweth many a wis and worthi wight.  
The same pris of Troilus I seye;  
God help me so, I knowe nat swiche tweye."  
"By God," quod she, "of Ector that is sooth.  
Of Troilus the same thyng trowe I;  
For, dredeles, men tellen that he doth  
In armes day by day so worthily,  
And bereth hym here at hom so gentily  
To everi wight, that alle pris hath he  
Of hem that me were levest preysed be."  
190 "Ye sey right sooth, ywys," quod Pandarus;  
"For yesterday, whoso had with hym ben,  
He myghte han wondred upon Troilus;  
For nevere yet so thikke a swarm of been  
Ne fleigh, as Grekes for hym gonne fleen,  
And thorough the feld, in everi wightes eere,  
Ther nas no cry but 'Troilus is there!'  
"Now here, now ther, he hunted hem so faste,  
Ther nas but Grekes blood -- and Troilus.  
Now hem he hurte, and hem al down he caste;  
200 Ay wher he wente, it was arayed thus:  
He was hire deth, and sheld and lif for us,  
That, as that day, ther dorste non withstonde  
Whil that he held his blody swerd in honde.  
"Therto he is the frendlieste man  
Of gret estat that evere I saugh my lyve;  
And wher hym lest, best felawshipe kan  
To swich as hym thynketh able for to thryve."  
And with that word tho Pandarus, as blyve,

He took his leve, and seyde, "I wol gon henne."  
210 "Nay, blame have I, myn uncle," quod she thenne.  
"What aileth yow to be thus wery soone,  
And namelich of wommen? Wol ye so?  
Nay, sitteth down; by God, I have to doone  
With yow, to speke of wisdom er ye go."  
And everi wight that was aboute hem tho,  
That herde that, gan fer away to stonde,  
Whil they two hadde al that hem liste in honde.  
Whan that hire tale al brought was to an ende,  
Of hire estat and of hire governaunce,  
220 Quod Pandarus, "Now tyme is that I wende.  
But yet, I say, ariseth, lat us daunce,  
And cast youre widewes habit to mischaunce!  
What list yow thus youreself to disfigure,  
Sith yow is tid thus fair an aventure?"  
"A, wel bithought! For love of God," quod she,  
"Shal I nat witen what ye meene of this?"  
"No, this thing axeth leyser," tho quod he,  
"And eke me wolde mucche greve, iwis,  
If I it tolde and ye it toke amys.  
230 Yet were it bet my tonge for to stille  
Than seye a soth that were ayeyns youre wille.  
"For, nece, by the goddesse Mynerve,  
And Jupiter, that maketh the thondre rynge,  
And by the blisful Venus that I serve,  
Ye ben the womman in this world lyvyng --  
Withouten paramours, to my wyttynge --  
That I best love, and lothest am to greve;  
And that ye weten wel youreself, I leve."  
"Iwis, myn uncle," quod she, "grant mercy!  
240 Your frendshipe have I founden evere yit.  
I am to no man holden, trewely,  
So mucche as yow, and have so litel quyt;  
And with the grace of God, emforth my wit,  
As in my gylt I shal yow nevere offende;  
And if I have er this, I wol amende.  
"But for the love of God I yow biseche,  
As ye ben he that I love moost and triste,  
Lat be to me youre fremde manere speche,  
And sey to me, youre nece, what yow liste."  
250 And with that word hire uncle anon hire kiste,



And seyde, "Gladly, leve nece dere!  
 Tak it for good, that I shal sey yow here."  
 With that she gan hire eighen down to caste,  
 And Pandarus to coghe gan a lite,  
 And seyde, "Nece, alwey -- lo! -- to the laste,  
 How so it be that som men hem delite  
 With subtyl art hire tales for to endite,  
 Yet for al that, in hire entencioun  
 Hire tale is al for som conclusioun.  
 260 "And sithe th' ende is every tales strengthe,  
 And this matere is so bihovely,  
 What sholde I peynte or drawen it on lengthe  
 To yow, that ben my frend so feythfully?"  
 And with that word he gan right inwardly  
 Byholden hire and loken on hire face,  
 And seyde, "On swich a mirour goode grace!"  
 Than thought he thus: "If I my tale endite  
 Aught harde, or make a proces any whyle,  
 She shal no savour have therin but lite,  
 270 And trowe I wolde hire in my wil bigyle;  
 For tendre wittes wenen al be wyle  
 Theras thei kan nought pleyntyly understonde;  
 Forthi hire wit to serven wol I fonde" --  
 And loked on hire in a bysi wyse,  
 And she was war that he byheld hire so,  
 And seyde, "Lord! so faste ye m' avise!  
 Sey ye me nevere er now? What sey ye, no?"  
 "Yis, yys," quod he, "and bet wol er I go!  
 But be my trouthe, I thoughte now if ye  
 280 Be fortunat, for now men shal it se.  
 "For to every wight som goodly aventure  
 Som tyme is shape, if he it kan receyven;  
 But if he wol take of it no cure,  
 Whan that it commeth, but wilfully it weyven,  
 Lo, neyther cas ne fortune hym deceyven,  
 But ryght his verray slouthe and wrecchednesse;  
 And swich a wight is for to blame, I gesse.  
 "Good aventure, O beelee nece, have ye  
 Ful lightly founden, and ye konne it take;  
 290 And for the love of God, and ek of me,  
 Cache it anon, lest aventure slake!  
 What sholde I lenger proces of it make?

Yif me youre hond, for in this world is noon --  
If that yow list -- a wight so wel bygon.  
"And sith I speke of good entencioun,  
As I to yow have told wel herebyforn,  
And love as wel youre honour and renoun  
As creature in al this world yborn,  
By alle the othes that I have yow sworn,  
300 And ye be wrooth therfore, or wene I lye,  
Ne shal I nevere sen yow eft with ye.  
"Beth naught agast, ne quaketh naught! Wherto?  
Ne chaungeth naught for fere so youre hewe!  
For hardely the werst of this is do;  
And though my tale as now be to yow newe,  
Yet trist alwey ye shal me fynde trewe;  
And were it thyng that me thoughte unsittyng,  
To yow wolde I no swiche tales brynge."  
"Now, good em, for Goddes love, I preye,"  
310 Quod she, "come of, and telle me what it is.  
For both I am agast what ye wol seye,  
And ek me longeth it to wite, ywis;  
For whethir it be wel or be amys,  
Say on, lat me nat in this feere dwelle."  
"So wol I doon; now herkeneth! I shall telle:  
"Now, nece myn, the kynges deere sone,  
The goode, wise, worthi, fresshe, and free,  
Which alwey for to don wel is his wone,  
The noble Troilus, so loveth the,  
320 That, but ye helpe, it wol his bane be.  
Lo, here is al! What sholde I moore seye?  
Doth what yow lest to make hym lyve or deye.  
"But if ye late hym deyen, I wol sterve --  
Have here my trouthe, nece, I nyl nat lyen --  
Al sholde I with this knyf my throte kerve."  
With that the teris breste out of his yen,  
And seide, "If that ye don us bothe dyen  
Thus gilteles, than have ye fisshed fayre!  
What mende ye, though that we booth appaire?  
330 "Allas, he which that is my lord so deere,  
That trewe man, that noble gentil knyght,  
That naught desireth but youre frendly cheere,  
I se hym dyen, ther he goth upryght,  
And hasteth hym with al his fulle myght

For to ben slayn, if his fortune assente.  
Allas, that God yow swich a beaute sente!  
"If it be so that ye so cruel be  
That of his deth yow liste nought to recche,  
That is so trewe and worthi, as ye se,  
340 Namore than of a japer or a wrecche --  
If ye be swich, youre beaute may nat strecche  
To make amendes of so cruel a dede;  
Avysement is good byfore the nede.  
"Wo worth the faire gemme vertulees!  
Wo worth that herbe also that dooth no boote!  
Wo worth that beaute that is routheles!  
Wo worth that wight that tret ech undir foote!  
And ye, that ben of beaute crop and roote,  
If therwithal in yow ther be no routh,  
350 Than is it harm ye lyven, by my trouthe!  
"And also think wel that this is no gaude;  
For me were levere thow and I and he  
Were hanged, than I sholde ben his baude,  
As heigh as men myghte on us alle ysee!  
I am thyn em; the shame were to me,  
As wel as the, if that I sholde assente  
Thorugh myn abet that he thyn honour shente.  
"Now understand, for I yow nought requere  
To bynde yow to hym thorugh no byheste,  
360 But only that ye make hym bettre chiere  
Than ye han doon er this, and moore feste,  
So that his lif be saved atte leeste;  
This al and som, and pleyedly, oure entente.  
God help me so, I nevere other mente!  
"Lo, this requeste is naught but skylle, ywys,  
Ne doute of resoun, pardee, is ther noon.  
I sette the worste, that ye dreden this:  
Men wolde wondren sen hym come or goon.  
Ther-ayeins answer I thus anon,  
370 That every wight, but he be fool of kynde,  
Wol deme it love of frendshipe in his mynde.  
"What, who wol demen, though he se a man  
To temple go, that he th' ymages eteth.  
Thenk ek how wel and wisely that he kan  
Governe hymself, that he no thyng foryeteth,  
That where he cometh he pris and thank hym geteth.

And ek therto, he shal come here so selde,  
What fors were it though al the town byhelde?  
"Swych love of frendes regneth al this town;  
380 And wre yow in that mantel evere moo,  
And God so wys be my savacioun,  
As I have seyde, youre beste is to do soo.  
But alwey, goode nece, to stynte his woo,  
So lat youre daunger sucred ben a lite,  
That of his deth ye be naught for to wite."  
Criseyde, which that herde hym in this wise,  
Thoughte, "I shal felen what he meneth, ywis."  
"Now em," quod she, "what wolde ye devise?  
What is youre reed I sholde don of this?"  
390 "That is wel seyde," quod he. "Certein, best is  
That ye hym love ayeyn for his lovyng,  
As love for love is skilful guerdonyng.  
"Thenk ek how elde wasteth every houre  
In ech of yow a partie of beautee;  
And therefore er that age the devoure,  
Go love; for old, ther wol no wight of the.  
Lat this proverbe a loore unto yow be:  
To late ywar, quod Beaute, whan it paste;  
And Elde daunteth Daunger at the laste.  
400 "The kynges fool is wont to crie loude,  
Whan that hym thinketh a womman berth hire hye,  
'So longe mote ye lyve, and alle proude,  
Til crowes feet be growe under youre ye,  
And sende yow than a myrour in to pryde,  
In which that ye may se youre face a morwe!  
I bidde wisse yow namore sorwe."  
With this he stynte, and caste adown the heed,  
And she began to breste a-wepe anon,  
And seyde, "Allas, for wo! Why nere I deed?  
410 For of this world the feyth is al agoon.  
Allas, what sholden straunge to me doon,  
Whan he that for my beste frend I wende  
Ret me to love, and sholde it me defende?  
"Allas! I wolde han trusted, douteles,  
That if that I, thorough my dysaventure,  
Hadde loved outhir hym or Achilles,  
Ector, or any mannes creature,  
Ye nolde han had no mercy ne mesure

On me, but alwey had me in repreve.  
 420 This false world -- alas! -- who may it leve?  
 "What, is this al the joye and al the feste?  
 Is this youre reed? Is this my blisful cas?  
 Is this the verray mede of youre byheeste?  
 Is al this paynted proces seyde -- alas! --  
 Right for this fyn? O lady myn, Pallas!  
 Thow in this dredful cas for me purveye,  
 For so astoned am I that I deye."  
 Wyth that she gan ful sorwfully to syke.  
 "A, may it be no bet?" quod Pandarus;  
 430 "By God, I shal namore come here this wyke,  
 And God toforn, that am mystrusted thus!  
 I se wel that ye sette lite of us,  
 Or of oure deth! Allas, I woful wrecche!  
 Might he yet lyve, of me is nought to recche.  
 "O cruel god, O dispitouse Marte,  
 O Furies thre of helle, on yow I crye!  
 So lat me nevere out of this hous departe,  
 If I mente harm or vilenye!  
 But sith I se my lord mot nedes dye,  
 440 And I with hym, here I me shryve, and seye  
 That wikkedly ye don us bothe deye.  
 "But sith it liketh yow that I be ded,  
 By Neptunus, that god is of the see,  
 Fro this forth shal I nevere eten bred  
 Til I myn owen herte blood may see;  
 For certeyn I wol deye as soone as he."  
 And up he sterte, and on his wey he raughte,  
 Tyl she agayn hym by the lappe kaughte.  
 Criseyde, which that wel neigh starf for feere,  
 450 So as she was the ferfulleste wight  
 That myghte be, and herde ek with hire ere  
 And saugh the sorwful ernest of the knyght,  
 And in his preier ek saugh noon unryght,  
 And for the harm that myghte ek fallen moore,  
 She gan to rewe and dredde hire wonder soore,  
 And thoughte thus: "Unhappes fallen thikke  
 Alday for love, and in swych manere cas  
 As men ben cruel in hemself and wikke;  
 And if this man sle here hymself -- alas! --  
 460 In my presence, it wol be no solas.

What men wolde of hit deme I kan nat seye;  
 It nedeth me ful sleighly for to pleie."  
 And with a sorowful sik she sayde thrie,  
 "A, Lord! What me is tid a sory chaunce!  
 For myn estat lith in a jupartie,  
 And ek myn emes lif is in balaunce;  
 But natheles, with Goddes governaunce,  
 I shal so doon, myn honour shal I kepe,  
 And ek his lif" -- and stynte for to wepe.  
 470 "Of harmes two, the lesse is for to chese;  
 Yet have I levere maken hym good chere  
 In honour, than myn emes lyf to lese.  
 Ye seyn, ye nothyng elles me requere?"  
 "No, wis," quod he, "myn owen nece dere."  
 "Now wel," quod she, "and I wol doon my peyne;  
 I shal myn herte ayeins my lust constreyne.  
 "But that I nyl nat holden hym in honde,  
 Ne love a man ne kan I naught ne may  
 Ayeins my wyl, but elles wol I fonde,  
 480 Myn honour sauf, plese hym fro day to day.  
 Therto nolde I nat ones han seyde nay,  
 But that I drede, as in my fantasye;  
 But cesse cause, ay cesseth maladie.  
 "And here I make a protestacioun  
 That in this proces if ye depper go,  
 That certeynly, for no salvacioun  
 Of yow, though that ye sterven bothe two,  
 Though al the world on o day be my fo,  
 Ne shal I nevere of hym han other routhe."  
 490 "I graunte wel," quod Pandare, "by my trowthe.  
 "But may I truste wel to yow," quod he,  
 "That of this thyng that ye han hight me here,  
 Ye wole it holden trewely unto me?"  
 "Ye, doutelees," quod she, "myn uncle deere."  
 "Ne that I shal han cause in this matere,"  
 Quod he, "to pleyne, or ofter yow to preche?"  
 "Why, no, parde; what nedeth moore speche?"  
 Tho fellen they in other tales glade,  
 Tyl at the laste, "O good em," quod she tho,  
 500 "For his love, that us bothe made,  
 Tel me how first ye wisten of his wo.  
 Woot noon of it but ye?" He seyde, "No."

"Kan he wel speke of love?" quod she; "I preye  
Tel me, for I the bet me shal purveye."

Tho Pandarus a litel gan to smyle,  
And seyde, "By my trouthe, I shal yow telle.  
This other day, naught gon ful longe while,  
In-with the paleis gardyn, by a welle,  
Gan he and I wel half a day to dwelle,  
510 Right for to speken of an ordinaunce,  
How we the Grekes myghten disavaunce.

"Soon after that bigonne we to lepe,  
And casten with oure dartes to and fro,  
Tyl at the laste he seyde he wolde slepe,  
And on the gres adoun he leyde hym tho;  
And I afer gan romen to and fro,  
Til that I herde, as that I welk alone,  
How he bigan ful woefully to grone.

"Tho gan I stalke hym softely byhynde,  
520 And sikirly, the soothe for to seyne,  
As I kan clepe ayein now to my mynde,  
Right thus to Love he gan hym for to pleyne:  
He seyde, 'Lord, have routhe upon my peyne,  
Al have I ben rebell in myn entente;  
Now, mea culpa, lord, I me repente!

"O god, that at thi disposicioun  
Ledest the fyn by juste purveiaunce  
Of every wight, my lowe confessioun  
Accepte in gree, and sende me swich penaunce  
530 As liketh the, but from disesperaunce,  
That may my goost departe away fro the,  
Thow be my sheld, for thi benignite.

"For certes, lord, so soore hath she me wounded,  
That stood in blak, with lokyng of hire eyen,  
That to myn hertes botme it is ysounded,  
Thorugh which I woot that I moot nedes deyen.  
This is the werste, I dar me nat bywreyen;  
And wel the hotter ben the gledes rede,  
That men hem wrien with asshen pale and dede.'

540 "Wyth that he smot his hed adown anon,  
And gan to motre, I noot what, trewely.  
And I with that gan stille away to goon,  
And leet therof as nothing wist had I,  
And com ayein anon, and stood hym by,

And seyde, 'Awake, ye slepen al to longe!  
It semeth nat that love doth yow longe,  
"That slepen so that no man may yow wake.  
Who sey evere or this so dul a man?'  
'Ye, frend,' quod he, 'do ye youre hedes ake  
550 For love, and lat me lyven as I kan.'  
But though that he for wo was pale and wan,  
Yet made he tho as fresshe a countenaunce  
As though he sholde have led the newe daunce.  
"This passed forth til now, this other day,  
It fel that I com romyng al allone  
Into his chaumbre, and fond how that he lay  
Upon his bed; but man so soore grone  
Ne herde I nevere, and what that was his mone  
Ne wist I nought; for, as I was comyng,  
560 Al sodeynly he lefte his complaynyng.  
"Of which I took somwat suspecioun,  
And ner I com, and fond he wepte soore;  
And God so wys be my savacioun,  
As nevere of thyng hadde I no routhe moore;  
For neither with engyn, ne with no loore,  
Unnethes myghte I fro the deth hym kepe,  
That yet fele I myn herte for hym wepe.  
"And God woot, nevere sith that I was born  
Was I so besy no man for to preche,  
570 Ne nevere was to wight so depe isworn,  
Or he me told who myghte ben his leche.  
But now to yow rehercen al his speche,  
Or alle his woful wordes for to sowne,  
Ne bid me naught, but ye wol se me swowne.  
"But for to save his lif, and elles nought,  
And to noon harm of yow, thus am I dryven;  
And for the love of God, that us hath wrought,  
Swich cheer hym dooth that he and I may lyven!  
Now have I plat to yow myn herte shryven,  
580 And sith ye woot that myn entent is cleene,  
Take heede therof, for I non yvel meene.  
"And right good thrift, I prey to God, have ye,  
That han swich oon ykaught withouten net!  
And be ye wis as ye be fair to see,  
Wel in the ryng than is the ruby set.  
Ther were nevere two so wel ymet,



Whan ye ben his al hool as he is youre;  
Ther myghty God graunte us see that houre!"  
"Nay, therof spak I nought, ha, ha!" quod she;  
590 "As helpe me God, ye shenden every deel!"  
"O, mercy, dere nece," anon quod he,  
"What so I spak, I mente naught but wel,  
By Mars, the god that helmed is of steel!  
Now beth naught wroth, my blood, my nece dere."  
"Now wel," quod she, "foryeven be it here!"  
With this he took his leve, and hom he wente;  
And, Lord, he was glad and wel bygon!  
Criseyde aros, no lenger she ne stente,  
But streght into hire closet wente anon,  
600 And set hire down as styлле as any ston,  
And every word gan up and down to wynde  
That he had seyde, as it com hire to mynde,  
And wex somdel astoned in hire thought  
Right for the newe cas; but whan that she  
Was ful avysed, tho fond she right nought  
Of peril why she ought afered be.  
For man may love, of possibilite,  
A womman so, his herte may tobestre,  
And she naught love ayein, but if hire leste.  
610 But as she sat allone and thoughte thus,  
Ascry aros at scarmuch al withoute,  
And men criden in the strete, "Se, Troilus  
Hath right now put to flighte the Grekes route!"  
With that gan al hire meyne for to shoute,  
"A, go we se! Cast up the yates wyde!  
For thorwgh this strete he moot to paleys ride;  
"For other wey is to the yate noon  
Of Dardanus, there opyn is the cheyne."  
With that com he and al his folk anon  
620 An esy pas rydyng, in routes tweyne,  
Right as his happy day was, sooth to seyne,  
For which, men seyn, may nought destourbed be  
That shal bityden of necessitee.  
This Troilus sat on his baye steede  
Al armed, save his hed, ful richely;  
And wowned was his hors, and gan to blede,  
On which he rood a pas ful softly.  
But swich a knyghtly sighte trewely

As was on hym, was nought, withouten faille,  
630 To loke on Mars, that god is of bataille.  
So lik a man of armes and a knyght  
He was to seen, fulfilled of heigh prowesse,  
For bothe he hadde a body and a myght  
To don that thing, as wel as hardynesse;  
And ek to seen hym in his gere hym dresse,  
So fressh, so yong, so weldy semed he,  
It was an heven upon hym for to see.  
His helm tohewen was in twenty places,  
That by a tyssew heng his bak byhynde;  
640 His sheeld todasshed was with swerdes and maces,  
In which men myghte many an arwe fynde  
That thirled hadde horn and nerf and rynde;  
And ay the peple cryde, "Here cometh oure joye,  
And, next his brother, holder up of Troye!"  
For which he wex a litel reed for shame  
When he the peple upon hym herde cryen,  
That to byholde it was a noble game  
How sobrelich he caste down his yen.  
Criseyda gan al his chere asprien,  
650 And leet it so softe in hire herte synke,  
That to hireself she seyde, "Who yaf me drynke?"  
For of hire owen thought she wex al reed,  
Remembryng hire right thus, "Lo, this is he  
Which that myn uncle swerith he moot be deed,  
But I on hym have mercy and pitee."  
And with that thought, for pure ashamed, she  
Gan in hire hed to pulle, and that as faste,  
Whil he and alle the peple forby paste,  
And gan to caste and rollen up and down  
660 Withinne hire thought his excellent prowesse,  
And his estat, and also his renown,  
His wit, his shap, and ek his gentillesse;  
But moost hire favour was, for his distresse  
Was al for hire, and thoughte it was a routhe  
To sleen swich oon, if that he mente trouthe.  
Now myghte som envious jangle thus:  
"This was a sodeyn love; how myght it be  
That she so lightly loved Troilus  
Right for the firste syghte, ye, parde?"  
670 Now whoso seith so, mote he nevere ythe!

For every thing a gynnyng hath it nede  
Er al be wrought, withowten any drede.  
For I sey nought that she so sodeynly  
Yaf hym hire love, but that she gan enclyne  
To like hym first, and I have told yow whi;  
And after that, his manhod and his pyne  
Made love withinne hire for to myne,  
For which by proces and by good servyse  
He gat hire love, and in no sodeyn wyse.  
680 And also blisful Venus, wel arrayed,  
Sat in hire seventhe hous of hevene tho,  
Disposed wel, and with aspectes payed,  
To helpe sely Troilus of his woo.  
And soth to seyne, she nas not al a foo  
To Troilus in his nativitee;  
God woot that wel the sonner spedde he.  
Now lat us stynte of Troilus a throwe,  
That rideth forth, and lat us torne faste  
Unto Criseyde, that heng hire hed ful lowe  
690 Ther as she sat allone, and gan to caste  
Where on she wolde apoynte hire atte laste,  
If it so were hire em ne wolde cesse  
For Troilus upon hire for to presse.  
And, Lord! So she gan in hire thought argue  
In this matere of which I have yow told,  
And what to doone best were, and what eschue,  
That plited she ful ofte in many fold.  
Now was hire herte warm, now was it cold;  
And what she thoughte somewhat shal I write,  
700 As to myn auctour listeth for t' endite.  
She thoughte wel that Troilus persone  
She knew by syghte, and ek his gentilesse,  
And thus she seyde, "Al were it nat to doone  
To graunte hym love, yet for his worthynesse  
It were honour with pley and with gladnesse  
In honestee with swich a lord to deele,  
For myn estat, and also for his heele.  
"Ek wel woot I my kynges sone is he,  
And sith he hath to se me swich delit,  
710 If I wolde outreliche his sighte flee,  
Peraunter he myghte have me in dispit,  
Thorugh whicch I myghte stonde in worse plit.

Now were I wis, me hate to purchace,  
Withouten need, ther I may stonde in grace?  
"In every thyng, I woot, ther lith mesure;  
For though a man forbede dronkenesse,  
He naught forbet that every creature  
Be drynkeles for alwey, as I gesse.  
Ek sith I woot for me is his destresse,  
720 I ne aughte nat for that thing hym despise,  
Sith it is so he meneth in good wyse.  
"And ek I knowe of longe tyme agon  
His thewes goode, and that he is nat nyce;  
N' avantour, seith men, certein, he is noon;  
To wis is he to doon so gret a vice;  
Ne als I nyl hym nevere so cherice  
That he may make avaunt, by juste cause,  
He shal me nevere bynde in swich a clause.  
"Now sette a caas: the hardest is, ywys,  
730 Men myghten demen that he loveth me.  
What dishonour were it unto me, this?  
May ich hym lette of that? Why, nay, parde!  
I knowe also, and alday heere and se,  
Men loven wommen al biside hire leve,  
And whan hem leste namore, lat hem byleve!  
"I thenke ek how he able is for to have  
Of al this noble town the thriftieste  
To ben his love, so she hire honour save.  
For out and out he is the worthieste,  
740 Save only Ector, which that is the beste;  
And yet his lif al lith now in my cure.  
But swich is love, and ek myn aventure.  
"Ne me to love, a wonder is it nought;  
For wel woot I myself, so God me spede --  
Al wolde I that noon wiste of this thought --  
I am oon the faireste, out of drede,  
And goodlieste, who that taketh hede,  
And so men seyn, in al the town of Troie.  
What wonder is though he of me have joye?  
750 "I am myn owene womman, wel at ese --  
I thank it God -- as after myn estat,  
Right yong, and stonde unteyd in lusty leese,  
Withouten jalousie or swich debat:  
Shal noon housbonde seyn to me `Chek mat!'

For either they ben ful of jalousie,  
Or maisterfull, or loven novelrie.  
"What shal I doon? To what fyn lyve I thus?  
Shal I nat love, in cas if that me leste?  
What, pardieux! I am naught religious.  
760 And though that I myn herte sette at reste  
Upon this knyght, that is the worthieste,  
And kepe alwey myn honour and my name,  
By alle right, it may do me no shame."  
But right as when the sonne shyneth brighte  
In March, that chaungeth ofte tyme his face,  
And that a cloude is put with wynd to flighte,  
Which oversprat the sonne as for a space,  
A cloudy thought gan thorough hire soule pace,  
That overspradde hire brighte thoughtes alle,  
770 So that for feere almost she gan to falle.  
That thought was this: "Allas! Syn I am free,  
Sholde I now love, and put in jupartie  
My sikernesse, and thrallen libertee?  
Allas, how dorst I thenken that folie?  
May I naught wel in other folk asprie  
Hire dredfull joye, hire constreinte, and hire peyne?  
Ther loveth noon, that she nath why to pleyne.  
"For love is yet the mooste stormy lyf,  
Right of hymself, that evere was bigonne;  
780 For evere som mystrust or nice strif  
Ther is in love, som cloude is over that sonne.  
Therto we wrecched wommen nothing konne,  
Whan us is wo, but wepe and sitte and thinke;  
Oure wrecche is this, oure owen wo to drynke.  
"Also thise wikked tonges ben so prest  
To speke us harm; ek men ben so untrewe,  
That right anon as cessed is hire lest,  
So cesseth love, and forth to love a newe.  
But harm ydoon is doon, whoso it rewe:  
790 For though thise men for love hem first torende,  
Ful sharp bygynnyng breketh ofte at ende.  
"How ofte tyme hath it yknowen be  
The tresoun that to wommen hath ben do!  
To what fyn is swich love I kan nat see,  
Or wher bycometh it, whan that it is ago.  
Ther is no wight that woot, I trowe so,

Where it bycometh. Lo, no wight on it sporneth.  
 That erst was nothing, into nought it torneth.  
 "How bisy, if I love, ek most I be  
 800 To plesen hem that jangle of love, and dremen,  
 And coye hem, that they seye noon harm of me!  
 For though ther be no cause, yet hem semen  
 Al be for harm that folk hire frendes quemen;  
 And who may stoppen every wikked tonge,  
 Or sown of belles whil that thei ben ronge?"  
 And after that, hire thought gan for to clere,  
 And seide, "He which that nothing undertaketh,  
 Nothyng n' acheveth, be hym looth or deere."  
 And with an other thought hire herte quaketh.  
 810 Than slepeth hope, and after drede awaketh.  
 Now hoot, now cold; but thus, bitwixen tweye,  
 She rist hire up, and went hire for to pleye.  
 Adown the steyre anonright tho she wente  
 Into the gardyn with hire neces thre,  
 And up and down ther made many a wente --  
 Flexippe, she, Tharbe, and Antigone --  
 To pleyen that it joye was to see;  
 And other of hire wommen, a gret route,  
 Hire folowede in the gardyn al aboute.  
 820 This yerd was large, and rayled alle th' aleyes,  
 And shadewed wel with blosmy bowes grene,  
 And benched newe, and sonded alle the weyes,  
 In which she walketh arm in arm bitwene,  
 Til at the laste Antigone the shene  
 Gan on a Troian song to singen cleere,  
 That it an heven was hire vois to here.  
 She seyde, "O Love, to whom I have and shal  
 Ben humble subgit, trewe in myn entente,  
 As I best kan, to yow, lord, yeve ich al  
 830 For everemo myn hertes lust to rente;  
 For nevere yet thi grace no wight sente  
 So blisful cause as me, my lif to lede  
 In alle joie and seurte out of drede.  
 "Ye, blisful god, han me so wel byset  
 In love, iwys, that al that bereth lif  
 Ymagynen ne kouth. how to be bet;  
 For, lord, withouten jalousie or strif,  
 I love oon which is moost ententif

To serven wel, unweri or unfeyned,  
840 That evere was, and leest with harm desteyned.

"As he that is the welle of worthynesse,  
Of trouthe grownd, mirour of goodlihed,  
Of wit Apollo, stoon of sikernesse,  
Of vertu roote, of lust fynder and hed,  
Thorugh which is alle sorwe fro me ded --  
Iwis, I love hym best, so doth he me;  
Now good thrift have he, wherso that he be!  
"Whom shulde I thanken but yow, god of Love,  
Of al this blisse, in which to bathe I gynne?  
850 And thanked be ye, lord, for that I love!

This is the righte lif that I am inne,  
To flemen alle manere vice and synne:  
This dooth me so to vertu for t' entende,  
That day by day I in my wille amende.  
"And whoso seith that for to love is vice,  
Or thraldom, though he feele in it destresse,  
He outhur is envyous, or right nyce,  
Or is unmyghty, for his shrewednesse,  
To loven; for swich manere folk, I gesse,  
860 Defamen Love, as nothing of hym knowe.  
Thei speken, but thei benten nevere his bowe!

"What is the sonne wers, of kynde right,  
Though that a man, for fieblesse of his yen,  
May nought endure on it to see for bright?  
Or love the wers, though wrecches on it crien?  
No wele is worth, that may no sorwe dryen.

And forthi, who that hath an hed of verre,  
Fro cast of stones war hym in the werre!

"But I with al myn herte and al my myght,  
870 As I have seyde, wol love unto my laste  
My deere herte and al myn owen knyght,  
In which myn herte growen is so faste,  
And his in me, that it shal evere laste.

Al dredde I first to love hym to bigynne,  
Now woot I wel, ther is no peril inne."

And of hir song right with that word she stente,  
And therwithal, "Now nece," quod Cryseyde,

"Who made this song now with so good entente?"

Antygone answerde anoon and seyde,

880 "Madame, ywys, the goodlieste mayde

Of gret estat in al the town of Troye,  
 And let hire lif in moste honour and joye."  
 "Forsothe, so it semeth by hire song,"  
 Quod tho Criseyde, and gan therwith to sike,  
 And seyde, "Lord, is ther swych blisse among  
 Thise loveres, as they konne faire endite?"  
 "Ye, wis," quod fresshe Antigone the white,  
 "For alle the folk that han or ben on lyve  
 Ne konne wel the blisse of love discryve.  
 890 "But wene ye that every wrecche woot  
 The parfit blisse of love? Why, nay, iwys!  
 They wenen all be love, if oon be hoot.  
 Do wey, do wey, they woot no thyng of this!  
 Men moste axe at seyntes if it is  
 Aught fair in hevene (Why? For they kan telle),  
 And axen fendes is it foul in helle."  
 Criseyde unto that purpos naught answerde,  
 But seyde, "Ywys, it wol be nyght as faste."  
 But every word which that she of hire herde,  
 900 She gan to prenten in hire herte faste,  
 And ay gan love hire lasse for t' agaste  
 Than it dide erst, and synken in hire herte,  
 That she wex somewhat able to converte.  
 The dayes honour, and the hevenes ye,  
 The nyghtes foo -- al this clepe I the sonne --  
 Gan westren faste, and downward for to wrye,  
 As he that hadde his dayes cours yronne,  
 And white thynges wexen dymme and donne  
 For lak of lyght, and sterres for t' apere,  
 910 That she and alle hire folk in went yfeere.  
 So whan it liked hire to go to reste,  
 And voided weren thei that voiden oughte,  
 She seyde that to slepen wel hire leste.  
 Hire wommen soone til hire bed hire broughte.  
 Whan al was hust, than lay she stille and thoughte  
 Of al this thing; the manere and the wise  
 Reherce it nedeth nought, for ye ben wise.  
 A nyghtyngale, upon a cedre grene,  
 Under the chambre wal ther as she ley,  
 920 Ful loude song ayein the moone shene,  
 Peraunter in his briddes wise a lay  
 Of love, that made hire herte fressh and gay.



That herkned she so longe in good entente,  
Til at the laste the dede slep hire hente.  
And as she slep, anonright tho hire mette  
How that an egle, fethered whit as bon,  
Under hire brest his longe clawes sette,  
And out hire herte he rente, and that anon,  
And dide his herte into hire brest to gon --  
930 Of which she nought agroos, ne nothyng smerte --  
And forth he fleigh, with herte left for herte.  
Now lat hire slepe, and we oure tales holde  
Of Troilus, that is to paleis riden  
Fro the scarmuch of the which I tolde,  
And in his chaumbre sit and hath abiden  
Til two or thre of his messages yeden  
For Pandarus, and soughten hym ful faste,  
Til they him founde and broughte him at the laste.  
This Pandarus com lepyng in atones,  
940 And seyde thus: "Who hath ben wel ibete  
To-day with swerdes and with slynge-stones,  
But Troilus, that hath caught hym an hete?"  
And gan to jape, and seyde, "Lord, so ye swete!  
But ris and lat us soupe and go to reste."  
And he answerde hym, "Do we as the leste."  
With al the haste goodly that they myghte  
They spedde hem fro the soper unto bedde;  
And every wight out at the dore hym dyghte,  
And where hym liste upon his wey him spedde.  
950 But Troilus, that thoughte his herte bledde  
For wo, til that he herde som tydyng,  
He seyde, "Frend, shal I now wepe or synge?"  
Quod Pandarus, "Ly styлле and lat me slepe,  
And don thyn hood; thy nedes spedde be!  
And ches if thou wolt synge or daunce or lepe!  
At shorte wordes, thou shal trowen me:  
Sire, my nece wol do wel by the,  
And love the best, by God and by my trouthe,  
But lak of pursuyt make it in thi slouthe.  
960 "For thus ferforth I have thi werk bigonne  
Fro day to day, til this day by the morwe  
Hire love of frendshipe have I to the wonne,  
And therto hath she leyd hire feyth to borwe.  
Algate a foot is hameled of thi sorwe!"

What sholde I lenger sermoun of it holde?  
As ye han herd byfore, al he hym tolde.  
But right as floures, thorough the cold of nyght  
Iclosed, stoupen on hire stalke lowe,  
Redressen hem ayein the sonne bright,  
970 And spreden on hire kynde cours by rowe,  
Right so gan tho his eighen up to throwe  
This Troilus, and seyde, "O Venus deere,  
Thi myght, thi grace, yheried be it here!"  
And to Pandare he held up bothe his hondes,  
And seyde, "Lord, al thyn be that I have!  
For I am hool, al brosten ben my bondes.  
A thousand Troyes whoso that me yave,  
Ech after other, God so wys me save,  
Ne myghte me so gladen; lo, myn herte,  
980 It spreadeth so for joie it wol tosterte!  
"But, Lord, how shal I doon? How shal I lyven?  
Whan shal I next my deere herte see?  
How shal this longe tyme away be dryven  
Til that thow be ayein at hire fro me?  
Thow maist answer, 'Abid, abid,' but he  
That hangeth by the nekke, soth to seyne  
In gret disese abideth for the peyne."  
"Al esily, now, for the love of Marte,"  
Quod Pandarus, "for every thing hath tyme.  
990 So longe abid til that the nyght departe,  
For also siker as thow list here by me,  
And God toforn, I wol be ther at pryme;  
And forthi, werk somewhat as I shal seye,  
Or on som other wight this charge leye.  
"For, pardee, God woot I have evere yit  
Ben redy the to serve, and to this nyght  
Have I naught feyned, but emforth my wit  
Don al thi lust, and shal with al my myght.  
Do now as I shal seyn, and far aright;  
1000 And if thow nylt, wite al thiself thi care!  
On me is nought along thyn yvel fare.  
"I woot wel that thow wiser art than I  
A thousand fold, but if I were as thow,  
God help me so, as I wolde outrely  
Of myn owen hond write hire right now  
A lettre, in which I wolde hire tellen how

I ferde amys, and hire biseche of routhe.  
Now help thiself, and leve it nought for slouthel!  
"And I myself wol therwith to hire gon;  
1010 And whan thou woost that I am with hire there,  
Worth thou upon a courser right anon --  
Ye, hardily, right in thi beste gere --  
And ryd forth by the place, as nought ne were,  
And thou shalt fynde us, if I may, sittynge  
At som wyndow, into the strete lokynge.  
"And if the list, than maystow us salue;  
And upon me make thou thi countenaunce;  
But by thi lif, be war and faste eschue  
To tarien ought -- God shilde us fro meschaunce!  
1020 Rid forth thi wey, and hold thi governaunce;  
And we shal speek of the somewhat, I trowe,  
Whan thou art gon, to don thyn eris glowe!  
"Towchyng thi lettre, thou art wys ynough.  
I woot thou nynt it dygneliche endite,  
As make it with thise argumentes tough;  
Ne scryvenyssh or craftyly thou it write;  
Biblotte it with thi teris ek a lite;  
And if thou write a goodly word al softe,  
Though it be good, reherce it nought to ofte.  
1030 "For though the beste harpoun upon lyve  
Wolde on the beste sowned joly harpe  
That evere was, with alle his fynghes fyve  
Touche ay o stryng, or ay o werbul harpe,  
Were his nayles poynted nevere so sharpe,  
It sholde maken every wight to dulle,  
To here his glee, and of his strokes fulle.  
"Ne jompre ek no discordant thyng yfeere,  
As thus, to usen termes of phisik  
In loves termes; hold of thi matere  
1040 The forme alwey, and do that it be lik;  
For if a peyntour wolde peynte a pyk  
With asses feet, and hedde it as an ape,  
It cordeth naught, so were it but a jape."  
This counseil liked wel to Troilus,  
But, as a dredful love, he seyde this:  
"Allas, my deere brother Pandarus,  
I am ashamed for to write, ywys,  
Lest of myn innocence I seyde amys,

Or that she nolde it for despit receyve;  
1050 Than were I ded: ther myght it nothyng weyve."  
To that Pandare answered, "If the lest,  
Do that I seye, and lat me therwith gon;  
For by that Lord that formede est and west,  
I hope of it to brynge answeere anon  
Of hire hond; and if that thow nylt noon,  
Lat be, and sory mote he ben his lyve  
Ayeins thi lust that helpeth the to thryve."  
Quod Troilus, "Depardieux, ich assente!  
Sith that the list, I wil arise and write;  
1060 And blisful God prey ich with good entente,  
The viage, and the lettre I shal endite,  
So spede it; and thow, Minerva, the white,  
Yif thow me wit my lettre to devyse."  
And sette hym down, and wrot right in this wyse:  
First he gan hire his righte lady calle,  
His hertes lif, his lust, his sorwes leche,  
His blisse, and ek thise other termes alle  
That in swich cas thise loveres alle seche;  
And in ful humble wise, as in his speche,  
1070 He gan hym recomaunde unto hire grace;  
To telle al how, it axeth muchel space.  
And after this ful lowely he hire preyde  
To be nought wroth, thogh he, of his folie,  
So hardy was to hire to write, and seyde  
That love it made, or elles most he die,  
And pitousli gan mercy for to crye;  
And after that he seyde -- and leigh ful loude --  
Hymself was litel worth, and lasse he koude;  
And that she sholde han his konnyng excused,  
1080 That litel was, and ek he dredde hire soo;  
And his unworthynesse he ay acused;  
And after that than gan he telle his woo --  
But that was endeles, withouten hoo --  
And seyde he wolde in trouthe alwey hym holde;  
And radde it over, and gan the lettre folde.  
And with his salte teris gan he bathe  
The ruby in his signet, and it sette  
Upon the wex deliverliche and rathe.  
Therwith a thousand tymes er he lette  
1090 He kiste tho the lettre that he shette,

And seyde, "Lettre, a blisful destine  
 The shapyn is. my lady shal the see!"  
 This Pandare tok the lettre, and that bytyme  
 A-morwe, and to his neces paleis sterte,  
 And faste he swor that it was passed prime,  
 And gan to jape, and seyde, "Ywys, myn herte,  
 So fressh it is, although it sore smerte,  
 I may naught slepe nevere a Mayes morwe;  
 I have a joly wo, a lusty sorwe."  
 1100 Criseyde, whan that she hire uncle herde,  
 With dredful herte, and desirous to here  
 The cause of his comynge, thus answerde:  
 "Now, by youre fey, myn uncle," quod she, "dere,  
 What manere wyndes gydeth yow now here?  
 Tel us youre joly wo and youre penaunce.  
 How ferforth be ye put in loves daunce?"  
 "By God," quod he, "I hoppe alwey byhynde!"  
 And she to laughe, it thoughte hire herte brest.  
 Quod Pandarus, "Loke alwey that ye fynde  
 1110 Game in myn hood; but herkneth, if yow lest!  
 Ther is right now come into town a gest,  
 A Greek espie, and telleth newe thinges,  
 For which I come to telle yow tydynges.  
 "Into the gardyn go we, and ye shal here,  
 Al pryvely, of this a long sermoun."  
 With that they wenten arm in arm yfeere  
 Into the gardyn from the chaumbre down;  
 And whan that he so fer was that the sown  
 Of that he spak no man heren myghte,  
 1120 He seyde hire thus, and out the lettre plighte:  
 "Lo, he that is al holy youres free  
 Hym recomaundeth lowely to youre grace,  
 And sente yow this lettre here by me.  
 Avyseth yow on it, whan ye han space,  
 And of som goodly answer yow purchace,  
 Or, helpe me God, so pleynly for to seyne,  
 He may nat longe lyven for his peyne."  
 Ful dredfully tho gan she stonden styлле,  
 And took it naught, but al hire humble chere  
 1130 Gan for to chaunge, and seyde, "Scrit ne bille,  
 For love of God, that toucheth swich matere,  
 Ne bryng me noon; and also, uncle deere,

To myn estat have more reward, I preye,  
Than to his lust! What sholde I more seye?  
"And loketh now if this be resonable,  
And letteth nought, for favour ne for slouthe,  
To seyn a sooth; now were it covenable  
To myn estat, by God and by youre trouthe,  
To taken it, or to han of hym routhe,  
1140 In harmyng of myself, or in repreve?  
Ber it ayein, for hym that ye on leve!"  
This Pandarus gan on hire for to stare,  
And seyde, "Now is this the grettest wondre  
That evere I seigh! Lat be this nyce fare!  
To dethe mot I smyten be with thondre,  
If for the citee which that stondeth yondre,  
Wolde I a lettre unto yow brynge or take  
To harm of yow! What list yow thus it make?  
"But thus ye faren, wel neigh alle and some,  
1150 That he that most desireth yow to serve,  
Of hym ye recche leest wher he bycome,  
And whethir that he lyve or elles sterve.  
But for al that that ever I may deserve,  
Refuse it naught," quod he, and hente hire faste,  
And in hire bosom the lettre down he thraste,  
And seyde hire, "Now cast it away anon,  
That folk may seen and gauren on us tweye."  
Quod she, "I kan abyde til they be gon";  
And gan to smyle, and seyde hym, "Em, I preye,  
1160 Swich answeere as yow list, youreself purveye,  
For trewely I nyl no lettre write."  
"No? than wol I," quod he, "so ye endite."  
Therwith she lough, and seyde, "Go we dyne."  
And he gan at hymself to jape faste,  
And seyde, "Nece, I have so gret a pyne  
For love, that everich other day I faste --"  
And gan his beste japes forth to caste,  
And made hire so to laughe at his folye,  
That she for laughter wende for to dye.  
1170 And whan that she was comen into halle,  
"Now, em," quod she, "we wol go dyne anon."  
And gan some of hire wommen to hire calle,  
And streght into hire chambre gan she gon;  
But of hire besynesses this was on --

Amonges othere thynges, out of drede --  
 Ful pryvely this lettre for to rede;  
 Avysed word by word in every lyne,  
 And fond no lak, she thoughte he koude good,  
 And up it putte, and wente hire in to dyne.  
 1180 But Pandarus, that in a studye stood,  
 Er he was war, she took hym by the hood,  
 And seyde, "Ye were caught er that ye wiste."  
 "I vouche sauf," quod he. "Do what you liste."  
 Tho wesshen they, and sette hem down, and ete;  
 And after noon ful sleighly Pandarus  
 Gan drawe hym to the wyndowe next the strete,  
 And seyde, "Nece, who hath araied thus  
 The yonder hous, that stant aforweyn us?"  
 "Which hous?" quod she, and gan for to byholde,  
 1190 And knew it wel, and whos it was hym tolde;  
 And fillen forth in speche of thynges smale,  
 And seten in the windowe bothe tweye.  
 Whan Pandarus saugh tyme unto his tale,  
 And saugh wel that hire folk were alle aweye,  
 "Now, nece myn, tel on," quod he; "I seye,  
 How liketh yow the lettre that ye woot?  
 Kan he theron? For, by my trouthe, I noot."  
 Therwith al rosy hewed tho wex she,  
 And gan to homme, and seyde, "So I trowe."  
 1200 "Aquite hym wel, for Goddes love," quod he;  
 "Myself to medes wol the lettre sowe."  
 And held his hondes up, and sat on knowe;  
 "Now, goode nece, be it nevere so lite,  
 Yif me the labour it to sowe and plite."  
 "Ye, for I kan so writen," quod she tho;  
 "And ek I noot what I sholde to hym seye."  
 "Nay, nece," quod Pandare, "sey nat so.  
 Yet at the leeste thonketh hym, I preye,  
 Of his good wille, and doth hym nat to deye.  
 1210 Now, for the love of me, my nece deere,  
 Refuseth nat at this tid my prayere!"  
 "Depardieux," quod she, "God leve al be wel!  
 God help me so, this is the firste lettre  
 That evere I wroot, ye, al or any del."  
 And into a closet, for t' advise hire bettre,  
 She wente allone, and gan hire herte unfettere

Out of desdaynes prisoun but a lite,  
 And sette hire down, and gan a lettre write,  
 Of which to telle in short is myn entente  
 1220 Th' effect, as fer as I kan understonde.  
 She thanked hym of al that he wel mente  
 Towardes hire, but holden hym in honde  
 She nolde nought, ne make hireselven bonde  
 In love; but as his suster, hym to plese,  
 She wolde fayn to doon his herte an ese.  
 She shette it, and to Pandare in gan goon,  
 Ther as he sat and loked into the strete,  
 And down she sette hire by hym on a stoon  
 Of jaspre, upon a quysshyn gold-ybete,  
 1230 And seyde, "As wisly help me God the grete,  
 I nevere dide thing with more peyne  
 Than writen this, to which ye me constreyne,"  
 And took it hym. He thonked hire and seyde,  
 "God woot, of thyng ful often looth bygonne  
 Comth ende good; and nece myn, Criseyde,  
 That ye to hym of hard now ben ywonne  
 Oughte he be glad, by God and yonder sonne;  
 For-whi men seith, 'Impressiounes lighte  
 Ful lightly ben ay redy to the flighte.'  
 1240 "But ye han played tirant neigh to longe,  
 And hard was it youre herte for to grave.  
 Now stynte, that ye no lenger on it honge,  
 Al wolde ye the forme of daunger save,  
 But hasteth you to doon hym joye have;  
 For trusteth wel, to long ydoon hardnesse  
 Causeth despit ful often for destresse."  
 And right as they declamed this matere,  
 Lo, Troilus, right at the stretes ende,  
 Com rydyng with his tenthe som yfere,  
 1250 Al softly, and thiderward gan bende  
 Ther as they sete, as was his way to wende  
 To paleis-ward; and Pandare hym aspide,  
 And seyde, "Nece, ysee who comth here ride!  
 "O fle naught in (he seeth us, I suppose),  
 Lest he may thynken that ye hym eschuwe."  
 "Nay, nay," quod she, and wex as red as rose.  
 With that he gan hire humbly to saluwe  
 With dredful chere, and oft his hewes muwe;



And up his look debonairly he caste,  
1260 And bekked on Pandare, and forth he paste.  
God woot if he sat on his hors aright,  
Or goodly was biseyn, that ilke day!  
God woot wher he was lik a manly knyght!  
What sholde I drecche, or telle of his aray?  
Criseyde, which that alle thise thynges say,  
To telle in short, hire liked al in-fere,  
His persoun, his aray, his look, his chere,  
His goodly manere, and his gentillesse,  
So wel that nevere, sith that she was born,  
1270 Ne hadde she swych routh of his destresse;  
And how so she hath hard ben here-byforn,  
To God hope I, she hath now kaught a thorn,  
She shal nat pulle it out this nexte wyke.  
God sende mo swich thornes on to pike!  
Pandare, which that stood hire faste by,  
Felte iren hoot, and he bygan to smyte,  
And seyde, "Nece, I pray yow hertely,  
Tel me that I shal axen yow a lite:  
A womman that were of his deth to wite,  
1280 Withouten his gilt, but for hire lakked routhe,  
Were it wel doon?" Quod she, "Nay, by my trouthe!"  
"God help me so," quod he, "ye sey me soth.  
Ye felen wel youreself that I nought lye.  
Lo, yond he rit!" Quod she, "Ye, so he doth!"  
"Wel," quod Pandare, "as I have told yow thrie,  
Lat be youre nyce shame and youre folie,  
And spek with hym in esyng of his herte;  
Lat nycete nat do yow bothe smerte."  
But theron was to heven and to doone.  
1290 Considered al thing it may nat be;  
And whi? For speche; and it were ek to soone  
To graunten hym so gret a libertee.  
For pleynty hire entente, as seyde she,  
Was for to love hym unwist, if she myghte,  
And guerdoun hym with nothing but with sighte.  
But Pandarus thought, "It shal nought be so,  
Yif that I may; this nyce opynyoun  
Shal nought be holden fully yeres two."  
What sholde I make of this a long sermoun?  
1300 He moste assente on that conclusioun,

As for the tyme; and whan that it was eve,  
And al was wel, he roos and tok his leve.  
And on his wey ful faste homward he spedde,  
And right for joye he felte his herte daunce;  
And Troilus he fond allone abedde,  
That lay, as do thise lovers, in a traunce  
Bitwixen hope and derk disesperaunce.  
But Pandarus, right at his in-comynge,  
He song, as who seyth, "Somwhat I brynge,"  
1310 And seyde, "Who is in his bed so soone  
Iburied thus?" "It am I, frend," quod he.  
"Who, Troilus? Nay, help me so the moone,"  
Quod Pandarus, "thow shalt arise and see  
A charme that was sent right now to the,  
The which kan helen the of thyn accesse,  
If thow do forthwith al thi bisynesse."  
"Ye, thorough the myght of God," quod Troilus,  
And Pandarus gan hym the lettre take,  
And seyde, "Parde, God hath holpen us!  
1320 Have here a light, and loke on al this blake."  
But ofte gan the herte glade and quake  
Of Troilus, whil that he gan it rede,  
So as the wordes yave hym hope or drede.  
But finaly, he took al for the beste  
That she hym wroot, for somewhat he byheld  
On which hym thoughte he myghte his herte reste,  
Al covered she tho wordes under sheld.  
Thus to the more worthi part he held,  
That what for hope and Pandarus byheste,  
1330 His grete wo foryede he at the leste.  
But as we may alday oureselven see,  
Thorough more wode or col, the more fir,  
Right so encrease hope, of what it be,  
Therwith ful ofte encresseth ek desir;  
Or as an ook comth of a litil spir,  
So thorough this lettre which that she hym sente  
Encrescen gan desir, of which he brente.  
Wherfore I seye alwey, that day and nyght  
This Troilus gan to desiren moore  
1340 Thanne he did erst, thorough hope, and did his myght  
To preessen on, as by Pandarus loore,  
And writen to hire of his sorwes soore.

Fro day to day he leet it nought refreyde,  
That by Pandare he wroot somewhat or seyde;  
And dide also his other observaunces  
That til a love-re longeth in this cas;  
And after that thise dees torned on chaunces,  
So was he outhere glad or seyde "Allas!"  
And held after his gistes ay his pas;  
1350 And after swiche answeres as he hadde,  
So were his dayes sory outhere gladde.  
But to Pandare alwey was his recours,  
And pitously gan ay tyl hym to pleyne,  
And hym bisoughte of reed and som socours.  
And Pandarus, that sey his woode payne,  
Wex wel neigh ded for routhe, sooth to seyne,  
And bisily with al his herte caste  
Som of his wo to slen, and that as faste;  
And seyde, "Lord, and frend, and brother dere,  
1360 God woot that thi disese doth me wo.  
But wiltow stynten al this woful cheere,  
And, by my trouthe, er it be dayes two,  
And God toforen, yet shal I shape it so,  
That thou shalt come into a certeyn place,  
There as thou mayst thiself hire prey of grace.  
"And certeynly -- I noot if thou it woost,  
But tho that ben expert in love it seye --  
It is oon of the thynges forthereth most,  
A man to han a layser for to prey,  
1370 And siker place his wo for to bywreye;  
For in good herte it mot som routhe impresse,  
To here and see the giltles in distresse.  
"Peraunter thynkestow: though it be so,  
That Kynde wolde don hire to bygynne  
To have a manere routhe upon my woo,  
Seyth Daunger, 'Nay, thou shalt me nevere wyne!"  
So reulith hire hir hertes gost withinne,  
That though she bende, yet she stant on roote;  
What in effect is this unto my boote?  
1380 "Thenk here-ayeins: whan that the stordy ook,  
On which men hakketh ofte, for the nones,  
Receyved hath the happy fallyng strook,  
The greet sweigh doth it come al at ones,  
As don thise rokkes or thise milnestones;

For swifter cours comth thyng that is of wighte,  
Whan it descendeth, than don thynges lighte.  
"And reed that boweth down for every blast,  
Ful lightly, cesse wynd, it wol aryse;  
But so nyl nought an ook, whan it is cast;  
1390 It nedeth me nought the longe to forbise.  
Men shal rejoissen of a gret empryse  
Acheved wel, and stant withouten doute,  
Al han men ben the lenger therabout.  
"But, Troilus, yet telle me, if the lest,  
A thing now which that I shal axen the:  
Which is thi brother that thow lovest best,  
As in thi verray hertes privetee?"  
"Iwis, my brother Deiphebus," quod he.  
"Now," quod Pandare, "er houres twyes twelve,  
1400 He shal the ese, unwist of it hymselfe.  
"Now lat m' alone, and werken as I may,"  
Quod he; and to Deiphebus wente he tho,  
Which hadde his lord and grete frend ben ay;  
Save Troilus, no man he loved so.  
To telle in short, withouten wordes mo,  
Quod Pandarus, "I pray yow that ye be  
Frend to a cause which that toucheth me."  
"Yis, parde," quod Deiphebus, "wel thow woost,  
In al that evere I may, and God tofore,  
1410 Al nere it but for man I love moost,  
My brother Troilus; but sey wherfore  
It is. for sith that day that I was bore,  
I nas, ne nevere mo to ben I thynke,  
Ayeins a thing that myghte the forthynke."  
Pandare gan hym thanke, and to hym seyde,  
"Lo, sire, I have a lady in this town,  
That is my nece, and called is Criseyde,  
Which some men wolden don oppressioun,  
And wrongfully han hire possessioun;  
1420 Wherfore I of youre lordship yow biseche  
To ben oure frend, withouten more speche."  
Deiphebus hym answerde, "O, is nat this,  
That thow spekest of to me thus straungely,  
Criseda, my frend?" He seyde, "Yis."  
"Than nedeth," quod Deiphebus, "hardly,  
Namore to speke, for trusteth wel that I

Wol be hire champioun with spore and yerde;  
 I roughte nought though alle hire foos it herde.  
 "But tel me how -- thow woost of this matere --  
 1430 It myghte best avaylen." "Now lat se,"  
 Quod Pandarus; "if ye, my lord so dere,  
 Wolden as now do this honour to me,  
 To preyen hire to-morwe, lo, that she  
 Come unto yow, hire pleyntes to devise,  
 Hire adversaries wolde of it agrise.  
 "And yif I more dorste preye as now,  
 And chargen yow to han so gret travaille,  
 To han some of youre bretheren here with yow,  
 That myghten to hire cause bet availle,  
 1440 Than wot I wel she myghte nevere faille  
 For to ben holpen, what at youre instaunce,  
 What with hire other frendes governaunce."  
 Deiphebus, which that comen was of kynde  
 To alle honour and bounte to consente,  
 Answerd, "It shal be don; and I kan fynde  
 Yet grettere help to this in myn entente.  
 What wiltow seyn if I for Eleyne sente  
 To speke of this? I trowe it be the beste,  
 For she may leden Paris as hire leste.  
 1450 "Of Ector, which that is my lord, my brother,  
 It nedeth naught to preye hym frend to be;  
 For I have herd hym, o tyme and ek oother,  
 Speke of Cryseyde swich honour that he  
 May seyn no bet, swich hap to hym hath she.  
 It nedeth naught his helpes for to crave;  
 He shal be swich, right as we wol hym have.  
 "Spek thow thiself also to Troilus  
 On my byhalve, and prey hym with us dyne."  
 "Syre, al this shal be don," quod Pandarus,  
 1460 And took his leve, and nevere gan to fyne,  
 But to his neces hous, as streyght as lyne,  
 He com; and fond hire fro the mete arise,  
 And sette hym down, and spak right in this wise:  
 He seide, "O verray God, so have I ronne!  
 Lo, nece myn, se ye nought how I swete?  
 I not wheither ye the more thank me konne.  
 Be ye naught war how false Poliphete  
 Is now aboute eftsones for to plete,

And brynge on yow advocacies newe?"  
 1470 "I, no!" quod she, and chaunged al hire hewe.  
 "What is he more aboute, me to drecche  
 And don me wrong? What shal I doon, allas?  
 Yet of hymself nothing ne wolde I recche,  
 Nere it for Antenor and Eneas,  
 That ben his frendes in swich manere cas.  
 But, for the love of God, myn uncle deere,  
 No fors of that; lat hym han al yfeere,  
 "Withouten that I have ynough for us."  
 "Nay," quod Pandare, "it shal nothing be so.  
 1480 For I have ben right now at Deiphebus,  
 At Ector, and myn oother lordes moo,  
 And shortly maked ech of hem his foo,  
 That, by my thrift, he shal it nevere wyne,  
 For aught he kan, whan that so he bygynne."  
 And as thei casten what was best to doone,  
 Deiphebus, of his owen curteisie,  
 Com hire to preye, in his propre persone,  
 To holde hym on the morwe compaignie  
 At dyner, which she nolde nought denye,  
 1490 But goodly gan to his preier obeye.  
 He thonked hire, and went upon his weye.  
 Whan this was don, this Pandare up anon,  
 To telle in short, and forth gan for to wende  
 To Troilus, as stille as any ston;  
 And al this thyng he tolde hym, word and ende,  
 And how that he Deiphebus gan to blende,  
 And seyde hym, "Now is tyme, if that thou konne,  
 To bere the wel tomorwe, and al is wonne.  
 "Now spek, now prey, now pitously compleyne;  
 1500 Lat nought for nyce shame, or drede, or slouth!  
 Somtyme a man mot telle his owen peyne.  
 Bileve it, and she shal han on the routhe:  
 Thou shalt be saved by thi feyth, in trouthe.  
 But wel woot I thou art now in drede,  
 And what it is, I leye, I kan arede.  
 "Thou thynekst now, `How sholde I don al this?  
 For by my cheres mosten folk asprie  
 That for hire love is that I fare amys;  
 Yet hadde I levere unwist for sorwe dye.'  
 1510 Now thynk nat so, for thou dost gret folie;

For I right now have founden o manere  
Of sleighte, for to coveren al thi cheere.  
"Thow shalt gon over nyght, and that bylyve,  
Unto Deiphebus hous as the to pleye,  
Thi maladie away the bet to dryve --  
For-whi thow semest sik, soth for to seye.  
Sone after that, down in thi bed the leye,  
And sey thow mayst no lenger up endure,  
And ly right there, and byd thyn aventure.  
1520 "Sey that thi fevre is wont the for to take  
The same tyme, and lasten til a-morwe;  
And lat se now how wel thow kanst it make,  
For, parde, sik is he that is in sorwe.  
Go now, farwel! And Venus here to borwe,  
I hope, and thow this purpos holde ferme,  
Thi grace she shal fully ther conferme."  
Quod Troilus, "Iwis, thow nedeles  
Conseilest me that siklich I me feyne,  
For I am sik in ernest, douteles,  
1530 So that wel neigh I sterve for the peyne."  
Quod Pandarus, "Thow shalt the bettre pleyne,  
And hast the lasse need to countrefete,  
For hym men demen hoot that men seen swete.  
"Lo, hold the at thi triste cloos, and I  
Shal wel the deer unto thi bowe dryve."  
Therwith he took his leve al softly,  
And Troilus to paleis wente blyve.  
So glad ne was he nevere in al his lyve,  
And to Pandarus reed gan al assente,  
1540 And to Deiphebus hous at nyght he wente.  
What nedeth yow to tellen al the cheere  
That Deiphebus unto his brother made,  
Or his accesse, or his sikliche manere,  
How men gan hym with clothes for to lade  
Whan he was leyde, and how men wolde hym glade?  
But al for nought; he held forth ay the wyse  
That ye han herd Pandare er this devyse.  
But certayn is, er Troilus hym leyde,  
Deiphebus had hym preied over-nyght  
1550 To ben a frend and helpyng to Criseyde.  
God woot that he it graunted anon-right,  
To ben hire fulle frend with al his myght.

But swich a nede was to preye hym thenne,  
As for to bidde a wood man for to renne!  
The morwen com, and neighen gan the tyme  
Of meeltid, that the faire queene Eleyne  
Shoop hire to ben, an houre after the prime,  
With Deiphebus, to whom she nolde feyne;  
But as his suster, homly, soth to seyne,  
1560 She com to dyner in hire pleyne entente.  
But God and Pandare wist al what this mente.  
Com ek Criseyde, al innocent of this,  
Antigone, hire suster Tarbe also.  
But fle we now prolixitee best is,  
For love of God, and lat us faste go  
Right to th' effect, withouten tales mo,  
Whi al this folk assembled in this place;  
And lat us of hire saluynge pace.  
Gret honour did hem Deiphebus, certeyn,  
1570 And fedde hem wel with al that myghte like;  
But evere mo "Allas!" was his refreyn,  
"My goode brother Troilus, the syke,  
Lith yet" -- and therwithal he gan to sike;  
And after that, he peyned hym to glade  
Hem as he myghte, and cheere good he made.  
Compleyned ek Eleyne of his siknesse  
So feythfully that pite was to here,  
And every wight gan waxen for accesse  
A leche anon, and seyde, "In this manere  
1580 Men curen folk." -- "This charme I wol yow leere."  
But ther sat oon, al list hire nought to teche,  
That thoughte, "Best koud I yet ben his leche."  
After compleynthe, hym gonnen they to preyse,  
As folk don yet whan som wight hath bygonne  
To preise a man, and up with pris hym reise  
A thousand fold yet heigher than the sonne:  
"He is, he kan, that fewe lordes konne."  
And Pandarus, of that they wolde afferme,  
He naught forgot hire preisyng to conferme.  
1590 Herde al this thyng Criseyde wel inough,  
And every word gan for to notifie;  
For which with sobre cheere hire herte lough.  
For who is that ne wolde hire glorifie,  
To mowen swich a knyght don lyve or dye?



But al passe I, lest ye to longe dwelle;  
 For for o fyn is al that evere I telle.  
 The tyme com fro dyner for to ryse,  
 And as hem aughte, arisen everichon.  
 And gonne a while of this and that devise.  
 1600 But Pandarus brak al that speche anon,  
 And seide to Deiphebus, "Wol ye gon,  
 If it youre wille be, as I yow preyde,  
 To speke here of the nedes of Criseyde?"  
 Eleyne, which that by the hond hire held,  
 Took first the tale, and seyde, "Go we blyve";  
 And goodly on Criseyde she biheld,  
 And seyde, "Joves lat hym nevere thryve  
 That doth yow harm, and brynge hym soone of lyve,  
 And yeve me sorwe, but he shal it rewe,  
 1610 If that I may, and alle folk be trewe!"  
 "Tel thow thi neces cas," quod Deiphebus  
 To Pandarus, "for thow kanst best it telle."  
 "My lordes and my ladys, it stant thus:  
 What sholde I lenger," quod he, "do yow dwelle?"  
 He rong hem out a proces lik a belle  
 Upon hire foo that highte Poliphete,  
 So heynous that men myghten on it spete.  
 Answerde of this ech werse of hem than other,  
 And Poliphete they gonnen thus to warien:  
 1620 "Anhonged be swich oon, were he my brother!  
 And so he shal, for it ne may nought varien!"  
 What shold I lenger in this tale tarien?  
 Pleyynliche, alle at ones, they hire highten  
 To ben hire help in al that evere they myghten.  
 Spak than Eleyne, and seyde, "Pandarus,  
 Woot ought my lord, my brother, this matere --  
 I meene Ector -- or woot it Troilus?"  
 He seyde, "Ye, but wole ye now me here?  
 Me thynketh this, sith that Troilus is here,  
 1630 It were good, if that ye wolde assente,  
 She tolde hireself hym al this er she wente.  
 "For he wol have the more hir grief at herte,  
 By cause, lo, that she a lady is.  
 And, by youre leve, I wol but in right sterte  
 And do yow wyte, and that anon, iwys,  
 If that he slepe, or wol ought here of this."

And in he lepte, and seyde hym in his ere,  
 "God have thi soule, ibrought have I thi beere!"  
 To smylen of this gan tho Troilus,  
 1640 And Pandarus, withouten rekenynge,  
 Out wente anon to Eleyne and Deiphebus,  
 And seyde hem, "So ther be no tarynge,  
 Ne moore prees, he wol wel that ye brynge  
 Criseda, my lady, that is here;  
 And as he may enduren, he wol here.  
 "But wel ye woot, the chaumbre is but lite,  
 And fewe folk may lightly make it warm;  
 Now loketh ye (for I wol have no wite  
 To brynge in prees that myghte don hym harm,  
 1650 Or hym disesen, for my bettre arm)  
 Wher it be bet she bide til eft-sonys;  
 Now loketh ye that knowen what to doon is.  
 "I sey for me, best is, as I kan knowe,  
 That no wight in ne wente but ye tweye,  
 But it were I, for I kan in a throwe  
 Reherce hire cas unlik that she kan seye;  
 And after this she may hym ones preye  
 To ben good lord, in short, and take hire leve.  
 This may nought muchel of his ese hym reve.  
 1660 "And ek, for she is straunge, he wol forbere  
 His ese, which that hym thar nought for yow;  
 Ek oother thing that toucheth nought to here  
 He wol yow telle -- I woot it wel right now --  
 That secret is, and for the townes prow."  
 And they, that nothyng knewe of his entente,  
 Withouten more, to Troilus in they wente.  
 Eleyne, in al hire goodly softe wyse,  
 Gan hym salve, and wommanly to pleye,  
 And seyde, "Iwys, ye moste alweies arise!  
 1670 Now faire brother, beth al hool, I preye!"  
 And gan hire arm right over his shulder leye,  
 And hym with al hire wit to reconforte;  
 As she best koude, she gan hym to disporte.  
 So after this quod she, "We yow biseke,  
 My deere brother Deiphebus and I,  
 For love of God -- and so doth Pandare eke --  
 To ben good lord and frend, right hertely,  
 Unto Criseyde, which that certeynly

Receyveth wrong, as woot weel here Pandare,  
1680 That kan hire cas wel bet than I declare."  
This Pandarus gan newe his tong affile,  
And al hire cas reherce, and that anon.  
Whan it was seyde, soone after in a while,  
Quod Troilus, "As sone as I may gon,  
I wol right fayn with al my myght ben oon --  
Have God my trouthe -- hire cause to sustene."  
"Good thrift have ye!" quod Eleyne the queene.  
Quod Pandarus, "And it youre wille be  
That she may take hire leve, er that she go?"  
1690 "O, elles God forbede it," tho quod he,  
"If that she vouche sauf for to do so."  
And with that word quod Troilus, "Ye two,  
Deiphebus and my suster lief and deere,  
To yow have I to speke of o matere,  
"To ben avysed by youre reed the bettre --"  
And fond, as hap was, at his beddes hed  
The copie of a tretys and a lettre  
That Ector hadde hym sent to axen red  
If swych a man was worthi to ben ded,  
1700 Woot I nought who; but in a grisly wise  
He preyede hem anon on it avyse.  
Deiphebus gan this lettre for t' onfolde  
In ernest greet; so did Eleyne the queene;  
And romyng outward, faste it gonne byholde,  
Downward a steire, into an herber greene.  
This ilke thing they redden hem bitwene,  
And largely, the mountance of an houre,  
Thei gonne on it to reden and to poure.  
Now lat hem rede, and torne we anon  
1710 To Pandarus, that gan ful faste pryde  
That al was wel, and out he gan to gon  
Into the grete chaumbre, and that in hye,  
And seyde, "God save al this compaynye!  
Com, nece myn; my lady queene Eleyne  
Abideth yow, and ek my lordes tweyne.  
"Rys, take with yow youre nece Antigone,  
Or whom yow list; or no fors; hardyly  
The lesse prees, the bet; com forth with me,  
And loke that ye thonken humblely  
1720 Hem alle thre, and whan ye may goodly

Youre tyme se, taketh of hem youre leeve,  
 Lest we to longe his restes hym byreeve."  
 Al innocent of Pandarus entente,  
 Quod tho Criseyde, "Go we, uncle deere";  
 And arm in arm inward with hym she wente,  
 Avysed wel hire wordes and hire cheere;  
 And Pandarus, in earnestful manere,  
 Seyde, "Alle folk, for Goddes love, I preye,  
 Stynteth right here, and softly yow pleye.  
 1730 "Avyseth yow what folk ben hire withinne,  
 And in what plit oon is, God hym amende!"  
 And inward thus, "Ful softly bygynne,  
 Nece, I conjure and heighly yow defende,  
 On his half which that soule us alle sende,  
 And in the vertu of coronas tweyne,  
 Sle naught this man, that hath for yow this peyne!  
 "Fy on the devel! Thynk which oon he is,  
 And in what plit he lith. com of anon!  
 Thynk al swich taried tyde, but lost it nys.  
 1740 That wol ye bothe seyn, whan ye ben oon.  
 Secoundely, ther yet devyneth noon  
 Upon yow two; come of now, if ye konne!  
 While folk is blent, lo, al the tyme is wonne.  
 "In tityng, and pursuyte, and delayes,  
 The folk devyne at waggyng of a stree;  
 And though ye wolde han after mirye dayes,  
 Than dar ye naught. And whi? For she, and she  
 Spak swych a word; thus loked he, and he!  
 Las, tyme ilost! I dar nought with yow dele.  
 1750 Com of, therfore, and bryngeth hym to hele!"  
 But now to yow, ye loveres that ben here,  
 Was Troilus nought in a kankedort,  
 That lay, and myghte whisprynge of hem here,  
 And thoughte, "O Lord, right now renneth my sort  
 Fully to deye, or han anon comfort!"  
 And was the firste tyme he shulde hire preye  
 Of love; O myghty God, what shal he seye?



### BOOK 3

O blisful light of which the bemes clere  
 Adorneth al the thridde heven faire!  
 O sonnes lief, O Joves doughter deere,  
 Plesance of love, O goodly debonaire,  
 In gentil hertes ay redy to repaire!  
 O veray cause of heele and of gladnesse,  
 Iheryed be thy myght and thi goodnesse!  
 In hevene and helle, in erthe and salte see  
 Is felt thi myght, if that I wel descerne,  
 10 As man, brid, best, fissh, herbe, and grene tree  
 Thee fele in tymes with vapour eterne.  
 God loveth, and to love wol nought werne,  
 And in this world no lyves creature  
 Withouten love is worth, or may endure.  
 Ye Joves first to thilke effectes glade,  
 Thorugh which that thynges lyven alle and be,  
 Comeveden, and amorous him made  
 On mortal thyng, and as yow list, ay ye  
 Yeve hym in love ese or adversitee,  
 20 And in a thousand formes down hym sente  
 For love in erthe, and whom yow liste he hente.  
 Ye fierse Mars apaisen of his ire,  
 And as yow list, ye maken hertes digne;  
 Algates hem that ye wol sette a-fyre,  
 They dreden shame, and vices they resygne;  
 Ye do hem corteys be, fresshe and benigne;  
 And heighe or lowe, after a wight entendeth,  
 The joies that he hath, youre myght it sendeth.  
 Ye holden regne and hous in unitee;  
 30 Ye sothfast cause of frendship ben also;  
 Ye knowe al thilke covered qualitee  
 Of thynges, which that folk on wondren so,  
 Whan they kan nought construe how it may jo  
 She loveth hym, or whi he loveth here,  
 As whi this fissh, and naught that, comth to were.  
 Ye folk a lawe han set in universe,  
 And this knowe I by hem that lovers be,  
 That whoso stryvet with yow hath the werse.  
 Now, lady bryght, for thi benignite,  
 40 At reverence of hem that serven the,

Whos clerik I am, so techeth me devyse  
Som joye of that is felt in thi servyse.  
Ye in my naked herte sentement  
Inhiede, and do me shewe of thy swetnesse.  
Caliope, thi vois be now present,  
For now is nede: sestow nought my destresse,  
How I mot telle anonright the gladnesse  
Of Troilus, to Venus herynge?  
To which gladnesse, who nede hath, God hym brynge!  
50 Lay al this mene while Troilus,  
Recordyng his lesson in this manere:  
"Mafay," thoughte he, "thus wol I sey, and thus;  
Thus wol I pleyne unto my lady dere;  
That word is good, and this shal be my cheere;  
This nyl I nought foryeten in no wise."  
God leve hym werken as he kan devyse!  
And, Lord, so that his herte gan to quappe,  
Heryng hire come, and shorte for to sike!  
And Pandarus, that ledde hire by the lappe,  
60 Com ner, and gan in at the curtyn pike,  
And seyde, "God do boot on alle syke!  
Se who is here yow comen to visite:  
Lo, here is she that is youre deth to wite."  
Therwith it semed as he wepte almost.  
"Ha, a," quod Troilus so reufully,  
"Wher me be wo, O myghty God, thow woost!  
Who is al ther? I se nought trewely."  
"Sire," quod Criseyde, "it is Pandare and I."  
"Ye, swete herte? Allas, I may nought rise,  
70 To knele and do yow honour in som wyse."  
And dressed hym upward, and she right tho  
Gan bothe hire hondes softe upon hym leye.  
"O, for the love of God, do ye nought so  
To me," quod she, "I! What is this to seye?  
Sire, comen am I to yow for causes tweye:  
First, yow to thonke, and of youre lordshipe eke  
Continuance I wolde yow biseke."  
This Troilus, that herde his lady preye  
Of lordshipe hym, wax neither quyke ne ded,  
80 Ne myghte o word for shame to it seye,  
Although men sholde smyten of his hed.  
But Lord, so he wex sodeynliche red,

And sire, his lessoun, that he wende konne  
To preyen hire, is thorough his wit ironne.  
Criseyde al this aspied wel ynough,  
For she was wis, and loved hym nevere the lasse,  
Al nere he malapert, or made it tough,  
Or was to bold, to synge a fool a masse.  
But whan his shame gan somewhat to passe,  
90 His resons, as I may my rymes holde,  
I yow wol telle, as techen bokes olde.  
In chaunged vois, right for his verray drede,  
Which vois ek quook, and therto his manere  
Goodly abaist, and now his hewes rede,  
Now pale, unto Criseyde, his lady dere,  
With look down cast and humble iyolden chere,  
Lo, the alderfirste word that hym asterte  
Was, twyes, "Mercy, mercy, swete herte!"  
And stynte a while, and whan he myghte out brynge,  
100 The nexte word was, "God woot, for I have,  
As ferforthly as I have had konnyng,  
Ben youres al, God so my soule save,  
And shal til that I, woful wight, be grave!  
And though I dar, ne kan, unto yow pleyne,  
Iwis, I suffre nought the lasse peyne.  
"Thus muche as now, O wommanliche wif,  
I may out brynge, and if this yow displese,  
That shal I wreke upon myn owen lif  
Right soone, I trowe, and do youre herte an ese,  
110 If with my deth youre wreththe may apese.  
But syn that ye han herd me somewhat seye,  
Now recche I nevere how soone that I deye."  
Therwith his manly sorwe to biholde  
It myghte han mad an herte of stoon to rewe;  
And Pandare wep as he to water wolde,  
And poked evere his nece new and newe,  
And seyde, "Wo bygon ben hertes trewe!  
For love of God, make of this thing an ende,  
Or sle us both at ones er ye wende."  
120 "I, what?" quod she, "by God and by my trouthe,  
I not nat what ye wilne that I seye."  
"I, what?" quod he, "That ye han on hym routhe,  
For Goddes love, and doth hym nought to deye!"  
"Now than thus," quod she, "I wolde hym preye

To telle me the fyn of his entente.  
Yet wist I nevere wel what that he mente."  
"What that I mene, O swete herte deere?"  
Quod Troilus, "O goodly, fresshe free,  
That with the stremes of youre eyen cleere  
130 Ye wolde somtyme frendly on me see,  
And thanne agreeen that I may ben he,  
Withouten braunche of vice on any wise,  
In trouthe alwey to don yow my servise,  
"As to my lady right and chief resort,  
With al my wit and al my diligence;  
And I to han, right as yow list, comfort,  
Under yowre yerde, egal to myn offence,  
As deth, if that I breke youre defence;  
And that ye deigne me so muchel honoure  
140 Me to comanden aught in any houre;  
"And I to ben youre -- verray, humble, trewe,  
Secret, and in my paynes pacient,  
And evere mo desiren fresshly newe  
To serve, and ben ylike diligent,  
And with good herte al holly youre talent  
Receyven wel, how sore that me smerte;  
Lo, this mene I, myn owen swete herte."  
Quod Pandarus, "Lo, here an hard requeste,  
And resonable, a lady for to werne!  
150 Now, nece myn, by natal Joves feste,  
Were I a god, ye sholden sterve as yerne,  
That heren wel this man wol nothing yerne  
But youre honour, and sen hym almost sterve,  
And ben so loth to suffren hym yow serve."  
With that she gan hire eyen on hym caste  
Ful esily and ful debonairly,  
Avysyng hire, and hied nought to faste  
With nevere a word, but seyde hym softely,  
"Myn honour sauf, I wol wel trewely,  
160 And in swich forme as he gan now devyse,  
Receyven hym fully to my servyse,  
"Bysechyng hym, for Goddes love, that he  
Wolde, in honour of trouthe and gentillesse,  
As I wel mene, ek menen wel to me,  
And myn honour with wit and bisynesse  
Ay kepe; and if I may don hym gladnesse,



From hennesforth, iwys, I nyl nought feyne.  
 Now beth al hool; no lenger ye ne pleyne.  
 "But natheles, this warne I yow," quod she,  
 170 "A kynges sone although ye be, ywys,  
 Ye shal namore han sovereignete  
 Of me in love, than right in that cas is.  
 N' y nyl forbere, if that ye don amys,  
 To wratthe yow; and whil that ye me serve,  
 Chericen yow right after ye disserve.  
 "And shortly, deere herte and al my knyght,  
 Beth glad, and draweth yow to lustinesse,  
 And I shal trewely, with al my myght,  
 Youre bittre tornen al into swetenesse.  
 180 If I be she that may yow do gladnesse,  
 For every wo ye shal recovere a blisse" --  
 And hym in armes took, and gan hym kisse.  
 Fil Pandarus on knees, and up his eyen  
 To heven threw, and held his hondes highe:  
 "Immortal god," quod he, "that mayst nought deyen,  
 Cupide I mene, of this mayst glorifie;  
 And Venus, thow mayst maken melodie!  
 Withouten hond, me semeth that in the towne,  
 For this merveille ich here ech belle sowne.  
 190 "But ho! namore as now of this matere;  
 For-whi this folk wol comen up anon,  
 That han the lettre red; lo, I hem here.  
 But I conjure the, Criseyde, anon,  
 And to, thow Troilus, whan thow mayst goon,  
 That at myn hous ye ben at my warnynge,  
 For I ful well shal shape youre comynge;  
 "And eseth there youre hertes right ynough;  
 And lat se which of yow shal bere the belle  
 To speke of love aright!" -- therwith he lough --  
 200 "For ther have ye a leiser for to telle."  
 Quod Troilus, "How longe shal I dwelle,  
 Er this be don?" Quod he, "Whan thow mayst ryse,  
 This thyng shal be right as I yow devyse."  
 With that Eleyne and also Deiphebus  
 Tho comen upward, right at the steires ende;  
 And Lord, so thanne gan gronen Troilus,  
 His brother and his suster for to blende.  
 Quod Pandarus, "It tyme is that we wende.

Tak, nece myn, youre leve at alle thre,  
210 And lat hem speke, and cometh forth with me."  
She took hire leve at hem ful thriftily,  
As she wel koude, and they hire reverence  
Unto the fulle diden, hardyly,  
And wonder wel speken, in hire absence,  
Of hire in preysing of hire excellence --  
Hire governaunce, hire wit, and hire manere  
Comendedden, it joie was to here.  
Now lat hire wende unto hire owen place,  
And torne we to Troilus ayein,  
220 That gan ful lightly of the lettre pace  
That Deiphebus hadde in the gardyn seyn;  
And of Eleyne and hym he wolde feyn  
Delivered ben, and seyde that hym leste  
To slepe, and after tales have reste.  
Eleyne hym kiste, and took hire leve blyve,  
Deiphebus ek, and hom wente every wight;  
And Pandarus, as faste as he may dryve,  
To Troilus tho com, as lyne right,  
And on a paillet al that glade nyght  
230 By Troilus he lay, with mery chere,  
To tale; and wel was hem they were yfeere.  
Whan every wight was voided but they two,  
And alle the dores weren faste yshette,  
To telle in short, withouten wordes mo,  
This Pandarus, withouten any lette,  
Up roos, and on his beddes syde hym sette,  
And gan to speken in a sobre wyse  
To Troilus, as I shal yow devyse:  
"Myn alderlevest lord, and brother deere,  
240 God woot, and thow, that it sat me so soore,  
Whan I the saugh so langwisshyng to-yere  
For love, of which thi wo wax alwey moore,  
That I, with al my myght and al my loore,  
Have evere sithen don my bisynesse  
To brynge the to joye out of distresse,  
"And have it brought to swich plit as thow woost,  
So that thorough me thow stondest now in weye  
To faren wel; I sey it for no bost,  
And wostow whi? For shame it is to seye:  
250 For the have I bigonne a gamen pleye

Which that I nevere do shal eft for other,  
Although he were a thousand fold my brother.

"That is to seye, for the am I bicommen,  
Bitwixen game and earnest, swich a meene  
As maken wommen unto men to comen;  
Al sey I nought, thow wost wel what I meene.  
For the have I my nece, of vices cleene,  
So fully maad thi gentilesse triste,  
That al shal ben right as thiselven liste.

260 "But God, that al woot, take I to witnesse,  
That nevere I this for coveitise wroughte,  
But oonly for t' abregge that distresse  
For which wel neigh thow deidest, as me thoughte.  
But, goode brother, do now as the oughte,  
For Goddes love, and kep hire out of blame,  
Syn thow art wys, and save alwey hire name.

"For wel thow woost, the name as yet of here  
Among the peeples, as who seyth, halwed is.  
For that man is unbore, I dar wel swere,  
270 That evere wiste that she dide amys.

But wo is me, that I, that cause al this,  
May thynken that she is my nece deere,  
And I hire em, and traitour ek yfeere!

"And were it wist that I, thorough myn engyn,  
Hadde in my nece yput this fantasie,  
To doon thi lust and holly to ben thyn,  
Whi, al the world upon it wolde crie,  
And seyn that I the werste trecherie  
Dide in this cas, that evere was bigonne,  
280 And she forlost, and thow right nought ywonne.

"Wherefore, er I wol ferther gon a pas,  
The preie ich eft, although thow shuldest deye,  
That privete go with us in this cas;  
That is to seyn, that thow us nevere wreye;  
And be nought wroth, though I the ofte preye  
To holden secree swich an heigh matere,  
For skilfull is, thow woost wel, my praiere.

"And thynk what wo ther hath bitid er this,  
For makyng of avantes, as men rede;  
290 And what meschaunce in this world yet ther is,  
Fro day to day, right for that wikked dede;  
For which thise wise clerkes that ben dede

Han evere yet proverbed to us yonge,  
That 'firste vertu is to kepe tonge.'  
"And nere it that I wilne as now t' abregge  
Diffusioun of speche, I koude almoost  
A thousand olde stories the allegge  
Of wommen lost through fals and foles bost.  
Proverbes kanst thiself ynowe and woost  
300 Ayeins that vice, for to ben a labbe,  
Al seyde men soth as often as thei gabbe.  
"O tonge, alas, so often here-byforn  
Hath mad ful many a lady bright of hewe  
Seyd 'Weilaway, the day that I was born!'  
And many a maydes sorwe for to newe;  
And for the more part, al is untrewe  
That men of yelpe, and it were brought to preve.  
Of kynde non avauntour is to leve.  
"Avauntour and a lyere, al is on;  
310 As thus: I pose, a womman grante me  
Hire love, and seith that other wol she non,  
And I am sworn to holden it secree,  
And after I go telle it two or thre --  
Iwis, I am avauntour at the leeste,  
And lyere, for I breke my biheste.  
"Now loke thanne, if they be nought to blame,  
Swich manere folk -- what shal I clepe hem, what? --  
That hem avaunte of wommen, and by name,  
That nevere yet bihyghte hem this ne that,  
320 Ne knewe hem more than myn olde hat!  
No wonder is, so God me sende hele,  
Though wommen dreden with us men to dele.  
"I sey nought this for no mistrust of yow,  
Ne for no wis-man, but for foles nyce,  
And for the harm that in the werld is now,  
As wel for folie ofte as for malice;  
For wel woot I, in wise folk that vice  
No womman drat, if she be wel avised;  
For wyse ben by foles harm chastised.  
330 "But now to purpos; leve brother deere,  
Have al this thyng that I have seyde in mynde,  
And kep the clos, and be now of good cheere,  
For at thi day thou shalt me trewe fynde.  
I shal thi proces set in swych a kynde,

And God toforn, that it shal the suffise,  
For it shal be right as thow wolt devyse.  
"For wel I woot, thow menest wel, parde;  
Therefore I dar this fully undertake.  
Thow woost ek what thi lady graunted the,  
340 And day is set the chartres up to make.  
Have now good nyght, I may no lenger wake;  
And bid for me, syn thow art now in blysse,  
That God me sende deth or soone lisse."  
Who myghte tellen half the joie or feste  
Which that the soule of Troilus tho felte,  
Heryng th' effect of Pandarus byheste?  
His olde wo, that made his herte swelte,  
Gan tho for joie wasten and tomelte,  
And al the richesse of his sikes sore  
350 At ones fledde; he felte of hem namore.  
But right so as thise holtes and thise hayis,  
That han in wynter dede ben and dreye,  
Revesten hem in grene whan that May is,  
Whan every lusty liketh best to pleye;  
Right in that selve wise, soth to seye,  
Wax sodeynliche his herte ful of joie,  
That gladder was ther nevere man in Troie.  
And gan his look on Pandarus up caste  
Ful sobrelly, and frendly for to se,  
360 And seyde, "Frend, in Aperil the laste --  
As wel thow woost, if it remembre the --  
How neigh the deth for wo thow fownde me,  
And how thow dedest al thi bisynesse  
To knowe of me the cause of my destresse.  
"Thow woost how longe ich it forbar to seye  
To the, that art the man that I best triste;  
And peril non was it to the bywreye,  
That wist I wel; but telle me, if the liste,  
Sith I so loth was that thiself it wiste,  
370 How dorst I mo tellen of this matere,  
That quake now, and no wight may us here?  
"But natheles, by that God I the swere,  
That, as hym list, may al this world governe --  
And, if I lye, Achilles with his spere  
Myn herte cleve, al were my lif eterne,  
As I am mortal, if I late or yerne

Wolde it bewreye, or dorst, or sholde konne,  
For al the good that God made under sonne --  
"That rather deye I wolde, and determyne,  
380 As thynketh me, now stokked in prisoun,  
In wrecchidnesse, in filthe, and in vermyne,  
Caytif to cruel kyng Agamenoun;  
And this in all the temples of this town  
Upon the goddes alle, I wol the swere  
To-morwe day, if that it liketh here.  
"And that thow hast so muche ido for me  
That I ne may it nevere more disserve,  
This know I wel, al myghte I now for the  
A thousand tymes on a morwe sterve.  
390 I kan namore, but that I wol the serve  
Right as thi sclave, whider so thow wende,  
For evere more, unto my lyves ende.  
"But here, with al myn herte, I the biseche  
That nevere in me thow deme swich folie  
As I shal seyn: me thoughte by thi speche  
That this which thow me dost for compaignie,  
I sholde wene it were a bauderye.  
I am nought wood, al if I lewed be!  
It is nought so, that woot I wel, parde!  
400 "But he that gooth for gold or for ricchesse  
On swich message, calle hym what the list;  
And this that thow doost, calle it gentillesse,  
Compassioun, and felawship, and trist.  
Depart it so, for wyde-wher is wist  
How that ther is diversite requered  
Bytwixen thynges like, as I have lered.  
"And that thow knowe I thynke nought ne wene  
That this servise a shame be or jape,  
I have my faire suster Polixene,  
410 Cassandre, Eleyne, or any of the frape --  
Be she nevere so fair or wel yshape,  
Tel me which thow wilt of everychone,  
To han for thyn, and lat me thanne allone.  
"But, sith thow hast don me this servyse  
My lif to save and for non hope of mede,  
So for the love of God, this grete emprise  
Perfourme it out, for now is moste nede;  
For heigh and lough, withowten any drede,

I wol alwey thyn hestes alle kepe.  
420 Have now good nyght, and lat us bothe slepe."  
Thus held hym ech of other wel apayed,  
That al the world ne myghte it bet amende;  
And on the morwe, whan they were arayed,  
Ech to his owen nedes gan entende.  
But Troilus, though as the fir he brende  
For sharp desir of hope and of plesaunce,  
He nought forgot his goode governaunce,  
But in hymself with manhod gan restreyne  
Ech racle dede and ech unbridled cheere,  
430 That alle tho that lyven, soth to seyne,  
Ne sholde han wist, by word or by manere,  
What that he mente, as touchyng this matere.  
From every wight as fer as is the cloude  
He was, so wel dissimilen he koude.  
And al the while which that I yow devyse,  
This was his lif: with all his fulle myght,  
By day, he was in Martes heigh servyse --  
This is to seyn, in armes as a knyght;  
And for the more part, the longe nyght  
440 He lay and thoughte how that he myghte serve  
His lady best, hire thonk for to deserve.  
Nil I naught swere, although he lay ful softe,  
That in his thought he nas somewhat disesed,  
Ne that he torned on his pilwes ofte,  
And wold of that hym missed han ben sesed.  
But in swich cas men is nought alwey plesed,  
For aught I woot, namore than was he;  
That kan I deme of possibilittee.  
But certeyn is, to purpos for to go,  
450 That in this while, as writen is in geeste,  
He say his lady somtyme, and also  
She with hym spak, whan that she dorst or leste;  
And by hire bothe avys, as was the beste,  
Apoynteden full warly in this nede,  
So as they durste, how they wolde procede.  
But it was spoken in so short a wise,  
In swich await alwey, and in swich feere,  
Lest any wight devynen or devyse  
Wolde of hem two, or to it laye an ere,  
460 That al this world so leef to hem ne were

As that Cupide wolde hem grace sende  
To maken of hire speche aright an ende.  
But thilke litel that they spake or wroughte,  
His wise goost took ay of al swych heede,  
It semed hire he wiste what she thoughte  
Withouten word, so that it was no nede  
To bidde hym ought to doon, or ought forbeede;  
For which she thought that love, al come it late,  
Of alle joie hadde opned hire the yate.  
470 And shortly of this proces for to pace,  
So wel his werk and wordes he bisette,  
That he so ful stood in his lady grace,  
That twenty thousand tymes, er she lette,  
She thonked God that evere she with hym mette.  
So koude he hym governe in swich servyse,  
That al the world ne myght it bet devyse.  
For whi she fond hym so discret in al,  
So secret, and of swich obeisaunce,  
That wel she felte he was to hire a wal  
480 Of stiel, and sheld from every displesaunce;  
That to ben in his goode governaunce,  
So wis he was, she was namore afered --  
I mene, as fer as oughte ben requered.  
And Pandarus, to quike alwey the fir,  
Was evere ylike prest and diligent;  
To ese his frend was set al his desir.  
He shof ay on, he to and fro was sent;  
He lettres bar whan Troilus was absent;  
That nevere man, as in his frendes nede,  
490 Ne bar hym bet than he, withouten drede.  
But now, paraunter, som man wayten wolde  
That every word, or soonde, or look, or cheere  
Of Troilus that I rehercen sholde,  
In al this while unto his lady deere --  
I trowe it were a long thyng for to here --  
Or of what wight that stant in swich disjoynte,  
His wordes alle, or every look, to poynte.  
For sothe, I have naught herd it don er this  
In story non, ne no man here, I wene;  
500 And though I wolde, I koude nought, ywys;  
For ther was som epistel hem bitwene,  
That wolde, as seyth myn autour, wel contene



Neigh half this book, of which hym liste nought write.  
How sholde I thanne a lyne of it endite?  
But to the grete effect: than sey I thus,  
That stondyng in concord and in quiete,  
Thise ilke two, Criseyde and Troilus,  
As I have told, and in this tyme swete --  
Save only often myghte they nought mete,  
510 Ne leiser have hire speches to fulfelle --  
That it bifel right as I shal yow telle:  
That Pandarus, that evere dide his myght  
Right for the fyn that I shal speke of here,  
As for to bryngen to his hows som nyght  
His faire nece and Troilus yfere,  
Wheras at leiser al this heighe matere,  
Touchyng here love, were at the fulle upbounde,  
Hadde out of doute a tyme to it founde.  
For he with gret deliberacioun  
520 Hadde every thyng that herto myght availle  
Forncast and put in execucioun,  
And neither left for cost ne for travaille.  
Come if hem list, hem sholde no thyng faille;  
And for to ben in ought aspied there,  
That, wiste he wel, an impossible were.  
Dredeles, it cler was in the wynd  
Of every pie and every lette-game;  
Now al is wel, for al the world is blynd  
In this matere, bothe fremde and tame.  
530 This tymbur is al redy up to frame;  
Us lakketh nought but that we witen wolde  
A certeyn houre, in which she comen sholde.  
And Troilus, that al this purveiaunce  
Knew at the fulle, and waited on it ay,  
Hadde hereupon ek mad gret ordinaunce,  
And found his cause, and therto his aray,  
If that he were missed, nyght or day,  
Ther-while he was aboute this servyse,  
That he was gon to don his sacrificise,  
540 And moste at swich a temple allone wake,  
Answered of Apollo for to be;  
And first to sen the holy laurer quake,  
Er that Apollo spak out of the tree,  
To telle hym next whan Grekes sholde flee --

And forthy lette hym no man, God forbede,  
But prey Apollo helpen in this nede.  
Now is ther litel more for to doone,  
But Pandare up and, shortly for to seyne,  
Right sone upon the chaungynge of the moone,  
550 Whan lightles is the world a nyght or tweyne,  
And that the wolken shop hym for to reyne,  
He streght o morwe unto his nece wente --  
Ye han wel herd the fyn of his entente.  
Whan he was com, he gan anon to pleye  
As he was wont, and of hymself to jape;  
And finaly he swor and gan hire seye,  
By this and that, she sholde hym nought escape,  
Ne lenger don hym after hire to cape;  
But certeynly she moste, by hire leve,  
560 Come soupen in his hous with hym at eve.  
At which she lough, and gan hire faste excuse,  
And seyde, "It reyneth. lo, how sholde I gon?"  
"Lat be," quod he, "ne stant nought thus to muse.  
This moot be don! Ye shal be ther anon."  
So at the laste herof they fille aton,  
Or elles, softe he swor hire in hire ere,  
He nolde nevere comen ther she were.  
Soone after this, she to hym gan to rowne,  
And axed hym if Troilus were there.  
570 He swor hire nay, for he was out of towne,  
And seyde, "Nece, I pose that he were;  
Yow thurste nevere han the more fere;  
For rather than men myghte hym ther asprie,  
Me were levere a thousand fold to dye."  
Nought list myn auctour fully to declare  
What that she thoughte whan he seyde so,  
That Troilus was out of towne yfare,  
As if he seyde therof soth or no;  
But that, withowten await, with hym to go,  
580 She graunted hym, sith he hire that bisoughte,  
And, as his nece, obeyed as hire oughte.  
But natheles, yet gan she hym biseche,  
Although with hym to gon it was no fere,  
For to ben war of goosissh poeples speche,  
That dremen thynges whiche as nevere were,  
And wel avyse hym whom he broughte there;

And seyde hym, "Em, syn I moste on yow triste,  
Loke al be wel, and do now as yow liste."  
He swor hire yis, by stokkes and by stones,  
590 And by the goddes that in hevene dwelle,  
Or elles were hym levere, soule and bones,  
With Pluto kyng as depe ben in helle  
As Tantalus -- what sholde I more telle?  
Whan al was wel, he roos and took his leve,  
And she to soper com, whan it was eve,  
With a certein of hire owen men,  
And with hire faire nece Antigone,  
And other of hire wommen nyne or ten.  
But who was glad now, who, as trowe ye,  
600 But Troilus, that stood and myght it se  
Thorughout a litel wyndow in a stewe,  
Ther he bishet syn mydnyght was in mewen,  
Unwist of every wight but of Pandare?  
But to the point: now whan that she was come,  
With alle joie and alle frendes fare  
Hire em anon in armes hath hire nome,  
And after to the soper, alle and some,  
Whan tyme was, ful softe they hem sette.  
God woot, ther was no deynte for to fette!  
610 And after soper gonnen they to rise,  
At ese wel, with herte fresshe and glade;  
And wel was hym that koude best devyse  
To liken hire, or that hire laughen made:  
He song; she pleyde; he tolde tale of Wade.  
But at the laste, as every thyng hath ende,  
She took hire leve, and nedes wolde wende.  
But O Fortune, executrice of wierdes,  
O influences of thise hevenes hye!  
Soth is, that under God ye ben oure hierdes,  
620 Though to us bestes ben the causez wrie.  
This mene I now: for she gan homward hye,  
But execut was al bisyde hire leve  
The goddes wil, for which she moste bleve.  
The bente moone with hire hornes pale,  
Saturne, and Jove, in Cancro joyned were,  
That swych a reyn from heven gan avale  
That every maner womman that was there  
Hadde of that smoky reyn a verray feere;

At which Pandare tho lough, and seyde thenne,  
630 "Now were it tyme a lady to gon henne!  
"But goode nece, if I myghte evere plese  
Yow any thyng, than prey ich yow," quod he,  
"To don myn herte as now so gret an ese  
As for to dwelle here al this nyght with me,  
For-whi this is youre owen hous, parde.  
For by my trouthe, I sey it nought a-game,  
To wende as now, it were to me a shame."  
Criseyde, which that koude as muche good  
As half a world, took hede of his preiere;  
640 And syn it ron, and al was on a flod,  
She thoughte, "As good chep may I dwellen here,  
And graunte it gladly with a frendes chere,  
And have a thonk, as grucche and thanne abide;  
For hom to gon, it may nought wel bitide."  
"I wol," quod she, "myn uncle lief and deere;  
Syn that yow list, it skile is to be so.  
I am right glad with yow to dwellen here;  
I seyde but a-game I wolde go."  
"Iwys, graunt mercy, nece," quod he tho,  
650 "Were it a game or no, soth for to telle,  
Now am I glad, syn that yow list to dwelle."  
Thus al is wel; but tho bigan aright  
The newe joie and al the feste agayn.  
But Pandarus, if goodly hadde he myght,  
He wolde han hyed hire to bedde fayn,  
And seyde, "Lord, this is an huge rayn!  
This were a weder for to slepen inne --  
And that I rede us soone to bygynne."  
"And nece, woot ye wher I wol yow leye,  
660 For that we shul nat liggen far asonder,  
And for ye neither shullen, dar I seye,  
Heren noyse of reynes nor of thonder?  
By God, right in my litel closet yonder.  
And I wol in that outer hous allone  
Be wardein of youre wommen everichone.  
"And in this myddel chambre that ye se  
Shal youre wommen slepen, wel and softe;  
And there I seyde shal youreselven be;  
And if ye liggen wel to-nyght, com ofte,  
670 And careth nought what weder is alofte.

The wyn anon, and whan so that yow leste,  
So go we slepe: I trowe it be the beste."  
Ther nys no more, but hereafter soone,  
The voide dronke, and travers drawe anon,  
Gan every wight that hadde nought to done  
More in the place out of the chaumbre gon.  
And evere mo so sterneliche it ron,  
And blew therwith so wondirliche loude,  
That wel neigh no man heren other koude.  
680 Tho Pandarus, hire em, right as hym oughte,  
With wommen swiche as were hire most aboute,  
Ful glad unto hire beddes syde hire broughte,  
And took his leve, and gan ful lowe loute,  
And seyde, "Here at this closet dore withoute,  
Right overthwart, youre wommen liggen alle,  
That whom yow list of hem ye may here calle."  
So whan that she was in the closet leyde,  
And alle hire wommen forth by ordinaunce  
Abedde weren, ther as I have seyde,  
690 Ther was nomore to skippen nor to traunce,  
But boden go to bedde, with meschaunce,  
If any wight was steryng anywhere,  
And lat hem slepen that abedde were.  
But Pandarus, that wel koude ech a deel  
Th' olde daunce, and every point therinne,  
Whan that he sey that alle thyng was wel,  
He thought he wolde upon his werk bigynne,  
And gan the stuwe doore al softe unpynne;  
And stille as stoon, withouten lenger lette,  
700 By Troilus adown right he hym sette,  
And shortly to the point right for to gon,  
Of al this werk he tolde hym word and ende,  
And seyde, "Make the redy right anon,  
For thow shalt into hevene blisse wende."  
"Now, blisful Venus, thow me grace sende!"  
Quod Troilus, "For nevere yet no nede  
Hadde ich er now, ne halvendel the drede."  
Quod Pandarus, "Ne drede the nevere a deel,  
For it shal be right as thow wolt desire;  
710 So thryve I, this nyght shal I make it weel,  
Or casten al the gruwel in the fire."  
"Yet, blisful Venus, this nyght thow me enspire,"

Quod Troilus, "As wys as I the serve,  
 And evere bet and bet shal, til I sterve.  
 "And if ich hadde, O Venus ful of myrthe,  
 Aspectes badde of Mars or of Saturne,  
 Or thow combust or let were in my birthe,  
 Thy fader prey al thilke harm disturne  
 Of grace, and that I glad ayein may turne,  
 720 For love of hym thow lovedest in the shawe --  
 I meene Adoun, that with the boor was slawe.  
 "O Jove ek, for the love of faire Europe,  
 The which in forme of bole away thow fette,  
 Now help! O Mars, thow with thi bloody cope,  
 For love of Cipris, thow me nought ne lette!  
 O Phebus, thynk whan Dane hireselven shette  
 Under the bark, and laurer wax for drede;  
 Yet for hire love, O help now at this nede!  
 "Mercurie, for the love of Hierse eke,  
 730 For which Pallas was with Aglawros wroth,  
 Now help! And ek Diane, I the biseke  
 That this viage be nought to the looth!  
 O fatal sustren which, er any cloth  
 Me shapen was, my destine me sponne,  
 So helpeth to this werk that is bygonne!"  
 Quod Pandarus, "Thow wrecched mouses herte,  
 Artow agast so that she wol the bite?  
 Wy! Don this furred cloke upon thy sherte,  
 And folwe me, for I wol have the wite.  
 740 But bid, and lat me gon biforn a lite."  
 And with that word he gan undon a trappe,  
 And Troilus he brought in by the lappe.  
 The sterne wynd so loude gan to route  
 That no wight oother noise myghte heere;  
 And they that layen at the dore withoute,  
 Ful sikerly they slepten alle yfere;  
 And Pandarus, with a ful sobre cheere,  
 Goth to the dore anon, withouten lette,  
 Ther as they laye, and softly it shette.  
 750 And as he com ayeynward pryvely,  
 His nece awook, and axed, "Who goth there?"  
 "My dere nece," quod he, "it am I.  
 Ne wondreth nought, ne have of it no fere."  
 And ner he com and seyde hire in hire ere,

"No word, for love of God, I yow biseche!  
Lat no wight risen and heren of oure speche."  
"What, which wey be ye comen, benedicite?"  
Quod she; "And how, unwist of hem alle?"  
"Here at this secre trappe-dore," quod he.  
760 Quod tho Criseyde, "Lat me som wight calle!"  
"I! God forbede that it sholde falle,"  
Quod Pandarus, "that ye swich folye wroughte!  
They myghte demen thyng they nevere er thoughte.  
"It is nought good a slepyng hound to wake,  
Ne yeve a wight a cause to devyne:  
Youre wommen slepen alle, I undertake,  
So that, for hem, the hous men myghte myne,  
And slepen wollen til the sonne shyne.  
And whan my tale brought is to an ende,  
770 Unwist, right as I com, so wol I wende.  
"Now, nece myn, ye shul wel understonde,"  
Quod he, "so as ye wommen demen alle,  
That for to holde in love a man in honde,  
And hym hire lief and deere herte calle,  
And maken hym an howve above a calle --  
I meene, as love another in this while --  
She doth hireself a shame and hym a gyle.  
"Now, wherby that I telle yow al this:  
Ye woot youreself, as wel as any wight,  
780 How that youre love al fully graunted is  
To Troilus, the worthieste knyght,  
Oon of this world, and therto trouthe yplight,  
That, but it were on hym along, ye nolde  
Hym nevere falsen while ye lyven sholde.  
"Now stant it thus, that sith I fro yow wente,  
This Troilus, right platly for to seyn,  
Is thorough a goter, by a pryve wente,  
Into my chaumbre come in al this reyn,  
Unwist of every manere wight, certeyn,  
790 Save of myself, as wisly have I joye,  
And by that feith I shal Priam of Troie.  
"And he is come in swich peyne and distresse  
That, but he be al fully wood by this,  
He sodeynly mot falle into wodnesse,  
But if God helpe; and cause whi this is.  
He seith hym told is of a frend of his,

How that ye sholden love oon hatte Horaste;  
For sorwe of which this nyght shal ben his laste."  
Criseyde, which that al this wonder herde,  
800 Gan sodeynly aboute hire herte colde,  
And with a sik she sorwfully answerde,  
"Allas! I wende, whoso tales tolde,  
My deere herte wolde me nought holde  
So lightly fals! Allas, conceytes wronge,  
What harm they don! For now lyve I to longe!  
"Horaste! Allas, and falsen Troilus?  
I knowe hym nought, God helpe me so!" quod she.  
"Allas, what wikked spirit tolde hym thus?  
Now certes, em, tomorwe and I hym se,  
810 I shal therof as ful excusen me,  
As evere dide womman, if hym like."  
And with that word she gan ful soore sike.  
"O God," quod she, "so worldly selynesse,  
Which clerkes callen fals felicitee,  
Imedled is with many a bitternesse!  
Ful angwissous than is, God woot," quod she,  
"Condicoun of veyn prosperitee:  
For either joies comen nought yfeere,  
Or elles no wight hath hem alwey here.  
820 "O brotel wele of mannes joie unstable!  
With what wight so thow be, or how thow pleye,  
Either he woot that thow, joie, art muable,  
Or woot it nought; it mot ben oon of tweye.  
Now if he woot it nought, how may he seye  
That he hath verray joie and selynesse,  
That is of ignoraunce ay in derknesse?  
"Now if he woot that joie is transitorie,  
As every joye of worldly thyng mot flee,  
Than every tyme he that hath in memorie,  
830 The drede of lesyng maketh hym that he  
May in no perfit selynesse be;  
And if to lese his joie he sette a myte,  
Than semeth it that joie is worth ful lite.  
"Wherfore I wol diffyne in this matere,  
That trewely, for aught I kan espie,  
Ther is no verray weele in this world heere.  
But O thow wikked serpent, jalousie,  
Thow mysbyleved envyous folie,



Why hastow Troilus mad to me untriste,  
 840 That nevere yet agylte hym, that I wiste?"  
 Quod Pandarus, "Thus fallen is this cas --"  
 "Wy! Uncle myn," quod she, "who tolde hym this?  
 Why doth my deere herte thus, alas?"  
 "Ye woot, ye, nece myn," quod he, "what is.  
 I hope al shal be wel that is amys,  
 For ye may quenche al this, if that yow leste --  
 And doth right so, for I holde it the beste."  
 "So shal I do to-morwe, ywys," quod she,  
 "And God toforn, so that it shal suffise."  
 850 "To-morwe? Allas, that were a fair!" quod he;  
 "Nay, nay, it may nat stonden in this wise,  
 For, nece myn, thus writen clerkes wise,  
 That peril is with drecchyng in ydrawe;  
 Nay, swiche abodes ben nought worth an hawe.  
 "Nece, alle thyng hath tyme, I dar avowe;  
 For whan a chaumbre afire is or an halle,  
 Wel more nede is, it sodeynly rescowe  
 Than to dispute and axe amonges alle  
 How this candel in the strawe is falle.  
 860 A, benedicite! For al among that fare  
 The harm is don, and fare-wel feldefare!  
 "And nece myn -- ne take it naught agrief --  
 If that ye suffre hym al nyght in this wo,  
 God help me so, ye hadde hym nevere lief!  
 That dar I seyn, now ther is but we two.  
 But wel I woot that ye wol nat do so;  
 Ye ben to wys to doon so gret folie,  
 To putte his lif al nyght in jupertie."  
 "Hadde I hym nevere lief? by God, I weene  
 870 Ye hadde nevere thyng so lief!" quod she.  
 "Now by my thrift," quod he, "that shal be seene!  
 For syn ye make this ensauple of me,  
 If ich al nyght wolde hym in sorwe se,  
 For al the tresour in the town of Troie,  
 I bidde God I nevere mote have joie.  
 "Now loke thanne, if ye that ben his love  
 Shul putte his lif al night in jupertie  
 For thyng of nought, now by that God above,  
 Naught oonly this delay comth of folie,  
 880 But of malice, if that I shal naught lie.

What! Platly, and ye suffre hym in destresse,  
Ye neyther bounte don ne gentillesse."  
Quod tho Criseyde, "Wol ye don o thyng  
And ye therwith shal stynte al his disese?  
Have heere, and bereth hym this blewe ryng,  
For ther is nothyng myghte hym bettre plese,  
Save I myself, ne more hys herte apese;  
And sey my deere herte that his sorwe  
Is causeles; that shal be sene to-morwe."  
890 "A ryng?" quod he, "Ye haselwodes shaken!  
Ye, nece myn, that ryng moste han a stoon  
That myghte dede men alyve maken;  
And swich a ryng trowe I that ye have non.  
Discrecioun out of youre hed is gon;  
That fele I now," quod he, "and that is routhe.  
O tyme ilost, wel maistow corsen slouthe!  
"Woot ye not wel that noble and heigh corage  
Ne sorweth nought, ne stynteth ek, for lite?  
But if a fool were in a jalous rage,  
900 I nolde setten at his sorwe a myte,  
But feffe hym with a fewe wordes white  
Anothir day, whan that I myghte hym fynde;  
But this thyng stant al in another kynde.  
"This is so gentil and so tendre of herte  
That with his deth he wol his sorwes wreke;  
For trusteth wel, how sore that hym smerte,  
He wol to yow no jalous wordes speke.  
And forthi, nece, er that his herte breke,  
So speke youreself to hym of this matere,  
910 For with o word ye may his herte stere.  
"Now have I told what peril he is inne,  
And his comynge unwist is to every wight;  
Ne, parde, harm may ther be non, ne synne:  
I wol myself be with yow al this nyght.  
Ye knowe ek how it is youre owen knyght,  
And that bi right ye moste upon hym triste,  
And I al prest to fecche hym whan yow liste."  
This accident so pitous was to here,  
And ek so like a sooth at prime face,  
920 And Troilus hire knyght to hir so deere,  
His prive comyng, and the siker place,  
That though that she did hym as thanne a grace,

Considered alle thynges as they stoode,  
No wonder is, syn she did al for goode.  
Criseyde answerde, "As wisly God at reste  
My soule brynge, as me is for hym wo!  
And em, iwis, fayn wolde I don the beste,  
If that ich hadde grace to do so;  
But whether that ye dwelle or for hym go,  
930 I am, til God me bettre mynde sende,  
At dulcarnoun, right at my wittes ende."  
Quod Pandarus, "Yee, nece, wol ye here?  
Dulcarnoun called is `flemynge of wrecches':  
It semeth hard, for wrecches wol nought lere,  
For verray slouthe or other wilfull tecches;  
This seyde by hem that ben nought worth two fecches;  
But ye ben wis, and that we han on honde  
Nis neither hard, ne skilful to withstonde."  
"Than, em," quod she, "doth herof as yow list.  
940 But er he com, I wil up first arise,  
And for the love of God, syn al my trist  
Is on yow two, and ye ben bothe wise,  
So werketh now in so discret a wise  
That I honour may have, and he plesaunce:  
For I am here al in youre governaunce."  
"That is wel seyde," quod he, "my nece deere.  
Ther good thrift on that wise gentil herte!  
But liggeth stille, and taketh hym right here --  
It nedeth nought no ferther for hym sterte.  
950 And ech of yow ese otheres sorwes smerte,  
For love of God! And Venus, I the herye;  
For soone hope I we shul ben alle merye."  
This Troilus ful soone on knees hym sette  
Ful sobrelly, right be hyre beddes hed,  
And in his beste wyse his lady grette.  
But Lord, so she wex sodeynliche red!  
Ne though men sholde smyten of hire hed,  
She kouth. nought a word aright out brynge  
So sodeynly, for his sodeyn comynge.  
960 But Pandarus, that so wel koude feeles  
In every thyng, to pleye anon bigan,  
And seyde, "Nece, se how this lord kan knele!  
Now for youre trouthe, se this gentil man!"  
And with that word he for a quysshyn ran,

And seyde, "Kneleth now, while that yow leste;  
There God youre hertes brynge soone at reste!"  
Kan I naught seyn, for she bad hym nought rise,  
If sorwe it putte out of hire remembraunce,  
Or elles that she took it in the wise  
970 Of dewete, as for his observaunce;  
But wel fynde I she dede hym this plesaunce,  
That she hym kiste, although she siked sore,  
And bad hym sitte adown withouten more.  
Quod Pandarus, "Now wol ye wel bigynne.  
Now doth hym sitte, goode nece deere,  
Upon youre beddes syde al ther withinne,  
That ech of yow the bet may other heere."  
And with that word he drow hym to the feere,  
And took a light, and fond his contenaunce,  
980 As for to looke upon an old romaunce.  
Criseyde, that was Troilus lady right,  
And cler stood on a ground of sikernesse,  
Al thoughte she hire servant and hire knyght  
Ne sholde of right non untrouthe in hire gesse,  
Yet natheles, considered his distresse,  
And that love is in cause of swich folie,  
Thus to hym spak she of his jalousie:  
"Lo, herte myn, as wolde the excellence  
Of love, ayeins the which that no man may --  
990 Ne oughte ek -- goodly make resistance,  
And ek bycause I felte wel and say  
Youre grete trouthe and servise every day,  
And that youre herte al myn was, soth to seyne,  
This drof me for to rewe upon youre peyne.  
"And youre goodnesse have I founde alwey yit,  
Of which, my deere herte and al my knyght,  
I thonke it yow, as fer as I have wit,  
Al kan I nought as mucche as it were right;  
And I, emforth my connyng and my might,  
1000 Have and ay shal, how sore that me smerte,  
Ben to yow trewe and hool with al myn herte,  
"And dredeles, that shal be founde at preve.  
But, herte myn, what al this is to seyne  
Shal wel be told, so that ye nought yow greve,  
Though I to yow right on youreself compleyne,  
For therwith mene I fynaly the peyne

That halt youre herte and myn in hevynesse  
Fully to slen, and every wrong redresse.  
"My goode myn, noot I for-why ne how  
1010 That jalousie, alas, that wikked wyvere,  
Thus causeles is copen into yow,  
The harm of which I wolde fayn delyvere.  
Allas, that he, al hool or of hym slyvere,  
Shuld han his refut in so digne a place;  
Ther Jove hym sone out of youre herte arace!  
"But O, thow Jove, O auctour of nature,  
Is this an honour to thi deyte,  
That folk ungiltif suffren hire injure,  
And who that giltif is, al quyt goth he?  
1020 O, were it lefull for to pleyn on the,  
That undeserved suffrest jalousie,  
Of that I wolde upon the pleyne and crie!  
"Ek al my wo is this, that folk now usen  
To seyn right thus, 'Ye, jalousie is love!'  
And wolde a busshel venym al excusen,  
For that o greyn of love is on it shove.  
But that woot heighe God that sit above,  
If it be likkere love, or hate, or grame;  
And after that, it oughte bere his name.  
1030 "But certeyn is, som manere jalousie  
Is excusable more than som, iwys;  
As whan cause is, and som swich fantasie  
With piete so wel repressed is  
That it unnethe doth or seyth amys,  
But goodly drynketh up al his distresse --  
And that excuse I, for the gentillesse;  
"And som so ful of furie is and despit  
That it sourmounteth his repressioun.  
But herte myn, ye be nat in that plit,  
1040 That thonke I God; for which youre passioun  
I wol nought calle it but illusioun  
Of habundaunce of love and besy cure,  
That doth youre herte this disese endure.  
"Of which I am right sory but nought wroth;  
But, for my devoir and youre hertes reste,  
Wherso yow list, by ordal or by oth,  
By sort, or in what wise so yow leste,  
For love of God, lat preve it for the beste;

And if that I be giltif, do me deye!  
1050 Allas, what myght I more don or seye?"  
With that a fewe brighte teris newe  
Owt of hire eighen fille, and thus she seyde,  
"Now God, thow woost, in thought ne dede untrew  
To Troilus was nevere yet Criseyde."  
With that here heed down in the bed she leyde,  
And with the sheete it wreigh, and sighte soore,  
And held hire pees; nought o word spak she more.  
But now help God to quenchen al this sorwe!  
So hope I that he shal, for he best may.  
1060 For I have seyn of a ful misty morwe  
Folowen ful ofte a myrie someris day;  
And after wynter foloweth grene May;  
Men sen alday, and reden ek in stories,  
That after sharpe shoures ben victories.  
This Troilus, whan he hire wordes herde,  
Have ye no care, hym liste nought to slepe;  
For it thoughte hym no strokes of a yerde  
To heere or seen Criseyde, his lady, wepe;  
But wel he felt aboute his herte crepe,  
1070 For everi tere which that Criseyde asterte,  
The crampe of deth to streyne hym by the herte.  
And in his mynde he gan the tyme acorse  
That he com there, and that, that he was born;  
For now is wikke torned into worse,  
And al that labour he hath don byforn,  
He wende it lost; he thoughte he nas but lorn.  
"O Pandarus," thoughte he, "allas, thi wile  
Serveth of nought, so weylaway the while!"  
And therwithal he heng adown the heed,  
1080 And fil on knees, and sorwfully he sighte.  
What myghte he seyn? He felte he nas but deed,  
For wroth was she that sholde his sorwes lighte.  
But natheles, whan that he speken myghte,  
Than seyde he thus, "God woot that of this game,  
Whan al is wist, than am I nought to blame."  
Therwith the sorwe so his herte shette  
That from his eyen fil there nought a tere,  
And every spirit his vigour in knette,  
So they astoned or oppressed were.  
1090 The felyng of his sorwe, or of his fere,

Or of aught elles, fled was out of towne;  
And down he fel al sodeynly a-swowne.  
This was no litel sorwe for to se;  
But al was hust, and Pandare up as faste;  
"O nece, pes, or we be lost!" quod he,  
"Beth naught agast!" But certeyn, at the laste,  
For this or that, he into bed hym caste,  
And seyde, "O thef, is this a mannes herte?"  
And of he rente al to his bare sherte,  
1100 And seyde, "Nece, but ye helpe us now,  
Allas, youre owen Troilus is lorn!"  
"Iwis, so wolde I, and I wiste how,  
Ful fayn," quod she. "Allas, that I was born!"  
"Yee, nece, wol ye pullen out the thorn  
That stiketh in his herte?" quod Pandare.  
"Sey 'Al foryeve,' and stynt is al this fare!"  
"Ye, that to me," quod she, "ful levere were  
Than al the good the sonne aboute gooth."  
And therwithal she swor hym in his ere,  
1110 "Iwys, my deere herte, I am nought wroth,  
Have here my trouthe!" -- and many an other oth.  
"Now speke to me, for it am I, Criseyde!"  
But al for nought; yit myght he nought abreyde.  
Therwith his pous and paumes of his hondes  
They gan to frote, and wete his temples tweyne;  
And to deliveren hym fro bittre bondes  
She ofte hym kiste; and shortly for to seyne,  
Hym to revoken she did al hire peyne;  
And at the laste, he gan his breth to drawe,  
1120 And of his swough sone after that adawe,  
And gan bet mynde and reson to hym take,  
But wonder soore he was abayst, iwis;  
And with a sik, whan he gan bet awake,  
He seyde, "O mercy, God, what thyng is this?"  
"Why do ye with youreselven thus amys?"  
Quod tho Criseyde, "Is this a mannes game?  
What, Troilus, wol ye do thus for shame?"  
And therwithal hire arm over hym she leyde,  
And al foryaf, and ofte tyme hym keste.  
1130 He thonked hire, and to hire spak, and seyde  
As fil to purpos for his herte reste;  
And she to that answerde hym as hire leste,

And with hire goodly wordes hym disporte  
 She gan, and ofte his sorwes to comforte.  
 Quod Pandarus, "For aught I kan asprien,  
 This light, nor I, ne serven here of nought.  
 Light is nought good for sike folkes yen!  
 But, for the love of God, syn ye ben brought  
 In thus good plit, lat now no hevy thought  
 1140 Ben hangyng in the hertes of yow tweye" --  
 And bar the candel to the chymeneye.  
 Soone after this, though it no nede were,  
 Whan she swiche othes as hire leste devyse  
 Hadde of hym take, hire thoughte tho no fere,  
 Ne cause ek non to bidde hym thennes rise.  
 Yet lasse thyng than othes may suffise  
 In many a cas, for every wyght, I gesse,  
 That loveth wel, meneth but gentillesse.  
 But in effect she wolde wite anon  
 1150 Of what man, and ek wheer, and also why  
 He jalous was, syn ther was cause non;  
 And ek the sygne that he took it by,  
 She badde hym that to telle hire bisily,  
 Or elles, certeyn, she bar hym on honde  
 That this was don of malice, hire to fonde.  
 Withouten more, shortly for to seyne,  
 He most obeye unto his lady heste;  
 And for the lasse harm, he moste feyne.  
 He seyde hire, whan she was at swich a feste,  
 1160 She myght on hym han loked at the leste --  
 Noot I nought what, al deere ynough a rysshe,  
 As he that nedes most a cause fisse.  
 And she answerde, "Swete, al were it so,  
 What harm was that, syn I non yvel mene?  
 For, by that God that bought us bothe two,  
 In alle thyng is myn entente cleene.  
 Swiche argumentes ne ben naught worth a beene.  
 Wol ye the childissh jalous contrefete?  
 Now were it worthi that ye were ybete."  
 1170 Tho Troilus gan sorwfully to sike --  
 Lest she be wroth, hym thoughte his herte deyde --  
 And seyde, "Allas, upon my sorwes sike  
 Have mercy, swete herte myn, Criseyde!  
 And if that in tho wordes that I seyde



Be any wrong, I wol no more trespase.  
Doth what yow list; I am al in youre grace."  
And she answerde, "Of gilt misericorde!  
That is to seyn, that I foryeve al this;  
And evere more on this nyght yow recorde,  
1180 And beth wel war ye do namore amys."  
"Nay, dere herte myn," quod he, "iwys!"  
"And now," quod she, "that I have don yow smerte,  
Foryeve it me, myn owene swete herte."  
This Troilus, with blisse of that supprised,  
Putte al in Goddes hand, as he that mente  
Nothing but wel; and sodeynly avysed,  
He hire in armes faste to hym hente.  
And Pandarus with a ful good entente  
Leyde hym to slepe, and seyde, "If ye be wise,  
1190 Swouneth nought now, lest more folk arise!"  
What myghte or may the sely larke seye,  
Whan that the sperhawk hath it in his foot?  
I kan namore; but of thise ilke tweye --  
To whom this tale sucre be or soot --  
Though that I tarie a yer, somtyme I moot,  
After myn auctour, tellen hire gladnesse,  
As wel as I have told hire hevynesse.  
Criseyde, which that felte hire thus itake,  
As writen clerkes in hire bokes olde,  
1200 Right as an aspes leef she gan to quake,  
Whan she hym felte hire in his armes folde.  
But Troilus, al hool of cares colde,  
Gan thanken tho the bryghte goddes sevene;  
Thus sondry peynes bryngen folk in hevene.  
This Troilus in armes gan hire streyne,  
And seyde, "O swete, as evere mot I gon,  
Now be ye kaught; now is ther but we tweyne!  
Now yeldeth yow, for other bote is non!"  
To that Criseyde answerde thus anon,  
1210 "Ne hadde I er now, my swete herte deere,  
Ben yolde, ywis, I were now nought heere!"  
O, sooth is seyde, that heled for to be  
As of a fevre or other gret siknesse,  
Men moste drynke, as men may ofte se,  
Ful bittre drynke; and for to han gladnesse  
Men drynken ofte peyne and gret distresse --

I mene it here, as for this aventure,  
That thorough a peyne hath founden al his cure.  
And now swetnesse semeth more swete,  
1220 That bitternesse assaied was byforn;  
For out of wo in blisse now they flete;  
Non swich they felten sithen they were born.  
Now is this bet than bothe two be lorn.  
For love of God, take every womman heede  
To werken thus, if it comth to the neede.  
Criseyde, al quyt from every drede and tene,  
As she that juste cause hadde hym to triste,  
Made hym swych feste it joye was to sene,  
Whan she his trouthe and clene entente wiste;  
1230 And as aboute a tree, with many a twiste,  
Bytrent and writh the swote wodebynde,  
Gan ech of hem in armes other wynde.  
And as the newe abaysed nyghtyngale,  
That stynteth first whan she bygynneth to synge,  
Whan that she hereth any herde tale,  
Or in the hegges any wyght stirynge,  
And after siker doth hire vois out rynge,  
Right so Criseyde, whan hire drede stente,  
Opned hire herte and tolde hym hire entente.  
1240 And right as he that seth his deth yshapen,  
And dyen mot, in ought that he may gesse,  
And sodeynly rescous doth hym escapen,  
And from his deth is brought in sykernesse,  
For al this world, in swych present gladnesse  
Was Troilus, and hath his lady swete.  
With worse hap God lat us nevere mete!  
Hire armes smale, hire streghte bak and softe,  
Hire sydes longe, fleshly, smothe, and white  
He gan to stroke, and good thrift bad ful ofte  
1250 Hire snowissh throte, hire brestes rounde and lite.  
Thus in this hevene he gan hym to delite,  
And therwithal a thousand tyme hire kiste,  
That what to don, for joie unnethe he wiste.  
Than seyde he thus: "O Love, O Charite!  
Thi moder ek, Citheria the swete,  
After thiself next heried be she --  
Venus mene I, the wel-willy planete! --  
And next that, Imeneus, I the grete,

For nevere man was to yow goddes holde  
 1260 As I, which ye han brought fro cares colde.  
 "Benigne Love, thow holy bond of thynges,  
 Whoso wol grace and list the nought honouren,  
 Lo, his desir wol fle withouten wynges;  
 For noldestow of bownte hem socouren  
 That serven best and most alwey labouren,  
 Yet were al lost, that dar I wel seyn, certes,  
 But if thi grace passed oure desertes.  
 "And for thow me, that koude leest disserve  
 Of hem that noumbred ben unto thi grace,  
 1270 Hast holpen, ther I likly was to sterve,  
 And me bistowed in so heigh a place  
 That thilke boundes may no blisse pace,  
 I kan namore; but laude and reverence  
 Be to thy bounte and thyn excellence!"  
 And therwithal Criseyde anon he kiste,  
 Of which certein she felte no disese,  
 And thus seyde he: "Now wolde God I wiste,  
 Myn herte swete, how I yow myght plese!  
 What man," quod he, "was evere thus at ese  
 1280 As I, on which the faireste and the beste  
 That evere I say deyneth hire herte reste?  
 "Here may men seen that mercy passeth right;  
 Th' experience of that is felt in me,  
 That am unworthi to so swete a wight.  
 But herte myn, of youre benignite,  
 So thynketh, though that I unworthi be,  
 Yet mot I nede amenden in som wyse,  
 Right thorough the vertu of youre heigh servyse.  
 "And for the love of God, my lady deere,  
 1290 Syn God hath wrought me for I shall yow serve --  
 As thus I mene: he wol ye be my steere,  
 To do me lyve, if that yow liste, or sterve --  
 So techeth me how that I may disserve  
 Yourre thanke, so that I thorough myn ignoraunce  
 Ne do no thyng that yow be displesaunce.  
 "For certes, fresshe wommanliche wif,  
 This dar I seye, that trouthe and diligence,  
 That shal ye fynden in me al my lif;  
 N' y wol nat, certein, breken youre defence;  
 1300 And if I do, present or in absence,

For love of God, lat sle me with the dede,  
 If that it like unto youre wommanhede."  
 "Iwys," quod she, "myn owen hertes list,  
 My ground of ese, and al myn herte deere,  
 Gramercy, for on that is al my trist!  
 But lat us falle away fro this matere,  
 For it suffiseth, this that seyde is heere,  
 And at o word, withouten repentaunce,  
 Welcome, my knyght, my pees, my suffisaunce!"  
 1310 Of hire delit or joies oon the leeste  
 Were impossible to my wit to seye;  
 But juggeth ye that han ben at the feste  
 Of swich gladnesse, if that hem liste pleye!  
 I kan namore, but thus thise ilke tweye  
 That nyght, bitwixen drede and sikernesse,  
 Felten in love the grete worthynesse.  
 O blisful nyght, of hem so longe isought,  
 How blithe unto hem bothe two thow weere!  
 Why nad I swich oon with my soule ybought,  
 1320 Ye, or the leeste joie that was there?  
 Away, thow foule daunger and thow feere,  
 And lat hem in this hevene blisse dwelle,  
 That is so heigh that al ne kan I telle!  
 But sooth is, though I kan nat tellen al,  
 As kan myn auctour, of his excellence,  
 Yet have I seyde, and God tofore, and shal  
 In every thyng, al holly his sentence;  
 And if that ich, at Loves reverence,  
 Have any word in ech for the beste,  
 1330 Doth therewithal right as youreselven leste.  
 For myne wordes, heere and every part,  
 I speke hem alle under correccioun  
 Of yow that felyng han in loves art,  
 And putte it al in youre discrecioun  
 To encesse or maken dymynucioun  
 Of my langage, and that I yow biseche.  
 But now to purpos of my rather speche.  
 Thise ilke two, that ben in armes laft,  
 So loth to hem asonder gon it were,  
 1340 That ech from other wenden ben biraft,  
 Or elles -- lo, this was hir mooste feere --  
 That al this thyng but nyce dremes were;

For which ful ofte ech of hem seyde, "O swete,  
Clippe ich yow thus, or elles I it meete?"  
And Lord! So he gan goodly on hire se  
That nevere his look ne bleynte from hire face,  
And seyde, "O deere herte, may it be  
That it be soth, that ye ben in this place?"  
"Yee, herte myn, God thank I of his grace,"  
1350 Quod tho Criseyde, and therwithal hym kiste,  
That where his spirit was, for joie he nyste.  
This Troilus ful ofte hire eyen two  
Gan for to kisse, and seyde, "O eyen clere,  
It weren ye that wroughte me swich wo,  
Ye humble nettes of my lady deere!  
Though ther be mercy writen in youre cheere,  
God woot, the text ful hard is, soth, to fynde!  
How koude ye withouten bond me bynde?"  
Therwith he gan hire faste in armes take,  
1360 And wel a thousand tymes gan he syke --  
Naught swiche sorwfull sikes as men make  
For wo, or elles when that folk ben sike,  
But esy sykes, swiche as ben to like,  
That shewed his affeccoun withinne;  
Of swiche sikes koude he nought bilynne.  
Soone after this they spake of sondry thynges,  
As fel to purpos of this aventure,  
And pleyinge entrechaungen hire rynges,  
Of whiche I kan nought tellen no scripture;  
1370 But wel I woot, a broche, gold and asure,  
In which a ruby set was lik an herte,  
Criseyde hym yaf, and stak it on his sherte.  
Lord, trowe ye a coveytous or a wrecche,  
That blameth love and halt of it despit,  
That of tho pens that he kan mokre and kecche  
Was evere yit yyeven hym swich delit  
As is in love, in o poynt, in som plit?  
Nay, douteles, for also God me save,  
So perfit joie may no nygard have.  
1380 They wol seyn "Yis," but Lord, so they lye,  
Tho besy wrecches, ful of wo and drede!  
Thei callen love a woodnesse or folie,  
But it shall falle hem as I shal yow rede:  
They shal forgon the white and ek the rede,

And lyve in wo, ther God yeve hem meschaunce,  
And every love in his trouthe avaunce!  
As wolde God tho wrecches that dispise  
Servise of love hadde erys also longe  
As hadde Mida, ful of coveytise,  
1390 And therto dronken hadde as hoot and stronge  
As Crassus did for his affectis wronge,  
To techen hem that they ben in the vice,  
And loveres nought, although they holde hem nyce.  
Thise ilke two of whom that I yow seye,  
Whan that hire hertes wel assured were,  
Tho gonne they to speken and to pleye,  
And ek rehercen how, and whan, and where  
Thei knewe hem first, and every wo and feere  
That passed was; but al swich hevynesse --  
1400 I thank it God -- was torned to gladnesse.  
And evere mo, when that hem fel to speke  
Of any wo of swich a tyme agoon,  
With kysyng al that tale sholde breke  
And fallen in a newe joye anoon;  
And diden al hire myght, syn they were oon,  
For to recoveren blisse and ben at eise,  
And passed wo with joie contrepeise.  
Resoun wol nought that I speke of slep,  
For it acordeth nought to my matere.  
1410 God woot, they took of that ful litel kep!  
But lest this nyght, that was to hem so deere,  
Ne sholde in veyn escape in no manere,  
It was byset in joie and bisynesse  
Of al that souneth into gentillesse.  
But whan the cok, comune astrologer,  
Gan on his brest to bete and after crowe,  
And Lucyfer, the dayes messenger,  
Gan for to rise and out hire bemes throwe,  
And estward roos -- to hym that koude it knowe --  
1420 Fortuna Major, that anoon Criseyde,  
With herte soor, to Troilus thus seyde:  
"Myn hertes lif, my trist, al my plesaunce,  
That I was born, alas, what me is wo,  
That day of us moot make disseveraunce!  
For tyme it is to ryse and hennes go,  
Or ellis I am lost for evere mo!

O nyght, allas, why nyltow over us hove  
As longe as whan Almena lay by Jove?  
"O blake nyght, as folk in bokes rede,  
1430 That shapen art by God this world to hide  
At certeyn tymes wyth thi derke wede,  
That under that men myghte in reste abide,  
Wel oughten bestes pleyne and folk the chide,  
That there as day wyth labour wolde us breste,  
That thow thus fleest, and deynest us nought reste.  
"Thow doost, allas, to shortly thyn office,  
Thow racle nyght! Ther God, maker of kynde,  
The, for thyn haste and thyn unkynde vice,  
So faste ay to oure hemysperie bynde  
1440 That nevere more under the ground thow wynde!  
For now, for thow so hiest out of Troie,  
Have I forgon thus hastili my joie!"  
This Troilus, that with tho wordes felte,  
As thoughte hym tho, for pietous distresse  
The bloody teris from his herte melte,  
As he that nevere yet swich hevynesse  
Assayed hadde, out of so gret gladnesse,  
Gan therwithal Criseyde, his lady deere,  
In armes streyne, and seyde in this manere:  
1450 "O cruel day, accusour of the joie  
That nyght and love han stole and faste iwryen,  
Acorsed be thi comyng into Troye,  
For every bore hath oon of thi bryghte yen!  
Envyous day, what list the so to spien?  
What hastow lost? Why sekestow this place?  
Ther God thi light so quenche, for his grace!  
"Allas, what have thise loveris the agylt,  
Dispitous day? Thyn be the peyne of helle!  
For many a love-re hastow slayn, and wilt;  
1460 Thy pouryng in wol nowher lat hem dwelle.  
What profrestow thi light here for to selle?  
Go selle it hem that smale selys grave;  
We wol the nought; us nedeth no day have."  
And ek the sonne, Titan, gan he chide,  
And seyde, "O fool, wel may men the dispise,  
That hast the dawyng al nyght by thi syde,  
And suffrest hire so soone up fro the rise  
For to disese loveris in this wyse.

What, holde youre bed ther, thow, and ek thi Morwe!

1470 I bidde God, so yeve yow bothe sorwe!"

Therwith ful soore he syghte, and thus he seyde:

"My lady right, and of my wele or wo

The welle and roote, O goodly myn Criseyde,

And shal I rise, alas, and shal I so?

Now fele I that myn herte moot a-two,

For how sholde I my lif an houre save,

Syn that with yow is al the lif ich have?

"What shal I don? For, certes, I not how,

Ne whan, alas, I shal the tyme see

1480 That in this plit I may ben eft with yow;

And of my lif, God woot how that shal be,

Syn that desir right now so streyneth me

That I am ded anon, but I retourne.

How sholde I longe, alas, fro yow sojourne?

"But natheles, myn owen lady bright,

Were it so that I wiste outrely

That I, youre humble servant and youre knyght,

Were in youre herte iset so fermely

As ye in myn -- the which thyng, trewely,

1490 Me levere were than thise worldes tweyne --

Yet sholde I bet enduren al my peyne."

To that Criseyde answerde right anon,

And with a sik she seyde, "O herte deere,

The game, ywys, so ferforth now is gon

That first shal Phebus fallen fro his speere,

And everich egle ben the dowves feere,

And everich roche out of his place sterte,

Er Troilus oute of Criseydes herte.

"Ye ben so depe in-with myn herte grave,

1500 That, though I wolde it torne out of my thought,

As wisly verray God my soule save,

To dyen in the peyne, I koude nought.

And, for the love of God that us hath wrought,

Lat in youre brayn non other fantasie

So crepe that it cause me to dye!

"And that ye me wolde han as faste in mynde

As I have yow, that wolde I yow biseche;

And if I wiste sothly that to fynde,

God myghte nought a poynt my joies eche.

1510 But herte myn, withouten more speche,



Beth to me trewe, or ellis were it routhe,  
For I am thyn, by God and by my trouthe!  
"Beth glad, forthy, and lyve in sikernesse!  
Thus seyde I nevere er this, ne shal to mo;  
And if to yow it were a gret gladnesse  
To torne ayeyn soone after that ye go,  
As fayn wolde I as ye that it were so,  
As wisly God myn herte brynge at reste!"  
And hym in armes tok, and ofte keste.  
1520 Agayns his wil, sith it mot nedes be,  
This Troilus up ros, and faste hym cledde,  
And in his armes took his lady free  
An hondred tyme, and on his wey hym spedde;  
And with swich voys as though his herte bledde,  
He seyde, "Farwel, dere herte swete;  
Ther God us graunte sownde and soone to mete!"  
To which no word for sorwe she answerde,  
So soore gan his partyng hire distreyne;  
And Troilus unto his paleys ferde,  
1530 As wo-bygon as she was, soth to seyne.  
So harde hym wrong of sharp desir the peyne  
For to ben eft there he was in plesaunce,  
That it may nevere out of his remembraunce.  
Retorned to his real paleys soone,  
He softe into his bed gan for to slynke,  
To slepe longe, as he was wont to doone.  
But al for nought; he may wel ligge and wynke,  
But slep ne may ther in his herte synke,  
Thynkyng how she for whom desir hym brende  
1540 A thousand fold was worth more than he wende.  
And in his thought gan up and down to wynde  
Hire wordes alle, and every countenaunce,  
And fermely impressen in his mynde  
The leeste point that to him was plesaunce;  
And verraylich of thilke remembraunce  
Desir al newe hym brende, and lust to brede  
Gan more than erst, and yet took he non hede.  
Criseyde also, right in the same wyse,  
Of Troilus gan in hire herte shette  
1550 His worthynesse, his lust, his dedes wise,  
His gentillesse, and how she with hym mette,  
Thonkyng Love he so wel hire bisette,

Desiryng eft to han hire herte deere  
In swich a plit, she dorste make hym cheere.  
Pandare, o-morwe, which that comen was  
Unto his nece and gan hire faire grete,  
Seyde, "Al this nyght so reyned it, allas,  
That al my drede is that ye, nece swete,  
Han litel laiser had to slepe and mete.  
1560 Al nyght," quod he, "hath reyn so do me wake,  
That som of us, I trowe, hire hedes ake."  
And ner he com, and seyde, "How stant it now  
This mury morwe? Nece, how kan ye fare?"  
Criseyde answerde, "Nevere the bet for yow,  
Fox that ye ben! God yeve youre herte kare!  
God help me so, ye caused al this fare,  
Trowe I," quod she, "for al youre wordes white.  
O, whoso seeth yow knoweth yow ful lite."  
With that she gan hire face for to wrye  
1570 With the shete, and wax for shame al reed;  
And Pandarus gan under for to prie,  
And seyde, "Nece, if that I shal be ded,  
Have here a swerd and smyteth of myn hed!"  
With that his arm al sodeynly he thriste  
Under hire nekke, and at the laste hire kyste.  
I passe al that which chargeth nought to seye.  
What! God foryaf his deth, and she al so  
Foryaf, and with here uncle gan to pleye,  
For other cause was ther noon than so.  
1580 But of this thing right to the effect to go:  
Whan tyme was, hom til here hous she wente,  
And Pandarus hath fully his entente.  
Now torne we ayeyn to Troilus,  
That resteles ful longe abedde lay,  
And pryvely sente after Pandarus,  
To hym to com in al the haste he may.  
He com anon -- nought ones seyde he nay --  
And Troilus ful sobrely he grette,  
And down upon his beddes syde hym sette.  
1590 This Troilus, with al th' affeccoun  
Of frendes love that herte may devyse,  
To Pandarus on knowes fil adown,  
And er that he wolde of the place arise  
He gan hym thonken in his beste wise

An hondred sythe, and gan the tyme blesse  
That he was born, to brynge hym fro destresse.  
He seyde, "O frend of frendes the alderbeste  
That evere was, the sothe for to telle,  
Thow hast in hevene ybrought my soule at reste  
1600 Fro Flegitoun, the fery flood of helle,  
That, though I myght a thousand tymes selle  
Upon a day my lif in thi servise,  
It myghte naught a moote in that suffise.  
"The sonne, which that al the world may se,  
Saugh nevere yet my lif, that dar I leye,  
So inly fair and goodly as is she  
Whos I am al, and shal, tyl that I deye.  
And that I thus am hires, dar I seye,  
That thanked be the heighe worthynesse  
1610 Of Love, and ek thi kynde bysynesse.  
"Thus hastow me no litel thing yyive,  
For which to the obliged be for ay  
My lif. And whi? For thorough thyn help I lyve,  
Or elles ded hadde I ben many a day."  
And with that word down in his bed he lay,  
And Pandarus ful sobrelly hym herde  
Tyl al was seyde, and than he thus answerde:  
"My deere frend, if I have don for the  
In any cas, God wot, it is me lief,  
1620 And am as glad as man may of it be,  
God help me so; but tak now nat a-grief  
That I shal seyn: be war of this meschief,  
That, there as thow now brought art in thy blisse,  
That thow thiself ne cause it nat to misse.  
"For of fortunes sharpe adversitee  
The worste kynde of infortune is this,  
A man to han ben in prosperitee,  
And it remembren whan it passed is.  
Th' art wis ynough; forthi do nat amys:  
1630 Be naught to rakel, theigh thow sitte warme,  
For if thow be, certeyn it wol the harme.  
"Thow art at ese, and hold the wel therinne;  
For also seur as reed is every fir,  
As gret a craft is kepe wel as wyne.  
Bridle alwey wel thi speche and thi desir,  
For worldly joie halt nought but by a wir.

That preveth wel, it brest al day so ofte;  
 Forthi nede is to werken with it softe."  
 Quod Troilus, "I hope, and God toforn,  
 1640 My deere frend, that I shal so me beere  
 That in my gylt ther shal nothyng be lorn,  
 N' y nyl nought racle as for to greven heere.  
 It nedeth naught this matere ofte stere;  
 For wystemyn myn herte wel, Pandare,  
 God woot, of this thow woldest litel care."  
 Tho gan he telle hym of his glade nyght,  
 And wherof first his herte dred, and how,  
 And seyde, "Frend, as I am trewe knyght,  
 And by that feyth I shal to God and yow,  
 1650 I hadde it nevere half so hote as now;  
 And ay the more that desir me biteth  
 To love hire best, the more it me deliteth.  
 "I not myself naught wisly what it is,  
 But now I feelee a newe qualitee --  
 Yee, al another than I dide er this."  
 Pandare answerd, and seyde thus, that "he  
 That ones may in hevene blisse be,  
 He feleth other weyes, dar I leye,  
 Than thilke tyme he first herde of it seye."  
 1660 This is o word for al: this Troilus  
 Was nevere ful to speke of this matere,  
 And for to preisen unto Pandarus  
 The bounte of his righte lady deere,  
 And Pandarus to thanke and maken cheere.  
 This tale ay was span-newe to bygynne,  
 Til that the nyght departed hem atwynne.  
 Soon after this, for that Fortune it wolde,  
 Icomen was the blisful tyme swete  
 That Troilus was warned that he sholde,  
 1670 There he was erst, Criseyde his lady mete,  
 For which he felte his herte in joie flete  
 And feithfully gan alle the goddes herie.  
 And lat se now if that he kan be merie!  
 And holden was the forme and al the wise  
 Of hire commyng, and of his also,  
 As it was erst, which nedeth nought devyse.  
 But pleyntly to th' effect right for to go:  
 In joie and suerte Pandarus hem two

Abedde brought, whan that hem bothe leste,  
1680 And thus they ben in quyete and in reste.  
Nought nedeth it to yow, syn they ben met,  
To axe at me if that they blithe were;  
For if it erst was wel, tho was it bet  
A thousand fold; this nedeth nought enquire.  
Ago was every sorwe and every feere;  
And bothe, ywys, they hadde, and so they wende,  
As muche joie as herte may comprende.  
This is no litel thyng of for to seye;  
This passeth every wit for to devyse;  
1690 For ech of hem gan otheres lust obeye.  
Felicite, which that thise clerkes wise  
Comenden so, ne may nought here suffise;  
This joie may nought writen be with inke;  
This passeth al that herte may bythynke.  
But cruel day -- so wailaway the stounde! --  
Gan for t' aproche, as they by sygnes knewe,  
For which hem thoughte feelen dethis wownde.  
So wo was hem that chaungen gan hire hewe,  
And day they gonnen to despise al newe,  
1700 Callyng it traitour, envyous, and worse,  
And bitterly the dayes light thei corse.  
Quod Troilus, "Allas, now am I war  
That Piros and tho swifte steedes thre,  
Which that drawn forth the sonnes char,  
Han gon som bi-path in dispit of me;  
That maketh it so soone day to be;  
And for the sonne hym hasteth thus to rise,  
Ne shal I nevere don hire sacrifise."  
But nedes day departe hem moste soone,  
1710 And whan hire speche don was and hire cheere,  
They twynne anon, as they were wont to doone,  
And setten tyme of metyng eft yfeere;  
And many a nyght they wroughte in this manere,  
And thus Fortune a tyme ledde in joie  
Criseyde and ek this kynges sone of Troie.  
In suffisaunce, in blisse, and in singynges,  
This Troilus gan al his lif to lede.  
He spendeth, jousteth, maketh festeynges;  
He yeveth frely ofte, and chaungeth wede,  
1720 And held aboute hym alwey, out of drede,

A world of folk, as com hym wel of kynde,  
 The fresshest and the beste he koude fynde;  
 That swich a vois was of hym and a stevene,  
 Thorughout the world, of honour and largesse,  
 That it up rong unto the yate of hevene;  
 And, as in love, he was in swich gladnesse  
 That in his herte he demed, as I gesse,  
 That ther nys lovere in this world at ese  
 So wel as he; and thus gan love hym plese.

1730 The goodlihede or beaute which that kynde  
 In any other lady hadde yset  
 Kan nought the montance of a knotte unbynde  
 Aboute his herte of al Criseydes net.

He was so narwe ymasked and yknet,  
 That it undon on any manere syde,  
 That nyl naught ben, for aught that may bitide.

And by the hond ful ofte he wolde take  
 This Pandarus, and into gardyn lede,  
 And swich a feste and swich a proces make

1740 Hym of Criseyde, and of hire wommanhede,  
 And of hire beaute, that withouten drede  
 It was an hevene his wordes for to here;  
 And thanne he wolde synge in this manere:

"Love, that of erthe and se hath governaunce,  
 Love, that his hestes hath in hevene hye,  
 Love, that with an holsom alliaunce  
 Halt peples joyned, as hym lest hem gye,

Love, that knetteth lawe of compaignie,  
 And couples doth in vertu for to dwelle,  
 1750 Bynd this acord, that I have told and telle.

"That, that the world with feith which that is stable  
 Diverseth so his stowndes concordynge,  
 That elementz that ben so discordable

Holden a bond perpetuely durynge,  
 That Phebus mote his rosy day forth brynge,  
 And that the mone hath lordshipe over the nyghtes:  
 Al this doth Love, ay heried be his myghtes! --

"That, that the se, that gredy is to flowen,  
 Constreyneth to a certeyn ende so

1760 His flodes that so fiersly they ne growen  
 To drenchen erthe and al for evere mo;  
 And if that Love aught lete his bridel go,

Al that now loveth asondre sholde lepe,  
And lost were al that Love halt now to-hepe.  
"So wolde God, that auctour is of kynde,  
That with his bond Love of his vertu liste  
To cerclen hertes alle and faste bynde,  
That from his bond no wight the wey out wiste;  
And hertes colde, hem wolde I that he twiste  
1770 To make hem love, and that hem liste ay rewte  
On hertes sore, and kepe hem that ben trewe!"  
In alle nedes for the townes werre  
He was, and ay, the first in armes dyght,  
And certeynly, but if that bokes erre,  
Save Ector most ydred of any wight;  
And this encrees of hardynesse and myght  
Com hym of love, his ladies thank to wyne,  
That altered his spirit so withinne.  
In tyme of trewe, on haukyng wolde he ride,  
1780 Or elles honte boor, beer, or lyoun;  
The smale bestes leet he gon biside.  
And whan that he com ridyng into town,  
Ful ofte his lady from hire wyndow down,  
As fressh as faukoun comen out of muwe,  
Ful redy was hym goodly to saluwe.  
And moost of love and vertu was his speche,  
And in despit hadde alle wrecchednesse;  
And douteles, no nede was hym biseche  
To honouren hem that hadde worthynesse,  
1790 And esen hem that weren in destresse;  
And glad was he if any wyght wel ferde,  
That love was, whan he it wiste or herde.  
For soth to seyne, he lost held every wyght,  
But if he were in Loves heigh servise --  
I mene folk that oughte it ben of right.  
And over al this, so wel koude he devyse  
Of sentement and in so unkouth wise  
Al his array, that every love thoughte  
That al was wel, what so he seyde or wroughte.  
1800 And though that he be come of blood roial,  
Hym liste of pride at no wight for to chace;  
Benigne he was to ech in general,  
For which he gat hym thank in every place.  
Thus wolde Love -- yheried be his grace! --

That Pride, Envye, Ire, and Avarice  
He gan to fle, and everich other vice.  
Thow lady bryght, the doughter to Dyone,  
Thy blynde and wynged sone ek, daun Cupide,  
Yee sustren nyne ek, that by Elicone  
1810 In hil Pernaso listen for t' abide,  
That ye thus fer han deynded me to gyde --  
I kan namore, but syn that ye wol wende,  
Ye heried ben for ay withouten ende!  
Thorugh yow have I seyde fully in my song  
Th' effect and joie of Troilus servise,  
Al be that ther was som disese among,  
As to myn auctour listeth to devise.  
My thridde bok now ende ich in this wyse,  
And Troilus in lust and in quiete  
1820 Is with Criseyde, his owen herte swete.





## BOOK 4

But al to litel, weylaway the whyle,  
 Lasteth swich joie, ythonked be Fortune,  
 That semeth trewest whan she wol bygyle  
 And kan to fooles so hire song entune  
 That she hem hent and blent, traitour comune!  
 And whan a wight is from hire whiel ythrowe,  
 Than laugheth she, and maketh hym the mowe.  
 From Troilus she gan hire brighte face  
 Away to writhe, and tok of hym non heede,  
 10 But caste hym clene out of his lady grace,  
 And on hire whiel she sette up Diomedé;  
 For which myn herte right now gynneth blede,  
 And now my penne, alas, with which I write,  
 Quaketh for drede of that I moste endite.  
 For how Criseyde Troilus forsook --  
 Or at the leeste, how that she was unkynde --  
 Moot hennesforth ben matere of my book,  
 As writen folk thorough which it is in mynde.  
 Allas, that they sholde evere cause fynde  
 20 To speke hire harm! And if they on hire lye,  
 Iwis, hemself sholde han the vilanye.  
 O ye Herynes, Nyghtes doughtren thre,  
 That endeles compleignen evere in pyne,  
 Megera, Alete, and ek Thesiphone,  
 Thow cruel Mars ek, fader to Quyryne,  
 This ilke ferthe book me helpeth fyne,  
 So that the losse of lyf and love yfeere  
 Of Troilus be fully shewed heere.  
 Liggyng in oost, as I have seyde er this,  
 30 The Grekys stronge aboute Troie town,  
 Byfel that, whan that Phebus shynyng is  
 Upon the brest of Hercules lyoun,  
 That Ector, with ful many a bold baroun,  
 Caste on a day with Grekis for to fighte,  
 As he was wont, to greve hem what he myghte.  
 Not I how longe or short it was bitwene  
 This purpos and that day they issen mente,  
 But on a day, wel armed, brighte, and shene,  
 Ector and many a worthi wight out wente,  
 40 With spere in honde and bigge bowes bente;

And in the berd, withouten lenger lette,  
Hire fomen in the feld hem faste mette.  
The longe day, with speres sharpe igrounde,  
With arwes, dartes, swerdes, maces felle,  
They fighte and bringen hors and man to grounde,  
And with hire axes out the braynes quelle.  
But in the laste shour, soth for to telle,  
The folk of Troie hemselven so mysledden  
That with the worse at nyght homward they fledden.  
50 At which day was taken Antenore,  
Maugre Polydamas or Monesteo,  
Santippe, Sarpedoun, Polynestore,  
Polite, or ek the Trojan daun Rupheo,  
And other lasse folk as Phebuseo;  
So that, for harm, that day the folk of Troie  
Dredden to lese a gret part of hire joie.  
Of Priamus was yeve, at Grek requeste,  
A tyme of trewe, and tho they gonnen trete  
Hire prisoners to chaungen, meste and leste,  
60 And for the surplus yeven sommes grete.  
This thing anon was couth in every strete,  
Bothe in th' assege, in town, and everywhere,  
And with the firste it com to Calkas ere.  
Whan Calkas knew this tretis sholde holde,  
In consistorie among the Grekes soone  
He gan in thringe forth with lordes olde,  
And sette hym there as he was wont to doone;  
And with a chaunged face hem bad a boone,  
For love of God, to don that reverence,  
70 To stynte noyse and yeve hym audience.  
Than seyde he thus: "Lo, lordes myn, ich was  
Troian, as it is knowen out of drede;  
And, if that yow remembre, I am Calkas,  
That alderfirst yaf comfort to youre nede,  
And tolde wel how that ye shulden spede.  
For dredeles, thorough yow shal in a stownde  
Ben Troie ybrend and beten down to grownde.  
"And in what forme, or in what manere wise,  
This town to shende, and al youre lust t' acheve,  
80 Ye han er this wel herd me yow devyse;  
This knowe ye, my lordes, as I leve.  
And for the Grekis weren me so leeve,

I com myself, in my propre persone,  
To teche in this how yow was best to doone.  
"Havyng unto my tresor ne my rente  
Right no resport, to respect of youre ese,  
Thus al my good I lefte and to yow wente,  
Wenyng in this yow lordes for to plese.  
But al that los ne doth me no disese.  
90 I vouchesauf, as wisly have I joie,  
For yow to lese al that I have in Troie,  
"Save of a doughter that I lefte, alas,  
Slepyng at hom, whanne out of Troie I sterte.  
O sterne, O cruel fader that I was!  
How myghte I have in that so hard an herte?  
Allas, I ne hadde ibrought hire in hire sherte!  
For sorwe of which I wol nought lyve to-morwe,  
But if ye lordes rewe upon my sorwe.  
"For by that cause I say no tyme er now  
100 Hire to deliver, ich holden have my pees;  
But now or never, if that it like yow,  
I may hire have right soone, douteles.  
O help and grace amonges al this prees!  
Rewe on this olde caytyf in destresse,  
Syn I thorough yow have al this hevynesse.  
"Ye have now kaught and fetered in prisoun  
Troians ynowe, and if youre willes be,  
My child with oon may han redempcioun;  
Now for the love of God and of bounte,  
110 Oon of so fele, alas, so yive hym me!  
What nede were it this preiere for to werne,  
Syn ye shul bothe han folk and town as yerne?  
"On peril of my lif, I shal nat lye;  
Appollo hath me told it feithfully;  
I have ek founde it be astronomye,  
By sort, and by augurye ek, trewely,  
And dar wel say, the tyme is faste by  
That fire and flaumbe on al the town shal sprede,  
And thus shal Troie torne to asshen dede.  
120 "For certain, Phebus and Neptunus bothe,  
That makeden the walles of the town,  
Ben with the folk of Troie alwey so wrothe  
That they wol brynge it to confusioun,  
Right in despit of kyng Lameadoun;

Bycause he nolde payen hem here hire,  
The town of Troie shal ben set on-fire."  
Tellyng his tale alwey, this olde greye,  
Humble in his speche and in his lokyng eke,  
The salte teris from his eyen tweye  
130 Ful faste ronnen down by either cheke.  
So longe he gan of socour hem biseke  
That, for to hele hym of his sorwes soore,  
They yave hym Antenor, withouten moore.  
But who was glad ynough but Calkas tho?  
And of this thyng ful soone his nedes leyde  
On hem that sholden for the tretis go,  
And hem for Antenor ful ofte preyde  
To bryngen hom kyng Toas and Criseyde.  
And whan Priam his save-garde sente,  
140 Th' embassadours to Troie streight they wente.  
The cause itold of hire comyng, the olde  
Priam, the kyng, ful soone in general  
Let her-upon his parlement to holde,  
Of which th' effect rehercen yow I shal.  
Th' embassadours ben answerd for fynal;  
Th' eschaunge of prisoners and al this nede  
Hem liketh wel, and forth in they procede.  
This Troilus was present in the place  
Whan axed was for Antenor Criseyde,  
150 For which ful soone chaungen gan his face,  
As he that with tho wordes wel neigh deyde.  
But natheles he no word to it seyde,  
Lest men sholde his affeccioun espye;  
With mannes herte he gan his sorwes drye,  
And ful of angwissh and of grisly drede  
Abod what lordes wolde unto it seye;  
And if they wolde graunte -- as God forbede --  
Th' eschaunge of hire, than thoughte he thynges tweye:  
First, how to save hire honour, and what weye  
160 He myghte best th' eschaunge of hire withstonde.  
Ful faste he caste how al this myghte stonde.  
Love hym made al prest to don hire byde,  
And rather dyen than she sholde go;  
But Resoun seyde hym, on that other syde,  
"Withouten assent of hire ne do nat so,  
Lest for thi werk she wolde be thy fo,

And seyn that thorough thy medlynge is iblowe  
Youre bother love, ther it was erst unknowe."  
For which he gan deliberen, for the beste,  
170 That though the lordes wolde that she wente,  
He wolde lat hem graunte what hem leste,  
And telle his lady first what that they mente;  
And whan that she hadde seyde hym hire entente,  
Therafter wolde he werken also blyve,  
Theigh al the world ayeyn it wolde stryve.  
Ector, which that wel the Grekis herde,  
For Antenor how they wolde han Criseyde,  
Gan it withstonde, and sobrelly answerde:  
"Syres, she nys no prisonere," he seyde;  
180 "I not on yow who that this charge leyde,  
But, on my part, ye may eftsone hem telle,  
We usen here no wommen for to selle."  
The noyse of peple up stirte thanne at ones,  
As breme as blase of straw iset on-fire;  
For infortune it wolde, for the nones,  
They sholden hire confusioun desire.  
"Ector," quod they, "what goost may yow enspyre  
This womman thus to shilde and don us leese  
Daun Antenor -- a wrong wey now ye chese --  
190 "That is so wys and ek so bold baroun?  
And we han nede to folk, as men may se.  
He is ek oon the grettest of this town.  
O Ector, lat tho fantasies be!  
O kyng Priam," quod they, "thus sygge we,  
That al oure vois is to forgon Criseyde."  
And to deliveren Antenor they preyde.  
O Juvenal, lord, trewe is thy sentence,  
That litel wyten folk what is to yerne,  
That they ne fynde in hire desir offence;  
200 For cloude of errour let hem to discernen  
What best is. And lo, here ensample as yerne:  
This folk desiren now deliveraunce  
Of Antenor, that brought hem to meschaunce,  
For he was after traitour to the town  
Of Troye. Allas, they quytte hym out to rathe!  
O nyce world, lo, thy discrecioun!  
Criseyde, which that nevere dide hem scathe,  
Shal now no lenger in hire blisse bathe;

But Antenor, he shal com hom to towne,  
210 And she shal out; thus seyden here and howne.  
For which delibered was by parlement  
For Antenor to yelden out Criseyde,  
And it pronounced by the president,  
Altheigh that Ector "nay" ful ofte preyde.  
And fynaly, what wight that it withseyde,  
It was for nought; it moste ben and sholde,  
For substaunce of the parlement it wolde.  
Departed out of parlement echone,  
This Troilus, withouten wordes mo,  
220 Unto his chambre spedde hym faste allone,  
But if it were a man of his or two  
The which he bad out faste for to go  
Bycause he wolde slepen, as he seyde,  
And hastily upon his bed hym leyde.  
And as in wynter leves ben biraft,  
Ech after other, til the tree be bare,  
So that ther nys but bark and braunche ilaft,  
Lith Troilus, byraft of ech welfare,  
Ibounden in the blake bark of care,  
230 Disposed wood out of his wit to breyde,  
So sore hym sat the chaungynge of Criseyde.  
He rist hym up, and every dore he shette,  
And wyndow ek, and tho this sorwful man  
Upon his beddes syde adown hym sette,  
Ful lik a ded ymage, pale and wan;  
And in his brest the heped wo bygan  
Out breste, and he to werken in this wise  
In his woodnesse, as I shal yow devyse.  
Right as the wylde bole bygynneth sprynge,  
240 Now her, now ther, idarted to the herte,  
And of his deth roreth in compleynyng,  
Right so gan he aboute the chaumbre sterte,  
Smytyng his brest ay with his fistes smerte;  
His hed to the wal, his body to the grounde  
Ful ofte he swapte, hymselfen to confounde.  
His eyen two, for piete of herte,  
Out stremeden as swifte welles tweye;  
The heighe sobbes of his sorwes smerte  
His speche hym refte; unnethes myghte he seye,  
250 "O deth, alas, why nyltow do me deye?

Acorsed be that day which that Nature  
 Shop me to ben a lyves creature!"  
 But after, whan the furie and al the rage,  
 Which that his herte twiste and faste threste,  
 By lengthe of tyme somewhat gan aswage,  
 Upon his bed he leyde hym down to reste.  
 But tho bygonne his teeris more out breste,  
 That wonder is the body may suffise  
 To half this wo which that I yow devyse.  
 260 Than seyde he thus: "Fortune, allas the while!  
 What have I don? What have I thus agylt?  
 How myghtestow for rowthe me bygile?  
 Is ther no grace, and shal I thus be spilt?  
 Shal thus Creiseyde away, for that thow wilt?  
 Allas, how maistow in thyn herte fynde  
 To ben to me thus cruwel and unkynde?  
 "Have I the nought honoured al my lyve,  
 As thow wel woost, above the goddes alle?  
 Whi wiltow me fro joie thus deprive?  
 270 O Troilus, what may men now the calle  
 But wrecche of wrecches, out of honour falle  
 Into miserie, in which I wol bewaille  
 Criseyde -- allas! -- til that the breth me faille?  
 "Allas, Fortune, if that my lif in joie  
 Displeased hadde unto thi foule envye,  
 Why ne haddestow my fader, kyng of Troye,  
 Byraft the lif, or don my bretheren dye,  
 Or slayn myself, that thus compleyne and crye --  
 I, combre-world, that may of nothyng serve,  
 280 But evere dye and nevere fulli sterve.  
 "If that Criseyde allone were me laft,  
 Nought roughte I whiderward thow woldest me steere;  
 And hire, allas, than hastow me biraft.  
 But everemore, lo, this is thi manere,  
 To reve a wight that most is to hym deere,  
 To preve in that thi gerful violence.  
 Thus am I lost; ther helpeth no diffence.  
 "O verrey lord, O Love! O god, allas!  
 That knowest best myn herte and al my thought,  
 290 What shal my sorwful lif don in this cas,  
 If I forgo that I so deere have bought?  
 Syn ye Criseyde and me han fully brought

Into youre grace, and bothe oure hertes seled,  
How may ye suffre, alas, it be repeled?

"What shal I don? I shal, while I may dure  
On lyve in torment and in cruwel peyne  
This infortune or this disaventure,  
Allone as I was born, iwys, compleyne;  
Ne nevere wol I seen it shyne or reyne,  
300 But ende I wol, as Edippe, in derknesse  
My sorwful lif, and dyen in distresse.

"O wery goost, that errest to and fro,  
Why nyltow fleen out of the wofulleste  
Body that evere myghte on grounde go?  
O soule, lurkyng in this wo, unneste,  
Fle forth out of myn herte, and lat it breste,  
And folowe alwey Criseyde, thi lady dere.  
Thi righte place is now no lenger here.

"O woful eyen two, syn youre disport  
310 Was al to sen Criseydes eyen brighte,  
What shal ye don but, for my discomfort,  
Stonden for naught, and wepen out youre sighte,  
Syn she is queynt that wont was yow to lighte?  
In vayn fro this forth have ich eyen tweye  
Ifourmed, syn youre vertu is aweye.

"O my Criseyde, O lady sovereigne  
Of thilke woful soule that thus crieth,  
Who shal now yeven comfort to my peyne?  
Allas, no wight. But whan myn herte dieth,  
320 My spirit, which that so unto yow hieth,  
Receyve in gree, for that shal ay yow serve;  
Forthi no fors is, though the body sterve.

"O ye loveris, that heigh upon the whiel  
Ben set of Fortune, in good aventure,  
God leve that ye fynde ay love of stiel,  
And longe mote youre lif in joie endure!  
But whan ye comen by my sepulture,  
Remembreth that youre felawe resteth there;  
For I loved ek, though ich unworthi were.

330 "O oold, unholysom, and myslyved man --  
Calkas I mene -- alas, what eiled the  
To ben a Grek, syn thow art born Troian?  
O Calkas, which that wolt my bane be,  
In corsed tyme was thow born for me!



As wolde blisful Jove, for his joie,  
That I the hadde wher I wolde, in Troie!"  
A thousand sikes, hotter than the gleede,  
Out of his brest ech after other wente,  
Medled with pleyntes new, his wo to feede,  
340 For which his woful teris nevere stente;  
And shortly, so his peynes hym torente,  
And wex so mat, that joie nor penaunce  
He feleth non, but lith forth in a traunce.  
Pandare, which that in the parlement  
Hadde herd what every lord and burgeys seyde,  
And how ful graunted was by oon assent  
For Antenor to yelden so Criseyde,  
Gan wel neigh wood out of his wit to breyde,  
So that for wo he nyste what he mente,  
350 But in a rees to Troilus he wente.  
A certeyn knyght that for the tyme kepte  
The chambre door undide it hym anon;  
And Pandare, that ful tendreliche wepte,  
Into the derke chambre, as stille as ston,  
Toward the bed gan softly to gon,  
So confus that he nyste what to seye;  
For verray wo his wit was neigh aweye.  
And with his chiere and lokyng al totorn  
For sorwe of this, and with his armes folden,  
360 He stood this woful Troilus byforn,  
And on his pitous face he gan byholden.  
But Lord, so ofte gan his herte colden,  
Seyng his frend in wo, whos hevynesse  
His herte slough, as thoughte hym, for destresse.  
This woful wight, this Troilus, that felte  
His frend Pandare ycomen hym to se,  
Gan as the snow ayeyn the sonne melte;  
For which this sorwful Pandare, of pitee,  
Gan for to wepe as tendreliche as he;  
370 And specheles thus ben thise ilke tweye,  
That neither myghte o word for sorwe seye.  
But at the laste this woful Troilus,  
Neigh ded for smert, gan bresten out to rore,  
And with a sorwful noise he seyde thus,  
Among hise sobbes and his sikes sore:  
"Lo, Pandare, I am ded, withouten more.

Hastow nat herd at parlement," he seyde,  
"For Antenor how lost is my Criseyde?"  
This Pandarus, ful ded and pale of hewe,  
380 Ful pitously answerde and seyde, "Yis!  
As wisly were it fals as it is trewe,  
That I have herd, and woot al how it is.  
O mercy, God, who wolde have trowed this?  
Who wolde have wend that in so litel a throwe  
Fortune oure joie wold han overthrowe?  
"For in this world ther is no creature,  
As to my dom, that ever saugh ruyne  
Straunger than this, thorough cas or aventure.  
But who may al eschue, or al devyne?  
390 Swich is this world! Forthi I thus diffyne:  
Ne trust no wight to fynden in Fortune  
Ay propretee; hire yiftes ben comune.  
"But telle me this: whi thow art now so mad  
To sorwen thus? Whi listow in this wise,  
Syn thi desir al holly hastow had,  
So that, by right, it oughte ynough suffise?  
But I, that nevere felte in my servyse  
A frendly cheere or lokyng of an eye,  
Lat me thus wepe and wailen til I deye.  
400 "And over al this, as thow wel woost thiselve,  
This town is ful of ladys al aboute;  
And, to my doom, fairer than swiche twelve  
As evere she was, shal I fynde in som route --  
Yee, on or two, withouten any doute.  
Forthi be glad, myn owen deere brother!  
If she be lost, we shal recovere an other.  
"What! God forbede alwey that ech plesaunce  
In o thyng were and in non other wight!  
If oon kan synge, an other kan wel daunce;  
410 If this be goodly, she is glad and light;  
And this is fair, and that kan good aright.  
Ech for his vertu holden is for deere,  
Both heroner and faucoun for ryvere.  
"And ek, as writ Zanzis, that was ful wys,  
'The newe love out chaceth ofte the olde';  
And upon newe cas lith newe avys.  
Thenk ek, thi lif to saven artow holde.  
Swich fir, by proces, shal of kynde colde,

For syn it is but casuel plesaunce,  
420 Som cas shal putte it out of remembraunce;  
"For also seur as day comth after nyght,  
The newe love, labour, or oother wo,  
Or elles selde seyng of a wight,  
Don olde affeccious alle over-go.  
And, for thi part, thou shalt have oon of tho  
T' abregge with thi bittre peynes smerte;  
Absence of hire shal dryve hire out of herte."  
Thise wordes seyde he for the nones alle,  
To help his frend, lest he for sorwe deyde;  
430 For douteles, to don his wo to falle,  
He roughte nought what unthrift that he seyde.  
But Troilus, that neigh for sorwe deyde,  
Took litel heede of al that evere he mente --  
Oon ere it herde, at tother out it wente --  
But at the laste answerde, and seyde, "Frend,  
This lechecraft, or heeled thus to be,  
Were wel sitting, if that I were a fend --  
To traysen a wight that trewe is unto me!  
I pray God lat this conseil nevere ythe;  
440 But do me rather sterve anon-right here,  
Er I thus do as thou me woldest leere!  
"She that I serve, iwis, what so thou seye,  
To whom myn herte enhabit is by right,  
Shal han me holly hires til that I deye.  
For Pandarus, syn I have trouthe hire hight,  
I wol nat ben untrew for no wight,  
But as hire man I wol ay lyve and sterve,  
And nevere other creature serve.  
"And ther thou seist thou shalt as faire fynde  
450 As she, lat be; make no comparisoun  
To creature yformed here by kynde!  
O leve Pandare, in conclusioun,  
I wol nat ben of thyn opynyoun  
Touchyng al this. For which I the biseche,  
So hold thi pees; thou sleest me with thi speche!  
"Thou biddest me I shulde love another  
Al fresshly newe, and lat Criseyde go!  
It lith nat in my power, leeve brother;  
And though I myght, I wolde nat do so.  
460 But kanstow playen raket, to and fro,

Nettle in, dok out, now this, now that, Pandare?  
 Now foule falle hire for thi wo that care!  
 "Thow farest ek by me, thow Pandarus,  
 As he that, whan a wight is wo bygon,  
 He cometh to hym a paas and seith right thus:  
 'Thynk nat on smert, and thow shalt fele non.'  
 Thow moost me first transmewen in a ston,  
 And reve me my passiones alle,  
 Er thow so lightly do my wo to falle.  
 470 "The deth may wel out of my brest departe  
 The lif, so longe may this sorwe myne,  
 But fro my soule shal Criseydes darte  
 Out nevere mo; but down with Proserpyne,  
 Whan I am ded, I wol go wone in pyne,  
 And ther I wol eternaly compleyne  
 My wo, and how that twynned be we tweyne.  
 "Thow hast here made an argument for fyn,  
 How that it sholde a lasse peyne be  
 Criseyde to forgon, for she was myn  
 480 And lyved in ese and in felicite.  
 Whi gabbestow, that seydest unto me  
 That 'hym is wors that is fro wele ythrowe,  
 Than he hadde erst noon of that wele yknowe'?  
 "But tel me now, syn that the thynketh so light  
 To changen so in love ay to and fro,  
 Whi hastow nat don bisily thi myght  
 To chaungen hire that doth the al thi wo?  
 Why nyltow lete hire fro thyn herte go?  
 Whi nyltow love an other lady swete,  
 490 That may thyn herte setten in quiete?  
 "If thou hast had in love ay yet myschaunce  
 And kanst it not out of thyn herte dryve,  
 I, that levede yn lust and in plesaunce  
 With here, as mucche as creature on lyve,  
 How sholde I that foryete, and that so blyve?  
 O, where hastow ben hid so longe in muwe,  
 That kanst so wel and formely arguwe?  
 "Nay, God wot, nought worth is al thi red,  
 For which, for what that evere may byfalle,  
 500 Withouten wordes mo, I wol be ded.  
 O deth, that endere art of sorwes alle,  
 Com now, syn I so ofte after the calle;

For sely is that deth, soth for to seyne,  
That, ofte ycleped, cometh and endeth peyne.  
"Wel wot I, whil my lyf was in quyete,  
Er thow me slowe, I wolde have yeven hire;  
But now thi comynge is to me so swete  
That in this world I nothing so desire.  
O deth, syn with this sorwe I am a-fyre,  
510 Thou other do me anoon yn teris drenche,  
Or with thi colde strok myn hete quenche.  
"Syn that thou sleest so fele in sondry wyse  
Ayens hire wil, unpreyed, day and nyght,  
Do me at my requeste this service:  
Delyvere now the world -- so dostow right --  
Of me, that am the wofulleste wyght  
That evere was; for tyme is that I sterve,  
Syn in this world of right nought may I serve."  
This Troylus in teris gan distille,  
520 As licour out of a lambyc ful faste;  
And Pandarus gan holde his tunge stille,  
And to the ground his eyen doun he caste.  
But natheles, thus thought he at the laste:  
"What! Parde, rather than my felawe deye,  
Yet shal I somewhat more unto hym seye."  
And seyde, "Frend, syn thow hast swych distresse,  
And syn the list myn argumentz to blame,  
Why nylt thiselven helpen don redresse  
And with thy manhod letten al this grame?  
530 Go ravysshe here! Ne kanstow nat, for shame?  
And other lat here out of towne fare,  
Or hold here stille, and leve thi nyce fare.  
"Artow in Troie, and hast non hardyment  
To take a womman which that loveth the  
And wolde hireselven ben of thyn assent?  
Now is nat this a nyce vanitee?  
Ris up anon, and lat this wepyng be,  
And kith thow art a man; for in this houre  
I wol ben ded, or she shal bleven oure."  
540 To this answerde hym Troilus ful softe,  
And seyde, "Parde, leve brother deere,  
Al this have I myself yet thought ful ofte,  
And more thyng than thow devysest here.  
But whi this thyng is laft, thow shalt wel here;

And whan thow me hast yeve an audience,  
Therafter maystow telle al thi sentence.  
"First, syn thow woost this town hath al this werre  
For ravysshynge of wommen so by myght,  
It sholde nought be suffred me to erre,  
550 As it stant now, ne don so gret unright.  
I sholde han also blame of every wight,  
My fadres graunt if that I so withstoode,  
Syn she is chaunged for the townes goode.  
"I have ek thought, so it were hire assent,  
To axe hire at my fader, of his grace;  
Than thynke I this were hire accusation,  
Syn wel I woot I may hire nought purchace;  
For syn my fader, in so heigh a place  
As parlement hath hire eschaunge enseled,  
560 He nyl for me his lettre be repeled.  
"Yet drede I moost hire herte to perturbe  
With violence, if I do swich a game;  
For if I wolde it openly desturbe,  
It mooste be disclaundre to hire name.  
And me were levere ded than hire diffame --  
As nolde God but if I sholde have  
Hire honour levere than my lif to save!  
"Thus am I lost, for aught that I kan see.  
For certeyn is, syn that I am hire knyght,  
570 I moste hire honour levere han than me  
In every cas, as love ought of right.  
Thus am I with desir and reson twight:  
Desir for to destourben hire me redeth,  
And reson nyl nat; so myn herte dredeth."  
Thus wepyng that he koude nevere cesse,  
He seyde, "Allas, how shal I, wrecche, fare?  
For wel fele I alwey my love encresse,  
And hope is lasse and lasse alway, Pandare.  
Encressen ek the causes of my care.  
580 So weilaway, whi nyl myn herte breste?  
For, as in love, ther is but litel reste."  
Pandare answerde, "Frend, thow maist, for me,  
Don as the list; but hadde ich it so hoote,  
And thyn estat, she sholde go with me,  
Though al this town cride on this thyng by note.  
I nolde sette at al that noys a grote!

For whan men han wel cryd, than wol they rowne;  
Ek wonder last but nyne nyght nevere in towne.

"Devyne not in resoun ay so depe

590 Ne preciously, but help thiself anon.

Bet is that othere than thiselven wepe,

And namely, syn ye two ben al on,

Ris up, for by myn hed, she shal not goon!

And rather be in blame a lite ifounde

Than sterve here as a gnat, withouten wounde.

"It is no rape, in my dom, ne no vice,

Hire to withholden that ye love moost;

Peraunter she myghte holde the for nyce

To late hire go thus unto the Grekis oost.

600 Thenk ek Fortune, as wel thiselven woost,

Helpeth hardy man unto his enprise,

And weyveth wrecches for hire cowardise.

"And though thy lady wolde a lite hire greve,

Thow shalt thiself thi pees hereafter make;

But as for me, certeyn, I kan nat leve

That she wolde it as now for yvel take.

Whi sholde thanne of ferd thyn herte quake?

Thenk ek how Paris hath, that is thi brother,

A love; and whi shaltow nat have another?

610 "And Troilus, o thyng I dar the swere:

That if Criseyde, which that is thi lief,

Now loveth the as wel as thow dost here,

God help me so, she nyl nat take a-grief,

Theigh thow do boote anon in this meschief;

And if she wilneth fro the for to passe,

Thanne is she fals; so love hire wel the lasse.

"Forthi tak herte, and thynk right as a knyght:

Thorugh love is broken al day every lawe.

Kith now somewhat thi corage and thi myght;

620 Have mercy on thiself for any awe.

Lat nat this wrecched wo thyn herte gnawe,

But manly sette the world on six and sevene;

And if thow deye a martyr, go to hevene!

"I wol myself ben with the at this dede,

Theigh ich and al my kyn upon a stownde

Shulle in a strete as dogges liggen dede,

Thorugh-girt with many a wid and bloody wownde;

In every cas I wol a frend be founde.

And if the list here sterven as a wrecche,  
630 Adieu, the devel spede hym that it recche!"  
This Troilus gan with tho wordes quyken,  
And seyde, "Frend, graunt mercy, ich assente.  
But certeynly thow maist nat so me priken,  
Ne peyne non ne may me so tormente,  
That, for no cas, it is nat myn entente,  
At shorte wordes, though I deyen sholde,  
To ravysshe hire, but if hireself it wolde."  
"Whi, so mene I," quod Pandare, "al this day.  
But telle me thanne, hastow hire wil assayed,  
640 That sorwest thus?" And he answerde hym, "Nay."  
"Wherof artow," quod Pandare, "thanne amayed,  
That nost nat that she wol ben yvele appayed  
To ravysshe hire, syn thow hast nought ben there,  
But if that Jove told it in thyn ere?"  
"Forthi ris up, as nought ne were, anon,  
And wassh thi face, and to the kyng thow wende,  
Or he may wondren whider thow art goon.  
Thow most with wisdom hym and othere blende,  
Or, upon cas, he may after the sende  
650 Er thow be war; and shortly, brother deere,  
Be glad, and lat me werke in this matere,  
"For I shal shape it so, that sikerly  
Thow shalt this nyght som tyme, in som manere,  
Come speken with thi lady pryvely,  
And by hire wordes ek, and by hire cheere,  
Thow shalt ful sone aperceyve and wel here  
Al hire entente, and in this cas the beste.  
And far now wel, for in this point I reste."  
The swifte Fame, which that false thynges  
660 Egal reporteth lik the thynges trewe,  
Was thoroughout Troie yfled with preste wynges  
Fro man to man, and made this tale al newe,  
How Calkas doughter, with hire brighte hewe,  
At parlement, withouten wordes more,  
Ygraunted was in chaunge of Antenore.  
The whiche tale anon-right as Criseyde  
Hadde herd, she, which that of hire fader roughte,  
As in this cas, right nought, ne whan he deyde,  
Ful bisily to Jupiter bisoughte  
670 Yeve hem meschaunce that this tretis broughte;



But shortly, lest thise tales sothe were,  
 She dorst at no wight asken it, for fere.  
 As she that hadde hire herte and al hire mynde  
 On Troilus iset so wonder faste  
 That al this world ne myghte hire love unbynde,  
 Ne Troilus out of hire herte caste,  
 She wol ben his, while that hire lif may laste.  
 And thus she brenneth both in love and drede,  
 So that she nyste what was best to reede.  
 680 But as men seen in towne and al aboute  
 That wommen usen frendes to visite,  
 So to Criseyde of wommen com a route,  
 For pitous joie, and wenden hire delite;  
 And with hire tales, deere ynough a myte,  
 Thise wommen, which that in the cite dwelle,  
 They sette hem down and seyde as I shall telle.  
 Quod first that oon, "I am glad, trewely,  
 Bycause of yow, that shal youre fader see."  
 Another seyde, "Ywis, so nam nat I,  
 690 For al to litel hath she with us be."  
 Quod tho the thridde, "I hope, ywis, that she  
 Shal bryngen us the pees on every syde,  
 That, whan she goth, almyghty God hire gide!"  
 Tho wordes and tho wommanysshe thynges,  
 She herde hem right as though she thennes were;  
 For God it woot, hire herte on othir thyng is.  
 Although the body sat among hem there,  
 Hire advertence is alwey elleswhere,  
 For Troilus ful faste hire soule soughte;  
 700 Withouten word, on hym alwey she thoughte.  
 Thise wommen, that thus wenden hire to plese,  
 Aboute naught gonne alle hire tales spende.  
 Swich vanyte ne kan don hire non ese,  
 As she that al this mene while brende  
 Of other passioun than that they wende,  
 So that she felte almost hire herte dye  
 For wo and wery of that compaignie.  
 For which no lenger myghte she restreyne  
 Hir teeris, so they gonnen up to welle,  
 710 That yaven signes of the bittre peyne  
 In which hir spirit was, and moste dwelle,  
 Remembryng hir, fro heven into which helle

She fallen was, syn she forgoth the syghte  
Of Troilus, and sorwfully she sighte.  
And thilke fooles sittynge hire aboute  
Wenden that she wepte and siked sore  
Bycause that she sholde out of that route  
Depart, and nevere pleye with hem more.  
And they that hadde yknowen hire of yore  
720 Seigh hire so wepe and thoughte it kyndenesse,  
And ech of hem wepte ek for hire destresse.  
And bisyly they gonnen hire comforten  
Of thyng, God woot, on which she litel thoughte;  
And with hire tales wenden hire disporten,  
And to be glad they often hire bysoughte;  
But swich an ese therwith they hire wroughte,  
Right as a man is esed for to feele  
For ache of hed to clawen hym on his heele!  
But after al this nyce vanyte  
730 They toke hire leve, and hom they wenten alle.  
Criseyde, ful of sorwful piete,  
Into hire chambre up went out of the halle,  
And on hire bed she gan for ded to falle,  
In purpos nevere thennes for to rise;  
And thus she wroughte, as I shal yow devyse.  
Hire ownded heer, that sonnyssh was of hewe,  
She rente, and ek hire fyngeres longe and smale  
She wrong ful ofte, and bad God on hire rewe,  
And with the deth to doon boote on hire bale.  
740 Hire hewe, whilom bright, that tho was pale,  
Bar witnesse of hire wo and hire constreynte;  
And thus she spak, sobbyng in hire compleynte:  
"Allas," quod she, "out of this regioun  
I, woful wrecche and infortuned wight,  
And born in corsed constellacioun,  
Moot goon and thus departen fro my knyght!  
Wo worth, alas, that ilke dayes light  
On which I saugh hym first with eyen tweyne,  
That causeth me, and ich hym, al this peyne!"  
750 Therwith the teris from hire eyen two  
Down fille, as shour in Aperil ful swithe;  
Hire white brest she bet, and for the wo  
After the deth she cryed a thousand sithe,  
Syn he that wont hire wo was for to lithe

She moot forgon; for which disaventure  
She held hireself a forlost creature.  
She seyde, "How shal he don, and ich also?  
How sholde I lyve if that I from hym twynne?  
O deere herte eke, that I love so,  
760 Who shal that sorwe slen that ye ben inne?  
O Calkas, fader, thyn be al this synne!  
O moder myn, that cleped were Argyve,  
Wo worth that day that thow me bere on lyve!  
"To what fyn sholde I lyve and sorwen thus?  
How sholde a fissh withouten water dure?  
What is Criseyde worth, from Troilus?  
How sholde a plaunte or lyves creature  
Lyve withouten his kynde noriture?  
For which ful ofte a by-word here I seye,  
770 That `rooteles moot grene soone deye.'  
"I shal doon thus -- syn neither swerd ne darte  
Dar I noon handle, for the crueltee --  
That ilke day that I from yow departe,  
If sorwe of that nyl nat my bane be:  
Thanne shal no mete or drynke come in me  
Til I my soule out of my breste unshethe,  
And thus myselven wol I don to dethe.  
"And, Troilus, my clothes everychon  
Shul blake ben in tokenyng, herte swete,  
780 That I am as out of this world agon,  
That wont was yow to setten in quiete;  
And of myn ordre, ay til deth me mete,  
The observance evere, in youre absence,  
Shal sorwe ben, compleynt, and abstinence.  
"Myn herte and ek the woful goost therinne  
Byqueth. I with youre spirit to compleyne  
Eternaly, for they shal nevere twynne;  
For though in erthe ytwynned be we tweyne,  
Yet in the feld of pite, out of peyne,  
790 That highte Elisos, shal we ben yfeere,  
As Orpheus and Erudice, his fere.  
"Thus, herte myn, for Antenor, allas,  
I soone shal be chaunged, as I wene.  
But how shul ye don in this sorwful cas?  
How shal youre tendre herte this sustene?  
But, herte myn, foryete this sorwe and tene,

And me also; for sothly for to seye,  
So ye wel fare, I recche naught to deye."  
How myghte it evere yred ben or ysonge,  
800 The pleynte that she made in hire destresse?  
I not; but, as for me, my litel tonge,  
If I discryven wolde hire hevynesse,  
It sholde make hire sorwe seme lesse  
Than that it was, and childisshly deface  
Hire heigh compleynte, and therfore ich it pace.  
Pandare, which that sent from Troilus  
Was to Criseyde -- as ye han herd devyse  
That for the beste it was acorded thus,  
And he ful glad to doon hym that servyse --  
810 Unto Criseyde, in a ful secree wise,  
Ther as she lay in torment and in rage,  
Com hire to telle al hoolly his message,  
And fond that she hireselven gan to trete  
Ful pitously, for with hire salte teris  
Hire brest, hire face, ybathed was ful wete;  
The myghty tresses of hire sonnysshe heeris  
Unbroiden hangen al aboute hire eeris,  
Which yaf hym verray signal of martire  
Of deth, which that hire herte gan desire.  
820 Whan she hym saugh, she gan for shame anon  
Hire tery face atwixe hire armes hide;  
For which this Pandare is so wo-bygon  
That in the hous he myghte unnethe abyde,  
As he that pite felt on every syde;  
For if Criseyde hadde erst compleyned soore,  
Tho gan she pleyne a thousand tymes more.  
And in hire aspre pleynte thus she seyde:  
"Pandare first of joies mo than two  
Was cause causyng unto me, Criseyde,  
830 That now transmewed ben in cruel wo.  
Wher shal I seye to yow welcom or no,  
That alderfirst me broughte unto servyse  
Of love -- alas! -- that endeth in swich wise?  
"Endeth than love in wo? Ye, or men lieth,  
And alle worldly blisse, as thynketh me.  
The ende of blisse ay sorwe it occupieth.  
And whoso troweth nat that it so be,  
Lat hym upon me, woful wrecche, ysee,

That myself hate and ay my burthe acorse,  
 840 Felyng alwey fro wikke I go to worse.  
 "Whoso me seeth, he seeth sorwe al atonys --  
 Peyne, torment, pleynte, wo, distresse!  
 Out of my woful body harm ther noon is,  
 As angwissh, langour, cruel bitternesse,  
 Anoy, smert, drede, fury, and ek siknesse.  
 I trowe, ywys, from hevene teeris reyne  
 For pite of myn aspre and cruel peyne."  
 "And thow, my suster, ful of discomfort,"  
 Quod Pandarus, "what thynkestow to do?  
 850 Whi ne hastow to thyselfen som resport?  
 Whi wiltow thus thiself, allas, fordo?  
 Leef al this werk, and tak now heede to  
 That I shal seyn; and herkne of good entente  
 This which by me thi Troilus the sente."  
 Tornede hire tho Criseyde, a wo makynge  
 So gret that it a deth was for to see.  
 "Allas," quod she, "what wordes may ye brynge?  
 What wol my deere herte seyn to me,  
 Which that I drede nevere mo to see?  
 860 Wol he han pleynte or teris er I wende?  
 I have ynough, if he therafter sende!"  
 She was right swich to seen in hire visage  
 As is that wight that men on beere bynde;  
 Hire face, lik of Paradys the ymage,  
 Was al ychaunged in another kynde.  
 The pleye, the laughter, men was wont to fynde  
 On hire, and ek hire joies everichone,  
 Ben fled; and thus lith now Criseyde allone.  
 Aboute hire eyen two a purpre ryng  
 870 Bytrent, in sothfast tokenyng of hire peyne,  
 That to biholde it was a dedly thyng;  
 For which Pandare myghte nat restreyne  
 The teeris from his eighen for to reyne;  
 But natheles, as he best myghte, he seyde  
 From Troilus thise wordes to Criseyde:  
 "Lo, nece, I trowe ye han herd al how  
 The kyng with othere lordes, for the beste,  
 Hath mad eschaunge of Antenor and yow,  
 That cause is of this sorwe and this unreste.  
 880 But how this cas dooth Troilus moleste,

That may non erthly mannes tonge seye --  
 As he that shortly shapith hym to deye.  
 "For which we han so sorwed, he and I,  
 That into litel bothe it hadde us slawe;  
 But thorough my conseyll this day finaly  
 He somewhat is fro wepyng now withdrawe,  
 And semeth me that he desireth fawe  
 With yow to ben al nyght, for to devyse  
 Remedie in this, if ther were any wyse.  
 890 "This, short and pleyn, th' effect of my message,  
 As ferforth as my wit kan comprehend,  
 For ye that ben of torment in swich rage  
 May to no long prologe as now entende.  
 And hereupon ye may answer hym sende;  
 And for the love of God, my nece deere,  
 So lef this wo er Troilus be here!"  
 "Gret is my wo," quod she, and sighte soore  
 As she that feleth dedly sharp distresse;  
 "But yit to me his sorwe is muchel more,  
 900 That love hym bet than he hymself, I gesse.  
 Allas, for me hath he swich hevynesse?  
 Kan he for me so pitously compleyne?  
 Iwis, his sorwe doubleth al my peyne.  
 "Grevous to me, God woot, is for to twynne,"  
 Quod she, "but yet it harder is to me  
 To sen that sorwe which that he is inne;  
 For wel I woot it wol my bane be,  
 And deye I wol in certeyn," tho quod she;  
 "But bid hym come, er deth, that thus me threteth,  
 910 Dryve out that goost which in myn herte beteth."  
 Thise wordes seyde, she on hire armes two  
 Fil gruf, and gan to wepen pitously.  
 Quod Pandarus, "Allas, whi do ye so,  
 Syn wel ye woot the tyme is faste by  
 That he shal come? Aris up hastily,  
 That he yow nat bywopen thus ne fynde,  
 But ye wole have hym wood out of his mynde.  
 "For wiste he that ye ferde in this manere,  
 He wolde hymselfen sle; and if I wende  
 920 To han this fare, he sholde nat come here  
 For al the good that Priam may dispende.  
 For to what fyn he wolde anon pretende,

That knowe ich wel; and forthi yet I seye:  
So lef this sorwe, or platly he wol deye.  
"And shapeth yow his sorwe for t' abregge,  
And nought encresse, leeve nece swete!  
Beth rather to hym cause of flat than egge,  
And with som wisdom ye his sorwe bete.  
What helpeth it to wepen ful a strete,  
930 Or though ye bothe in salte teeris dreynte?  
Bet is a tyme of cure ay than of pleynte.  
"I mene thus: whan ich hym hider brynge,  
Syn ye be wise and bothe of oon assent,  
So shapeth how destourbe youre goynge,  
Or come ayeyn soon after ye be went.  
Women ben wise in short avysement;  
And lat sen how youre wit shal now availle,  
And that that I may helpe, it shal nat faille."  
"Go," quod Criseyde, "and uncle, trewely,  
940 I shal don al my myght me to restreyne  
From wepyng in his sighte, and bisily  
Hym for to glade I shal don al my peyne,  
And in myn herte seken every veyne.  
If to his sore ther may be fonden salve,  
It shal nat lakke, certeyn, on my halve."  
Goth Pandarus, and Troilus he soughte  
Til in a temple he fond hym al allone,  
As he that of his lif no lenger roughte;  
But to the pitouse goddes everichone  
950 Ful tendrely he preyde and made his mone,  
To doon hym sone out of this world to pace,  
For wel he thoughte ther was non other grace.  
And shortly, al the sothe for to seye,  
He was so fallen in despeir that day,  
That outrely he shop hym for to deye.  
For right thus was his argument alway:  
He seyde he nas but lorn, weylaway!  
"For al that comth, comth by necessitee:  
Thus to ben lorn, it is my destinee.  
960 "For certeynly, this wot I wel," he seyde,  
"That foresight of divine purveyaunce  
Hath seyn alwey me to forgon Criseyde,  
Syn God seeth every thyng, out of doutaunce,  
And hem disponyth, thorough his ordinaunce,

In hire merites sothly for to be,  
As they shul comen by predestyne.  
"But natheles, allas, whom shal I leeve?  
For ther ben grete clerkes many oon  
That destyne thorough argumentes preve;  
970 And som men seyn that nedely ther is noon,  
But that fre chois is yeven us everychon.  
O, welaway! So sleighe arn clerkes olde  
That I not whos opynyoun I may holde.  
"For som men seyn, if God seth al biforn --  
Ne God may nat deceyved ben, parde --  
Than moot it fallen, theigh men hadde it sworn,  
That purveiance hath seyn before to be.  
Wherfore I sey, that from eterne if he  
Hath wist byforn oure thought ek as oure dede,  
980 We han no fre chois, as thise clerkes rede.  
"For other thought, nor other dede also,  
Myghte nevere ben, but swich as purveyaunce,  
Which may nat ben deceyved nevere mo,  
Hath feled byforn, withouten ignoraunce.  
For yf ther myghte ben a variaunce  
To writen out fro Goddis purveyinge,  
Ther nere no prescience of thyng comynge,  
"But it were rather an opynyoun  
Uncerteyn, and no stedfast forseynge;  
990 And certes, that were an abusoun,  
That God sholde han no parfit cler wytynge  
More than we men that han doutous wenynge.  
But swich an errour upon God to gesse  
Were fals and foul, and wikked corsednesse.  
"Ek this is an opynyoun of some  
That han hire top ful heighe and smothe yshore:  
They seyn right thus, that thyng is nat to come  
For that the prescience hath seyn byfore  
That it shal come; but they seyn that therfore  
1000 That it shal come, therfore the purveyaunce  
Woot it byforn, withouten ignoraunce;  
"And in this manere this necessite  
Retorneth in his part contrarie agayn.  
For nedfully byhoveth it nat to bee  
That thilke thynges fallen in certayn  
That ben purveyed; but nedly, as they sayn,



Byhoveth it that thynges whiche that falle,  
That they in certayn ben purveyed alle.  
"I mene as though I laboured me in this  
1010 To enqueren which thyng cause of which thyng be:  
As wheither that the prescience of God is  
The certeyn cause of the necessite  
Of thynges that to comen ben, parde,  
Or if necessite of thyng comynge  
Be cause certeyn of the purveyinge.  
"But now n' enforce I me nat in shewynge  
How the ordre of causes stant; but wel woot I  
That it byhoveth that the byfallynge  
Of thynges wist byfore certeynly  
1020 Be necessarie, al seme it nat therby  
That prescience put fallynge necessaire  
To thyng to come, al falle it foule or faire.  
"For if ther sitte a man yond on a see,  
Than by necessite bihoveth it  
That, certes, thyn opynyoun sooth be  
That wenest or coniectest that he sit.  
And further over now ayeynward yit,  
Lo, right so is it of the part contrarie,  
As thus -- now herkne, for I wol nat tarie:  
1030 "I sey that if the opynyoun of the  
Be soth, for that he sitte, than sey I this:  
That he mot sitten by necessite;  
And thus necessite in eyther is.  
For in hym, nede of sittynge is, ywys,  
And in the, nede of soth; and thus, forsothe,  
There mot necessite ben in yow bothe.  
"But thow mayst seyn, the man sit nat therfore  
That thyn opynyoun of his sittynge soth is,  
But rather, for the man sit ther byfore,  
1040 Therfore is thyn opynyoun soth, ywis.  
And I seye, though the cause of soth of this  
Comth of his sittynge, yet necessite  
Is entrechaunged, both in hym and the.  
"Thus in this same wise, out of doutaunce,  
I may wel maken, as it semeth me,  
My resonyng of Goddes purveyaunce  
And of the thynges that to comen be;  
By which resoun men may wel yse

That thilke thynges that in erthe falle,  
1050 That by necessite they comen alle.  
"For although that for thyng shal come, ywys,  
Therefore is it purveyed, certeynly --  
Nat that it comth for it purveyed is --  
Yet natheles, bihoveth it nedfully  
That thing to come be purveyd, trewely,  
Or elles, thynges that purveyed be,  
That they bitiden by necessite.  
"And this suffiseth right ynough, certeyn,  
For to destruye oure fre chois every del.  
1060 But now is this abusioun, to seyn  
That fallyng of the thynges temporel  
Is cause of Goddes prescience eternal.  
Now trewely, that is a fals sentence,  
That thyng to come sholde cause his prescience.  
"What myght I wene, and I hadde swich a thought,  
But that God purveyeth thyng that is to come  
For that it is to come, and ellis nought?  
So myghte I wene that thynges alle and some  
That whilom ben byfalle and overcome  
1070 Ben cause of thilke sovereyne purveyaunce  
That forwot al withouten ignoraunce.  
"And over al this, yet sey I more herto:  
That right as whan I wot ther is a thyng,  
Iwys, that thyng moot nedfully be so;  
Ek right so, whan I woot a thyng comyng,  
So mot it come; and thus the bifallyng  
Of thynges that ben wist bfore the tyde,  
They mowe nat ben eschued on no syde."  
Thanne seyde he thus: "Almyghty Jove in trone,  
1080 That woost of al thys thyng the sothfastnesse,  
Rewe on my sorwe: or do me deyen sone,  
Or bryng Criseyde and me fro this destresse!"  
And whil he was in al this hevynesse,  
Disputyng with hymself in this matere,  
Com Pandare in, and seyde as ye may here:  
"O myghty God," quod Pandarus, "in trone,  
I! Who say evere a wis man faren so?  
Whi, Troilus, what thinkestow to doone?  
Hastow swich lust to ben thyn owen fo?  
1090 What, parde, yet is nat Criseyde ago!

Whi list the so thiself fordoon for drede  
 That in thyn hed thyne eyen semen dede?  
 "Hastow nat lyved many a yer byforn  
 Withouten hire, and ferd ful wel at ese?  
 Artow for hire and for noon other born?  
 Hath Kynde the wrought al only hire to plese?  
 Lat be, and thynk right thus in thi disese:  
 That, in the dees right as ther fallen chaunces,  
 Right so in love ther come and gon plesaunces.  
 1100 "And yet this is a wonder most of alle,  
 Whi thow thus sorwest, syn thow nost nat yit,  
 Touchyng hire goyng, how that it shal falle,  
 Ne yif she kan hireself destourben it.  
 Thow hast nat yet assayed al hire wit.  
 A man may al bytyme his nekke beede  
 Whan it shal of, and sorwen at the nede.  
 "Forthi tak hede of that that I shal seye:  
 I have with hire yspoke and longe ybe,  
 So as acorded was bitwixe us tweye;  
 1110 And evere mor me thynketh thus, that she  
 Hath somewhat in hire hertes private  
 Wherwith she kan, if I shal right arede,  
 Destourbe al this of which thow art in drede.  
 "For which my counseil is, whan it is nyght  
 Thow to hire go and make of this an ende;  
 And blisful Juno thorough hire grete myght  
 Shal, as I hope, hire grace unto us sende.  
 Myn herte seyth, 'Certeyn, she shal nat wende.'  
 And forthi put thyn herte a while in reste,  
 1120 And hold this purpos, for it is the beste."  
 This Troilus answerd, and sighte soore:  
 "Thow seist right wel, and I wol don right so."  
 And what hym liste, he seyde unto it more.  
 And whan that it was tyme for to go,  
 Ful pryvely hymself, withouten mo,  
 Unto hire com, as he was wont to doone;  
 And how they wroughte, I shal yow tellen soone.  
 Soth is, that whan they gonnen first to mete,  
 So gan the peyne hire hertes for to twiste  
 1130 That neyther of hem other myghte grete,  
 But hem in armes toke, and after kiste.  
 The lasse woful of hem bothe nyste

Wher that he was, ne myghte o word out brynge,  
As I seyde erst, for wo and for sobbynge.  
The woful teeris that they leten falle  
As bittre weren, out of teris kynde,  
For peyne, as is ligne aloes or galle --  
So bittre teeris weep nought, as I fynde,  
The woful Mirra thorough the bark and rynde --  
1140 That in this world ther nys so hard an herte  
That nolde han rewed on hire peynes smerte.  
But whan hire woful weri goostes tweyne  
Retourned ben ther as hem oughte dwelle,  
And that somewhat to wayken gan the peyne  
By lengthe of pleynte, and ebben gan the welle  
Of hire teeris, and the herte unswelle,  
With broken vois, al hoors forshright, Criseyde  
To Troilus thise ilke wordes seyde:  
"O Jove, I deye, and mercy I beseche!  
1150 Help, Troilus!" And therwithal hire face  
Upon his brest she leyde and loste speche --  
Hire woful spirit from his propre place,  
Right with the word, alwey o poynt to pace.  
And thus she lith with hewes pale and grene,  
That whilom fressh and fairest was to sene.  
This Troilus, that on hire gan biholde,  
Clepyng hire name -- and she lay as for ded --  
Without answeere, and felte hire lymes colde,  
Hire eyen throwen upward to hire hed,  
1160 This sorwful man kan now noon other red,  
But ofte tyme hire colde mowth he kiste.  
Wher hym was wo, God and hymself it wiste!  
He rist hym up, and long streght he hire leyde;  
For signe of lif, for aught he kan or may,  
Kan he non fynde in nothyng on Criseyde,  
For which his song ful ofte is "weylaway!"  
But whan he saugh that specheles she lay,  
With sorweful vois and herte of blisse al bare,  
He seyde how she was fro this world yfare.  
1170 So after that he longe hadde hire compleyned,  
His hondes wrong, and seyde that was to seye,  
And with his teeris salt hire brest byreyned,  
He gan tho teeris wypen of ful dreye,  
And pitously gan for the soule preye,

And seyde, "O Lord, that set art in thi trone,  
Rewe ek on me, for I shal folwe hire sone!"  
She cold was, and withouten sentement  
For aught he woot, for breth ne felte he non,  
And this was hym a pregnant argument  
1180 That she was forth out of this world agon.  
And whan he say ther was non other woon,  
He gan hire lymes dresse in swich manere  
As men don hem that shal ben layd on beere.  
And after this, with sterne and cruel herte,  
His swerd anon out of his shethe he twichte  
Hymself to slen, how sore that hym smerte,  
So that his soule hire soule folwen myghte  
Ther as the doom of Mynos wolde it dighte,  
Syn Love and cruel Fortune it ne wolde  
1190 That in this world he lenger lyven sholde.  
Than seyde he thus, fulfild of heigh desdayn:  
"O cruel Jove, and thow, Fortune adverse,  
This al and som: that falsly have ye slayn  
Criseyde, and syn ye may do me no werse,  
Fy on youre myght and werkes so dyverse!  
Thus cowardly ye shul me nevere wynne;  
Ther shal no deth me fro my lady twynne.  
"For I this world, syn ye have slayn hire thus,  
Wol lete and folwe hire spirit low or hye.  
1200 Shal nevere love seyn that Troilus  
Dar nat for fere with his lady dye;  
For certeyn I wol beere hire compaignie.  
But syn ye wol nat suffre us lyven here,  
Yet suffreth that oure soules ben yfere.  
"And thow, cite, which that I leve in wo,  
And thow, Priam, and bretheren alle yfeere,  
And thow, my moder, farwel, for I go;  
And Atropos, make redy thow my beere;  
And thow, Criseyde, o swete herte deere,  
1210 Receyve now my spirit!" wolde he seye,  
With swerd at herte, al redy for to deye.  
But as God wolde, of swough therwith sh' abreyde,  
And gan to sike, and "Troilus" she cride;  
And he answerde, "Lady myn, Criseyde,  
Lyve ye yet?" and leet his swerd down glide.  
"Ye, herte myn, that thonked be Cipride!"

Quod she; and therwithal she soore syghte,  
And he bigan conforte hire as he myghte,  
Took hire in armes two, and kiste hire ofte,  
1220 And hire to glade he did al his entente;  
For which hire goost, that flikered ay o-lofte,  
Into hire woful herte ayeyn it wente.  
But at the laste, as that hire eye glente  
Asyde, anon she gan his swerd espie,  
As it lay bare, and gan for fere crye,  
And asked hym, whi he it hadde out drawe.  
And Troilus anon the cause hire tolde,  
And how hymself therwith he wolde han slawe;  
For which Criseyde upon hym gan biholde,  
1230 And gan hym in hire armes faste folde,  
And seyde, "O mercy, God! Lo, which a dede!  
Allas, how neigh we weren bothe dede!  
"Than if I nadde spoken, as grace was,  
Ye wolde han slayn youreself anon?" quod she.  
"Yee, douteles"; and she answerde, "Allas,  
For by that ilke Lord that made me,  
I nolde a forlong wey on lyve have be  
After youre deth, to han ben crowned queene  
Of al that lond the sonne on shyneth sheene.  
1240 "But with this selve swerd, which that here is,  
Myselve I wolde han slawe," quod she tho.  
"But hoo, for we han right ynough of this,  
And lat us rise, and streght to bedde go,  
And there lat us speken of oure wo;  
For, by the mortar which that I se brenne,  
Knowe I ful wel that day is nat far henne."  
Whan they were in hire bed, in armes folde,  
Naught was it lik tho nyghtes here-byforn.  
For pitously ech other gan byholde,  
1250 As they that hadden al hire blisse ylorn,  
Bywaylinge ay the day that they were born;  
Til at the laste this sorwful wight, Criseyde,  
To Troilus thise ilke wordes seyde:  
"Lo, herte myn, wel woot ye this," quod she,  
"That if a wight alwey his wo compleyne  
And seketh nought how holpen for to be,  
It nys but folie and encrees of peyne;  
And syn that here assembled be we tweyne

To fynde boote of wo that we ben inne,  
1260 It were al tyme soone to bygynne.  
"I am a womman, as ful wel ye woot,  
And as I am avysed sodeynly,  
So wol I telle yow, whil it is hoot.  
Me thynketh thus: that nouthur ye nor I  
Ought half this wo to maken, skilfully;  
For ther is art ynough for to redresse  
That yet is mys, and slen this hevynesse.  
"Soth is, the wo, the which that we ben inne,  
For aught I woot, for nothyng ellis is  
1270 But for the cause that we sholden twynne.  
Considered al, ther nys namore amys.  
But what is thanne a remede unto this,  
But that we shape us soone for to meete?  
This al and som, my deere herte sweete.  
"Now, that I shal wel bryngen it aboute  
To come ayeyn, soone after that I go,  
Therof am I no manere thyng in doute;  
For, dredeles, withinne a wowke or two  
I shal ben here; and that it may be so  
1280 By alle right and in a wordes fewe,  
I shal yow wel an heep of weyes shewe.  
"For which I wol nat make long sermoun --  
For tyme ylost may nought recovered be --  
But I wol gon to my conclusioun,  
And to the beste, in aught that I kan see.  
And for the love of God, foryeve it me  
If I speke aught ayeyns youre hertes reste;  
For trewely, I speke it for the beste,  
"Makyng alwey a protestacioun  
1290 That now thises wordes which that I shal seye  
Nis but to shewen yow my mocoun  
To fynde unto oure help the beste weye;  
And taketh it non other wise, I preye,  
For in effect, what so ye me comaunde,  
That wol I don, for that is no demaunde.  
"Now herkneth this: ye han wel understonde  
My goyng graunted is by parlement  
So ferforth that it may nat be withstonde  
For al this world, as by my jugement.  
1300 And syn ther helpeth non avisement

To letten it, lat it passe out of mynde,  
 And lat us shape a better wey to fynde.  
 "The soth is this: the twynnyng of us tweyne  
 Wol us disese and cruelich anoye,  
 But hym byhoveth somtyme han a peyne  
 That serveth Love, if that he wol have joye.  
 And syn I shal no ferther out of Troie  
 Than I may ride ayeyn on half a morwe,  
 It oughte lesse causen us to sorwe;  
 1310 "So as I shal not so ben hid in muwe,  
 That day by day, myn owne herte deere --  
 Syn wel ye woot that it is now a trewe --  
 Ye shal ful wel al myn estat yheere.  
 And er that trewe is doon, I shal ben heere;  
 And thanne have ye both Antenore ywonne  
 And me also. Beth glad now, if ye konne,  
 "And thenk right thus: `Criseyde is now agon.  
 But what, she shal come hastiliche ayeyn!'  
 And whanne, allas? By God, lo, right anon,  
 1320 Er dayes ten, this dar I saufly seyn.  
 And than at erste shal we be so feyn,  
 So as we shal togideres evere dwelle,  
 That al this world ne myghte oure blisse telle.  
 "I se that oft-tyme, there as we ben now,  
 That for the beste, oure counseyl for to hide,  
 Ye speke nat with me, nor I with yow  
 In fourtenyght, ne se yow go ne ride.  
 May ye naught ten dayes thanne abide,  
 For myn honour, in swich an aventure?  
 1330 Iwys, ye mowen ellis lite endure!  
 "Ye knowe ek how that al my kyn is heere,  
 But if that onliche it my fader be,  
 And ek myn othere thynges alle yfeere,  
 And nameliche, my deere herte, ye,  
 Whom that I nolde leven for to se  
 For al this world, as wyd as it hath space,  
 Or ellis se ich nevere Joves face!  
 "Whi trowe ye my fader in this wise  
 Coveyteth so to se me, but for drede  
 1340 Lest in this town that folkes me despise  
 Because of hym, for his unhappy dede?  
 What woot my fader what lif that I lede?



For if he wiste in Troie how wel I fare,  
Us neded for my wendyng nought to care.  
"Ye sen that every day ek, more and more,  
Men trete of pees, and it supposid is  
That men the queene Eleyne shal restore,  
And Grekis us restoren that is mys;  
So, though ther nere comfort non but this,  
1350 That men purposen pees on every syde,  
Ye may the bettre at ese of herte abyde.  
"For if that it be pees, myn herte deere,  
The nature of the pees moot nedes dryve  
That men moost entrecomunen yfeere,  
And to and fro ek ride and gon as blyve  
Alday as thikke as been fleen from an hyve,  
And every wight han liberte to bleve  
Whereas hym liste the bet, withouten leve.  
"And though so be that pees ther may be non,  
1360 Yet hider, though ther nevere pees ne were,  
I moste come; for whider sholde I gon,  
Or how, meschaunce, sholde I dwelle there  
Among tho men of armes evere in feere?  
For which, as wisly God my soule rede,  
I kan nat sen wherof ye sholden drede.  
"Have here another wey, if it so be  
That al this thyng ne may yow nat suffise:  
My fader, as ye knowen wel, parde,  
Is old, and elde is ful of coveytise,  
1370 And I right now have founden al the gise,  
Withouten net, wherwith I shal hym hente.  
And herkeneth how, if that ye wol assente:  
"Lo, Troilus, men seyn that hard it is  
The wolf ful and the wether hool to have;  
This is to seyn, that men ful ofte, iwys,  
Mote spenden part the remenant for to save;  
For ay with gold men may the herte grave  
Of hym that set is upon coveytise;  
And how I mene, I shal it yow devyse:  
1380 "The moeble which that I have in this town  
Unto my fader shal I take, and seye  
That right for trust and for savacioun  
It sent is from a frend of his or tweye,  
The whiche frendes ferventliche hym preye

To senden after more, and that in hie,  
 Whil that this town stant thus in jupartie.  
 "And that shal ben an huge quantite --  
 Thus shal I seyn -- but lest it folk espide,  
 This may be sent by no wyght but by me.  
 1390 I shal ek shewen hym, yf pees bytyde,  
 What frendes that ich have on every syde  
 Toward the court, to don the wrathe pace  
 Of Priamus and don hym stonde in grace.  
 "So what for o thyng and for other, swete,  
 I shal hym so enchaunten with my sawes  
 That right in hevene his sowle is, shal he mete;  
 For al Appollo, or his clerkes lawes,  
 Or calkullynge, avayleth nought thre hawes;  
 Desir of gold shal so his soule blende  
 1400 That, as me lyst, I shal wel make an ende.  
 "And yf he wolde ought by hys sort it preve  
 If that I lye, in certayn I shal fonde  
 Distorben hym and plukke hym by the sleve,  
 Makynge his sort, and beren hym on honde  
 He hath not wel the goddes understonde;  
 For goddes speken in amphibologies,  
 And for o soth they tellen twenty lyes.  
 "Ek, 'Drede fond first goddes, I suppose' --  
 Thus shal I seyn -- and that his coward herte  
 1410 Made hym amys the goddes text to glose,  
 Whan he for fered out of Delphos sterte.  
 And but I make hym soone to converte  
 And don my red withinne a day or tweye,  
 I wol to yow oblige me to deye."  
 And treweliche, as writen wel I fynde  
 That al this thyng was seyde of good entente,  
 And that hire herte trewe was and kynde  
 Towardes hym, and spak right as she mente,  
 And that she starf for wo neigh whan she wente,  
 1420 And was in purpos evere to be trewe:  
 Thus writen they that of hire werkes knewe.  
 This Troilus, with herte and erys spradde,  
 Herde al this thyng devysen to and fro,  
 And verrayliche him semed that he hadde  
 The selve wit; but yet to late hire go  
 His herte mysforyaf hym evere mo;

But fynaly, he gan his herte wreste  
 To trusten hire, and took it for the beste.  
 For which the grete furie of his penaunce  
 1430 Was queynt with hope, and therwith hem bitwene  
 Bigan for joie th' amoureuse daunce;  
 And as the briddes, whanne the sonne is shene,  
 Deliten in hire song in leves grene,  
 Right so the wordes that they spake yfeere  
 Delited hem, and made hire hertes clere.  
 But natheles, the wending of Criseyde,  
 For al this world, may nat out of his mynde,  
 For which ful ofte he pitously hire preyde  
 That of hire heste he myghte hire trewe fynde,  
 1440 And seyde hire, "Certes, if ye be unkynde,  
 And but ye come at day set into Troye,  
 Ne shal I nevere have hele, honour, ne joye.  
 "For also soth as sonne uprist o-morwe --  
 And God so wisly thow me, woful wrecche,  
 To reste brynge out of this cruel sorwe! --  
 I wol myselfen sle if that ye drecche.  
 But of my deeth though litel be to recche,  
 Yet, er that ye me causen so to smerte,  
 Dwelle rather here, myn owen swete herte.  
 1450 "For trewely, myn owne lady deere,  
 Tho sleghtes yet that I have herd yow stere  
 Ful shaply ben to faylen alle yfeere.  
 For thus men seyth `That on thenketh the beere,  
 But al another thenketh his ledere.'  
 Youre syre is wys; and seyde is, out of drede,  
 `Men may the wise atrenne, and naught atrede.'  
 "It is ful hard to halten unespied  
 Byfore a crepel, for he kan the craft;  
 Youre fader is in sleight as Argus eyed;  
 1460 For al be that his moeble is hym biraft,  
 His olde sleighte is yet so with hym laft  
 Ye shal nat blende hym for youre wommanhede,  
 Ne feyne aright; and that is al my drede.  
 "I not if pees shal evere mo bitide;  
 But pees or no, for earnest ne for game,  
 I woot, syn Calkas on the Grekis syde  
 Hath ones ben and lost so foule his name,  
 He dar nomore come here ayeyn for shame;

For which that wey, for aught I kan espie,  
1470 To trusten on nys but a fantasie.

"Ye shal ek sen, youre fader shal yow glose  
To ben a wif; and as he kan wel preche,  
He shal som Grek so preyse and wel alose  
That ravysshyn he shal yow with his speche,  
Or do yow don by force as he shal teche;  
And Troilus, of whom ye nyl han routhe,  
Shal causeles so sterven in his trouthe!

"And over al this, youre fader shal despise  
Us alle, and seyn this cite nys but lorn,  
1480 And that th' assege nevere shal aryse,  
For-whi the Grekis han it alle sworn,  
Til we be slayn and down oure walles torn.  
And thus he shal yow with his wordes fere,  
That ay drede I that ye wol bleven there.

"Ye shal ek seen so many a lusty knyght  
Among the Grekis, ful of worthynesse,  
And ech of hem with herte, wit, and myght  
To plesen yow don al his bisynesse,  
That ye shul dullen of the rudenesse  
1490 Of us sely Troians, but if routhe  
Remorde yow, or vertu of youre trouthe.

"And this to me so grevous is to thynke  
That fro my brest it wol my soule rende;  
Ne dredeles, in me ther may nat synke  
A good opynyoun, if that ye wende,  
For whi youre fadres sleghte wol us shende.  
And if ye gon, as I have told yow yore,  
So thenk I n' am but ded, withoute more.

"For which, with humble, trewe, and pitous herte,  
1500 A thousand tymes mercy I yow preye;  
So rueth on myn aspre peynes smerte,  
And doth somewhat as that I shal yow seye,  
And lat us stele away bitwixe us tweye;  
And thynk that folie is, whan man may chese,  
For accident his substaunce ay to lese.

"I mene thus: that syn we mowe er day  
Wel stele away and ben togidere so,  
What wit were it to putten in assay,  
In cas ye sholden to youre fader go,  
1510 If that ye myghten come ayeyn or no?

Thus mene I: that it were a gret folie  
 To putte that sikernesse in jupertie.  
 "And vulgarly to speken of substaunce  
 Of tresour, may we bothe with us lede  
 Inough to lyve in honour and plesaunce  
 Til into tyme that we shal ben dede;  
 And thus we may eschuen al this drede.  
 For everich other wey ye kan recorde,  
 Myn herte, ywys, may therwith naught acorde.  
 1520 "And hardily, ne dredeth no poverté,  
 For I have kyn and frendes elleswhere  
 That, though we comen in oure bare sherte,  
 Us sholde neyther lakken gold ne gere,  
 But ben honured while we dwelten there.  
 And go we anon; for as in myn entente,  
 This is the beste, if that ye wole assente."  
 Criseyde, with a sik, right in this wise  
 Answerde, "Ywys, my deere herte trewe,  
 We may wel stele away, as ye devyse,  
 1530 And fynden swich unthrifty weyes newe,  
 But afterward ful soore it wol us rewe.  
 And helpe me God so at my mooste nede,  
 As causeles ye suffren al this drede!  
 "For thilke day that I for cherisyng  
 Or drede of fader, or for other wight,  
 Or for estat, delit, or for weddyng,  
 Be fals to yow, my Troilus, my knyght,  
 Saturnes doughter, Juno, thorough hire myght,  
 As wood as Athamante do me dwelle  
 1540 Eternalich in Stix, the put of helle!  
 "And this on every god celestial  
 I swere it yow, and ek on ech goddesse,  
 On every nympe and deite infernal,  
 On satyre and fawny more and lesse,  
 That halve goddes ben of wildernesse;  
 And Attropos my thred of lif to breste  
 If I be fals! Now trowe me if yow leste!  
 "And thow, Symois, that as an arwe clere  
 Thorough Troie rennest downward to the se,  
 1550 Ber witness of this word that seyde is here:  
 That thilke day that ich untrewed be  
 To Troilus, myn owene herte fre,

That thow retourne bakward to thi welle,  
 And I with body and soule synke in helle!  
 "But that ye speke, away thus for to go  
 And leten alle youre frendes, God forbede  
 For any womman that ye sholden so,  
 And namely syn Troie hath now swich nede  
 Of help. And ek of o thyng taketh hede:  
 1560 If this were wist, my lif lay in balaunce,  
 And youre honour; God shilde us fro meschaunce!  
 "And if so be that pees heere-after take,  
 As alday happeth after anger game,  
 Whi, Lord, the sorwe and wo ye wolden make,  
 That ye ne dorste come ayeyn for shame!  
 And er that ye juparten so youre name,  
 Beth naught to hastif in this hote fare,  
 For hastif man ne wanteth nevere care.  
 "What trowe ye the peple ek al aboute  
 1570 Wolde of it seye? It is ful light t' arede.  
 They wolden seye, and swere it out of doute,  
 That love ne drof yow naught to don this dede,  
 But lust voluptuous and coward drede.  
 Thus were al lost, ywys, myn herte deere,  
 Your honour, which that now shyneth so clere.  
 "And also thynketh on myn honeste,  
 That floureth yet, how foule I sholde it shende,  
 And with what filthe it spotted sholde be,  
 If in this forme I sholde with yow wende.  
 1580 Ne though I lyved unto the werldes ende,  
 My name sholde I nevere ayeynward wynne;  
 Thus were I lost, and that were routhe and synne.  
 "And forthi sle with resoun al this hete!  
 Men seyn, 'The suffrant overcomith,' parde;  
 Ek 'Whoso wol han lief, he lief moot lete.'  
 Thus maketh vertu of necessite  
 By pacience, and thynk that lord is he  
 Of Fortune ay that naught wole of hire recche,  
 And she ne daunteth no wight but a wrecche.  
 1590 "And trusteth this: that certes, herte swete,  
 Er Phebus suster, Lucina the sheene,  
 The Leoun passe out of this Ariete,  
 I wol ben here, withouten any wene.  
 I mene, as helpe me Juno, hevenes quene,

The tenthe day, but if that deth m' assaile,  
 I wol yow sen withouten any faille."  
 "And now, so this be soth," quod Troilus,  
 "I shal wel suffre unto the tenthe day,  
 Syn that I se that nede it mot be thus.  
 1600 But for the love of God, if it be may,  
 So late us stelen priveliche away;  
 For evere in oon, as for to lyve in reste,  
 Myn herte seyth that it wol be the beste."  
 "O mercy, God, what lif is this?" quod she.  
 "Allas, ye sle me thus for verray tene!  
 I se wel now that ye mystrusten me,  
 For by youre wordes it is wel yseene.  
 Now for the love of Cinthia the sheene,  
 Mistrust me nought thus causeles, for routhe,  
 1610 Syn to be trewe I have yow plight my trouthe.  
 "And thynketh wel that somtyme it is wit  
 To spende a tyme, a tyme for to wynne;  
 Ne, parde, lorn am I naught fro yow yit,  
 Though that we ben a day or two atwynne.  
 Drif out the fantasies yow withinne,  
 And trusteth me, and leveth ek youre sorwe,  
 Or here my trouthe: I wol naught lyve tyl morwe.  
 "For if ye wiste how soore it doth me smerte,  
 Ye wolde cesse of this; for, God, thow wost,  
 1620 The pure spirit wepeth in myn herte  
 To se yow wepen that I love most,  
 And that I mot gon to the Grekis oost.  
 Ye, nere it that I wiste remedie  
 To come ayeyn, right here I wolde dye!  
 "But certes, I am naught so nyce a wight  
 That I ne kan ymaginen a wey  
 To come ayeyn that day that I have hight.  
 For who may holde a thing that wol away?  
 My fader naught, for al his queynte pley!  
 1630 And by my thrift, my wending out of Troie  
 Another day shal torne us alle to joie.  
 "Forthi with al myn herte I yow biseke,  
 If that yow list don ought for my preyere,  
 And for that love which that I love yow eke,  
 That er that I departe fro yow here,  
 That of so good a confort and a cheere

I may yow sen that ye may brynge at reste  
 Myn herte, which that is o poynt to breste.  
 "And over al this I prey yow," quod she tho,  
 1640 "Myn owene hertes sothfast suffisaunce,  
 Syn I am thyn al hol, withouten mo,  
 That whil that I am absent, no plesaunce  
 Of oother do me fro youre remembraunce;  
 For I am evere agast, forwhy men rede  
 That love is thyng ay ful of bisy drede.  
 "For in this world ther lyveth lady non,  
 If that ye were untrewe -- as God defende! --  
 That so bitraised were or wo-bigon  
 As I, that alle trouthe in yow entende.  
 1650 And douteles, if that ich other wende,  
 I ner but ded; and er ye cause fynde,  
 For Goddes love, so beth me naught unkynde!"  
 To this answerde Troilus and seyde,  
 "Now God, to whom ther nys no cause ywrye,  
 Me glade, as wys I nevere unto Criseyde,  
 Syn thilke day I saugh hire first with ye,  
 Was fals, ne nevere shal til that I dye.  
 At shorte wordes, wel ye may me leve.  
 I kan na more; it shal be founde at preve."  
 1660 "Grant mercy, goode myn, iwys!" quod she,  
 "And blisful Venus lat me nevere sterve  
 Er I may stonde of plesaunce in degree  
 To quyte hym wel that so wel kan deserve;  
 And while that God my wit wol me conserve,  
 I shal so don, so trewe I have yow founde,  
 That ay honour to me-ward shal rebounde.  
 "For trusteth wel that youre estat roial,  
 Ne veyn delit, nor only worthinesse  
 Of yow in werre or torney marcial,  
 1670 Ne pompe, array, nobleye, or ek richesse  
 Ne made me to rewe on youre destresse,  
 But moral vertu, grounded upon trouthe --  
 That was the cause I first hadde on yow routhe!  
 "Eke gentil herte and manhod that ye hadde,  
 And that ye hadde, as me thoughte, in despit  
 Every thyng that souned into badde,  
 As rudenesse and poeplissh appetit,  
 And that youre resoun bridledde youre delit,



This made, aboven every creature,  
1680 That I was youre, and shal while I may dure.  
"And this may lengthe of yeres naught fordo,  
Ne remuable Fortune deface.  
But Juppiter, that of his myght may do  
The sorwful to be glad, so yeve us grace  
Or nyghtes ten to meten in this place,  
So that it may youre herte and myn suffise!  
And fareth now wel, for tyme is that ye rise."  
And after that they longe ypleyned hadde,  
And ofte ykist, and streite in armes folde,  
1690 The day gan rise, and Troilus hym cladde,  
And rewwfullich his lady gan byholde,  
As he that felte dethes cares colde,  
And to hire grace he gan hym recomaunde.  
Wher hym was wo, this holde I no demaunde.  
For mannes hed ymagynen ne kan,  
N' entendement considere, ne tonge telle  
The cruele peynes of this sorwful man,  
That passen every torment down in helle.  
For whan he saugh that she ne myghte dwelle,  
1700 Which that his soule out of his herte rente,  
Withouten more out of the chaumbre he wente.



**BOOK 5**

Aprochen gan the fatal destyne  
That Joves hath in disposicioun,  
And to yow, angry Parcas, sustren thre,  
Committeth to don execucioun;  
For which Criseyde moste out of the town,  
And Troilus shal dwellen forth in pyne  
Til Lachesis his thred no lenger twyne.  
The gold-tressed Phebus heighe on-lofte  
Thries hadde alle with his bemes cleene  
10 The snowes molte, and Zepherus as ofte  
Ibrought ayeyn the tendre leves grene,  
Syn that the sone of Ecuba the queene  
Bigan to love hire first for whom his sorwe  
Was al, that she departe sholde a-morwe.  
Ful redy was at prime Diomed  
Criseyde unto the Grekis oost to lede,  
For sorwe of which she felt hire herte blede,  
As she that nyste what was best to rede.  
And trewely, as men in bokes rede,  
20 Men wiste nevere womman han the care,  
Ne was so loth out of a town to fare.  
This Troilus, withouten reed or loore,  
As man that hath his joies ek forlore,  
Was waytyng on his lady evere more  
As she that was the sothfast crop and more  
Of al his lust or joies heretofore.  
But Troilus, now far-wel al thi joie,  
For shaltow nevere sen hire eft in Troie!  
Soth is that while he bood in this manere,  
30 He gan his wo ful manly for to hide,  
That wel unnethe it sene was in his chere;  
But at the yate ther she sholde out ride,  
With certeyn folk he hoved hire t' abide,  
So wo-bigon, al wolde he naught hym pleyne,  
That on his hors unnethe he sat for peyne.  
For ire he quook, so gan his herte gnawe,  
Whan Diomed on horse gan hym dresse,  
And seyde to hymself this ilke sawe:  
"Allas," quod he, "thus foul a wrecchednesse,  
40 Whi suffre ich it? Whi nyl ich it redresse?"

Were it nat bet atones for to dye  
Than evere more in langour thus to drye?  
"Whi nyl I make atones riche and pore  
To have inough to doone er that she go?  
Why nyl I brynge al Troie upon a roore?  
Whi nyl I slen this Diomedes also?  
Why nyl I rather with a man or two  
Stele hire away? Whi wol I this endure?  
Whi nyl I helpen to myn owen cure?"  
50 But why he nolde don so fel a dede,  
That shal I seyn, and whi hym liste it spare:  
He hadde in herte alweyes a manere drede  
Lest that Criseyde, in rumour of this fare,  
Sholde han ben slayn; lo, this was al his care.  
And ellis, certeyn, as I seyde yore,  
He hadde it don, withouten wordes more.  
Criseyde, whan she redy was to ride,  
Ful sorwfully she sighte, and seyde "Allas!"  
But forth she moot, for aught that may bitide;  
60 Ther is non other remedie in this cas.  
And forth she rit ful sorwfully a pas.  
What wonder is, though that hire sore smerte,  
Whan she forgoth hire owen swete herte?  
This Troilus, in wise of curteysie,  
With hawk on honde and with an huge route  
Of knyghtes, rood and did hire companye,  
Passyng al the valeye fer withoute,  
And ferther wolde han riden, out of doute,  
Ful fayn, and wo was hym to gon so sone;  
70 But torne he moste, and it was ek to done.  
And right with that was Antenor ycome  
Out of the Grekis oost, and every wight  
Was of it glad, and seyde he was welcome.  
And Troilus, al nere his herte light,  
He peyned hym with al his fulle myght  
Hym to withholde of wepyng atte leeste,  
And Antenor he kiste and made feste.  
And therwithal he moste his leve take,  
And caste his eye upon hire pitously,  
80 And neer he rood, his cause for to make,  
To take hire by the honde al sobrelly.  
And Lord, so she gan wepen tendrely!

And he ful softe and sleighly gan hire seye,  
"Now holde youre day, and do me nat to deye."  
With that his courser torned he aboute  
With face pale, and unto Diomedes  
No word he spak, ne non of al his route;  
Of which the sone of Tideus took hede,  
As he that koude more than the crede  
90 In swich a craft, and by the reyne hire hente;  
And Troilus to Troie homward he wente.  
This Diomedes, that ledde hire by the bridel,  
Whan that he saugh the folk of Troie aweye,  
Thoughte, "Al my labour shal nat ben on ydel,  
If that I may, for somewhat shal I seye,  
For at the werste it may yet shorte oure weye.  
I have herd seyde ek tymes twyes twelve,  
'He is a fool that wol foryete hymselfe.'"  
But natheles, this thoughte he wel ynough,  
100 That "Certeynlich I am aboute nought,  
If that I speke of love or make it tough;  
For douteles, if she have in hire thought  
Hym that I gesse, he may nat ben ybrought  
So soon away; but I shal fynde a meene  
That she naught wite as yet shal what I mene."  
This Diomedes, as he that koude his good,  
Whan tyme was, gan fallen forth in speche  
Of this and that, and axed whi she stood  
In swich disese, and gan hire ek biseche  
110 That if that he encresse myghte or eche  
With any thyng hire ese, that she sholde  
Comaunde it hym, and seyde he don it wolde.  
For treweliche he swor hire as a knyght  
That ther nas thyng with which he myghte hire plese,  
That he nolde don his payne and al his myght  
To don it, for to don hire herte an ese;  
And preyede hire she wolde hire sorwe apese,  
And seyde, "Iwis, we Grekis kan have joie  
To honouren yow as wel as folk of Troie."  
120 He seyde ek thus: "I woot yow thynketh straunge --  
Ne wonder is, for it is to yow newe --  
Th' aquayntaunce of thise Troianis to chaunge  
For folk of Grece, that ye nevere knewe.  
But wolde nevere God but if as trewe

A Grek ye sholde among us alle fynde  
As any Troian is, and ek as kynde.  
"And by the cause I swor yow right, lo, now,  
To ben youre frend, and helply, to my myght,  
And for that more aquayntaunce ek of yow  
130 Have ich had than another straunger wight,  
So fro this forth, I pray yow, day and nyght  
Comaundeth me, how soore that me smerte,  
To don al that may like unto youre herte;  
"And that ye me wolde as youre brother trete,  
And taketh naught my frendshipe in despit;  
And though youre sorwes be for thynges grete --  
Not I nat whi -- but out of more respit  
Myn herte hath for t' amende it gret delit;  
And if I may youre harmes nat redresse,  
140 I am right sory for youre hevynesse,  
"For though ye Troians with us Grekes wrothe  
Han many a day ben, alwey yet, parde,  
O god of Love in soth we serven bothe.  
And for the love of God, my lady fre,  
Whomso ye hate, as beth nat wroth with me,  
For trewely, ther kan no wyght yow serve  
That half so loth youre wratthe wold disserve.  
"And nere it that we ben so neigh the tente  
Of Calcas, which that sen us bothe may,  
150 I wolde of this yow telle al myn entente --  
But this enseled til anothis day.  
Yeve me youre hond; I am, and shal ben ay,  
God helpe me so, while that my lyf may dure,  
Youre owene aboven every creature.  
"Thus seyde I nevere er now to womman born,  
For God myn herte as wisly glade so,  
I loved never womman here-biforn  
As paramours, ne nevere shal no mo.  
And for the love of God, beth nat my fo,  
160 Al kan I naught to yow, my lady deere,  
Compleyne aright, for I am yet to leere.  
"And wondreth nought, myn owen lady bright,  
Though that I speke of love to yow thus blyve;  
For I have herd er this of many a wight,  
Hath loved thyng he nevere saigh his lyve.  
Ek I am nat of power for to stryve

Ayeyns the god of Love, but hym obeye  
I wole alwey; and mercy I yow preye.  
"Ther ben so worthi knyghtes in this place,  
170 And ye so fayr, that everich of hem alle  
Wol peynen hym to stonden in youre grace.  
But myghte me so faire a grace falle,  
That ye me for youre servant wolde calle,  
So lowely ne so trewely yow serve  
Nil non of hem as I shal til I sterve."  
Criseyde unto that purpos lite answerde,  
As she that was with sorwe oppressed so  
That, in effect, she naught his tales herde  
But here and ther, now here a word or two.  
180 Hire thoughte hire sorwful herte brast a-two,  
For whan she gan hire fader fer espie  
Wel neigh down of hire hors she gan to sye.  
But natheles she thonketh Diomede  
Of al his travaile and his goode cheere,  
And that hym list his frendshipe hire to bede;  
And she accepteth it in good manere,  
And wol do fayn that is hym lief and dere,  
And tristen hym she wolde, and wel she myghte,  
As seyde she; and from hire hors sh' alighte.  
190 Hire fader hath hire in his armes nome,  
And twenty tyme he kiste his doughter sweete,  
And seyde, "O deere doughter myn, welcome!"  
She seyde ek she was fayn with hym to mete,  
And stood forth muwet, milde, and mansuete.  
But here I leve hire with hire fader dwelle,  
And forth I wol of Troilus yow telle.  
To Troie is come this woful Troilus,  
In sorwe aboven alle sorwes smerte,  
With feloun look and face dispitous.  
200 Tho sodeynly down from his hors he sterte,  
And thorough his paleis, with a swollen herte,  
To chaumbre he wente; of nothyng took he hede,  
Ne non to hym dar speke a word for drede.  
And ther his sorwes that he spared hadde  
He yaf an issue large, and "Deth!" he criede;  
And in his throwes frenetik and madde  
He corseth Jove, Appollo, and ek Cupide;  
He corseth Ceres, Bacus, and Cipride,

His burthe, hymself, his fate, and ek nature,  
210 And, save his lady, every creature.  
To bedde he goth, and walwith ther and torneth  
In furie, as doth he Ixion in helle,  
And in this wise he neigh til day sojorneth.  
But tho bigan his herte a lite unswelle  
Thorugh teris, which that gonnen up to welle,  
And pitously he cryde upon Criseyde,  
And to hymself right thus he spak, and seyde,  
"Wher is myn owene lady, lief and deere?  
Wher is hire white brest? Wher is it, where?  
220 Wher ben hire armes and hire eyen cleere  
That yesternyght this tyme with me were?  
Now may I wepe allone many a teere,  
And graspe aboute I may, but in this place,  
Save a pilowe, I fynde naught t' embrace.  
"How shal I do? Whan shal she come ayeyn?  
I not, alas, whi lete ich hire to go;  
As wolde God ich hadde as tho ben sleyn!  
O herte myn, Criseyde, O swete fo!  
O lady myn, that I love and na mo,  
230 To whom for evermo myn herte I dowe,  
Se how I dey, ye nyl me nat rescowe!  
"Who seth yow now, my righte lode-sterre?  
Who sit right now or stant in youre presence?  
Who kan conforten now youre hertes werre?  
Now I am gon, whom yeve ye audience?  
Who speketh for me right now in myn absence?  
Allas, no wight; and that is al my care,  
For wel woot I, as yvele as I ye fare.  
"How sholde I thus ten dayes ful endure,  
240 Whan I the firste nyght have al this tene?  
How shal she don ek, sorwful creature?  
For tendernesse, how shal she sustene  
Swich wo for me? O pitous, pale, grene  
Shal ben youre fresshe, wommanliche face  
For langour, er ye torne unto this place."  
And whan he fil in any slomberynge,  
Anon bygynne he sholde for to grone  
And dremen of the dredefulleste thynges  
That myghte ben; as mete he were allone  
250 In place horrible makyng ay his mone,

Or meten that he was amonges alle  
His enemys, and in hire hondes falle.  
And therwithal his body sholde sterte,  
And with the stert al sodeynliche awake,  
And swich a tremour fele aboute his herte  
That of the fere his body sholde quake;  
And therwithal he sholde a noyse make,  
And seme as though he sholde falle depe  
From heighe o-lofte; and thanne he wolde wepe,  
260 And rewen on hymself so pitously  
That wonder was to here his fantasie.  
Another tyme he sholde myghtyly  
Conforte hymself, and sein it was folie  
So causeles swich drede for to drye;  
And eft bygynne his aspre sorwes newe,  
That every man myght on his sorwes rewe.  
Who koude telle aright or ful discryve  
His wo, his pleynt, his langour, and his pyne?  
Naught alle the men that han or ben on lyve.  
270 Thow, redere, maist thiself ful wel devyne  
That swich a wo my wit kan nat diffyne;  
On ydel for to write it sholde I swynke,  
Whan that my wit is wery it to thynke.  
On hevene yet the sterres weren seene,  
Although ful pale ywoxen was the moone,  
And whiten gan the orisonte shene  
Al estward, as it wont is for to doone;  
And Phebus with his rosy carte soone  
Gan after that to dresse hym up to fare  
280 Whan Troilus hath sent after Pandare.  
This Pandare, that of al the day biforn  
Ne myghte han comen Troilus to se,  
Although he on his hed it hadde sworn --  
For with the kyng Priam al day was he,  
So that it lay nought in his libertee  
Nowher to gon -- but on the morwe he wente  
To Troilus, whan that he for hym sente.  
For in his herte he koude wel devyne  
That Troilus al nyght for sorwe wook;  
290 And that he wolde telle hym of his pyne,  
This knew he wel ynough, withoute book.  
For which to chaumbre streght the wey he took,



And Troilus tho sobrelich he grette,  
And on the bed ful sone he gan hym sette.  
"My Pandarus," quod Troilus, "the sorwe  
Which that I drye I may nat longe endure.  
I trowe I shal nat lyven til to-morwe.  
For which I wolde always, on aventure,  
To the devysen of my sepulture  
300 The forme; and of my moeble thow dispone  
Right as the semeth best is for to done.  
"But of the fir and flaumbe funeral  
In which my body brennen shal to glede,  
And of the feste and pleyes palestral  
At my vigile, I prey the, tak good hede  
That that be wel; and offre Mars my steede,  
My swerd, myn helm; and, leve brother deere,  
My sheld to Pallas yef, that shyneth cleere.  
"The poudre in which myn herte ybrend shal torne,  
310 That preye I the thow take and it conserve  
In a vessell that men clepeth an urne,  
Of gold, and to my lady that I serve,  
For love of whom thus pitouslich I sterve,  
So yeve it hire, and do me this plesaunce,  
To preyen hire kepe it for a remembraunce.  
"For wele I fele, by my maladie  
And by my dremes now and yore ago,  
Al certeynly that I mot nedes dye.  
The owle ek, which that hette Escaphilo,  
320 Hath after me shrigh al thise nyghtes two.  
And god Mercurye, of me now, woful wrecche,  
The soule gyde, and whan the liste, it fecche!"  
Pandare answerde and seyde, "Troilus,  
My deere frend, as I have told the yore,  
That it is folye for to sorwen thus,  
And causeles, for which I kan namore.  
But whoso wil nought trowen reed ne loore,  
I kan nat sen in hym no remedie,  
But lat hym worthen with his fantasie.  
330 "But, Troilus, I prey the, tel me now  
If that thow trowe er this that any wight  
Hath loved paramours as wel as thow?  
Ye, God woot, and fro many a worthi knyght  
Hath his lady gon a fourtenyght,

And he nat yet made halvendel the fare.  
What nede is the to maken al this care?  
"Syn day by day thow maist thiselven se  
That from his love, or ellis from his wif,  
A man mot twynnen of necessite --  
340 Ye, though he love hire as his owene lif --  
Yet nyl he with hymself thus maken strif.  
For wel thou woost, my leve brother deere,  
That alwey frendes may nat ben yfeere.  
"How don this folk that seen hire loves wedded  
By frendes myght, as it bitit ful ofte,  
And sen hem in hire spouses bed ybedded?  
God woot, they take it wisly, faire, and softe,  
Forwhi good hope halt up hire herte o-lofte.  
And for they kan a tyme of sorwe endure,  
350 As tyme hem hurt, a tyme doth hem cure.  
"So shuldestow endure, and laten slide  
The tyme, and fonde to ben glad and light.  
Ten dayes nys so longe nought t' abide.  
And syn she the to comen hath bihyght,  
She nyl hire heste breken for no wight.  
For dred the nat that she nyl fynden weye  
To come ayein; my lif that dorste I leye.  
"Thi swevnes ek and al swich fantasie  
Drif out and lat hem faren to meschaunce,  
360 For they procede of thi malencolie  
That doth the fele in slep al this penaunce.  
A straw for alle swevenes signifiaunce!  
God helpe me so, I counte hem nought a bene!  
Ther woot no man aright what dremes mene.  
"For prestes of the temple tellen this,  
That dremes ben the revelaciouns  
Of goddes, and as wel they telle, ywis,  
That they ben infernals illusiouns;  
And leches seyn that of complexiouns  
370 Proceden they, or fast, or glotonye.  
Who woot in soth thus what thei signifie?  
"Ek oother seyn that thorough impressiouns,  
As if a wight hath faste a thyng in mynde,  
That therof cometh swiche avysiouns;  
And other seyn, as they in bokes fynde,  
That after tymes of the yer, by kynde,

Men dreme, and that th' effect goth by the moone.  
But leve no drem, for it is nought to doone.  
"Wel worth. of dremes ay thise olde wives,  
380 And treweliche ek augurye of thise fowles,  
For fere of which men wenen lese here lyves,  
As revenes qualm, or shrichyng of thise owles.  
To trowen on it bothe fals and foul is.  
Allas, alas, so noble a creature  
As is a man shal dreden swich ordure!  
"For which with al myn herte I the biseche,  
Unto thiself that al this thow foryyve;  
And ris now up withowten more speche,  
And lat us caste how forth may best be dryve  
390 This tyme, and ek how fresshly we may lyve  
Whan that she comth, the which shal be right soone.  
God helpe me so, the beste is thus to doone.  
"Ris, lat us speke of lusty lif in Troie  
That we han led, and forth the tyme dryve;  
And ek of tyme comyng us rejoie,  
That bryngen shal oure blisse now so blyve;  
And langour of thise twyes dayes fyve  
We shal therwith so foryete or oppresse  
That wel unneth it don shal us duresse.  
400 "This town is ful of lordes al aboute,  
And trewes lasten al this mene while.  
Go we pleye us in som lusty route  
To Sarpedoun, nat hennes but a myle;  
And thus thow shalt the tyme wel bygile,  
And dryve it forth unto that blisful morwe  
That thow hire se, that cause is of thi sorwe.  
"Now ris, my deere brother Troilus,  
For certes it non honour is to the  
To wepe and in thi bedde to jouken thus;  
410 For trewelich, of o thyng trust to me:  
If thow thus ligge a day, or two, or thre,  
The folk wol seyn that thow for cowardise  
The feynest sik, and that thow darst nat rise!"  
This Troilus answerde, "O brother deere,  
This knowen folk that han ysuffred peyne,  
That though he wepe and make sorwful cheere  
That feleth harm and smert in every veyne,  
No wonder is. and though ich evere pleyne,

Or alwey wepe, I am no thyng to blame,  
420 Syn I have lost the cause of al my game.  
"But syn of fyne force I mot arise,  
I shal arise as soone as evere I may;  
And God, to whom myn herte I sacrifice,  
So sende us hastely the tenthe day!  
For was ther nevere fowel so fayn of May  
As I shal ben whan that she comth in Troie  
That cause is of my torment and my joie.  
"But whider is thi reed," quod Troilus,  
"That we may pleye us best in al this town?"  
430 "By God, my conseil is," quod Pandarus,  
"To ride and pleye us with kyng Sarpedoun."  
So longe of this they speken up and down  
Til Troilus gan at the laste assente  
To rise, and forth to Sarpedoun they wente.  
This Sarpedoun, as he that honourable  
Was evere his lyve, and ful of heigh largesse,  
With al that myghte yservyd ben on table  
That deynte was, al coste it gret richesse,  
He fedde hem day by day, that swich noblesse,  
440 As seyden bothe the mooste and ek the leeste,  
Was nevere er that day wist at any feste.  
Nor in this world ther is non instrument  
Delicious, thorough wynd or touche of corde,  
As fer as any wight hath evere ywent,  
That tonge telle or herte may recorde,  
That at that feste it nas wel herd acorde;  
Ne of ladys ek so fair a compaignie  
On daunce, er tho, was nevere iseye with ie.  
But what availeth this to Troilus,  
450 That for his sorwe nothyng of it roughte?  
For evere in oon his herte pietous  
Ful bisyly Criseyde, his lady, soughte.  
On hire was evere al that his herte thoughte,  
Now this, now that, so faste ymagenynge  
That glade, iwis, kan hym no festeyinge.  
Thise ladies ek that at this feste ben,  
Syn that he saugh his lady was awaye,  
It was his sorwe upon hem for to sen,  
Or for to here on instrumentes pleye.  
460 For she that of his herte berth the keye

Was absent, lo, this was his fantasie --  
That no wight sholde maken melodie.  
Nor ther nas houre in al the day or nyght,  
Whan he was there as no wight myghte hym heere,  
That he ne seyde, "O lufsom lady bryght,  
How have ye faren syn that ye were here?  
Welcome, ywis, myn owne lady deere!"  
But weylaway, al this nat but a maze.  
Fortune his howve entended bet to glaze!  
470 The lettres ek that she of olde tyme  
Hadde hym ysent, he wolde allone rede  
An hondred sithe atwixen noon and prime,  
Refiguryng hire shap, hire wommanhede,  
Withinne his herte, and every word or dede  
That passed was; and thus he drof t' an ende  
The ferthe day, and seyde he wolde wende.  
And seyde, "Leve brother Pandarus,  
Intendestow that we shal here bleve  
Til Sarpedoun wol forth congeyen us?  
480 Yet were it fairer that we toke oure leve.  
For Goddes love, lat us now soone at eve  
Oure leve take, and homward lat us torne,  
For treweliche, I nyl nat thus sojourne."  
Pandare answerde, "Be we comen hider  
To fecchen fir and rennen hom ayein?  
God help me so, I kan nat tellen whider  
We myghte gon, if I shal sothly seyn,  
Ther any wight is of us more feyn  
Than Sarpedoun; and if we hennes hye  
490 Thus sodeynly, I holde it vilanye.  
"Syn that we seyden that we wolde bleve  
With hym a wowke, and now, thus sodeynly,  
The ferthe day to take of hym owre leve --  
He wolde wondren on it, trewely!  
Lat us holden forth oure purpos fermely;  
And syn that ye bihighten hym to bide,  
Holde forward now, and after lat us ride."  
Thus Pandarus, with alle peyne and wo,  
Made hym to dwelle; and at the wikes ende  
500 Of Sarpedoun they toke hire leve tho,  
And on hire wey they spedden hem to wende.  
Quod Troilus, "Now Lord me grace sende,

That I may fynden at myn hom-comynge  
Criseyde comen!" And therwith gan he synge.  
"Ye, haselwode!" thoughte this Pandare,  
And to hymself ful softeliche he seyde,  
"God woot, refreyden may this hote fare,  
Er Calkas sende Troilus Criseyde!"  
But natheles, he japed thus, and pleyde,  
510 And swor, ywys, his herte hym wel bihighte  
She wolde come as soone as evere she myghte.  
Whan they unto the paleys were ycomen  
Of Troilus, they down of hors alighte,  
And to the chambre hire wey than han they nomen;  
And into tyme that it gan to nyghte  
They spoken of Criseyde the brighte;  
And after this, whan that hem bothe leste,  
They spedde hem fro the soper unto reste.  
On morwe, as soone as day bygan to clere,  
520 This Troilus gan of his slep t' abrayde,  
And to Pandare, his owen brother deere,  
"For love of God," ful pitously he sayde,  
"As go we sen the palais of Criseyde;  
For syn we yet may have namore feste,  
So lat us sen hire paleys atte leeste."  
And therwithal, his meyne for to blende,  
A cause he fond in towne for to go,  
And to Criseydes hous they gonnen wende.  
But Lord, this sely Troilus was wo!  
530 Hym thoughte his sorwful herte braste a-two.  
For whan he saugh hire dores spered alle,  
Wel neigh for sorwe adoun he gan to falle.  
Therwith, whan he was war and gan biholde  
How shet was every wyndow of the place,  
As frost, hym thoughte, his herte gan to colde;  
For which with chaunged dedlich pale face,  
Withouten word, he forthby gan to pace,  
And as God wolde, he gan so faste ride  
That no wight of his contenance espide.  
540 Than seide he thus: "O paleys desolat,  
O hous of houses whilom best ihight,  
O paleys empty and disconsolat,  
O thow lanterne of which queynt is the light,  
O paleys, whilom day, that now art nyght,

Wel oughtestow to falle, and I to dye,  
Syn she is went that wont was us to gye!  
"O paleis, whilom crowne of houses alle,  
Enlumyned with sonne of alle blisse!  
O ryng, fro which the ruby is out falle,  
550 O cause of wo, that cause hast ben of lisse!  
Yet, syn I may no bet, fayn wolde I kisse  
Thy colde dores, dorste I for this route;  
And farwel shryne, of which the seynt is oute!"  
Therwith he caste on Pandarus his ye,  
With chaunged face, and pitous to biholde;  
And whan he myghte his tyme aright asprie,  
Ay as he rood to Pandarus he tolde  
His newe sorwe and ek his joies olde,  
So pitously and with so ded an hewe  
560 That every wight myghte on his sorwe rewe.  
Fro thennesforth he rideth up and down,  
And every thyng com hym to remembraunce  
As he rood forby places of the town  
In which he whilom hadde al his plesaunce.  
"Lo, yonder saugh ich last my lady daunce;  
And in that temple, with hire eyen cleere,  
Me kaughte first my righte lady dere.  
"And yonder have I herd ful lustyly  
My dere herte laugh; and yonder pleye  
570 Saugh ich hire ones ek ful blisfully;  
And yonder ones to me gan she seye,  
'Now goode swete, love me wel, I preye';  
And yond so goodly gan she me biholde  
That to the deth myn herte is to hire holde.  
"And at that corner, in the yonder hous,  
Herde I myn alderlevest lady deere  
So wommanly, with vois melodious,  
Syngen so wel, so goodly, and so cleere  
That in my soule yet me thynketh ich here  
580 The blisful sown; and in that yonder place  
My lady first me took unto hire grace."  
Thanne thoughte he thus: "O blisful lord Cupide,  
Whan I the proces have in my memorie  
How thow me hast wereyed on every syde,  
Men myght a book make of it, lik a storie.  
What nede is the to seke on me victorie,

Syn I am thyn and holly at thi wille?  
What joie hastow thyn owen folk to spille?  
"Wel hastow, lord, ywroke on me thyn ire,  
590 Thow myghty god, and dredefull for to greve!  
Now mercy, lord! Thow woost wel I desire  
Thi grace moost of alle lustes leeve,  
And lyve and dye I wol in thy byleve;  
For which I n' axe in guerdoun but o bone --  
That thow Criseyde ayein me sende sone.  
"Destreyne hire herte as faste to retorne  
As thow doost myn to longen hire to see;  
Than woot I wel that she nyl naught sojorne.  
Now blisful lord, so cruel thow ne be  
600 Unto the blood of Troie, I preye the,  
As Juno was unto the blood Thebane,  
For which the folk of Thebes caughte hire bane."  
And after this he to the yates wente  
Ther as Criseyde out rood a ful good paas,  
And up and down ther made he many a wente,  
And to hymself ful ofte he seyde, "Allas,  
Fro hennes rood my blisse and my solas!  
As wolde blisful God now, for his joie,  
I myghte hire sen ayein come into Troie!  
610 "And to the yonder hille I gan hire gyde,  
Allas, and ther I took of hire my leve!  
And yond I saugh hire to hire fader ride,  
For sorwe of which myn herte shal tocleve;  
And hider hom I com whan it was eve,  
And here I dwelle out cast from alle joie,  
And shal, til I may sen hire eft in Troie."  
And of hymself ymagened he ofte  
To ben defet, and pale, and waxen lesse  
Than he was wont, and that men seyden softe,  
620 "What may it be? Who kan the sothe gesse  
Whi Troilus hath al this hevynesse?"  
And al this nas but his malencolie,  
That he hadde of hymself swich fantasie.  
Another tyme ymaginen he wolde  
That every wight that wente by the weye  
Hadde of hym routhe, and that they seyen sholde,  
"I am right sory Troilus wol deye."  
And thus he drof a day yet forth or tweye,



As ye have herd; swich lif right gan he lede  
630 As he that stood bitwixen hope and drede.  
For which hym likede in his songes shewe  
Th' enchesoun of his wo, as he best myghte;  
And made a song of wordes but a fewe,  
Somwhat his woful herte for to lighte;  
And whan he was from every mannes syghte,  
With softe vois he of his lady deere,  
That absent was, gan synge as ye may heere:  
"O sterre, of which I lost have al the light,  
With herte soor wel oughte I to biwaille  
640 That evere derk in torment, nyght by nyght,  
Toward my deth with wynd in steere I saille;  
For which the tenthe nyght, if that I faille  
The gydyng of thi bemes bright an houre,  
My ship and me Caribdis wol devoure."  
This song whan he thus songen hadde, soone  
He fil ayeyn into his sikes olde;  
And every nyght, as was his wone to doone,  
He stood the brighte moone to byholde,  
And al his sorwe he to the moone tolde,  
650 And seyde, "Ywis, whan thou art horned newe,  
I shal be glad, if al the world be trewe!  
"I saugh thyn hornes olde ek by the morwe  
Whan hennes rood my righte lady dere  
That cause is of my torment and my sorwe;  
For which, O brighte Latona the clere,  
For love of God, ren faste aboute thy spere!  
For whan thyne hornes newe gynnen sprynge,  
Than shal she come that may my blisse brynge."  
The dayes moore and lenger every nyght  
660 Than they ben wont to be, hym thoughte tho,  
And that the sonne went his cours unright  
By lenger weye than it was wont to do;  
And seyde, "Ywis, me dredeth evere mo  
The sonnes sone, Pheton, be on lyve,  
And that his fader carte amys he dryve."  
Upon the walles faste ek wolde he walke,  
And on the Grekis oost he wolde se;  
And to hymself right thus he wolde talke:  
"Lo, yonder is myn owene lady free,  
670 Or ellis yonder, ther tho tentes be;

And thennes comth this eyr, that is so soote  
That in my soule I fele it doth me boote.  
"And hardily, this wynd that more and moore  
Thus stoundemele encresseth in my face  
Is of my ladys depe sikes soore.  
I preve it thus: for in noon other place  
Of al this town, save onliche in this space,  
Fele I no wynd that sowneth so lik peyne;  
It seyth, 'Allas! Whi twynned be we tweyne?'"  
680 This longe tyme he dryveth forth right thus  
Til fully passed was the nynthe nyght;  
And ay bisyde hym was this Pandarus,  
That bisily did al his fulle myght  
Hym to conforte and make his herte light,  
Yevyng hym hope alwey the tenthe morwe  
That she shal come and stynten al his sorwe.  
Upon that other syde ek was Criseyde,  
With wommen fewe, among the Grekis stronge,  
For which ful ofte a day "Allas," she seyde,  
690 "That I was born! Wel may myn herte longe  
After my deth, for now lyve I to longe.  
Allas, and I ne may it nat amende,  
For now is wors than evere yet I wende!  
"My fader nyl for nothyng do me grace  
To gon ayeyn, for naught I kan hym queme;  
And if so be that I my terme pace,  
My Troilus shal in his herte deme  
That I am fals, and so it may wel seme:  
Thus shal ich have unthouk on every side --  
700 That I was born so weilaway the tide!  
"And if that I me putte in jupartie  
To stele away by nyght, and it bifalle  
That I be kaught, I shal be holde a spie;  
Or elles -- lo, this drede I moost of alle --  
If in the hondes of som wrecche I falle,  
I nam but lost, al be myn herte trewe.  
Now, myghty God, thow on my sorwe rewe!"  
Ful pale ywoxen was hire brighte face,  
Hire lymes lene, as she that al the day  
710 Stood, whan she dorste, and loked on the place  
Ther she was born, and ther she dwelt hadde ay;  
And al the nyght wepyng, allas, she lay.

And thus despeired, out of alle cure,  
She ladde hire lif, this woful creature.  
Ful ofte a day she sighte ek for destresse,  
And in hireself she wente ay purtraynge  
Of Troilus the grete worthynesse,  
And al his goodly wordes recordyng  
Syn first that day hire love bigan to springe.  
720 And thus she sette hire woful herte afire  
Thorugh remembraunce of that she gan desire.  
In al this world ther nys so cruel herte  
That hire hadde herd compleynen in hire sorwe  
That nolde han wepen for hire peynes smerte,  
So tendrely she weep, bothe eve and morwe.  
Hire nedede no teris for to borwe!  
And this was yet the werste of al hire peyne:  
Ther was no wight to whom she dorste hire pleyne.  
Ful rewfully she loked upon Troie,  
730 Biheld the toures heigh and ek the halles;  
"Allas," quod she, "the plesance and the joie,  
The which that now al torned into galle is,  
Have ich had ofte withinne yonder walles!  
O Troilus, what dostow now?" she seyde.  
"Lord, wheyther thou yet thenke upon Criseyde?  
"Allas, I ne hadde trowed on youre loore  
And went with yow, as ye me redde er this!  
Than hadde I now nat siked half so soore.  
Who myghte han seyde that I hadde don amys  
740 To stele away with swich oon as he ys.  
But al to late comth the letuarie  
Whan men the cors unto the grave carie.  
"To late is now to speke of that matere.  
Prudence, alas, oon of thyne eyen thre  
Me lakked alwey, er that I come here!  
On tyme ypassed wel remembred me,  
And present tyme ek koud ich wel ise,  
But future tyme, er I was in the snare,  
Koude I nat sen; that causeth now my care.  
750 "But natheles, bityde what bityde,  
I shal to-morwe at nyght, by est or west,  
Out of this oost stele in som manere syde,  
And gon with Troilus where as hym lest.  
This purpos wol ich holde, and this is best.

No fors of wikked tonges janglerie,  
For evere on love han wrecches had envye.  
"For whoso wol of every word take hede,  
Or reulen hym by every wightes wit,  
Ne shal he nevere thryven, out of drede;  
760 For that that som men blamen evere yit,  
Lo, other manere folk comenden it.  
And as for me, for al swich variaunce,  
Felicite clepe I my suffisaunce.  
"For which, withouten any wordes mo,  
To Troie I wole, as for conclusioun."  
But God it wot, er fully monthes two,  
She was ful fer fro that entencioun!  
For bothe Troilus and Troie town  
Shal knotteles thoroughout hire herte slide;  
770 For she wol take a purpos for t' abide.  
This Diomede, of whom yow telle I gan,  
Goth now withinne hymself ay arguynge,  
With al the sleghte and al that evere he kan,  
How he may best, with shortest tarynge,  
Into his net Criseydes herte brynge.  
To this entent he koude nevere fyne;  
To fisshen hire he leyde out hook and lyne.  
But natheles, wel in his herte he thoughte  
That she nas nat withoute a love in Troie,  
780 For nevere sythen he hire thennes broughte  
Ne koude he sen hire laughe or maken joie.  
He nyst how best hire herte for t' acoye;  
"But for t' asay," he seyde, "it naught n' agreveth,  
For he that naught n' asaieth naught n' acheveth."  
Yet seyde he to hymself upon a nyght,  
"Now am I nat a fool, that woot wel how  
Hire wo for love is of another wight,  
And hereupon to gon assaye hire now?  
I may wel wite it nyl nat ben my prow,  
790 For wise folk in bookes it expresse,  
'Men shal nat wowe a wight in hevynesse.'  
"But whoso myghte wynnen swich a flour  
From hym for whom she morneth nyght and day,  
He myghte seyn he were a conquerour."  
And right anon, as he that bold was ay,  
Thoughte in his herte, "Happe how happe may,

Al sholde I dye, I wol hire herte seche!  
I shal namore lesen but my speche."  
This Diomedes, as bokes us declare,  
800 Was in his nedes prest and corageous,  
With sterne vois and myghty lymes square,  
Hardy, testif, strong, and chivalrous  
Of dedes, lik his fader Tideus.  
And som men seyn he was of tonge large;  
And heir he was of Calydoigne and Arge.  
Criseyde mene was of hire stature;  
Therto of shap, of face, and ek of cheere,  
Ther myghte ben no fairer creature.  
And ofte tymes this was hire manere:  
810 To gon ytressed with hire heres clere  
Doun by hire coler at hire bak byhynde,  
Which with a thred of gold she wolde bynde;  
And, save hire browes joyneden yfeere,  
Ther nas no lak, in aught I kan espie.  
But for to speken of hire eyen cleere,  
Lo, trewely, they writen that hire syen  
That Paradis stood formed in hire yen.  
And with hire riche beaute evere more  
Strof love in hire ay, which of hem was more.  
820 She sobre was, ek symple, and wys withal,  
The best ynorished ek that myghte be,  
And goodly of hire speche in general,  
Charitable, estatlich, lusty, fre;  
Ne nevere mo ne lakked hire pite;  
Tendre-herted, slydynge of corage;  
But trewely, I kan nat telle hire age.  
And Troilus wel woxen was in highte,  
And complet formed by proporcioun  
So wel that kynde it nought amenden myghte;  
830 Yong, fressh, strong, and hardy as lyoun;  
Trewe as stiel in ech condicioun;  
Oon of the beste entecched creature  
That is or shal whil that the world may dure.  
And certeynly in storye it is yfounde  
That Troilus was nevere unto no wight,  
As in his tyme, in no degree secounde  
In durrung don that longeth to a knyght.  
Al myghte a geant passen hym of myght,

His herte ay with the first and with the beste  
840 Stood paregal, to durre don that hym leste.  
But for to tellen forth of Diomedede:  
It fel that after, on the tenthe day  
Syn that Criseyde out of the citee yede,  
This Diomedede, as fressh as braunche in May,  
Com to the tente ther as Calkas lay,  
And feyned hym with Calkas han to doone;  
But what he mente, I shal yow tellen soone.  
Criseyde, at shorte wordes for to telle,  
Welcomed hym and down hym by hire sette --  
850 And he was ethe ynough to maken dwelle!  
And after this, withouten longe lette,  
The spices and the wyn men forth hem fette;  
And forth they speke of this and that yfeere,  
As frendes don, of which som shal ye heere.  
He gan first fallen of the werre in speche  
Bitwixe hem and the folk of Troie town;  
And of th' assege he gan hire ek biseche  
To telle hym what was hire opynyoun;  
Fro that demaunde he so descendeth down  
860 To axen hire if that hire straunge thoughte  
The Grekis gise and werkes that they wroughte;  
And whi hire fader tarieth so longe  
To wedden hire unto som worthy wight.  
Criseyde, that was in hire peynes stronge  
For love of Troilus, hire owen knyght,  
As ferforth as she konnyng hadde or myght  
Answerde hym tho; but as of his entente,  
It semed nat she wiste what he mente.  
But natheles, this ilke Diomedede  
870 Gan in hymself assure, and thus he seyde:  
"If ich aright have taken of yow hede,  
Me thynketh thus, O lady myn, Criseyde,  
That syn I first hond on youre bridel leyde,  
Whan ye out come of Troie by the morwe,  
Ne koude I nevere sen yow but in sorwe.  
"Kan I nat seyn what may the cause be,  
But if for love of som Troian it were,  
The which right sore wolde athynken me  
That ye for any wight that dwelleth there  
880 Sholden spille a quarter of a tere

Or pitously youreselven so bigile --  
For dredeles, it is nought worth the while.  
"The folk of Troie, as who seyth, alle and some  
In prisoun ben, as ye youreselven se;  
Nor thennes shal nat oon on-lyve come  
For al the gold atwixen sonne and se.  
Trusteth wel, and understondeth me,  
Ther shal nat oon to mercy gon on-lyve,  
Al were he lord of worldes twies fyve!

890 "Swich wreche on hem for fecchyng of Eleyne  
Ther shal ben take, er that we hennes wende,  
That Manes, which that goddes ben of peyne,  
Shal ben agast that Grekes wol hem shende,  
And men shul drede, unto the worldes ende,  
From hennesforth to ravysshyn any queene,  
So cruel shal oure wreche on hem be seene.

"And but if Calkas lede us with ambages --  
That is to seyn, with double wordes slye,  
Swiche as men clepen a word with two visages --  
900 Ye shal wel knowen that I naught ne lie,  
And al this thyng right sen it with youre ye,  
And that anon, ye nyl nat trowe how sone;  
Now taketh hede, for it is for to doone.

"What! Wene ye youre wise fader wolde  
Han yeven Antenor for yow anon,  
If he ne wiste that the cite sholde  
Destroied ben? Whi, nay, so mote I gon!  
He knew ful wel ther shal nat scapen oon  
That Troian is. and for the grete feere

910 He dorste nat ye dwelte lenger there.

"What wol ye more, lufsom lady deere?  
Lat Troie and Troian fro youre herte pace!  
Drif out that bittre hope, and make good cheere,  
And clepe ayeyn the Beaute of youre face  
That ye with salte teris so deface,  
For Troie is brought in swich a jupartie  
That it to save is now no remedie.

"And thenketh wel, ye shal in Grekis fynde  
A moore parfit love, er it be nyght,  
920 Than any Troian is, and more kynde,  
And bet to serven yow wol don his myght.  
And if ye vouchesauf, my lady bright,

I wol ben he to serven yow myselve,  
Yee, levere than be kyng of Greces twelve!"  
And with that word he gan to waxen red,  
And in his speche a litel wight he quok,  
And caste asyde a litel wight his hed,  
And stynte a while; and afterward he wok,  
And sobreliche on hire he threw his lok,  
930 And seyde, "I am, al be it yow no joie,  
As gentil man as any wight in Troie.  
"For if my fader Tideus," he seyde,  
"Ilyved hadde, ich hadde ben er this  
Of Calydoyne and Arge a kyng, Criseyde!  
And so hope I that I shal yet, iwis.  
But he was slayn -- alas, the more harm is. --  
Unhappily at Thebes al to rathe,  
Polymyte and many a man to scathe.  
"But herte myn, syn that I am youre man --  
940 And ben the first of whom I seche grace --  
To serve yow as hertely as I kan,  
And evere shal whil I to lyve have space,  
So, er that I departe out of this place,  
Ye wol me graunte that I may to-morwe,  
At bettre leyser, telle yow my sorwe."  
What sholde I telle his wordes that he seyde?  
He spak inough for o day at the meeste.  
It preveth wel; he spak so that Criseyde  
Graunted on the morwe, at his requeste,  
950 For to speken with hym at the leeste --  
So that he nolde speke of swich matere.  
And thus to hym she seyde, as ye may here,  
As she that hadde hire herte on Troilus  
So faste that ther may it non arace;  
And strangely she spak, and seyde thus:  
"O Diomedes, I love that ilke place  
Ther I was born; and Joves, for his grace,  
Delyvere it soone of al that doth it care!  
God, for thy myght, so leve it wel to fare!  
960 "That Grekis wolde hire wrath on Troie wreke,  
If that they myght, I knowe it wel, iwis;  
But it shal naught byfallen as ye speke,  
And God toforn! And forther over this,  
I woot my fader wys and redy is,



And that he me hath bought, as ye me tolde,  
So deere, I am the more unto hym holde.  
"That Grekis ben of heigh condicioun  
I woot ek wel; but certeyn, men shal fynde  
As worthi folk withinne Troie town,  
970 As konnyng, and as parfit, and as kynde,  
As ben bitwixen Orkades and Inde;  
And that ye koude wel yowre lady serve,  
I trowe ek wel, hire thank for to deserve.  
"But as to speke of love, ywis," she seyde,  
"I hadde a lord, to whom I wedded was,  
The whos myn herte al was, til that he deyde;  
And other love, as help me now Pallas,  
Ther in myn herte nys, ne nevere was.  
And that ye ben of noble and heigh kynrede,  
980 I have wel herd it tellen, out of drede.  
"And that doth me to han so gret a wonder  
That ye wol scornen any womman so.  
Ek, God woot, love and I ben fer ysonder!  
I am disposed bet, so mot I go,  
Unto my deth, to pleyne and maken wo.  
What I shal after don I kan nat seye;  
But trewelich, as yet me list nat pleye.  
"Myn herte is now in tribulacioun,  
And ye in armes bisy day by day.  
990 Herafter, whan ye wonnen han the town,  
Peraventure so it happen may  
That whan I se that nevere yit I say  
Than wol I werke that I nevere wroughte!  
This word to yow ynough suffisen oughte.  
"To-morwe ek wol I speken with yow fayn,  
So that ye touchen naught of this matere.  
And whan yow list, ye may come here ayayn;  
And er ye gon, thus muche I sey yow here:  
As help me Pallas with hire heres clere,  
1000 If that I sholde of any Grek han routhe,  
It sholde be youreselven, by my trouthe!  
"I say nat therfore that I wol yow love,  
N' y say nat nay; but in conclusioun,  
I mene wel, by God that sit above!"  
And therwithal she caste hire eyen down,  
And gan to sike, and seyde, "O Troie town,

Yet bidde I God in quiete and in reste  
I may yow sen, or do myn herte breste."  
But in effect, and shortly for to seye,  
1010 This Diomedes al fresshly newe ayeyn  
Gan pressen on, and faste hire mercy preye;  
And after this, the sothe for to seyn,  
Hire glove he took, of which he was ful feyn;  
And finally, whan it was woxen eve  
And al was wel, he roos and tok his leve.  
The brighte Venus folwede and ay taughte  
The wey ther brode Phebus down alighte;  
And Cynthea hire char-hors overraughte  
To whirle out of the Leoun, if she myghte;  
1020 And Signifer his candels sheweth brighte  
Whan that Criseyde unto hire bedde wente  
Inwith hire fadres faire brighte tente,  
Retornyng in hire soule ay up and down  
The wordes of this sodeyn Diomedes,  
His grete estat, and perel of the town,  
And that she was allone and hadde nede  
Of frendes help; and thus bygan to brede  
The cause whi, the sothe for to telle,  
That she took fully purpos for to dwelle.  
1030 The morwen com, and gostly for to speke,  
This Diomedes is come unto Criseyde;  
And shortly, lest that ye my tale breke,  
So wel he for hymselfen spak and seyde  
That alle hire sikes soore adown he leyde;  
And finally, the sothe for to seyne,  
He refte hire of the grete of al hire peyne.  
And after this the storie telleth us  
That she hym yaf the faire baye stede  
The which he ones wan of Troilus;  
1040 And ek a broche -- and that was litel nede --  
That Troilus was, she yaf this Diomedes.  
And ek, the bet from sorwe hym to releve,  
She made hym were a pencil of hire sleve.  
I fynde ek in stories elleswhere,  
Whan thorough the body hurt was Diomedes  
Of Troilus, tho wep she many a teere  
Whan that she saugh his wyde wounndes blede,  
And that she took, to kepen hym, good hede;

And for to helen hym of his sorwes smerte,  
1050 Men seyn -- I not -- that she yaf hym hire herte.  
But trewely, the storie telleth us,  
Ther made nevere womman moore wo  
Than she, whan that she falsed Troilus.  
She seyde, "Allas, for now is clene ago  
My name of trouthe in love, for everemo!  
For I have falsed oon the gentileste  
That evere was, and oon the worthieste!  
"Allas, of me, unto the worldes ende,  
Shal neyther ben ywriten nor ysonge  
1060 No good word, for thise bokes wol me shende.  
O, rolled shal I ben on many a tonge!  
Thorughout the world my belle shal be ronge!  
And wommen moost wol haten me of alle.  
Allas, that swich a cas me sholde falle!  
"Thei wol seyn, in as mucche as in me is,  
I have hem don dishonour, weylaway!  
Al be I nat the first that dide amys,  
What helpeth that to don my blame away?  
But syn I se ther is no bettre way,  
1070 And that to late is now for me to rewe,  
To Diomedes algate I wol be trewe.  
"But, Troilus, syn I no bettre may,  
And syn that thus departen ye and I,  
Yet prey I God, so yeve yow right good day,  
As for the gentileste, trewely,  
That evere I say, to serven feythfully,  
And best kan ay his lady honour kepe."  
And with that word she brast anon to wepe.  
"And certes yow ne haten shal I nevere;  
1080 And frendes love, that shal ye han of me,  
And my good word, al sholde I lyven evere.  
And trewely I wolde sory be  
For to seen yow in adversitee;  
And gilteles, I woot wel, I yow leve.  
But al shal passe; and thus take I my leve."  
But trewely, how longe it was bytwene  
That she forsok hym for this Diomedes,  
Ther is non auctour telleth it, I wene.  
Take every man now to his bokes heede,  
1090 He shal no terme fynden, out of drede.

For though that he bigan to wowe hire soone,  
Er he hire wan, yet was ther more to doone.  
Ne me ne list this sely womman chyde  
Forther than the storye wol devyse.  
Hire name, alas, is publysshed so wide  
That for hire gilt it oughte ynough suffise.  
And if I myghte excuse hire any wise,  
For she so sory was for hire untrouthe,  
Iwis, I wolde excuse hire yet for routhe.  
1100 This Troilus, as I byfore have told,  
Thus driveth forth, as wel as he hath myght;  
But often was his herte hoot and cold,  
And namely that ilke nynthe nyght,  
Which on the morwe she hadde hym bihight  
To com ayeyn. God woot, ful litel reste  
Hadde he that nyght -- nothyng to slepe hym leste.  
The laurer-crowned Phebus with his heete  
Gan, in his cours ay upward as he wente,  
To warmen of the est se the wawes weete,  
1110 And Nysus doughter song with fressh entente,  
Whan Troilus his Pandare after sente;  
And on the walles of the town they pleyde,  
To loke if they kan sen aught of Criseyde.  
Tyl it was noon they stoden for to se  
Who that ther come, and every maner wight  
That com fro fer, they seyden it was she --  
Til that thei koude knowen hym aright.  
Now was his herte dul, now was it light.  
And thus byjaped stonden for to stare  
1120 Aboute naught this Troilus and Pandare.  
To Pandarus this Troilus tho seyde,  
"For aught I woot, byfor noon, sikirly,  
Into this town ne comth nat here Criseyde.  
She hath ynough to doone, hardyly,  
To wynnen from hire fader, so trowe I.  
Hire olde fader wol yet make hire dyne  
Er that she go -- God yeve hys herte pyne!"  
Pandare answerede, "It may wel be, certeyn.  
And forthi lat us dyne, I the byseche,  
1130 And after noon than maystow come ayeyn."  
And hom they go, withoute more speche,  
And comen ayeyn -- but longe may they seche

Er that they fynde that they after cape.  
Fortune hem bothe thenketh for to jape!  
Quod Troilus, "I se wel now that she  
Is taried with hire olde fader so,  
That er she come, it wol neigh even be.  
Com forth; I wol unto the yate go.  
Thise porters ben unkonnyng evere mo,  
1140 And I wol don hem holden up the yate  
As naught ne were, although she come late."  
The day goth faste, and after that com eve,  
And yet com nought to Troilus Criseyde.  
He loketh forth by hegge, by tre, by greve,  
And fer his hed over the wal he leyde;  
And at the laste he torned hym and seyde,  
"By God, I woot hire menyng now, Pandare!  
Almoost, ywys, al newe was my care.  
"Now douteles, this lady kan hire good;  
1150 I woot she meneth riden pryvely.  
I comende hire wisdom, by myn hood!  
She wol nat maken peple nycely  
Gaure on hire whan she comth, but softly  
By nyghte into the town she thenketh ride.  
And, deere brother, thynk nat longe t' abide.  
"We han naught elles for to don, ywis.  
And Pandarus, now woltow trowen me?  
Have here my trouthe, I se hire! Yond she is.  
Heve up thyn eyen, man! Maistow nat se?"  
1160 Pandare answerede, "Nay, so mote I the!  
Al wrong, by God! What saistow, man? Where arte?  
That I se yond nys but a fare-carte."  
"Allas, thow seyst right soth," quod Troilus.  
"But, hardily, it is naught al for nought  
That in myn herte I now rejoyse thus;  
It is ayeyns som good I have a thought.  
Not I nat how, but syn that I was wrought  
Ne felte I swich a comfort, dar I seye;  
She comth to-nyght, my lif that dorste I leye!"  
1170 Pandare answerde, "It may be, wel ynough,"  
And held with hym of al that evere he seyde.  
But in his herte he thoughte, and softe lough,  
And to hymself ful sobreliche he seyde,  
"From haselwode, there joly Robyn pleyde,

Shal come al that that thow abidest heere.  
Ye, fare wel al the snow of ferne yere!"  
The warden of the yates gan to calle  
The folk which that withoute the yates were,  
And bad hem dryven in hire bestes alle,  
1180 Or all the nyght they moste bleven there.  
And fer withinne the nyght, with many a teere,  
This Troilus gan homward for to ride,  
For wel he seth it helpeth naught t' abide.  
But natheles, he gladed hym in this:  
He thought he misaccounted hadde his day,  
And seyde, "I understonde have al amys.  
For thilke nyght I last Criseyde say,  
She seyde, 'I shal ben here, if that I may,  
Er that the moone, O deere herte swete,  
1190 The Leoun passe, out of this Ariete.'  
"For which she may yet holde al hire byheste."  
And on the morwe unto the yate he wente,  
And up and down, by west and ek by este,  
Upon the walles made he many a wente.  
But al for nought; his hope alwey hym blente.  
For which at nyght, in sorwe and sikes sore,  
He wente hym hom, withouten any more.  
His hope al clene out of his herte fledde;  
He nath wheron now lenger for to honge;  
1200 But for the peyne hym thoughte his herte bledde,  
So were his throwes sharpe and wonder stronge;  
For whan he saugh that she abood so longe,  
He nyste what he juggen of it myghte,  
Syn she hath broken that she hym bihighte.  
The thridde, ferthe, fifte, sexte day  
After tho dayes ten of which I tolde,  
Bitwixen hope and drede his herte lay,  
Yet somewhat trustyng on hire hestes olde.  
But whan he saugh she nolde hire terme holde,  
1210 He kan now sen non other remedie  
But for to shape hym soone for to dye.  
Therwith the wikked spirit, God us blesse,  
Which that men clepeth woode jalousie,  
Gan in hym crepe, in al this hevynesse;  
For which, by cause he wolde soone dye,  
He ne et ne drank, for his malencolye,

And ek from every compaignye he fledde:  
This was the lif that al the tyme he ledde.  
He so defet was, that no manere man  
1220 Unneth hym myghte knowen ther he wente;  
So was he lene, and therto pale and wan,  
And feble, that he walketh by potente;  
And with his ire he thus hymselfe shente.  
But whoso axed hym wherof hym smerte,  
He seyde his harm was al aboute his herte.  
Priam ful ofte, and ek his moder deere,  
His bretheren and his sustren gonne hym freyne  
Whi he so sorwful was in al his cheere,  
And what thyng was the cause of al his peyne;  
1230 But al for naught. He nolde his cause pleyne,  
But seyde he felte a grevous maladie  
Aboute his herte, and fayn he wolde dye.  
So on a day he leyde hym down to slepe,  
And so byfel that yn his slep hym thoughte  
That in a forest faste he welk to wepe  
For love of here that hym these peynes wroughte;  
And up and down as he the forest soughte,  
He mette he saugh a bor with tuskes grete,  
That slepte ayeyn the bryghte sonnes hete.  
1240 And by this bor, faste in his armes folde,  
Lay, kyssyng ay, his lady bryght, Criseyde.  
For sorwe of which, whan he it gan byholde,  
And for despit, out of his slep he breyde,  
And loude he cride on Pandarus, and seyde:  
"O Pandarus, now know I crop and roote.  
I n' am but ded; ther nys noon other bote.  
"My lady bryght, Criseyde, hath me bytrayed,  
In whom I trusted most of ony wight.  
She elliswhere hath now here herte apayed.  
1250 The blysfyl goddes thorough here grete myght  
Han in my drem yshewed it ful right.  
Thus yn my drem Criseyde have I byholde" --  
And al this thing to Pandarus he tolde.  
"O my Criseyde, allas, what subtilte,  
What newe lust, what Beaute, what science,  
What wratthe of juste cause have ye to me?  
What gilt of me, what fel experience  
Hath fro me raft, allas, thyn advertence?

O trust, O feyth, O depe assauraunce!  
1260 Who hath me reft Criseyde, al my plesaunce?  
"Allas, whi leet I you from hennes go,  
For which wel neigh out of my wit I breyde?  
Who shal now trowe on any othes mo?  
God wot, I wende, O lady bright, Criseyde,  
That every word was gospel that ye seyde!  
But who may bet bigile, yf hym lyst,  
Than he on whom men weneth best to triste?  
"What shal I don, my Pandarus, allas?  
I fele now so sharp a newe peyne,  
1270 Syn that ther lith no remedye in this cas,  
That bet were it I with myn hondes tweyne  
Myselven slowh alwey than thus to pleyne;  
For thorough the deth my wo sholde han an ende,  
Ther every day with lyf myself I shende."  
Pandare answerde and seyde, "Allas the while  
That I was born! Have I nat seyde er this,  
That dremes many a maner man bigile?  
And whi? For folk expounden hem amys.  
How darstow seyn that fals thy lady ys  
1280 For any drem, right for thyn owene drede?  
Lat be this thought; thow kanst no dremes rede.  
"Peraunter, ther thow dremest of this boor,  
It may so be that it may signifie  
Hire fader, which that old is and ek hoor,  
Ayeyn the sonne lith o poynt to dye,  
And she for sorwe gynneth wepe and crie,  
And kisseth hym, ther he lith on the grounde:  
Thus sholdestow thi drem aright expounde!"  
"How myghte I than don," quod Troilus,  
1290 "To knowe of this, yee, were it nevere so lite?"  
"Now seystow wisly," quod this Pandarus;  
"My red is this: syn thow kanst wel endite,  
That hastily a lettre thow hire write,  
Thorough which thow shalt wel bryngyn it aboute  
To know a soth of that thow art in doute.  
"And se now whi: for this I dar wel seyn,  
That if so is that she untrewe be,  
I kan nat trowen that she wol write ayeyn.  
And if she write, thow shalt ful sone yse  
1300 As wheither she hath any liberte



To come ayeyn; or ellis in som clause,  
If she be let, she wol assigne a cause.  
"Thow hast nat writen hire syn that she wente,  
Nor she to the; and this I dorste laye,  
Ther may swich cause ben in hire entente  
That hardily thow wolt thiselven saye  
That hire abod the best is for yow twaye.  
Now writ hire thanne, and thow shalt feelee sone  
A soth of al. Ther is namore to done."  
1310 Acorded ben to this conclusioun,  
And that anon, thise ilke lordes two;  
And hastily sit Troilus adown,  
And rolleth in his herte to and fro  
How he may best discryven hire his wo.  
And to Criseyde, his owen lady deere,  
He wrot right thus, and seyde as ye may here:  
"Right fresshe flour, whos I ben have and shal,  
Withouten part of elleswhere servyse,  
With herte, body, lif, lust, thought, and al,  
1320 I, woful wyght, in everich humble wise  
That tonge telle or herte may devyse,  
As ofte as matere occupieth place,  
Me recomaunde unto youre noble grace.  
"Liketh yow to witen, swete herte,  
As ye wel knowe, how longe tyme agon  
That ye me left in aspre peynes smerte,  
Whan that ye wente, of which yet boote non  
Have I non had, but evere wors bigon  
Fro day to day am I, and so mot dwelle,  
1330 While it yow list, of wele and wo my welle.  
"For which to yow, with dredful herte trewe,  
I write, as he that sorwe drifto to write,  
My wo, that everich houre encresseth newe,  
Compleynyng, as I dar or kan endite.  
And that defaced is, that may ye wite  
The teris which that fro myn eyen reyne,  
That wolden speke, if that they koude, and pleyne.  
"Yow first biseche I, that youre eyen clere  
To loke on this defouled ye nat holde;  
1340 And over al this, that ye, my lady deere,  
Wol vouchesauf this lettre to byholde;  
And by the cause ek of my cares colde

That sleth my wit, if aught amys m' asterte,  
Foryeve it me, myn owen swete herte!  
"If any servant dorste or oughte of right  
Upon his lady pitously compleyne,  
Thanne wene I that ich oughte be that wight,  
Considered this, that ye thise monthes tweyne  
Han taried, ther ye seyden, soth to seyne,  
1350 But dayes ten ye nolde in oost sojourne --  
But in two monthes yet ye nat retourne.  
"But for as muche as me moot nedes like  
Al that yow liste, I dar nat pleyne moore,  
But humblely, with sorwful sikes sike,  
Yow write ich myn unresty sorwes soore,  
Fro day to day desiryng evere moore  
To knowen fully, if youre wille it weere,  
How ye han ferd and don whil ye be theere;  
"The whos welfare and hele ek God encresse  
1360 In honour swich that upward in degree  
It growe alwey, so that it nevere cesse.  
Right as youre herte ay kan, my lady free,  
Devyse, I prey to God so moot it be,  
And graunte it that ye soone upon me rewe,  
As wisly as in al I am yow trewe.  
"And if yow liketh knowen of the fare  
Of me, whos wo ther may no wit discryve,  
I kan namore but, chiste of every care,  
At wrytyng of this lettre I was on-lyve,  
1370 Al redy out my woful gost to dryve,  
Which I delaye, and holde hym yet in honde,  
Upon the sighte of matere of youre sonde.  
"Myn eyen two, in veyn with which I se,  
Of sorwful teris salte arn waxen welles;  
My song, in pleynte of myn adversitee;  
My good, in harm; myn ese ek woxen helle is.  
My joie, in wo; I kan sey yow naught ellis,  
But torned is -- for which my lif I warie --  
Everich joie or ese in his contrarie;  
1380 "Which with youre comyng hom ayeyn to Troie  
Ye may redresse, and more a thousand sithe  
Than evere ich hadde encressen in me joie.  
For was ther nevere herte yet so blithe  
To han his lif as I shal ben as swithe

As I yow se; and though no manere routhe  
Commeve yow, yet thynketh on youre trouthe.  
"And if so be my gilt hath deth deserved,  
Or if yow list namore upon me se,  
In guerdoun yet of that I have yow served,  
1390 Byseche I yow, myn owen lady free,  
That hereupon ye wolden write me,  
For love of God, my righte lode-sterre,  
That deth may make an ende of al my werre;  
"If other cause aught doth yow for to dwelle,  
That with youre lettre ye me recomforte;  
For though to me youre absence is an helle,  
With pacience I wol my wo comporte,  
And with youre lettre of hope I wol desporte.  
Now writeth, swete, and lat me thus nat pleyne;  
1400 With hope, or deth, delivereth me fro peyne.  
"Iwis, myne owene deere herte trewe,  
I woot that whan ye next upon me se,  
So lost have I myn hele and ek myn hewe,  
Criseyde shal nought konne knowen me.  
Iwys, myn hertes day, my lady free,  
So thursteth ay myn herte to byholde  
Your beute, that my lif unnethe I holde.  
"I say namore, al have I for to seye  
To yow wel more than I telle may;  
1410 But wheither that ye do me lyve or deye,  
Yet praye I God, so yeve yow right good day!  
And fareth wel, goodly, faire, fresshe may,  
As she that lif or deth may me comande!  
And to youre trouthe ay I me recomande,  
"With hele swich that, but ye yeven me  
The same hele, I shal non hele have.  
In yow lith, whan yow liste that it so be,  
The day in which me clothen shal my grave;  
In yow my lif, in yow myght for to save  
1420 Me fro disese of alle peynes smerte;  
And far now wel, myn owen swete herte! Le vostre T."  
This lettre forth was sent unto Criseyde,  
Of which hire answer in effect was this:  
Ful pitously she wroot ayeyn, and seyde,  
That also sone as that she myghte, ywys,  
She wolde come, and mende al that was mys.

And fynaly she wroot and seyde hym thenne,  
She wolde come, ye, but she nyste whenne.  
But in hire lettre made she swich festes  
1430 That wonder was, and swerth she loveth hym best,  
Of which he fond but botmeles bihestes.  
But Troilus, thow maist now, est or west,  
Pipe in an ivy lef, if that the lest!  
Thus goth the world. God shilde us fro meschaunce,  
And every wight that meneth trouthe avaunce!  
Encressen gan the wo fro day to nyght  
Of Troilus, for taryng of Criseyde;  
And lessen gan his hope and ek his myght,  
For which al down he in his bed hym leyde.  
1440 He ne eet, ne dronk, ne slep, ne word seyde,  
Ymagynyng ay that she was unkynde,  
For which wel neigh he wex out of his mynde.  
This drem, of which I told have ek byforn,  
May nevere outhen of his remembraunce.  
He thought ay wel he hadde his lady lorn,  
And that Joves of his purveyaunce  
Hym shewed hadde in slep the signifiaunce  
Of hire untrouthe and his disaventure,  
And that the boor was shewed hym in figure.  
1450 For which he for Sibille his suster sente,  
That called was Cassandre ek al aboute,  
And al his drem he tolde hire er he stente,  
And hire bisoughte assoilen hym the doute  
Of the stronge boor with tuskes stoute;  
And fynaly, withinne a litel stounde,  
Cassandre hym gan right thus his drem expounde:  
She gan first smyle, and seyde, "O brother deere,  
If thow a soth of this desirest knowe,  
Thow most a fewe of olde stories heere,  
1460 To purpos how that Fortune overthrowe  
Hath lordes olde, thorough which, withinne a throwe,  
Thow wel this boor shalt knowe, and of what kynde  
He comen is, as men in bokes fynde.  
"Diane, which that wroth was and in ire  
For Grekis nolde don hire sacrifice,  
Ne encens upon hire auter sette afire,  
She, for that Grekis gonne hire so despise,  
Wrak hire in a wonder cruel wise;

For with a boor as gret as ox in stalle  
1470 She made up frete hire corn and vynes alle.  
"To sle this boor was al the contre raysed,  
Amonges which ther com, this boor to se,  
A mayde, oon of this world the beste ypreysed;  
And Meleagre, lord of that contree,  
He loved so this fresshe mayden free  
That with his manhod, er he wolde stente,  
This boor he slough, and hire the hed he sente;  
"Of which, as olde bokes tellen us,  
Ther ros a contek and a gret envye;  
1480 And of this lord descended Tideus  
By ligne, or ellis olde bookes lye.  
But how this Meleagre gan to dye  
Thorugh his moder, wol I yow naught telle,  
For al to longe it were for to dwelle."  
She tolde ek how Tideus, er she stente,  
Unto the stronge citee of Thebes,  
To cleymen kyngdom of the citee, wente,  
For his felawe, daun Polymytes,  
Of which the brother, daun Ethiocles,  
1490 Ful wrongfully of Thebes held the strengthe;  
This tolde she by proces, al by lengthe.  
She tolde ek how Hemonydes asterte,  
Whan Tideus slough fifty knyghtes stoute.  
She tolde ek alle the prophecyes by herte,  
And how that seven kynges with hire route  
Bysegeden the citee al aboute;  
And of the holy serpent, and the welle,  
And of the furies, al she gan hym telle;  
Of Archymoris brennyng and the pleyes,  
1500 And how Amphiorax fil thorugh the grounde,  
How Tideus was sleyn, lord of Argeyes,  
And how Ypomedoun in litel stounde  
Was dreynt, and ded Parthonope of wownde;  
And also how Capaneus the proude  
With thonder-dynt was slayn, that cride loude.  
She gan ek telle hym how that eyther brother,  
Ethiocles and Polymyte also,  
At a scarmuche ech of hem slough other,  
And of Argyves wepyng and hire wo;  
1510 And how the town was brent, she tolde ek tho;

And so descendeth down from gestes olde  
To Diomedé, and thus she spak and tolde:  
"This ilke boor bitokneth Diomedé,  
Tideus sone, that down descended is  
Fro Meleagre, that made the boor to blede;  
And thy lady, wherso she be, ywis,  
This Diomedé hire herte hath, and she his.  
Wep if thou wolt, or lef, for out of doute,  
This Diomedé is inne, and thou art oute."  
1520 "Thou seyst nat soth," quod he, "thou sorceresse,  
With al thy false goost of prophecie!  
Thou wenest ben a gret devyneresse!  
Now sestow nat this fool of fantasie  
Peyneth hire on ladys for to lye?  
Away!" quod he. "Ther Joves yeve the sorwe!  
Thou shalt be fals, perauunter, yet tomorwe!  
"As wel thou myghtest lien on Alceste,  
That was of creatures, but men lye,  
That evere weren, kyndest and the beste!  
1530 For whan hire housbonde was in jupertye  
To dye hymself but if she wolde dye,  
She ches for hym to dye and gon to helle,  
And starf anon, as us the bokes telle."  
Cassandre goth, and he with cruel herte  
Foryat his wo, for angre of hire speche;  
And from his bed al sodeynly he sterte,  
As though al hool hym hadde ymad a leche.  
And day by day he gan enquire and seche  
A sooth of this with al his fulle cure;  
1540 And thus he drieth forth his aventure.  
Fortune, which that permutacioun  
Of thynges hath, as it is hire comitted  
Thorugh purveyaunce and disposicioun  
Of heighe Jove, as regnes shal be flitted  
Fro folk in folk, or when they shal be smytte,  
Gan pulle away the fetheres brighte of Troie  
Fro day to day, til they ben bare of joie.  
Among al this, the fyn of the parodie  
Of Ector gan aprochen wonder blyve.  
1550 The fate wolde his soule sholde unbodye,  
And shapen hadde a mene it out to dryve,  
Ayeyns which fate hym helpeth nat to stryve;

But on a day to fighten gan he wende,  
At which -- alas! -- he caughte his lyves ende.  
For which me thynketh every manere wight  
That haunteth armes oughte to biwaille  
The deth of hym that was so noble a knyght;  
For as he drough a kyng by th' aventaille,  
Unwar of this, Achilles thorough the maille  
1560 And thorough the body gan hym for to ryve;  
And thus this worthi knyght was brought of lyve.  
For whom, as olde bokes tellen us,  
Was mad swich wo that tonge it may nat telle,  
And namely, the sorwe of Troilus,  
That next hym was of worthynesse welle;  
And in this wo gan Troilus to dwelle  
That, what for sorwe, and love, and for unreste,  
Ful ofte a day he bad his herte breste.  
But natheles, though he gan hym dispaire,  
1570 And dradde ay that his lady was untrewe,  
Yet ay on hire his herte gan repaire.  
And as thise lovers don, he soughte ay newe  
To gete ayeyn Criseyde, brighte of hewe;  
And in his herte he wente hire excusynge,  
That Calkas caused al hire tariynge.  
And ofte tyme he was in purpos grete  
Hymselfen lik a pilgrym to desgise  
To seen hire; but he may nat contrefete  
To ben unknownen of folk that weren wise,  
1580 Ne fynde excuse aright that may suffise  
If he among the Grekis knowen were;  
For which he wep ful ofte and many a tere.  
To hire he wroot yet ofte tyme al newe  
Ful pitously -- he lefte it nought for slouthe --  
Bisechyng hire that sithen he was trewe,  
That she wol come ayeyn and holde hire trouthe.  
For which Criseyde upon a day, for routhe --  
I take it so -- touchyng al this matere,  
Wrot hym ayeyn, and seyde as ye may here:  
1590 "Cupides sone, ensample of goodlyheede,  
O swerd of knyghthod, sours of gentillesse,  
How myght a wight in torment and in drede  
And heleles, yow sende as yet gladnesse?  
I herteles, I sik, I in destresse!

Syn ye with me, nor I with yow, may dele,  
Yow neyther sende ich herte may nor hele.  
"Youre lettres ful, the papir al ypleynted,  
Conceyved hath myn hertes pietee.  
I have ek seyn with teris al depeynted  
1600 Yourre lettre, and how that ye requeren me  
To come ayeyn, which yet ne may nat be;  
But whi, lest that this lettre founden were,  
No mencion ne make I now, for feere.  
"Grevous to me, God woot, is youre unreste,  
Youre haste, and that the goddes ordinaunce  
It semeth nat ye take it for the beste.  
Nor other thyng nys in youre remembraunce,  
As thynketh me, but only youre plesaunce.  
But beth nat wroth, and that I yow biseche;  
1610 For that I tarie is al for wikked speche.  
"For I have herd wel moore than I wende,  
Touchyng us two, how thynges han ystonde,  
Which I shal with dissymelyng amende.  
And beth nat wroth, I have ek understonde  
How ye ne do but holden me in honde.  
But now no force. I kan nat in yow gesse  
But alle trouthe and alle gentillesse.  
"Come I wole; but yet in swich disjoynte  
I stonde as now that what yer or what day  
1620 That this shal be, that kan I naught apoynte.  
But in effect I pray yow, as I may,  
Of youre good word and of youre frendship ay;  
For trewely, while that my lif may dure,  
As for a frend ye may in me assure.  
"Yet preye ich yow, on yvel ye ne take  
That it is short which that I to yow write;  
I dar nat, ther I am, wel lettres make,  
Ne nevere yet ne koude I wel endite.  
Ek gret effect men write in place lite;  
1630 Th' entente is al, and nat the lettres space.  
And fareth now wel. God have yow in his grace! La vostre Tr 5 C."  
This Troilus this lettre thoughte al straunge  
Whan he it saugh, and sorwfullich he sighte;  
Hym thoughte it lik a kalendes of chaunge.  
But fynaly, he ful ne trowen myghte  
That she ne wolde hym holden that she hyghte;



For with ful yvel wille list hym to leve  
That loveth wel, in swich cas, though hym greve.  
But natheles men seyen that at the laste,  
1640 For any thyng, men shal the soothe se;  
And swich a cas bitidde, and that as faste,  
That Troilus wel understod that she  
Nas nought so kynde as that hire oughte be.  
And fynaly, he woot now out of doute  
That al is lost that he hath ben aboute.  
Stood on a day in his malencolie  
This Troilus, and in suspecioun  
Of hire for whom he wende for to dye.  
And so bifel that thoroughout Troye town,  
1650 As was the gise, iborn was up and down  
A manere cote-armure, as seith the storie,  
Byforn Deiphebe, in signe of his victorie;  
The whiche cote, as telleth Lollius,  
Deiphebe it hadde rent fro Diomede  
The same day. And whan this Troilus  
It saugh, he gan to taken of it hede,  
Avysyng of the lengthe and of the brede,  
And al the werk; but as he gan byholde,  
Ful sodeynly his herte gan to colde,  
1660 As he that on the coler fond withinne  
A broch that he Criseyde yaf that morwe  
That she from Troie moste nedes twynne,  
In remembraunce of hym and of his sorwe.  
And she hym leyde ayeyn hire feith to borwe  
To kepe it ay! But now ful wel he wiste,  
His lady nas no lenger on to triste.  
He goth hym hom and gan ful soone sende  
For Pandarus, and al this newe chaunce,  
And of this broche, he tolde hym word and ende,  
1670 Compleynyng of hire hertes variaunce,  
His longe love, his trouthe, and his penaunce.  
And after deth, withouten wordes moore,  
Ful faste he cride, his reste hym to restore.  
Than spak he thus, "O lady myn, Criseyde,  
Where is youre feith, and where is youre biheste?  
Where is youre love? Where is youre trouthe?" he seyde.  
"Of Diomede have ye now al this feeste!  
Allas, I wolde han trowed atte leeste

That syn ye nolde in trouthe to me stonde,  
1680 That ye thus nolde han holden me in honde!

"Who shal now trowe on any othes mo?  
Allas, I nevere wolde han wend, er this,  
That ye, Criseyde, koude han chaunged so;  
Ne, but I hadde agilt and don amys,  
So cruel wende I nought youre herte, ywis,  
To sle me thus! Allas, youre name of trouthe  
Is now fordon, and that is al my routhe.

"Was ther non other broch yow liste lete  
To feffe with youre newe love," quod he,  
1690 "But thilke broch that I, with teris wete,  
Yow yaf as for a remembraunce of me?  
Non other cause, allas, ne hadde ye  
But for despit, and ek for that ye mente  
Al outrely to shewen youre entente.

"Thorugh which I se that clene out of youre mynde  
Ye han me cast -- and I ne kan nor may,  
For al this world, withinne myn herte fynde  
To unloven yow a quarter of a day!  
In corsed tyme I born was, weilaway,  
1700 That yow, that doon me al this wo endure,  
Yet love I best of any creature!

"Now God," quod he, "me sende yet the grace  
That I may meten with this Diomedes!  
And trewely, if I have myght and space,  
Yet shal I make, I hope, his sydes blede.  
O God," quod he, "that oughtest taken heede  
To fortheren trouthe, and wronges to punyce,  
Whi nyltow don a vengeaunce of this vice?

"O Pandarus, that in dremes for to triste  
1710 Me blamed hast, and wont art oft upbreyde,  
Now maistow sen thiself, if that the liste,  
How trewe is now thi nece, bright Criseyde!  
In sondry formes, God it woot," he seyde,  
"The goddes shewen bothe joie and tene  
In slep, and by my drem it is now sene.  
"And certeynly, withouten moore speche,  
From hennesforth, as ferforth as I may,  
Myn owen deth in armes wol I seche;  
I recche nat how soone be the day!

1720 But trewely, Criseyde, swete may,

Whom I have ay with al my myght yserved,  
That ye thus doon, I have it nat deserved."  
This Pandarus, that al thise thynges herde,  
And wiste wel he seyde a soth of this,  
He nought a word ayeyn to hym answerde;  
For sory of his frendes sorwe he is,  
And shamed for his nece hath don amys,  
And stant, astoned of thise causes tweye,  
As stille as ston; a word ne kowde he seye.  
1730 But at the laste thus he spak, and seyde:  
"My brother deer, I may do the namore.  
What sholde I seyen? I hate, ywys, Cryseyde;  
And, God woot, I wol hate hire evermore!  
And that thow me bisoughtest don of yoore,  
Havyng unto myn honour ne my reste  
Right no reward, I dide al that the leste.  
"If I dide aught that myghte liken the,  
It is me lief; and of this tresoun now,  
God woot that it a sorwe is unto me!  
1740 And dredeles, for hertes ese of yow,  
Right fayn I wolde amende it, wiste I how.  
And fro this world, almyghty God I preye  
Delivere hire soon! I kan namore seye."  
Gret was the sorwe and pleynte of Troilus,  
But forth hire cours Fortune ay gan to holde.  
Criseyde loveth the sone of Tideus,  
And Troilus moot wepe in cares colde.  
Swich is this world, whoso it kan byholde;  
In ech estat is litel hertes reste.  
1750 God leve us for to take it for the beste!  
In many cruel bataille, out of drede,  
Of Troilus, this ilke noble knyght,  
As men may in thise olde bokes rede,  
Was seen his knyghthod and his grete myght;  
And dredeles, his ire, day and nyght,  
Ful cruwely the Grekis ay aboughte;  
And alwey moost this Diomed he soughte.  
And ofte tyme, I fynde that they mette  
With bloody strokes and with wordes grete,  
1760 Assayinge how hire speres weren whette;  
And, God it woot, with many a cruel hete  
Gan Troilus upon his helm to bete!

But natheles, Fortune it naught ne wolde  
 Of oothers hond that eyther deyen sholde.  
 And if I hadde ytaken for to write  
 The armes of this ilke worthi man,  
 Than wolde ich of his batailles endite;  
 But for that I to writen first bigan  
 Of his love, I have seyde as I kan --  
 1770 His worthi dedes, whoso list hem heere,  
 Rede Dares, he kan telle hem alle ifeere --  
 Bysechyng every lady bright of hewe,  
 And every gentil womman, what she be,  
 That al be that Criseyde was untrewed,  
 That for that gilt she be nat wroth with me.  
 Ye may hire gilt in other bokes se;  
 And gladlier I wol write, yif yow leste,  
 Penolopees trouthe and good Alceste.  
 N' y sey nat this al oonly for thise men,  
 1780 But moost for wommen that bitraised be  
 Thorough false folk -- God yeve hem sorwe, amen! --  
 That with hire grete wit and subtilte  
 Bytraise yow. And this commeveth me  
 To speke, and in effect yow alle I preye,  
 Beth war of men, and herkne what I seye!  
 Go, litel bok, go, litel myn tragedye,  
 Ther God thi makere yet, er that he dye,  
 So sende myght to make in som comedye!  
 But litel book, no makyng thow n' envie,  
 1790 But subgit be to alle poesy;  
 And kis the steppes where as thow seest pace  
 Virgile, Ovide, Omer, Lucan, and Stace.  
 And for ther is so gret diversite  
 In Englissh and in wrytyng of oure tonge,  
 So prey I God that non myswrite the,  
 Ne the mysmetre for defaute of tonge;  
 And red wherso thow be, or elles songe,  
 That thow be understonde, God I biseche!  
 But yet to purpos of my rather speche:  
 1800 The wrath, as I bigan yow for to seye,  
 Of Troilus the Grekis boughten deere,  
 For thousandes his hondes maden deye,  
 As he that was withouten any peere,  
 Save Ector, in his tyme, as I kan heere.

But -- weilawey, save only Goddes wille,  
Despitously hym slough the fierse Achille.  
And whan that he was slayn in this manere,  
His lighte goost ful blisfully is went  
Up to the holughnesse of the eighthe spere,  
1810 In convers letyng everich element;  
And ther he saugh with ful avysement  
The erratik sterres, herkenyng armonye  
With sownes ful of hevenyss melodye.  
And down from thennes faste he gan avyse  
This litel spot of erthe that with the se  
Embraced is, and fully gan despise  
This wrecched world, and held al vanite  
To respect of the pleyn felicite  
That is in hevene above; and at the laste,  
1820 Ther he was slayn his lokyng down he caste,  
And in hymself he lough right at the wo  
Of hem that wepten for his deth so faste,  
And dampned al oure werk that foloweth so  
The blynde lust, the which that may nat laste,  
And sholden al oure herte on heven caste;  
And forth he wente, shortly for to telle,  
1827 Ther as Mercurye sorted hym to dwelle.  
Swich fyn hath, lo, this Troilus for love!  
Swich fyn hath al his grete worthynesse!  
1830 Swich fyn hath his estat real above!  
Swich fyn his lust, swich fyn hath his noblesse!  
Swych fyn hath false worldes brotelnesse!  
And thus bigan his lovyng of Criseyde,  
As I have told, and in this wise he deyde.  
O yonge, fresshe folkes, he or she,  
In which that love up groweth with youre age,  
Repeyareth hom fro worldly vanyte,  
And of youre herte up casteth the visage  
To thilke God that after his ymage  
1840 Yow made, and thynketh al nys but a faire,  
This world that passeth soone as floures faire.  
And loveth hym the which that right for love  
Upon a crois, oure soules for to beye,  
1844 First starf, and roos, and sit in hevene above;  
For he nyl falsen no wight, dar I seye,  
That wol his herte al holly on hym leye.

And syn he best to love is, and most meke,  
What nedeth feynede loves for to seke?  
Lo here, of payens corsed olde rites!  
1850 Lo here, what alle hire goddes may availle!  
Lo here, thise wrecched worldes appetites!  
Lo here, the fyn and guerdoun for travaille  
Of Jove, Appollo, of Mars, of swich rascaille!  
Lo here, the forme of olde clerkis speche  
In poetrie, if ye hire bokes seche.  
O moral Gower, this book I directe  
To the and to the, philosophical Strode,  
To vouchen sauf, ther nede is, to correcte,  
Of youre benignites and zeles goode.  
1860 And to that sothfast Crist, that starf on rode,  
With al myn herte of mercy evere I preye,  
And to the Lord right thus I speke and seye:  
Thow oon, and two, and thre, eterne on lyve,  
That regnest ay in thre, and two, and oon,  
Uncircumscript, and al maist circumscribe,  
Us from visible and invisible foon  
Defende, and to thy mercy, everichon,  
So make us, Jesus, for thi mercy, digne,  
For love of mayde and moder thyn benigne.  
1870 Amen.



## THE LEGEND OF GOOD WOMEN

### PROLOGUE F

A thousand tymes have I herd men telle  
That ther ys joy in hevene and peyne in helle,  
And I acorde wel that it ys so;  
But, natheles, yet wot I wel also  
That ther nis noon dwellyng in this contree  
That eyther hath in hevene or helle ybe,  
Ne may of hit noon other weyes witen  
But as he hath herd seyde or founde it writen;  
For by assay ther may no man it preve.  
10 But God forbede but men shulde leve  
Wel more thing than men han seen with ye!  
Men shal not wenen every thing a lye  
But yf himself yt seeth or elles dooth.  
For, God wot, thing is never the lasse sooth,  
Thogh every wight ne may it nat ysee.  
Bernard the monk ne saugh nat all, pardee!  
Than mote we to bokes that we fynde,  
Thurgh whiche that olde thinges ben in mynde,  
And to the doctrine of these olde wyse,  
20 Yeve credence, in every skylful wise,  
That tellen of these olde appreved stories  
Of holynesse, of regnes, of victories,  
Of love, of hate, of other sondry thynges,  
Of whiche I may not maken rehersynges.  
And yf that olde bokes were awaye,  
Yloren were of remembraunce the keye.  
Wel ought us thanne honouren and beleve  
These bokes, there we han noon other preve.  
And as for me, though that I konne but lyte,  
30 On bokes for to rede I me delyte,  
And to hem yive I feyth and ful credence,  
And in myn herte have hem in reverence  
So hertely, that ther is game noon  
That fro my bokes maketh me to goon,  
But yt be seldom on the holyday,  
Save, certeynly, whan that the month of May  
Is comen, and that I here the foules synge,  
And that the floures gynnen for to sprynge,

Farewel my bok and my devocioun!  
40 Now have I thanne eek this condicioun,  
That, of al the floures in the mede,  
Thanne love I most thise floures white and rede,  
Swiche as men callen daysyes in our toun.  
To hem have I so gret affeccioun,  
As I seyde erst, whanne comen is the May,  
That in my bed ther daweth me no day  
That I nam up and walkyng in the mede  
To seen this flour ayein the sonne sprede,  
Whan it upryseth erly by the morwe.  
50 That blisful sighte softneth al my sorwe,  
So glad am I, whan that I have presence  
Of it, to doon it alle reverence,  
As she that is of alle floures flour,  
Fulfilled of al vertu and honour,  
And evere ilyke faire and fressh of hewe;  
And I love it, and ever ylike newe,  
And evere shal, til that myn herte dye.  
Al swere I nat, of this I wol nat lye;  
Ther loved no wight hotter in his lyve.  
60 And whan that hit ys eve, I renne blyve,  
As sone as evere the sonne gynneth weste,  
To seen this flour, how it wol go to reste,  
For fere of nyght, so hateth she derknesse.  
Hire chere is pleyntly sprad in the brightnesse  
Of the sonne, for ther yt wol uncloze.  
Allas, that I ne had Englyssh, ryme or prose,  
Suffisant this flour to preyse aryght!  
But helpeth, ye that han konnyng and myght,  
Ye lovers that kan make of sentement;  
70 In this cas oghte ye be diligent  
To forthren me somewhat in my labour,  
Whethir ye ben with the leef or with the flour.  
For wel I wot that ye han her-biforn  
Of makyng ropen, and lad away the corn,  
And I come after, glenyng here and there,  
And am ful glad yf I may fynde an ere  
Of any goodly word that ye han left.  
And thogh it happen me rehercen eft  
That ye han in your fresshe songes sayd,  
80 Forbereth me, and beth nat evele apayd,



Syn that ye see I do yt in the honour  
Of love, and eke in service of the flour  
Whom that I serve as I have wit or myght.  
She is the clernesse and the verray lyght  
That in this derke world me wynt and ledeth.  
The hert in-with my sorwfull brest yow dredeth  
And loveth so sore that ye ben verrayly  
The maistresse of my wit, and nothing I.  
My word, my werk ys knyt so in youre bond  
90 That, as an harpe obeieth to the hond  
And maketh it soune after his fyngerynge,  
Ryght so mowe ye oute of myn herte bringe  
Swich vois, ryght as yow lyst, to laughe or pleyne.  
Be ye my gide and lady sovereyne!  
As to myn erthly god to yow I calle,  
Bothe in this werk and in my sorwes alle.  
But wherfore that I spak, to yive credence  
To olde stories and doon hem reverence,  
And that men mosten more thyng beleve  
100 Then men may seen at eye, or elles preve --  
That shal I seyn, whanne that I see my tyme;  
I may not al at-ones speke in ryme.  
My besy gost, that thursteth alwey newe  
To seen this flour so yong, so fressh of hewe,  
Constreyned me with so gledy desir  
That in myn herte I feele yet the fir  
That made me to ryse er yt were day --  
And this was now the firste morwe of May --  
With dredful hert and glad devocioun,  
110 For to ben at the resureccioun  
Of this flour, whan that yt shulde uncloze  
Agayn the sonne, that roos as red as rose,  
That in the brest was of the beste, that day,  
That Agenores doghtre ladde away.  
And doun on knes anoon-ryght I me sette,  
And, as I koude, this fresshe flour I grette,  
Knelyng alwey, til it unclosed was,  
Upon the smale, softe, swote gras,  
That was with floures swote enbrouded al,  
120 Of swich swetnesse and swich odour overal,  
That, for to speke of gomme, or herbe, or tree,  
Comparisoun may noon ymaked bee;

For yt surmounteth pleyedly alle odoures,  
And of riche beaute alle floures.  
Forgeten hadde the erthe his pore estat  
Of wynter, that hym naked made and mat,  
And with his swerd of cold so sore greved;  
Now hath th' atempre sonne all that releved,  
That naked was, and clad him new agayn.  
130 The smale foules, of the sesoun fayn,  
That from the panter and the net ben scaped,  
Upon the fowler, that hem made awhaped  
In wynter, and distroyed hadde hire brood,  
In his dispit hem thoghte yt did hem good  
To synge of hym, and in hir song despise  
The foule cherl that, for his coveytise,  
Had hem betrayed with his sophistrye.  
This was hire song: "The fowler we deffye,  
And al his craft." And somme songen clere  
140 Layes of love, that joye it was to here,  
In worship and in preysinge of hir make;  
And for the newe blisful somers sake,  
Upon the braunches ful of blosmes softe,  
In hire delyt they turned hem ful ofte,  
And songen, "Blessed be Seynt Valentyn,  
For on his day I chees yow to be myn,  
Withouten repentyng, myn herte swete!"  
And therwithalle hire bekes gonnen meete,  
Yeldyng honour and humble obeysaunces  
150 To love, and diden hire other observaunces  
That longeth onto love and to nature;  
Construeth that as yow lyst, I do no cure.  
And thoo that hadde doon unkyndenesse --  
As dooth the tydif, for newfangelnesse --  
Besoghte mercy of hir trespassynge,  
And humblely songen hire repentyng,  
And sworn on the blosmes to be trewe  
So that hire makes wolde upon hem rewe,  
And at the laste maden hire acord.  
160 Al founde they Daunger for a tyme a lord,  
Yet Pitee, thurgh his stronge gentil myght,  
Forgaf, and made Mercy passen Ryght,  
Thurgh innocence and ruled Curtesye.  
But I ne clepe nat innocence folye,

Ne fals pitee, for vertu is the mene,  
As Etik seith. in swich maner I mene.  
And thus thise foweles, voide of al malice,  
Acordeden to love, and laften vice  
Of hate, and songen alle of oon acord,  
170 "Welcome, somer, oure governour and lord!"  
And Zepherus and Flora gentilly  
Yaf to the floures, softe and tenderly,  
Hire swoote breth, and made hem for to sprede,  
As god and goddesse of the floury mede;  
In which me thoghte I myghte, day by day,  
Duellen alwey, the joly month of May,  
Withouten slep, withouten mete or drynke.  
Adoun ful softly I gan to synke,  
And, lenynge on myn elbowe and my syde,  
180 The longe day I shoop me for t' abide  
For nothing elles, and I shal nat lye,  
But for to loke upon the dayesie,  
That wel by reson men it calle may  
The "dayesye," or elles the "ye of day,"  
The emperice and flour of floures alle.  
I pray to God that faire mote she falle,  
And alle that loven floures, for hire sake!  
But natheles, ne wene nat that I make  
In preysing of the flour agayn the leef,  
190 No more than of the corn agayn the sheef;  
For, as to me, nys lever noon ne lother.  
I nam withholden yit with never nother;  
Ne I not who serveth leef ne who the flour.  
Wel browken they her service or labour;  
For this thing is al of another tonne,  
Of olde storye, er swich stryf was begonne.  
Whan that the sonne out of the south gan weste,  
And that this flour gan close and goon to reste  
For derknesse of the nyght, the which she dredde,  
200 Hom to myn hous ful swiftly I me spedde  
To goon to reste, and erly for to ryse,  
To seen this flour to sprede, as I devyse.  
And in a litel herber that I have,  
That benched was on turves fressh ygrave,  
I bad men sholde me my couche make;  
For deyntee of the newe someres sake,

I bad hem strawen floures on my bed.  
Whan I was leyd and had myn eyen hed,  
I fel on slepe within an houre or twoo.  
210 Me mette how I lay in the medewe thoo,  
To seen this flour that I so love and drede;  
And from afer com walkyng in the mede  
The god of Love, and in his hand a quene,  
And she was clad in real habit grene.  
A fret of gold she hadde next her heer,  
And upon that a whit corowne she beer  
With flourouns smale, and I shal nat lye;  
For al the world, ryght as a dayesye  
Ycorouned ys with white leves lyte,  
220 So were the flowrouns of hire coroune white.  
For of o perle fyn, oriental,  
Hire white coroune was ymaked al;  
For which the white coroune above the grene  
Made hire lyk a daysie for to sene,  
Considered eke hir fret of gold above.  
Yclothed was this myghty god of Love  
In silk, enbrouded ful of grene greves,  
In-with a fret of rede rose-leves,  
The fresshest syn the world was first bygonne.  
230 His gilte heer was corowned with a sonne  
Instede of gold, for hevynesse and wyghte.  
Therwith me thoghte his face shoon so bryghte  
That wel unnethes myghte I him beholde;  
And in his hand me thoghte I saugh him holde  
Twoo firy dartes as the gledes rede,  
And aungelyke hys wynges saugh I sprede.  
And al be that men seyn that blynd ys he,  
Algate me thoghte that he myghte se;  
For sternely on me he gan byholde,  
240 So that his lokyng dooth myn herte colde.  
And by the hand he held this noble quene  
Corowned with whit and clothed al in grene,  
So womanly, so benigne, and so meke,  
That in this world, thogh that men wolde seke,  
Half hire Beaute shulde men nat fynde  
In creature that formed ys by kynde.  
And therefore may I seyn, as thynketh me,  
This song in preysyng of this lady fre:

Hyd, Absolon, thy gilte tresses clere;  
250 Ester, ley thou thy meknesse al adown;  
Hyd, Jonathas, al thy frendly manere;  
Penalopee and Marcia Catoun,  
Make of youre wifhod no comparysoun;  
Hyde ye youre beautes, Ysoude and Eleyne:  
My lady cometh, that al this may disteyne.  
Thy faire body, lat yt nat appere,  
Lavyne; and thou, Lucesse of Rome toun,  
And Polixene, that boghten love so dere,  
And Cleopatre, with al thy passyoun,  
260 Hyde ye your trouthe of love and your renoun;  
And thou, Tisbe, that hast for love swich peyne:  
My lady cometh, that al this may disteyne.  
Herro, Dido, Laudomia, alle yfere,  
And Phillis, hangyng for thy Demophoun,  
And Canace, espied by thy chere,  
Ysiphile, betrayed with Jasoun,  
Maketh of your trouthe neythir boost ne soun;  
Nor Ypermystre or Adriane, ye tweyne:  
My lady cometh, that al this may dysteyne.  
270 This balade may ful wel ysongen be,  
As I have seyde erst, by my lady free;  
For certeynly al thise mowe nat suffise  
To apperen wyth my lady in no wyse.  
For as the sonne wole the fyr disteyne,  
So passeth al my lady sovereyne,  
That ys so good, so faire, so debonayre,  
I preye to God that ever falle hire faire!  
For, hadde comfort ben of hire presence,  
I hadde ben ded, withouten any defence,  
280 For drede of Loves wordes and his chere,  
As, when tyme ys, hereafter ye shal here.  
Behynde this god of Love, upon the grene,  
I saugh comyng of ladyes nyntene,  
In real habit, a ful esy paas,  
And after hem coome of wymen swich a traas  
That, syn that God Adam hadde mad of erthe,  
The thridde part, of mankynde, or the ferthe,  
Ne wende I not by possibilitee  
Had ever in this wide world ybee;  
290 And trewe of love thise women were echon.

Now wheither was that a wonder thing or non,  
That ryght anoon as that they gonne espye  
Thys flour which that I clepe the dayesie,  
Ful sodeynly they stynten al attones,  
And kneled down, as it were for the nones,  
And songen with o vois, "Heel and honour  
To trouthe of womanhede, and to this flour  
That bereth our alder pris in figurynge!  
Hire white corowne bereth the witnessynge."  
300 And with that word, a-compas enviroun,  
They setten hem ful softly adoun.  
First sat the god of Love, and syth his quene  
With the white corowne, clad in grene,  
And sithen al the remenaunt by and by,  
As they were of estaat, ful curteysly;  
Ne nat a word was spoken in the place  
The mountaunce of a furlong wey of space.  
I, knelyng by this flour, in good entente,  
Abood to knowen what this peple mente,  
310 As stille as any ston; til at the laste  
This god of Love on me hys eyen caste,  
And seyde, "Who kneleth there?" And I answerde  
Unto his askynge, whan that I it herde,  
And seyde, "Sir, it am I," and com him ner,  
And salwed him. Quod he, "What dostow her  
So nygh myn oun flour, so boldely?  
Yt were better worthy, trewely,  
A worm to neghen ner my flour than thou."  
"And why, sire," quod I, "and yt lyke yow?"  
320 "For thou," quod he, "art therto nothing able.  
Yt is my relyke, digne and delytable,  
And thou my foo, and al my folk werreyest,  
And of myn olde servauntes thou mysseyest,  
And hynderest hem with thy translacioun,  
And lettest folk from hire devocioun  
To serve me, and holdest it folye  
To serve Love. Thou maist yt nat denyen,  
For in pleyn text, withouten nede of glose,  
Thou hast translated the Romaunce of the Rose,  
330 That is an heresye ayeins my lawe,  
And makest wise folk fro me withdrawe;  
And of Creseyde thou hast seyde as the lyst,

That maketh men to wommen lasse triste,  
That ben as trewe as ever was any steel.  
Of thyn answer avise the ryght weel;  
For thogh thou reneyed hast my lay,  
As other wrecches han doon many a day,  
By Seynt Venus that my moder ys,  
If that thou lyve, thou shalt repenten this  
340 So cruelly that it shal wel be sene!"  
Thoo spak this lady, clothed al in grene,  
And seyde, "God, ryght of youre curtesye,  
Ye moten herken yf he can replye  
Agayns al this that ye have to him meved.  
A god ne sholde nat thus be agreved,  
But of hys deitee he shal be stable,  
And therto gracious and merciablen.  
And yf ye nere a god, that knowen al,  
Thanne myght yt be as I yow tellen shal:  
350 This man to yow may falsly ben accused  
That as by right him oughte ben excused.  
For in youre court ys many a losengeour,  
And many a queynte totelere accusour,  
That tabouren in youre eres many a sown,  
Ryght after hire ymagynacioun,  
To have youre daliance, and for envie.  
Thise ben the causes, and I shal not lye.  
Envie ys lavendere of the court alway,  
For she ne parteth, neither nyght ne day,  
360 Out of the hous of Cesar; thus seith Dante;  
Whoso that gooth, algate she wol nat wante.  
And eke, peraunter, for this man ys nyce,  
He myghte doon yt, gessyng no malice,  
But for he useth thynges for to make;  
Hym rekketh noght of what matere he take.  
Or him was boden maken thilke tweye  
Of som persone, and durste yt nat withseye;  
Or him repenteth outrely of this.  
He ne hath nat doon so grevously amys  
370 To translaten that olde clerkes writen,  
As thogh that he of malice wolde enditen  
Despit of love, and had himself yt wroght.  
This shoolde a ryghtwis lord have in his thoght,  
And nat be lyk tirauntz of Lumbardye,

That han no reward but at tyrannye.  
For he that kynge or lord ys naturel,  
Hym oghte nat be tiraunt ne crewel  
As is a fermour, to doon the harm he kan.  
He moste thinke yt is his lige man,  
380 And is his tresour and his gold in cofre.  
This is the sentence of the Philosophre,  
A kyng to kepe his liges in justice;  
Withouten doute, that is his office.  
Al wol he kepe his lordes hire degree,  
As it ys ryght and skilful that they bee  
Enhaunced and honoured, and most dere --  
For they ben half-goddes in this world here --  
Yit mot he doon bothe ryght, to poore and ryche,  
Al be that hire estaat be nat yliche,  
390 And han of poore folk compassyoun.  
For loo, the gentil kynde of the lyoun:  
For whan a flye offendeth him or biteth,  
He with his tayl away the flye smyteth  
Al esely; for, of hys genterye,  
Hym deyneth not to wreke hym on a flye,  
As dooth a curre, or elles another best.  
In noble corage ought ben arest,  
And weyen every thing by equytee,  
And ever have reward to his owen degree.  
400 For, syr, yt is no maistrye for a lord  
To dampne a man without answeere of word,  
And for a lord that is ful foul to use.  
And if so be he may hym nat excuse,  
But asketh mercy with a dredeful herte,  
And profereth him, ryght in his bare sherte,  
To ben ryght at your owen jugement,  
Than oght a god by short avysement  
Consydre his owne honour and hys trespas.  
For, syth no cause of deth lyeth in this caas,  
410 Yow oghte to ben the lyghter merciab;le;  
Leteth youre ire, and beth sumwhat trefable.  
The man hath served yow of his kunnyng,  
And furthred wel youre lawe in his makynge.  
Al be hit that he kan nat wel endite,  
Yet hath he maked lewed folk delyte  
To serve yow, in preysinge of your name.



He made the book that hight the Hous of Fame,  
And eke the Deeth of Blaunche the Duchesse,  
And the Parlement of Foules, as I gesse,  
420 And al the love of Palamon and Arcite  
Of Thebes, thogh the storye ys knowen lyte;  
And many an ympne for your halydayes,  
That highten balades, roundels, virelayes;  
And, for to speke of other holynesse,  
He hath in prose translated Boece,  
And maad the lyf also of Seynt Cecile.  
He made also, goon ys a gret while,  
Origenes upon the Maudeleyne.  
Hym oughte now to have the lesse peyne;  
430 He hath maad many a lay and many a thing.  
Now as ye be a god and eke a kyng,  
I, your Alceste, whilom quene of Trace,  
Y aske yow this man, ryght of your grace,  
That ye him never hurte in al his lyve;  
And he shal swere to yow, and that as blyve,  
He shal no more agilten in this wyse,  
But he shal maken, as ye wol devyse,  
Of wommen trewe in lovyng al hire lyve,  
Wherso ye wol, of mayden or of wyve,  
440 And forthren yow as muche as he mysseyde  
Or in the Rose or elles in Creseyde."  
The god of Love answerede hire thus anon:  
"Madame," quod he, "it is so long agoon  
That I yow knew so charitable and trewe,  
That never yit syn that the world was newe  
To me ne fond y better noon than yee.  
If that I wol save my degree,  
I may, ne wol, nat werne your requeste.  
Al lyeth in yow, dooth wyth hym what yow leste.  
450 I al foryeve, withouten lenger space;  
For whoso yeveth a yifte or dooth a grace,  
Do it by tyme, his thank ys wel the more.  
And demeth ye what he shal doo therfore.  
Goo thanke now my lady here," quod he.  
I roos, and doun I sette me on my knee,  
And seyde thus: "Madame, the God above  
Foryelde yow that ye the god of Love  
Han maked me his wrathe to foryive,

And yeve me grace so longe for to lyve  
460 That I may knowe soothly what ye bee  
That han me holpe and put in this degree.  
But trewly I wende, as in this cas,  
Naught have agilt, ne doon to love trespass.  
For-why a trewe man, withouten drede,  
Hath nat to parten with a theves dede;  
Ne a trewe lover oght me not to blame  
Thogh that I speke a fals love som shame.  
They oghte rather with me for to holde  
For that I of Creseyde wroot or tolde,  
470 Or of the Rose; what so myn auctour mente,  
Algate, God woot, yt was myn entente  
To forthren trouthe in love and yt cheryce,  
And to ben war fro falsnesse and fro vice  
By swich ensample; this was my menyng."   
And she answerde, "Lat be thyn arguynge,  
For Love ne wol nat countrepleted be  
In ryght ne wrong; and lerne that at me!  
Thow hast thy grace, and hold the ryght therto.  
Now wol I seyn what penance thou shalt do  
480 For thy trespass. Understonde yt here:  
Thow shalt, while that thou lyvest, yer by yere,  
The moste partye of thy tyme spende  
In makynge of a glorious legende  
Of goode wymmen, maydenes and wyves,  
That weren trewe in lovyng al hire lyves;  
And telle of false men that hem bytraien,  
That al hir lyf ne don nat but assayen  
How many women they may doon a shame;  
For in youre world that is now holde a game.  
490 And thogh the lyke nat a love be,  
Speke wel of love; this penance yive I thee.  
And to the god of Love I shal so preye  
That he shal charge his servantz by any weye  
To forthren thee, and wel thy labour quyte.  
Goo now thy wey, this penaunce ys but lyte.  
And whan this book ys maad, yive it the quene,  
On my byhalf, at Eltham or at Sheene."  
The god of Love gan smyle, and than he sayde:  
"Wostow," quod he, "wher this be wyf or mayde,  
500 Or queene, or countesse, or of what degre,

That hath so lytel penance yiven thee,  
 That hast deserved sorer for to smerte?  
 But pite renneth soone in gentil herte;  
 That maistow seen; she kytheth what she ys."  
 And I answered, "Nay, sire, so have I blys,  
 No moore but that I see wel she is good."  
 "That is a trewe tale, by myn hood!"  
 Quod Love; "And that thou knowest wel, pardee,  
 If yt be so that thou avise the.  
 510 Hastow nat in a book, lyth in thy cheste,  
 The grete goodnesse of the quene Alceste,  
 That turned was into a dayesye;  
 She that for hire housbonde chees to dye,  
 And eke to goon to helle, rather than he,  
 And Ercules rescowed hire, parde,  
 And broght hir out of helle agayn to blys?"  
 And I answerd ageyn, and sayde, "Yis,  
 Now knowe I hire. And is this good Alceste,  
 The dayesie, and myn owene hertes reste?  
 520 Now fele I weel the goodnesse of this wyf,  
 That both aftir hir deth and in hir lyf  
 Hir grete bounte doubleth hire renoun.  
 Wel hath she quyt me myn affeccioun  
 That I have to hire flour, the dayesye.  
 No wonder ys thogh Jove hire stellyfye,  
 As telleth Agaton, for hire goodnesse!  
 Hire white corowne berith of hyt witnesse;  
 For also many vertues hadde shee  
 As smale florouns in hire corowne bee.  
 530 In remembraunce of hire and in honour  
 Cibella maade the daysye and the flour  
 Ycrowned al with whit, as men may see;  
 And Mars yaf to hire corowne reed, pardee,  
 In stede of rubyes, sette among the white."  
 Therwith this queene wex reed for shame a lyte  
 Whan she was preysed so in hire presence.  
 Thanne seyde Love, "A ful gret negligence  
 Was yt to the, that ylke tyme thou made  
 `Hyd, Absolon, thy tresses,' in balade,  
 540 That thou forgate hire in thi song to sette,  
 Syn that thou art so gretly in hire dette,  
 And wost so wel that kalender ys shee

To any woman that wol lover bee.  
For she taught al the craft of fyn lovyng,  
And namely of wyfhod the lyvyng,  
And al the boundes that she oghte kepe.  
Thy litel wit was thilke tyme aslepe.  
But now I charge the upon thy lyf  
That in thy legende thou make of thys wyf  
550 Whan thou hast other smale ymaad before;  
And far now wel, I charge the namore.  
But er I goo, thus mucche I wol the telle:  
Ne shal no trewe lover come in helle.  
Thise other ladies sittynge here arowe  
Ben in thy balade, yf thou kanst hem knowe,  
And in thy bookes alle thou shalt hem fynde.  
Have hem now in thy legende al in mynde;  
I mene of hem that ben in thy knowynge.  
For here ben twenty thousand moo sittynge  
560 Than thou knowest, goode wommen alle,  
And trewe of love for oght that may byfalle.  
Make the metres of hem as the lest --  
I mot goon hom (the sonne draweth west)  
To paradys, with al this companye --  
And serve alwey the fresshe dayesye.  
At Cleopatre I wol that thou begynne,  
And so forth, and my love so shal thou wyne.  
For lat see now what man that lover be,  
Wol doon so strong a peyne for love as she.  
570 I wot wel that thou maist nat al yt ryme  
That swiche lovers diden in hire tyme;  
It were to long to reden and to here.  
Suffiseth me thou make in this manere:  
That thou reherce of al hir lyf the grete,  
After thise olde auctours lysten for to trete.  
For whoso shal so many a storye telle,  
Sey shortly, or he shal to longe dwelle."  
And with that word my bokes gan I take,  
And ryght thus on my Legende gan I make.



## PROLOGUE G

A thousand sythes have I herd men telle  
That there is joye in hevene and peyne in helle,  
And I acorde wel that it be so;  
But natheles, this wot I wel also,  
That there ne is non that dwelleth in this contre  
That eyther hath in helle or hevene ybe,  
Ne may of it non other weyes witen  
But as he hath herd seyde or founde it writen;  
For by assay there may no man it preve.  
10 But Goddes forbode but men shulde leve  
Wel more thyng than men han seyn with ye!  
Men shal nat wenen every thyng a lye  
For that he say it nat of yore ago.  
God wot a thyng is nevere the lesse so  
Thow every wyght ne may it nat yse.  
Bernard the monk ne say nat al, parde!  
Thanne mote we to bokes that we fynde,  
Thourgh whiche that olde thynges ben in mynde,  
And to the doctryne of these olde wyse  
20 Yeven credence, in every skylful wyse,  
And trowen on these olde aproved storyes  
Of holynesse, of regnes, of victoryes,  
Of love, of hate, of othere sondry thynges,  
Of which I may nat make rehersynges.  
And if that olde bokes weren aweye,  
Yloren were of remembrance the keye.  
Wel oughte us thanne on olde bokes leve,  
There as there is non other assay by preve.  
And as for me, though that my wit be lite,  
30 On bokes for to rede I me delyte,  
And in myn herte have hem in reverence,  
And to hem yeve swich lust and swich credence  
That there is wel unethe game non  
That fro my bokes make me to gon,  
But it be other upon the halyday,  
Or ellis in the joly tyme of May,  
Whan that I here the smale foules synge,  
And that the floures gynne for to sprynge.  
Farwel my stodye, as lastynge that sesoun!  
40 Now have I therto this condicioun,

That, of alle the floures in the mede,  
Thanne love I most these floures white and rede,  
Swyche as men calle dayesydes in oure toun.  
To hem have I so gret affeccioun,  
As I seyde erst, whan comen is the May,  
That in my bed there daweth me no day  
That I n' am up and walkynge in the mede  
To sen these floures agen the sonne sprede  
Whan it up ryseth by the morwe shene,  
50 The longe day thus walkynge in the grene.  
And whan the sonne gynneth for to weste,  
Thanne closeth it, and draweth it to reste,  
So sore it is afered of the nyght,  
Til on the morwe that it is dayes lyght.  
This dayesye, of alle floures flour,  
Fulfyld of vertu and of alle honour,  
And evere ylike fayr and fresh of hewe,  
As wel in wynter as in somer newe,  
Fayn wolde I preysen, if I coude aryght;  
60 But wo is me, it lyth nat in my myght.  
For wel I wot that folk han here-beforn  
Of makynge ropen, and lad away the corn;  
[And] I come after, glenynge here and there,  
And am ful glad if I may fynde an ere  
Of any goodly word that they han left.  
And if it happe me rehersen eft  
That they han in here freshe songes said,  
I hope that they wole nat ben evele apayd,  
Sith it is seyde in fortheryng and honour  
70 Of hem that eyther serven lef or flour.  
For trusteth wel, I ne have nat undertake  
As of the lef agayn the flour to make,  
Ne of the flour to make ageyn the lef,  
No more than of the corn agen the shef;  
For, as to me, is lefer non, ne lother.  
I am witholde yit with never nother;  
I not who serveth lef ne who the flour.  
That nys nothyng the entent of my labour.  
For this werk is al of another tonne,  
80 Of olde story, er swich strif was begonne.  
But wherfore that I spak, to yeve credence  
To bokes olde and don hem reverence,

Is for men shulde autoritees beleve,  
There as there lyth non other assay by preve.  
For myn entent is, or I fro yow fare,  
The naked text in English to declare  
Of many a story, or elles of many a geste,  
As autours seyn; leveth hem if yow leste.  
Whan passed was almost the month of May,  
90 And I hadde romed, al the someres day,  
The grene medewe, of which that I yow tolde,  
Upon the freshe dayseie to beholde,  
And that the sonne out of the south gan weste,  
And closed was the flour and gon to reste,  
For derknesse of the nyght, of which she dredde,  
Hom to myn hous ful swiftly I me spedde,  
And in a lytel herber that I have,  
Ybenched newe with turves fresshe ygrave,  
I bad men shulde me my couche make;  
100 For deynte of the newe someres sake,  
I bad hem strowe floures on my bed.  
Whan I was layd, and hadde myn eyen hed,  
I fel aslepe withinne an hour or two.  
Me mette how I was in the medewe tho,  
And that I romede in that same gyse,  
To sen that flour, as ye han herd devyse.  
Fayr was this medewe, as thoughte me, overal;  
With floures sote enbrouded was it al.  
As for to speke of gomme, or herbe, or tre,  
110 Comparisoun may non ymaked be;  
For it surmountede pleynty alle odoures,  
And of ryche beaute alle floures.  
Forgeten hadde the erthe his pore estat  
Of wynter, that hym naked made and mat,  
And with his swerd of cold so sore hadde greved.  
Now hadde th' atempre sonne al that releved,  
And clothed hym in grene al newe ageyn.  
The smale foules, of the seson fayn,  
That from the panter and the net ben skaped,  
120 Upon the foulere, that hem made awhaped  
In wynter, and distroyed hadde hire brod,  
In his dispit hem thoughte it dide hem good  
To synge of hym, and in here song despise  
The foule cherl that for his coveytyse

Hadde hem betrayed with his sophistrye.  
This was here song, "The foulere we defye,  
[And] [al] [his] [craft]." [And] [some] [songen] [clere]  
[Layes] of love that joye it was to here,  
In worshiþe and in preysyng of hire make;  
130 And [for] the newe blysfyl somers sake,  
[They] sunge, "Blyssed be Seynt Valentyn!  
[For] [on] his day I ches yow to be myn,  
Withoute repentyng, myn herte swete!"  
And therewithal here bekes gonne mete,  
[Yelding] honour and humble obeysaunces;  
And after diden othere observaunces  
Ryht [longing] onto love and to nature;  
So ech of hem [doth] [wel] to creature.  
This song to herkenen I dide al myn entente,  
140 For-why I mette I wiste what they mente,  
Tyl at the laste a larke son above:  
"I se," quod she, "the myghty god of Love.  
Lo! yond he cometh! I se his wynges sprede."  
Tho gan I loken endelong the mede  
And saw hym come, and in his hond a quene  
Clothed in real habyt al of grene.  
A fret of goold she hadde next hyre her  
And upon that a whit corone she ber  
With many floures, and I shal nat lye;  
150 For al the world, ryght as the dayesye  
Ycrouned is with white leves lite,  
Swiche were the floures of hire coroune white.  
For of o perle fyn and oryental  
Hyre white coroun was ymaked al;  
For which the white coroun above the grene  
Made hire lyk a dayesye for to sene,  
Considered ek the fret of gold above.  
Yclothed was this myghty god of Love  
Of silk, ybrouded ful of grene greves,  
160 A garlond on his hed of rose-leves  
Stiked al with lylle floures newe.  
But of his face I can not seyn the hewe,  
For sikerly his face shon so bryghte  
That with the glem astoned was the syghte;  
A furlong-wey I myhte hym not beholde.  
But at the laste in hande I saw hym holde



Two firy dartes as the gleedes rede,  
And aungellych hys winges gan he sprede.  
And al be that men seyn that blynd is he,  
170 Algate me thoughte he myghte wel yse;  
For sternely on me he gan beholde,  
So that his lokynge doth myn herte colde.  
And by the hond he held the noble quene  
Corouned with whit and clothed al in grene,  
So womanly, so benygne, and so meke,  
That in this world, thogh that men wolde seke,  
Half hire Beaute shulde men nat fynde  
In creature that formed is by kynde.  
Hire name was Alceste the debonayre.  
180 I preye to God that evere falle she fayre,  
For ne hadde confort been of hire presence,  
I hadde be ded, withouten any defence,  
For dred of Loves wordes and his chere,  
As, whan tyme is, hereafter ye shal here.  
Byhynde this god of Love, upon this grene,  
I saw comynge of ladyes nyntene  
In real habyt, a ful esy pas,  
And after hem come of wemen swich a tras  
That, syn that God Adam [had] mad of erthe,  
190 The thridde part of wemen, ne the ferthe,  
Ne wende I not by possibilite  
Hadden evere in this [wyde] world ybe;  
And trewe of love these wemen were echon.  
Now whether was that a wonder thyng or non,  
That ryght anon as that they gonne espye  
This flour, which that I clepe the dayesyne,  
Ful sodeynly they stynten alle atones,  
And knelede adoun, as it were for the nones.  
And after that they wenten in compas,  
200 Daunsynge aboute this flour an esy pas,  
And songen, as it were in carole-wyse,  
This balade, which that I shal yow devyse.  
Hyd, Absalon, thy gilte tresses clere;  
Ester, ley thow thy meknesse al adoun;  
Hyd, Jonathas, al thyn frendly manere;  
Penelope and Marcia Catoun,  
Mak of youre wyfhod no comparisoun;  
Hyde ye youre beautes, Ysode and Eleyne:

Alceste is here, that al that may desteyne.  
210 Thy fayre body, lat it nat apeere,  
Laveyne; and thow, Lucesse of Rome toun,  
And Polixene, that boughte love so dere,  
Ek Cleopatre, with al thy passioun,  
Hide ye youre trouth in love and youre renoun;  
And thow, Tysbe, that hast for love swich peyne:  
Alceste is here, that al that may desteyne.  
Herro, Dido, Laodomya, alle in-fere,  
Ek Phillis, hangynge for thy Demophoun,  
And Canace, espied by thy chere,  
220 Ysiphile, betrayed with Jasoun,  
Mak of youre trouthe in love no bost ne soun;  
Nor Ypermystre or Adriane, ne pleyne  
Alceste is here, that al that may disteyne.  
Whan that this balade al ysongen was,  
Upon the softe and sote grene gras  
They setten hem ful softly adoun,  
By order alle in compas, enveroun.  
Fyrst sat the god of Love, and thanne this queene  
With the white corone, clad in grene,  
230 And sithen al the remenant by and by,  
As they were of degre, ful curteysly;  
Ne nat a word was spoken in that place  
The mountaunce of a furlong-wey of space.  
I, lenynge faste by under a bente,  
Abod to knowe what this peple mente,  
As stille as any ston, til at the laste  
The god of Love on me his eye caste  
And seyde, "Who restith there?" And I answerde  
Unto his axynge, whan that I hym herde,  
240 And seyde, "Sire, it am I," and cam hym ner,  
And salewede hym. Quod he, "What dost thow her  
In my presence, and that so boldely?  
For it were better worthi, trewely,  
A worm to comen in my syght than thow."  
"And why, sire," quod I, "and it lyke yow?"  
"For thow," quod he, "art therto nothyng able.  
My servaunts ben alle wyse and honourable.  
Thow art my mortal fo and me werreyest,  
And of myne olde servauntes thow mysseyest,  
250 And hynderest hem with thy translacyoun,

And lettest folk to han devocoun  
To serven me, and holdest it folye  
To truste on me. Thow mayst it nat denye,  
For in pleyn text, it nedeth nat to glose,  
Thow hast translated the Romauns of the Rose,  
That is an heresy ageyns my lawe,  
And makest wise folk fro me withdrawe;  
And thynkest in thy wit, that is ful col,  
That he nys but a verray propre fol  
260 That loveth paramours to harde and hote.  
Wel wot I therby thow begynnyst dote,  
As olde foles whan here spiryt fayleth;  
Thanne blame they folk, and wite nat what hem ayleth.  
Hast thow nat mad in Englysh ek the bok  
How that Crisseyde Troylus forsok,  
In shewynge how that wemen han don mis?  
But natheles, answeere me now to this;  
Why noldest thow as wel [han] seyde goodnesse  
Of wemen, as thow hast seyde wikednesse?  
270 Was there no good matere in thy mynde,  
Ne in alle thy bokes ne coudest thow nat fynde  
Som story of wemen that were goode and trewe?  
Yis, God wot, sixty bokes olde and newe  
Hast thow thyself, alle ful of storyes grete,  
That bothe Romainys and ek Grekes trete  
Of sundry wemen, which lyf that they ladde,  
And evere an hundred goode ageyn oon badde.  
This knoweth God, and alle clerkes eke  
That usen swiche materes for to seke.  
280 What seith Valerye, Titus, or Claudyan?  
What seith Jerome agayns Jovynyan?  
How clene maydenes and how trewe wyves,  
How stedefaste widewes durynge alle here lyves,  
Telleth Jerome, and that nat of a fewe,  
But, I dar seyn, an hundred on a rewe,  
That it is pite for to rede, and routhe,  
The wo that they endure for here trouthe  
For to hyre love were they so trewe  
That, rather than they wolde take a newe,  
290 They chose to be ded in sondry wyse,  
And deiden, as the story wol devyse;  
And some were brend, and some were cut the hals,

And some dreynt for they wolden not be fals;  
For alle keped they here maydenhede,  
Or elles wedlok, or here widewehede.  
And this thing was nat kept for holynesse,  
But al for verray vertu and clennesses,  
And for men schulde sette on hem no lak;  
And yit they were hethene, al the pak,  
300 That were so sore adrad of alle shame.  
These olde wemen kepte so here name  
That in this world I trowe men shal nat fynde  
A man that coude be so trewe and kynde  
As was the leste woman in that tyde.  
What seyth also the epistel of Ovyde  
Of trewe wyves and of here labour?  
What Vincent in his Estorial Myrour?  
Ek al the world of autours maystow here,  
Cristene and hethene, trete of swich matere;  
310 It nedeth nat al day thus for to endite.  
But yit, I seye, what eyleth the to wryte  
The draf of storyes, and forgete the corn?  
By Seynt Venus, of whom that I was born,  
Although thou reneyed hast my lay,  
As othere olde foles many a day,  
Thow shalt repente it, so that it shal be sene!"  
Thanne spak Alceste, the worthyeste queene,  
And seyde, "God, ryght of youre curteysye,  
Ye moten herkenen if he can replye  
320 Ageyns these poynts that ye han to hym meved.  
A god ne sholde not thus been agreved,  
But of his deite he shal be stable,  
And therto ryghtful, and ek mercyable.  
He shal nat ryghtfully his yre wreke  
Or he have herd the tother partye speke.  
Al ne is nat gospel that is to yow pleyned;  
The god of Love hereth many a tale yfeyned.  
For in youre court is many a losengeour,  
And many a queynte totelere accusour,  
330 That tabouren in youre eres many a thyng  
For hate, or for jelous ymagynyng,  
And for to han with you som dalyaunce.  
Envye -- I preye to God yeve hire myschaunce! --  
Is lavender in the grete court alway,

For she ne parteth, neyther nyght ne day,  
Out of the hous of Cesar; thus seyth Dante;  
Whoso that goth, alwey she mot [nat] wante.  
This man to yow may wrongly ben acused,  
There as by ryght hym oughte ben excusid.  
340 Or elles, sire, for that this man is nyce,  
He may translate a thyng in no malyce,  
But for he useth bokes for to make,  
And taketh non hed of what matere he take,  
Therefore he wrot the Rose and ek Crisseyde  
Of innocence, and nyste what he seyde.  
Or hym was boden make thilke tweye  
Of som persone, and durste it not withseye;  
For he hath write many a bok er this.  
He ne hath not don so grevously amys  
350 To translate that olde clerkes wryte,  
As thogh that he of maleys wolde endyte  
Despit of love, and hadde hymself ywrought.  
This shulde a ryghtwys lord han in his thought,  
And not ben lyk tyraunts of Lumbardye,  
That usen wilfulhed and tyrannye.  
For he that kyng or lord is naturel,  
Hym oughte nat be tyraunt and crewel  
As is a fermour, to don the harm he can.  
He moste thynke it is his lige man,  
360 And that hym oweth, of verray duetee,  
Shewen his peple pleyn benygnete,  
And wel to heren here excusacyouns,  
And here compleyntes and petyciouns,  
In duewe tyme, whan they shal it profre.  
This is the sentence of the Philosophre,  
A kyng to kepe his lyges in justice;  
Withouten doute, that is his office.  
And therto is a kyng ful depe ysworn  
Ful many an hundred wynter herebeforn;  
370 And for to kepe his lordes hir degre,  
As it is ryght and skylful that they be  
Enhaunsed and honoured, [and] most dere --  
For they ben half-goddes in this world here --  
This shal he don bothe to pore [and] ryche,  
Al be that her estat be nat alyche,  
And han of pore folk compassioun.

For lo, the gentyl kynde of the lyoun:  
For whan a flye offendeth hym or byteth,  
He with his tayl away the flye smyteth  
380 Al esyly; for, of his genterye,  
Hym deyneth nat to wreke hym on a flye,  
As doth a curre, or elles another best.  
In noble corage oughte ben arest,  
And weyen every thing by equite,  
And evere han reward to his owen degre.  
For, sire, it is no maystrye for a lord  
To dampne a man withoute answer or word,  
And, for a lord, that is ful foul to use.  
And if so be he may hym nat excuse,  
390 [But] axeth mercy with a sorweful herte,  
And profereth hym, ryght in his bare sherte,  
To been ryght at youre owene jugement,  
Than ought a god, by short avisement,  
Considerere his owene honour and his trespas.  
For syth no cause of deth lyth in this cas,  
Yow oughte to ben the lyghter merciabyle;  
Leteth youre yre, and beth somewhat treftable.  
The man hath served yow of his konnyng,  
And forthered [wel] youre lawe with his makynge.  
400 Whil he was yong, he kepte youre estat;  
I not wher he be now a renegat.  
But wel I wot, with that he can endyte  
He hath maked lewed folk to delyte  
To serven yow, in preysynge of youre name.  
He made the bok that highte the Hous of Fame,  
And ek the Deth of Blaunche the Duchesse,  
And the Parlement of Foules, as I gesse,  
And al the love of Palamon and Arcite  
Of Thebes, thogh the storye is knowen lite;  
410 And many an ympne for your halydayes,  
That highten balades, roundeles, vyrelayes;  
And, for to speke of other besynesse,  
He hath in prose translated Boece,  
And Of the Wretched Engendrynge of Mankynde,  
As man may in Pope Innocent yfynde;  
And mad the lyf also of Seynt Cecile.  
He made also, gon is a gret while,  
Orygenes upon the Maudeleyne.

Hym oughte now to have the lesse peyne;  
420 He hath mad many a lay and many a thyng.  
Now as ye ben a god and ek a kyng,  
I, youre Alceste, whilom quene of Trace,  
I axe yow this man, ryght of youre grace,  
That ye hym nevere hurte in al his lyve;  
And he shal swere to yow, and that as blyve,  
He shal no more agilten in this wyse,  
But he shal maken, as ye wol devyse,  
Of women trewe in lovyng al here lyve,  
Wherso ye wol, of mayden or of wyve,  
430 And fortheren yow as mucche as he mysseyde  
Or in the Rose or elles in Crisseide."  
The god of Love answerede hire thus anon:  
"Madame," quod he, "it is so longe agon  
That I yow knew so charytable and trewe,  
That nevere yit sith that the world was newe  
To me ne fond I betere non than ye;  
That, if that I wol save my degre,  
I may, ne wol, not warne youre requeste.  
Al lyth in yow, doth with hym what yow leste;  
440 And al foryeve, withoute lenger space.  
For whoso yeveth a yifte or doth a grace,  
Do it by tyme, his thank is wel the more.  
And demeth ye what he shal do therfore.  
Go thanke now my lady here," quod he.  
I ros, and doun I sette me on my kne,  
And seyde thus, "Madame, the God above  
Foryelde yow that ye the god of Love  
Han maked me his wrathe to foryive,  
And yeve me grace so longe for to live  
450 That I may knowe sothly what ye be  
That han me holpen and put in swich degre.  
But trewely I wende, as in this cas,  
Naught have agilt, ne don to love trespas.  
For-why a trewe man, withoute drede,  
Hath nat to parte with a theves dede;  
Ne a trewe love-re oughte me nat to blame  
Thogh that I speke a fals love-re som shame.  
They oughte rather with me for to holde  
For that I of Criseide wrot or tolde,  
460 Or of the Rose; what so myn auctour mente,

Algate, God wot, it was myn entente  
To forthere trouthe in love and it cheryce,  
And to be war fro falsnesse and fro vice  
By swich ensauple; this was my menyng." And she answerde, "Lat be thyn arguyng,  
For Love ne wol nat counterpletyd be  
In ryght ne wrong; and lerne this at me!  
Thow hast thy grace, and hold the ryght therto.  
Now wol I seyn what penaunce thow shalt do  
470 For thy trespass, and understond it here:  
Thow shalt, whil that thow livest, yer by yere,  
The moste partye of thy tyme spende  
In makynge of a glorious legende  
Of goode women, maydenes and wyves,  
That were trewe in lovyng al here lyves;  
And telle of false men that hem betrayen,  
That al here lyf ne don nat but assayen  
How manye wemen they may don a shame;  
For in youre world that is now holden game.  
480 And thogh the lesteth nat a love be,  
Spek wel of love; this penaunce yeve I thee.  
And to the god of Love I shal so preye  
That he shal charge his servaunts by any weye  
To fortheren the, and wel thy labour quite.  
Go now thy wey, thy penaunce is but lyte."  
The god of Love gan smyle, and thanne he seyde:  
"Wostow," quod he, "wher this be wif or mayde,  
Or queen, or countesse, or of what degre,  
That hath so lytel penaunce given the,  
490 That hast deserved sorer for to smerte?  
But pite renneth sone in gentil herte;  
That mayst thow sen; she kytheth what she is."  
And I answerde, "Nay, sire, so have I blys,  
No more but that I se wel she is good."  
"That is a trewe tale, by myn hood!"  
Quod Love, "and that thow knowest wel, parde,  
Yif it be so that thow avise the.  
Hast thow nat in a bok, lyth in thy cheste,  
The grete goodnesse of the queene Alceste,  
500 That turned was into a dayesye;  
She that for hire husbonde ches to dye,  
And ek to gon to helle rather than he,



And Ercules rescued hire, parde,  
And broughte hyre out of helle ageyn to blys?"  
And I answerde ayen, and seyde, "Yis,  
Now knowe I hire. And is this goode Alceste,  
The dayesye, and myn owene hertes reste?  
Now fele I wel the goodnesse of this wif,  
That bothe after hire deth and in hire lyf  
510 Hire grete bounte doubleth hire renoun.  
Wel hath she quit me myn affeccioun  
That I have to hire flour, the dayesye.  
No wonder is thogh Jove hire stellifye,  
As telleth Agaton, for hyre goodnesse!  
Hire white coroun bereth of it witnesse;  
For also manye vertues hadde she  
As smale flourys in hyre coroun be.  
In remembraunce of hire and in honour  
Cibella made the dayesye and the flour  
520 Ycoroned al with whit, as men may se;  
And Mars yaf to hire corone red, parde,  
In stede of rubies, set among the white."  
Therwith this queene wex red for shame a lyte  
Whan she was preysed so in hire presence.  
Thanne seyde Love, "A ful gret neglygence  
Was it to the, to write unstedfastnesse  
Of women, sith thou knowest here goodnesse  
By pref, and ek by storyes herebyforn.  
Let be the chaf, and writ wel of the corn.  
530 Why noldest thou han writen of Alceste,  
And laten Criseide ben aslepe and reste?  
For of Alceste shulde thy wrytynge be,  
Syn that thou wost that calandier is she  
Of goodnesse, for she taughte of fyn lovyng,  
And namely of wifhod the lyvyng,  
And alle the boundes that she oughte kepe.  
Thy litel wit was thilke tyme aslepe.  
But now I charge the upon thy lyf  
That in thy legende thou make of this wif  
540 Whan thou hast othere smale mad byfore;  
And far now wel, I charge the no more.  
At Cleopatre I wol that thou begynne,  
And so forth, and my love so shalt thou wyne."

And with that word, of slep I gan awake,  
And ryght thus on my Legende gan I make.



## THE LEGENDS

After the deth of Tholome the kyng,  
That al Egipt hadde in his governyng,  
Regned his queene Cleopataras;  
Tyl on a tyme befel there swich a cas  
That out of Rome was sent a senatour  
For to conqueren regnes and honour  
Unto the toun of Rome, as was usaunce,  
To han the world at hire obesaunce,  
And soth to seyne, Antonius was his name.  
So fil it, as Fortune hym oughte a shame,  
590 Whan he was fallen in prosperite  
Rebel unto the toun of Rome is he.  
And over al this, the suster of Cesar,  
He lafte hire falsly, or that she was war,  
And wolde algates han another wyf,  
For which he tok with Rome and Cesar stryf.  
Natheles, for sothe, this ilke senatour  
Was a ful worthy gentil werreyour,  
And of his deth it was ful gret damage.  
But love hadde brought this man in swich a rage  
600 And hym so narwe bounden in his las,  
Al for the love of Cleopataras,  
That al the world he sette at no value.  
Hym thoughte there nas nothyng to hym so due  
As Cleopatras for to love and serve;  
Hym roughte nat in armes for to sterve  
In the defence of hyre and of hire ryght.  
This noble queene ek lovede so this knyght,  
Thourgh his desert, and for his chyvalrye;  
As certeynly, but if that bokes lye,  
610 He was, of persone and of gentillesse,  
And of discrecioun and hardynesse,  
Worthi to any wyght that liven may;  
And she was fayr as is the rose in May.  
And, for to make shortly is the beste,  
She wax his wif, and hadde hym as hire leste.  
The weddynge and the feste to devyse,  
To me, that have ytake swich empryse  
Of so many a story for to make,  
It were to longe, lest that I shulde slake

620 Of thyng that bereth more effect and charge;  
For men may overlade a ship or barge.  
And forthy to th' effect thanne wol I skyppe,  
And al the remenaunt, I wol lete it slippe.  
Octovyan, that wod was of this dede,  
Shop hym an ost on Antony to lede  
Al uterly for his destruccioun,  
With stoute Romeyns, crewel as lyoun;  
To ship they wente, and thus I lat hem sayle.  
Antonius was war, and wol nat fayle  
630 To meten with these Romeyns, if he may;  
Tok ek his red, and bothe, upon a day,  
His wif and he, and al his ost, forth wente  
To shipe anon, no lengere they ne stente;  
And in the se it happede hem to mete.  
Up goth the trompe, and for to shoute and shete,  
And peynen hem to sette on with the sunne.  
With grysely soun out goth the grete gonne,  
And heterly they hurtelen al atones,  
And from the top doun come the grete stones.  
640 In goth the grapenel, so ful of crokes;  
Among the ropes renne the sherynge-hokes.  
In with the polax preseth he and he;  
Byhynde the mast begynnyth he to fle,  
And out ageyn, and dryveth hym overbord;  
He styngeth hym upon his speres ord;  
He rent the seyl with hokes lyke a sithe;  
He bryngeth the cuppe and biddeth hem be blythe;  
He poureth pesen upon the haches slidere;  
With pottes ful of lyme they gon togidere;  
650 And thus the longe day in fyght they spende,  
Tyl at the laste, as every thyng hath ende,  
Antony is schent and put hym to the flyghte,  
And al his folk to-go that best go myghte.  
Fleth ek the queen, with al hire purple sayl,  
For strokes, whiche that wente as thikke as hayl;  
No wonder was she myghte it nat endure.  
And whan that Antony saw that aventure,  
"Allas," quod he, "the day that I was born!  
My worshipe in this day thus have I lorn."  
660 And for dispeyr out of his wit he sterte  
And rof hymself anon thourghout the herte

Or that he ferther wente out of the place.  
His wif, that coude of Cesar have no grace,  
To Egipt is fled for drede and for destresse.  
But herkeneth, ye that speken of kyndenesse,  
Ye men that falsly sweren many an oth  
That ye wol deye if that youre love be wroth,  
Here may ye sen of women which a trouthe!  
This woful Cleopatre hath mad swich routhe  
670 That ther is tonge non that may it telle.  
But on the morwe she wolde no lengere dwelle,  
But made hire subtyl werkmen make a shryne  
Of alle the rubyes and the stones fyne  
In al Egypte that she coude espie,  
And putte ful the shryne of spicerye,  
And let the cors enbaume, and forth she fette  
This dede cors, and in the shryne it shette.  
And next the shryne a pit thanne doth she grave,  
And alle the serpentis that she myghte have,  
680 She putte hem in that grave, and thus she seyde:  
"Now, love, to whom my sorweful herte obeyde  
So ferforthly that from that blisful houre  
That I yow swor to ben al frely youre --  
I mene yow, Antonius, my knyght --  
That nevere wakyng, in the day or nyght,  
Ye nere out of myn hertes remembraunce,  
For wel or wo, for carole or for daunce;  
And in myself this covenant made I tho,  
That ryght swich as ye felten, wel or wo,  
690 As fer forth as it in my power lay,  
Unreprovable unto my wyfhod ay,  
The same wolde I fele, lyf or deth --  
And thilke covenant whil me lasteth breth  
I wol fulfille; and that shal ben wel sene,  
Was nevere unto hire love a trewer quene."  
And with that word, naked, with ful good herte,  
Among the serpentis in the pit she sterte,  
And there she ches to have hire buryinge.  
Anon the nadderis gonne hire for to styng,   
700 And she hire deth receyveth with good cheere  
For love of Antony that was hire so dere.  
And this is storyal soth, it is no fable.  
Now, or I fynde a man thus trewe and stable,

And wol for love his deth so frely take,  
I preye God let oure hedes nevere ake! Amen.  
At Babiloyne whylom fil it thus,  
The whyche toun the queen Semyramus  
Let dychen al aboute and walles make  
Ful hye, of hard tiles wel ybake:  
710 There were dwellyng in this noble toun  
Two lordes, whiche that were of gret renoun,  
And woneden so nygh, upon a grene,  
That there nas but a ston-wal hem betweene,  
As ofte in grete tounes is the wone.  
And soth to seyne, that o man hadde a sone,  
Of al that lond oon of the lustyeste.  
That other hadde a doughter, the fayreste  
That estward in the world was tho dwellynge.  
The name of everych gan to other sprynge  
720 By women that were neighebores aboute.  
For in that contre yit, withouten doute,  
Maydenes been ykept, for jelosye,  
Ful streyte, lest they diden som folye.  
This yonge man was called Piramus,  
Tysbe hight the maide, Naso seyth thus;  
And thus by report was hire name yshove  
That, as they wex in age, wex here love.  
And certeyn, as by resoun of hire age,  
There myghte have ben bytwixe hem maryage,  
730 But that here fadres nolde it nat assente;  
And bothe in love ylyke sore they brente,  
That non of alle hyre frendes myght it lette,  
But pryvyly som tyme yit they mette  
By sleyghte, and spoken som of here desyr;  
As wry the glede and hotter is the fyr,  
Forbede a love, and it is ten so wod.  
This wal, which that bitwixe hem bothe stod,  
Was clove a-two, ryght from the cop adoun,  
Of olde tyme of his fundacioun;  
740 But yit this clyfte was so narw and lyte  
It nas nat sene, deere ynogh a myte.  
But what is that that love can nat espye?  
Ye loveres two, if that I shal nat lye,  
Ye founden first this litel narwe clifte;  
And with a soun as softe as any shryfte,

They lete here wordes thourgh the clifte pace,  
And tolden, whil that they stode in the place,  
Al here compleynt of love and al here wo,  
At every tyme whan they durste so.  
750 Upon that o syde of the wal stod he,  
And on that other side stod Thesbe,  
The swote soun of other to receyve.  
And thus here wardeyns wolde they deceyve,  
And every day this wal they wolde threte,  
And wisshe to God that it were doun ybete.  
Thus wolde they seyn: "Alas, thow wikkede wal!  
Thorgh thyn envye thow us lettest al.  
Why nyht thow cleve or fallen al a-two?  
Or at the leste, but thou woldist so,  
760 Yit woldest thow but ones lat us mete,  
Or ones that we myghte kyssen swete,  
Thanne were we covered of oure cares colde.  
But, natheles, yit be we to thee holde,  
In as muche as thow sufferest for to gon  
Oure wordes thourgh thy lym and ek thy ston.  
Yit oughte we with the been wel apayd."  
And whan these ydele wordes weren sayd,  
The colde wal they wolden kysse of ston,  
And take here leve and forth they wolden gon.  
770 And this was gladly in the eve-tyde,  
Or wonder erly, lest men it espyde.  
And longe tyme they wroughte in this manere,  
Tyl on a day, whan Phebus gan to cleere --  
Aurora with the stremes of hire hete  
Hadde dreyed up the dew of herbes wet --  
Unto this clyft, as it was wont to be,  
Com Piramus, and after com Thysbe,  
And plyghten trouthe fully in here fey  
That ilke same nyght to stele away,  
780 And to begile here wardeyns everichon,  
And forth out of the cite for to goon;  
And, for the feldes ben so brode and wide,  
For to mete in o place at o tyde,  
They sette mark here metynge sholde be  
There kyng Nynus was grave under a tre --  
For olde payens that idoles heryed  
Useden tho in feldes to ben beryed --

And faste by this grave was a welle.  
And shortly of this tale for to telle,  
790 This covenant was affermed wonder faste;  
And longe hem thoughte that the sonne laste,  
That it nere gon under the se adoun.  
This Tisbe hath so gret affeccoun  
And so gret lykinge Pirus to se,  
That whan she say hire tyme myghte be,  
At nyght she stal away ful pryvyly,  
With hire face ywympled subtyly;  
For alle hire frendes -- for to save hire trouthe --  
She hath forsake; alas, and that is routhe  
800 That evere woman wolde ben so trewe  
To truste man, but she the bet hym knewe.  
And to the tre she goth a ful good pas,  
For love made hire so hardy in this cas,  
And by the welle adoun she gan hyre dresse.  
Allas! Than cometh a wilde lyonesse  
Out of the wode, withoute more arest,  
With bloody mouth, of strangelynge of a best,  
To drynken of the welle there as she sat.  
And whan that Tisbe hadde espyed that,  
810 She rist hire up, with a ful drery herte,  
And in a cave with dredful fot she sterte,  
For by the mone she say it wel withalle.  
And as she ran hire wympel let she falle  
And tok non hed, so sore she was awhaped,  
And ek so glad that that she was escaped;  
And thus she sit and darketh wonder styll.  
Whan that this lyonesse hath dronke hire fille,  
About the welle gan she for to wynde,  
And ryght anon the wympel gan she fynde,  
820 And with hire bloody mouth it al torente.  
Whan this was don, no lengere she ne stente,  
But to the wode hire weye thanne hath she nome.  
And at the laste this Pirus is come;  
But al to longe, alas, at hom was he!  
The mone shon, and he myghte wel yse,  
And in his wey, as that he com ful faste.  
His eyen to the ground adoun he caste,  
And in the sond, as he byheld adoun,  
He sey the steppes brode of a lyoun,



830 And in his herte he sodeynly agros,  
And pale he wex; therwith his heer aros,  
And ner he com, and fond the wimpel torn.  
"Allas," quod he, "the day that I was born!  
This o nyght wol us lovers bothe sle!  
How shulde I axe mercy of Tisbe,  
Whan I am he that have yow slayn, allas!  
My biddyng hath yow slayn, as in this cas.  
Allas, to bidde a woman gon by nyghte  
In place there as peril falle myghte!  
840 And I so slow! Allas, I ne hadde be  
Here in this place a furlong wey or ye!  
Now what lyoun that be in this forest,  
My body mote he renten, or what best  
That wilde is, gnawe mote he now myn herte!"  
And with that word he to the wympel sterte,  
And kiste it ofte, and wep on it ful sore,  
And seyde, "Wympel, allas! There is no more  
But thow shalt feele as wel the blod of me  
As thow hast felt the bledyng of Thisbe!"  
850 And with that word he smot hym to the herte.  
The blod out of the wounde as brode sterte  
As water whan the condit broken is.  
Now Tisbe, which that wiste nat of this,  
But sittynge in hire drede, she thoughte thus:  
"If it so falle that my Pirus  
Be comen hider, and may me not yfynde,  
He may me holde fals and ek unkynde."  
And out she cometh and after hym gan espion,  
Bothe with hire herte and with hire yen,  
860 And thoughte, "I wol hym tellen of my drede,  
Bothe of the lyonesse and al my deede."  
And at the laste hire love thanne hath she founde,  
Betyng with his heles on the grounde,  
Al bloody, and therwithal a-bak she sterte,  
And lik the wawes quappe gan hire herte,  
And pale as box she was, and in a throwe  
Avisede hire, and gan hym wel to knowe,  
That it was Pirus, hire herte deere.  
Who coude wryte which a dedly cheere  
870 Hath Thisbe now, and how hire heer she rente,  
And how she gan hireselve to turmente,

And how she lyth and swouneth on the grounde,  
And how she wep of teres ful his wounde;  
How medeleth she his blod with hire compleynte;  
How with his blod hireselve gan she peynte;  
How clyppeth she the deede cors, allas!  
How doth this woful Tisbe in this cas!  
How kysseth she his frosty mouth so cold!  
"Who hath don this, and who hath been so bold  
880 To sle my leef? O spek, my Piramus!  
I am thy Tisbe, that the calleth thus."  
And therwithal she lifteth up his hed.  
This woful man, that was nat fully ded,  
Whan that he herde the name of Tisbe cryen,  
On hire he caste his hevy, dedly yen,  
And doun agayn, and yeldeth up the gost.  
Tysbe ryst up withouten noyse or bost,  
And saw hire wympel and his empty shethe,  
And ek his swerd that hym hath don to dethe.  
890 Thanne spak she thus: "My woful hand," quod she,  
"Is strong ynogh in swich a werk to me;  
For love shal yeve me strengthe and hardynesse  
To make my wounde large ynogh, I gesse.  
I wol thee folwe ded, and I wol be  
Felawe and cause ek of thy deth," quod she.  
"And thogh that nothing, save the deth only,  
Mighte thee fro me departe trewely,  
Thow shalt no more departe now fro me  
Than fro the deth, for I wol go with thee.  
900 And now, ye wrechede jelos fadres oure,  
We that whilom were children youre,  
We preyen yow, withouten more envye,  
That in o grave yfere we moten lye,  
Sith love hath brought us to this pitous ende.  
And ryghtwis God to every love-re sende,  
That loveth trewely, more prosperite  
Than evere yit had Piramus and Tisbe!  
And lat no gentil woman hyre assure  
To putten hire in swich an aventure.  
910 But God forbode but a woman can  
Ben as trewe in lovyng as a man!  
And for my part, I shal anon it kythe."  
And with that word his swerd she tok as swythe,

That warm was of hire loves blod, and hot,  
And to the herte she hireselven smot.  
And thus are Tisbe and Piramus ygo.  
Of trewe men I fynde but fewe mo  
In alle my bokes, save this Piramus,  
And therefore have I spoken of hym thus.  
920 For it is deynte to us men to fynde  
A man that can in love been trewe and kynde.  
Here may ye se, what love so he be,  
A woman dar and can as wel as he.  
Glorye and honour, Virgil Mantoan,  
Be to thy name! and I shal, as I can,  
Folwe thy lanterne, as thou gost byforn,  
How Eneas to Dido was forsworn.  
In thyn Eneyde and Naso wol I take  
The tenor, and the grete effectes make.  
930 Whan Troye brought was to destruccioun  
By Grekes sleyghte, and namely by Synoun,  
Feynyng the hors offered unto Mynerve,  
Thourgh which that many a Trojan moste sterve;  
And Ector hadde, after his deth, apeered;  
And fyr so wode it myghte nat been steered  
In al the noble tour of Ylioun,  
That of the cite was the chef dongeoun;  
And al the contre was so lowe ybrought,  
And Priamus the kyng fordon and nought;  
940 And Enyas was charged by Venus  
To fleen away, he tok Ascanius,  
That was his sone, in his ryght hand and fledde;  
And on his bak he bar and with hym ledde  
His olde fader cleped Anchises,  
And by the weye his wif Creusa he les.  
And moche sorwe hadde he in his mynde,  
Or that he coude his felaweshipe fynde.  
But at the laste, whan he hadde hem founde,  
He made hym redy in a certeyn stounde,  
950 And to the se ful faste he gan him hye,  
And sayleth forth with al his companye  
Toward Ytyle, as wolde his destinee.  
But of his adventures in the se  
Nis nat to purpos for to speke of here,  
For it acordeth nat to my matere.

But, as I seyde, of hym and of Dido  
Shal be my tale, til that I have do.  
So longe he saylede in the salte se  
Tyl in Libie unnethe aryvede he  
960 With shipes sevene and with no more navye;  
And glad was he to londe for to hye,  
So was he with the tempest al toshake.  
And whan that he the haven hadde ytake,  
He hadde a knyght, was called Achates,  
And hym of al his felawshipe he ches  
To gon with hym, the cuntre for t' espie.  
He tok with hym no more companye,  
But forth they gon, and lafte his shipes ryde,  
His fere and he, withouten any gyde.  
970 So longe he walketh in this wilderness,  
Til at the laste he mette an hunteresse.  
A bowe in hande and arwes hadde she;  
Hire clothes cutted were unto the kne.  
But she was yit the fayreste creature  
That evere was yformed by Nature;  
And Eneas and Achates she grette,  
And thus she to hem spak whan she hem mette:  
"Saw ye," quod she, "as ye han walked wyde,  
Any of my sustren walke yow besyde  
980 With any wilde bor or other best,  
That they han hunted to, in this forest,  
Ytukked up, with arwes in hire cas?"  
"Nay, sothly, lady," quod this Eneas;  
"But by thy beaute, as it thynketh me,  
Thow myghtest nevere erthly woman be,  
But Phebus syster art thou, as I gesse.  
And if so be that thou be a goddesse,  
Have mercy on oure labour and oure wo."  
"I n' am no goddesse, sothly," quod she tho;  
990 "For maydens walken in this contre here,  
With arwes and with bowe, in this manere.  
This is the reyne of Libie there ye ben,  
Of which that Dido lady is and queen" --  
And shortly tolde hym al the occasioun  
Why Dido cam into that regioun,  
Of which as now me lesteth nat to ryme;  
It nedeth nat, it were but los of tyme.

For this is al and som, it was Venus,  
His owene moder, that spak with him thus,  
1000 And to Cartage she bad he sholde hym dighte,  
And vanyshed anon out of his syghte.  
I coude folwe, word for word, Virgile,  
But it wolde lasten al to longe while.  
This noble queen that cleped was Dido,  
That whilom was the wif of Sytheo,  
That fayrer was than is the bryghte sonne,  
This noble toun of Cartage hath bigonne;  
In which she regneth in so gret honour  
That she was holden of alle queenes flour  
1010 Of gentillesse, of fredom, of beaute,  
That wel was hym that myghte hire ones se;  
Of kynges and of lordes so desyred  
That al the world hire beaute hadde yfyred,  
She stod so wel in every wightes grace.  
Whan Eneas was come unto that place,  
Unto the mayster temple of al the toun  
Ther Dido was in hire devocoun,  
Ful pryvyly his weye than hath he nome.  
Whan he was in the large temple come,  
1020 I can nat seyn if that it be possible,  
But Venus hadde hym maked invysible --  
Thus seyth the bok, withouten any les.  
And whan this Eneas and Achates  
Hadden in this temple ben overal,  
Thanne founde they, depeynted on a wal,  
How Troye and al the lond destroyed was.  
"Allas, that I was born!" quod Eneas;  
"Thourghout the world oure shame is kid so wyde,  
Now it is peynted upon every syde.  
1030 We, that weren in prosperite,  
Been now desclandred, and in swich degre,  
No lenger for to lyven I ne kepe."  
And with that word he brast out for to wepe  
So tenderly that routhe it was to sene.  
This fresshe lady, of the cite queene,  
Stod in the temple in hire estat real,  
So rychely and ek so fayr withal,  
So yong, so lusty, with hire eyen glade,  
That, if that God, that hevene and erthe made,

1040 Wolde han a love, for beaute and goodnesse,  
And womanhod, and trouthe, and semelynesse,  
Whom shulde he loven but this lady swete?  
Ther nys no woman to hym half so mete.  
Fortune, that hath the world in governaunce,  
Hath sodeynly brought in so newe a chaunce  
That nevere was ther yit so fremde a cas.  
For al the companye of Eneas,  
Which that he wende han loren in the se,  
Aryved is nat fer from that cite;  
1050 For which the gretteste of his lordes some  
By aventure ben to the cite come,  
Unto that same temple, for to seke  
The queene, and of hire socour to beseke,  
Swich renoun was there sprongen of hire goodnesse.  
And whan they hadden told al here distresse,  
And al here tempest and here harde cas,  
Unto the queen apeered Eneas,  
And openly biknew that it was he.  
Who hadde joye thanne but his meyne,  
1060 That hadde founde here lord, here governour?  
The queen saugh that they dide hym swych honour,  
And hadde herd ofte of Eneas er tho,  
And in hire herte she hadde routhe and wo  
That evere swich a noble man as he  
Shal ben disherited in swich degre;  
And saw the man, that he was lyk a knyght,  
And suffisaunt of persone and of myght,  
And lyk to been a verray gentil man;  
And wel his wordes he besette can,  
1070 And hadde a noble visage for the nones,  
And formed wel of braunes and of bones.  
For after Venus hadde he swich fayrnesse  
That no man myghte be half so fayr, I gesse;  
And wel a lord he semede for to be.  
And, for he was a straunger, somewhat she  
Likede hym the bet, as, God do bote,  
To som folk ofte newe thyng is sote.  
Anon hire herte hath pite of his wo,  
And with that pite love com in also;  
1080 And thus, for pite and for gentillesse,  
Refreshed moste he been of his distresse.

She seyde, certes, that she sory was  
That he hath had swych peryl and swich cas;  
And, in hire frendly speche, in this manere  
She to hym spak, and seyde as ye may here:  
"Be ye nat Venus sone and Anchises?  
In good feyth, al the worshipe and encres  
That I may goodly don yow, ye shal have.  
Youre shipes and youre meyne shal I save."  
1090 And many a gentil word she spak hym to,  
And comaunded hire messageres to go  
The same day, withouten any fayle,  
His shippes for to seke, and hem vitayle.  
Ful many a beste she to the shippes sente,  
And with the wyn she gan hem to presente,  
And to hire royal paleys she hire spedde,  
And Eneas alwey with hire she ledde.  
What nedeth yow the feste to describe?  
He nevere beter at ese was in his lyve.  
1100 Ful was the feste of deyntees and rychesse,  
Of instruments, of song, and of gladnesse,  
Of many an amorous lokyng and devys.  
This Eneas is come to paradys  
Out of the swolow of helle, and thus in joye  
Remembreth hym of his estat in Troye.  
To daunsynge chaumberes ful of paramentes,  
Of riche beddes, and of ornementes,  
This Eneas is led after the mete.  
And with the quene, whan that he hadde sete,  
1110 And spices parted, and the wyn agon,  
Unto his chambres was he led anon  
To take his ese and for to have his reste,  
With al his folk, to don what so hem leste.  
There nas courser wel ybrydeled non,  
Ne stede, for the justing wel to gon,  
Ne large palfrey, esy for the nones,  
Ne jewel, fretted ful of ryche stones,  
Ne sakkes ful of gold, of large wyghte,  
Ne ruby non, that shynede by nyghte,  
1120 Ne gentil hawtein faucoun heroner,  
Ne hound for hert or wilde bor or der,  
Ne coupe of gold, with floreyngs newe ybete,  
That in the land of Libie may be gete,

That Dido ne hath it Eneas ysent;  
And al is payed, what that he hath spent.  
Thus can this quene honorable hire gestes calle,  
As she that can in fredom passen alle.  
Eneas sothly ek, withouten les,  
Hadde sent unto his ship by Achates  
1130 After his sone, and after riche thynges,  
Bothe sceptre, clothes, broches, and ek rynges,  
Some for to were, and some for to presente  
To hire that alle thise noble thynges hym sente;  
And bad his sone how that he shulde make  
The presenting, and to the queen it take.  
Repeyred is this Achates agayn,  
And Eneas ful blysfyl is and fayn  
To sen his yonge sone Ascanyus.  
But natheles, oure autour telleth us,  
1140 That Cupido, that is the god of love,  
At preyere of his moder hye above,  
Hadde the liknesse of the child ytake,  
This noble queen enamored to make  
On Eneas; but, as of that scripture,  
Be as be may, I take of it no cure.  
But soth is this, the queen hath mad swich chere  
Unto this child, that wonder is to here;  
And of the present that his fader sente  
She thanked hym ful ofte, in good entente.  
1150 Thus is this queen in plesaunce and in joye,  
With alle these newe lusty folk of Troye.  
And of the dedes hath she more enquired  
Of Eneas, and al the story lered  
Of Troye, and al the longe day they tweye  
Entendeden to speken and to pleye;  
Of which ther gan to bredden swich a fyr  
That sely Dido hath now swich desyr  
With Eneas, hire newe gest, to dele,  
That she hath lost hire hewe and ek hire hele.  
1160 Now to th' effect, now to the fruyt of al,  
Whi I have told this story, and telle shal.  
Thus I begynne: it fil upon a nyght,  
Whan that the mone up reysed hadde his lyght,  
This noble queene unto hire reste wente.  
She siketh sore, and gan hyreself turmente;



She waketh, walweth, maketh many a breyd,  
As don these lovers, as I have herd seyde.  
And at the laste, unto hire syster Anne  
She made hire mone, and ryght thus spak she thanne:  
1170 "Now, dere sister myn, what may it be  
That me agasteth in my drem?" quod she.  
"This newe Troyan is so in my thought,  
For that me thynketh he is so wel ywrought,  
And ek so likly for to ben a man,  
And therwithal so moche good he can,  
That al my love and lyf lyth in his cure.  
Have ye nat herd him telle his aventure?  
Now certes, Anne, if that ye rede it me,  
I wolde fayn to hym ywedded be;  
1180 This is th' effect; what sholde I more seye?  
In hym lyth al, to do me live or deye."  
Hyre syster Anne, as she that coude hire good,  
Seyde as hire thoughte, and somdel it withstod.  
But herof was so long a sermounynge  
It were to long to make rehersynge.  
But finally, it may nat ben withstonde;  
Love wol love, for nothing wol it wonde.  
The dawenyng up-rist out of the se.  
This amorous queene chargeth hire meyne  
1190 The nettes dresse, and speres brode and kene;  
An huntyng wol this lusty freshe queene,  
So priketh hire this newe joly wo.  
To hors is al hir lusty folk ygo;  
Into the court the houndes been ybrought;  
And upon coursers swift as any thought  
Hire yonge knyghtes hoven al aboute,  
And of hire women ek an huge route.  
Upon a thikke palfrey, paper-whit,  
With sadel red, enbrouded with delyt,  
1200 Of gold the barres up enbosedde hye,  
Sit Dido, al in gold and perre wrye;  
And she as fair as is the bryghte morwe,  
That heleth syke folk of nyghtes sorwe.  
Upon a courser stertlynge as the fyr --  
Men myghte turne hym with a litel wyr --  
Sit Eneas, lik Phebus to devyse,  
So was he fressh arayed in his wyse.

The fomy brydel with the bit of gold  
Governeth he ryght as hymself hath wold.  
1210 And forth this noble queen thus lat I ride  
On huntynge, with this Troyan by hyre side.  
The herde of hertes founden is anon,  
With "Hay! Go bet! Pryke thow! Lat gon, lat gon!  
Why nyl the leoun comen, or the bere,  
That I myghte ones mete hym with this spere?"  
Thus seyn these yonge folk, and up they kylle  
These bestes wilde, and han hem at here wille.  
Among al this to rumbelen gan the hevene;  
The thunder rored with a grisely stevene;  
1220 Doun cam the reyn with hayl and slet so faste,  
With hevenes fyr, that it so sore agaste  
This noble queen, and also hire meyne,  
That ech of hem was glad away to fle.  
And shortly, from the tempest hire to save,  
She fledde hireself into a litel cave,  
And with hire wente this Eneas also.  
I not, with hem if there wente any mo;  
The autour maketh of it no mencion.  
And here began the depe affeccoun  
1230 Betwixe hem two; this was the firste morwe  
Of hire gladnesse, and gynning of hire sorwe.  
For there hath Eneas ykneled so,  
And told hire al his herte and al his wo,  
And swore so depe to hire to be trewe  
For wel or wo and chaunge hire for no newe;  
And as a fals love so wel can pleyne,  
That sely Dido rewede on his peyne,  
And tok hym for husbonde and becom his wyf  
For everemo, whil that hem laste lyf.  
1240 And after this, whan that the tempest stente,  
With myrthe out as they comen, hom they wente.  
The wikke fame upros, and that anon,  
How Eneas hath with the queen ygon  
Into the cave; and demede as hem liste.  
And whan the kyng that Yarbys highte it wiste,  
As he that hadde hir loved evere his lyf,  
And wowede hyre, to han hire to his wyf,  
Swich sorwe as he hath maked, and swich cheere,  
It is a routhe and pite for to here.

1250 But as in love, alday it happeth so  
That oon shal laughen at anothers wo.  
Now laugheth Eneas and is in joye  
And more richesse than evere he was in Troye.  
O sely wemen, ful of innocence,  
Ful of pite, of trouthe and conscience,  
What maketh yow to men to truste so?  
Have ye swych routhe upon hyre feyned wo,  
And han swich olde ensaumples yow beforn?  
Se ye nat alle how they ben forsworn?  
1260 Where sen ye oon that he ne hath laft his leef,  
Or ben unkynde, or don hire som myscheef,  
Or piled hire, or bosted of his dede?  
Ye may as wel it sen as ye may rede.  
Tak hede now of this grete gentil-man,  
This Troyan, that so wel hire plesen can,  
That feyneth hym so trewe and obeysynge,  
So gentil, and so privy of his doinge,  
And can so wel don alle his obeysaunces,  
And wayten hire at festes and at daunces,  
1270 And whan she goth to temple and hom ageyn,  
And fasten til he hath his lady seyn,  
And beren in his devyses, for hire sake,  
Not I not what; and songes wolde he make,  
Justen, and don of armes many thynges,  
Sende hire lettres, tokens, broches, rynges --  
Now herkneth how he shal his lady serve!  
There as he was in peril for to sterve  
For hunger, and for myschef in the se,  
And desolat, and fled from his cuntre,  
1280 And al his folk with tempest al todryven,  
She hath hire body and ek hire reame yiven  
Into his hand, there as she myghte have been  
Of othere land than of Cartage a queen,  
And lyved in joye ynogh; what wole ye more?  
This Eneas, that hath so depe yswore,  
Is wery of his craft withinne a throwe;  
The hote earnest is al overblowe.  
And pryvyly he doth his shipes dyghte,  
And shapeth hym to stele away by nyghte.  
1290 This Dido hath suspeciouun of this,  
And thoughte wel that it was al amys.

For in hir bed he lyth a-nyght and syketh.  
She axeth hym anon what hym myslyketh --  
"My dere herte, which that I love most?"  
"Certes," quod he, "this nyght my faderes gost  
Hath in my slep so sore me tormented,  
And ek Mercurye his message hath presented,  
That nedes to the conquest of Ytayle  
My destine is sone for to sayle;  
1300 For which, me thynketh, brosten is myn herte!"  
Therwith his false teres out they sterte,  
And taketh hire withinne his armes two.  
"Is that in earnest?" quod she; "Wole ye so?  
Have ye nat sworn to wyve me to take?  
Allas, what woman wole ye of me make?  
I am a gentil woman and a queen.  
Ye wole nat from youre wif thus foule fleen?  
That I was born, alas! What shal I do?"  
To telle in short, this noble quen Dydo,  
1310 She seketh halwes and doth sacryfise;  
She kneleth, cryeth, that routhe is to devyse;  
Conjureth hym, and profereth hym to be  
His thral, his servant in the leste degre;  
She falleth hym to fote and swouneth ther,  
Dischevele, with hire bryghte gilte her,  
And seyth, "Have mercy; let me with yow ryde!  
These lordes, which that wonen me besyde,  
Wole me distroyen only for youre sake.  
And, so ye wole me now to wive take,  
1320 As ye han sworn, thanne wol I yeve yow leve  
To slen me with youre swerd now sone at eve!  
For thanne yit shal I deyen as youre wif.  
I am with childe, and yeve my child his lyf!  
Mercy, lord! Have pite in youre thought!"  
But al this thing awayleth hire ryght nought,  
For on a nyght, slepyng he let hire lye,  
And stal away unto his companye,  
And as a traytour forth he gan to sayle  
Toward the large contre of Ytayle.  
1330 Thus he hath laft Dido in wo and pyne,  
And wedded ther a lady hyghte Lavyne.  
A cloth he lafte, and ek his swerd stondynge,  
Whan he from Dido stal in hire slepyng,

Ryght at hire beddes hed, so gan he hie,  
Whan that he stal away to his navye;  
Which cloth, whan sely Dido gan awake,  
She hath it kyst ful ofte for his sake,  
And seyde, "O swete cloth, whil Juppiter it leste,  
Tak now my soule, unbynd me of this unreste!  
1340 I have fulfild of fortune al the cours."  
And thus, alas, withouten his socours,  
Twenty tyme yswouned hath she thanne.  
And whanne that she unto hire syster Anne  
Compleyned hadde -- of which I may nat wryte,  
So gret a routhe I have it for t' endite --  
And bad hire norice and hire sister gon  
To fechen fyr and other thyng anon,  
And seyde that she wolde sacryfye --  
And whan she myghte hire tyme wel espie,  
1350 Upon the fir of sacryfice she sterte,  
And with his swerd she rof hyre to the herte.  
But, as myn auctour seith, yit thus she seyde;  
Or she was hurt, byforen or she deyde,  
She wrot a lettre anon that thus began:  
"Ryght so," quod she, "as that the white swan  
Ayens his deth begynnyth for to synge,  
Right so to yow make I my compleynyng.  
Not that I trowe to geten yow ageyn,  
For wel I wot that it is al in veyn,  
1360 Syn that the goddes been contraire to me.  
But syn my name is lost thourgh yow," quod she,  
"I may wel lese on yow a word or letter,  
Al be it that I shal ben nevere the better;  
For thilke wynd that blew youre ship away,  
The same wynd hath blowe away youre fey."  
But who wol al this letter have in mynde,  
Rede Ovyde, and in hym he shal it fynde.  
Thow rote of false lovers, Duc Jasoun,  
Thow sly devourere and confusioun  
1370 Of gentil women, tendre creatures,  
Thow madest thy recleymyng and thy lures  
To ladyes of thy statly aparaunce,  
And of thy wordes farced with plesaunce,  
And of thy feyned trouthe and thy manere,  
With thyn obesaunce and humble cheere,

And with thy contrefeted peyne and wo.  
There othere falsen oon, thow falsest two!  
O, often swore thow that thow woldest dye  
For love, whan thow ne feltest maladye  
1380 Save foul delyt, which that thow callest love!  
Yif that I live, thy name shal be shove  
In English that thy sekete shal be knowe!  
Have at thee, Jason! Now thyn horn is blowe!  
But certes, it is bothe routhe and wo  
That love with false loveres werketh so;  
For they shal have wel betere love and chere  
Than he that hath abought his love ful dere,  
Or hadde in armes many a bloody box.  
For evere as tendre a capoun et the fox,  
1390 Thow he be fals and hath the foul betrayed,  
As shal the good-man that therfore hath payed.  
Al have he to the capoun skille and ryght,  
The false fox wol have his part at nyght.  
On Jason this ensauple is wel ysene  
By Isiphile and Medea the queene.  
In Tessalie, as Guido tellith us,  
There was a kyng that highte Pelleus,  
That hadde a brother which that highte Eson;  
And whan for age he myghte unnethes gon,  
1400 He yaf to Pelleus the governyng  
Of al his regne and made hym lord and kyng.  
Of which Eson this Jason geten was,  
That in his tyme in al that land there nas  
Nat swich a famous knyght of gentillesse,  
Of fredom, and of strengthe and lustynesse.  
After his fadres deth he bar hym so  
That there nas non that liste ben his fo,  
But dide hym al honour and companye.  
Of which this Pelleus hadde gret envye,  
1410 Imagynyng that Jason myghte be  
Enhaunsed so and put in swich degre  
With love of lordes of his regioun,  
That from his regne he may ben put adoun.  
And in his wit a-nyght compassed he  
How Jason myghte best destroyed be  
Withoute sclaunder of his compassement,  
And at the last he tok avysement

To senden hym into som fer contre,  
There as this Jason may destroyed be.  
1420 This was his wit, al made he to Jasoun  
Gret chere of love and of affeccoun,  
For drede lest his lordes it espide.  
So fyl it, so as fame renneth wide,  
There was swich tydyng overal and swich loos,  
That in an yle that called was Colcos,  
Beyonde Troye, estward in the se,  
That therin was a ram that men mighte se  
That hadde a fles of gold that shon so bryghte  
That nowher was ther swich anothir syghte;  
1430 But it was kept alwey with a dragoun,  
And many other merveyles, up and down,  
And with two boles maked al of bras,  
That spitten fyr, and moche thyng there was.  
But this was ek the tale, natheles,  
That whoso wolde wyne thylke fles,  
He moste bothe, or he it wyne myghte,  
With the boles and the dragoun fyghte.  
And kyng Oetes lord was of that yle.  
This Pelleus bethoughte upon this wile,  
1440 That he his neveu Jason wolde enhorten  
To saylen to that lond, hym to disporte,  
And seyde, "Nevew, if it myghte be  
That swich a worshipec myghte fallen the,  
That thou this famous tresor myghtest wyne,  
And bryngen it my regioun withinne,  
It were to me gret plesaunce and honour.  
Thanne were I holde to quyte thy labour;  
And al the cost I wol myselven make.  
And chees what folk that thou wilt with the take;  
1450 Lat sen now, darst thou take this viage?"  
Jason was yong, and lusty of corage,  
And undertok to don this ilke empryse.  
Anon Argus his shipes gan devyse;  
With Jason wente the stronge Ercules,  
And many another that he with hym ches.  
But whoso axeth who is with hym gon,  
Lat hym go rede Argonautycon,  
For he wole telle a tale long ynogh.  
Philotetes anon the sayl up drogh,

1460 Whan that the wynd was good, and gan hym hye  
Out of his contre called Thessalye.  
So longe he seyled in the salte se,  
Til in the yle of Lemnon aryvede he --  
Al be this nat rehersed of Guido,  
Yit seyth Ovyde in his Epistels so --  
And of this ile lady was and quene  
The fayre yonge Ysiphele, the shene,  
That whylom Thoas doughter was, the kyng.  
Isiphile was gon in hire pleying,  
1470 And, romynge on the clyves by the se,  
Under a banke anon aspied she  
Where that the ship of Jason gan aryve.  
Of hire goodnesse adoun she sendeth blyve  
To witen if that any straunge wight  
With tempest thider were yblowe a-nyght,  
To don him socour, as was hire usaunce  
To fortheren every wight, and don plesaunce  
Of verrey bounte and of curteysye.  
This messangeer adoun hym gan to hye,  
1480 And fond Jason and Ercules also,  
That in a cog to londe were ygo,  
Hem to refreshen and to take the eyr.  
The morwenynge attempre was and fayr,  
And in his weye this messenger hem mette.  
Ful cunninggly these lordes two he grette,  
And dide his message, axinge hem anon  
If they were broken, or ought wo begon,  
Or hadden nede of lodman or vitayle;  
For of socour they sholde nothyng fayle,  
1490 For it was outrely the quenes wille.  
Jason answerde mekely and styлле:  
"My lady," quod he, "thanke I hertely  
Of hire goodnesse; us nedeth, trewely,  
Nothyng as now, but that we wery be,  
And come for to pleye out of the se  
Tyl that the wynd be better in oure weye."  
This lady rometh by the clyf to pleye,  
With hire meyne, endelong the stronde,  
And fynt this Jason and this other stonde  
1500 In spekyng of this thyng, as I yow tolde.  
This Ercules and Jason gan beholde



How that the queen it was, and fayre hire grette  
Anon-ryght as they with this lady mette;  
And she tok hed, and knew by hyre manere,  
By hire aray, by wordes, and by chere,  
That it were gentil-men of gret degre,  
And to the castel with hire ledeth she  
These straunge folk and doth hem gret honour,  
And axeth hem of travayle and labour  
1510 That they han suffered in the salte se;  
So that, withinne a day, or two, or thre,  
She knew, by folk that in his shipes be,  
That it was Jason, ful of renone,  
And Ercules, that hadde the grete los,  
That soughten the adventures of Colcos;  
And dide hem honour more than before,  
And with hem deled evere lenger the more,  
For they ben worthy folk, withouten les.  
And namely, most she spak with Ercules;  
1520 To hym hire herte bar, he shulde be  
Sad, wys, and trewe, of wordes avyse,  
Withouten any other affeccioun  
Of love, or evyl ymagynacyoun.  
This Ercules hath so this Jason preysed  
That to the sonne he hath hym up areysed,  
That half so trewe a man there nas of love  
Under the cope of heven that is above;  
And he was wis, hardy, secre, and ryche.  
Of these thre poyntes there nas non hym liche:  
1530 Of fredom passede he, and lustyhede,  
Alle tho that lyven or been dede;  
Therto so gret a gentilman was he,  
And of Thessalye likly kyng to be.  
There nas no lak, but that he was agast  
To love, and for to speke shamefast.  
He hadde lever hymself to morder, and dye,  
Than that men shulde a love-re hym espye.  
"As wolde God that I hadde yive  
My blod and flesh, so that I myghte live,  
1540 With the nones that he hadde owher a wif  
For hys estat; for swich a lusty lyf  
She shulde lede with this lusty knyght!"  
And al this was compassed on the nyght

Bytwixe hym Jason and this Ercules.  
Of these two here was a shrewed lees,  
To come to hous upon an innocent!  
For to bedote this queen was here assent.  
And Jason is as coy as is a mayde;  
He loketh pitously, but nought he sayde,  
1550 But frely yaf he to hire conseyleres  
Yiftes grete, and to hire officeres.  
As wolde God I leyser hadde and tyme  
By proces al his wowyng for to ryme!  
But in this hous if any fals love be,  
Ryght as hymself now doth, ryght so dide he,  
With feynynge, and with every subtil dede.  
Ye gete namore of me, but ye wole rede  
Th' origynal, that telleth al the cas.  
The somme is this: that Jason wedded was  
1560 Unto this queen and tok of hir substaunce  
What so hym leste unto his purveyaunce;  
And upon hire begat he children two,  
And drogh his sayl and saw hir nevere mo.  
A letter sente she to hym, certeyn,  
Which were to longe to wryten and to sen,  
And hym reprevith of his grete untrouthe,  
And preyeth him on hire to have som routhe.  
And of his children two she seyde hym this:  
That they ben lyk of alle thyng, ywis,  
1570 To Jason, save they coude nat begile;  
And preyede God, or it were longe while,  
That she that hadde his herte yraft hire fro  
Moste fynden hym untrewe to hir also,  
And that she moste bothe hire chyldren spylle,  
And alle tho that sufferede hym his wille.  
And trewe to Jason was she al hire lyf,  
And evere kepte hire chast, as for his wif;  
Ne nevere hadde she joye at hire herte,  
But deyede for his love, of sorwes smerte.  
1580 To Colcos comen is this duc Jasoun,  
That is of love devourer and dragoun.  
As mater apetiteth forme alwey  
And from forme into forme it passen may,  
Or as a welle that were botomles,  
Ryght so can false Jason have no pes.

For to desyren thourgh his apetit  
To don with gentil women his delyt,  
This is his lust and his felicite.  
Jason is romed forth to the cyte  
1590 That whilom cleped was Jaconitos,  
That was the mayster-toun of al Colcos,  
And hath ytold the cause of his comyng  
Unto Oetes, of that contre kyng,  
Preyinge hym that he moste don his assay  
To gete the fles of gold if that he may;  
Of which the kyng assenteth to his bone,  
And doth hym honour, as it was to done,  
So fer forth that his doughter and his eyr,  
Medea, which that was so wis and fayr  
1600 That fayrer say there nevere man with ye,  
He made hire don to Jason companye  
At mete, and sitte by hym in the halle.  
Now was Jason a semely man withalle,  
And lyk a lord, and hadde a gret renoun,  
And of his lok as real as a leoun,  
And goodly of his speche, and familer,  
And coude of love al craft and art pleyner  
Withoute bok, with everych observaunce.  
And, as Fortune hire oughte a foul myschaunce,  
1610 She wex enamoured upon this man.  
"Jason," quod she, "for ought I se or can,  
As of this thyng the whiche ye ben aboute,  
Ye han youreself yput in moche doute.  
For whoso wol this aventure acheve,  
He may nat wel asterten, as I leve,  
Withouten deth, but I his helpe be.  
But natheles, it is my wylle," quod she,  
"To fortheren yow so that ye shal nat die,  
But turnen sound hom to youre Tessalye."  
1620 "My ryghte lady," quod this Jason tho,  
"That ye han of my deth or of my wo  
Any reward, and don me this honour,  
I wot wel that my myght ne my labour  
May nat disserve it in my lyves day.  
God thanke yow there I ne can ne may!  
Youre man I am, and lowely yow beseche  
To ben my helpe, withoute more speche;

But, certes, for my deth shal I nat spare."  
Tho gan this Medea to hym declare  
1630 The peril of this cas from poynt to poynt,  
And of his batayle, and in what disjoynt  
He mote stonde, of which no creature  
Save only she ne myghte his lyf assure.  
And shortly to the poynt ryght for to go,  
They been acorded ful bytwixe hem two  
That Jason shal hire wedde, as trewe knyght;  
And terme set to come sone at nyght  
Unto hire chamber and make there his oth  
Upon the goddes, that he for lef or loth  
1640 Ne sholde nevere hire false, nyght ne day,  
To ben hire husbonde whil he lyve may,  
As she that from his deth hym saved here.  
And hereupon at nyght they mette in-feere,  
And doth his oth, and goth with hire to bedde;  
And on the morwe upward he hym spedde,  
For she hath taught hym how he shal nat fayle  
The fles to wynne and stynten his batayle;  
And saved hym his lyf and his honour;  
And gat hym a name ryght as a conquerour,  
1650 Ryght thourgh the sleyghte of hire enchauntement.  
Now hath Jason the fles, and hom is went  
With Medea, and tresor ful gret won;  
But unwist of hire fader is she gon  
To Tessaly with Duk Jason hire lef,  
That afterward hath brought hire to myschef.  
For as a traytour he is from hire go,  
And with hire lafte his yonge children two,  
And falsly hath betraysed hire, alas,  
As evere in love a chef traytour he was;  
1660 And wedded yit the thridde wif anon,  
That was the doughter of the kyng Creon.  
This is the mede of lovyng and guerdoun  
That Medea receyved of Jasoun  
Ryght for hire trouthe and for hire kyndenesse,  
That lovede hym beter than hireself, I gesse,  
And lafte hire fader and hire herytage.  
And of Jason this is the vassellage,  
That in his dayes nas ther non yfounde  
So fals a love-re goinge on the grounde.

1670 And therfore in hire letter thus she seyde  
Fyrst, whan she of his falsnesse hym upbreyde:  
"Whi lykede me thy yelwe her to se  
More than the boundes of myn honeste?  
Why lykede me thy youthe and thy fayrnesse,  
And of thy tonge, the infynyt graciousnesse?  
O, haddest thou in thy conquest ded ybe,  
Ful mikel untrouthe hadde ther deyde with the!"  
Wel can Ovyde hire letter in vers endyte,  
Which were as now to long for me to wryte.  
1680 Now mot I seyn the exilynge of kynges  
Of Rome, for here horrible doinges,  
And of the laste kyng Tarquinius,  
As seyth Ovyde and Titus Lyvius.  
But for that cause telle I nat this storye,  
But for to preyse and drawe to memorye  
The verray wif, the verray trewe Lucesse,  
That for hyre wifhod and hire stedefastnesse  
Nat only that these payens hire comende,  
But he that cleped is in oure legende  
1690 The grete Austyn hath gret compassioun  
Of this Lucesse, that starf at Rome toun;  
And in what wise, I wol but shortly trete,  
And of this thyng I touche but the grete.  
Whan Ardea beseged was aboute  
With Romeyns, that ful sterne were and stoute,  
Ful longe lay the sege and lytel wroughten,  
So that they were half idel, as hem thoughten;  
And in his pley Tarquinius the yonge  
Gan for to jape, for he was lyght of tonge,  
1700 And seyde that it was an ydel lyf;  
No man dide there no more than his wif.  
"And lat us speke of wyves, that is best;  
Preyse every man his owene as hym lest,  
And with oure speche lat us ese oure herte."  
A knyght that highte Colatyn up sterte,  
And seyde thus: "Nay, sire, it is no nede  
To trowen on the word, but on the dede.  
I have a wif," quod he, "that, as I trowe,  
Is holden good of alle that evere hire knowe.  
1710 Go we to-nyght to Rome, and we shal se."  
Tarquinius answerde, "That liketh me."

To Rome be they come, and faste hem dyghte  
To Colatynes hous and doun they lyghte,  
Tarquinius and ek this Colatyn.  
The husbonde knew the estris wel and fyn,  
And prively into the hous they gon,  
Nor at the yate porter nas there non,  
And at the chambre-dore they abyde.  
This noble wif sat by hire beddes side  
1720 Dischevele, for no malyce she ne thoughte;  
And softe wolde oure bok seyth that she wroughte  
To kepen hire from slouthe and idelnesse;  
And bad hire servaunts don hire besynesse,  
And axeth hem, "What tydyngs heren ye?  
How seyth men of the sege, how shal it be?  
God wolde the walles were falle adoun!  
Myn husbonde is to longe out of this toun,  
For which the drede doth me so to smerte  
That with a swerd it stingeth to myn herte  
1730 Whan I thynke on the sege or on that place.  
God save my lord, I preye hym for his grace!"  
And therwithal ful tenderly she wep,  
And of hire werk she tok no more kep,  
And mekely she let hyre eyen falle;  
And thilke semblaunt sat hire wel withalle.  
And eek hire teres, ful of honeste,  
Embelished hire wifly chastite;  
Hyre contenaunce is to hire herte dygne,  
For they acorde bothe in dede and sygne.  
1740 And with that word hire husbonde Colatyn,  
Or she of him was war, com stertynge in  
And seyde, "Drede the nat, for I am here!"  
And she anon up ros with blysful chere  
And kiste hym, as of wives is the wone.  
Tarquinius, this proude kynges sone,  
Conceyved hath hire beaute and hyre cheere,  
Hire yelwe her, hire shap, and hire manere,  
Hire hew, hire wordes, that she hath compleyned  
(And by no craft hire beaute nas nat feyned),  
1750 And caughte to this lady swich desyr  
That in his herte brende as any fyr,  
So wodly that his wit was al forgeten.  
For wel thoghte he she wolde nat ben geten;

And ay the more that he was in dispayr,  
The more he coveyteth and thoughte hire fayr.  
His blynde lust was al his coveytynge.  
A-morwe, whan the brid began to synge,  
Unto the sege he cometh ful privily,  
And by hymself he walketh soberly,  
1760 Th' ymage of hire recordyng alwey newe:  
"Thus lay hire her, and thus fresh was hyre hewe;  
Thus sat, thus spak, thus span; this was hire chere;  
Thus fayr she was, and this was hire manere."  
Al this conseit hys herte hath newe ytake.  
And as the se, with tempest al toshake,  
That after, whan the storm is al ago,  
Yit wol the water quappe a day or two,  
Ryght so, thogh that hire forme were absent,  
The plesaunce of hire forme was present;  
1770 But natheles, nat plesaunce but delit,  
Or an unrightful talent, with dispit --  
"For, maugre hyre, she shal my leman be!  
Hap helpeth hardy man alday," quod he;  
"What ende that I make, it shal be so."  
And girte hym with his swerd and gan to go,  
And forth he rit til he to Rome is come,  
And al alone his wey than hath he nome  
Unto the hous of Colatyn ful ryght.  
Doun was the sonne and day hath lost his lyght;  
1780 And in he cometh into a prive halke,  
And in the nyght ful thefly gan he stalke,  
Whan every wight was to his reste brought,  
Ne no wight hadde of tresoun swich a thought.  
Were it by wyndow or by other gyn,  
With swerd ydrawe shortly he com in  
There as she lay, this noble wif Lucesse.  
And as she wok, hire bed she felte presse.  
"What beste is that," quod she, "that weyeth thus?"  
"I am the kynges sone, Tarquinius,"  
1790 Quod he, "but, and thow crye or noyse make,  
Or if there any creature awake,  
By thilke God that formed man alyve,  
This swerd thourghout thyn herte shal I ryve."  
And therwithal unto hire throte he sterte,  
And sette the poynt al sharp upon hire herte.

No word she spak, she hath no myght therto.  
What shal she seyn? Hire wit is al ago.  
Ryght as a wolf that fynt a lomb alone,  
To whom shal she compleyne or make mone?  
1800 What, shal she fyghte with an hardy knyght?  
Wel wot men that a woman hath no myght.  
What, shal she crye, or how shal she asterte  
That hath hire by the throte with swerd at herte?  
She axeth grace, and seyth al that she can.  
"Ne wilt thou nat," quod he, this crewel man,  
"As wisly Jupiter my soule save,  
As I shal in the stable slen thy knave,  
And ley hym in thy bed, and loude crye  
That I the fynde in swich avouterye.  
1810 And thus thou shalt be ded and also lese  
Thy name, for thou shalt non other chese."  
These Romeyns wyves lovede so here name  
At thilke tyme, and dredde so the shame,  
That, what for fer of sclaunder and drede of deth,  
She loste bothe at ones wit and breth,  
And in a swogh she lay, and wex so ded  
Men myghte smyten of hire arm or hed;  
She feleth no thyng, neyther foul ne fayr.  
Tarquinius, that art a kynges eyr,  
1820 And sholdest, as by lynage and by ryght,  
Don as a lord and as a verray knyght,  
Whi hastow don dispit to chivalrye?  
Whi hastow don this lady vilanye?  
Allas, of the this was a vileyns dede!  
But now to purpos; in the story I rede,  
Whan he was gon and this myschaunce is falle,  
This lady sente after hire frendes alle,  
Fader, moder, husbonde, alle yfeere;  
And al dischevele, with hire heres cleere,  
1830 In habit swich as women used tho  
Unto the buryinge of hire frendes go,  
She sit in halle with a sorweful sighte.  
Hyre frendes axen what hire eylen myghte,  
And who was ded; and she sit ay wepynge;  
A word, for shame, forth ne myght she brynge,  
Ne upon hem she durste nat beholde.  
But atte last of Tarquyny she hem tolde



This rewful cas and al thys thing horryble.  
The woo to tellen were an impossible,  
1840 That she and al hir frendes made attones.  
Al hadde folkes hertes ben of stones,  
Hyt myght have maked hem upon hir rewe,  
Hir herte was so wyfly and so trewe.  
She sayde that, for hir gylt ne for hir blame,  
Hir husbonde shulde nat have the foule name,  
That wolde she nat suffre by no wey.  
And they answerden alle, upon hir fey,  
That they forgave yt hyr, for yt was ryght;  
It was no gilt, it lay not in hir myght;  
1850 And seyden hir ensamples many oon.  
But al for noght; for thus she seyde anoon:  
"Be as be may," quod she, "of forgyvyng,  
I wol not have noo forgyft for nothing."  
But pryvely she kaughte forth a knyf,  
And therwithal she rafte hirsself hir lyf;  
And as she fel adoun, she kaste hir lok,  
And of hir clothes yet she hede tok.  
For in hir fallynge yet she had a care,  
Lest that hir fet or suche thyng lay bare;  
1860 So wel she loved clenness and eke trouthe.  
Of hir had al the toun of Rome routhe,  
And Brutus by hir chaste blood hath swore  
That Tarquyn shulde ybanysshed be therfore,  
And al hys kyn; and let the peple calle,  
And openly the tale he tolde hem alle,  
And openly let cary her on a bere  
Thurgh al the toun, that men may see and here  
The horryble dede of hir oppressyoun,  
Ne never was ther kyng in Rome toun  
1870 Syn thilke day; and she was holden there  
A seynt, and ever hir day yhalwed dere  
As in hir lawe; and thus endeth Lucesse,  
The noble wyf, as Tytus bereth witnesse.  
I telle hyt for she was of love so trewe,  
Ne in hir wille she chaunged for no newe;  
And for the stable herte, sadde and kynde,  
That in these wymmen men may alday fynde.  
Ther as they kaste hir herte, there it dwelleth.  
For wel I wot that Crist himselve telleth

1880 That in Israel, as wyd as is the lond,  
 That so gret feyth in al that he ne fond  
 As in a woman; and this is no lye.  
 And as of men, loke ye which tirannye  
 They doon alday; assay hem whoso lyste,  
 The trewest ys ful brotel for to triste.  
 Juge infernal, Mynos, of Crete kyng,  
 Now cometh thy lot, now comestow on the ryng.  
 Nat for thy sake oonly write I this storye,  
 But for to clepe ageyn unto memorye  
 1890 Of Theseus the grete untrouthe of love;  
 For which the goddes of the heven above  
 Ben wrothe, and wreche han take for thy synne.  
 Be red for shame! Now I thy lyf begynne.  
 Mynos, that was the myghty kyng of Crete,  
 That hadde an hundred citees stronge and grete,  
 To scole hath sent hys sone Androgeus,  
 To Athenes; of the which hyt happed thus,  
 That he was slayn, lernynge philosophie,  
 Ryght in that citee, nat but for envye.  
 1900 The grete Mynos, of the which I speke,  
 Hys sones deth ys come for to wreke.  
 Alcathoe he besegeth harde and longe;  
 But natheles, the walles be so stronge,  
 And Nysus, that was kyng of that citee,  
 So chevalrous, that lytel dredeth he;  
 Of Mynos or hys ost tok he no cure,  
 Til on a day befel an aventure,  
 That Nysus doughter stod upon the wal,  
 And of the sege saw the maner al.  
 1910 So happed it that at a scarmishyng  
 She caste hire herte upon Mynos the kyng,  
 For his beaute and for his chyvalrye,  
 So sore that she wende for to dye.  
 And, shortly of this proces for to pace,  
 She made Mynos wynnen thilke place,  
 So that the cite was al at his wille,  
 To saven whom hym leste or elles spille.  
 But wikkedly he quitte hire kyndenesse,  
 And let hire drenche in sorwe and distresse,  
 1920 Nere that the goddes hadde of hire pite;  
 But that tale were to long as now for me.

Athenes wan thys kyng Mynos also,  
As Alcathoe, and other tounes mo.  
And this th' effect, that Mynos hath so driven  
Hem of Athenes that they mote hym given  
From yer to yer hire owene children dere  
For to be slayne right as ye shal here.  
This Mynos hadde a monstre, a wiked best,  
That was so crewel that, withoute arest,  
1930 Whan that a man was brought in his presence,  
He wolde hym ete; ther helpeth no defence.  
And every thridde yeer, withouten doute,  
They caste lot, and as it com aboute  
On riche, on pore, he moste his sone take,  
And of his child he moste present make  
Unto Minos, to save hym or to spylle,  
Or lete his best devoure hym at his wille.  
And this hath Mynos don, ryght in dispit;  
To wreke his sone was set al his delyt,  
1940 And maken hem of Athenes his thral  
From yer to yer, whil that he liven shal;  
And hom he sayleth whan this toun is wonne.  
This wiked custom is so longe yronne,  
Til that of Athenes kyng Egeus  
Mot senden his owene sone, Theseus,  
Sith that the lot is fallen hym upon,  
To ben devoured, for grace is there non.  
And forth is lad this woful yonge knyght  
Unto the court of kyng Mynos ful ryght,  
1950 And into a prysoun, fetered, cast is he  
Tyl thilke tyme he sholde freten be.  
Wel maystow wepe, O woful Theseus,  
That art a kynges sone, and dampned thus.  
Me thynketh this, that thou were depe yholde  
To whom that savede thee from cares colde!  
And if now any woman helpe the,  
Wel oughtestow hire servaunt for to be,  
And ben hire trewe loveye yer be yere!  
But now to come ageyn to my matere.  
1960 The tour there as this Theseus is throwe  
Doun in the botom derk and wonder lowe,  
Was joynynge in the wal to a foreyne;  
And it was longynge to the doughtren tweyne

Of Mynos, that in hire chaumbers grete  
Dwellten above, toward the mayster-strete  
Of Athenes, in joye and in solas.  
Noot I not how, it happede par cas,  
As Theseus compleynede hym by nyghte,  
The kynges doughter, Adryane that highte,  
1970 And ek hire syster Phedra, herden al  
His compleynynge as they stode on the wal  
And lokeden upon the bryghte mone.  
Hem leste nat to go to bedde so sone;  
And of his wo they hadde compassioun.  
A kynges sone to ben in swich prysoun,  
And ben devoured, thoughte hem gret pite.  
This Adryane spak to hire syster fre,  
And seyde, "Phedra, leve syster dere,  
This woful lordes sone may ye nat here,  
1980 How pitously compleyneth he his kyn,  
And ek his povre estat that he is in,  
And gilteles? Now, certes, it is routhe!  
And if ye wol assenten, by my trouthe,  
He shal ben holpen, how so that we do."  
Phedra answerde, "Ywis, me is as wo  
For hym as evere I was for any man;  
And, to his help, the beste red I can  
Is that we do the gayler prively  
To come and speke with us hastily,  
1990 And don this woful man with hym to come.  
For if he may this monstre overcome,  
Thanne were he quyt; ther is non other bote.  
Lat us wel taste hym at his herte-rote,  
That if so be that he a wepen have,  
Wher that he dar, his lyf to kepe and save,  
Fyghten with the fend, and hym defende.  
For in the prysoun ther he shal descende,  
Ye wote wel that the beste is in a place  
That nys nat derk, and hath roum eek and space  
2000 To welde an ax, or swerd, or staf, or knyf;  
So that, me thynketh, he shulde save his lyf.  
If that he be a man, he shal do so.  
And we shul make hym balles ek also  
Of wex and tow, that whan he gapeth faste,  
Into the bestes throte he shal hem caste

To slake his hunger and encombre his teth;  
 And right anon, whan that Theseus seth  
 The beste achoked, he shal on hym lepe  
 To slen hym or they comen more to-hepe.  
 2010 This wepen shal the gayler, or that tyde,  
 Ful prively withinne the prysoun hyde;  
 And for the hous is krynkeled to and fro,  
 And hath so queynte weyes for to go --  
 For it is shapen as the mase is wrought --  
 Therto have I a remedye in my thought,  
 That, by a clewe of twyn, as he hath gon,  
 The same weye he may returne anon,  
 Folwynge alwey the thred as he hath come.  
 And whan that he this beste hath overcome,  
 2020 Thanne may he flen away out of this drede,  
 And ek the gayler may he with hym lede,  
 And hym avaunce at hom in his cuntre,  
 Syn that so gret a lordes sone is he.  
 This is my red, if that he dar it take."  
 What sholde I lenger sarmoun of it make?  
 This gayler cometh, and with hym Theseus.  
 Whan these thynges ben acorded thus,  
 Adoun sit Theseus upon his kne --  
 "The ryghte lady of my lyf," quod he,  
 2030 "I, sorweful man, ydampned to the deth,  
 Fro yow, whil that me lasteth lyf or breth,  
 I wol nat twynne, after this aventure,  
 But in youre servise thus I wol endure,  
 That, as a wreche unknowe, I wol yow serve  
 For everemo, til that myn herte sterve.  
 Forsake I wol at hom myn herytage,  
 And, as I seyde, ben of youre court a page,  
 If that ye vouche-sauf that in this place  
 Ye graunte me to han so gret a grace  
 2040 That I may han nat but my mete and drynke.  
 And for my sustenaunce yit wol I swynke,  
 Ryght as yow leste, that Mynos ne no wight --  
 Syn that he saw me nevere with eyen syght --  
 Ne no man elles, shal me conne espye;  
 So slyly and so wel I shal me gye,  
 And me so wel disfigure and so lowe,  
 That in this world ther shal no man me knowe,

To han my lyf, and for to han presence  
Of yow, that don to me this excellence.  
2050 And to my fader shal I sende here  
This worthy man that is now youre gaylere,  
And hym so gwerdone that he shal wel be  
Oon of the gretteste men of my cuntre.  
And if I durste seyn, my lady bryght,  
I am a kynges sone and ek a knyght.  
As wolde God, if that it myghte be  
Ye weren in my cuntre, alle thre,  
And I with yow to bere yow compaignye,  
Thanne shulde ye se if that I therof lye.  
2060 And if I profre yow in low manere  
To ben youre page and serven yow ryght here,  
But I yow serve as lowly in that place,  
I preye to Mars to yeve me swich a grace  
That shames deth on me ther mote falle,  
And deth and poverté to my frendes alle;  
And that my spirit by nyghte mote go,  
After my deth, and walke to and fro,  
That I mote of traytour have a name,  
For which my spirit go, to do me shame!  
2070 And if I evere cleyme other degre,  
But if ye vouche-sauf to yeve it me,  
As I have seyde, of shames deth I deye!  
And mercy, lady! I can nat elles seye."  
A semely knyght was Theseus to se,  
And yong, but of a twenty yer and thre.  
But whoso hadde seyn his contenance,  
He wolde have wept for routhe of his penaunce;  
For which this Adryane in this manere  
Answerde hym to his profre and to his chere:  
2080 "A kynges sone, and ek a knyght," quod she,  
"To ben my servaunt in so low degre,  
God shilde it, for the shame of wemen alle,  
And lene me nevere swich a cas befalle!  
But sende yow grace of herte and sleighte also,  
Yow to defende and knyghtly slen youre fo,  
And leve hereafter that I may yow fynde  
To me and to my syster here so kynde,  
That I repente nat to yeve yow lyf!  
Yit were it betere that I were youre wyf,

2090 Syn that ye ben as gentil born as I,  
And have a reaume, nat but faste by,  
Than that I suffered, gilteles, yow sterve,  
Or that I let yow as a page serve.  
It nys no profre as unto youre kynrede;  
But what is that that man nyl don for drede?  
And to my syster, syn that it is so  
That she mot gon with me, if that I go,  
Or elles suffre deth as wel as I,  
That ye unto youre sone as trewely  
2100 Don hire ben wedded at youre hom-comyng.  
This is the final ende of al this thyng;  
Ye swere it here, upon al that may be sworn."  
"Ye, lady myn," quod he, "or ellis torn  
Mote I be with the Mynotaur to-morwe!  
And haveth hereof myn herte blod to borwe,  
If that ye wole; if I hadde knyf or spere,  
I wolde it laten out, and theron swere,  
For thanne at erst I wot ye wole me leve.  
By Mars, that is the chef of my beleve,  
2110 So that I myghte liven and nat fayle  
To-morwe for t' acheve my batayle,  
I wolde nevere from this place fle,  
Til that ye shulde the verray preve se.  
For now, if that the sothe I shal yow say,  
I have yloved yow ful many a day,  
Thogh ye ne wiste it nat, in my cuntre,  
And aldermost desired yow to se  
Of any erthly livynge creature.  
Upon my trouthe I swere and yow assure,  
2120 This sevene yer I have youre servaunt be.  
Now have I yow, and also have ye me,  
My dere herte, of Athenes duchesse!"  
This lady smyleth at his stedefastnesse,  
And at his hertely wordes and his chere,  
And to hyre sister seyde in this manere,  
Al softly: "Now, syster myn," quod she,  
"Now be we duchesses, bothe I and ye,  
And sekered to the regals of Athenes,  
And bothe hereafter likly to ben quenes;  
2130 And saved from his deth a kynges sone,  
As evere of gentil women is the wone

To save a gentyl man, emforth hire myght,  
In honest cause, and namely in his ryght.  
Me thynketh no wight oughte us herof blame,  
Ne beren us therfore an evil name."  
And shortly of this mater for to make,  
This Theseus of hire hath leve take,  
And every poynt was performed in dede  
As ye han in this covenant herd me rede.  
2140 His wepne, his clewe, his thyng, that I have sayd,  
Was by the gayler in the hous yleyd,  
Ther as the Mynotaur hath his dwellynge,  
Ryght faste by the dore, at his entrynge.  
And Theseus is lad unto his deth,  
And forth unto this Mynotaur he geth,  
And by the techynge of this Adryane  
He overcom this beste and was his bane;  
And out he cometh by the clewe agayn  
Ful prively, whan he this beste hath slayn;  
2150 And by the gayler geten hath a barge,  
And of his wyves tresor gan it charge,  
And tok his wif, and ek hire sister fre,  
And ek the gayler, and with hem alle thre  
Is stole away out of the lond by nyghte,  
And to the contre of Ennopye hym dyghte  
There as he hadde a frend of his knowynge.  
There feste they, there daunce they and synge;  
And in his armes hath this Adryane,  
That of the beste hath kept hym from his bane;  
2160 And gat hym there a newe barge anon,  
And of his contre-folk a ful gret won,  
And taketh his leve, and homward sayleth he.  
And in an yle amynd the wilde se,  
Ther as there dwelled creature non  
Save wilde bestes, and that ful many oon,  
He made his ship a-londe for to sette;  
And in that yle half a day he lette,  
And seyde that on the lond he moste hym reste.  
His maryners han don ryght as hym leste;  
2170 And, for to tellen shortly in this cas,  
Whan Adryane his wif aslepe was,  
For that hire syster fayrer was than she,  
He taketh hire in his hond and forth goth he



To shipe, and as a traytour stal his wey,  
Whil that this Adryane aslepe lay,  
And to his contre-ward he sayleth blyve --  
A twenty devel-wey the wynd hym dryve! --  
And fond his fader drenched in the se.  
Me lest no more to speke of hym, parde.  
2180 These false lovers, poysoun be here bane!  
But I wol turne ageyn to Adryane,  
That is with slep for werynesse atake.  
Ful sorwefully hire herte may awake.  
Allas, for thee myn herte hath now pite!  
Ryght in the dawenyng awaketh she,  
And gropeth in the bed, and fond ryght nought.  
"Allas," quod she, "that evere I was wrought!  
I am betrayed!" and hire her torente,  
And to the stronde barefot faste she wente,  
2190 And cryed, "Theseus, myn herte swete!  
Where be ye, that I may nat with yow mete,  
And myghte thus with bestes ben yslayn?"  
The holwe rokkes answerde hire agayn.  
No man she saw, and yit shyned the mone,  
And hye upon a rokke she wente sone,  
And saw his barge saylynge in the se.  
Cold wex hire herte, and ryght thus seyde she:  
"Meker than ye fynde I the bestes wilde!"  
Hadde he nat synne that hire thus begylde?  
2200 She cryed, "O turn ageyn, for routhe and synne!  
Thy barge hath nat al his meyne inne!"  
Hire coverchef on a pole up steked she,  
Ascaunce that he shulde it wel yse,  
And hym remembre that she was behynde,  
And turne ageyn, and on the stronde hire fynde.  
But al for nought; his wey he is ygon.  
Adoun she fyl aswoune upon a ston;  
And up she rist, and kyssed, in al hire care,  
The steppes of his fet ther he hath fare,  
2210 And to hire bed ryght thus she speketh tho:  
"Thow bed," quod she, "that hast receyved two,  
Thow shalt answer of two, and nat of oon!  
Where is thy gretter part away ygon?  
Allas! Where shal I, wreche wight, become?  
For thogh so be that ship or boot here come,

Hom to my contre dar I nat for drede.  
I can myselven in this cas nat rede."  
What shulde I more telle hire compleynyng?  
It is so long, it were an hevy thyng.  
2220 In hire Epistel Naso telleth al;  
But shortly to the ende I telle shal.  
The goddes han hire holpen for pite,  
And in the signe of Taurus men may se  
The stones of hire corone shyne clere.  
I wol no more speke of this mateere;  
But thus this false lovere can begyle  
His trewe love, the devel quyte hym his while!  
Thow yevere of the formes, that hast wrought  
This fayre world and bar it in thy thought  
2230 Eternaly er thow thy werk began,  
Why madest thow, unto the slaunder of man,  
Or, al be that it was nat thy doing,  
As for that fyn, to make swich a thyng,  
Whi sufferest thow that Tereus was bore,  
That is in love so fals and so forswore,  
That fro this world up to the firste hevene  
Corrumpeth whan that folk his name nevene?  
And, as to me, so grisely was his dede  
That, whan that I his foule storye rede,  
2240 Myne eyen wexe foule and sore also.  
Yit last the venym of so longe ago,  
That it enfecteth hym that wol beholde  
The storye of Tereus, of which I tolde.  
Of Trace was he lord, and kyn to Marte,  
The crewel god that stant with bloody darte;  
And wedded hadde he, with a blysfyl cheere,  
Kyng Pandiones fayre doughter dere,  
That highte Progne, flour of hire cuntre,  
Thogh Juno lyst nat at the feste to be,  
2250 Ne Imeneus that god of wedyng is.  
But at the feste redy ben, ywis,  
The Furies thre with al here mortal brond.  
The oule al nyght aboute the balkes wond,  
That prophete is of wo and of myschaunce.  
This revel, ful of song and ek of daunce,  
Laste a fortenyght, or lytel lasse.  
But shortly of this story for to passe,

For I am wery of hym for to telle,  
Fyve yer his wif and he togeder dwelle,  
2260 Til on a day she gan so sore longe  
To sen hire sister that she say nat longe,  
That for desyr she nyste what to seye.  
But to hire husbonde gan she for to preye,  
For Godes love, that she moste ones gon  
Hyre syster for to sen, and come anon,  
Or elles, but she moste to hire wende,  
She preyde hym that he wolde after hire sende;  
And this was day by day al hire preyere,  
With al humblesse of wifhod, word and chere.  
2270 This Tereus let make his shipes yare,  
And into Grece hymself is forth yfare.  
Unto his fadyr-in-lawe gan he preye  
To vouche-sauf that for a month or tweye  
That Philomene, his wyves syster, myghte  
On Progne his wyf but ones han a syghte --  
"And she shal come to yow ageyn anon.  
Myself with hyre wol bothe come and gon,  
And as myn hertes lyf I wol hire kepe."  
This olde Pandion, this kyng, gan wepe  
2280 For tendernesse of herte for to leve  
His doughter gon, and for to yeve hire leve;  
Of al this world he loveth nothyng so;  
But at the laste leve hath she to go.  
For Philomene with salte teres eke  
Gan of hire fader grace to beseke  
To sen hire syster that she loveth so,  
And hym embraseth with hire armes two.  
And therwithal so yong and fayr was she  
That, whan that Tereus saw hire beaute,  
2290 And of aray that there was non hire lyche,  
And yit of beaute was she two so ryche,  
He caste his fyry herte upon hyre so  
That he wol have hir, how so that it go;  
And with his wiles kneled and so preyde,  
Tyl at the laste Pandyon thus seyde:  
"Now, sone," quod he, "that art to me so dere,  
I the betake my yonge doughter here  
That bereth the keye of al myn hertes lyf.  
And gret me wel my doughter and thy wif,

2300 And yif hire leve somtyme for to pleye,  
That she may sen me ones er I deye."  
And sothly, he hath mad hym riche feste,  
And to his folk, the moste and ek the leste,  
That with hym com; and yaf hym yiftes grete,  
And hym conveyeth thourgh the mayster-strete  
Of Athenes, and to the se hym broughte,  
And turneth hom; no malyce he ne thoughte.  
The ores pullen forth the vessel faste,  
And into Trace aryveth at the laste,  
2310 And up into a forest he hire ledde,  
And to a cave pryvely hym spedde;  
And in this derke cave, yif hir leste,  
Or leste nat, he bad hire for to reste;  
Of which hire herte agros, and seyde thus:  
"Where is my sister, brother Tereus?"  
And therwithal she wepte tenderly  
And quok for fere, pale and pitously,  
Ryght as the lamb that of the wolf is biten;  
Or as the culver that of the egle is smiten,  
2320 And is out of his clawes forth escaped,  
Yit it is afered and awhaped,  
Lest it be hent eft-sones; so sat she.  
But utterly it may non other be.  
By force hath this traytour don a dede,  
That he hath reft hire of hire maydenhede,  
Maugre hire hed, by strengthe and by his myght.  
Lo! here a dede of men, and that a ryght!  
She cryeth "Syster!" with ful loud a stevene,  
And "Fader dere!" and "Help me, God in hevene!"  
2330 Al helpeth nat; and yit this false thef  
Hath don this lady yit a more myschef,  
For fere lest she shulde his shame crye  
And don hym openly a vilenye,  
And with his swerd hire tonge of kerveth he,  
And in a castel made hire for to be  
Ful pryvely in prisoun everemore,  
And kepte hire to his usage and his store,  
So that she myghte hym neveremore asterte.  
O sely Philomene, wo is thyn herte!  
2340 God wreke thee, and sende the thy bone!  
Now is it tyme I make an ende sone.

This Tereus is to his wif ycome,  
And in his armes hath his wif ynome,  
And pitously he wep and shok his hed,  
And swor hir that he fond hir sister ded;  
For which this sely Progne hath swich wo  
That nygh hire sorweful herte brak a-two.  
And thus in terys lete I Progne dwelle,  
And of hire sister forth I wol yow telle.  
2350 This woful lady lerned hadde in youthe  
So that she werken and enbroude couthe,  
And weven in hire stol the radevore  
As it of women hath be woned yore.  
And, sothly for to seyne, she hadde hire fille  
Of mete and drynk, and clothyng at hire wille.  
She coude eek rede and wel ynow endyte,  
But with a penne coude she nat wryte.  
But letters can she weve to and fro,  
So that, by that the yer was al ago,  
2360 She hadde ywoven in a stamyn large  
How she was brought from Athenes in a barge,  
And in a cave how that she was brought;  
And al the thyng that Tereus hath wrought,  
She waf it wel, and wrot the storye above,  
How she was served for hire systers love.  
And to a knave a ryng she yaf anon,  
And preyed hym by signes for to gon  
Unto the queen, and beren hir that cloth,  
And by signes swor hym many an oth  
2370 She wolde hym yeven what she geten myghte.  
This knave anon unto the quene hym dyghte,  
And tok it hire, and al the maner tolde.  
And whan that Progne hath this thing beholde,  
No word she spak, for sorwe and ek for rage,  
But feynede hire to gon on pilgrymage  
To Bacus temple; and in a litel stounde  
Hire dombe sister sittynge hath she founde,  
Wepynge in the castel, here alone.  
Allas! The wo, the compleynt, and the mone  
2380 That Progne upon hire doumbe syster maketh.  
In armes everych of hem other taketh,  
And thus I late hem in here sorwe dwelle.  
The remenaunt is no charge for to telle,

For this is al and som: thus was she served,  
That nevere harm agilte ne deserved  
Unto this crewel man, that she of wiste.  
Ye may be war of men, if that yow liste.  
For al be it that he wol nat, for shame,  
Don as Tereus, to lese his name,  
2390 Ne serve yow as a morderour or a knave,  
Ful lytel while shal ye trewe hym have --  
That wol I seyn, al were he now my brother --  
But it so be that he may have non other.  
By preve as wel as by autorite,  
That wiked fruit cometh of a wiked tre,  
That may ye fynde, if that it like yow.  
But for this ende I speke this as now,  
To tellen yow of false Demophon.  
In love a falsere herde I nevere non,  
2400 But if it were his fader Theseus.  
"God, for his grace, fro swich oon kepe us!"  
Thus may these women preyen that it here.  
Now to the effect turne I of my matere.  
Destroyed is of Troye the cite;  
This Demophon com seylyng in the se  
Toward Athenes, to his paleys large.  
With hym com many a ship and many a barge  
Ful of his folk, of whiche ful many oon  
Is wounded sore, and sek, and wo begon,  
2410 As they han at th' asege longe yleyn.  
Byhynde hym com a wynd and ek a reyn  
That shof so sore his sayl ne myghte stonde;  
Hym were levere than al the world a-londe,  
So hunteth hym the tempest to and fro.  
So derk it was, he coude nowher go;  
And with a wawe brosten was his stere.  
His ship was rent so lowe, in swich manere,  
That carpenter ne coude it nat amende.  
The se, by nyghte, as any torche it brende  
2420 For wod, and possith hym now up, now down,  
Til Neptune hath of hym compassioun,  
And Thetis, Thorus, Triton, and they alle,  
And maden hym upon a lond to falle,  
Wherof that Phillis lady was and queene,  
Ligurges doughter, fayrer on to sene

Than is the flour ageyn the bryghte sonne.  
Unnethe is Demophon to londe ywonne,  
Wayk, and ek wery, and his folk forpyned  
Of werynesse, and also enfamyned,  
2430 That to the deth he almost was ydriven.  
His wise folk to conseyl han hym yiven  
To seken help and socour of the queen,  
And loke what his grace myghte been,  
And maken in that lond som chevysaunce,  
To kepen hym fro wo and fro myschaunce.  
For syk he was, and almost at the deth;  
Unnethe myghte he speke or drawe his breth,  
And lyth in Rodopeya hym for to reste.  
Whan he may walke, hym thoughte it was the beste  
2440 Unto the court to seken for socour.  
Men knewen hym wel and diden hym honour;  
For of Athenes duk and lord was he,  
As Theseus his fader hadde be,  
That in his tyme was of gret renoun,  
No man so gret in al the regyoun,  
And lyk his fader of face and of stature,  
And fals of love; it com hym of nature.  
As doth the fox Renard, the foxes sone,  
Of kynde he coude his olde faders wone  
2450 Withoute lore, as can a drake swimme  
Whan it is caught and caryed to the brymme.  
This honourable Phillis doth hym chere;  
Hire liketh wel his port and his manere.  
But, for I am agroted herebyforn  
To wryte of hem that ben in love forsworn,  
And ek to haste me in my legende,  
(Which to performe God me grace sende)  
Therefore I passe shortly in this wyse.  
Ye han wel herd of Theseus devyse  
2460 In the betraysynge of fayre Adryane  
That of hire pite kepte him from his bane.  
At shorte wordes, ryght so Demophon  
The same wey, the same path hath gon,  
That dide his false fader Theseus.  
For unto Phillis hath he sworn thus,  
To wedden hire, and hire his trouthe plyghte,  
And piked of hire al the good he myghte,

Whan he was hol and sound, and hadde his reste;  
And doth with Phillis what so that hym leste,  
2470 As wel coude I, if that me leste so,  
Tellen al his doynge to and fro.  
He seyde unto his contre moste he sayle,  
For there he wolde hire weddyngge aparayle,  
As fel to hire honour and his also.  
And openly he tok his leve tho,  
And hath hire sworn he wolde nat sojorne,  
But in a month he wolde ageyn retorne;  
And in that lond let make his ordenaunce  
As verray lord, and tok the obeysaunce  
2480 Wel and homly, and let his shipes dighte,  
And hom he goth the nexte wey he myghte.  
For unto Phillis yit ne com he nought,  
And that hath she so harde and sore abought --  
Allas! -- that, as the storyes us recorde,  
She was hire owene deth ryght with a corde,  
Whan that she saw that Demophon hire trayed.  
But to hym first she wrot, and faste him prayed  
He wolde come and hire delyvere of peyne,  
As I reherce shal a word or tweyne.  
2490 Me lyst nat vouche-sauf on hym to swynke,  
Ne spende on hym a penne ful of ynke,  
For fals in love was he, ryght as his syre.  
The devil sette here soules bothe afyre!  
But of the letter of Phillis wol I wryte  
A word or two, althogh it be but lyte.  
"Thyn hostesse," quod she, "O Demophon,  
Thy Phillis, which that is so wo begon,  
Of Rodopeye, upon yow mot compleyne  
Over the terme set bytwixe us tweyne,  
2500 That ye ne holde forward, as ye seyde.  
Youre anker, which ye in oure haven leyde,  
Hyghte us that ye wolde comen, out of doute,  
Or that the mone wente ones aboute.  
But tymes foure the mone hath hid hire face,  
Syn thilke day ye wente from this place,  
And foure tymes lyghte the world ageyn.  
But for al that, yif I shal soothly seyn,  
Yit hath the strem of Sytho nat ybrought  
From Athenes the ship; yit cometh it noght.



2510 And if that ye the terme rekene wolde  
As I or as a trewe love shulde,  
I pleyne nat, God wot, byforn my day."  
But al hire letter wryten I ne may  
By order, for it were to me a charge;  
Hire letter was ryght long and therto large.  
But here and ther in rym I have it layd,  
There as me thoughte that she wel hath sayd.  
She seyde, "Thy sayles come nat agen,  
Ne to thy word there is no fey certeyn;  
2520 But I wot why ye come nat," quod she,  
"For I was of my love to yow to fre.  
And of the goddes that ye han forswore,  
Yif hire vengeance falle on yow therfore,  
Ye be nat suffisaunt to bere the peyne.  
To moche trusted I, wel may I pleyne,  
Upon youre lynage and youre fayre tonge,  
And on youre teres falsly out yronge.  
How coude ye wepe so by craft?" quod she.  
"May there swiche teres feyned be?  
2530 Now certes, yif ye wol have in memorye,  
It oughte be to yow but lyte glorye  
To han a sely mayde thus betrayed!  
To God," quod she, "preye I, and ofte have prayed,  
That it mot be the grettest prys of alle  
And most honour that evere the shal befalle!  
And whan thyne olde auncestres peynted be,  
In which men may here worthynesse se,  
Thanne preye I God thow peynted be also  
That folk may rede forby as they go,  
2540 'Lo! this is he that with his flaterye  
Bytraised hath and don hire vilenye  
That was his trewe love in thought and dede!  
But sothly, of oo poynt yit may they rede,  
That ye ben lyk youre fader as in this,  
For he begiled Adriane, ywis,  
With swich an art and with swich subtilte  
As thow thyselven hast begyled me.  
As in that poynt, althogh it be nat fayr,  
Thow folwest hym, certayn, and art his ayr.  
2550 But syn thus synfully ye me begile,  
My body mote ye se withinne a while,

Ryght in the haven of Athenes fletynge,  
Withoute sepulture and buryinge,  
Thogh ye ben harder than is any ston."  
And whan this letter was forth sent anon,  
And knew how brotel and how fals he was,  
She for dispeyr fordide hyreself, allas.  
Swych sorwe hath she, for she besette hire so.  
Be war, ye wemen, of youre subtyl fo,  
2560 Syn yit this day men may ensaumple se;  
And trusteth, as in love, no man but me.  
In Grece whilom weren brethren two,  
Of whiche that oon was called Danao,  
That many a sone hath of his body wonne,  
As swiche false lovers ofte conne.  
Among his sones alle there was oon  
That aldermost he lovede of everychoon.  
And whan this child was born, this Danao  
Shop hym a name and callede hym Lyno.  
2570 That other brother called was Egiste,  
That was of love as fals as evere hym liste,  
And many a doughter gat he in his lyf;  
Of whiche he gat upon his ryghte wyf  
A doughter dere, and dide hire for to calle  
Ypermystra, yongeste of hem alle.  
The whiche child of hire natyvyte  
To alle thewes goode yborn was she,  
As likede to the goddes er she was born,  
That of the shef she sholde be the corn.  
2580 The Wirdes, that we clepen Destine,  
Hath shapen hire that she mot nedes be  
Pyetous, sad, wis, and trewe as stel,  
As to these wemen it acordeth wel.  
For thogh that Venus yaf hire gret beaute,  
With Jupiter compouned so was she  
That conscience, trouthe, and drede of shame,  
And of hyre wifhod for to kepe hire name,  
This, thoughte hire, was felycite as here.  
The rede Mars was that tyme of the yeere  
2590 So feble that his malyce is hym raft;  
Repressed hath Venus his crewel craft,  
That, what with Venus and other oppressioun  
Of houses, Mars his venim is adoun,

That Ypermystra dar nat handle a knyf  
In malyce, thogh she shulde lese hire lyf.  
But natheles, as hevene gan tho turne,  
To badde aspectes hath she of Saturne,  
That made hire for to deyen in prisoun,  
As I shal after make mencion.  
2600 To Danao and Egistes also,  
Although so be that they were brethren two --  
For thilke tyme was spared no lynage --  
It lykede hem to make a maryage  
Bytwixen Ypermystre and hym Lyno,  
And casten swich a day it shal be so,  
And ful acorded was it utterly;  
The aray is wrought, the tyme is faste by.  
And thus Lyno hath of his faders brother  
The doughter wedded, and ech of hem hath other.  
2610 The torches brennen, and the laumpes bryghte;  
The sacryfices ben ful redy dighte;  
Th' encens out of the fyre reketh sote;  
The flour, the lef is rent up by the rote  
To maken garlondes and crounes hye.  
Ful is the place of soun of minstralsye,  
Of songes amorous of maryage,  
As thylke tyme was the pleyne usage.  
And this was in the paleys of Egiste,  
That in his hous was lord, ryght as hym lyste.  
2620 And thus the day they dryve to an ende;  
The frendes taken leve, and hom they wende;  
The nyght is come, the bryd shal go to bedde.  
Egistus to his chamber faste hym spedde,  
And prively he let his doughter calle.  
Whan that the hous was voyded of hem alle,  
He loketh on his doughter with glad chere  
And to hire spak, as ye shal after here:  
"My ryghte doughter, tresor of myn herte,  
Syn fyrst that day that shapen was my sherte,  
2630 Or by the fatal systren had my dom,  
So nygh myn herte nevere thyng ne com  
As thow, myn Ypermystre, doughter dere.  
Tak hed what I, thy fader, seye the here,  
And werk after thy wiser evere mo.  
For alderfirst, doughter, I love the so

That al the world to me nis half so lef;  
Ne I nolde rede the to thy myschef  
For al the good under the colde mone.  
And what I mene, it shal be seyde right sone,  
2640 With protestacioun, as in this wyse,  
That, but thou do as I shal the devyse,  
Thou shalt be ded, by hym that al hath wrought!  
At shorte wordes, thou ne scapest nought  
Out of my paleys or that thou be ded,  
But thou consente and werke after my red;  
Tak this to thee for ful conclusioun."  
This Ypermystre caste hire eyen doun,  
And quok as doth the lef of aspe grene.  
Ded wex hire hew, and lyk an ash to sene,  
2650 And seyde, "Lord and fader, al youre wille,  
After my myght, God wot, I shal fulfille,  
So it to me be no confusioun."  
"I nele," quod he, "have non excepcioun";  
And out he caught a knyf, as rasour kene.  
"Hyd this," quod he, "that it be nat ysene;  
And whan thyn husbonde is to bedde go,  
Whil that he slepeth, kit his throte atwo.  
For in my dremes it is warned me  
How that my nevew shal my bane be,  
2660 But which I noot, wherfore I wol be siker.  
If thou sey nay, we two shul have a biker,  
As I have seyde, by hym that I have sworn!"  
This Ipermystre hath nygh hire wit forlorn;  
And, for to passen harmles of that place,  
She graunteth hym; ther is non other grace.  
And therewithal a costret taketh he,  
And seyde, "Herof a draught, or two, or thre,  
Yif hym to drynke, whan he goth to reste,  
And he shal slepe as longe as evere thee leste,  
2670 The narcotyks and opies ben so stronge.  
And go thy way, lest that him thynke longe."  
Out cometh the bryd, and with ful sobre cheere,  
As is of maydens ofte the manere,  
To chaumbre is brought with revel and with song.  
And shortly, lest this tale be to long,  
This Lyno and she ben brought to bedde,  
And every wight out at the dore hym spedde.

The nyght is wasted, and he fyl aslepe.  
Ful tenderly begynneth she to wepe;  
2680 She rist hire up, and dredfully she quaketh,  
As doth the braunche that Zepherus shaketh,  
And hust were alle in Argon that cite.  
As cold as any frost now waxeth she;  
For pite by the herte hire streyneth so,  
And drede of deth doth hire so moche wo,  
That thryes doun she fyl in swich a were.  
She rist yit up, and stakereth her and there,  
And on hire hondes faste loketh she.  
"Allas! and shal myne hondes bloody be?  
2690 I am a mayde, and, as by my nature,  
And bi my semblaunt and by my vesture,  
Myne handes ben nat shapen for a knyf,  
As for to reve no man fro his lyf.  
What devel have I with the knyf to do?  
And shal I have my throte korve a-two?  
Thanne shal I blede, allas, and me beshende!  
And nedes-cost this thyng moste have an ende;  
Or he or I mot nedes lese oure lyf.  
Now certes," quod she, "syn I am his wif,  
2700 And hath my feyth, yit is it bet for me  
For to be ded in wifly honeste  
Than ben a traytour lyvyng in my shame.  
Be as be may, for ernest or for game,  
He shal awake, and ryse, and gon his way,  
Out at this goter, or that it be day" --  
And wep ful tenderly upon his face,  
And in hyre armes gan hym to enbrace,  
And hym she roggeth and awaketh softe.  
And at a wyndow lep he fro the lofte,  
2710 Whan she hath warned hym, and don hym bote.  
This Lyno swift was, and lyght of fote,  
And from his wif he ran a ful good pas.  
This sely woman is so weik -- Allas! --  
And helples, so that or that she fer wente,  
Hire crewel fader dide hire for to hente.  
Allas, Lyno, whi art thou so unkynde?  
Why ne haddest thou remembred in thy mynde  
To taken hire, and lad hire forth with the?  
For whan she saw that gon away was he,

2720 And that she myghte nat so faste go,  
Ne folwen hym, she sat hire doun ryght tho,  
Til she was caught and fetered in prysoun.  
This tale is seyde for this conclusioun --



## THE SHORTER POEMS

### AN ABC

Almighty and al merciable queene,  
 To whom that al this world fleeth for socour,  
 To have relees of sinne, of sorwe, and teene,  
 Glorious virgine, of alle floures flour,  
 To thee I flee, confounded in errour.  
 Help and releeve, thou mighti debonayre,  
 Have mercy on my perilous langour.  
 Venquissed me hath my cruel adversaire.  
 Bountee so fix hath in thin herte his tente  
 10 That wel I wot thou wolt my socour bee;  
 Thou canst not warne him that with good entente  
 Axeth thin helpe, thin herte is ay so free.  
 Thou art largesse of pleyn felicittee,  
 Haven of refut, of quiete, and of reste.  
 Loo, how that theeves sevene chasen mee.  
 Help, lady bright, er that my ship tobreste.  
 Comfort is noon but in yow, ladi deere;  
 For loo, my sinne and my confusioun,  
 Which oughten not in thi presence appeere,  
 20 Han take on me a greevous accioun  
 Of verrey right and desperacioun;  
 And as bi right thei mighten wel susteene  
 That I were wurthi my dampnacioun,  
 Nere merci of you, blisful hevene queene.  
 Dowte is ther noon, thou queen of misericorde,  
 That thou n' art cause of grace and merci heere;  
 God vouched sauf thurgh thee with us to accorde.  
 For certes, Crystes blisful mooder deere,  
 Were now the bowe bent in swich maneere  
 30 As it was first of justice and of ire,  
 The rightful God nolde of no mercy heere;  
 But thurgh thee han we grace as we desire.  
 Evere hath myn hope of refut been in thee,  
 For heer-biforn ful ofte in many a wyse  
 Hast thou to misericorde receyved me.  
 But merci, ladi, at the grete assyse  
 Whan we shule come bfore the hye justyse.  
 So litel fruit shal thanne in me be founde

That, but thou er that day correcte [vice],  
40 Of verrey right my werk wol me confounde.  
Fleeinge, I flee for socour to thi tente  
Me for to hide from tempeste ful of dreede,  
Biseeching yow that ye you not absente  
Thouh I be wikke. O, help yit at this neede!  
Al have I ben a beste in wil and deede,  
Yit, ladi, thou me cloth. with thi grace.  
Thin enemy and myn -- ladi, tak heede --  
Unto my deth in poynt is me to chace!  
Glorious mayde and mooder, which that nevere  
50 Were bitter, neither in erthe nor in see,  
But ful of swetnesse and of merci evere,  
Help that my Fader be not wroth with me.  
Spek thou, for I ne dar not him ysee,  
So have I doon in erthe, allas the while,  
That certes, but if thou my socour bee,  
To stink eterne he wole my gost exile.  
He vouched sauf, tel him, as was his wille,  
Bicome a man, to have oure alliaunce,  
And with his precious blood he wrot the bille  
60 Upon the crois as general acquitaunce  
To every penitent in ful creaunce;  
And therefore, ladi bright, thou for us praye.  
Thanne shalt thou bothe stinte al his grevaunce,  
And make oure foo to failen of his praye.  
I wot it wel, thou wolt ben oure socour,  
Thou art so ful of bowntee, in certeyn,  
For whan a soule falleth in errour  
Thi pitee goth and haleth him ayein.  
Thanne makest thou his pees with his sovereyn  
70 And bringest him out of the crooked strete.  
Whoso thee loveth, he shal not love in veyn,  
That shal he fynde as he the lyf shal lete.  
Kalenderes enlumyned ben thei  
That in this world ben lighted with thi name,  
And whoso goth to yow the righte wey,  
Him thar not drede in soule to be lame.  
Now, queen of comfort, sith thou art that same  
To whom I seeche for my medicine,  
Lat not my foo no more my wounde entame;  
80 Myn hele into thin hand al I resygne.



Ladi, thi sorwe kan I not portreye  
Under the cros, ne his greevous penaunce;  
But for youre bothes peynes I yow preye,  
Lat not oure alder foo make his bobaunce  
That he hath in his lystes of mischaunce  
Convict that ye bothe have bought so deere.  
As I seide erst, thou ground of oure substaunce,  
Continue on us thi pitous eyen cleere!  
Moises, that saugh the bush with flawmes rede  
90 Brenninge, of which ther never a stikke brende,  
Was signe of thin unwemmed maidenhede.  
Thou art the bush on which ther gan descende  
The Holi Gost, the which that Moyses wende  
Had ben a-fyr, and this was in figure.  
Now, ladi, from the fyr thou us defende  
Which that in helle eternalli shal dure.  
Noble princesse, that nevere haddest peere,  
Certes if any comfort in us bee,  
That cometh of thee, thou Cristes mooder deere.  
100 We han noon oother melodye or glee  
Us to rejoyse in oure adversitee,  
Ne advocat noon that wole and dar so preye  
For us, and that for litel hire as yee  
That helpen for an Ave-Marie or tweye.  
O verrey light of eyen that ben blynde,  
O verrey lust of labour and distresse,  
O tresoreere of bountee to mankynde,  
Thee whom God ches to mooder for humblesse!  
From his ancille he made the maistresse  
110 Of hevene and erthe, oure bille up for to beede.  
This world awaiteth evere on thi goodnesse  
For thou ne failest nevere wight at neede.  
Purpos I have sum time for to enquire  
Wherfore and whi the Holi Gost thee soughte  
Whan Gabrielles vois cam to thin ere.  
He not to werre us swich a wonder wroughte,  
But for to save us that he sithen boughte.  
Thanne needeth us no wepen us for to save,  
But oonly ther we dide not, as us oughte,  
120 Doo penitence, and merci axe and have.  
Queen of comfort, yit whan I me bithinke  
That I agilt have bothe him and thee,

And that my soule is worthi for to sinke,  
Allas, I caityf, whider may I flee?  
Who shal unto thi Sone my mene bee?  
Who, but thiself, that art of pitee welle?  
Thou hast more reuthe on oure adversitee  
Than in this world might any tonge telle.  
Redresse me, mooder, and me chastise,  
130 For certeynly my Faderes chastisinge,  
That dar I nouht abiden in no wise,  
So hidous is his rightful rekenynge.  
Mooder, of whom oure merci gan to springe,  
Beth ye my juge and eek my soules leche;  
For evere in you is pitee haboundinge  
To ech that wole of pitee you biseeche.  
Soth is that God ne granteth no pitee  
Withoute thee; for God of his goodnesse  
Foryiveth noon, but it like unto thee.  
140 He hath thee maked vicaire and maistresse  
Of al this world, and eek governouresse  
Of hevene, and he represseth his justise  
After thi wil; and therfore in witnessse  
He hath thee corowned in so rial wise.  
Temple devout, ther God hath his woninge,  
Fro which these misbileeved deprived been,  
To you my soule penitent I bringe.  
Receyve me -- I can no ferther fleen.  
With thornes venymous, O hevene queen,  
150 For which the eerthe acursed was ful yore,  
I am so wounded, as ye may wel seen,  
That I am lost almost, it smert so sore.  
Virgine, that art so noble of apparaile,  
And ledest us into the hye tour  
Of Paradys, thou me wisse and counsaile  
How I may have thi grace and thi socour,  
All have I ben in filthe and in errour.  
Ladi, unto that court thou me ajourne  
That cleped is thi bench, O freshe flour,  
160 Ther as that merci evere shal sojourne.  
Xristus, thi sone, that in this world alighte  
Upon the cros to suffre his passioun,  
And eek that Longius his herte pighte  
And made his herte blood to renne adoun,

And al was this for my salvacioun;  
And I to him am fals and eek unkynde,  
And yit he wole not my dampnacioun --  
This thanke I yow, socour of al mankynde!  
Ysaac was figure of his deth, certeyn,  
170 That so fer forth his fader wolde obeye  
That him ne roughete nothing to be slayn;  
Right soo thi Sone list as a lamb to deye.  
Now, ladi ful of merci, I yow preye,  
Sith he his merci mesured so large,  
Be ye not skant, for alle we singe and seye  
That ye ben from vengeance ay oure targe.  
Zacharie yow clepeth the open welle  
To wasshe sinful soule out of his gilt.  
Therefore this lessoun oughte I wel to telle,  
180 That, nere thi tender herte, we were spilt.  
Now, ladi bryghte, sith thou canst and wilt  
Ben to the seed of Adam merci able,  
Bring us to that palais that is bilt  
To penitentes that ben to merci able. Amen.



## THE COMPLAINT UNTO PITY

Pite, that I have sought so yore agoo  
With herte soore and ful of besy peyne,  
That in this world was never wight so woo  
Withoute deth -- and yf I shal not feyne,  
My purpos was to Pite to compleyne  
Upon the crueltee and tirannye  
Of Love, that for my trouthe doth me dye.  
And when that I, be lengthe of certeyne yeres,  
Had evere in oon a tyme sought to speke,  
10 To Pitee ran I al bespreynt with teres  
To prayen hir on Cruelte me awreke.  
But er I myghte with any word outbreke  
Or tellen any of my peynes smerte,  
I fond hir ded, and buried in an herte.  
Adoun I fel when that I saugh the herse,  
Ded as a ston while that the swogh me laste;  
But up I roos with colour ful dyverse  
And pitously on hir myn eyen I caste,  
And ner the corps I gan to presen faste,  
20 And for the soule I shop me for to preye.  
I was but lorn, ther was no more to seye.  
Thus am I slayn sith that Pite is ded.  
Allas, that day, that ever hyt shulde falle.  
What maner man dar now hold up his hed?  
To whom shal any sorwful herte calle?  
Now Cruelte hath cast to slee us alle,  
In ydel hope, folk redeless of peyne,  
Syth she is ded, to whom shul we compleyne?  
But yet encreseth me this wonder newe,  
30 That no wight woot that she is ded, but I --  
So many men as in her tyme hir knewe --  
And yet she dyed not so sodeynly,  
For I have sought hir ever ful besely  
Sith first I hadde wit or mannes mynde,  
But she was ded er that I koude hir fynde.  
Aboute hir herse there stoden lustely,  
Withouten any woo as thoughte me,  
Bounte parfyt, wel armed and richely,  
And fresshe Beaute, Lust, and Jolyte,  
40 Assured Maner, Youthe, and Honeste,

Wisdom, Estaat, Drede, and Governauce,  
Confedred both by bonde and alliaunce.  
A compleynt had I, writen in myn hond,  
For to have put to Pite as a bille;  
But when I al this companye ther fond,  
That rather wolden al my cause spille  
Then do me help, I held my pleynte stille,  
For to that folk, withouten any fayle,  
Withoute Pitee ther may no bille availe.  
50 Then leve I al these vertues, sauf Pite,  
Kepyng the corps as ye have herd me seyn,  
Confedered alle by bond of Cruelte  
And ben assented when I shal be sleyn.  
And I have put my complaynt up ageyn,  
For to my foes my bille I dar not shewe,  
Th' effect of which seith thus, in wordes fewe:  
Humblest of herte, highest of reverence,  
Benygne flour, coroune of vertues alle,  
Sheweth unto youre rial excellence  
60 Youre servaunt, yf I durste me so calle,  
Hys mortal harm in which he is yfalle,  
And noght al oonly for his evel fare,  
But for your renoun, as he shal declare.  
Hit stondeth thus: your contraire, Crueltee,  
Allyed is ayenst your regalye  
Under colour of womanly Beaute --  
For men shulde not, lo, knowe hir tirannye --  
With Bounte, Gentilesse, and Curtesye,  
And hath depryved yow now of your place  
70 That hyghte "Beaute apertenant to Grace."  
For kyndely by youre herytage ryght  
Ye ben annexed ever unto Bounte;  
And verrayly ye oughte do youre myght  
To helpe Trouthe in his adversyte.  
Ye be also the corowne of Beaute,  
And certes yf ye wanten in these tweyne,  
The world is lore; ther is no more to seyne.  
Eke what availeth Maner and Gentilesse  
Withoute yow, benygne creature?  
80 Shal Cruelte be your governeresse?  
Allas, what herte may hyt longe endure?  
Wherfore, but ye the rather take cure

To breke that perilouse alliaunce,  
Ye sleen hem that ben in your obeisaunce.  
And further over yf ye suffre this,  
Youre renoun ys fordoo than in a throwe;  
Ther shal no man wite well what Pite is.  
Allas, that your renoun is falle so lowe!  
Ye be than fro youre heritage ythrowe  
90 By Cruelte that occupieth youre place,  
And we despeyred that seken to your grace.  
Have mercy on me, thow Herenus quene,  
That yow have sought so tendirly and yore;  
Let som strem of youre lyght on me be sene  
That love and drede yow ever lenger the more;  
For sothly for to seyne I bere the soore,  
And though I be not konnyng for to pleyne,  
For Goddis love have mercy on my peyne.  
My peyne is this, that what so I desire  
100 That have I not, ne nothing lyk therto;  
And ever setteth Desir myn hert on fire.  
Eke on that other syde where so I goo,  
What maner thing that may encrese my woo,  
That have I redy, unsoght, everywhere;  
Me lakketh but my deth and than my bere.  
What nedeth to shewe parcel of my peyne?  
Syth every woo that herte may bethynke  
I suffre and yet I dar not to yow pleyne;  
For wel I wot although I wake or wynke,  
110 Ye rekke not whether I flete or synke.  
But natheles yet my trouthe I shal sustene  
Unto my deth, and that shal wel be sene.  
This is to seyne I wol be youres evere,  
Though ye me slee by Cruelte your foo,  
Algate my spirit shal never dissevere  
Fro youre servise for any peyne or woo.  
Sith ye be ded -- alas that hyt is soo --  
Thus for your deth I may wel wepe and pleyne  
With herte sore and ful of besy peyne.



## A COMPLAINT TO HIS LADY

The longe nightes, whan every creature  
Shulde have hir rest in somewhat as by kynde,  
Or elles ne may hir lif nat longe endure,  
Hit falleth most into my woful mynde  
How I so fer have broght myself behynde  
That, sauf the deeth, ther may nothyng me lisse,  
So desespaiied I am from alle blisse.  
This same thoght me lasteth til the morwe  
And from the morwe forth til hit be eve;  
10 Ther nedeth me no care for to borwe,  
For bothe I have good leyser and good leve;  
Ther is no wyght that wol me wo bereve  
To wepe ynogh and wailen al my fille;  
The sore spark of peyne now doth me spille.  
This Love, that hath me set in such a place  
That my desir [he] nevere wol fulfille,  
For neither pitee, mercy, neither grace  
Can I nat fynde, and yit my sorwful herte  
For to be deed I can hit nought arace.  
20 The more I love, the more she doth me smerte,  
Thourgh which I see withoute remedye  
That from the deeth I may no wyse asterte.  
Now sothly what she hight I wol reherse:  
Hir name is Bountee set in womanhede,  
Sadnesse in youthe and Beautee prydelees  
And Plesaunce under governaunce and drede;  
Hir surname is eek Faire Rewthelees  
The Wyse, yknit unto Good Aventure,  
That, for I love hir, she sleeth me giltelees.  
30 Hir love I best, and shal, whyl I may dure,  
Bet than myself an hundred thousand deel,  
Than al this worldes richesse or creature.  
Now hath not Love me bestowed weel  
To love ther I never shal have part?  
Allas, right thus is turned me the wheel,  
Thus am I slayn with Loves fyry dart!  
I can but love hir best, my swete fo;  
Love hath me taught no more of his art  
But serve alwey and stinte for no wo.  
40 In my trewe [and] careful herte ther is

So moche wo and [eek] so litel blis  
That wo is me that ever I was bore;  
For al that thyng which I desyre I mis  
And al that ever I wolde not ywis,  
That finde I redy to me evermore;  
And of al this I not to whom me pleyne.  
For she that mighte me out of this brynge  
Ne reccheth nought whether I wepe or synge,  
So litel rewthe hath she upon my peyne.  
50 Allas! Whan slepyng-tyme is than I wake,  
Whan I shulde daunce, for fere, lo, than I quake.  
This hevy lif I lede, lo, for your sake  
Thogh ye therof in no wyse hede take,  
Myn hertes lady and hool my lyves quene.  
For trewly durste I seye as that I fele,  
Me semeth that your swete herte of stele  
Is whetted now ageynes me to kene.  
My dere herte and best beloved fo,  
Why lyketh yow to do me al this wo?  
60 What have I doon that greveth yow or sayd,  
But for I serve and love yow and no mo?  
And while I lyve I wol ever do so,  
And therfor, swete, ne beth nat yvel apayd.  
For so good and so fair as ye be  
Hit were right gret wonder but ye hadde  
Of alle servantes, bothe of goode and badde;  
And leest worthy of alle hem, I am he.  
But nevertheles, my righte lady swete,  
Thogh that I be unconnyng and unmete  
70 To serve, as I coude best, ay your hynesse,  
Yit is ther noon fayner, that wolde I hete,  
Than I, to do yow ese, or elles bete  
What so I wiste that were to youre hevynesse;  
And hadde I myght as good as I have wille,  
Than shulde ye fele wher it were so or noon;  
For in this world livyng than is ther noon  
That fayner wolde your hertes wil fulfille.  
For bothe I love and eek drede yow so sore,  
And algates moot, and have doon yow, ful yore,  
80 That bettre loved is noon ne never shal;  
And yit I wolde beseche yow of no more,  
But leveth wel and be not wrooth therfore,



And lat me serve yow forth; lo, this is al.  
For I am not so hardy ne so wood,  
For to desire that ye shulde love me,  
For wel I wot -- allas -- that wil nat be;  
I am so litel worthy and ye so good.  
For ye be oon the worthiest on-lyve  
And I the most unlykly for to thryve,  
90 Yit for al this, witeth ye right wele  
That ye ne shul me from your servyce dryve  
That I ne wil ay, with alle my wittes fyve,  
Serve yow trewly, what wo so that I fele.  
For I am set on yow in such manere  
That, thogh ye never wil upon me rewe,  
I moste yow love and been ever as trewe  
As any man can, or may, on-lyve [here].  
But the more that I love yow, goodly free,  
The lasse fynde I that ye loven me;  
100 Allas, whan shal that harde wit amende?  
Wher is now al your wommanly pitee,  
Your gentillesse and your debonairtee?  
Wil ye nothyng therof upon me spende?  
And so hool, swete, as I am youres al,  
And so gret wil as I have yow to serve,  
Now certes, and ye lete me thus sterve,  
Yit have ye wonne theron but a smal.  
For at my knowyng I do nought why,  
And this I wol beseche yow hertely,  
110 That ther ever ye fynde, whyles ye lyve,  
A trewer servant to yow than am I,  
Leveth thanne and sleeth me hardely,  
And I my deeth to yow wol al foryive.  
And if ye fynde no trewer verrayly,  
Wil ye suffre than that I thus spille  
And for no maner gilt but my good wille?  
As good were thanne untrewe as trewe to be.  
But I, my lyf and deeth, to yow obeye  
And with right buxom herte hooly I preye  
120 As is your moste plesure, so doth by me;  
Wel lever is me liken yow and deye  
Than for to anythyng or thynke or seye  
That yow myghte offende in any tyme.  
And therfor, swete, rewe on my peynes smerte,

And of your grace graunteth me som drope,  
For elles may me laste no blis ne hope,  
Ne dwelle within my trouble careful herte.



## THE COMPLAINT OF MARS

Gladeth, ye foules, of the morowe gray;  
Lo, Venus, rysen among yon rows rede.  
And floures fressh, honoureth ye this day,  
For when the sunne uprist then wol ye sprede.  
But ye lovers, that lye in any drede,  
Fleeth, lest wikked tonges yow espye.  
Lo, yond the sunne, the candel of jelosye!  
Wyth teres blewe and with a wounded herte  
Taketh your leve, and with Seint John to borowe  
10 Apeseth sumwhat of your sorowes smerte.  
Tyme cometh eft that cese shal your sorowe;  
The glade nyght ys worth an hevy morowe --  
Seynt Valentyne, a foul thus herde I synge  
Upon thy day er sonne gan up-sprynge.  
Yet sang this foul -- I rede yow al awake,  
And ye that han not chosen in humble wyse,  
Without repentyng cheseth yow your make,  
And ye that han ful chosen as I devise,  
Yet at the leste renoveleth your servyse.  
20 Confermeth hyt perpetuely to dure,  
And paciently taketh your aventure.  
And for the worship of this highe feste,  
Yet wol I, in my briddes wise, synge  
The sentence of the compleynt, at the leste,  
That woful Mars made atte departyng  
Fro fresshe Venus in a morwenyng,  
Whan Phebus with his firy torches rede  
Ransaked every lover in hys drede.  
Whilom the thridde hevenes lord above,  
30 As wel by hevenysh revolucioun  
As by desert, hath wonne Venus his love,  
And she hath take him in subjeccioun,  
And as a maistresse taught him his lessoun,  
Commaundyng him that nevere, in her servise,  
He nere so bold no lover to dispise.  
For she forbad him jelosye at al,  
And cruelte, and bost, and tyrannye.  
She made him at her lust so humble and tal,  
That when her deyed to cast on hym her ye,  
40 He tok in pacience to lyve or dye.

And thus she brydeleth him in her manere,  
With nothing but with scourging of her chere.  
Who regneth now in blysse but Venus,  
That hath thys worthy knyght in governaunce?  
Who syngeth now but Mars, that serveth thus  
The faire Venus, causer of plesaunce?  
He bynt him to perpetuall obeisaunce,  
And she bynt her to loven him for evere,  
But so be that his trespas hyt desevere.  
50 Thus be they knyght and regnen as in hevene  
Be lokyng moost; til hyt fil on a tyde  
That by her bothe assent was set a stevene  
That Mars shal entre, as fast as he may glyde,  
Into hir nexte paleys, and ther abyde,  
Walkynge hys cours, til she had him atake,  
And he preide her to haste her for his sake.  
Then seyde he thus, "Myn hertes lady swete,  
Ye knowe wel my myschef in that place,  
For sikerly, til that I with yow mete,  
60 My lyf stant ther in aventure and grace;  
But when I se the Beaute of your face,  
Ther ys no drede of deth may do me smerte,  
For al your lust is ese to myn herte."  
She hath so gret compassioun of her knyght,  
That dwelleth in solitude til she come --  
For hyt stod so that thilke tyme no wight  
Counseyled hym ther, ne seyde to hym welcome --  
That nygh her wit for wo was overcome;  
Wherefore she sped her as faste in her weye  
70 Almost in oo day as he dyde in tweye.  
The grete joye that was betwix hem two  
When they be mette ther may no tunge telle.  
Ther is no more but unto bed thei go,  
And thus in joy and blysse I lete hem duelle.  
This worthi Mars, that is of knyghthod welle,  
The flour of feyrnesse lappeth in his armes,  
And Venus kysseth Mars, the god of armes.  
Sojourned hath this Mars of which I rede  
In chambre amyng the paleys prively  
80 A certeyn tyme, til him fel a drede  
Throgh Phebus, that was comen hastely  
Within the paleys yates sturdely,

With torche in honde, of which the stremes bryghte  
On Venus chambre knockeden ful lyghte.  
The chambre ther as ley this fresshe quene  
Depeynted was with white boles grete,  
And by the lyght she knew, that shon so shene,  
That Phebus cam to brenne hem with his hete.  
This sely Venus nygh dreynt in teres wete  
90 Enbraceth Mars and seyde, "Alas, I dye!  
The torche is come that al this world wol wrie."  
Up sterte Mars; hym liste not to slepe  
When he his lady herde so compleyne,  
But, for his nature was not for to wepe,  
In stede of teres, from his eyen tweyne  
The firi sparkes brosten out for peyne,  
And hente his hauberk that ley hym besyde.  
Fle wolde he not, ne myghte himselven hide.  
He throweth on his helm of huge wyghte,  
100 And girt him with his swerd, and in his hond  
His myghty spere, as he was wont to fyghte,  
He shaketh so that almost hit towond.  
Ful hevy was he to walken over lond;  
He may not holde with Venus companye  
But bad her fleen lest Phebus her espye.  
O woful Mars -- alas -- what maist thou seyn,  
That in the paleys of thy disturbaunce  
Art left byhynde in peril to be sleyn?  
And yet therto ys double thy penaunce,  
110 For she that hath thyn herte in governaunce  
Is passed half the stremes of thin yen;  
That thou nere swift, wel maist thou wepe and crien.  
Now fleeth Venus unto Cilenios tour  
With voide cours for fere of Phebus lyght --  
Alas -- and ther ne hath she no socour,  
For she ne found ne saugh no maner wyght,  
And eke as ther she hath but litil myght,  
Wherfor, herselven for to hyde and save,  
Within the gate she fledde into a cave.  
120 Derk was this cave and smokyng as the helle;  
Not but two pas within the yate hit stod.  
A naturel day in derk I lete her duelle.  
Now wol I speke of Mars, furious and wod.  
For sorow he wolde have sen his herte blod;

Sith that he myghte don her no companye,  
He ne roghte not a myte for to dye.  
So feble he wex for hete and for his wo  
That nygh he swelte, he myghte unnethe endure;  
He passeth but o steyre in dayes two.  
130 But nathelesse, for al his hevy armure,  
He foloweth her that is his lyves cure,  
For whos departyng he tok gretter ire  
Then for al his brennyng in the fire.  
After he walketh softly a paas,  
Compleynyng, that hyt pite was to here,  
He seyde, "O lady bryght, Venus, alas,  
That evere so wyd a compas ys my spere!  
Alas, when shal I mete yow, herte dere?  
This twelfte daye of April I endure  
140 Throgh jelous Phebus this mysaventure."  
Now God helpe sely Venus allone.  
But as God wolde, hyt happed for to be  
That, while that Venus weping made her mone,  
Cilenius, rydinge in his chevache,  
Fro Venus valaunse myghte his paleys se,  
And Venus he salueth and doth chere,  
And her receyveth as his frend ful dere.  
Mars dwelleth forth in his adversyte,  
Compleynyng ever on her departyng,  
150 And what his compleynt was, remembreth me;  
And therfore, in this lusty morwenynge  
As I best can, I wol hit seyn and synge;  
And after that I wol my leve take,  
And God yeve every wyght joy of his make!  
The ordre of compleynt requireth skylfully  
That yf a wight shal pleyne pitously,  
Ther mot be cause wherfore that men pleyne;  
Or men may deme he pleyneeth folily  
And causeles; alas, that am not I.  
160 Wherfore the ground and cause of al my peyne,  
So as my troubled wit may hit atteyne,  
I wol reherse; not for to have redresse,  
But to declare my ground of hevynesse.  
The firste tyme, alas, that I was wroght  
And for certeyn effectes hider broght  
Be him that lordeth ech intelligence,

I yaf my trewe servise and my thoght  
For evermore -- how dere I have hit boght --  
To her that is of so gret excellence  
170 That what wight that first sheweth his presence,  
When she is wroth and taketh of hym no cure,  
He may not longe in joye of love endure.  
This is no feyned mater that I telle;  
My lady is the verrey sours and welle  
Of beaute, lust, fredom, and gentilnesse,  
Of riche aray -- how dere men hit selle! --  
Of al disport in which men frendly duelle,  
Of love and pley, and of benigne humblesse,  
Of soun of instrumentes of al swetnesse;  
180 And therto so wel fortunèd and thewed  
That thorough the world her goodnesse is yshewed.  
What wonder ys it then, thogh I besette  
My servise on such on that may me knette  
To wele or wo sith hit lyth in her myght?  
Therefore my herte forever I to her hette,  
Ne truly, for my deth, I shal not lette  
To ben her truest servaunt and her knyght.  
I flater noght, that may wete every wyght;  
For this day in her servise shal I dye.  
190 But grace be, I se her never wyth ye.  
To whom shal I than pleyne of my distresse?  
Who may me helpe? Who may my harm redresse?  
Shal I compleyne unto my lady fre?  
Nay, certes, for she hath such hevynesse,  
For fere and eke for wo that, as I gesse,  
In lytil tyme hit wol her bane be.  
But were she sauf, hit were no fors of me.  
Alas, that ever lovers mote endure  
For love so many a perilous aventure!  
200 For thogh so be that lovers be as trewe  
As any metal that is forged newe,  
In many a cas hem tydeth ofte sorowe.  
Somtyme her lady wil not on hem rewe;  
Somtyme yf that jelosie hyt knewe,  
They myghten lyghtly leye her hed to borowe;  
Somtyme envyou folk with tungen horowe  
Depraven hem; alas, whom may they plese?  
But he be fals, no lover hath non ese.

But what availeth such a long sermoun  
210 Of adventures of love up and doun?  
I wol returne and speken of my peyne.  
The poynt is this of my distruccioun:  
My righte lady, my savacyoun,  
Is in affray, and not to whom to pleyne.  
O herte swete, O lady sovereyne!  
For your disese wel oughte I swowne and swelte,  
Though I non other harm ne drede felte.  
To what fyn made the God, that sit so hye,  
Benethen him love other companye  
220 And streyneth folk to love, malgre her hed?  
And then her joy, for oght I can espye,  
Ne lasteth not the twynkelyng of an ye,  
And somme han never joy til they be ded.  
What meneth this? What is this mystihed?  
Wherto constreyneth he his folk so faste  
Thing to desyre, but hit shulde laste?  
And thogh he made a lover love a thing  
And maketh hit seme stedfast and during,  
Yet putteth he in hyt such mysaventure  
230 That reste nys ther non in his yeving.  
And that is wonder, that so juste a kyng  
Doth such hardnesse to his creature.  
Thus, whether love breke or elles dure,  
Algates he that hath with love to done  
Hath ofter wo then changed ys the mone.  
Hit semeth he hath to lovers enmyte,  
And lyk a fissher, as men alday may se,  
Baiteth hys angle-hok with som plesaunce  
Til many a fissh ys wod til that he be  
240 Sesed therwith; and then at erst hath he  
Al his desir, and therwith al myschaunce;  
And thogh the lyne breke, he hath penaunce;  
For with the hok he wounded is so sore  
That he his wages hath for evermore.  
The broche of Thebes was of such a kynde,  
So ful of rubies and of stones of Ynde  
That every wight, that sette on hit an ye,  
He wende anon to worthe out of his mynde;  
So sore the Beaute wolde his herte bynde.  
250 Til he hit had, him thoghte he moste dye;



And whan that hit was his, then shulde he drye  
Such woo for drede, ay while that he hit hadde,  
That wel nygh for the fere he shulde madde.  
And whan hit was fro his possessioun,  
Then had he double wo and passioun  
For he so feir a tresor had forgo;  
But yet this broche as in conclusioun  
Was not the cause of his confusioun,  
But he that wroghte hit enfortuned hit so  
260 That every wight that had hit shulde have wo;  
And therfore in the worcher was the vice,  
And in the covetour that was so nyce.  
So fareth hyt by lovers and by me;  
For thogh my lady have so gret beaute  
That I was mad til I had gete her grace,  
She was not cause of myn adversite,  
But he that wroghte her, also mot I the,  
That putte such a beaute in her face,  
That made me coveyten and purchace  
270 Myn ounne deth -- him wite I that I dye,  
And myn unwit that ever I clamb so hye.  
But to yow, hardy knyghtes of renoun,  
Syn that ye be of myn devisioun,  
Al be I not worthy to so gret a name,  
Yet, seyn these clerkes, I am your patroun;  
Therefore ye oghte have som compassioun  
Of my disese, and take hit not a-game.  
The proudest of yow may be mad ful tame;  
Wherfore I prey yow of your gentillesse  
280 That ye compleyne for myn hevynesse.  
And ye, my ladyes, that ben true and stable,  
Be wey of kynde, ye oughten to be able  
To have pite of folk that be in peyne.  
Now have ye cause to clothe yow in sable,  
Sith that youre emperise, the honorable,  
Is desolat; wel oghte ye to pleyne.  
Now shulde your holy teres falle and reyne.  
Alas, your honour and your emperise,  
Negh ded for drede ne can her not chevisen!  
290 Compleyneth eke, ye lovers, al in-fere,  
For her that with unfeyned humble chere  
Was evere redy to do yow socour;

Compleyneth her that evere hath had yow dere;  
Compleyneth Beaute, Fredom, and Manere;  
Compleyneth her that endeth your labour;  
Compleyneth thilke ensample of al honour,  
That never dide but al gentilesse;  
Kytheth therfore on her sum kyndenesse.



## THE COMPLAINT OF VENUS

Ther nys so high comfort to my pleasaunce,  
When that I am in any hevynesse,  
As for to have leyser of remembraunce  
Upon the manhod and the worthynesse,  
Upon the trouthe and on the stidfastnesse  
Of him whos I am al, while I may dure.  
Ther oghte blame me no creature,  
For every wight preiseth his gentilesse.  
In him is bounte, wysdom, governaunce,  
10 Wel more then any mannes wit can gesse,  
For grace hath wold so ferforth hym avaunce  
That of knyghthod he is parfit richesse.  
Honour honoureth him for his noblesse;  
Therto so wel hath formed him Nature  
That I am his for ever, I him assure,  
For every wight preyseth his gentilesse.  
And notwithstandyng al his suffisaunce,  
His gentil herte is of so gret humblesse  
To me in word, in werk, in contenaunce,  
20 And me to serve is al his besynesse,  
That I am set in verrey sikernesse.  
Thus oghte I blesse wel myn aventure  
Sith that him list me serven and honoure,  
For every wight preiseth his gentilesse.  
Now certis, Love, hit is right covenable  
That men ful dere bye thy nobil thing,  
As wake abedde and fasten at the table,  
Wepinge to laughe and singe in compleynyng,  
And doun to caste visage and loking,  
30 Often to chaunge hewe and contenaunce,  
Pleyne in slepyng and dremen at the daunce,  
Al the revers of any glad felyng.  
Jelosie be hanged by a cable!  
She wolde al knowe thurgh her espying;  
Ther doth no wyght nothing so resonable  
That al nys harm in her ymagenyng.  
Thus dere abought is Love in yevyng,  
Which ofte he yiveth withouten ordynaunce,  
As sorwe ynogh and litil of plesaunce,  
40 Al the revers of any glad felyng.

A lytel tyme his yift ys agreable,  
But ful encomberous is the usyng,  
For subtil Jelosie, the deceyvable,  
Ful often tyme causeth desturbyng.  
Thus be we ever in drede and sufferyng;  
In nouncerteyn we languisshe in penaunce,  
And han wele ofte many an hard mischaunce,  
Al the revers of any glad felyng.  
But certes, Love, I sey not in such wise  
50 That for t' escape out of youre las I mente,  
For I so longe have ben in your servise  
That for to lete of wil I never assente;  
No fors thogh Jelosye me turmente.  
Sufficeth me to sen hym when I may,  
And therefore certes, to myn endyng day  
To love hym best ne shal I never repente.  
And certis, Love, when I me wel avise  
On any estat that man may represente,  
Then have ye made me thurgh your fraunchise  
60 Chese the best that ever on erthe wente.  
Now love wel, herte, and lok thou never stente,  
And let the jelous putte it in assay  
That for no peyne wol I not sey nay;  
To love him best ne shal I never repente.  
Herte, to the hit oughte ynogh suffise  
That Love so high a grace to the sente  
To chese the worthieste in alle wise  
And most agreable unto myn entente.  
Seche no ferther, neythir wey ne wente,  
70 Sith I have suffisaunce unto my pay.  
Thus wol I ende this compleynt or this lay;  
To love hym best ne shal I never repente.  
Princes, receyveth this compleynt in gre,  
Unto your excelent benignite  
Direct after my litel suffisaunce.  
For elde, that in my spirit dulleth me,  
Hath of endyting al the subtilte  
Wel nygh bereft out of my remembraunce,  
And eke to me it ys a gret penaunce,  
80 Syth rym in Englissh hath such skarsete,  
To folowe word by word the curiosite  
Of Graunson, flour of hem that make in Fraunce.



## TO ROSEMOUNDE

Madame, ye ben of al beaute shryne  
As fer as cercled is the mapamounde,  
For as the cristal glorious ye shyne,  
And lyke ruby ben your chekes rounde.  
Therwith ye ben so mery and so jocounde  
That at a revel whan that I see you daunce,  
It is an oynement unto my wounde,  
Thogh ye to me ne do no daliaunce.  
For thogh I wepe of teres ful a tyne,  
10 Yet may that wo myn herte nat confounde;  
Your semy voys that ye so smal out twyne  
Maketh my thoght in joy and blis habounde.  
So curtaysly I go with love bounde  
That to myself I sey in my penaunce,  
"Suffyseth me to love you, Rosemounde,  
Thogh ye to me ne do no daliaunce."  
Nas never pyk walwed in galauntyne  
As I in love am walwed and ywounde,  
For which ful ofte I of myself devyne  
20 That I am trewe Tristam the secounde.  
My love may not refreyde nor affounde,  
I brenne ay in an amorous plesaunce.  
Do what you lyst, I wyl your thral be founde,  
Thogh ye to me ne do no daliaunce.



## WOMANLY NOBLESSE

So hath myn herte caught in remembraunce  
Your Beaute hoole and stidefast governaunce,  
Your vertues al and yowre hie noblesse,  
That you to serve is set al my plesaunce.  
So wel me liketh your womanly contenaunce,  
Your fresshe fetures and your comlynesse,  
That whiles I live myn hert to his maystresse  
You hath ful chose in trewe perseveraunce  
Never to chaunge, for no maner distresse.  
10 And sith I shal do [you] this observaunce,  
Al my lif withouten displesaunce  
You for to serve with al my besynesse,  
And have me somewhat in your souvenaunce.  
My woful herte suffreth greet duresse,  
And [loke] how humbly with al symplesse  
My wil I conforme to your ordynaunce,  
As you best list, my peynes for to redresse.  
Considryng eke how I hange in balaunce  
In your service, such, lo, is my chaunce,  
20 Abidyng grace, whan that your gentilnesse  
Of my grete wo liste do alleggeaunce,  
And with your pite me som wise avaunce  
In ful rebatyng of myn hevynesse;  
And thynketh by resoun that wommanly noblesse  
Shuld nat desire for to do the outrance  
Ther as she fyndeth non unbuxumnesse.  
Auctour of norture, lady of plesaunce,  
Soveraigne of beautee, floure of wommanhede,  
Take ye non hede unto myn ignoraunce,  
30 But this receyveth of your goodlihede,  
Thynkyng that I have caught in remembraunce,  
Your Beaute hole, your stidefast governaunce.



## CHAUCERS WORDES UNTO ADAM, HIS OWNE SCRIVEYN

Adam scriveyn, if ever it thee bifalle  
Boece or Troylus for to wryten newe,  
Under thy long lokkes thou most have the scalles,  
But after my making thou wryte more trewe;  
So ofte adaye I mot thy werk renewe,  
It to correcte and eke to rubbe and scrape,  
And al is thorough thy negligence and rape.





## THE FORMER AGE

A blisful lyf, a paisible and a swete,  
Ledden the peples in the former age.  
They helde hem payed of the fruites that they ete,  
Which that the feldes yave hem by usage;  
They ne were nat forpampred with outrage.  
Unknowen was the quern and ek the melle;  
They eten mast, hawes, and swich pounage,  
And dronken water of the colde welle.  
Yit nas the ground nat wounded with the plough,  
10 But corn up-sprong, unsowe of mannes hond,  
The which they gnodded and eete nat half ynough.  
No man yit knew the forwes of his lond,  
No man the fyr out of the flint yit fond,  
Unkorven and ungrobbed lay the vyne;  
No man yit in the mortar spyces grond  
To clarre ne to sause of galantyne.  
No mader, welde, or wood no litestere  
Ne knew; the flees was of his former hewe;  
No flesh ne wiste offence of egge or spere.  
20 No coyn ne knew man which was fals or trewe,  
No ship yit karf the wawes grene and blewe,  
No marchaunt yit ne fette outlandish ware.  
No trompes for the werres folk ne knewe,  
Ne toures heye and walles rounde or square.  
What sholde it han avayled to werreye?  
Ther lay no profit, ther was no richesse;  
But cursed was the tyme, I dare wel seye,  
That men first dide hir swety bysinesse  
To grobbe up metal, lurking in derknesse,  
30 And in the riveres first gemmes soghte.  
Allas, than sprong up al the cursednesse  
Of coveytyse, that first our sorwe broghte.  
Thise tyraunts putte hem gladly nat in pres  
No wildnesse ne no busshes for to winne,  
Ther poverte is, as seith Diogenes,  
Ther as vitale is ek so skars and thinne  
That noght but mast or apples is therinne;  
But, ther as bagges ben and fat vitale,  
Ther wol they gon, and spare for no sinne  
40 With al hir ost the cite for to asayle.

Yit was no paleis-chaumbres ne non halles;  
In caves and wodes softe and swete  
Slepten this blissed folk withoute walles  
On gras or leves in parfit quiete.  
Ne doun of fetheres ne no bleched shete  
Was kid to hem, but in seurtee they slepte.  
Hir hertes were al oon withoute galles;  
Everich of hem his feith to other kepte.  
Unforged was the hauberk and the plate;  
50 The lambish peple, voyd of alle vyce,  
Hadden no fantasye to debate,  
But ech of hem wolde other wel cheryce.  
No pryde, non envye, non avaryce,  
No lord, no taylage by no tyrannye;  
Humblesse and pees, good feith the emperice.  
Yit was not Jupiter the likerous,  
That first was fader of delicacye,  
Come in this world; ne Nembrot, desirous  
To regne, had nat maad his toures hye.  
60 Allas, allas, now may men wepe and crye!  
For in oure dayes nis but covetyse,  
Doublenesse, and tresoun, and envye,  
Poyson, manslawhtre, and mordre in sondry wyse.



## FORTUNE

This wrecched worldes transmutacioun,  
As wele or wo, now povre and now honour,  
Withouten ordre or wys discrecioun  
Governed is by Fortunes errour.  
But natheles, the lak of hir favour  
Ne may nat don me singen though I dye,  
Jay tout perdu mon temps et mon labour;  
For fynally, Fortune, I thee defye.  
Yit is me left the light of my resoun  
10 To knowen frend fro fo in thy mirour.  
So muchel hath yit thy whirling up and down  
Ytaught me for to knowen in an hour.  
But trewely, no force of thy reddour  
To him that over himself hath the maystrye.  
My suffisaunce shal be my socour,  
For fynally Fortune, I thee defye.  
O Socrates, thou stidfast champioun,  
She never mighte be thy tormentour;  
Thou never dreddest hir oppressioun,  
20 Ne in hir chere founde thou no savour.  
Thou knewe wel the deceit of hir colour,  
And that hir moste worshipec is to lye.  
I knowe hir eek a fals dissimulour,  
For fynally, Fortune, I thee defye!  
No man is wrecched but himself it wene,  
And he that hath himself hath suffisaunce.  
Why seystow thanne I am to thee so kene,  
That hast thyself out of my governaunce?  
Sey thus: "Graunt mercy of thyn haboundaunce  
30 That thou hast lent or this." Why wolt thou stryve?  
What wostow yit how I thee wol avaunce?  
And eek thou hast thy beste frend alyve.  
I have thee taught divisioun bitwene  
Frend of effect and frend of countenaunce;  
Thee nedeth nat the galle of noon hyene,  
That cureth eyen derked for penaunce;  
Now seestow cleer that were in ignoraunce.  
Yit halt thyn ancre and yit thou mayst arryve  
Ther bountee berth the keye of my substaunce,  
40 And eek thou hast thy beste frend alyve.

How many have I refused to sustene  
Sin I thee fostred have in thy plesaunce.  
Woltow than make a statut on thy quene  
That I shal been ay at thyn ordinaunce?  
Thou born art in my regne of variaunce,  
About the wheel with other most thou dryve.  
My lore is bet than wikke is thy grevaunce,  
And eek thou hast thy beste frend alyve.  
Thy lore I dampne; it is adversitee.  
50 My frend maystow nat reven, blind goddesse;  
That I thy frendes knowe, I thanke it thee.  
Tak hem agayn, lat hem go lye on presse.  
The negardye in keping hir richesse  
Prenostik is thou wolt hir tour assayle;  
Wikke appetyt comth ay before syknesse.  
In general, this reule may nat fayle.  
Thou pinchest at my mutabilitee  
For I thee lente a drope of my richesse,  
And now me lyketh to withdrawe me.  
60 Why sholdestow my realtee oppresse?  
The see may ebbe and flowen more or lesse;  
The welkne hath might to shyne, reyne, or hayle;  
Right so mot I kythen my brotelnesse.  
In general, this reule may nat fayle.  
Lo, th' execucion of the majestee  
That al purveyeth of his rightwysnesse,  
That same thing "Fortune" clepen ye,  
Ye blinde bestes ful of lewednesse.  
The hevene hath propretee of sikernesse,  
70 This world hath ever resteles travayle;  
Thy laste day is ende of myn intresse.  
In general, this reule may nat fayle.  
Princes, I prey you of your gentillesse  
Lat nat this man on me thus crye and pleyne,  
And I shal quyte you your bisnesse  
At my requeste, as three of you or tweyne,  
And but you list releve him of his peyne,  
Preyeth his beste frend of his noblesse  
That to som beter estat he may atteyne.



## TRUTH

Flee fro the prees and dwelle with sothfastnesse;  
Suffyce unto thy thing, though it be smal,  
For hord hath hate, and climbing tikelnesse,  
Prees hath envye, and wele blent overal.  
Savour no more than thee bihove shal,  
Reule wel thyself that other folk canst rede,  
And trouthe thee shal deliver, it is no drede.  
Tempest thee noght al croked to redresse  
In trust of hir that turneth as a bal;  
10 Gret reste stant in litel besinesse.  
Be war therfore to sporne ayeyns an al,  
Stryve not, as doth the crokke with the wal.  
Daunte thyself, that dauntest otheres dede,  
And trouthe thee shal deliver, it is no drede.  
That thee is sent, receyve in buxumnesse;  
The wrastling for this world axeth a fal.  
Her is non hoom, her nis but wilderness:  
Forth, pilgrim, forth! Forth, beste, out of thy stal!  
Know thy contree, look up, thank God of al;  
20 Hold the heye wey and lat thy gost thee lede,  
And trouthe thee shal deliver, it is no drede.  
Therefore, thou Vache, leve thyn old wrecchednesse;  
Unto the world leve now to be thral.  
Crye him mercy, that of his hy goodnesse  
Made thee of noght, and in especial  
Draw unto him, and pray in general  
For thee, and eek for other, hevenlich mede;  
And trouthe thee shal deliver, it is no drede.



## GENTILESSE

The firste stok, fader of gentilesse --  
What man that desireth gentil for to be  
Must folowe his trace, and alle his wittes dresse  
Vertu to love and vyces for to flee.  
For unto vertu longeth dignitee  
And noght the revers, saufly dar I deme,  
Al were he mytre, croune, or diademe.  
This firste stok was ful of rightwisnesse,  
Trewe of his word, sobre, pitous, and free,  
10 Clene of his gost, and loved besinesse,  
Ayeinst the vyce of slouthe, in honestee;  
And, but his heir love vertu as dide he,  
He is noght gentil, thogh he riche seme,  
Al were he mytre, croune, or diademe.  
Vyce may wel be heir to old richesse,  
But ther may no man, as men may wel see,  
Bequethe his heir his vertuous noblesse  
(That is approped unto no degree  
But to the firste fader in magestee,  
20 That maketh hem his heyres that him queme),  
Al were he mytre, croune, or diademe.



## LAK OF STEDFASTNESSE

Somtyme the world was so stedfast and stable  
That mannes word was obligacioun,  
And now it is so fals and deceivable  
That word and deed, as in conclusioun,  
Ben nothing lyk, for turned up-so-doun  
Is al this world for mede and wilfulnesse,  
That al is lost for lak of stedfastnesse.  
What maketh this world to be so variable  
But lust that folk have in dissensioun?  
10 For among us now a man is holde unable,  
But if he can by som collusioun  
Don his neighbour wrong or oppressioun.  
What causeth this but wilful wrecchednesse,  
That al is lost for lak of stedfastnesse?  
Trouthe is put down, resoun is holden fable,  
Vertu hath now no dominacioun;  
Pitee exyled, no man is merciabe.  
Through covetyse is blent discrecioun.  
The world hath mad a permutacioun  
20 Fro right to wrong, fro trouthe to fikelnesse,  
That al is lost for lak of stedfastnesse.  
O prince, desyre to be honourable,  
Cherish thy folk and hate extorcioun.  
Suffre nothing that may be reprevable  
To thyn estat don in thy regioun.  
Shew forth thy swerd of castigacioun,  
Dred God, do law, love trouthe and worthinesse,  
And wed thy folk agein to stedfastnesse.





## LENVOY DE CHAUCER A SCOGAN

Tobroken been the statutz hye in hevene  
That creat were eternally to dure,  
Syth that I see the bryghte goddis sevene  
Mowe wepe and wayle, and passioun endure,  
As may in erthe a mortal creature.  
Allas, fro whennes may thys thing procede,  
Of which errour I deye almost for drede?  
By word eterne whilom was it shape  
That fro the fyfte sercle, in no manere,  
10 Ne myght a drope of teeres doun escape.  
But now so wepith Venus in hir spere  
That with hir teeres she wol drenche us here.  
Allas! Scogan, this is for thyn offence;  
Thow causest this diluge of pestilence.  
Hastow not seyde, in blaspheme of the goddis,  
Thurgh pride, or thurgh thy grete rekennesse,  
Swich thing as in the lawe of love forbode is,  
That, for thy lady sawgh nat thy distresse,  
Therefore thow yave hir up at Michelmesse?  
20 Allas! Scogan, of olde folk ne yonge  
Was never erst Scogan blamed for his tonge.  
Thow drowe in skorn Cupide eke to record  
Of thilke rebel word that thow hast spoken,  
For which he wol no lenger be thy lord.  
And, Scogan, though his bowe be nat broken,  
He wol nat with his arwes been ywroken  
On the, ne me, ne noon of oure figure;  
We shul of him have neyther hurt ne cure.  
Now certes, frend, I drede of thyn unhap,  
30 Lest for thy gilt the wreche of Love procede  
On alle hem that ben hoor and rounde of shap,  
That ben so lykly folk in love to spede.  
Than shal we for oure labour have no mede;  
But wel I wot, thow wolt answere and saye,  
"Lo, olde Grisel lyst to ryme and playe!"  
Nay, Scogan, say not so, for I m' excuse --  
God helpe me so! -- in no rym, dowteles,  
Ne thynke I never of slep to wake my muse,  
That rusteth in my shethe stille in pees.  
40 While I was yong, I put hir forth in prees;

But al shal passe that men prose or ryme;  
Take every man hys turn, as for his tyme.  
Scogan, that knelest at the stremes hed  
Of grace, of alle honour and worthynesse,  
In th' ende of which strem I am dul as ded,  
Forgete in solytarie wilderness --  
Yet, Scogan, thenke on Tullius kyndenesse;  
Mynne thy frend, there it may fructyfye!  
Far-wel, and loke thow never eft Love dyffye.



## LENVOY DE CHAUCER A BUKTON

My maister Bukton, whan of Crist our kyng  
Was axed what is trouthe or sothfastnesse,  
He nat a word answerde to that axing,  
As who saith, "No man is al trewe," I gesse.  
And therefore, though I highte to expresse  
The sorwe and wo that is in mariage,  
I dar not writen of it no wikkednesse,  
Lest I myself falle eft in swich dotage.  
I wol nat seyn how that yt is the cheyne  
10 Of Sathanas, on which he gnaweth evere,  
But I dar seyn, were he out of his peyne,  
As by his wille he wolde be bounde nevere.  
But thilke doted fool that eft hath levere  
Ycheyned be than out of prison crepe,  
God lete him never fro his wo dissevere,  
Ne no man him bewayle, though he wepe.  
But yet, lest thow do worse, take a wyf;  
Bet ys to wedde than brenne in worse wise.  
But thow shal have sorwe on thy flessch, thy lyf,  
20 And ben thy wives thral, as seyn these wise;  
And yf that hooly writ may nat suffyse,  
Experience shal the teche, so may happe,  
That the were lever to be take in Frise  
Than eft to falle of weddyng in the trappe.  
This lytel writ, proverbes, or figure  
I sende yow; take kepe of yt, I rede;  
Unwys is he that kan no wele endure.  
If thow be siker, put the nat in drede.  
The Wyf of Bathe I pray yow that ye rede  
30 Of this matere that we have on honde.  
God graunte yow your lyf frely to lede  
In fredam, for ful hard is to be bonde.



## THE COMPLAINT OF CHAUCER TO HIS PURSE

To yow, my purse, and to noon other wight  
Complayne I, for ye be my lady dere.  
I am so sory, now that ye been lyght;  
For certes but yf ye make me hevy chere,  
Me were as leef be layd upon my bere;  
For which unto your mercy thus I crye,  
Beth hevy ageyn, or elles mot I dye.  
Now voucheth sauf this day or hyt be nyght  
That I of yow the blisful soun may here  
10 Or see your colour lyk the sonne bryght  
That of yelownesse hadde never pere.  
Ye be my lyf, ye be myn hertes stere.  
Quene of comfort and of good companye,  
Beth hevy ageyn, or elles moot I dye.  
Now purse that ben to me my lyves lyght  
And saveour as doun in this world here,  
Out of this tounne helpe me thurgh your myght,  
Syn that ye wole nat ben my tresorere;  
For I am shave as nye as any frere.  
20 But yet I pray unto your curtesye,  
Beth hevy agen, or elles moot I dye.  
O conquerour of Brutes Albyon,  
Which that by lyne and free eleccion  
Been verray kyng, this song to yow I sende,  
And ye, that mowen alle oure harmes amende,  
Have mynde upon my supplicacion.



## PROVERBS

What shul these clothes thus manyfold,  
Lo this hote somers day?  
After grete hete cometh cold;  
No man caste his pilche away.  
Of al this world the large compas  
Yt wil not in myn armes tweyne;  
Who so mochel wol embrace,  
Litel therof he shal distreyne.



## AGAINST WOMEN UNCONSTANT

Madame, for your newefangelnesse  
Many a servaunt have ye put out of grace.  
I take my leve of your unstedfastnesse,  
For wel I wot, whyl ye have lyves space,  
Ye can not love ful half yeer in a place,  
To newe thing your lust is ay so kene.  
In stede of blew, thus may ye were al grene.  
Right as a mirour nothing may impresse,  
But, lightly as it cometh, so mot it pace,  
10 So fareth your love, your werkes beren witnesse.  
Ther is no feith that may your herte embrace,  
But as a wedercok, that turneth his face  
With every wind, ye fare, and that is sene;  
In stede of blew, thus may ye were al grene.  
Ye might be shryned for your brotelnesse  
Bet than Dalyda, Creseyde or Candace,  
For ever in chaunging stant your sikernes;  
That tache may no wight fro your herte arace.  
If ye lese oon, ye can wel tweyn purchase;  
20 Al light for somer (ye woot wel what I mene),  
In stede of blew, thus may ye were al grene.



## COMPLAYNT D'AMOURS

I, which that am the sorwefulleste man  
 That in this world was ever yit livinge,  
 And leest recoverer of himselven can,  
 Beginne right thus my deedly compleininge  
 On hir that may to lyf and deeth me bringe,  
 Which hath on me no mercy ne no rewthe,  
 That love hir best, but sleeth me for my trewthe.  
 Can I noght doon ne seye that may yow lyke?  
 Ne, certes now; allas, allas the whyle!  
 10 Your plesaunce is to laughen whan I syke,  
 And thus ye me from al my blisse exyle.  
 Ye han me cast in thilke spitous yle  
 Ther never man on lyve mighte asterte;  
 This have I, for I love you, swete herte!  
 Sooth is, that wel I woot, by lyklinesse,  
 If that it were a thing possible to do  
 For to acompte youre beautee and goodnesse,  
 I have no wonder thogh ye do me wo;  
 Sith I, th' unworthiest that may ryde or go,  
 20 Durste ever thinken in so hy a place.  
 What wonder is, thogh ye do me no grace?  
 Allas, thus is my lyf brought to an ende;  
 My deeth, I see, is my conclusioun.  
 I may wel singe, "In sory tyme I spende  
 My lyf." That song may have confusioun.  
 For mercy, pitee, and deep affeccioun,  
 I sey for me, for al my deedly chere,  
 Alle thise diden, in that, me love yow dere.  
 And in this wyse and in dispayr I live  
 30 In love -- nay, but in dispayr I dye!  
 But shal I thus yow my deeth foryive,  
 That causeles doth me this sorwe drye?  
 Ye, certes, I! For she of my folye  
 Hath nought to done although she do me sterve,  
 Hit is nat with hir wil that I hir serve.  
 Than sithen I am of my sorwe the cause  
 And sithen I have this withoute hir reed,  
 Than may I seyn right shortly in a clause,  
 It is no blame unto hir womanheed  
 40 Though swich a wrecche as I be for hir deed.

Yet alwey two thinges doon me dye,  
That is to seyn, hir beautee and myn ye';  
So that, algates, she is verray rote  
Of my disese and of my deth also,  
For with oon word she mighte be my bote,  
If that she vouched sauf for to do so.  
But than is hir gladnesse at my wo?  
It is hir wone plesaunce for to take  
To seen hir servaunts dyen for hir sake.  
50 But certes, than is al my wonderinge,  
Sithen she is the fayrest creature,  
As to my doom, that ever was livinge,  
The benignest and beste eek that Nature  
Hath wrought or shal, whyl that the world may dure,  
Why that she lefte Pite so behinde?  
It was, ywis, a greet defaute in Kinde.  
Yit is al this no lak to hir, pardee,  
But God or Nature sore wolde I blame.  
For though she shewe no pite unto me,  
60 Sithen that she doth othere men the same,  
I ne oughte to despyse my ladyes game;  
It is hir pley to laughen whan men syketh,  
And I assente al that hir list and lyketh.  
Yet wolde I, as I dar, with sorwful herte  
Biseche unto your meke womanhede  
That I now dorste my sharpe sorwes smerte  
Shewe by word, that ye wolde ones rede  
The compleynte of me, which ful sore I drede  
That I have seid here, through myn unkonninge,  
70 In any word to your displesinge.  
Lothest of anything that ever was loth  
Were me, as wisly God my soule save,  
To seyn a thing through which ye might be wroth;  
And, to that day that I be leyd in grave,  
A trewer servaunt shulle ye never have;  
And, though that I have pleyned unto you here,  
Foryiveth it me, myn owne lady dere.  
Ever have I been, and shal, how-so I wende,  
Outher to live or dye, your humble trewe.  
80 Ye been to me my ginning and myn ende,  
Sonne of the sterre bright and clere of hewe;  
Alwey in oon to love yow freshly newe,



By God and by my trouthe, is myn entente;  
To live or dye, I wol it never repente!  
This compleynte on Seint Valentynes day,  
Whan every foughel chesen shal his make,  
To hir, whos I am hool and shal alwey,  
This woful song and this compleynte I make,  
That never yit wolde me to mercy take;  
90 And yit wol I evermore her serve  
And love hir best, although she do me sterve.



## MERCILES BEAUTE

Your yen two wol slee me sodenly;  
 I may the beautee of hem not sustene,  
 So woundeth hit thourghout my herte kene.  
 And but your word wol helen hastily  
 My hertes wounde while that hit is grene,  
 Your yen [two wol slee me sodenly];  
 [I may the beautee of hem not sustene].  
 Upon my trouthe I sey you feithfully  
 That ye ben of my lyf and deeth the quene,  
 10 For with my deeth the trouthe shal be sene.  
 Your yen [two wol slee me sodenly];  
 [I may the beautee of hem not sustene],  
 [So woundeth it thourghout my herte kene].  
 So hath your beautee fro your herte chaced  
 Pitee, that me ne availeth not to pleyne,  
 For Daunger halt your mercy in his cheyne.  
 Giltles my deeth thus han ye me purchaced;  
 I sey you sooth, me nedeth not to feyne;  
 So hath your beautee [fro your herte chaced]  
 20 [Pitee, that me ne availeth not to pleyne].  
 Allas, that Nature hath in you compassed  
 So greet beautee, that no man may atteyne  
 To mercy though he sterve for the peyne.  
 So hath your beautee [fro your herte chaced]  
 [Pitee, that me ne availeth not to pleyne],  
 [For Daunger halt your mercy in his cheyne].  
 Sin I fro Love escaped am so fat,  
 I never thenk to ben in his prison lene;  
 Sin I am free, I counte him not a bene.  
 30 He may answeere and seye this and that;  
 I do no fors, I speke right as I mene.  
 Sin I fro Love [escaped am so fat],  
 [I never thenk to ben in his prison lene].  
 Love hath my name ystrike out of his sclat,  
 And he is strike out of my bokes clene  
 For evermo; [ther] is non other mene.  
 Sin I fro Love [escaped am so fat],  
 [I never thenk to ben in his prison lene];  
 [Sin I am free, I counte him not a bene].



## A BALADE OF COMPLAINT

Compleyne ne koude, ne might myn herte never,  
My peynes halve, ne what torment I have,  
Though that I sholde in your presence ben ever,  
Myn hertes lady, as wisly he me save  
That Bountee made, and Beautee list to grave  
In your persone, and bad hem bothe in-fere  
Ever t' awayte, and ay be wher ye were.  
As wisly he gye alle my joyes here  
As I am youre, and to yow sad and trewe,  
10 And ye, my lyf and cause of my gode chere,  
And deeth also, whan ye my peynes newe,  
My worldes joye, whom I wol serve and sewe,  
Myn heven hool, and al my suffisaunce,  
Whom for to serve is set al my plesaunce.  
Beseching yow in my most humble wyse  
T' accepte in worth this litel pore dyte,  
And for my trouthe my servyce not despyse,  
Myn observaunce eke have not in despyte,  
Ne yit to longe to suffren in this plyte;  
20 I yow beseche, myn hertes lady, here,  
Sith I yow serve, and so wil yeer by yere.



# A TREATISE ON THE ASTROLABE

## PART 1

Lyte Lowys my sone, I aperceyve wel by certeyne  
evydences thyn abilite to lerne sciences  
touching nombres and proporciouns; and as wel  
considre I thy besy praier in special to lerne the  
tretys of the Astrelabie. Than for as moche as a  
philosofre saith, "he wrappith him in his frend,  
that condescendith to the rightfulle praier of his  
frend," therfore have I yeven the a suffisant Astrolabie  
as for oure orizonte, compowned  
10 after the latitude of Oxenforde; upon  
which, by mediacioun of this litel tretys, I  
purpose to teche the a certain nombre of conclusions  
aperteynyng to the same instrument. I  
seie a certain of conclusions, for thre causes. The  
first cause is this: truste wel that alle the conclusions  
that han be founde, or ellys possibly  
might be founde in so noble an instrument as is  
an Astrelabie ben unknowe parfitly to eny mortal  
man in this regioun, as I suppose. Another  
20 cause is this, that sothly in any tretis of the  
Astrelabie that I have seyn, there be somme  
conclusions that wol not in alle thinges parformen  
her bihestes; and somme of hem ben to  
harde to thy tendir age of ten yeer to conceyve.  
This tretis, divided in 5 parties, wol I shewe  
the under full light reules and naked wordes in  
Englissh, for Latyn canst thou yit but small,  
my litel sone. But natheles suffise to the these  
trewe conclusions in Englissh as wel as sufficith  
30 to these noble clerkes Grekes these  
same conclusions in Grek; and to Arabiens  
in Arabik, and to Jewes in Ebrew, and to  
Latyn folk in Latyn; whiche Latyn folk had  
hem first out of othere dyverse langages, and  
writen hem in her owne tunge, that is to seyn,  
in Latyn. And God woot that in alle these  
langages and in many moo han these conclusions  
ben suffisantly lerned and taught, and yit

by diverse reules; right as diverse pathes  
40 leden diverse folk the righte way to Rome.  
Now wol I preie mekely every discret persone  
that redith or herith this litel tretys to have  
my rude endityng for excusid, and my superfluite  
of wordes, for two causes. The firste cause  
is for that curious endityng and hard sentence  
is ful hevy at onys for such a child to lerne.  
And the secunde cause is this, that sothly me  
semith better to writen unto a child twyes a  
god sentence, than he forgete it onys.  
50 And Lowys, yf so be that I shewe the in  
my lighte Englissh as trewe conclusions  
touching this mater, and not oonly as trewe  
but as many and as subtile conclusiouns, as  
ben shewid in Latyn in eny commune tretys  
of the Astrelabie, konne me the more thank.  
And preie God save the king, that is lord of  
this langage, and alle that him feith berith and  
obeieth, everich in his degre, the more and  
the lasse. But conside wel that I ne usurpe  
60 not to have founden this werk of my labour  
or of myn engyn. I n' am but a lewd compiler  
of the labour of olde astrologiens, and have it  
translatid in myn Englissh oonly for thy doctrine.  
And with this swerd shal I sleen envie.  
Prima pars. -- The firste partie of this tretys  
shal rehearse the figures and the membres of  
thyn Astrelabie by cause that thou shalt have  
the gretter knowing of thyn oune instrument.  
Secunda pars. -- The secunde partie  
70 shal techen the worken the verrey practik  
of the forseide conclusiouns, as ferforth and  
as narwe as may be shewed in so small an  
instrument portatif aboute. For wel woot  
every astrologien that smallist fraccions ne  
wol not be shewid in so small an instrument as  
in subtile tables calculed for a cause.  
Tertia pars. -- The thirde partie shal contene  
diverse tables of longitudes and latitudes  
of sterres fixe for the Astrelabie, and tables  
80 of the declinacions of the sonne, and tables

of longitudes of citees and townes; and  
 tables as well for the governaunce of a klokke, as  
 for to fynde the altitude meridian; and many anothir  
 notable conclusioun after the kalenders  
 of the reverent clerkes, Frere J. Somer and  
 Frere N. Lenne.

Quarta pars. -- The fourthe partie shal ben  
 a theorike to declare the moevyng of the celestiall  
 bodies with the causes. The whiche

90 fourthe partie in speciall shal shewen a  
 table of the verrey moevyng of the mone  
 from houre to houre every day and in every  
 signe after thyn almenak. Upon which table  
 there folewith a canoun suffisant to teche as  
 wel the manere of the worchynge of the same  
 conclusioun as to knowe in oure orizonte with  
 which degre of the zodiak that the mone arisith  
 in any latitude, and the arisyng of any planete  
 after his latitude fro the ecliptik lyne.

100 Quinta pars. -- The fifthe partie shal  
 be an introductorie, after the statutes of  
 oure doctours, in which thou maist lerne a gret  
 part of the generall rewles of theorik in astrologie.  
 In which fifthe partie shalt thou fynden  
 tables of equaciouns of houses after the latitude of  
 Oxenforde; and tables of dignitees of planetes,  
 and othere notefull thinges, yf God wol vouche  
 saaf and his Moder the Maide, moo then I behete.

Thyn Astrolabie hath a ring to putten on  
 the thombe of thi right hond in taking the  
 height of thinges. And tak kep, for from henes  
 forthward I wol clepen the heighte of any thing  
 that is taken by the rewle "the altitude," withoute  
 moo wordes.

This ryng renneth in a maner toret fast  
 to the moder of thyn Astrelabie in so rowme a  
 space that it distourbith not the instrument to  
 hangen after his right centre.

The moder of thin Astrelabye is thikkeste  
 plate, perced with a large hool, that resceiveth  
 in hir wombe the thynne plates compowned  
 for diverse clymates, and thy reet shapen in

manere of a nett or of a web of a loppe.  
This moder is dividid on the bakhalf with  
a lyne that cometh descending fro the ring  
doun to the netherist bordure. The whiche  
lyne, fro the forseide ring unto the centre of  
the large hool amidde, is clepid the south lyne,  
or ellis the lyne meridional. And the remenaunt  
of this lyne doun to the bordure is  
clepid the north lyne, or ellis the lyne of midnyght.  
Overthwart this forseide longe lyne ther  
crossith him another lyne of the same lengthe  
from eest to west. Of the whiche lyne, from  
a litel cros (+) in the bordure unto the centre  
of the large hool, is clepid the est lyne, or  
ellis the lyne orientale. And the remenaunt of  
this lyne, fro the forseide centre unto the bordure,  
is clepid the west lyne, or ellis the lyne  
occidentale. Now hast thou here the foure  
10 quarters of thin Astrolabie divided after the  
foure principales plages or quarters of the firmament.  
The est syde of thyn Astrolabie is clepid  
the right syde, and the west syde is clepid the  
left syde. Forget not thys, litel Lowys. Put  
the ryng of thyn Astrolabie upon the thombe  
of thi right hond, and than wol his right side  
be toward thi lift side, and his left side wol be  
toward thy right side. Tak this rewle generall,  
as wel on the bak as on the wombe syde. Upon  
the ende of this est lyne, as I first seide, is  
10 marked a litel cros (+), where as evere  
moo generally is considerid the entring of  
the first degree in which the sonne arisith.  
Fro this litel cros (+) up to the ende  
of the lyne meridionall, under the ryng, shalt  
thou fynden the bordure divided with 90 degrees;  
and by that same proporcioun is every  
quarter of thin Astrolabie divided. Over the  
whiche degrees there ben noumbres of augrym  
that dividen thilke same degres fro 5 to 5, as  
shewith by longe strikes bitwene. Of whiche  
longe strikes the space bitwene contenith  
10 a myle wey, and every degree of the bordure



conteneth 4 minutes; this is to seien,  
mynutes of an houre.

Under the compas of thilke degrees ben  
writen the names of the 12 Signes: as  
Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo,  
Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricornus, Aquarius,  
Piscis. And the nombres of the degrees of  
thoo signes be writen in augrym above, and  
with longe divisious fro 5 to 5, dyvidid fro  
the tyme that the signe entrith unto the last  
ende. But understond wel that these degres  
10 of signes ben everich of hem considred  
of 60 mynutes, and every mynute of  
60 secundes, and so furth into smale fraccions  
infinite, as saith Alkabucius. And therfore  
knowe wel that a degree of the bordure contenith  
4 minutes, and a degree of a signe conteneth  
60 minutes, and have this in mynde.

Next this folewith the cercle of the daies,  
that ben figured in manere of degres, that contenen  
in nombre 365, dividid also with longe  
strikes fro 5 to 5, and the nombre in augrym  
writen under that cercle.

Next the cercle of the daies folewith the  
cercle of the names of the monthes, that is to  
say, Januarius, Februarius, Marcius, Aprilis,  
Maius, Junius, Julius, Augustus, September,  
October, November, December. The names  
of these monthes were clepid somme for  
her propirtees and somme by statutes of  
Arabiens, somme by othre lordes of Rome.

Eke of these monthes, as liked to Julius  
10 Cesar and to Cesar Augustus, somme were  
compounded of diverse nombres of daies, as  
Julie and August. Than hath Januarie 31 daies,  
Februarie 28, March 31, Aprill 30, May 31,  
Junius 30, Julius 31, Augustus 31, Septembre  
30, Octobre 31, Novembre 30, Decembre 31.  
Natheles, all though that Julius Cesar toke 2  
daies out of Feverer and putte hem in his  
month of Juyll, and Augustus Cesar clepid the  
month of August after his name and ordeined

20 it of 31 daies, yit truste wel that the  
sonne dwellith therfore nevere the more  
ne lasse in oon signe than in another.  
Than folewen the names of the holy  
daies in the Kalender, and next hem the lettres  
of the A B C on whiche thei fallen.  
Next the forseide cercle of the A B C,  
under the cross lyne, is marked the skale in  
manere of 2 squyres, or ellis in manere of laddres,  
that serveth by his 12 pointes and his  
dyvisiouns of ful many a subtil conclusioun.  
Of this forseide skale fro the cross lyne unto  
the verrey angle is clepid Umbra Versa, and  
the nethir partie is clepid Umbra Recta, or  
ellis Umbra Extensa.  
Than hast thou a brod reule, that hath  
on either ende a square plate perced with certein  
holes, somme more and somme lasse, to  
resceyve the stremes of the sonne by day, and  
eke by mediacioun of thin eye to knowe the  
altitude of sterres by night.  
Than is there a large pyn in manere of  
an extre, that goth thorough the hole that halt  
the tables of the clymates and the riet in the  
wombe of the moder; thorough which pyn ther  
goth a litel wegge, which that is clepid the  
hors, that streynith all these parties to-hepe.  
Thys forseide grete pyn in manere of an extre  
is ymagyned to be the Pool Artik in thyn  
Astralabie.  
The wombe syde of thyn Astrelabie is  
also divided with a longe cros in 4 quarters  
from est to west, fro southe to northe, fro  
right syde to left side, as is the bakside.  
The bordure of which wombe side is  
divided fro the point of the est lyne unto the  
point of the south lyne under the ring, in 90  
degrees; and by that same proporcioun is every  
quarter divided, as is the bakside. That  
amountith 360 degrees. And understond wel  
that degres of this bordure ben aunswering and  
consentrike to the degrees of the equinoxiall,

that is dividid in the same nombre as every  
10 othir cercle is in the highe hevene. This  
same bordure is divided also with 23  
lettres capitals and a small cross (+) above  
the south lyne, that shewith the 24 houres  
equals of the klokke. And, as I have seid, 5  
of these degres maken a myle wey, and 3 mile-wei  
maken an houre. And every degre of thys  
bordure contenith 4 minutes, and every minute  
60 secundes. Now have I told the twyes.  
The plate under the riet is discribed  
with 3 cercles, of whiche the leest is  
clepid the cercle of Cancre by cause that the  
heved of Cancre turnith evermo consentrik  
upon the same cercle. In this heved  
of Cancer is the grettist declinacioun northward  
of the sonne, and therfore is he clepid  
solsticium of somer; which declinacioun, after  
Ptholome, is 23 degrees and 50 minutes as  
10 wel in Cancer as in Capricorn. This signe  
of Cancer is clepid the tropik of somer, of  
tropos, that is to seien "ageynward." For than  
beginneth the sonne to passen from us-ward.  
The myddel cercle in wydnesse, of these 3,  
is clepid the cercle equinoxiall, upon which  
turnith evermo the hevedes of Aries and Libra.  
And understond wel that evermo thys cercle  
equinoxiall turnith justly from verrey est to verrey  
west as I have shewed the in the speer  
20 solide. This same cercle is clepid also  
Equator, that is the weyer of the day; for  
whan the sonne is in the hevedes of Aries and  
Libra, than ben the dayes and the nightes ylike  
of lengthe in all the world. And therfore ben  
these 2 signes called the equinoxiis. And all  
that moeveth withinne the hevedes of these  
Aries and Libra, his moevyng is clepid northward;  
and all that moevith withoute these  
hevedes, his moevyng is clepid southward,  
30 as fro the equinoxiall. Tak kep of these  
latitudes north and south, and forget it nat.  
By this cercle equinoxiall ben considred the

24 houres of the klokke; for evermo the arisyng of 15 degrees of the equinoxiall makith an houre equal of the klokke. This equinoxiall is clepid the gurdel of the first moeving, or ellis of the firste moevable. And note that the firste moevyng is clepid moevyng of the firste moevable of the 8 speer, which moeving is from 40 est to west, and eft ageyn into est. Also it is clepid girdel of the firste moeving for it departith the firste moevable, that is to seyn the spere, in two like partyes evene distantz fro the poles of this world.

The widest of these 3 principale cercles is clepid the cercle of Capricorne, by cause that the heved of Capricorne turneth evermo consentrik upon the same cercle. In the heved of this forseide Capricorne is the grettist declinacioun 50 southward of the sonne, and therfore it is clepid the solsticiun of wynter.

This signe of Capricorne is also clepid the tropic of wynter, for than begynneth the sonne to come ageyn to us-ward.

Upon this forseide plate ben compassed certeyn cercles that highten almycanteras, of whiche somme of hem semen parfit cercles and somme semen inparfit. The centre that stondith amyddes the narwest cercle is clepid the cenyth. And the netherist cercle, or the firste cercle, is clepid the orizonte, that is to seyn, the cercle that divideth the two emysperies, that is, the partie of the hevene above the 10 erthe and the partie bynethe. These almykanteras ben compowned by 2 and 2, all be it so that on diverse Astrelabies somme almykanteras ben divided by oon, and somme by two, and somme by thre, after the quantite of the Astrelabie. This forseide cenyth is ymagined to ben the verrey point over the crowne of thin heved. And also this cenyth is the verray pool of the orizonte in every regioun. From this cenyth, as it semeth, there comen a maner croked strikes like to the clawes

of a loppe, or elles like the werk of a wommans calle, in kervyng overthwart the almykanteras. And these same strikes or divisiouns ben clepid azimuth, and thei dividen the orisounte of thin Astrelabie in 24 divisiouns. And these azymutz serve to knowe the costes of the firmament, and to othre conclusions, as 10 for to knowe the cenyth of the sonne and of every sterre.

Next these azymutz, under the cercle of Cancer, ben there 12 divisiouns embelif, muche like to the shap of the azemutz, that shewen the spaces of the houres of planetes. The riet of thin Astrelabie with thy zodiak, shapen in manere of a net or of a lopweb after the olde descripcioun, which thou maist turnen up and down as thiself liketh, contenith certain nombre of sterres fixes, with her longitudes and latitudes determinat, yf so be that the maker have not errid. The names of the sterres ben writen in the margyn of the riet there as thei sitte, of whiche sterres the smale point is 10 clepid the centre. And understond also that alle the sterres sitting within the zodiak of thin Astrelabie ben clepid sterres of the north, for thei arise by northe the est lyne. And all the remenaunt fixed oute of the zodiak ben clepid sterres of the south. But I seie not that thei arisen alle by southe the est lyne; witnesse on Aldeberan and Algomeysa. Generaly understond this rewle, that thilke sterres that ben clepid sterres of the north arisen rather than the degre of 20 her longitude, and alle the sterres of the south arisen after the degre of her longitude -- this is to seyn, sterres fixed in thyn Astrelabie. The mesure of this longitude of sterres is taken in the lyne ecliptik of hevene, under which lyne, whan that the sonne and the mone be lyne-right, or ellis in the superficie of this lyne, than is the eclipse of the sonne or of the mone, as I shal declare, and eke the cause why. But sothly the ecliptik lyne of thy

30 zodiak is the utterist bordure of thy zodiak  
there the degrees be marked.

Thy zodiak of thin Astrelabie is shapen as  
a compas which that contenith a large brede  
as after the quantite of thyn Astrelabie, in ensample  
that the zodiak in hevene is ymagyned  
to ben a superfice contenyng a latitude of 12  
degrees, whereas alle the remenaunt of cercles  
in the hevene ben ymagyned verrey lynes withoute  
eny latitude. Amiddes this celestial

40 zodiak is ymagined a lyne which that is  
clepid the ecliptik lyne, under which lyne  
is evermo the wey of the sonne. Thus ben  
there 6 degres of the zodiak on that oo syde  
of the lyne and 6 degrees on that othir. This  
zodiak is dividid in 12 principale divisiouns that  
departen the 12 signes, and, for the streitnesse  
of thin Astrolabie, than is every smal divisioun  
in a signe departed by two degrees and two, I  
mene degrees contenyng 60 mynutes. And  
50 this forseide hevenysse zodiak is clepid  
the cercle of the signes, or the cercle of the  
bestes, for "zodia" in langage of Grek sowneth  
"bestes" in Latyn tunge. And in the zodiak  
ben the 12 signes that han names of bestes,  
or ellis for whan the sonne entrith in eny  
of tho signes he takith the propirte of suche  
bestes, or ellis for that the sterres that ben  
ther fixed ben disposid in signes of bestes or  
shape like bestes, or elles whan the planetes  
60 ben under thilke signes thei causen us by  
her influence operaciouns and effectes like  
to the operaciouns of bestes.

And understond also that whan an hot planete  
cometh into an hot signe, than encrescith  
his hete; and yf a planete be cold, than amenusith  
his coldnesse by cause of the hoote sygne.

And by thys conclusioun maist thou take ensample  
in alle the signes, be thei moist or drie,  
or moeble or fixe, reknyng the qualite of the  
70 planete as I first seide. And everich of  
these 12 signes hath respect to a certeyn

parcel of the body of a man, and hath it in governaunce; as Aries hath thin heved, and Taurus thy nekke and thy throte, Gemini thin armholes and thin armes, and so furth, as shall be shewid more pleyn in the 5 partie of this tretis.

This zodiak, which that is part of the 8 speer, over-kervith the equinoxial, and he over-kervith 80 him ageyn in evene parties; and that oo half declineth southward; and that othir northward, as plainly declarith the Tretys of the Speer.

Than hast thou a label that is shapen like a reule, save that it is streit and hath no plates on either ende with holes. But with the smale point of the forseide label shalt thou calcule thin equaciouns in the bordure of thin Astralabie, as by thin almury.

90 Thin almury is clepid the denticle of Capricorne, or ellis the calculer. This same almury sitt fix in the heved of Capricorne, and it serveth of many a necessarie conclusioun in equacions of thinges as shal be shewid.



## PART 2

To fynde the degre in which the sonne is  
RubA day by day, after his cours aboute.  
Rekne and knowe which is the day of thy  
month, and ley thy rewle upon that same day,  
and than wol the verrey poynt of thy rewle  
sitten in the bordure upon the degre of thy  
sonne.

Ensample as thus: The yeer of oure Lord  
1391, the 12 day of March at midday, I wolde  
knowe the degre of the sonne. I soughte in  
the bakhalf of myn Astrelabie and fond the  
10 cercle of the daies, the whiche I knowe by  
the names of the monthes writen under the  
same cercle. Tho leyde I my reule over this  
foreseide day, and fond the point of my reule  
in the bordure upon the firste degre of Aries,  
a litel within the degre. And thus knowe I this  
conclusioun.

Anothir day I wolde knowen the degre of  
my sonne, and this was at midday in the 13  
day of Decembre. I fond the day of the  
20 month in manere as I seide; tho leide I my  
rewle upon this forseide 13 day, and fond  
the point of my rewle in the bordure upon  
the firste degre of Capricorne a lite within the  
degre. And than had I of this conclusioun the  
ful experience.

Rub To knowe the altitude of the sonne or of  
RubA othre celestial bodies.

Put the ryng of thyn Astrelabie upon thy  
right thombe, and turne thi lift syde ageyn  
the light of the sonne; and remewe thy rewle  
up and doun til that the stremes of the sonne  
shine thorough bothe holes of thi rewle. Loke  
than how many degrees thy rule is areised fro  
the litel cros upon thin est lyne, and tak there  
the altitude of thi sonne. And in this same  
wise maist thou knowe by night the altitude  
10 of the mone or of brighte sterres.

This chapitre is so generall evere in oon



that there nedith no more declaracioun; but  
forget it not.

Rub To knowe every tyme of the day by light  
RubA of the sonne; and every tyme of the nyght by  
RubB the sterres fixe; and eke to knowe by nyght or  
RubC by day the degre of eny signe that ascendith on  
RubD the est orisonte, which that is clepid comounly  
RubE the ascendent, or ellis horoscopum.

Tak the altitude of the sonne whan the list,  
as I have seid, and set the degre of the sonne,  
in caas that it be befor the myddel of the day,  
among thyn almykanteras on the est syde of  
thin Astrelabie; and if it be after the myddel  
of the day, set the degre of thy sonne upon the  
west syde. Tak this manere of setting for a  
general rule, ones for evere. And whan thou  
hast set the degre of thy sonne upon as  
10 many almykanteras of height as was the altitude  
of the sonne taken by thy rule, ley  
over thi label upon the degre of the sonne; and  
than wol the point of thi labell sitte in the  
bordure upon the verrey tyde of the day.

Ensample as thus: The yeer of oure lord  
1391, the 12 day of March, I wolde knowe the  
tyde of the day. I tok the altitude of my sonne,  
and fond that it was 25 degrees and 30 minutes  
of height in the bordure on the bak

20 side. Tho turned I myn Astrelabye, and by  
cause that it was before mydday, I turned  
my riet and sette the degre of the sonne, that  
is to seyn the firste degre of Aries, on the right  
side of myn Astrelabye upon 25 degrees and  
30 mynutes of height among myn almykanteras.

Tho leide I my label upon the degre of my  
sonne, and fond the point of my label in the  
bordure upon a capital lettre that is clepid  
an X. Tho rekned I alle the capitale lettres  
30 fro the lyne of mydnight unto this forseide  
lettre X, and fond that it was 9 of the  
clokke of the day. Tho loke I doun upon myn  
est orizonte, and fond there the 20 degre of  
Geminis ascendyng, which that I tok for myn

ascendent. And in this wise had I the experience  
for evermo in which manere I shulde  
knowe the tyde of the day and eke myn ascendent.  
Tho wolde I wite the same nyght folewyng  
40 the houre of the nyght, and wroughte  
in this wise: Among an heep of sterres  
fixe it liked me for to take the altitude of the  
faire white sterre that is clepid Alhabor, and  
fond hir sitting on the west side of the lyne  
of midday, 12 degrees of heighte taken by my  
rewle on the bak side. Tho sette I the centre  
of this Alhabor upon 12 degrees among myn  
almykanteras upon the west side, by cause that  
she was founde on the west side. Tho  
50 leyde I my label over the degre of the  
sonne, that was discendid under the west  
orisounte, and rekned all the lettres capitals  
fro the lyne of midday unto the point of my  
label in the bordure, and fond that it was  
passed 9 of the klokke the space of 10 degrees.  
Tho lokid I doun upon myn est orisounte, and  
fond there 10 degrees of Scorpius ascendyng,  
whom I tok for myn ascendent. And thus  
lerned I to knowe onys for ever in which  
60 manere I shuld come to the houre of the  
nyght, and to myn ascendent, as verrely as  
may be taken by so smal an instrument.  
But natheles this rule in generall wol I warne  
the for evere: Ne make the nevere bold to  
have take a just ascendent by thin Astrelabie,  
or elles to have set justly a klokke, whan eny  
celestial body by which that thou wenyst governe  
thilke thinges be nigh the south lyne.  
For trust wel, whan the sonne is nygh the  
70 meridional lyne, the degre of the sonne  
renneth so longe consentrik upon the almykanteras  
that sothly thou shalt erre fro the  
just ascendent. The same conclusioun sey I by  
the centre of eny sterre fix by nyght. And  
more over, by experience I wot wel that in  
oure orisounte, from xi of the klokke unto oon  
of the klokke, in taking of a just ascendent in

a portatif Astrelabie it is to hard to knowe --  
 I mene from xi of the klokke before the  
 80 houre of noon til oon of the klokke next  
 folewyng.

Rub A special declaracioun of the ascendent.  
 The ascendent sothly, as wel in alle nativites  
 as in questions and eleccions of tymes, is a  
 thing which that these astrologiens gretly observen.  
 Werfore me semeth conveyent, syth  
 that I speke of the ascendent, to make of it  
 speciall declaracioun.

The ascendent sothly, to take it at the largest,  
 is thilke degre that ascendith at eny of  
 these forseide tymes upon the est orisounte.

10 And therefore, yf that eny planete ascende  
 at thatt same tyme in thilke forseide degre,  
 than hath he no latitude fro the ecliptik lyne,  
 but he is than in the degre of the ecliptik  
 which that is the degre of his longitude. Men  
 sayn that thilke planete is in horoscopo.

But sothly the hous of the ascendent, that  
 is to seyn, the first hous or the est angle, is a  
 thing more brod and large. For, after the statutes  
 of astrologiens, what celestial body

20 that is 5 degrees above thilke degre that  
 ascendith, or withinne that nombre, that is  
 to seyn neer the degree that ascendith, yit  
 rekne they thilke planete in the ascendent.

And what planete that is under thilke degre  
 that ascendith the space of 25 degrees, yit seyn  
 thei that thilke planete is "like to him that is  
 the hous of the ascendent." But sothly, if he  
 passe the boundes of these forseide spaces,  
 above or bynethe, thei seyn that the planete  
 30 is "fallyng fro the ascendent." Yit saien

these astrologiens that the ascendent and  
 eke the lord of the ascendent may be shapen  
 for to be fortunat or infortunat, as thus: A  
 "fortunat ascendent" clepen they whan that no  
 wicked planete, as Saturne or Mars or elles  
 the Tayl of the Dragoun, is in the hous of the  
 ascendent, ne that no wicked planete have

noon aspect of enemyte upon the ascendent.  
 But thei wol caste that thei have a fortunat  
 40 planete in hir ascendent, and yit in his felicite;  
 and than sey thei that it is wel.

Further over thei seyn that the infortunyng of  
 an ascendent is the contrarie of these forseide  
 thinges. The lord of the ascendent, sey thei  
 that he is fortunat whan he is in god place  
 fro the ascendent, as in an angle, or in a succident  
 where as he is in hys dignite and comfortid  
 with frendly aspectes of planetes and  
 wel resceyved; and eke that he may seen  
 50 the ascendent; and that he be not retrograd,  
 ne combust, ne joyned with no  
 shrewe in the same signe; ne that he be not  
 in his discencioun, ne joyned with no planete  
 in his descencioun, ne have upon him noon  
 aspect infortunat; and than sey thei that he is  
 well.

Natheles these ben observaunces of judicial  
 matere and rytes of payens, in whiche my  
 spirit hath no feith, ne knowing of her  
 60 horoscopum. For they seyn that every  
 signe is departid in thre evene parties by  
 10 degrees, and thilke porcioun they clepe a  
 face. And although that a planete have a latitude  
 fro the ecliptik, yit sey somme folk, so  
 that the planete arise in that same signe with  
 eny degree of the forseide face in which his  
 longitude is rekned, that yit is the planete  
 in horoscopo, be it in nativyte or in eleccion,  
 etc.

Rub To knowe the verrey equacioun of the  
 RubA degree of the sonne yf so be that it falle bitwene  
 RubC thyn almykanteras.

For as mucche as the almykanteras in thin  
 Astrelabie ben compowned by two and two,  
 where as somme almykanteras in sondry astrelabies  
 be compowned by 1 and 1, or elles by 2  
 and 2, it is necessarie to thy lernyng to teche  
 the first to knowe and worke with thin oun  
 instrument. Wherfore whan that the degree of

thi sonne fallith bytwixe 2 almykanteras, or  
 ellis yf thin almykanteras ben graven with  
 10 over-gret a poynt of a compas (for bothe  
 these thinges may causen errour as wel in  
 knowing of the tide of the day, as of the verrey  
 ascendent), thou must worken in this  
 wise:

Set the degre of thy sonne upon the hyer  
 almykanteras of bothe, and wayte wel where  
 as thin almury touchith the bordure and set  
 there a prikke of ynke. Sett doun agayn the  
 degre of the sunne upon the nether almykanteras  
 20 of bothe, and sett there another  
 pricke. Remeve than thin almury in  
 the bordure evene amiddes bothe prickes, and  
 this wol lede justly the degre of thi sonne to  
 sitte bitwene bothe almykanteras in his right  
 place. Ley than thy label over the degre of  
 thi sonne, and fynd in the bordure the verrey  
 tyde of the day, or of the night. And as verraily  
 shalt thou fynde upon thin est orisonte  
 thin ascendent.

Rub To knowe the spryng of the dawenyng  
 RubA and the ende of the evenyng, the whiche ben  
 RubB called the two crepuscules.

Set the nadir of thy sonne upon 18 degrees  
 of height among thyn almykanteras on the west  
 syde; and ley thy label on the degre of thy  
 sonne, and than shal the point of thy label  
 shewen the spryng of the day. Also set the  
 nader of thy sonne upon 18 degrees of height  
 among thin almykanteras on the est side, and  
 ley over thy label upon the degre of the sonne,  
 and with the point of thy label fynd in the  
 10 bordure the ende of the evenyng, that is  
 verrey nyght.

The nader of the sonne is thilke degre that  
 is opposyt to the degre of the sonne, in the  
 7 signe, as thus: every degre of Aries by  
 ordir is nadir to every degre of Libra by ordre,  
 and Taurus to Scorpioun, Gemini to Sagittarie,  
 Cancer to Capricorne, Leo to Aquarie, Virgo

to Piscis. And if eny degree in thy zodiak be  
derk, his nadir shal declare hym.

Rub To knowe the arch of the day, that some  
RubA folk callen the day artificiall, fro sonne arisyng  
RubB tyl it go to reste.

Set the degree of thi sonne upon thin est  
orisonte, and ley thy label on the degree of  
the sonne, and at the point of thy label in the  
bordure set a pricke. Turne than thy riet  
aboute tyl the degree of the sonne sitte upon  
the west orisonte, and ley thy label upon the  
same degree of the sonne, and at the poynt of  
thy label set another pricke. Rekne than  
the quantite of tyme in the bordure bitwixe  
10 bothe prickes, and tak there thyn arch of  
the day. The remenaunt of the bordure  
under the orisonte is the arch of the nyght.  
Thus maist thou rekne bothe arches, or every  
porcioun, of whether that the liketh. And by  
this manere of worching maist thou se how  
longe that eny sterre fix dwelleth above the  
erthe, fro tyme that he riseth til he go to reste.  
But the day naturall, that is to seyn 24 hours,  
is the revolucioun of the equinoxial with as  
20 mucche partie of the zodiak as the sonne of  
his propre moeving passith in the mene  
while.

Rub To turne the houres inequales in houres  
RubA equales.

Know the nombre of the degrees in the  
houres inequales, and depart hem by 15, and  
tak there thin houres equales.

Rub To knowe the quantite of the day vulgar,  
RubA that is to seyn fro spryng of the day unto  
RubB verrey nyght.

Know the quantite of thy crepuscles, as I  
have taught in the 3 chapitre bifore, and adde  
hem to the arch of thy day artificial, and tak  
there the space of all the hool day vulgar unto  
verrey night. The same manere maist thou  
worche to knowe the quantite of the vulgar  
nyght.

Rub To knowe the quantite of houres inequales  
 RubA by day.

Understond wel that these houres inequales  
 ben clepid houres of planetes. And understond  
 wel that som tyme ben thei lenger by  
 day than by night, and som tyme the contrarie.  
 But understond wel that evermo generally  
 the houre inequal of the day with the  
 houre inequal of the night contenen 30 degrees  
 of the bordure, which bordure is evermo answering  
 to the degrees of the equinoxial.

10 Wherefore departe the arch of the day artificial  
 in 12, and tak there the quantite of  
 the houre inequale by day. And if thou abate  
 the quantite of the houre inequale by day out  
 of 30, than shal the remenaunt that levith parforme  
 the houre inequale by night.

Rub To knowe the quantite of houres  
 RubA equales.

The quantite of houres equales, that is to  
 seyn the houres of the klokke, ben departid by  
 15 degrees alreedy in the bordure of thin Astrelaby,  
 as wel by night as by day, generally for  
 evere. What nedith more declaracioun?

Wherefore whan the list to knowe hou many  
 houres of the klokke ben passed, or eny part  
 of eny of these houres that ben passed, or ellis  
 how many houres or parties of houres ben  
 10 to come fro such a tyme to such a tyme by  
 day or by night, know the degre of thy  
 sonne, and ley thy label on it. Turne thy ryet  
 aboute joyntly with thy label, and with the  
 poynt of it rekne in the bordure fro the sonne  
 arise unto that same place there thou desirist,  
 by day as by nyght. This conclusioun wol I declare  
 in the laste chapitre of the 4 partie of this  
 tretys so openly that ther shal lakke no word  
 that nedith to the declaracioun.

Rub Special declaracioun of the houres of  
 RubA planetes.

Understond wel that evermo, fro the arisyng

of the sonne til it go to reste, the nadir of  
the sonne shal shewe the houre of the planete;  
and fro that tyme forward al the night til the  
sonne arise, than shal the verrey degre of the  
sonne shewe the houre of the planete.  
Ensample as thus: The xiiij day of March  
fyl upon a Saturday, peraventure, and atte risyng  
of the sonne I fond the secunde degre  
10 of Aries sittynge upon myn est orisonte, all  
be it that it was but litel. Than fond I the  
2 degre of Libra, nadir of my sonne, discending  
on my west orisonte, upon which west orisonte  
every day generally, atte sonne arist, entrieth the  
houre of eny planete, after which planete the  
day berith his name, and endith in the next  
strike of the plate under the forseide west  
orisonte. And evere as the sonne clymbith upper  
and upper, so goth his nadir downer  
20 and downer, teching by suche strikes the  
houres of planetes by ordir as they sitten  
in the hevene. The firste houre inequal of  
every Saturday is to Saturne, and the secunde  
to Jupiter, the thirde to Mars, the fourthe  
to the sonne, the fifte to Venus, the sixte to  
Mercurius, the seventhe to the mone. And  
then ageyn the 8 is to Saturne, the 9 to  
Jupiter, the 10 to Mars, the 11 to the sonne,  
the 12 to Venus. And now is my sonne gon  
30 to reste as for that Saturday. Than shewith  
the verrey degre of the sonne the houre  
of Mercurie entring under my west orisonte at  
eve; and next him succedith the mone, and  
so furth by ordir, planete after planete in houre  
after houre, all the nyght longe til the sonne  
arise. Now risith the sonne that Sonday by  
the morwe, and the nadir of the sonne upon  
the west orisonte shewith me the entring of the  
houre of the forseide sonne. And in this  
40 manere succedith planete under planete fro  
Saturne unto the mone, and fro the mone up  
ageyn to Saturne, houre after houre generally.  
And thus knowe I this conclusyoun.



Rub To knowe the altitude of the sonne in  
RubA myddes of the day that is clepid the altitude  
RubB meridian.

Set the degre of the sonne upon the lyne  
meridional, and rekne how many degrees of  
almykanteras ben bitwyxe thin est orisonte and  
the degre of thy sonne; and tak there thin altitude  
meridian, this to seyn, the highest of the  
sonne as for that day. So maist thou knowe in  
the same lyne the heighest cours that eny sterre  
fix clymbeth by night. This is to seyn that whan  
eny sterre fix is passid the lyne meridional,  
10 than begynneth it to descende; and so doth  
the sonne.

Rub To knowe the degre of the sonne by thy  
RubA ryet, for a maner curiosite.

Sek besily with thy rule the highest of the  
sonne in mydde of the day. Turne than thin  
Astrelabie, and with a pricke of ynke marke  
the nombre of that same altitude in the lyne  
meridional; turne than thy ryet aboute tyl thou  
fynde a degre of thy zodiak according with the  
pricke, this is to seyn, sitting on the pricke.

And in soth thou shalt finde but 2 degrees in  
all the zodiak of that condicioun; and yit  
10 thilke 2 degrees ben in diverse signes.

Than maist thou lightly, by the sesoun of  
the yere, knowe the signe in which that is the  
sonne.

Rub To knowe which day is lik to which  
RubA day as of lengthe.

Loke whiche degrees ben ylike fer fro the  
hevedes of Cancer and Capricorne, and loke  
when the sonne is in eny of thilke degrees;  
than ben the dayes ylike of lengthe. This is  
to seyn that as longe is that day in that month,  
as was such a day in such a month; there varieth  
but litel.

Also, yf thou take 2 dayes naturales in the  
yere ylike fer fro either point of the equinoxiall  
10 in the opposyt parties, than as longe  
is the day artificiall of that oon day as is the

night of that othir, and the contrarie.

Rub This chapitre is a maner declaracioun

RubA to conclusiouns that folewen.

Understond wel that thy zodiak is departed  
in two halve circles, as fro the heved of Capricorne  
unto the heved of Cancer, and ageynward  
fro the heved of Cancer unto the heved  
of Capricorne. The heved of Capricorne is  
the lowest point where as the sonne goth in  
wynter, and the heved of Cancer is the heighist  
point in which the sonne goth in somer. And  
therefore understond wel that eny two degrees  
10 that ben ylike fer fro eny of these two  
hevedes, truste wel that thilke two degrees  
ben of ilike declinacioun, be it southward or  
northward, and the daies of hem ben ilike of  
lengthe and the nyghtes also, and the shadewes  
ilyke, and the altitudes ylike atte midday  
for evere.

Rub To knowe the verrey degre of eny maner

RubA sterre, straunge or unstraunge, after his longitude;

RubB though he be indeterminat in thin

RubC Astralabye, sothly to the trouthe thus he shal

RubD be knowe.

Tak the altitude of this sterre whan he is on  
the est syde of the lyne meridionall, as nye  
as thou mayst gesse; and tak an ascendent anon  
right by som manere sterre fix which that thou  
knowist; and forget not the altitude of the firste  
sterre ne thyn ascendent. And whan that this  
is don, aspye diligently whan this same firste  
sterre passith eny thyng the south westward;  
and cacche him anon right in the same  
10 nombre of altitude on the west syde of this  
lyne meridional, as he was kaught on the  
est syde; and tak a newe ascendent anon-ryght  
by som maner sterre fix which that thou knowist,  
and forget not this secunde ascendent. And  
whan that this is don, rekne than how many  
degrees ben bitwixe the firste ascendent and  
the secunde ascendent; and rekne wel the myddel  
degre bitwene bothe ascendentes, and set

thilke myddel degre upon thyn est orizonte;  
 20 and wayte than what degre that sitte upon  
 the lyne meridional, and tak there the verrey  
 degre of the ecliptik in which the sterre  
 stondith for the tyme. For in the ecliptik is the  
 longitude of a celestiall body rekned, evene  
 fro the heved of Aries unto the ende of Pisces;  
 and his latitude is rekned after the quantite of  
 his declynacioun north or south toward the  
 polys of this world.

As thus: Yif it be of the sonne or of  
 30 eny fix sterre, rekne hys latitude or his  
 declinacioun fro the equinoxiall cercle; and  
 if it be of a planete, rekne than the quantite  
 of his latitude fro the ecliptik lyne, all be it  
 so that fro the equinoxiall may the declinacioun  
 or the latitude of eny body celestiall be rekned  
 after the site north or south and after the quantite  
 of his declinacioun. And right so may the  
 latitude or the declinacioun of eny body celestiall,  
 saaf oonly of the sonne, after hys site  
 40 north or south and after the quantite of his  
 declinacioun, be rekned fro the ecliptik  
 lyne; fro which lyne alle planetes som tyme  
 declinen north or south saaf oonly the forseide  
 sonne.

Rub To knowe the degrees of longitudes of  
 RubA fixe sterres after that they be determynat in  
 RubB thin Astrelabye, yf so be that thei be trewly  
 RubC sette.

Set the centre of the sterre upon the lyne  
 meridionall, and tak kep of thy zodiak, and  
 loke what degre of eny signe that sitte upon  
 the same lyne meridionall at that same tyme,  
 and tak there the degre in which the sterre  
 stondith. and with that same degre cometh that  
 same sterre unto that same lyne fro the orizonte.

Rub To knowe with which degre of the zodiak  
 RubA eny sterre fix in thin Astrelabie arisith  
 RubB upon the est orizonte, all though his dwellyng  
 RubC be in another signe.

Set the centre of the sterre upon the est

orizonte, and loke what degre of eny signe that sitt upon the same orizonte at that same tyme. And understond wel that with that same degre arisith that same sterre.

And thys merveyulous arisyng with a straunge degre in another signe is by cause that the latitude of the sterre fix is either north or south fro the equinoxiall. But sothly the latitudes 10 of planetes be comounly rekened fro the ecliptyk, by cause that noon of hem declyneth but fewe degrees out fro the brede of the zodiak. And tak god kep of this chapitre of arisyng of celestiale bodies; for truste wel that neyther mone ne sterre, as in our embelif orizonte, arisith with that same degre of his longitude saaf in oo cas, and that is whan they have no latitude fro the ecliptyk lyne. But natheles som tyme is everich of these planetes 20 under the same lyne.

Rub To knowe the declinacioun of eny degre RubA in the zodiak fro the equinoxiall cercle. Set the degre of eny signe upon the lyne meridionall, and rekne hys altitude in the almykanteras fro the est orizonte up to the same degre set in the forseide lyne, and set there a prikke; turne up than thy riet, and set the heved of Aries or Libra in the same meridionall lyne, and set there a nother prikke. And whan that this is don, considre the altitudes of hem bothe; for sothly the difference of thilke altitudes 10 is the declinacioun of thilke degre fro the equinoxiall. And yf it so be that thilke degre be northward fro the equinoxiall, than is his declinacyoun north; yif it be southward, than is it south.

Rub To knowe for what latitude in eny regioun RubA the almykanteras of eny table ben compowned. Rekene how many degrees of almykanteras in the meridionall lyne ben fro the cercle equinoxiall unto the cenyth, or elles from the pool artyk unto the north orizonte; and for so gret a latitude, or for so smal a latitude, is the table

compowned.

Rub To knowe in speciall the latitude of  
RubA oure countre, I mene after the latitude of Oxenford,  
RubB and the height of oure pool.

Understond wel that as fer is the heved of  
Aries or Libra in the equinoxiall fro oure orisonte  
as is the cenyth fro the pool artik; and  
as high is the pool artik fro the orisonte as the  
equinoxiall is fer fro the cenyth. I prove it  
thus by the latitude of Oxenford: understond  
wel that the height of oure pool artik fro oure  
north orisonte is 51 degrees and 50 mynutes;  
than is the cenyth fro oure pool artik 38 degrees  
10 and 10 mynutes; than is the equinoxial  
from oure cenyth 51 degrees and 50  
mynutes; than is oure south orisonte from oure  
equinoxiall 38 degrees and 10 mynutes. Understond  
wel this rekenyng. Also forget not  
that the cenyth is 90 degrees of height from  
the orisonte, and oure equinoxiall is 90 degrees  
from oure pool artik. Also this shorte rule is  
soth, that the latitude of eny place in a regioun  
is the distaunce fro the cenyth unto  
20 the equinoxiall.

Rub To prove evidently the latitude of eny  
RubA place in a regioun by the preve of the height  
RubB of the pool artik in that same place.

In som wynters nyght whan the firmament  
is cler and thikke sterred, wayte a tyme til  
that eny sterre fix sitte lyne-right perpendiculer  
over the pool artik, and clepe that sterre A;  
and wayte another sterre that sitte lyne-right  
under A, and under the pool, and clepe that  
sterre F. And understond wel that F is not  
considrid but oonly to declare that A sitte  
evene over the pool. Tak than anoon-right  
10 the altitude of A from the orisonte, and forget  
it not; let A and F goo fare wel tyl  
ageynst the dawenyng a gret while, and com  
than ageyn, and abid til that A is evene under  
the pool, and under F; for sothly than wol F  
sitte over the pool, and A wol sitte under the

pool. Tak than eftsonys the altitude of A from the orisonte, and note as wel his secunde altitude as hys firste altitude. And whan that this is doon, rekene how many degrees that the 20 firste altitude of A excedith his secunde altitude, and tak half thilke porcioun that is excedid and adde it to his secunde altitude, and tak there the elevacioun of thy pool, and eke the latitude of thy regioun; for these two ben of oo nombre, this is to seyn, as many degrees as thy pool is elevat, so muche is the latitude of the regioun.

Ensample as thus: Peraventure the altitude of A in the evenyng is 56 degrees of height; 30 than wol his secunde altitude or the dawenyng be 48 degrees, that is 8 degrees lasse than 56, that was his first altitude att even. Tak than the half of 8 and adde it to 48 that was his secunde altitude, and than hast thou 52. Now hast thou the height of thy pool and the latitude of the regioun. But understond wel that to prove this conclusioun and many another faire conclusioun, thou must have a plomet hongyng on a lyne, heygher than 40 thin heved, on a perche; and thilke lyne must hange evene perpendicularer bytwixe the pool and thin eye; and than shalt thou seen yf A sitte evene over the pool, and over F atte evene; and also yf F sitte evene over the pool and over A or day.

Rub Another conclusioun to prove the RubA height of the pool artik fro the orisonte. Tak eny sterre fix that never descendith under the orisonte in thilke regioun, and conside his heighest altitude and his lowist altitude fro the orisonte, and make a nombre of bothe these altitudes; tak than and abate half that nombre, and take there the elevacioun of the pool artik in that same regioun.

Rub Another conclusioun to prove the latitude RubA of the regioun.

Understond wel that the latitude of eny

place in a regioun is verrelly the space bytwixe  
the cenyth of hem that dwellen there and the  
equinoxiall cercle north or south, takyng the  
mesure in the meridional lyne, as shewith in  
the almykanteras of thin Astrelabye. And thilke  
space is as much as the pool artike is high in  
that same place fro the orisonte. And than is  
the depressioun of the pool antartik, that  
10 is to seyn, than is the pool antartik, bynethe  
the orisonte the same quantite of  
space neither more ne lasse.

Than if thou desire to knowe this latitude  
of the regioun, tak the altitude of the sonne  
in the myddel of the day, whan the sonne is  
in the hevedes of Aries or of Libra; for than  
moeveth the sonne in the lyne equinoxiall;  
and abate the nombre of that same sonnes altitude  
out of 90 degrees, and than is the  
20 remenaunt of the nombre that leveth  
the latitude of the regioun. As thus:

I suppose that the sonne is thilke day at  
noon 38 degrees of height; abate than 38  
degrees oute of 90; so leveth there 52; than is  
52 degrees the latitude. I say not this but for  
ensample; for wel I wot the latitude of Oxenford  
is certeyn minutes lasse; thow might  
preve the same.

Now yf so be that the semeth to longe a  
30 tarieng to abide til that the sonne be in the  
hevedes of Aries or of Libra, than wayte  
whan the sonne is in eny othir degre of the  
zodiak, and considre the degre of his declinacioun  
fro the equinoxiall lyne; and if it so be  
that the sonnes declinacioun be northward fro  
the equinoxiall, abate than fro the sonnes altitude  
at non the nombre of his declinacioun,  
and than hast thou the height of the hevedes  
of Aries and Libra. As thus: My sonne  
40 is peraventure in the 10 degre of Leoun,  
almost 56 degrees of height at non,  
and his declinacioun is almost 18 degrees  
northward fro the equinoxiall; abate than thilke

18 degrees of declinacioun out of the altitude  
 at non; than leveth there 38 degrees and odde  
 minutes. Lo there the heved of Aries or Libra  
 and thin equinoxiall in that regioun. Also if  
 so be that the sonnes declinacioun be southward  
 fro the equinoxiall, adde than thilke  
 50 declinacioun to the altitude of the sonne at  
 noon, and tak there the hevedes of Aries  
 and Libra and thin equinoxial; abate than the  
 height of the equinoxial out of 90 degrees;  
 than leveth there the distance of the pool of  
 that regioun fro the equinoxiall. Or elles, if  
 the list, tak the highest altitude fro the equinoxial  
 of eny sterre fix that thou knowist, and  
 tak his netherest elongacioun (lengthing) fro  
 the same equinoxial lyne, and work in the  
 60 manere forseid.

Rub Declaracioun of the ascensioun of  
 RubA signes.

The excellence of the spere solide, amonges  
 othir noble conclusiouns, shewith manyfest the  
 diverse ascenciouns of signes in diverse places,  
 as wel in the right cercle as in the embelif  
 cercle. These auctours writen that thilke signe  
 is cleped of right ascensioun with which more  
 part of the cercle equinoxiall and lasse part of  
 the zodiak ascendith. and thilke signe ascendith  
 embelif with which lasse part of the  
 10 equinoxiall and more part of the zodiak  
 ascendith. Ferther-over, they seyn that in  
 thilke cuntrey where as the senith of hem that  
 dwellen there is in the equinoxial lyne, and  
 her orisonte passyng by the two poles of this  
 world, thilke folk han this right cercle and  
 the right orisonte; and evermore the arch of  
 the day and the arch of the night is there ilike  
 longe; and the sonne twies every yer passing  
 thorough the cenith of hir heed, and two  
 20 someres and two wynters in a yer han these  
 forseide peple. And the almycanteras in  
 her Astrelabyes ben streight as a lyne, so as  
 shewith in the figure.



The utilite to knowe the ascensions of signes  
 in the right cercle is this: Truste wel that  
 by mediacioun of thilke ascensions these astrologiens,  
 by her tables and her instrumentes,  
 knowen verreily the ascensioun of every degre  
 and minute in all the zodiak in the embelif  
 30 cercle, as shal be shewed. And nota that  
 this forseide right orisonte, that is clepid  
 Orison Rectum, dividith the equinoxial into  
 right angles; and the embelif orisonte, where  
 as the pool is enhaunced upon the orisonte,  
 overkervith the equinoxiall in embilif angles,  
 as shewith in the figure.

Rub This is the conclusioun to knowe the  
 RubA ascensions of signes in the right cercle, that is  
 RubB circulus directus.

Set the heved of what signe the lyst to knowe  
 his ascendyng in the right cercle upon the lyne  
 meridionall, and wayte where thyn almury  
 touchith the bordure, and set there a prikke;  
 turne than thy riet westward til that the ende  
 of the forseide signe sitte upon the meridional  
 lyne and eftsonys wayte where thin almury  
 touchith the bordure, and set there another  
 pricke. Rekene than the nombre of degres  
 10 in the bordure bitwixe bothe prikkes, and  
 tak the ascensioun of the signe in the right  
 cercle. And thus maist thou werke with every  
 porcioun of thy zodiak.

Rub To knowe the ascensions of signes in the  
 RubA embelif cercle in every regioun, I mene, in  
 RubB circulo obliquo.

Set the heved of the signe which as the list  
 to knowe his ascensioun upon the est orisonte,  
 and wayte where thin almury touchith the bordure,  
 and there set a prikke. Turne than thy  
 riet upward til that the ende of the same signe  
 sitte upon the est orisonte, and wayte eftsonys  
 where as thin almury touchith the bordure,  
 and set there a nother prikke. Rekene than  
 the nombre of degres in the bordure bitwyxe  
 10 bothe prikkes and tak there the ascensioun

of the signe in the embelif cercle.

And understond wel that alle the signes in thy  
zodiak, fro the heved of Aries unto the ende  
of Virgo, ben clepid signes of the north fro  
the equinoxiall. And these signes arisen bitwyxe  
the verrey est and the verrey north in  
oure orisonte generally for evere. And alle the  
signes fro the heved of Libra unto the ende  
of Pisces ben clepid signes of the south fro  
the equinoxial; and these signes arisen  
evermore bitwixe the verrey est and the  
verrey south in oure orisonte. Also every signe  
bitwixe the heved of Capricorne unto the ende  
of Geminis arisith on oure orisonte in lasse  
than 2 houres equales. And these same signes  
fro the heved of Capricorne unto the ende of  
Geminis ben cleped tortuose signes, or croked  
signes, for thei arise embelyf on oure orisonte.

And these croked signes ben obedient to  
the signes that ben of right ascensioun.

The signes of right ascencioun ben fro the  
heved of Cancer unto the ende of Sagittarie;  
and these signes arisen more upright, and thei  
ben called eke sovereyn signes and everich of  
hem arisith in more space than 2 houres. Of  
whiche signes Gemini obeieith to Cancer, and  
Taurus to Leo, Aries to Virgo, Pisces to Libra,  
Aquarius to Scorpioun, and Capricorne to Sagittarie.

And thus evermore 2 signes that  
ben ilike fer fro the heved of Capricorne  
obeyen everich of hem to othir.

Now To knowe justly the 4 quarters of the  
world, as Est, West, North, and South.

Tak the altitude of thy sonne whan the list,  
and note wel the quarter of the world in which  
the sonne is for the tyme by the azymutz.

Turne than thin Astrelabie, and set the degre  
of the sonne in the almykanteras of his altitude  
on thilke syde that the sonne stant, as is the  
manere in takyng of houres, and ley thy label  
on the degre of the sonne; and rekene how  
many degrees of the bordure ben bitwixe

10 the lyne meridional and the point of thy  
 label, and note wel that nombre. Turne  
 than ageyn thin Astrelabie, and set the point  
 of thy gret rule there thou takist thin altitudes  
 upon as many degrees in his bordure fro his  
 meridional as was the point of thy label fro  
 the lyne meridional on the wombe side. Take  
 than thin Astrelabie with bothe hondes sadly  
 and slyghly, and let the sonne shyne thorough  
 bothe holes of thy rule, and slyghly in thilke  
 20 shynyng lat thin Astrelabie kouche adoun  
 evene upon a smothe ground, and than wol  
 the verrey lyne meridional of thin Astrelabie  
 lye evene south, and the est lyne wol lye est,  
 and the west lyne west, and the north lyne  
 north, so that thou worke softly and avysely  
 in the kouching. And thus hast thou the 4  
 quarters of the firmament.

Rub To knowe the latitude of planetes fro  
 RubA the wey of the sonne, whethir so they be north  
 RubB or south fro the forseide wey.

Loke whan that a planete is in the lyne  
 meridional, yf that hir altitude be of the same  
 height that is the degre of the sonne for that  
 day, and than is the planete in the verrey wey  
 of the sonne and hath no latitude. And if the  
 altitude of the planete be heigher than the  
 degre of the sonne, than is the planete north  
 fro the wey of the sonne such a quantite of  
 latitude as shewith by thin almykanteras.

10 And if the altitude of the planete be lasse  
 than the degre of the sonne, than is the  
 planete south fro the wey of the sonne such  
 a quantite of latitude as shewith by thin  
 almykanteras. This is to seyn, fro the wey  
 where as the sonne went thilke day, but not  
 fro the wey of the sonne in every place of the  
 zodiak.

Rub To knowe the cenyth of the arising of  
 RubA the sonne, this is to seyn, the partie of the  
 RubB orisonte in which that the sonne arisith.  
 Thou must first considere that the sonne arisith

not alwey verrey est, but somtyme by northe  
 the est and somtyme by south the est. Sothly  
 the sonne arisith nevere moo verrey est in oure  
 orisonte, but he be in the heved of Aries or  
 Libra. Now is thin orisonte departed in 24 parties  
 by thin azimutes in significacioun of 24 parties  
 of the world; al be it so that shipmen rekene  
 thilke parties in 32. Than is there no  
 10 more but wayte in which azimut that thy  
 sonne entrith at his arisyng, and take there  
 the cenith of the arisyng of the sonne.

The manere of the divisioun of thin Astrelabie  
 is this, I mene as in this cas: First  
 it is divided in 4 plages principalis with the  
 lyne that goth from est to west; and than with  
 another lyne that goth fro south to north; than  
 is it divided in smale parties of azymutz, as est,  
 and est by south, where as is the first azymut  
 20 above the est lyne; and so furth fro  
 partie to partie til that thou come ageyn  
 unto the est lyne. Thus maist thou understonde  
 also the cenyth of eny sterre, in which partie  
 he riseth.

Rub To knowe in which partie of the firmament  
 RubA is the conjunccyon.

Considerere the tyme of the conjunccyon by  
 the kalender, as thus: Loke hou many houres  
 thilke conjunccioun is fro the midday of the  
 day precedent, as shewith by the canon of  
 thy kalender. Rekene than thilke nombre of  
 houres in the bordure of thin Astrelabie, as  
 thou art wont to do in knowyng of the houres  
 of the day or of the nyght, and ley thy label  
 over the degre of the sonne, and than wol  
 10 the point of thy label sitte upon the houre  
 of the conjunccioun. Loke than in which  
 azymut the degre of thy sonne sittith, and in  
 that partie of the firmament is the conjunccioun.

Rub To knowe the cenyth of the altitude of  
 RubA the sonne.

This is no more to seyn but eny tyme of  
 the day tak the altitude of the sonne, and by

the azymut in which he stondith maist thou  
 seen in which partie of the firmament he is.  
 And the same wise maist thou seen by night,  
 of eny sterre, wheither the sterre sitte est or  
 west, or north or south, or eny partie bitwene,  
 after the name of the azimut in which is the  
 sterre.

Rub To knowe sothly the degre of the longitude  
 RubA of the mone, or of eny planete that hath  
 RubB no latitude for the tyme fro the ecliptik lyne.

Tak the altitude of the mone, and rekne thy  
 altitude up among thyn almykanteras on  
 which syde that the mone stondith, and set  
 there a prikke. Tak than anon-right upon the  
 mones syde the altitude of eny sterre fix which  
 that thou knowist, and set his centre upon his  
 altitude among thyn almykanteras there the  
 sterre is founde. Wayte than which degre of  
 the zodiak touchith the prykke of the altitude  
 10 of the mone, and tak there the degre  
 in which the mone stondith. This conclusioun  
 is verrey soth, yf the sterres in thin  
 Astrelabie stonden after the trouthe. Comoun  
 tretes of the Astrelabie ne maken non excepcioun  
 whether the mone have latitude or  
 noon, ne on wheyther syde of the mone the  
 altitude of the sterre fixe be taken.

And nota that yf the mone shewe himself  
 by light of day, than maist thou worche  
 20 this same conclusioun by the sonne, as wel  
 as by the fixe sterre.

Rub This is the worching of the conclusioun  
 RubA to knowe yf that eny planete be direct  
 RubB or retrograd.

Tak the altitude of eny sterre that is clepid  
 a planete, and note it wel; and tak eke anon  
 the altitude of any sterre fix that thou knowist,  
 and note it wel also. Com than ageyn the  
 thridde or the fourthe nyght next folewing, for  
 than shalt thou perceyve wel the moeving of  
 a planete, wheither so he moeve forward or  
 bakward. Awayte wel than whan that thy

sterre fixe is in the same altitude that she  
 10 was whan thou toke hir firste altitude.  
 And tak than eft-sones the altitude of the  
 forseide planete and note it wel; for truste wel  
 yf so be that the planete be on the right syde  
 of the meridional lyne, so that his secunde altitude  
 be lasse than hys first altitude was, than  
 is the planete direct; and yf he be on the west  
 syde in that condicioun, than is he retrograd.  
 And yf so be that this planete be upon the est  
 side whan his altitude is ytaken, so that his  
 20 secunde altitude be more than his first altitude,  
 than is he retrograd. And if he be on  
 the west syde, than is he direct. But the contrarie  
 of these parties is of the cours of the  
 mone; for certis the mone moeveth the contrarie  
 from othre planetes as in hir epicicle, but  
 in noon othir manere.

Rub The conclusioun of equaciouns of  
 RubA houses after the Astrelabie.

Set the begynnyng of the degre that ascendith  
 upon the ende of the 8 houre inequal; than  
 wol the begynnyng of the 2 hous sitte upon  
 the lyne of mydnight. Remeve than the degre  
 that ascendith, and set him on the ende of the  
 10 houre inequal, and than wol the begynnyng  
 of the 3 hous sitte up on the mydnight lyne.  
 Bring up ageyn the same degre that ascended  
 first, and set him upon the est orisonte, and  
 10 than wol the begynnyng of the 4 hous sitte  
 upon the lyne of mydnight. Tak than the  
 nader of the degre that first ascendid, and set  
 him on the ende of the 2 houre inequal; and  
 than wol the begynnyng of the 5 hous sitte  
 upon the lyne of mydnight. Set than the nader  
 of the ascendent on the ende of the 4 houre  
 inequal, and than wol the begynnyng of the  
 6 hous sitte on the mydnight lyne. The begynnyng  
 of the 7 hous is nader of the ascendent,  
 20 and the begynnyng of the 8 hous  
 is nader of the 2, and the begynnyng  
 of the 9 hous is nader of the 3, and the begynnyng

of the 10 hous is nader of the 4,  
and the begynnyng of the 11 hous is nader  
of the 5, and the begynnyng of the 12 hous  
is nader of the 6.

Rub Another maner of equaciouns of houses  
RubA by the Astrelabye.

Tak thin ascendent, and than hast thou thy  
4 angles; for wel thou wost that the opposit  
of thin ascendent, that is to seyn, the begynnyng  
of the 7 hous, sitt upon the west orisonte,  
and the begynnyng of the 10 hous sitt upon  
the lyne meridional, and his opposyt upon the  
lyne of mydnight. Than ley thy label over the  
degre that ascendith, and rekne fro the point  
of thy label alle the degrees in the bordure  
10 tyl thou come to the meridional lyne; and  
departe alle thilke degrees in 3 evene parties,  
and take there the evene equacions of 3  
houses; for ley thy label over everich of these  
3 parties, and than maist thou se by thy label,  
in the zodiak, the begynnyng of everich  
of these same houses fro the ascendent; that  
is to seyn, the begynnyng of the 12 hous next  
above thin ascendent, the begynnyng of the  
11 hous, and than the 10 upon the meridional  
20 lyne, as I first seide. The same wise  
worch thou fro the ascendent down to the  
lyne of mydnyght, and thus hast thou othre  
3 houses; that is to seyn, the begynnyng of  
the 2, and the 3, and the 4 hous. Than is the  
nader of these 3 houses the begynnyng of the  
3 houses that folewen.

Rub To fynde the lyne meridional to dwelle  
RubA fix in eny certeyn place.

Tak a round plate of metal; for werpyng,  
the brodder the better; and make there upon  
a just compas a lite within the bordure. And  
ley this rounde plate upon an evene ground,  
or on an evene ston, or on an evene stok fix  
in the ground; and ley it evene by a level.  
And in the centre of the compas styke an  
evene pyn, or a wyr, upright, the smaller the

better; set thy pyn by a plom-rule evene  
 10 upright, and let this pyn be no lenger than  
 a quarter of the dyametre of thy compas,  
 fro the centre amiddes. And wayte bisely  
 aboute 10 or 11 of the klokke, whan the sonne  
 shineth, whan the shadewe of the pyn entrith  
 enythyng within the cercle of thy compas an  
 heer-mele; and marke there a pricke with inke.  
 Abid than stille waityng on the sonne til after  
 1 of the klokke, til that the shadwe of the wyr,  
 or of the pyn, passe enything out of the  
 20 cercle of the compas, be it nevere so lyte,  
 and set there another pricke of ynke. Tak  
 than a compas, and mesure evene the myddel  
 bitwixe bothe prickes, and set there a prikke.  
 Tak me than a rule and draw a strike evene  
 a-lyne, fro the pyn unto the middel prikke; and  
 tak there thi lyne meridional for evermore, as  
 in that same place. And yif thou drawe a  
 cross-lyne overthwart the compas justly over  
 the lyne meridional, than hast thou est and  
 30 west and south, and par consequens,  
 the opposit of the south lyne, i.e. the north.  
 Rub Descripcion of the meridional lyne, of  
 RubA longitudes and latitudes of citees and townes,  
 RubB as wel as of climates.  
 Thys lyne meridional is but a maner descripcioun,  
 or lyne ymagined, that passith upon the  
 poles of this world and by the cenyth of oure  
 heved. And it is cleped the lyne meridional,  
 for in what place that eny man is at any tyme  
 of the yer, whan that the sonne, by mevyng  
 of the firmament, cometh to his verrey meridian  
 place, than is it verrey mydday, that we clepen  
 oure non, as to thilke man. And therfore  
 10 is it clepid the lyne of midday. And nota  
 that evermore of eny 2 cytes or of 2 townes,  
 of which that oo town approachith ner toward  
 the est than doth that othir town, trust  
 wel that thilke townes han diverse meridians.  
 Nota also that the arch of the equinoxial that  
 is contened or bownded bitwixe the 2 meridians



is clepid the longitude of the toun. And  
 yf so be that two townes have ilike meridian  
 or oon meridian, than is the distaunce of  
 20 hem bothe ilike fer fro the est, and the contrarie;  
 and in this manere thei change not  
 her meridian. But sothly thei chaungen her  
 almykanteras, for the enhaunsyng of the pool  
 and the distance of the sonne.

The longitude of a climat is a lyne ymagined  
 fro est to west ilike distant fro the equinoxiall.  
 And the latitude of a climat may be  
 cleped the space of the erthe fro the begynnyng  
 of the first clymat unto the verrey  
 30 ende of the same clymat evene direct  
 ageyns the pool artyke. Thus sayn somme  
 auctours; and somme of hem sayn that yf men  
 clepe the latitude of a cuntrey the arch meridian  
 that is contened or intercept bitwix the  
 cenyth and the equinoxial, than say they that  
 the distance fro the equinoxial unto the ende  
 of a clymat evene ageynst the pool artik is the  
 latitude of a clymat forsoothe.

Rub To knowe with which degre of the zodiak  
 RubA that eny planete ascendith on the orisonte,  
 RubB wheither so that his latitude be north  
 RubC or south.

Know by thin almenak the degre of the  
 ecliptik of eny signe in which that the planete  
 is rekned for to be, and that is clepid the  
 degre of his longitude. And know also the  
 degre of his latitude fro the ecliptik north or  
 south. And by these ensamples folewynge in  
 speciall maist thou worche in general in every  
 signe of the zodiak:

The degre of the longitude peraventure  
 10 of Venus or of another planete was 1 of  
 Capricorne, and the latitude of him was  
 northward 4 degrees fro the ecliptik lyne. Than  
 tok I a subtil compas, and clepid that oo point  
 of my compas A, and that other point F. Than  
 tok I the point of A and sette it in the ecliptik  
 lyne in my zodiak in the degre of the longitude

of Venus, that is to seyn, in the 1 degre  
of Capricorne; and than sette I the point of  
F upward in the same signe by cause that  
20 latitude was north upon the latitude of  
Venus, that is to seyn, in the 4 degre fro the  
heved of Capricorne; and thus have I 4 degrees  
bitwixe my two prikes. Than leide I down  
softly my compas, and sette the degre of the  
longitude upon the orisonte; tho tok I and  
waxed my label in manere of a peire tables to  
receyve distinctly the prikes of my compas.  
Tho tok I thys forseide label, and leyde it fix  
over the degre of my longitude; tho tok I  
30 up my compas and sette the point of A in  
the wax on my label, as evene as I koude  
gesse, over the ecliptik lyne in the ende of the  
longitude, and sette the point of F endelong  
in my label upon the space of the latitude,  
inward and over the zodiak, that is to seyn  
northward fro the ecliptik. Than leide I doun  
my compas, and loked wel in the wey upon  
the prikes of A and of F; tho turned I my ryet  
til that the pricke of F satt upon the orisonte;  
40 than saw I wel that the body of  
Venus in hir latitude of 4 degrees septemtrionals  
ascendid, in the ende of the 8 degre,  
fro the heved of Capricorne.

And nota that in this manere maist thou  
worche with any latitude septemtrional in alle  
signes. But sothly the latitude meridional of  
a planete in Capricorne ne may not be take by  
cause of the litel space bitwixe the ecliptyk  
and the bordure of the Astrelabie; but  
50 sothely in all othre signes it may.

Also the degre peraventure of Jupiter, or of  
another planete, was in the first degre of Piscis  
in longitude, and his latitude was 2 degrees  
meridional; tho tok I the point of A and sette  
it in the first degre of Piscis on the ecliptik;  
and than sette I the point of F downward in  
the same signe by cause that the latitude was  
south 2 degres, that is to seyn, fro the heved

of Piscis; and thus have I 2 degrees bitwixe  
60 bothe prikkes. Than sette I the degre of  
the longitude upon the orisonte; tho tok I  
my label, and leide it fix upon the degre of the  
longitude; tho sette I the point of A on my  
label evene over the ecliptik lyne in the ende  
of the degre of the longitude, and sette the  
point of F endlong in my label the space of  
2 degrees of the latitude outward fro the zodiak  
(this is to seyn southward fro the ecliptik toward  
the bordure), and turned my riet  
70 til that the pricke of F saat upon the orisonte.  
Than say I wel that the body of  
Jupiter in his latitude of 2 degrees meridional  
ascendid with 8 degrees of Piscis in horoscopo.  
And in this manere maist thou worche with  
any latitude meridional, as I first seide, save in  
Capricorne. And yif thou wilt pleye this craft  
with the arisyng of the mone, loke thou rekne  
wel hir cours houre by houre, for she ne dwellith  
not in a degre of hir longitude but litel  
80 while, as thow wel knowist. But natheles  
yf thou rekne hir verrey moevyng by thy  
tables houre after houre, [thou shalt do wel  
ynow].

Rub Umbra Recta.

Yif it so be that thou wilt werke by umbra  
recta, and thou may come to the bas of the  
tour, in this maner shalt thou werke. Tak the  
altitude of the tour by bothe holes, so that  
thy rewle ligge even in a poynt. Ensample as  
thus: I see him thorw at the poynt of 4; than  
mete I the space betwixe me and the tour,  
and I finde it 20 foot; than beholde I how 4  
is to 12, right so is the space betwixe thee  
110 and the tour to the altitude of the tour.  
For 4 is the thridde part of 12, so is the  
space between thee and the tour the thridde  
part of the altitude of the tour; than thryes 20  
foot is the heyghte of the tour, with adding of  
thyn owne persone to thyn eye. And this rewle  
is general in umbra recta, fro the poynt of

oon to 12. And yif thy rewle falle upon 5, than  
is 5 12-partyes of the heyght the space between  
thee and the tour; with adding of  
120 thyn owne heyghte.

Rub Umbra Versa.

Another maner of the werkinge, by umbra  
versa. Yif so be that thou may nat come to  
the bas of the tour, I see him thorw at the nombre  
of 1; I sette ther a prikke at my fot; than  
go I neer to the tour, and I see him thorw at  
the poynt of 2, and there I sette another prikke;  
and I beholde how 1 hath him to 12, and ther  
finde I that it hath him twelfe sythes; than  
beholde I how 2 hath him to 12, and thou  
110 shalt finde it sexe sythes; than thou shalt  
finde that 12 passith 6 by the nombre of  
6; right so is the space between thy two prikkes  
the space of 6 tymes thyn altitude. And note,  
that at the ferste altitude of 1, thou settest a  
prikke; and afterward, whan thou seest him at  
2, ther thou settest another prikke; than thou  
findest betwyx thes two prikkys 60 foot; than  
thou shalt finde that 10 is the 6-party of 60.  
And then is 10 feet the altitude of the tour.

120 For other poyntis, yif it fille in umbra versa,  
as thus: I sette caas it fill upon 2, and at  
the secunde upon 3; than schalt thou finde  
that 2 is 6 partyes of 12; and 3 is 4 partyes of  
12; than passeth 6 4, by nombre of 2; so is the  
space between two prikkes twyes the heyghte  
of the tour. And yif the differens were thryes,  
than shulde it be three tymes; and thus mayst  
thou werke fro 1 to 12; and yif it be 4, 4 tymes;  
or 5, 5 tymes; et sic de ceteris.

Rub Umbra Recta.

Another maner of wyrking, by umbra recta:  
Yif it so be that thou mayst nat come to the  
baas of the tour, in this maner thou schalt  
werke. Set thy rewle upon 1 till thou see the  
altitude, and set at thy foot a prikke. Than  
set thy rewle upon 2, and behold what is the  
differense between 1 and 2, and thou shalt

finde that it is 1. Than mete the space between  
 two prikkes, and that is the 12 partie  
 10 of the altitude of the tour. And yif ther  
 were 2, it were the 6 partye; and yif ther  
 were 3, the 4 partye; et sic deinceps. And  
 note, yif it were 5, it were the 5 party of 12;  
 and 7, 7 party of 12; and note, at the altitude  
 of thy conclusion, adde the stature of thyn  
 heyghte to thyn eye.

Rub Another maner conclusion, to knowe  
 RubA the mene mote and the argumentis of any  
 RubB planete. To know the mene mote and the argumentis  
 RubC of every planete fro yeer to yeer, from  
 RubD day to day, from houre to houre, and from  
 RubE smale fraccionis infinite.

In this maner shalt thou worche; consider  
 thy rote first, the whiche is made the beginning  
 of the tables fro the yer of oure Lord  
 1397, and enter hit into thy slate for the laste  
 meridie of December; and than consider the  
 yer of oure Lord, what is the date, and behold  
 whether thy date be more or lasse than the  
 yer 1397. And yf hit so be that hit be more,  
 loke how many yeres hit passeth, and with  
 10 so many enter into thy tables in the first  
 lyne theras is writen anni collecti et expansi.  
 And loke where the same planet is  
 writen in the hed of thy table, and than loke  
 what thou findest in direct of the same yer of  
 oure Lord which is passid, be hit 8, or 9, or  
 10, or what nombre that evere it be, til the  
 tyme that thou come to 20, or 40, or 60. And  
 that thou findest in direct wryt in thy slate under  
 thy rote, and adde hit togeder, and that is  
 20 thy mene mote, for the laste meridian of  
 the December, for the same yer which that  
 thou hast purposed. And if hit so be that hit  
 passe 20, consider wel that fro 1 to 20 ben  
 anni expansi, and fro 20 to 3000 ben anni collecti;  
 and if thy nomber passe 20, than tak that  
 thou findest in direct of 20, and if hit be more,  
 as 6 or 18, than tak that thou findest in direct

thereof, that is to sayen, signes, degrees, minutes,  
and secoundes, and adde togedere  
30 unto thy rote; and thus to make rotes. And  
note, that if hit so be that the yer of oure  
Lord be lasse than the rote, which is the yer  
of oure Lord 1397, than shalt thou wryte in  
the same wyse first thy rote in thy slate, and  
after enter into thy table in the same yer that  
be lasse, as I taught before; and than consider  
how many signes, degrees, minutes, and secoundes  
thyn entringe conteyneth. And so be  
that ther be 2 entrees, than adde hem togeder,  
40 and after withdraw hem from the  
rote, the yer of oure Lord 1397; and the  
residue that leveth is thy mene mote for the  
laste meridie of December, the whiche thou  
hast purposid; and if hit so be that thou wolt  
witen thy mene mote for any day, or for any  
fraccioun of day, in this maner thou shalt  
worche. Make thy rote fro the laste day of  
December in the maner as I have taught,  
and afterward behold how many monethes,  
50 dayes, and houres ben passid from the  
meridie of December, and with that enter  
with the laste moneth that is ful passed, and  
take that thou findest in direct of him, and  
wryt hit in thy slate; and enter with as many  
dayes as be more, and wryt that thou findest  
in direct of the same planete that thou worchest  
for; and in the same wyse in the table of  
houres, for houres that ben passed, and adde  
alle these to thy rote; and the residue is the  
60 mene mote for the same day and the same  
houre.

Rub Another manere to knowe the mene  
RubA mote.

Whan thou wolt make the mene mote of eny  
planete to be by Arsechieles tables, tak thy  
rote, the which is for the yer of oure Lord  
1397; and if so be that thy yer be passid the  
date, wryt that date, and than wryt the nomber  
of the yeres. Than withdraw the yeres

out of the yeres that ben passed that rote.  
Ensampul as thus: the yer of oure Lord 1400,  
I wolde wyten, precise, my rote; than wrot  
10 I first 1400. And under that number I  
wrot a 1397; than withdraw I the laste  
number out of that, and than fond I the residue  
was 3 yer; I wiste that 3 yer was passed  
fro the rote, the which was writen in my  
tables. Than afterward soghte I in my tables  
the annis collectis et expansis, and among myn  
expanse yeres fond I 3 year. Than tok I alle  
the signes, degrees, and minutes, that I fond  
direct under the same planete that I  
20 wroghte for, and wrot so many signes,  
degrees, and minutes in my slate, and afterward  
added I to signes, degrees, minutes, and  
secoundes, the whiche I fond in my rote the  
yer of oure Lord 1397; and kepte the residue;  
and than had I the mene mote for the laste  
day of December. And if thou woldest wete  
the mene mote of any planete in March, April,  
or May, other in any other tyme or moneth of  
the yer, loke how many monethes and  
30 dayes ben passed from the laste day of December,  
the yer of oure Lord 1400; and so  
with monethis and dayes enter into thy table  
ther thou findest thy mene mote iwritten in  
monethes and dayes, and tak alle the signes,  
degrees, minutes, and secoundes that thou findest  
ywrite in direct of thy monethes, and adde  
to signes, degrees, minutes, and secoundes that  
thou findest with thy rote the yer of oure  
Lord 1400, and the residue that leveth is the  
40 mene mote for that same day. And note,  
if hit so be that thou woldest wite the mene  
mote in any yer that is lasse than thy rote,  
withdraw the number of so many yeres as hit  
is lasse than the yer of oure Lord a 1397, and  
kep the residue; and so many yeres, monethes,  
and dayes enter into thy tables of thy mene  
mote. And tak alle the signes, degrees, and  
minutes, and secoundes, that thou findest in

direct of alle the yeres, monethes, and  
50 dayes, and wryt hem in thy slate; and  
above thilke number wryt the signes, degrees,  
minutes, and secoundes, the which thou  
findest with thy rote the yer of oure Lord a  
1397; and withdraw alle the nethere signes  
and degrees fro the signes and degrees, minutes,  
and secoundes of other signes with thy  
rote; and thy residue that leveth is thy mene  
mote for that day.

Rub For to knowe at what houre of the day,  
RubA or of the night, shal be flod or ebbe.

First wite thou certainly, hou that haven  
stondeth, that thou list to werke for; that is  
to say in which place of the firmament the  
mone beyng, makith full see. Than awayte  
thou redily in what degree of the zodiak that  
the mone at that tyme is ynne. Bring furth  
than the label, and set the point therof in  
that same cost that the mone makith flod, and  
set thou there the degree of the mone according  
10 with the egge of the label. Than

afterward awayte where is than the degree  
of the sonne, at that tyme. Remeve thou than  
the label fro the mone, and bring and set it  
justly upon the degree of the sonne. And the  
point of the label shal than declare to thee, at  
what houre of the day or of the night shal  
be flod. And there also maist thou wite by the  
same point of the label, whethir it be, at that  
same tyme, flod or ebbe, or half flod, or  
20 quarter flod, or ebbe, or half or quarter  
ebbe; or ellis at what houre it was last, or  
shal be next by night or by day, thou than  
shalt esely knowe, &c. Furthermore, if it so  
be that thou happe to worke for this matere  
about the tyme of the conjunccioun, bring  
furth the degree of the mone with the label  
to that coste as it is before seyd. But than thou  
shalt understonde that thou may not bringe  
furth the label fro the degree of the mone  
30 as thou dide before; for-why the sonne is



than in the same degree with the mone.  
And so thou may at that tyme by the point of  
the label unremevid knowe the houre of the  
flod or of the ebbe, as it is before seyde, &c.  
And evermore as thou findest the mone passe  
fro the sonne, so remeve thou the label than  
fro the degree of the mone, and bring it to  
the degree of the sonne. And work thou than  
as thou dide before, &c. Or ellis know  
40 thou what houre it is that thou art inne,  
by thyn instrument. Than bring thou furth  
fro thennes the label and ley it upon the degree  
of the mone, and therby may thou wite  
also whan it was flod, or whan it wol be next,  
be it night or day; etc.



## THE ROMAUNT OF THE ROSE

### FRAGMENT A

Many men sayn that in sweveninges  
Ther nys but fables and lesynges;  
But men may some sweven[es] sen  
Whiche hardely that false ne ben,  
But afterward ben apparaunt.  
This may I drawe to warraunt  
An authour that hight Macrobes,  
That halt nat dremes false ne lees,  
But undoth us the avysioun  
10 That whilom mette kyng Cipoun.  
And whoso saith or weneth it be  
A jape, or elles nycete,  
To wene that dremes after falle,  
Let whoso lyste a fol me calle.  
For this trowe I, and say for me,  
That dremes signifiunce be  
Of good and harm to many wightes  
That dremen in her slep a-nyghtes  
Ful many thynges covertly  
20 That fallen after al openly.  
Within my twenty yer of age,  
Whan that Love taketh his cariage  
Of yonge folk, I wente soone  
To bedde, as I was wont to done,  
And faste I slepte; and in slepyng  
Me mette such a swevenyng  
That lyked me wonders wel.  
But in that sweven is never a del  
That it nys afterward befallle,  
30 Ryght as this drem wol tel us alle.  
Now this drem wol I ryme aright  
To make your hertes gaye and lyght,  
For Love it prayeth, and also  
Commaundeth me that it be so.  
And if there any aske me,  
Whether that it be he or she,  
How this book, which is here,  
Shal hatte, that I rede you here:

It is the Romance of the Rose,  
40 In which al the art of love I close.  
The mater fayre is of to make;  
God graunt me in gree that she it take  
For whom that it begonnen is.  
And that is she that hath, ywis,  
So mochel pris, and therto she  
So worthy is biloved to be,  
That she wel ought, of pris and ryght,  
Be cleped Rose of every wight.  
That it was May me thoughte tho  
50 It is fyve yer or more ago  
That it was May, thus dremed me,  
In tyme of love and jolite,  
That al thing gynneth waxen gay,  
For ther is neither busk nor hay  
In May that it nyl shrouded ben  
And it with newe leves wren.  
These wodes eek recoveren grene,  
That drie in wynter ben to sene,  
And the erthe wexith proud withalle,  
60 For swote dewes that on it falle,  
And the pore estat forget  
In which that wynter had it set.  
And than bycometh the ground so proud  
That it wole have a newe shroud,  
And makith so queynt his robe and faire  
That it hath hewes an hundred payre  
Of gras and flouris, ynde and pers,  
And many hewes ful dyvers  
That is the robe I mene, iwys,  
70 Through which the ground to preisen is.  
The briddes that haven left her song,  
While thei suffride cold so strong,  
In wedres gryl and derk to sighte,  
Ben in May for the sonne brighte  
So glade that they shewe in syngyng  
That in her hertis is sich lykyng  
That they mote syngen and be light.  
Than doth the nyghtyngale hir myght  
To make noyse and syngen blythe,  
80 Than is blisful many sithe

The chelaundre and papyngay,  
Than yonge folk entenden ay  
Forto ben gay and amorous  
The tyme is than so saverous.  
Hard is the hert that loveth nought  
In May whan al this mirth is wrought,  
Whan he may on these braunches here  
The smale briddes syngen clere  
Her blisful swete song pitous.  
90 And in this sesoun delytous,  
Whan love affraieth alle thing,  
Me thought a-nyght in my sleping,  
Right in my bed, ful redily,  
That it was by the morowe erly,  
And up I roos and gan me clothe.  
Anoon I wissh myn hondis bothe.  
A sylvre nedle forth I drough  
Out of an aguler queynt ynough,  
And gan this nedle threde anon,  
100 For out of toun me list to gon  
The song of briddes forto here  
That in thise buskes syngen clere.  
And in [the] swete seson that leef is,  
With a thred bastyng my slevis,  
Alone I wente in my plaiyng,  
The smale foules song harknyng.  
They peyned hem, ful many peyre,  
To synge on bowes blosmed feyre.  
Joly and gay, ful of gladnesse,  
110 Toward a ryver gan I me dresse  
That I herd renne faste by,  
For fairer plaiyng non saugh I  
Than playen me by that ryver.  
For from an hill that stood ther ner  
Cam doun the strem ful stif and bold.  
Cleer was the water, and as cold  
As any welle is, soth to seyne,  
And somdel lasse it was than Seyne,  
But it was strayghter wel away.  
120 And never saugh I, er that day,  
The watir that so wel lyked me,  
And wondir glad was I to se

That lusty place and that ryver.  
And with that watir, that ran so cler,  
My face I wyssh. Tho saugh I well  
The botme paved everydell  
With gravel, ful of stones shene.  
The medewe softe, swote, and grene,  
Beet right on the watir syde.  
130 Ful cler was than the morowtyde,  
And ful attempre, out of drede.  
Tho gan I walke thorough the mede,  
Dounward ay in my pleiying,  
The ryver syde costeiying.  
And whan I had a while goon,  
I saugh a gardyn right anoon,  
Ful long and brood, and everydell  
Enclosed was, and walled well  
With highe walles enbatailled,  
140 Portraied without and wel entailed  
With many riche portraitures.  
And bothe the ymages and the peyntures  
Gan I biholde bysyly,  
And I wole telle you redyly  
Of thilk ymages the semblaunce,  
As fer as I have in remembraunce.  
Amydde saugh I Hate stonde,  
That for hir wrathe, yre, and onde,  
Semed to ben a mynoresse,  
150 An angry wight, a chideresse;  
And ful of gyle and fel corage,  
By semblaunt, was that ilk ymage.  
And she was nothyng wel arraied,  
But lyk a wod womman afraied.  
Frounced foule was hir visage,  
And grennyng for dispitous rage,  
Hir nose snorted up for tene.  
Ful hidous was she for to sene,  
Ful foul and rusty was she, this.  
160 Hir heed writhen was, ywis,  
Ful grymly with a greet towayle.  
An ymage of another entayle  
A lyft half was hir faste by.  
Hir name above hir heed saugh I,

And she was called Felonye.  
Another ymage that Vilanye  
Clepid was saugh I and fond  
Upon the wal on hir right hond.  
Vilany was lyk somdell  
170 That other ymage, and, trustith wel,  
She semede a wikked creature.  
By countenaunce in portrayture  
She semed be ful dispitous,  
And eek ful proud and outrageous.  
Wel coude he peynte, I undirtake,  
That sich ymage coude make.  
Ful foul and cherlyssh semed she,  
And eek vylayneus for to be,  
And litel coude of norture  
180 To worshipe any creature.  
And next was peynted Coveitise,  
That eggith folk in many gise  
To take and yeve right nought ageyn,  
And gret tresouris up to leyn.  
And that is she that for usure  
Leneth to many a creature  
The lasse for the more wynnyng,  
So coveitous is her brennyng.  
And that is she that penyes fele  
190 Techith for to robbe and stele  
These theves and these smale harlotes;  
And that is routh, for by her throtes  
Ful many oon hangith at the laste.  
She makith folk compasse and caste  
To taken other folkis thyng  
Thorough robberie or myscounting.  
And that is she that makith trechoures,  
And she makith false pleadoures  
That with hir termes and hir domes  
200 Doon maydens, children, and eek gromes  
Her heritage to forgo.  
Ful croked were hir hondis two,  
For Coveitise is evere wod  
To gripen other folkis god.  
Coveityse, for hir wynnyng,  
Ful leef hath other mennes thing.

Another ymage set saugh I  
Next Coveitise faste by,  
And she was clepid Avarice.  
210 Ful foul in peyntyng was that vice;  
Ful fade and caytif was she eek,  
And also grene as ony leek.  
So yvel hewed was hir colour,  
Hir semed to have lyved in langour.  
She was lyk thyng for hungre deed,  
That ladde hir lyf oonly by breed  
Kneden with eisel strong and egre,  
And therto she was lene and megre.  
And she was clad ful porely  
220 Al in an old torn courtepy,  
As she were al with doggis torn;  
And bothe bihynde and eke biforn  
Clouted was she beggarly.  
A mantyl heng hir faste by,  
Upon a perche, weik and small;  
A burnet cote heng therwithall  
Furred with no menyver,  
But with a furre rough of her,  
Of lambe-skynnes hevy and blake.  
230 It was ful old, I undirtake,  
For Avarice to clothe hir well  
Ne hastith hir never a dell.  
For certeynly it were hir loth  
To weren ofte that ilke cloth,  
And if it were forwered, she  
Wolde have ful gret necessite  
Of clothyng er she bought hir newe,  
Al were it bad of woll and hewe.  
This Avarice hild in hir hand  
240 A purs that heng by a band,  
And that she hidde and bond so stronge,  
Men must abyde wondir longe  
Out of that purs er ther come ought.  
For that ne cometh not in hir thought;  
It was not, certein, hir entente  
That fro that purs a peny wente.  
And by that ymage, nygh ynough,  
Was peynted Envye, that never lough

Nor never wel in hir herte ferde  
250 But if she outhur saugh or herde  
Som gret myschaunce or gret disese.  
Nothyng may so moch hir plese  
As myschef and mysaventure,  
Or whan she seeth discomfiture  
Upon ony worthy man falle,  
Than likith hir wel withalle.  
She is ful glad in hir corage,  
If she se any gret lynage  
Be brought to nought in shamful wise.  
260 And if a man in honour rise,  
Or by his wit or by his prowesse,  
Of that hath she gret hevynesse.  
For, trustith wel, she goth nygh wod  
Whan any chaunce happith god.  
Envie is of such crueltee  
That feith ne trouthe holdith she  
To freend ne felawe, bad or good.  
Ne she hath kyn noon of hir blood,  
That she nys ful her enemy;  
270 She nolde, I dar seyn hardely,  
Hir owne fadir ferde well.  
And sore abieth she everydell  
Hir malice and hir maltalent,  
For she is in so gret turment,  
And hath such [wo] whan folk doth good  
That nygh she meltith for pure wood.  
Hir herte kervyth and so brekith  
That God the puple wel awrekith.  
Envie, iwis, shal nevere lette  
280 Som blame upon the folk to sette.  
I trowe that if Envie, iwis,  
Knewe the beste man that is  
On this side or biyonde the see,  
Yit somewhat lakken hym wolde she;  
And if he were so hende and wis  
That she ne myght al abate his pris,  
Yit wolde she blame his worthynesse  
Or by hir wordis make it lesse.  
I saugh Envie in that peynting  
290 Hadde a wondirful lokyng,



For she ne lokide but awry  
Or overthwart, all baggyngly.  
And she hadde a [foul] usage:  
She myght loke in no visage  
Of man or womman forth-right pleyn,  
But shette hir [oon] eie for disdeyn.  
So for envie brenned she  
Whan she myght any man se  
That fair or worthi were, or wis,  
300 Or elles stod in folkis prys.  
Sorowe was peynted next Envie  
Upon that wall of masonrye.  
But wel was seyn in hir colour  
That she hadde lyved in langour;  
Hir semede to have the jaunyce.  
Nought half so pale was Avarice,  
Nor nothyng lyk of lenesse;  
For sorowe, thought, and gret distresse,  
That she hadde suffred day and nyght,  
310 Made hir ful yelow and nothyng bright,  
Ful fade, pale, and megre also.  
Was never wight yit half so wo  
As that hir semede for to be,  
Nor so fulfilled of ire as she.  
I trowe that no wight myght hir please  
Nor do that thyng that myght hir ease;  
Nor she ne wolde hir sorowe slake,  
Nor comfort noon unto hir take,  
So depe was hir wo bigonnen,  
320 And eek hir hert in angre ronnen.  
A sorowful thyng wel semed she,  
Nor she hadde nothyng slowe be  
For to forcracchen al hir face,  
And for to rent in many place  
Hir clothis, and for to tere hir swire,  
As she that was fulfilled of ire.  
And al totorn lay eek hir her  
Aboute hir shuldris here and ther,  
As she that hadde it al torent  
330 For angre and for maltalent.  
And eek I telle you certeynly  
How that she wep ful tendirly.

In world nys wight so hard of herte  
That hadde sen her sorowes smerte,  
That nolde have had of her pyte,  
So wo-begon a thyng was she.  
She al todassht herself for woo  
And smot togyder her hondes two.  
To sorowe was she ful ententyf,  
340 That woful recheles caytyf.  
Her roughthe lytel of playing  
Or of clypping or kissyng;  
For whoso sorouful is in herte,  
Him luste not to play ne sterte,  
Ne for to dauncen, ne to synge,  
Ne may his herte in temper bringe  
To make joye on even or morowe,  
For joy is contrarie unto sorowe.  
Elde was paynted after this,  
350 That shorter was a foot, iwys,  
Than she was wont in her yonghede.  
Unneth herself she mighte fede.  
So feble and eke so old was she  
That faded was al her beaute.  
Ful salowe was waxen her colour;  
Her heed, for hor, was whyt as flour.  
Iwys, great qualm ne were it non,  
Ne synne, although her lyf were gon.  
Al woxen was her body unwelde,  
360 And drie and dwyned al for elde.  
A foul, forwelked thyng was she,  
That whylom round and softe had be.  
Her eeres shoken faste withalle,  
As from her heed they wolde falle;  
Her face frounced and forpyned,  
And bothe her hondes lorne, fordwyned.  
So old she was that she ne wente  
A foot, but it were by potente.  
The tyme that passeth nyght and day,  
370 And resteles travayleth ay,  
And steleth from us so prively  
That to us semeth sykerly  
That it in oon poynt dwelleth ever  
And certes, it ne resteth never,

But goth so faste, and passeth ay,  
That ther nys man that thynke may  
What tyme that now present is  
(Asketh at these clerkes this),  
For [er] men thynke it, redily  
380 Thre tymes ben passed by  
The tyme, that may not sojourne,  
But goth and may never retourne,  
As watir that doun renneth ay,  
But never drope retourne may;  
Ther may nothing as tyme endure,  
Metall nor erthely creature,  
For alle thing it fret and shall;  
The tyme eke that chaungith all,  
And all doth waxe and fostred be,  
390 And alle thing distroieth he;  
The tyme that eldith our auncessours,  
And eldith kynges and emperours,  
And that us alle shal overcomen,  
Er that deth us shal have nomen;  
The tyme that hath al in welde  
To elden folk had maad hir elde  
So ynly that, to my witing,  
She myghte helpe hersilf nothing,  
But turned ageyn unto childhede.  
400 She had nothing hersilf to lede,  
Ne wit ne pithe in hir hold,  
More than a child of two yeer old.  
But natheles, I trowe that she  
Was fair sumtyme, and fresh to se,  
Whan she was in hir rightful age,  
But she was past al that passage,  
And was a doted thing bicomem.  
A furred cope on had she nomen;  
Wel had she clad hersilf and warm,  
410 For cold myght elles don hir harm.  
These olde folk have alwey cold;  
Her kynde is sich, whan they ben old.  
Another thing was don there write  
That semede lyk an ipocrite,  
And it was clepid Poope-Holy.  
That ilk is she that pryvely

Ne spareth never a wikked dede,  
Whan men of hir taken noon hede,  
And maketh hir outward precious,  
420 With pale visage and pitous,  
And semeth a simple creature;  
But ther nys no mysaventure  
That she ne thenkith in hir corage.  
Ful lyk to hir was that ymage,  
That makid was lyk hir semblaunce.  
She was ful symple of countenaunce,  
And she was clothed and eke shod  
As she were, for the love of God,  
Yolden to relygioun,  
430 Sich semede hir devocioun.  
A sauter held she fast in honde,  
And bisily she gan to fonde  
To make many a feynt praier  
To God and to his seyntis dere.  
Ne she was gay, ne fresh, ne jolyf,  
But semede to be ful ententyf  
To gode werkis and to faire,  
And therto she had on an haire.  
Ne, certis, she was fatt nothing,  
440 But semed wery for fasting;  
Of colour pale and deed was she.  
From hir the gate ay werned be  
Of paradys, that blisful place;  
For sich folk maketh lene her face,  
As Crist seith in his evangile,  
To gete hem prys in toun a while;  
And for a litel glorie veine  
They lesen God and his reigne.  
And alderlast of everychon  
450 Was peynted Povert al aloon,  
That not a peny hadde in wolde,  
All though she hir clothis solde,  
And though she shulde anhonged be,  
For nakid as a worm was she.  
And if the wedir stormy were,  
For cold she shulde have deyed there.  
She nadde on but a streit old sak,  
And many a clout on it ther stak:

This was hir cote and hir mantell.  
460 No more was there, never a dell,  
To clothe hir with, I undirtake;  
Gret leyser hadde she to quake.  
And she was putt, that I of talke,  
Fer fro these other, up in an halke.  
There lurked and there coured she,  
For pover thing, whereso it be,  
Is shamefast and dispised ay.  
Acursed may wel be that day  
That povere man conceyved is.  
470 For, God wot, al to selde, iwys,  
Is ony povere man wel fed,  
Or wel araied or [wel] cled,  
Or wel biloved, in sich wise  
In honour that he may arise.  
Alle these thingis, well avised,  
As I have you er this devysed,  
With gold and asure over all  
Depeynted were upon the wall.  
Square was the wall, and high sumdell;  
480 Enclosed and barred well,  
In stede of hegge, was that gardyn;  
Com nevere shepherde theryn.  
Into that gardyn, wel wrought,  
Whoso that me coude have brought,  
By laddre or elles by degre,  
It wolde wel have liked me.  
For sich solas, sich joie and play,  
I trowe that nevere man ne say,  
As was in that place delytous.  
490 The gardeyn was not daungerous  
To herberwe briddes many oon.  
So riche a yer[d] was never noon  
Of briddes song and braunches grene;  
Therynne were briddes mo, I wene,  
Than ben in all the rewme of Fraunce.  
Ful blisful was the accordaunce  
Of swete and pitous song thei made,  
For all this world it owghte glade.  
And I mysilf so mery ferde,  
500 Whan I her blisful songes herde,

That for an hundred pound nolde I  
(If that the passage openly  
Hadde be unto me free)  
That I nolde entren for to se  
Th' assemble God kepe it fro care!  
Of briddis whiche therynne ware,  
That songen thorough her mery throtes  
Daunces of love and mery notes.  
Whan I thus herde foules synge,  
510 I fel fast in a weymentynge  
By which art or by what engyn  
I myght come into that gardyn;  
But way I couth. fynde noon  
Into that gardyn for to goon.  
Ne nought wist I if that ther were  
Eyther hole or place [o-]where  
By which I myght have entre.  
Ne ther was noon to teche me,  
For I was al aloone, iwys,  
520 Ful wo and angwishus of this,  
Til atte last bithought I me  
That by no weye ne myght it be  
That ther nas laddre or wey to passe,  
Or hole, into so faire a place.  
Tho gan I go a full gret pas  
Envyronyng evene in compas  
The closing of the square wall,  
Tyl that I fond a wiket small  
So shett that I ne myght in gon,  
530 And other entre was ther noon.  
Uppon this dore I gan to smyte,  
That was fetys and so lite,  
For other wey coude I not seke.  
Ful long I shof, and knokkide eke,  
And stood ful long and of[t] herknyng,  
If that I herde ony wight comyng,  
Til that [the] dore of thilk entre  
A mayden curteys openyde me.  
Hir heer was as yelowre of hewe  
540 As ony basyn scoured newe,  
Hir flesh tendre as is a chike,  
With bente browis smothe and slyke.

And by mesure large were  
The openyng of hir yen clere,  
Hir nose of good proporcioun,  
Hir yen grey as is a faucoun,  
With swete breth and wel savoured,  
Hir face whit and wel coloured,  
With litel mouth and round to see.  
550 A clove chynne eke hadde she.  
Hir nekke was of good fasoun  
In lengthe and gretnesse, by resoun,  
Withoute bleyne, scabbe, or royne;  
Fro Jerusalem unto Burgoyne  
Ther nys a fairer nekke, iwys,  
To fele how smothe and softe it is.  
Hir throte, also whit of hewe  
As snowe on braunche snowed newe.  
Of body ful wel wrought was she;  
560 Men neded not in no cuntre  
A fairer body for to seke.  
And of fyn orfrays hadde she eke  
A chapelet so semly oon  
Ne werede never mayde upon  
And faire above that chapelet  
A rose gerland had she sett.  
She hadde [in honde] a gay mirrour,  
And with a riche gold tressour  
Hir heed was tressed queyntely,  
570 Hir sleeves sewid fetisly,  
And for to kepe hir hondis faire  
Of gloves white she had a paire.  
And she hadde on a cote of grene  
Of cloth of Gaunt. Withouten wene,  
Wel semyde by hir apparayle  
She was not wont to gret travayle,  
For whan she kempt was fetisly,  
And wel arayed and richely,  
Thanne had she don al hir journe,  
580 For merye and wel bigoon was she.  
She ladde a lusty lyf in May:  
She hadde no thought, by nyght ne day,  
Of nothyng, but if it were oonly  
To graythe hir wel and uncouthly.

Whan that this dore hadde opened me  
This may[de] semely for to see,  
I thanked hir as I best myghte,  
And axide hir how that she highte,  
And what she was I axide eke.  
590 And she to me was nought unmeke,  
Ne of hir answer daungerous,  
But faire answerde, and seide thus:  
"Lo, sir, my name is Ydelnesse;  
So clepe men me, more and lesse.  
Ful myghty and ful riche am I,  
And that of oon thyng namely,  
For I entende to nothyng  
But to my joye and my pleying,  
And for to kembe and tresse me.  
600 Aqueynted am I and pryve  
With Myrthe, lord of this gardyn,  
That fro the land of Alexandryn  
Made the trees hidre be fet  
That in this gardyn ben set.  
And whan the trees were woxen on highte,  
This wall, that stant heere in thi sighte,  
Dide Myrthe enclosen al aboute;  
And these ymages, al withoute,  
He dide hem bothe entaile and peynte,  
610 That neithir ben jolyf ne queynte,  
But they ben ful of sorowe and woo,  
As thou hast seen a while agoo.  
And ofte tyme, hym to solace,  
Sir Myrthe cometh into this place,  
And eke with hym cometh his meynee  
That lyven in lust and jolite.  
And now is Myrthe therynne to here  
The briddis how they syngen clere,  
The mavys and the nyghtyngale,  
620 And other joly briddis smale.  
And thus he walketh to solace  
Hym and his folk, for swetter place  
To pleyen ynne he may not fynde,  
Although he sought oon in-tyl Ynde.  
The alther-fairest folk to see  
That in this world may founde be



Hath Mirthe with hym in his route,  
That folowen hym always aboute."  
Whan Ydelnesse had told al this,  
630 And I hadde herkned wel, ywys,  
Thanne seide I to dame Ydelnesse,  
"Now, also wisly God me blesse,  
Sith Myrthe, that is so faire and fre,  
Is in this yerde with his meyne,  
Fro thilk assemble, if I may,  
Shal no man werne me to-day,  
That I this nyght ne mote it see.  
For wel wene I there with hym be  
A fair and joly companye  
640 Fulfilled of alle curtesie."  
And forth, withoute wordis mo,  
In at the wicket went I tho,  
That Ydelnesse hadde opened me,  
Into that gardyn fair to see.  
And whan I was inne, iwys,  
Myn herte was ful glad of this,  
For wel wende I ful sikerly  
Have ben in paradys erthly.  
So fair it was that, trusteth wel,  
650 It semede a place espirituel,  
For certys, as at my devys,  
Ther is no place in paradys  
So good inne for to dwelle or be  
As in that gardyn, thoughte me.  
For there was many a bridd syngyng,  
Thoroughout the yerd al thringyng;  
In many places were nyghtyngales,  
Alpes, fynches, and wodewales,  
That in her swete song deliten  
660 In thilke places as they habiten.  
There myghte men see many flokkes  
Of turtles and laverokkes.  
Chalaundres fele sawe I there,  
That wery, nygh forsongen were;  
And thrustles, terins, and mavys,  
That songen for to wynne hem prys,  
And eke to sormounte in her song  
That other briddes hem among.

By note made fair servyse  
670 These briddes, that I you devise;  
They songe her song as faire and wel  
As angels don espirituel.  
And trusteth wel, whan I hem herde,  
Ful lustily and wel I ferde,  
For never yitt sich melodye  
Was herd of man that myghte dye.  
Sich swete song was hem among  
That me thought it no briddis song,  
But it was wondir lyk to be  
680 Song of mermaydens of the see,  
That, for her syngyng is so clere,  
Though we mermaydens clepe hem here  
In English, as is oure usaunce,  
Men clepe hem sereyns in Fraunce.  
Ententif weren for to synge  
These briddis, that nought unkunynyge  
Were of her craft, and apprentys,  
But of song sotil and wys.  
And certis, whan I herde her song,  
690 And saw the grene place among,  
In herte I wex so wondir gay  
That I was never erst, er that day,  
So jolyf nor so wel bigoo,  
Ne merye in herte, as I was thoo.  
And than wist I and saw ful well  
That Ydelnesse me served well,  
That me putte in sich jolite.  
Hir freend wel ought I for to be,  
Sith she the dore of that gardyn  
700 Hadde opened and me leten in.  
From hennes forth hou that I wroughte,  
I shal you tellen, as me thoughte.  
First, whereof Myrthe served there,  
And eke what folk there with hym were,  
Withoute fable I wol discryve.  
And of that gardyn eke as blyve  
I wole you tellen aftir this  
The faire fasoun all, ywys,  
That wel wrought was for the nones.  
710 I may not telle you all at ones,

But, as I may and can, I shall  
By ordre tellen you it all.  
Ful fair servise and eke ful swete  
These briddis maden as they sete.  
Layes of love, ful wel sownyng,  
They songen in her jargonyng;  
Summe high and summe eke lowe songe  
Upon the braunches grene spronge.  
The swetnesse of her melodye  
720 Made al myn herte in reverye.  
And whan that I hadde herd, I trowe,  
These briddis syngyng on a rowe,  
Than myght I not withholde me  
That I ne wente inne for to see  
Sir Myrthe, for my desiryng  
Was hym to seen, over alle thyng,  
His countenaunce and his manere  
That sighte was to me ful dere.  
Tho wente I forth on my right hond  
730 Doun by a lytel path I fond  
Of mentes full, and fenell grene,  
And faste by, without wene,  
Sir Myrthe I fond, and right anoon  
Unto Sir Myrthe gan I goon,  
There as he was hym to solace.  
And with hym in that lusty place  
So fair folk and so fresh had he  
That whan I saw, I wondred me  
Fro whennes siche folk myght come,  
740 So faire they weren, alle and some;  
For they were lyk, as to my sighte,  
To angels that ben fethered brighte.  
This folk, of which I telle you soo,  
Upon a karole wenten thoo.  
A lady karolede hem that hyghte  
Gladnesse, [the] blissful and the lighte;  
Wel coude she synge and lustyly,  
Noon half so wel and semely,  
And make in song sich refreynnyng:  
750 It sat hir wondir wel to synge.  
Hir vois ful clere was and ful swete.  
She was nought rude ne unmete

But couth. ynow of sich doying  
As longeth unto karolyng,  
For she was wont in every place  
To syngen first, folk to solace.  
For syngyng moost she gaf hir to;  
No craft had she so leef to do.  
Tho myghtist thou karoles sen,  
760 And folk daunce and mery ben,  
And made many a fair tournyng  
Upon the grene gras springyng.  
There myghtist thou see these flowtours,  
Mynstrales, and eke jogelours,  
That wel to synge dide her peyne.  
Somme songe songes of Loreyne,  
For in Loreyn her notes bee  
Full swetter than in this contre.  
There was many a tymbestere,  
770 And sailouris, that I dar wel swere  
Couth. her craft ful parfitly.  
The tymbres up ful sotilly  
They caste and hente full ofte  
Upon a fynger fair and softe,  
That they failide never mo.  
Ful fetys damyseles two,  
Ryght yonge and full of semelyhede,  
In kirtles and noon other wede,  
And faire tressed every tresse,  
780 Hadde Myrthe doon, for his noblesse,  
Amydde the karole for to daunce;  
But herof lieth no remembraunce,  
Hou that they daunced queyntely.  
That oon wolde come all pryvyly  
Agayn that other, and whan they were  
Togidre almost, they threwe yfere  
Her mouthis so that thorough her play  
It semed as they kiste alway  
To dauncen well koude they the gise.  
790 What shulde I more to you devyse?  
Ne bede I never thennes go,  
Whiles that I saw hem daunce so.  
Upon the karoll wonder faste  
I gan biholde, til atte laste

A lady gan me for to espie,  
And she was cleped Curtesie,  
The worshipfull, the debonaire  
I pray to God evere falle hir faire!  
Ful curteisly she called me:  
800 "What do ye there, beau ser?" quod she,  
"Come and, if it lyke you  
To dauncen, dauncith with us now."  
And I, withoute tariyng,  
Wente into the karolyng.  
I was abasshed never a dell,  
But it to me liked right well  
That Curtesie me cleped so  
And bad me on the daunce go.  
For if I hadde durst, certeyn  
810 I wolde have karoled right fayn,  
As man that was to daunce right blithe.  
Thanne gan I loken ofte sithe  
The shap, the bodies, and the cheres,  
The countenaunce and the maneres  
Of all the folk that daunced there,  
And I shal telle what they were.  
Ful fair was Myrthe, ful long and high;  
A fairer man I nevere sigh.  
As round as appil was his face,  
820 Ful rody and whit in every place.  
Fetys he was and wel beseye,  
With metely mouth and yen greye;  
His nose by mesure wrought ful right;  
Crisp was his heer, and eek ful bright;  
His shuldris of a large brede,  
And smalish in the girdilstede.  
He semed lyk a portreiture,  
So noble he was of his stature,  
So fair, so joly, and so fetys,  
830 With lymes wrought at poynt devys,  
Delyver, smert, and of gret myght;  
Ne sawe thou nevere man so lyght.  
Of berd unnethe hadde he nothyng,  
For it was in the firste spryng.  
Ful yong he was, and mery of thought,  
And in samet, with briddis wrought,

And with gold beten ful fetysly,  
His body was clad ful richely.  
Wrought was his robe in straunge gise,  
840 And al toslytered for queyntise  
In many a place, lowe and hie.  
And shod he was with gret maistrie,  
With shoon decoped, and with laas.  
By druery and by solas  
His leef a rosyn chapelet  
Hadde mad, and on his heed it set.  
And wite ye who was his leef?  
Dame Gladnesse there was hym so leef,  
That syngith so wel with glad courage,  
850 That from she was twelve yeer of age  
She of hir love graunt hym made.  
Sir Mirthe hir by the fynger hadde  
Daunsyng, and she hym also;  
Gret love was atwixe hem two.  
Bothe were they faire and bright of hewe.  
She semed lyk a rose newe  
Of colour, and hir flesh so tendre  
That with a brere smale and slendre  
Men myght it cleve, I dar wel seyn.  
860 Hir forheed, frounceles al pleyn;  
Bente were hir browis two,  
Hir yen greye and glad also,  
That laugheden ay in hir semblaunt  
First or the mouth, by covenaut.  
I not what of hir nose descryve,  
So fair hath no womman alyve.  
Hir heer was yelow and clere shynyng;  
I wot no lady so likyng.  
Of orfrays fresh was hir gerland;  
870 I, which seyen have a thousand,  
Saugh never, ywys, no gerlond yitt  
So wel wrought of silk as it.  
And in an overgilt samit  
Clad she was, by gret delit,  
Of which hir leef a robe werde  
The myrier she in hir herte ferde.  
And next hir wente, on hir other side,  
The God of Love that can devyde

Love, and as hym likith it be.  
880 But he can cherles daunten, he,  
And maken folkis pride fallen;  
And he can wel these lordis thrallen,  
And ladyes putt at lowe degre,  
Whan he may hem to p[r]oude see.  
This God of Love of his fasoun  
Was lyk no knave ne quystroun;  
His beaute gretly was to pryse.  
But of his robe to devise  
I drede encombred for to be;  
890 For nought clad in silk was he,  
But all in floures and in flourettes,  
And with losenges and scochouns,  
With briddes, lybardes, and lyouns,  
And other beestis wrought ful well.  
His garnement was everydell  
Portreied and wrought with floures,  
By dyvers medlyng of coloures.  
Floures there were of many gise  
900 Sett by compas in assise.  
Ther lakkide no flour, to my dom,  
Ne nought so mych as flour of brom,  
Ne violete, ne eke pervynke,  
Ne flour noon that man can on thynke;  
And many a rose-leef ful long  
Was entermedled theramong.  
And also on his heed was set  
Of roses reed a chapelett,  
But nyghtyngales, a ful gret route,  
910 That flyen over his heed aboute,  
The leeves felden as they flyen.  
And he was all with briddes wryen,  
With popynjay, with nyghtyngale,  
With chalaundre, and with wodewale,  
With fynch, with lark, and with archaungell.  
He semede as he were an aungell  
That doun were comen fro hevene cler.  
Love hadde with hym a bachelor  
That he made alweyes with hym be;  
920 Swete-Lokyng cleped was he.  
This bachelor stod biholdyng

The daunce, and in his hond holdyng  
Turke bowes two had he.  
That oon of hem was of a tree  
That bereth a fruyt of savour wykke;  
Ful crokid was that foule stikke,  
And knotty here and there also,  
And blak as bery or ony slo.  
That other bowe was of a plante  
930 Withoute wem, I dar warante,  
Ful evene and by proporcioun  
Treitys and long, of ful good fasoun.  
And it was peynted wel and thwyten,  
And overal diapred and writen  
With ladyes and with bacheleris,  
Ful lyghtsom and glad of cheris.  
These bowes two held Swete-Lokyng,  
That semede lyk no gadelyng.  
And ten brode arowis hild he there,  
940 Of which fyve in his right hond were.  
But they were shaven wel and dight,  
Nokked and fethered right,  
And all they were with gold bygoon,  
And stronge poynted everychoon,  
And sharpe for to kerven well.  
But iren was ther noon ne steell,  
For al was gold, men myght it see,  
Out-take the fetheres and the tree.  
The swiftest of these arowis fyve  
950 Out of a bowe for to dryve,  
And best fethered for to flee,  
And fairest eke, was clepid Beaute.  
That other arowe, that hurteth lesse,  
Was clepid, as I trowe, Symplesse.  
The thridde cleped was Fraunchise,  
That fethred was in noble wise  
With valour and with curtesye.  
The fourthe was cleped Compaignye,  
That hevy for to sheten ys.  
960 But whoso shetith right, ywys,  
May therwith doon gret harm and wo.  
The fifte of these and laste also,  
Faire-Semblaunt men that arowe calle,



The leeste grevous of hem alle,  
Yit can it make a ful gret wounde.  
But he may hope his soris sounde,  
That hurt is with that arowe, ywys.  
His wo the bet bistowed is,  
For he may sonner have gladnesse  
970 His langour oughte be the lesse.  
Five arowis were of other gise,  
That ben ful foule to devyse,  
For shaft and ende, soth for to telle,  
Were also blak as fend in helle.  
The first of hem is called Pride.  
That other arowe next hym biside,  
It was cleped Vylanye;  
That arowe was al with felonye  
Envenymed, and with spitous blame.  
980 The thridde of hem was cleped Shame.  
The fourthe Wanhope cleped is.  
The fifte, the Newe-Thought, ywys.  
These arowis that I speke of heere  
Were alle fyve on oon maneere,  
And alle were they resemblable.  
To hem was wel sitting and able  
The foule croked bowe hidous,  
That knotty was and al roynous.  
That bowe semede wel to shete  
990 These arowis fyve that ben unmete  
And contrarye to that other fyve.  
But though I telle not as blyve  
Of her power ne of her myght,  
Herafter shal I tellen right  
The soothe and eke signyfiaunce,  
As fer as I have remembraunce.  
All shal be seid, I undirtake,  
Er of this book an ende I make.  
Now come I to my tale ageyn.  
1000 But aldirfirst I wol you seyn  
The fasoun and the countenaunces  
Of all the folk that on the daunce is.  
The God of Love, jolyf and lyght,  
Ladde on his hond a lady bright,  
Of high prys and of gret degre.

This lady called was Beaute,  
As an arowe, of which I tolde.  
Ful wel thewed was she holde,  
Ne she was derk ne broun, but bright,  
1010 And clere as the mone lyght  
Ageyn whom all the sterres semen  
But smale candels, as we demen.  
Hir flesh was tendre as dew of flour,  
Hir chere was symple as byrde in bour,  
As whyt as lylle or rose in rys,  
Hir face, gentyl and tretys.  
Fetys she was, and smal to se;  
No wyndred browis hadde she,  
Ne popped hir, for it neded nought  
1020 To wyndre hir or to peynte hir ought.  
Hir tresses yelow and longe straughten,  
Unto hir helys down they raughten.  
Hir nose, hir mouth, and eye, and cheke  
Wel wrought, and all the remenaunt eke.  
A ful gret savour and a swote  
Me toucheth in myn herte rote,  
As helpe me God, whan I remembre  
Of the fasoun of every membre.  
In world is noon so fair a wight,  
1030 For yong she was, and hewed bright,  
Sore plesaunt, and fetys withall,  
Gente, and in hir myddill small.  
Biside Beaute yede Richesse,  
An high lady of gret noblesse,  
And gret of prys in every place.  
But whoso durste to hir trespase,  
Or til hir folk, in word or dede,  
He were full hardy, out of drede,  
For bothe she helpe and hyndre may.  
1040 And that is nought of yisterday  
That riche folk have full gret myght  
To helpe and eke to greve a wyght.  
The beste and the grettest of valour  
Diden Rychesse ful gret honour,  
And besy weren hir to serve,  
For that they wolde hir love deserve:  
They cleped hir lady, gret and small.

This wide world hir dredith all;  
This world is all in hir daunger.  
1050 Hir court hath many a losenger,  
And many a traytour envyous,  
That ben ful besy and curyous  
For to dispreisen and to blame  
That best deserven love and name.  
Bifore the folk, hem to bigilen,  
These losengeris hem preyse and smylen,  
And thus the world with word anynten;  
And aftirward they prikke and poynten  
The folk right to the bare boon,  
1060 Bihynde her bak whan they ben goon,  
And foule abate the folkis prys.  
Ful many a worthy man and wys,  
An hundred, have [they] do to dye.  
These losengers thorough flaterye  
Have made folk ful straunge be,  
There hem oughte be pryve.  
Wel yvel mote they thryve and thee,  
And yvel aryved mote they be,  
These losengers, ful of envye!  
1070 No good man loveth her companye.  
Richesse a robe of purpur on hadde  
Ne trowe not that I lye or madde,  
For in this world is noon it lyche,  
Ne by a thousand deell so riche,  
Ne noon so fair; for it ful well  
With orfrays leyde was everydeell,  
And portraied in the ribanynges  
Of dukes storyes, and of kynges,  
And with a bend of gold tasseled,  
1080 And knoppis fyne of gold ameled.  
Aboute hir nekke of gentyl entayle  
Was shet the riche chevesaile,  
In which ther was full gret plente  
Of stones clere and bright to see.  
Rychesse a girdell hadde upon,  
The bokel of it was of a stoon  
Of vertu gret and mochel of myght,  
For whoso bar the stoon so bright,  
Of venym durst hym nothing doute,

1090 While he the stoon hadde hym aboute.

That stoon was gretly for to love,  
And tyl a riche mannes byhove  
Worth all the gold in Rome and Frise.  
The mourdaunt wrought in noble wise  
Was of a stoon full precious,  
That was so fyn and vertuous  
That hol a man it koude make  
Of palasie and toth-ake.

And yit the stoon hadde such a grace

1100 That he was siker in every place,

All thilke day, not blynd to ben,  
That fastyng myghte that stoon seen.

The barres were of gold ful fyn  
Upon a tyssu of satyn,  
Full hevy, gret, and nothyng lyght;  
In everich was a besaunt-wight.

Upon the tresses of Richesse  
Was sette a cercle, for noblesse,  
Of brend gold that full lyghte shoon;

1110 So fair, trowe I, was never noon.

But he were kunnyng, for the nonys,  
That koude devyse all the stonys  
That in that cercle shewen clere.

It is a wondir thing to here,  
For no man koude preyse or gesse  
Of hem the valewe or richesse.

Rubyes there were, sapphires, jagounces,  
And emeraudes, more than two ounces,  
But all byfore, ful sotilly,

1120 A fyn charboncle set saugh I.

The stoon so clere was and so bright  
That, also soone as it was nyght,  
Men myghte seen to go, for nede,  
A myle or two in lengthe and brede.

Sich lyght sprang out of the ston  
That Richesse wondir brighte shon,  
Bothe hir heed and all hir face,  
And eke aboute hir al the place.

Dame Richesse on hir hond gan lede

1130 A yong man ful of semelyhede,

That she best loved of any thing.

His lust was mych in housholding.  
In clothyng was he ful fetys,  
And loved well to have hors of prys.  
He wende to have reprovéd be  
Of theft or moordre if that he  
Hadde in his stable ony hakeney.  
And therefore he desired ay  
To be aqueynted with Richesse,  
1140 For all his purpos, as I gesse,  
Was forto make gret dispense,  
Withoute wernyng or diffense.  
And Richesse myght it wel sustene,  
And hir dispence well mayntene,  
And hym alwey sich plente sende  
Of gold and silver for to spende  
Withoute lakking or daunger,  
As it were poured in a garner.  
And after on the daunce wente  
1150 Largesse, that settith al hir entente  
For to be honourable and free.  
Of Alexandres kyn was she.  
Hir most joye was, ywys,  
Whan that she yaf and seide, "Have this."  
Not Avarice, the foule caytyf,  
Was half to gripe so ententyf,  
As Largesse is to yeve and spende;  
And God ynough alwey hir sende,  
So that the more she yaf away  
1160 The more, ywys, she hadde alwey.  
Gret loos hath Largesse and gret pris,  
For bothe [wys] folk and unwys  
Were hooly to hir baundon brought,  
So wel with yiftes hath she wrought.  
And if she hadde an enemy,  
I trowe that she coude tristily  
Make hym full soone hir freend to be,  
So large of yift and free was she.  
Therefore she stod in love and grace  
1170 Of riche and pover in every place.  
A full gret fool is he, ywys,  
That bothe riche and nygard is.  
A lord may have no maner vice

That greveth more than avarice,  
For nygart never with strengthe of hond  
May wynne gret lordship or lond,  
For freendis all to fewe hath he  
To doon his will perfourmed be.  
And whoso wole have freendis heere,  
1180 He may not holde his tresour deere.  
For by ensample I telle this:  
Right as an adamaunt, iwys,  
Can drawen to hym sotyly  
The iren that is leid therby,  
So drawith folkes hertis, ywis,  
Silver and gold that yeven is.  
Largesse hadde on a robe fresh  
Of riche purpur Sarsynesh.  
Wel fourmed was hir face and cleer,  
1190 And opened hadde she hir coler,  
For she right there hadde in present  
Unto a lady maad present  
Of a gold broche, ful wel wrought.  
And certys, it myssat hir nought,  
For thorough hir smokke, wrought with silk,  
The flesh was seen as whit as mylk.  
Largesse, that worthy was and wys,  
Hild by the hond a knyght of prys,  
Was sib to Artour of Britaigne,  
1200 And that was he that bar the ensaigne  
Of worship and the gounfanoun.  
And yit he is of sich renoun  
That men of hym seye faire thynges  
Byfore barouns, erles, and kynges.  
This knyght was comen all newly  
Fro tourneyng faste by;  
There hadde he don gret chyvalrie  
Thorough his vertu and his maistrie;  
And for the love of his lemman  
1210 He caste doun many a doughty man.  
And next hym daunced dame Fraunchise,  
Arayed in full noble gyse.  
She was not broun ne dun of hewe,  
But whit as snow fallen newe.  
Hir nose was wrought at poynt devys,

For it was gentyl and tretys,  
With eyen gladde, and browes bente.  
Hir heer down to hir helis wente,  
And she was symple as dowve on tree.  
1220 Ful debonaire of herte was she.  
She durst never seyn ne do  
But that that hir longed to;  
And if a man were in distresse,  
And for hir love in hevynesse,  
Hir herte wolde have full gret pite,  
She was so amiable and free.  
For were a man for hir bistad,  
She wolde ben right sore adrad  
That she dide over-gret outrage,  
1230 But she hym holpe his harm to aswage;  
Hir thought it elles a vylanye.  
And she hadde on a sukkenye,  
That not of hempene heerdys was  
So fair was noon in all Arras.  
Lord, it was ridled fetysly!  
Ther nas [nat] a poynt, trewely,  
That it nas in his right assise.  
Full wel clothed was Fraunchise,  
For ther is no cloth sittith bet  
1240 On damysell than doth roket.  
A womman wel more fetys is  
In roket than in cote, ywis.  
The whyte roket, rydled faire,  
Bitokeneth that full debonaire  
And swete was she that it ber.  
Bi hir daunced a bachelor.  
I can not telle you what he highte,  
But faire he was and of good highte,  
All hadde he be, I sey no more,  
1250 The lordis sone of Wyndesore.  
And next that daunced Curtesye,  
That preised was of lowe and hye,  
For neither proud ne fool was she.  
She for to daunce called me  
(I pray God yeve hir right good grace!),  
Whanne I com first into the place.  
She was not nyce ne outrageous,

But wys and war and vertuous,  
Of fair speche and of fair answer.  
1260 Was never wight mysseid of here;  
She bar rancour to no wight.  
Clere broun she was, and therto bright  
Of face, of body avenaunt  
I wot no lady so plesaunt.  
She [were] worthy for to bene  
An emperesse or crowned quene.  
And by hir wente a knyght dauncyng,  
That worthy was and wel spekyng,  
And ful wel koude he don honour.  
1270 The knyght was fair and styf in stour,  
And in armure a semely man,  
And wel biloved of his lemman.  
Faire Idilnesse thanne saugh I,  
That alwey was me faste by.  
Of hir have I, withoute fayle,  
Told yow the shap and apparayle;  
For (as I seide) loo, that was she  
That dide to me so gret bounte  
That she the gate of the gardyn  
1280 Undide and let me passen in.  
And after daunced, as I gesse,  
[Youthe], fulfilled of lustynesse,  
That nas not yit twelve yeer of age,  
With herte wylde and thought volage.  
Nyce she was, but she ne mente  
Noon harm ne slight in hir entente,  
But oonly lust and jolyte;  
For yonge folk, wel witen ye,  
Have lytel thought but on her play.  
1290 Hir lemman was biside alway  
In sich a gise that he hir kyste  
At alle tymes that hym lyste,  
That all the daunce myght it see.  
They make no force of pryvete,  
For who spake of hem yvel or well,  
They were ashamed never a dell,  
But men myght seen hem kisse there  
As it two yonge dowves were.  
For yong was thilke bachelor;



1300 Of beaute wot I noon his per.  
And he was right of sich an age  
As Youthe his leef, and sich corage.  
The lusty folk thus daunced there,  
And also other that with hem were,  
That weren alle of her meyne;  
Ful hende folk and wys and free,  
And folk of faire port, truely,  
There weren alle comunly.  
Whanne I hadde seen the countenaunces  
1310 Of hem that ladden thus these daunces,  
Thanne hadde I will to gon and see  
The gardyn that so lyked me,  
And loken on these faire loreres,  
On pyntrees, cedres, and oliveris.  
The daunces thanne eended were,  
For many of them that daunced there  
Were with her loves went away  
Undir the trees to have her pley.  
A, Lord, they lyved lustyly!  
1320 A gret fool were he, sikirly,  
That nolde, his thanks, such lyf lede!  
For this dar I seyn, oute of drede,  
That whoso myghte so wel fare,  
For better lyf durst hym not care;  
For ther nys so good paradys  
As to have a love at his devys.  
Oute of that place wente I thoo,  
And in that gardyn gan I goo,  
Pleyyng along full meryly.  
1330 The God of Love full hastely  
Unto hym Swete-Lokyng clepte;  
No lenger wolde he that he kepte  
His bowe of gold, that shoon so bright.  
He bad hym bende [it] anon ryght,  
And he full soone [it] sette an-ende,  
And at a braid he gan it bende,  
And tok hym of his arowes fyve,  
Full sharp and redy for to dryve.  
Now God, that sittith in mageste,  
1340 Fro deedly woundes he kepe me,  
If so be that he hadde me shette!

For if I with his arowe mette,  
It hadde me greved sore, iwys.  
But I, that nothyng wist of this,  
Wente up and doun full many a wey,  
And he me folwed fast alwey,  
But nowhere wold I reste me,  
Till I hadde in all the gardyn be.  
The gardyn was, by mesuryng,  
1350 Right evene and square in compassing:  
It as long was as it was large.  
Of fruyt hadde every tree his charge,  
But it were any hidous tree,  
Of which ther were two or three.  
There were, and that wot I full well,  
Of pome-garnettys a full gret dell;  
That is a fruyt full well to lyke,  
Namely to folk whanne they ben sike.  
And trees there were, gret foisoun,  
1360 That baren notes in her sesoun,  
Such as men notemygges calle,  
That swote of savour ben withalle.  
And alemandres gret plente,  
Fyges, and many a date-tree  
There wexen, if men hadde nede,  
Thorough the gardyn in length and brede.  
Ther was eke wexyng many a spice,  
As clowe-gelofre and lycorice,  
Gyngevre and greyn de parys,  
1370 Canell and setewale of prys,  
And many a spice delitable  
To eten whan men rise fro table.  
And many homly trees ther were  
That peches, coynes, and apples beere,  
Medlers, plowmes, perys, chesteynes,  
Cherys, of which many oon fayn is,  
Notes, aleys, and bolas,  
That for to seen it was solas.  
With many high lorer and pyn  
1380 Was renged clene all that gardyn,  
With cipres and with olyveres,  
Of which that nygh no plente heere is.  
There were elmes grete and stronge,

Maples, asshe, ok, asp, planes longe,  
Fyn ew, popler, and lyndes faire,  
And othere trees full many a payre.  
What shulde I tel you more of it?  
There were so many trees yit,  
That I shulde al encombred be  
1390 Er I had rekened every tree.  
These trees were set, that I devyse,  
Oon from another, in assyse,  
Fyve fadome or sixe, I trowe so;  
But they were hye and great also,  
And for to kepe out wel the sonne,  
The croppes were so thicke ronne,  
And every braunche in other knet  
And ful of grene leves set,  
That sonne myght there non discende,  
1400 Lest [it] the tender grasses shende.  
There myght men does and roes se,  
And of squyrels ful great plente  
From bowe to bowe alway lepyng.  
Conies there were also playinge,  
That comyn out of her clapers,  
Of sondrie colours and maners,  
And maden many a tourneying  
Upon the fresshe grass spryngyng.  
In places saw I welles there,  
1410 In whiche there no frogges were,  
And fayr in shadowe was every welle.  
But I ne can the nombre telle  
Of stremys smal that by devys  
Myrthe had don come through condys,  
Of whiche the water in rennyng  
Gan make a noyse ful lykyng.  
About the brinkes of these welles,  
And by the stremes overal elles,  
Sprang up the grass, as thicke set  
1420 And softe as any veluet,  
On which men myght his lemman leye  
As on a fetherbed to pleye,  
For the erthe was ful softe and swete.  
Through moisture of the welle wete  
Sprong up the sote grene gras

As fayre, as thicke, as myster was.  
But moche amended it the place  
That th' erthe was of such a grace  
That it of floures hath plente,  
1430 That bothe in somer and wynter be.  
There sprang the vyolet al newe,  
And fressh pervynke, riche of hewe,  
And floures yelow, white, and rede  
Such plente grew there never in mede.  
Ful gay was al the ground, and queynt,  
And poudred, as men had it peynt,  
With many a fressh and sondri flour,  
That casten up ful good savour.  
I wol nat longe holde you in fable  
1440 Of al this garden dilectable.  
I mot my tonge stynten nede,  
For I ne may, withouten drede,  
Naught tellen you the beaute al,  
Ne half the bounte therewithal.  
I went on right hond and on left  
About the place; it was nat left,  
Tyl I had [in] al the garden ben,  
In the estres that men myghte sen.  
And thus while I wente in my play,  
1450 The God of Love me folowed ay,  
Right as an hunter can abyde  
The beest, tyl he seeth his tyde  
To sheten at good mes to the der,  
Whan that hym nedeth go no ner.  
And so befyl, I rested me  
Besydes a wel, under a tree,  
Which tree in Fraunce men cal a pyn.  
But sithe the tyme of Kyng Pepyn,  
Ne grew there tree in mannes syghte  
1460 So fayr, ne so wel woxe in highte  
In al that yard so high was non.  
And springyng in a marble ston  
Had Nature set, the sothe to telle,  
Under that pyn-tree a welle.  
And on the border, al withoute,  
Was written in the ston aboute,  
Letters smal that sayden thus,

"Here starf the fayre Narcisus."

Narcisus was a bachelor

1470 That Love had caught in his danger,

And in his net gan hym so strayne,

And dyd him so to wepe and playne,

That nede him must his lyf forgo.

For a fayr lady that hight Echo

Him loved over any creature,

And gan for hym such payne endure

That on a tyme she him tolde

That if he her loven nolde,

That her behoved nedes dye;

1480 There laye non other remedye.

But natheles for his beaute

So feirs and daungerous was he

That he nolde graunten hir askyng,

For wepyng ne for fair praiyng.

And whanne she herde hym werne [her] soo,

She hadde in herte so gret woo,

And took it in so gret dispit,

That she, withoute more respit,

Was deed anoon. But er she deide,

1490 Full pitously to God she preide

That proude-hertid Narcisus,

That was in love so daungerous,

Myght on a day ben hampred so

For love, and ben so hoot for woo,

That never he myght to joye atteyne,

And that he shulde feele in every veyne

What sorowe trewe lovers maken,

That ben so vilaynsly forsaken.

This prayer was but resonable;

1500 Therfore God held it ferme and stable.

For Narcisus, shortly to telle,

By aventure com to that welle

To reste hym in that shadowing

A day whanne he com fro huntynge.

This Narcisus hadde suffred paynes

For rennyng alday in the playnes,

And was for thirst in gret distresse

Of heet and of his werynesse

That hadde his breth almost bynomen.

1510 Whanne he was to that welle comen,  
That shadowid was with braunches grene,  
He thoughte of thilke water shene  
To drynke, and fresshe hym wel withalle.  
And doun on knees he gan to falle,  
And forth his heed and necke he straughte  
To drynken of that welle a draughte.  
And in the water anoon was seene  
His nose, his mouth, his yen sheene,  
And he therof was all abasshed.  
1520 His owne shadowe had hym bytrasshed,  
For well wende he the forme see  
Of a child of gret beaute.  
Well kouth. Love hym wreke thoo  
Of daunger and of pride also,  
That Narcisus somtyme hym beer.  
He quytte hym well his guerdoun ther,  
For he musede so in the welle  
That, shortly all the sothe to telle,  
He lovede his owne shadowe soo  
1530 That atte laste he starf for woo.  
For whanne he saugh that he his wille  
Myght in no maner wey fulfille,  
And that he was so faste caught  
That he hym kouth. comfort nought,  
He loste his wit right in that place,  
And diede withynne a lytel space.  
And thus his warisoun he took  
For the lady that he forsook.  
Ladies, I preye ensample takith,  
1540 Ye that ageyns youre love mistakith,  
For if her deth be yow to wite,  
God kan ful well youre while quyte.  
Whanne that this lettre of which I telle  
Hadde taught me that it was the welle  
Of Narcisus in his beaute,  
I gan anoon withdrawe me,  
Whanne it fel in my remembraunce  
That hym bitidde such myschaunce.  
But at the laste thanne thought I  
1550 That scatheles, full sykerly,  
I myght unto the welle goo.

Wherof shulde I abasshen soo?  
And doun I loutede for to see  
The clere water in the stoon,  
And eke the gravell, which that shoon  
Down in the botme as silver fyn,  
For of the well this is the fyn:  
In world is noon so cler of hewe.  
1560 The water is evere fresh and newe,  
That welmeth up with wawis brighte  
The mountance of two fynger highte.  
Abouten it is gras spryngyng,  
For moiste so thikke and wel likyng  
That it ne may in wynter dye  
No more than may the see be drye.  
Down at the botme set saw I  
Two cristall stonys craftely  
In thilke freshe and faire welle.  
1570 But o thing sothly dar I telle,  
That ye wole holde a gret mervayle  
Whanne it is told, withouten fayle.  
For whanne the sonne, cler in sighte,  
Cast in that well his bemys brighte,  
And that the heete descendid is,  
Thanne taketh the cristall stoon, ywis,  
Agayn the sonne an hundrid hewis,  
Blew, yelow, and red, that fresh and newe is.  
Yitt hath the merveilous cristall  
1580 Such strengthe that the place overall,  
Bothe flour and tree and leves grene  
And all the yerd in it is seene.  
And for to don you to undirstonde,  
To make ensample wole I fonde.  
Ryght as a myrrour openly  
Shewith all thing that stondith therby,  
As well the colour as the figure,  
Withouten ony coverture,  
Right so the cristall stoon shynyng  
1590 Withouten ony disseyvyng  
The estrees of the yerd accusith  
To hym that in the water musith.  
For evere, in which half that he be,  
He may well half the gardyn se,

And if he turne, he may right well  
Sen the remenaunt everydell.  
For ther is noon so litil thyng  
So hid, ne closid with shittying,  
That it ne is sene, as though it were  
1600 Peyntid in the cristall there.  
This is the mirrour perilous  
In which the proude Narcisus  
Saw all his face fair and bright,  
That made hym sithe to ligge upright.  
For whoso loketh in that mirrour,  
Ther may nothyng ben his socour  
That he ne shall there sen somthyng  
That shal hym lede into lovyng.  
Full many worthy man hath it  
1610 Blent, for folk of grettist wit  
Ben soone caught heere and awayted;  
Withouten respit ben they baited.  
Heere comth to folk of newe rage;  
Heere chaungith many wight corage;  
Heere lith no red ne wit therto;  
For Venus sone, daun Cupido,  
Hath sowen there of love the seed,  
That help ne lith there noon, ne red,  
So cerclith it the welle aboute.  
1620 His gynnes hath he sette withoute,  
Ryght for to cacche in his panter  
These damoyseles and bachelers.  
Love will noon other bridde[s] cacche,  
Though he sette either net or lacche.  
And for the seed that heere was sowen,  
This welle is clepid, as well is knowen,  
The Welle of Love, of verray right,  
Of which ther hath ful many a wight  
Spoken in bookis dyversely.  
1630 But they shull never so verily  
Descripcioun of the welle heere,  
Ne eke the sothe of this matere,  
As ye shull, whanne I have undo  
The craft that hir bilongith too.  
Allway me liked for to dwelle  
To sen the cristall in the welle



That shewide me full openly  
A thousand thinges faste by.  
But I may say, in sory houre  
1640 Stode I to loken or to poure,  
For sithen [have] I sore siked.  
That mirrour hath me now entriked,  
But hadde I first knowen in my wit  
The vertu and [the] strengthe of it,  
I nolde not have mused there.  
Me hadde bet ben elliswhere,  
For in the snare I fell anoon  
That hath bitrasshed many oon.  
In thilke mirrour saw I tho,  
1650 Among a thousand thinges mo,  
A roser chargid full of rosis,  
That with an hegge aboute enclos is.  
Tho had I sich lust and envie,  
That for Parys ne for Pavie  
Nolde I have left to goon and see  
There grettist hep of roses be.  
Whanne I was with this rage hent,  
That caught hath many a man and shent,  
Toward the roser gan I go;  
1660 And whanne I was not fer therfro,  
The savour of the roses swote  
Me smot right to the herte-rote,  
As I hadde all enbawmed be.  
And if I ne hadde endouted me  
To have ben hatid or assailed,  
My thankis, wolde I not have failed  
To pulle a rose of all that route  
To beren in myn hond aboute  
And smellen to it where I wente;  
1670 But ever I dredde me to repente,  
And lest it grevede or forthoughte  
The lord that thilke gardyn wroughte.  
Of roses ther were gret wone,  
So faire waxe never in rone.  
Of knoppes clos some sawe I there;  
And some wel beter woxen were;  
And some ther ben of other moysoun  
That drowe nygh to her sesoun

And spedde hem faste for to sprede.  
1680 I love well sich roses rede,  
For brode roses and open also  
Ben passed in a day or two,  
But knoppes wille [al] freshe be  
Two dayes, atte leest, or thre.  
The knoppes gretly liked me,  
For fairer may ther no man se.  
Whoso myght have oon of alle,  
It ought hym ben full lief withalle.  
Might I [a] gerlond of hem geten,  
1690 For no richesse I wolde it leten.  
Among the knoppes I ches oon  
So fair that of the remenaunt noon  
Ne preise I half so well as it,  
Whanne I avise it in my wit.  
For it so well was enlumyned  
With colour reed, [and] as well fyned  
As nature couth. it make faire.  
And it hath leves wel foure paire,  
That Kynde hath sett, thorough his knowyng,  
1700 Aboute the rede roses spryngyng.  
The stalke was as rishe right,  
And theron stod the knoppe upright  
That it ne bowide upon no side.  
The swote smelle sprong so wide  
That it dide all the place aboute



**FRAGMENT B**

Whanne I hadde smelled the savour swote,  
No will hadde I fro thens yit goo,  
Bot somdell neer it wente I thoo,  
To take it, but myn hond, for drede,  
1710 Ne dorste I to the Rose bede  
For thesteles sharpe, of many maneres,  
Netles, thornes, and hokede breres,  
For mych they distourbled me,  
For sore I dradde to harmed be.  
The God of Love, with bowe bent,  
That all day set hadde his talent  
To pursuen and to spien me,  
Was stondyng by a fige-tree.  
And whanne he saw hou that I  
1720 Hadde chosen so ententifly  
The botoun, more unto my pay  
Than ony other that I say,  
He tok an arowe full sharply whet,  
And in his bowe whanne it was set,  
He streight up to his ere drough  
The stronge bowe that was so tough,  
And shet att me so wondir smerte  
That thorough myn ye unto myn herte  
The takel smot, and depe it wente.  
1730 And therwithall such cold me hente  
That under clothes warme and softe  
Sithen that day I have chevered ofte.  
Whanne I was hurt thus, in [a] stounde  
I felle down plat unto the grounde.  
Myn herte failed and feynted ay,  
And longe tyme a-swoone I lay.  
But whanne I come out of swonyng,  
And hadde witt and my felyng,  
I was all maat, and wende full well  
1740 Of blood have loren a full gret dell.  
But certes, the arowe that in me stod  
Of me ne drew no drope of blod,  
For-why I found my wounde all dreie.  
Thanne tok I with myn hondis tweie  
The arowe, and ful fast out it plighte,

And in the pullyng sore I sighte.  
So at the last the shaft of tree  
I drough out with the fethers thre.  
But yet the hokede heed, ywis,  
1750 The which [that] Beaute callid is,  
Gan so depe in myn herte passe,  
That I it myghte nought arace;  
But in myn herte still it stod,  
Al bledde I not a drope of blod.  
I was bothe anguyssous and trouble  
For the perill that I saw double:  
I nyste what to seye or do,  
Ne gete a leche my woundis to;  
For neithir thurgh gras ne rote  
1760 Ne hadde I help of hope ne bote.  
But to the botoun evermo  
Myn herte drew, for all my wo;  
My thought was in noon other thing,  
For hadde it ben in my kepyng,  
It wolde have brought my lyf agayn.  
For certis evenly, I dar wel seyn,  
The sight oonly and the savour  
Alegged mych of my langour.  
Thanne gan I for to drawe me  
1770 Toward the botoun faire to se;  
And Love hadde gete hym, in a throwe,  
Another arowe into his bowe,  
And for to shete gan hym dresse.  
The arowis name was Symplesse,  
And whanne that Love gan nygh me nere,  
He drow it up, withouten were,  
And shet at me with all his myght,  
So that this arowe anoon-right  
Thourghout [myn] eigh, as it was founde,  
1780 Into myn herte hath maad a wounde.  
Thanne I anoon dide al my craft  
For to drawen out the shaft,  
And therwithall I sighed eft.  
But in myn herte the heed was left,  
Which ay encreside my desir  
Unto the botoun drawe ner;  
And evermo that me was woo,

The more desir hadde I to goo  
 Unto the roser, where that grew  
 1790 The freysshe botoun so bright of hew.  
 Betir me were to have laten be,  
 But it bihovede nedes me  
 To don right as myn herte bad,  
 For evere the body must be lad  
 Aftir the herte, in wele and woo;  
 Of force togidre they must goo.  
 But never this archer wolde feyne  
 To shete at me with all his peyne,  
 And for to make me to hym mete.  
 1800 The thridde arowe he gan to shete,  
 Whanne best his tyme he myght espie,  
 The which was named Curtesie.  
 Into myn herte it dide avale;  
 A-swoone I fell bothe deed and pale.  
 Long tyme I lay and stired nought,  
 Till I abraide out of my thought,  
 And faste thanne I avysede me  
 To drawe out the shaft of tree.  
 But evere the heed was left bihynde,  
 1810 For ought I couth. pulle or wynde,  
 So sore it stikid whanne I was hit,  
 That by no craft I myght it flit.  
 But anguyssous and full of thought,  
 I felte sich woo my wounde ay wrought,  
 That somonede me alway to goo  
 Toward the Rose that plesede me soo,  
 But I ne durste in no maner,  
 Bicause the archer was so ner.  
 "For evermore gladly," as I rede,  
 1820 "Brent child of fir hath myche drede."  
 And, certis yit, for al my peyne,  
 Though that I sigh yit arwis reyne,  
 And grounde quarels sharpe of steell,  
 Ne for no payne that I myght feell,  
 Yit myght I not mysilf witholde  
 The faire roser to biholde,  
 For Love me yaf sich hardement  
 For to fulfille his comaundement.  
 Upon my fete I ros up than,

1830 Feble as a forwoundid man,  
And forth to gon [my] myght I sette,  
And for the archer nolde I lette.  
Toward the roser fast I drow,  
But thornes sharpe mo than ynow  
Ther were, and also thisteles thikke,  
And breres, brymme for to prikke,  
That I ne myghte gete grace  
The rowe thornes for to passe,  
To sen the roses fresshe of hewe.  
1840 I must abide, though it me rewe,  
The hegge aboute so thikke was,  
That closide the roses in compas.  
But o thing lyked me right well:  
I was so nygh, I myghte fel  
Of the botoun the swote odour,  
And also se the fresshe colour,  
And that right gretly liked me,  
That I so neer myghte it se.  
Sich joie anoon therof hadde I  
1850 That I forgat my malady.  
To sen I hadde sich delit,  
Of sorwe and angre I was al quyt,  
And of my woundes that I hadde thore;  
For nothing liken me myght more  
Than dwellen by the roser ay,  
And thennes never to passe away.  
But whanne a while I hadde be thar,  
The God of Love, which al toshar  
Myn herte with his arwis kene,  
1860 Castith hym to yeve me woundis grene.  
He shet at me full hastily  
An arwe named Company,  
The whiche takell is full able  
To make these ladies merciable.  
Thanne I anoon gan chaungen hewe  
For grevaunce of my wounde newe,  
That I agayn fell in swonyng  
And sighede sore in compleynyng.  
Soore I compleyned that my sore  
1870 On me gan greven more and more.  
I hadde noon hope of allegeaunce;

So nygh I drow to desperaunce,  
I roughete of deth ne of lyf,  
Wheder that Love wolde me dryf.  
Yf me a martir wolde he make,  
I myght his power nought forsake.  
And while for anger thus I wok,  
The God of Love an arowe tok --  
Ful sharp it was and pugnaunt --  
1880 And it was callid Faire-Semblaunt,  
The which in no wise wole consente  
That ony lover hym repente  
To serve his love with herte and alle,  
For ony perill that may bifalle.  
But though this arwe was kene grounde  
As ony rasour that is founde,  
To kutte and kerve, at the poynt  
The God of Love it hadde anoynt  
With a precious oynement,  
1890 Somdell to yeve aleggement  
Upon the woundes that he had  
To helpe her sores, and to cure,  
And that they may the bet endure.  
But yit this arwe, withoute more,  
Made in myn herte a large sore,  
That in full gret peyne I abod.  
But ay the oynement wente abrod;  
Thourghout my woundes large and wide  
1900 It spredde aboute in every side,  
Thorough whos vertu and whos myght  
Myn herte joyfull was and light.  
I hadde ben deed and al toshent,  
But for the precious oynement.  
The shaft I drow out of the arwe,  
Rokyng for wo right wondir narwe;  
But the heed, which made me smerte,  
Lefte bihynde in myn herte  
With other foure, I dar wel say,  
1910 That never wole be take away.  
But the oynement halp me wel,  
And yit sich sorwe dide I fel  
That al day I chaunged hewe  
Of my woundes fresshe and newe,

As men myght se in my visage.  
The arwis were so full of rage,  
So variaunt of diversitee,  
That men in everich myghte se  
Bothe gret anoy and eke swetnesse,  
1920 And joie meynt with bittirnesse.  
Now were they esy, now were they wod;  
In hem I felte bothe harm and good;  
Now sore without alleggement,  
Now softenyng with oynement;  
It softenede heere and prikkith there:  
Thus ese and anger togidre were.  
The God of Love delyverly  
Com lepande to me hastily,  
And seide to me in gret rape,  
1930 "Yeld thee, for thou may not escape!  
May no defence availe thee heer;  
Therefore I rede make no daunger.  
If thou wolt yelde thee hastily,  
Thou shalt rather have mercy.  
He is a fool in sikernesse,  
That with daunger or stoutnesse  
Rebellith there that he shulde plese;  
In sich folye is litel ese.  
Be meke where thou must nedis bow;  
1940 To stryve ageyn is nought thi prow.  
Com at oones, and have ydoo,  
For I wol that it be soo.  
Thanne yeld thee heere debonairly."  
And I answerid ful hombly,  
"Gladly, sir, at youre biddying,  
I wole me yelde in alle thyng.  
To youre servyse I wol me take,  
For God defende that I shulde make  
Ageyn youre biddying resistence.  
1950 I wole not don so gret offence,  
For if I dide, it were no skile.  
Ye may do with me what ye wile,  
Save or spille, and also sloo.  
Fro you in no wise may I goo.  
My lyf, my deth is in youre hond;  
I may not laste out of youre bond.



Pleyn at youre lyst I yelde me,  
Hopyng in herte that sumtyme ye  
Comfort and ese shall me sende;  
1960 Or ellis, shortly, this is the eende,  
Withouten helthe I mot ay dure,  
But if ye take me to youre cure.  
Comfort or helthe how shuld I have,  
Sith ye me hurt, but ye me save?  
The helthe of love mot be founde  
Where as they token first her wounde.  
And if ye lyst of me to make  
Your prisoner, I wol it take  
Of herte and will, fully at gree.  
1970 Hoolly and pleyn Y yelde me,  
Withoute feynyng or feyntise,  
To be governed by youre emprise.  
Of you I here so myche pris,  
I wole ben hool at youre devis  
For to fulfille youre lykyng  
And repente for nothyng,  
Hopyng to have yit in som tide  
Mercy of that I abide."  
And with that covenaut yelde I me  
1980 Anoon, down knelyng upon my kne,  
Proferyng for to kisse his feet;  
But for nothyng he wolde [me] let,  
And seide, "I love thee bothe and preise,  
Sen that thyn aunswar doth me ease,  
For thou answerid so curteisly.  
For now I wot wel uttirly  
That thou art gentyll by thi speche.  
For though a man fer wolde seche,  
He shulde not fynden, in certeyn,  
1990 No sich answer of no vileyn;  
For sich a word ne myghte nought  
Isse out of a vilayns thought.  
Thou shalt not lesen of thi speche,  
For [to] thy helpyng wole I eche,  
And eke encresen that I may.  
But first I wole that thou obay  
Fully, for thyn avauntage,  
Anoon to do me heere homage.

And sithe kisse thou shalt my mouth,  
2000 Which to no vilayn was never couth  
For to aproche it, ne for to touche;  
For sauff of cherlis I ne vouche  
That they shull never neigh it nere.  
For curteis and of faire manere,  
Well taught and ful of gentilnesse  
He muste ben that shal me kysse,  
And also of full high fraunchise,  
That shal atteyne to that emprise.  
And first of o thing warne I thee,  
2010 That peyne and gret adversite  
He mot endure, and eke travaile,  
That shal me serve, withouten faile.  
But ther-ageyns thee to comforte,  
And with thi servise to desporte,  
Thou mayst full glad and joyfull be  
So good a maister to have as me,  
And lord of so high renoun.  
I bere of love the gonfanoun,  
Of curtesie the banere.  
2020 For I am of the silf manere,  
Gentil, curteys, meke, and fre,  
That whoever ententyf be  
Me to honoure, doute, and serve,  
And also that he hym observe  
Fro trespas and fro vilanye,  
And hym governe in curtesie  
With will and with entencioun.  
For whanne he first in my prisoun  
Is caught, thanne must he uttirly  
2030 Fro thennes forth full bisily  
Caste hym gentyll for to bee,  
If he desire help of me."  
Anoon withouten more delay,  
Withouten daunger or affray,  
I bicom his man anoon,  
And gaf hym thanks many a oon,  
And knelide doun with hondis joynt  
And made it in my port full queynt.  
The joye wente to myn herte rote,  
2040 Whanne I hadde kissed his mouth so swote;

I hadde sich myrthe and sich likyng,  
It cured me of langwisshing.  
He askide of me thanne hostages:  
"I have," he seide, "taken fele homages  
Of oon and other, where I have ben  
Disceyved ofte, withouten wen.  
These felouns, full of falsite,  
Have many sithes biguyled me  
And thorough falshed her lust achieved,  
2050 Wherof I repente and am agreved.  
And I hem gete in my daunger,  
Her falshede shull they bie full der.  
But for I love thee, I seie thee pleyn,  
I wol of thee be more certeyn;  
For thee so sore I wole now bynde  
That thou away ne shalt not wynde  
For to denyen the covenaut,  
Or don that is not avenaunt.  
That thou were fals it were gret reuthe,  
2060 Sith thou semest so full of treuthe."  
"Sire, if thee lyst to undirstande,  
I merveile the askyng this demande.  
For why or wherfore shulde ye  
Ostages or borwis aske of me,  
Or ony other sikirnesse,  
Sith ye wot, in sothfastnesse,  
That ye have me susprised so,  
And hol myn herte taken me fro,  
That it wole do for me nothing,  
2070 But if it be at youre biddyng?  
Myn herte is youre, and myn right nought,  
As it bihoveth, in dede and thought,  
Redy in all to worche youre will,  
Whether so turne to good or ill,  
So sore it lustith you to plese,  
No man therof may you disseise.  
Ye have theron sette sich justice,  
That it is werreid in many wise;  
And if ye doute it nolde obeye,  
2080 Ye may therof do make a keye,  
And holde it with you for ostage."  
"Now, certis, this is noon outrage,"

Quod Love, "and fully I acord.  
For of the body he is full lord  
That hath the herte in his tresor;  
Outrage it were to asken more."  
Thanne of his awmener he drough  
A litell keye, fetys ynowgh,  
Which was of gold polissed clere,  
2090 And seide to me, "With this keye heere  
Thyn herte to me now wole I shette.  
For all my jowelles, loke and knette,  
I bynde undir this litel keye,  
That no wight may carie aweye.  
This keye is full of gret poeste."  
With which anon he touchide me  
Undir the side full softly,  
That he myn herte sodeynly  
Without anoy hadde spered,  
2100 That yit right nought it hath me dered.  
Whanne he hadde don his will al oute,  
And I hadde putte hym out of doute,  
"Sire," I seide, "I have right gret wille  
Youre lust and plesaunce to fulfille.  
Loke ye my servise take at gree,  
By thilke feith ye owe to me.  
I seye nought for recreaundise,  
For I nought doute of youre servise,  
But the servaunt traveileth in vayne,  
2110 That for to serven doth his payne  
Unto that lord, which in no wise  
Kan hym no thank for his servyse."  
Love seide, "Dismaie thee nought.  
Syn thou for sokour hast me sought,  
In thank thi servise wol I take,  
And high of degre I wol thee make,  
If wikkidnesse ne hyndre thee.  
But, as I hope, it shal nought be;  
To worshipe no wight by aventure  
2120 May come, but if he peyne endure.  
Abid and suffre thy distresse;  
That hurtith now, it shal be lesse.  
I wot mysilf what may thee save,  
What medicyne thou woldist have.

And if thi trouthe to me thou kepe,  
I shal unto thy helpyng eke,  
To cure thy woundes and make hem clene,  
Where so they be olde or grene --  
Thou shalt be holpen, at wordis fewe.  
2130 For certeynly thou shalt well shewe  
Wher that thou servest with good wille  
For to complysshen and fulfille  
My comaundementis, day and nyght,  
Whiche I to lovers yeve of right."  
"A sire, for Goddis love," seide I,  
"Er ye passe hens, ententyfly  
Youre comaundementis to me ye say,  
And I shall kepe hem, if I may;  
For hem to kepen is all my thought.  
2140 And if so be I wot hem nought,  
Thanne may I [erre] unwityngly.  
Wherfore I pray you enterely,  
With all myn herte, me to lere,  
That I trespasse in no manere."  
The God of Love thanne chargide me  
Anoon, as ye shall here and see,  
Word by word, by right emprise,  
So as the Romance shall devise.  
The maister lesith his tyme to lere,  
2150 Whanne that the disciple wol not here;  
It is but veyn on hym to swynke  
That on his lernyng wol not thinke.  
Whoso luste love, lat hym entende,  
For now the Romance bigynneth to amende.  
Now is good to here, in fay,  
If ony be that can it say,  
And poynte it as the resoun is  
Set; for other-gate, ywys,  
It shall nought well in alle thyng  
2160 Be brought to good undirstondyng.  
For a reder that poyntith ille  
A good sentence may ofte spille.  
The book is good at the eendyng,  
Maad of newe and lusty thyng;  
For whoso wol the eendyng here,  
The craft of love he shall mowe lere,

If that ye wol so long abide,  
Tyl I this Romance may unhide,  
And undo the signifiante  
2170 Of this drem into Romance.  
The sothfastnesse that now is hid,  
Without coverture shall be kid  
Whanne I undon have this dremyng,  
Wherynne no word is of lesyng.  
"Vilanye, at the bigynnyng,  
I wole," sayde Love, "over alle thyng,  
Thou leve if thou wolt [not] be  
Fals, and trespasse ageynes me.  
I curse and blame generaly  
2180 All hem that loven vilany,  
For vilanye makith vilayn,  
And by his dedis a cherl is seyn.  
Thise vilayns arn withouten pitee,  
Frendshipe, love, and all bounte.  
I nyl resseyve unto my servise  
Hem that ben vilayns of emprise.  
But undirstonde in thyn entent  
That this is not myn entendement,  
To clepe no wight in noo ages  
2190 Oonly gentill for his lynages.  
But whoso is vertuous,  
And in his port nought outrageous,  
Whanne sich oon thou seest thee biforn,  
Though he be not gentill born,  
Thou maist well seyn, this is in soth,  
That he is gentil by cause he doth  
As longeth to a gentilman;  
Of hem noon other deme I can.  
For certeynly, withouten drede,  
2200 A cherl is demed by his dede  
Of hie or lowe, as we may see,  
Or of what kynrede that he bee.  
Ne say nought, for noon yvel wille,  
Thyng that is to holden stille;  
It is no worshipe to myssey.  
Thou maist ensample take of Key,  
That was somtyme, for mysseyng,  
Hated bothe of olde and ying.

As fer as Gaweyn, the worthy,  
2210 Was preised for his curtesy,  
Kay was hated, for he was fell,  
Of word dispitous and cruell.  
Wherfore be wise and aqueyntable,  
Goodly of word, and resonable  
Bothe to lesse and eke to mare.  
And whanne thou comest there men are,  
Loke that thou have in custome ay  
First to salue hem, if thou may;  
And if it fall that of hem som  
2220 Salue thee first, be not domm,  
But quyte hem curteisly anoon,  
Without abidyng, er they goon.  
"For nothyng eke thy tunge applye  
To speke wordis of rebaudrye.  
To vilayn speche in no degre  
Lat never thi lippe unbounden be.  
For I nought holde hym, in good feith,  
Curteys, that foule wordis seith.  
And alle wymmen serve and preise,  
2230 And to thy power her honour reise;  
And if that ony myssaiere  
Dispise wymmen, that thou maist here,  
Blame hym, and bidde hym holde hym stille.  
And [set] thy myght and all thy wille  
Wymmen and ladies for to please,  
And to do thyng that may hem ese,  
That they ever speke good of thee,  
For so thou maist best preised be.  
"Loke fro pride thou kepe thee wel;  
2240 For thou maist bothe perceyve and fel  
That pride is bothe folly and synne,  
And he that pride hath hym withynne  
Ne may his herte in no wise  
Meken ne souplen to servyse.  
For pride is founde in every part  
Contrarie unto loves art.  
And he that loveth, trewely,  
Shulde hym contene jolily  
Without pride in sondry wise,  
2250 And hym disgysen in queyntise.

For queynt array, without drede,  
Is nothyng proud, who takith hede;  
For fresh array, as men may see,  
Withouten pride may ofte be.  
"Mayntene thysilf aftir thi rent  
Of robe and eke of garnement,  
For many sithe fair clothynge  
A man amendith in myche thyng.  
And loke alwey that they be shape --  
2260 What garnement that thou shalt make --  
Of hym that kan best do,  
With all that perteyneth therto.  
Poyntis and sleeves be well sittand,  
Right and streght on the hand.  
Of shon and bootes, newe and faire,  
Loke at the leest thou have a paire,  
And that they sitte so fetisly  
That these rude may uttirly  
Merveyle, sith that they sitte so pleyn,  
2270 How they come on or off ageyn.  
Were streite gloves with awmenere  
Of silk; and alwey with good chere  
Thou yeve, if thou have richesse;  
And if thou have nought, spende the lesse.  
Alwey be mery, if thou may,  
But waste not thi good alway.  
Have hat of floures as fresh as May,  
Chapelett of roses of Whitsonday,  
For sich array ne costeth but lite.  
2280 Thyn hondis wassh, thy teeth make white,  
And let no filthe upon thee bee.  
Thy nailes blak if thou maist see,  
Voide it away delyverly,  
And kembe thyn heed right jolily.  
Fard not thi visage in no wise,  
For that of love is not th' emprise;  
For love doth haten, as I fynde,  
A beaute that cometh not of kynde.  
Alwey in herte I rede thee  
2290 Glad and mery for to be,  
And be as joyfull as thou can;  
Love hath no joye of sorowful man.



That yvell is full of curtesie  
That laughith in his maladie;  
For ever of love the siknesse  
Is meynd with swete and bitternesse.  
The sore of love is merveilous;  
For now the lover [is. joyous,  
Now can he pleyne, now can he grone,  
2300 Now can he syngen, now maken mone;  
To-day he pleyneth for hevynesse,  
To-morowe he pleyeth for jolynesse.  
The lyf of love is full contrarie,  
Which stoundemele can ofte varie.  
But if thou canst mirthis make,  
That men in gre wole gladly take,  
Do it goodly, I comaunde thee.  
For men shulde, wheresoevere they be,  
Do thing that hem sittyng is,  
2310 For therof cometh good loos and pris.  
Whereof that thou be vertuous,  
Ne be not straunge ne daungerous;  
For if that thou good ridere be,  
Prike gladly, that men may se.  
In armes also if thou konne,  
Pursue til thou a name hast wonne.  
And if thi voice be faire and cler,  
Thou shalt maken [no] gret daunger  
Whanne to synge they goodly preye --  
2320 It is thi worship for t' obeye.  
Also to you it longith ay  
To harpe and gitterne, daunce and play,  
For if he can wel foote and daunce,  
It may hym greetly do avaunce.  
Among eke, for thy lady sake,  
Songes and complayntes that thou make,  
For that wole meven in hir herte,  
Whanne they reden of thy smerte.  
Loke that no man for scarce thee holde,  
2330 For that may greve thee many folde.  
Resoun wole that a lover be  
In his yftes more large and fre  
Than cherles that ben not of lovyng.  
For who therof can ony thyng,

He shal be leef ay for to yeve,  
In Loves lore whoso wolde leve;  
For he that thorough a sodeyn sight,  
Or for a kyssyng, anoonright  
Yaff hool his herte in will and thought,  
2340 And to hymself kepith right nought,  
Aftir [swich] [gift] it is good resoun  
He yeve his good in abandoun.  
"Now wol I shortly heere reherce  
Of that I have seid in verce  
Al the sentence by and by,  
In wordis fewe compendiously,  
That thou the better mayst on hem thynke,  
Whether so it be thou wake or wynke.  
For the wordis litel greve  
2350 A man to kepe, whanne it is breve.  
Whoso with Love wole goon or ride,  
He mot be curteis, and voide of pride,  
Mery, and full of jolite,  
And of largesse alosed be.  
"First I joyne thee, heere in penaunce,  
That evere, withoute repentaunce,  
Thou sette thy thought in thy lovyng  
To laste withoute repentyng,  
And thenke upon thi myrthis swete,  
2360 That shall folowe aftir, whan ye mete.  
"And for thou trewe to love shalt be,  
I wole, and comaunde thee,  
That in oo place thou sette, all hool,  
Thyn herte withoute halfen dool  
Of trecherie and sikernesse;  
For I lovede nevere doublenesse.  
To many his herte that wole depart,  
Everich shal have but litel part;  
But of hym drede I me right nought,  
2370 That in oo place settith his thought.  
Therefore in oo place it sette,  
And lat it nevere thannys flette.  
For if thou yevest it in lenyng,  
I holde it but a wrecchid thyng;  
Therefore yeve it hool and quyt,  
And thou shalt have the more merit.

If it be lent, than aftir soon  
The bounte and the thank is doon;  
But, in love, fre yeven thing  
2380 Requyrith a gret guerdonyng.  
Yeve it in yift al quyt fully,  
And make thi yift debonairly,  
For men that yift holde more dere  
That yeven [is. with gladsom chere.  
That yift nought to preisen is  
That man yeveth maugre his.  
Whanne thou hast yeven thyn herte, as I  
Have seid thee heere openly,  
Thanne adventures shull thee falle,  
2390 Which harde and hevy ben withalle.  
For ofte whan thou bithenkist thee  
Of thy lovyng, whereso thou be,  
Fro folk thou must departe in hie,  
That noon perceyve thi maladie.  
But hyde thyne harm thou must alone,  
And go forth sool, and make thy mone.  
Thou shalt no whyle be in o stat,  
But whylom cold and whilom hat,  
Now reed as rose, now yelow and fade.  
2400 Such sorowe, I trowe, thou never hade;  
Cotidien ne quarteyne,  
It is nat so ful of peyne.  
For often tymes it shal falle  
In love, among thy paynes alle,  
That thou thyself al holly  
Foryeten shalt so utterly  
That many tymes thou shalt be  
Styl as an ymage of tree,  
Domm as a ston, without steryng  
2410 Of fot or hond, without spekyng.  
Than, soone after al thy payn,  
To memorye shalt thou come agayn,  
As man abashed wonder sore,  
And after syghen more and more.  
For wyt thou wel, withouten wen,  
In such astat ful ofte have ben  
That have the yvel of love assayd  
Wherthrough thou art so dismayd.

"After, a thought shal take the so,  
2420 That thy love is to fer the fro.  
Thou shalt saye, 'God! what may this be,  
That I ne may my lady se?  
Myn herte alone is to her go,  
And I abyde al sol in wo,  
Departed fro myn owne thought,  
And with myne eyen se right nought.  
Alas, myne eyen sende I ne may  
My careful herte to convay!  
Myn hertes gyde but they be,  
2430 I prayse nothyng, whatever they se.  
Shul they abyde thanne? Nay;  
But gon and visyten without delay  
That myn herte desyreth so.  
For certainly, but if they go,  
A fool myself I may wel holde,  
Whan I ne se what myn herte wolde.  
Wherfore I wol gon her to sen,  
Or eased shal I never ben,  
But I have som tokenyng.'  
2440 Than gost thou forth without dwellyng;  
But ofte thou faylest of thy desyr,  
Er thou mayst come her any ner,  
And wastest in vayn thi passage.  
Thanne fallest thou in a newe rage;  
For want of sight thou gynnest morne,  
And homward pensyf thou dost retorne.  
In greet myscheef thanne shalt thou bee,  
For thanne agayn shall come to thee  
Sighes and pleyntes with newe woo,  
2450 That no ycchyng prikketh soo.  
Who wot it nought, he may go lere  
Of hem that bien love so dere.  
"Nothyng thyn herte appesen may  
That ofte thou wolt goon and assay  
If thou maist seen, by aventure,  
Thi lyves joy, thin hertis cure;  
So that, bi grace, if thou myght  
Atteyne of hire to have a sight,  
Thanne shalt thou don noon other dede,  
2460 But with that sight thyne eyen fede.

That faire fresh whanne thou maist see,  
Thyne herte shall so ravysshed be  
That nevere thou woldest, thi thankis, lete,  
Ne remove for to see that swete.  
The more thou seest in sothfastnesse,  
The more thou coveytest of that swetnesse;  
The more thin herte brenneth in fir,  
The more thin herte is in desir.  
For who considreth everydeell,  
2470 It may be likned wondir well,  
The peyne of love, unto a fer;  
For evermore thou neigest ner,  
Thou, or whooso that it bee,  
For verray sothe I tell it thee,  
The hatter evere shall thou brenne,  
As experience shall thee kenne:  
Whereso [thou] comest in ony coost,  
Who is next fyr, he brenneth moost.  
And yitt forsothe, for all thin hete,  
2480 Though thou for love swelte and swete,  
Ne for nothyng thou felen may,  
Thou shalt not willen to passen away.  
And though thou go, yitt must thee nede  
Thenke all day on hir fairhede  
Whom thou biheelde with so good will,  
And holde thisilf biguyled ill  
That thou ne haddest noon hardement  
To shewe hir ought of thyn entent.  
Thyn herte full sore thou wolt dispise,  
2490 And eke repreve of cowardise,  
That thou, so dul in every thing,  
Were domme for drede, withoute spekyng.  
Thou shalt eke thenke thou didest folye  
That thou were hir so faste bye,  
And durst not aunte thee to saye  
Somthyng er thou cam awaye;  
For thou haddist no more wonne,  
To speke of hir whanne thou bigonne.  
But yitt she wolde, for thy sake,  
2500 In armes goodly thee have take --  
It shulde have be more worth to thee  
Than of tresour gret plente.

Thus shalt thou morne and eke compleyn,  
And gete enchesoun to goon ageyn  
Unto thi walk, or to thi place  
Where thou biheelde hir fleshly face.  
And never, for fals suspeccioun,  
Thou woldest fynde occasioun  
For to gon unto hire hous.

2510 So art thou thanne desirous  
A sight of hir for to have,  
If thou thin honour myghtist save,  
Or ony erande myghtist make  
Thider for thi loves sake,  
Full fayn thou woldist, but for drede  
Thou gost not, lest that men take hede.  
Wherfore I rede, in thi goyng,  
And also in thyn ageyn-comyng,  
Thou be well war that men ne wit.

2520 Feyne thee other cause than it  
To go that weye, or faste by;  
To hele wel is no foly.  
And if so be it happe thee  
That thou thi love there maist see,  
In siker wise thou hir salewe,  
Wherewith thi colour wole transmewe,  
And eke thy blod shal al toquake,  
Thyn hewe eke chaungen for hir sake.  
But word and wit, with chere full pale,

2530 Shull wante for to tell thy tale.  
And if thou maist so fer forth wyne  
That thou resoun durst bigynne,  
And woldist seyn thre thingis or mo,  
Thou shalt full scarsly seyn the two.  
Though thou bithenke thee never so well,  
Thou shalt foryete yit somdell,  
But if thou dele with trecherie.

For fals lovers mowe all folye  
Seyn, what hem lust, withouten drede,  
2540 They be so double in her falshede;  
For they in herte cunne thenke a thyng,  
And seyn another in her spekyng.  
And whanne thi speche is eendid all,  
Ryght thus to thee it shall byfall:

If ony word thanne come to mynde  
That thou to seye hast left bihynde,  
Thanne thou shalt brenne in gret martir,  
For thou shalt brenne as ony fir.  
This is the stryf and eke the affray,  
2550 And the batell that lastith ay.  
This bargeyn eende may never take,  
But if that she thi pees will make.  
And whanne the nyght is comen, anoon  
A thousand angres shall come uppon.  
To bedde as fast thou wolt thee dight,  
Where thou shalt have but smal delit.  
For whanne thou wenest for to slepe,  
So full of peyne shalt thou crepe,  
Sterte in thi bed aboute full wide,  
2560 And turne full ofte on every side,  
Now downward groff and now upright,  
And walowe in woo the longe nyght.  
Thine armys shalt thou sprede a-bred,  
As man in werre were forwerreyd.  
Thanne shall thee come a remembraunce  
Of hir shap and hir semblaunce,  
Whereto non other may be pere.  
And wite thou wel, withoute were,  
That thee shal se[me] somtyme that nyght  
2570 That thou hast hir that is so bright  
Naked bitwene thyne armes there,  
All sothfastnesse as though it were.  
Thou shalt make castels thanne in Spayne  
And dreme of joye, all but in vayne,  
And thee deliten of right nought,  
While thou so slombrest in that thought  
That is so swete and delitable,  
The which, in soth, nys but fable,  
For it ne shall no while laste.  
2580 Thanne shalt thou sighe and wepe faste,  
And say, `Dere God, what thing is this?  
My drem is turned all amys,  
Which was full swete and apparent;  
But now I wake, it is al shent!  
Now yede this mery thought away!  
Twenty tymes upon a day

I wolde this thought wolde come ageyn,  
For it aleggith well my peyn.  
It makith me full of joyfull thought;  
2590 It sleth me, that it lastith noght.  
A, Lord! Why nyl ye me socoure  
The joye, I trowe, that I langoure?  
The deth I wolde me shulde sloo  
While I lye in hir armes twoo.  
Myn harm is hard, withouten wene;  
My gret unese full ofte I meene.  
"But wolde Love do so I myght  
Have fully joye of hir so bright,  
My payne were quyt me rychely.  
2600 Allas, to gret a thing aske I!  
Hit is but foly and wrong wenyng  
To aske so outrageous a thyng;  
And whoso askith folily,  
He mot be warned hastily.  
And I ne wot what I may say,  
I am so fer out of the way;  
For I wolde have full gret likyng  
And full gret joye of lasse thing.  
For wolde she, of hir gentylnesse,  
2610 Without and more, me oonys kysse,  
It were to me a gret guerdoun,  
Relees of all my passioun.  
But it is hard to come therto;  
All is but folye that I do,  
So high I have myn herte set,  
Where I may no comfort get.  
I wote not wher I seye well or nought,  
But this I wot wel in my thought,  
That it were better of hir alloone,  
2620 For to stynte my woo and moone,  
A lok on hir I caste goodly,  
Than for to have al utterly  
Of an other all hool the pley.  
A, Lord! Wher I shall byde the day  
That evere she shall my lady be?  
He is full cured that may hir see.  
A, God! Whanne shal the dawning spring?  
To ligen thus is an angry thyng;



I have no joye thus heere to ly,  
2630 Whanne that my love is not me by.  
A man to lyen hath gret disese,  
Which may not slepe ne reste in ese.  
I wolde it dawed, and were now day,  
And that the nyght were went away;  
For were it day, I wolde uprise.  
A, slowe sonne, shewe thin enprise!  
Sped thee to sprede thy beemys bright,  
And chace the derknesse of the nyght,  
To putte away the stoundes stronge,  
2640 Whiche in me lasten all to longe.'  
"The nyght shalt thou contene soo  
Withoute rest, in peyne and woo.  
If evere thou knewe of love distresse,  
Thou shalt mowe lerne in that siknesse,  
And thus enduryng shalt thou ly,  
And ryse on morwe up erly  
Out of thy bedde, and harneyse thee,  
Er evere dawning thou maist see.  
All pryvyly thanne shalt thou goon,  
2650 What weder it be, thisilf alloon,  
For reyn or hayl, for snow, for slet,  
Thider she dwellith that is so swet,  
The which may fall a-slepe be,  
And thenkith but lytel upon thee.  
Thanne shalt thou goon, ful foule afeered,  
Loke if the gate be unspered,  
And waite without in woo and peyn,  
Full yvel a-coold, in wynd and reyn.  
Thanne shal thou go the dore bfore,  
2660 If thou maist fynde ony score,  
Or hool, or reeft, whatever it were;  
Thanne shalt thou stoupe and lay to ere,  
If they withynne a-slepe be --  
I mene all save the lady free,  
Whom wakyng if thou maist asprie,  
Go putte thisilf in jupartie  
To aske grace, and thee bimene,  
That she may wite, without wene,  
That thou [a-]nyght no rest hast had,  
2670 So sore for hir thou were bystad.

Wommen wel ought pite to take  
Of hem that sorwen for her sake.  
And loke, for love of that relyk,  
That thou thenke noon other lyk,  
For whom thou hast so gret annoy,  
Shall kysse thee, er thou go away,  
And holde that in full gret deynte.  
And for that no man shal thee see  
Bifore the hous ne in the way,  
2680 Loke thou be goon ageyn er day.  
Such comyng and such goyng,  
Such hevynesse and such wakyng,  
Makith lovers, withouten ony wene,  
Under her clothes pale and lene.  
For Love leveth colour ne cleernesse;  
Who loveth trewe hath no fatnesse.  
Thou shalt wel by thysilf see  
That thou must nedis assayed be.  
For men that shape hem other wey  
2690 Falsly her ladyes for to bitray,  
It is no wonder though they be fatt;  
With false othes her loves they gatt.  
For oft I see suche losengours  
Fatter than abbatis or priours.  
"Yit with o thing I thee charge,  
That is to seye, that thou be large  
Unto the mayde that hir doth serve,  
So best hir thank thou shalt deserve.  
Yeve hir yiftes, and get hir grace,  
2700 For so thou may thank purchace,  
That she thee worthy holde and free,  
Thi lady, and all that may thee see.  
Also hir servauntes worshiþe ay,  
And please as mych as thou may;  
Gret good thorough hem may come to thee  
Bicause with hir they ben pryve.  
They shal hir telle hou they thee fand  
Curteis, and wys, and well doand,  
And she shall preise well the mare.  
2710 Loke oute of londe thou be not fare,  
And if such cause thou have that thee  
Bihoveth to gon out of contree,

Leve hool thin herte in hostage,  
Till thou ageyn make thi passage.  
Thenk long to see the swete thyng  
That hath thin herte in hir kepyng.  
"Now have I told thee in what wise  
A love-re shall do me servise.  
Do it thanne, if thou wolt have  
2720 The meede that thou aftir crave."  
Whanne Love all this hadde boden me,  
I seide hym: "Sire, how may it be  
That lovers may in such manere  
Endure the peyne ye have seid heere?  
I merveyle me wonder faste  
How ony man may lyve or laste  
In such peyne and such brennyng,  
In sorwe and thought and such sighing,  
Ay unrelesed woo to make,  
2730 Whether so it be they slepe or wake,  
In such annoy contynuely --  
As helpe me God, this merveile I  
How man, but he were maad of stele,  
Myght lyve a month, such peynes to fele."  
The God of Love thanne seide me:  
"Freend, by the feith I owe to thee,  
May no man have good, but he it by.  
A man loveth more tendirly  
The thyng that he hath bought most dere.  
2740 For wite thou well, withouten were,  
In thank that thyng is taken more,  
For which a man hath suffred sore.  
Certis, no wo ne may atteyne  
Unto the sore of loves peyne;  
Noon yvel therto ne may amounte,  
No more than a man [may] counte  
The dropes that of the water be.  
For drye as well the greete see  
Thou myghtist as the harmes telle  
2750 Of hem that with love dwelle  
In servyse, for peyne hem sleeth.  
And yet ech man wolde fle the deeth,  
And trowe thei shulde nevere escape,  
Nere that hope couth. hem make

Glad, as man in prisoun sett,  
And may not geten for to et  
But barly breed and watir pure,  
And lyeth in vermyn and in ordure;  
With all this yitt can he lyve,  
2760 Good hope such comfort hath hym yive,  
Which maketh wene that he shall be  
Delyvered, and come to liberte.  
In fortune is [his] fulle trust,  
Though he lye in strawe or dust;  
In hoope is all his susteynyng.  
And so for lovers, in her wenying,  
Whiche Love hath shit in his prisoun,  
Good hope is her salvacioun.  
Good hope, how sore that they smerte,  
2770 Yeveth hem bothe will and herte  
To profre her body to martire;  
For hope so sore doth hem desire  
To suffre ech harm that men devise,  
For joye that aftirward shall aryse.  
"Hope in desir caccheth victorie;  
In hope of love is all the glorie;  
For hope is all that love may yive;  
Nere hope, ther shulde no lover lyve.  
Blessid be hope, which with desir  
2780 Avaunceth lovers in such maner!  
Good hope is curteis for to please,  
To kepe lovers from all disese.  
Hope kepith his bond, and wole abide,  
For ony perill that may betyde;  
For hope to lovers, as most cheef,  
Doth hem endure all myscheef;  
Hope is her helpe whanne myster is.  
"And I shall yeve thee eke, iwys,  
Three other thingis that gret solas  
2790 Doth to hem that be in my las.  
The firste good that may be founde  
To hem that in my las be bounde  
Is Swete-Thought, for to recorde  
Thing wherwith thou canst accorde  
Best in thyn herte, where she be --  
Thenkyng in absence is good to thee.

Whanne ony lover doth compleyne,  
And lyveth in distresse and in peyne,  
Thanne Swete-Thought shal come as blyve  
2800 Away his angre for to dryve:  
It makith lovers to have remembraunce  
Of comfort and of high plesaunce  
That Hope hath hight hym for to wyne.  
For Thought anon thanne shall bygynne,  
As fer, God wot, as he can fynde,  
To make a mirrour of his mynde;  
For to biholde he wole not lette.  
Hir persone he shall afore hym sette,  
Hir laughing eyen, persaunt and clere,  
2810 Hir shape, hir forme, hir goodly chere,  
Hir mouth, that is so gracious,  
So swete and eke so saverous;  
Of all hir fetures he shall take heede,  
His eyen with all hir lymes fede.  
"Thus Swete-Thenkyng shall aswage  
The peyne of lovers and her rage.  
Thi joye shall double, withoute gesse,  
Whanne thou thenkist on hir semlynnesse,  
Or of hir laughing, or of hir chere,  
2820 That to thee made thi lady dere.  
This comfort wole I that thou take;  
And if the next thou wolt forsake,  
Which is not lesse saverous,  
Thou shuldist ben to daungerous.  
"The secounde shal be Swete-Speche,  
That hath to many oon be leche,  
To bringe hem out of woo and wer,  
And holpe many a bachiler,  
And many a lady sent socour,  
2830 That have loved paramour,  
Thorough spekyng, whanne they myghte heere  
Of her lovers to hem so dere.  
To hem it voidith all her smerte,  
The which is closed in her herte.  
In herte it makith hem glad and light,  
Speche, whanne they [ne] mowe have sight.  
And therefore now it cometh to mynde,  
In olde dawes, as I fynde,

That clerkis writen that hir knewe,  
2840 Ther was a lady fresh of hewe,  
Which of hir love made a song  
On hym for to remembre among,  
In which she seyde, 'Whanne that I here  
Speken of hym that is so dere,  
To me it voidith all smert,  
Iwys, he sittith so ner myn hert.  
To speke of hym, at eve or morwe,  
It cureth me of all my sorwe.  
To me is noon so high plesaunce  
2850 As of his persone dalyaunce.'  
She wist full well that Swete-Spekyng  
Comfortith in full myche thyng.  
Hir love she hadde full well assayed;  
Of him she was full well apaied;  
To speke of hym hir joye was sett.  
Therefore I rede thee that thou gett  
A felowe that can well concele,  
And kepe thi counsell, and well hele,  
To whom go shewe hoolly thine herte,  
2860 Bothe wele and woo, joye and smerte.  
To gete comfort to hym thou goo,  
And pryvyly, bitwene yow twoo,  
Yee shall speke of that goodly thyng  
That hath thyn herte in hir kepyng,  
Of hir beaute and hir semblaunce  
And of hir goodly countenaunce.  
Of all thi stat thou shalt hym sey,  
And aske hym counseill how thou may  
Do ony thyng that may hir plese;  
2870 For it to thee shall do gret ese  
That he may wite thou trust hym soo,  
Bothe of thi wele and of thi woo.  
And if his herte to love be sett,  
His companye is myche the bett,  
For resoun wole he shewe to thee  
All uttirly his pryvyte;  
And what she is he loveth so,  
To thee pleyedly he shal undo,  
Withoute drede of ony shame,  
2880 Bothe tell hir renoun and hir name.

Thanne shall he forther, fer and ner,  
And namely to thi lady der,  
In syker wise; yee, every other  
Shall helpen as his owne brother,  
In trouthe withoute doublesesse,  
And kepen cloos in sikernesse.  
For it is noble thing, in fay,  
To have a man thou darst say  
Thy pryve counsell every deell;  
2890 For that wole comforte thee right well,  
And thou shalt holde thee well apayed,  
Whanne such a freend thou hast assayed.  
"The thridde good of gret comfort,  
That yeveth to lovers most disport,  
Comyth of sight and of biholdyng,  
That clepid is Swete-Lokyng,  
The whiche may noon ese do  
Whanne thou art fer thy lady fro;  
Wherfore thou prese alwey to be  
2900 In place where thou maist hir see.  
For it is thyng most amerous,  
Most delytable and saverous,  
For to aswage a mannes sorowe,  
To sen his lady by the morwe.  
For it is a full noble thing,  
Whanne thyne eyen have metyng  
With that relike precious,  
Wherof they be so desirous.  
But al day after, soth it is,  
2910 They have no drede to faren amys;  
They dreden neither wynd ne reyn,  
Ne noon other maner peyn.  
For whanne thyne eyen were thus in blis,  
Yit of hir curtesie, ywys,  
Alloone they can not have her joye,  
But to the herte they [it] convoye;  
Part of her blisse to hym they sende,  
Of all this harm to make an ende.  
The eye is a good messenger,  
2920 Which can to the herte in such maner  
Tidyngis sende that [he] hath sen,  
To voide hym of his peynes clen.

Wherof the herte rejoiseth soo,  
That a gret party of his woo  
Is voided and put away to flight.  
Right as the derknesse of the nyght  
Is chased with clernesse of the mone,  
Right so is al his woo full soone  
Devoided clene, whanne that the sight  
2930 Biholden may that freshe wight  
That the herte desireth soo,  
That al his derknesse is agoo.  
For thanne the herte is all at ese,  
Whanne the eyen sen that may hem plese.  
"Now have I declared thee all oute  
Of that thou were in drede and doute;  
For I have told thee feithfully  
What thee may curen utterly,  
And alle lovers that wole be  
2940 Feithfull and full of stabilite.  
Good-Hope alwey kep bi thi side,  
And Swete-Thought make eke abide,  
Swete-Lokyng and Swete-Speche --  
Of all thyne harmes thei shall be leche,  
Of every thou shalt have gret plesaunce.  
If thou canst bide in sufferaunce,  
And serve wel withoute feyntise,  
Thou shalt be quyt of thyn emprise  
With more guerdoun, if that thou lyve;  
2950 But at this tyme this I thee yive."  
The God of Love whanne al the day  
Had taught me, as ye have herd say,  
And enfourmed compendiously,  
He vanyshide away all sodeynly,  
And I alloone lefte, all sool,  
So full of compleynt and of dool,  
For I saw no man there me by.  
My woundes me greved wondirly;  
Me for to curen nothyng I knew,  
2960 Save the botoun bright of hew,  
Wheron was sett hoolly my thought.  
Of other comfort knew I nought,  
But it were thorough the God of Love;  
I knew not elles to my bihove



That myght me ease or comfort gete,  
But if he wolde hym entermete.  
The roser was, withoute doute,  
Closed with an hegge withoute,  
As ye toforn have herd me seyn;  
2970 And fast I bisiede, and wolde fayn  
Have passed the hay, if I myghte  
Have gotten ynne by ony slighte  
Unto the botoun so faire to see.  
But evere I dradde blamed to be,  
If men wolde have suspeccioun  
That I wolde of entencioun  
Have stole the roses that there were;  
Therfore to entre I was in fere.  
But at the last, as I bithought  
2980 Whether I shulde passe or nought,  
I saw come with a glad cher  
To me, a lusty bachelor,  
Of good stature and of good highte,  
And Bialacoil forsothe he highte.  
Sone he was to Curtesy,  
And he me grauntide full gladly  
The passage of the outter hay,  
And seide: "Sir, how that yee may  
Passe, if youre wille be  
2990 The freshe roser for to see,  
And yee the swete savour fele.  
Youre warrant may [I] [be] right wele;  
So thou thee kepe fro folye,  
Shall no man do thee vylanye.  
If I may helpe you in ought,  
I shall not feyne, dredeth nought,  
For I am bounde to youre servise,  
Fully devoide of feyntise."  
Thanne unto Bialacoil saide I,  
3000 "I thanke you, sir, full hertely,  
And youre biheeste take at gre,  
That ye so goodly profer me.  
To you it cometh of gret fraunchise  
That ye me profer youre servise."  
Thanne aftir, full delyverly,  
Thorough the breres anon wente I,

Wherof encombred was the hay.  
I was wel plesed, the soth to say,  
To se the botoun faire and swote  
3010 So freshe spronge out of the rote.  
And Bialacoil me served well,  
Whanne I so nygh me myghte fel  
Of the botoun the swete odour,  
And so lusty hewed of colour.  
But thanne a cherl (foule hym bityde!)  
Beside the roses gan hym hyde,  
To kepe the roses of that roser,  
Of whom the name was Daunger.  
This cherl was hid there in the greves,  
3020 Kovered with gras and with leves,  
To spie and take whom that he fond  
Unto that roser putte an hond.  
He was not sool, for ther was moo,  
For with hym were other twoo  
Of wikkid maners and yvel fame.  
That oon was clepid, by his name,  
Wykked-Tonge -- God yeve hym sorwe! --  
For neither at eve ne at morwe,  
He can of no man good speke;  
3030 On many a just man doth he wreke.  
Ther was a womman eke that hight  
Shame, that, who can reken right,  
Trespas was hir fadir name,  
Hir moder Resoun; and thus was Shame  
Brought of these ilke twoo.  
And yitt hadde Trespas never adoo  
With Resoun, ne never ley hir by,  
He was so hidous and so ugly,  
I mene this that Trespas highte;  
3040 But Resoun conceyveth of a sighte  
Shame, of that I spak afor.  
And whanne that Shame was thus born,  
It was ordeyned that Chastite  
Shulde of the roser lady be,  
Which, of the botouns more and las,  
With sondry folk assailed was,  
That she ne wiste what to doo.  
For Venus hir assailith soo,

That nyght and day from hir she stal  
3050 Botouns and roses overal.  
To Resoun thanne praieth Chastite,  
Whom Venus hath flemmed over the see,  
That she hir doughter wolde hir lene,  
To kepe the roser fresh and grene.  
Anoon Resoun to Chastite  
Is fully assented that it be,  
And grauntide hir, at hir request,  
That Shame, by cause she [is. honest,  
Shall keper of the roser be.  
3060 And thus to kepe it ther were three,  
That noon shulde hardy be ne bold,  
Were he yong or were he old,  
Ageyn hir will away to bere  
Botouns ne roses that there were.  
I hadde wel sped, hadde I not ben  
Awayted with these three and sen.  
For Bialacoil, that was so fair,  
So gracious and debonair,  
Quytt hym to me full curteisly,  
3070 And, me to plese, bad that I  
Shulde drawe me to the botoun ner;  
Prese in, to touche the roser  
Which bar the roses, he yaf me leve;  
This graunt ne myght but lytel greve.  
And for he saw it liked me,  
Ryght nygh the botoun pullede he  
A leef all grene, and yaff me that,  
The whiche ful nygh the botoun sat.  
I made [me] of that leef full queynt,  
3080 And whanne I felte I was aqueynt  
With Bialacoil, and so pryve,  
I wende all at my will hadde be.  
Thanne wax I hardy for to tel  
To Bialacoil hou me bifel  
Of Love, that tok and wounded me,  
And seide, "Sir, so mote I thee,  
I may no joye have in no wise,  
Uppon no side, but it rise.  
For sithe (if I shall not feyne)  
3090 In herte I have had so gret peyne,

So gret annoy and such affray,  
That I ne wot what I shall say;  
I drede youre wrath to disserve.  
Lever me were that knyves kerve  
My body shulde in pecys smale,  
Than in any wise it shulde falle  
That ye wratthed shulde ben with me."  
"Sey boldely thi will," quod he,  
"I nyl be wroth, if that I may,  
3100 For nought that thou shalt to me say."  
Thanne seide I, "Ser, not you displease  
To knowen of my gret unese,  
In which oonly Love hath me brought;  
For peynes gret, disese, and thought  
Fro day to day he doth me drye;  
Supposeth not, sir, that I lye.  
In me fyve woundes dide he make,  
The soore of whiche shall nevere slake,  
But ye the botoun graunte me,  
3110 Which is moost passaunt of beaute,  
My lyf, my deth, and my martire,  
And tresour that I moost desire."  
Thanne Bialacoil, affrayed all,  
Seyde, "Sir, it may not fall;  
That ye desire, it may not arise.  
What? Wolde ye shende me in this wise?  
A mochel fool thanne I were,  
If I suffride you away to bere  
The fresh botoun so faire of sight.  
3120 For it were neither skile ne right,  
Of the roser ye broke the rynde,  
Or take the Rose afor his kynde.  
Ye are not curteys to aske it.  
Late it still on the roser sitt  
And growe til it amended be,  
And parfytylly come to beaute.  
I nolde not that it pulled were  
Fro the roser that it bere,  
To me it is so leef and deer."  
3130 With that sterte oute anoon Daunger,  
Out of the place were he was hid.  
His malice in his chere was kid;

Full gret he was and blak of hewe,  
Sturdy and hidous, whoso hym knewe;  
Like sharp urchouns his her was growe;  
His nose frounced, full kirked stood.  
He com criand as he were wood,  
And seide, "Bialacoil, telle me why  
3140 Thou bryngest hider so booldely  
Hym that so nygh [is. the roser?  
Thou worchist in a wrong maner.  
He thenkith to dishonoure thee;  
Thou art wel worthy to have maugree  
To late hym of the roser wit.  
Who serveth a feloun is yvel quit.  
Thou woldist have doon gret bounte,  
And he with shame wolde quyte thee.  
Fle hennes, felowe! I rede thee goo!  
3150 It wanteth litel I wole thee sloo.  
For Bialacoil ne knew thee nought,  
Whanne thee to serve he sette his thought;  
For thou wolt shame hym, if thou myght,  
Bothe ageyns resoun and right.  
I wole no more in thee affye,  
That comest so slyghly for t' espye;  
For it preveth wonder well,  
Thy slight and tresoun, every deell."  
I durst no more there make abod  
3160 For the cherl, he was so wod,  
So gan he threte and manace,  
And thurgh the haye he dide me chace.  
For feer of hym I tremblyde and quok,  
So cherlishly his heed it shok,  
And seide, if eft he myght me take,  
I shulde not from his hondis scape.  
Thanne Bialacoil is fled and mat,  
And I, all sool, disconsolat,  
Was left aloone in peyne and thought;  
3170 For shame to deth I was nygh brought.  
Thanne thought I on myn high foly,  
How that my body utterly  
Was yeve to peyne and to martire;  
And therto hadde I so gret ire,  
That I ne durst the hayes passe.

There was noon hope; there was no grace.  
I trowe nevere man wiste of peyne,  
But he were laced in loves cheyne;  
Ne no man [wot], and sooth it is,  
3180 But if he love, what anger is.  
Love holdith his heest to me right wel,  
Whanne peyne he seide I shulde fel;  
Noon herte may thenke, ne tunge seyn,  
A quarter of my woo and peyn.  
I myght not with the anger laste;  
Myn herte in poynt was for to braste,  
Whanne I thought on the Rose, that soo  
Was thurgh Daunger cast me froo.  
A long while stod I in that stat,  
3190 Til that me saugh so mad and mat  
The lady of the highe ward,  
Which from hir tour lokide thiderward.  
Resoun men clepe that lady,  
Which from hir tour delyverly  
Com doun to me, withouten mor.  
But she was neither yong ne hoor,  
Ne high ne lowe, ne fat ne lene,  
But best as it were in a mene.  
Hir eyen twoo were cleer and light  
3200 As ony candell that brenneth bright;  
And on hir heed she hadde a crowne.  
Hir semede wel an high persoune,  
For round enviroun, hir crownet  
Was full of riche stonys fret.  
Hir goodly semblaunt, by devys,  
I trowe were maad in paradys,  
For Nature hadde nevere such a grace,  
To forge a werk of such compace.  
For certeyn, but if the letter ly,  
3210 God hymself, that is so high,  
Made hir aftir his ymage,  
And yaff hir sith sich avauntage  
That she hath myght and seignorie  
To kepe men from all folye.  
Whoso wole trowe hir lore,  
Ne may offenden nevermore.  
And while I stod thus derk and pale,

Resoun bigan to me hir tale.  
She seide, "Al hayl, my swete freend!  
3220 Foly and childhood wol thee sheend,  
Which the have putt in gret affray.  
Thou hast bought deere the tyme of May,  
That made thyn herte mery to be.  
In yvell tyme thou wentist to see  
The gardyn, whereof Ydilnesse  
Bar the keye and was maistresse,  
Whanne thou yedest in the daunce  
With hir, and haddest aqueyntaunce.  
Hir aqueyntaunce is perilous,  
3230 First softe, and aftir noious;  
She hath [thee] trashed, withoute wen.  
The God of Love hadde the not sen,  
Ne hadde Ydilnesse thee conveyed  
In the verger where Myrthe hym pleyed.  
If foly have supprised thee,  
Do so that it recovered be,  
And be wel ware to take nomore  
Counsel, that greveth aftir sore.  
He is wis that wol hymself chastise.  
3240 And though a yong man in any wise  
Trespace among, and do foly,  
Late hym not tarye, but hastily  
Late hym amende what so be mys.  
And eke I counseile thee, iwys,  
The God of Love hoolly foryet,  
That hath thee in sich peyne set,  
And thee in herte tourmented soo.  
I can [nat] sen how thou maist goo  
Other weyes to garisoun;  
3250 For Daunger, that is so feloun,  
Felly purposith thee to werreye,  
Which is ful cruel, the soth to seye.  
"And yitt of Daunger cometh no blame,  
In reward of my doughter Shame,  
Which hath the roses in hir ward,  
As she that may be no musard.  
And Wikked-Tunge is with these two,  
That suffrith no man thider goo;  
For er a thing be do, he shall,

3260 Where that he cometh, overall,  
In fourty places, if it be sought,  
Seye thyng that nevere was don ne wrought;  
So moche tresoun is in his male  
Of falsnesse, for to seyne a tale.  
Thou delest with angry folk, ywis;  
Wherfore to thee bettir is  
From these folk away to fare,  
For they wole make thee lyve in care.  
This is the yvell that love they call,  
3270 Wherynne ther is but foly al,  
For love is foly everydell.  
Who loveth in no wise may do well,  
Ne sette his thought on no good werk.  
His scole he lesith, if he be a clerk.  
Of other craft eke if he be,  
He shal not thryve therynne, for he  
In love shal have more passioun  
Than monk, hermyte, or chanoun.  
The peyne is hard, out [of] mesure;  
3280 The joye may eke no while endure;  
And in the possessioun  
Is myche tribulacioun.  
The joye it is so short lastyng,  
And but in hap is the getyng;  
For I see there many in travaille,  
That atte laste foule fayle.  
I was nothyng thi counseler,  
Whanne thou were maad the omager  
Of God of Love to hastily;  
3290 Ther was no wisdom, but foly.  
Thyn herte was joly but not sage,  
Whanne thou were brought in sich a rage  
To yelde thee so redily,  
And to leve of is gret maistry.  
"I rede thee Love away to dryve,  
That makith thee recche not of thi lyve.  
The foly more fro day to day  
Shal growe, but thou it putte away.  
Tak with thy teeth the bridel faste,  
3300 To daunte thyn herte, and eke thee caste,  
If that thou maist, to gete thee defence



For to redresse thi first offence.  
Whoso his herte alwey wol leve,  
Shal fynde among that shal hym greve."  
Whanne I hir herd thus me chastise,  
I answerd in ful angry wise.  
I prayed hir ceessen of hir speche,  
Outher to chastise me or teche,  
To bidde me my thought refreyne,  
3310 Which Love hath caught in his demeyne:  
"What? Wene ye Love wol consent,  
That me assailith with bowe bent,  
To drawe myn herte out of his hond,  
Which is so qwikly in his bond?  
That ye counseyle may nevere be,  
For whanne he first arestide me,  
He took myn herte so hool hym till,  
That it is nothyng at my wil.  
He taught it so hym for to obeye,  
3320 That he it sparrede with a keye.  
I pray yow, late me be all stille.  
For ye may well, if that ye wille,  
Youre wordis waste in idilnesse;  
For utterly, withouten gesse,  
All that ye seyn is but in veyne.  
Me were lever dye in the peyne,  
Than Love to me-ward shulde arette  
Falsheed, or tresoun on me sette.  
I wole me gete prys or blame,  
3330 And love trewe, to save my name.  
Who that me chastisith, I hym hate."  
With that word Resoun wente hir gate,  
Whanne she saugh for no sermonyng  
She myght me fro my folly brynge.  
Thanne dismaied, I left all sool,  
Forwery, forwandred as a fool,  
For I ne knew no chevisaunce.  
Thanne fell into my remembraunce  
How Love bad me to purveye  
3340 A felowe to whom I myghte seye  
My counsell and my pryvete,  
For that shulde moche availe me.  
With that bithought I me that I

Hadde a felowe faste by,  
Trewe and siker, curteys and hend,  
And he was called by name a Freend --  
A trewer felowe was nowher noon.  
In haste to hym I wente anoon,  
And to hym all my woo I tolde;  
3350 Fro hym right nought I wold withholde.  
I tolde hym all, withoute wer,  
And made my compleynt on Daunger,  
How for to see he was hidous,  
And to me-ward contrarious,  
The whiche thurgh his cruelte  
Was in poynt to [have] meygned me.  
With Bialacoil whanne he me sey  
Withynne the gardeyn walke and pley,  
Fro me he made hym for to go.  
3360 And I, bilefte aloone in woo,  
I durst no lenger with hym speke,  
For Daunger seide he wolde be wreke,  
Whanne that he saw how I wente  
The freshe botoun for to hente,  
If I were hardy to come neer  
Bitwene the hay and the roser.  
This freend, whanne he wiste of my thought,  
He discomforted me right nought,  
But seide, "Felowe, be not so mad,  
3370 Ne so abaysshed nor bystad.  
Mysilf I knowe full well Daunger,  
And how he is feers of his cheer,  
At prime temps, love to manace;  
Ful ofte I have ben in his caas.  
A feloun first though that he be,  
Aftir thou shalt hym souple se.  
Of longe passed I knew hym well;  
Ungoodly first though men hym feel,  
He wol meke aftir in his beryng  
3380 Been, for service and obeysshying.  
I shal thee telle what thou shalt doo.  
Mekely I rede thou go hym to,  
Of herte pray hym specialy  
Of thy trespas to have mercy,  
And hote hym wel, here to plese,

That thou shalt nevermore hym displese.

Who can best serve of flattery,

Shall please Daunger most uttirly."

Mi freend hath seid to me so wel

3390 That he me esid hath somdell,

And eke allegged of my torment;

For thurgh hym had I hardement

Agayn to Daunger for to go,

To preve if I myght meke hym soo.

To Daunger came I all ashamed,

The which afor me hadde blamed,

Desiryng for to pese my woo,

But over hegge durst I not goo,

For he forbed me the passage.

3400 I fond hym cruel in his rage,

And in his hond a gret burdoun.

To hym I knelide lowe adoun,

Ful meke of port and symple of chere,

And seide, "Sir, I am comen heere

Oonly to aske of you mercy.

That greveth me full gretly

That evere my lyf I wratthed you;

But for to amenden I am come now,

With all my myght, bothe loude and stille,

3410 To doon right at youre owne wille.

For Love made me for to doo

That I have trespassed hidirto,

Fro whom I ne may withdrawe myn hert.

Yit shall [I] never, for joy ne smert,

What so bifalle, good or ill,

Offende more ageyn youre will.

Lever I have endure disese,

Than do that you shulde displese.

"I you require and pray that ye

3420 Of me have mercy and pitee,

To stynte your ire that greveth soo,

That I wol swere for ever mo

To be redressid at youre likyng,

If I trespasse in ony thyng.

Save that I pray thee graunte me

A thyng that may not warned be,

That I may love, all oonly;

Noon other thyng of you aske I.  
I shall doon elles well, iwys,  
3430 If of youre grace ye graunte me this.  
And ye may not letten me,  
For wel wot ye that love is free,  
And I shall loven, sithen that I will,  
Who ever like it well or ill;  
And yit ne wold I, for all Fraunce,  
Do thyng to do you displesaunce."  
Thanne Daunger fil in his entent  
For to foryeve his maltalent;  
But all his wratthe yit at laste  
3440 He hath relesed, I preyde so faste.  
Shortly he seide, "Thy request  
Is not to mochel dishonest,  
Ne I wole not werne it thee,  
For yit nothyng engreveth me.  
For though thou love thus evermor,  
To me is neither softe ne soor.  
Love where that the list -- what recchith me,  
So [thou] fer fro my roses be?  
Trust not on me, for noon assay,  
3450 If ony tyme thou passe the hay."  
Thus hath he graunted my praier.  
Thanne wente I forth, withouten were,  
Unto my freend, and tolde hym all,  
Which was right joyful of my tall.  
He seide, "Now goth wel thyn affaire.  
He shall to thee be debonaire;  
Though he afor was dispitous,  
He shall heere aftir be gracious.  
If he were touchid on som good veyne,  
3460 He shuld yit rewen on thi peyne.  
Suffre, I rede, and no boost make,  
Till thou at good mes maist hym take.  
By sufferaunce and wordis softe  
A man may overcome ofte  
Hym that afor he hadde in drede,  
In bookis sothly as I rede."  
Thus hath my freend with gret comfort  
Avaunced [me] with high disport,  
Which wolde me good as mych as I.

3470 And thanne anoon full sodeynly  
I tok my leve, and streight I went  
Unto the hay, for gret talent  
I hadde to sen the fresh botoun  
Wherynne lay my salvacioun;  
And Daunger tok kep if that I  
Kepe hym covenant trewely.  
So sore I dradde his manasyng,  
I durst not breke his biddynge;  
For, lest that I were of hym shent,  
3480 I brak not his comaundement,  
For to purchase his good wil.  
It was [nat] for to come ther-til;  
His mercy was to fer bihynde.  
I wepte for I ne myght it fynde.  
I compleyned and sighed sore,  
And langwissched evermore,  
For I durst not over goo  
Unto the Rose I loved soo.  
Thurgh my demenyng outerly  
3490 Than he had knowledge certainly  
That Love me ladde in sich a wise  
That in me ther was no feyntise,  
Falsheed, ne no trecherie.  
And yit he, full of vylanye,  
Of disdeyn, and cruelte,  
On me ne wolde have pite,  
His cruel will for to refreyne,  
Though I wepe alwey, and me compleyne.  
And while I was in this torment,  
3500 Were come of grace, by God sent,  
Fraunchise, and with hir Pite.  
Fulfilde the bothen of bounte,  
They go to Daunger anoon-right  
To forther me with all her myght,  
And helpe in worde and in dede,  
For well they saugh that it was nede.  
First, of hir grace, dame Fraunchise  
Hath taken [word] of this emprise.  
She seide, "Daunger, gret wrong ye do,  
3510 To worche this man so myche woo,  
Or pynen hym so angerly;

It is to you gret villany.  
I can not see why, ne how,  
That he hath trespassed ageyn you,  
Save that he loveth, wherfore ye shulde  
The more in cherete of hym holde.  
The force of love makith hym do this;  
Who wolde hym blame he dide amys?  
He leseth more than ye may do;  
3520 His peyne is hard, ye may see, lo!  
And Love in no wise wolde consente  
That he have power to repente,  
For though that quyk ye wolde hym sloo,  
Fro love his herte may not goo.  
Now, swete sir, is it youre ese  
Hym for to angre or disese?  
Allas! what may it you avaunce  
To don to hym so gret grevaunce?  
What worship is it agayn hym take,  
3530 Or on youre man a werre make,  
Sith he so lowly, every wise,  
Is redy, as ye lust devise?  
If Love hath caught hym in his las,  
You for t' obeye in every caas,  
And ben youre suget at youre will,  
Shuld ye therfore willen hym ill?  
Ye shulde hym spare more, all out,  
Than hym that is bothe proud and stout.  
Curtesie wol that ye socoure  
3540 Hem that ben meke undir youre cure.  
His herte is hard that wole not meke,  
Whanne men of mekenesse hym biseke."  
"That is certeyn," seide Pite;  
"We se ofte that humilite  
Bothe ire and also felonye  
Venquyssheth, and also malencolye.  
To stonde forth in such duresse,  
This cruelte and wikkidnesse.  
Wherfore I pray you, sir Daunger,  
3550 For to mayntene no lenger heer  
Such cruel werre agayn youre man,  
As hoolly youres as ever he can;  
Nor that ye worchen no more woo

Upon this caytif, that langwisshith soo,  
Which wole no more to you trespasse,  
But putte hym hoolly in youre grace.  
His offense ne was but lite;  
The God of Love it was to wite,  
That he youre thrall so gretly is,  
3560 And if ye harme hym, ye don amys.  
For he hath had full hard penaunce,  
Sith that ye refte hym th' aqueyntaunce  
Of Bialacoil, his moste joye,  
Which alle his peynes myght acoye.  
He was biforn anoyed sore,  
But thanne ye doubled hym well more;  
For he of blis hath ben full bare,  
Sith Bialacoil was fro hym fare.  
Love hath to hym do gret distresse,  
3570 He hath no nede of more duresse.  
Voideth from hym youre ire, I rede;  
Ye may not wynnen in this dede.  
Makith Bialacoil repeire ageyn,  
And haveth pite upon his peyn;  
For Fraunchise wole, and I, Pite,  
That mercyful to hym ye be;  
And sith that she and I accorde,  
Have upon hym misericorde.  
For I you pray and eke moneste  
3580 Nought to refusen oure requeste,  
For he is hard and fell of thought,  
That for us twoo wole do right nought."  
Daunger ne myght no more endure;  
He mekede hym unto mesure.  
"I wole in no wise," seith Daunger,  
"Denye that ye have asked heer;  
It were to gret uncurtesie.  
I wole he have the companye  
Of Bialacoil, as ye devise;  
3590 I wole hym lette in no wise."  
To Bialacoil thanne wente in hy  
Fraunchise, and seide full curteisly,  
"Ye have to longe be deignous  
Unto this lover, and daungerous,  
Fro him to withdrawe your presence,

Which hath do to him gret offence,  
That ye not wolde upon him se,  
Wherefore a sorouful man is he.  
Shape ye to paye him, and to please,  
3600 Of my love if ye wol have ease.  
Fulfyl his wyl, sith that ye knowe  
Daunger is daunted and brought lowe  
Through help of me and of Pyte.  
You dar no more afered be."  
"I shal do right as ye wyl,"  
Saith Bialacoil, "for it is skyl,  
Sithe Daunger wol that it so be."  
Than Fraunchise hath him sent to me.  
Byalacoil at the begynnyng  
3610 Salued me in his commyng.  
No straungenesse was in him sen,  
No more than he ne had wrathed ben.  
As fayr semblaunt than shewed he me,  
And goodly, as aforndyd he;  
And by the hond, withouten doute,  
Within the haye, right al aboute  
He ladde me, with right good cher,  
Al envyron the verger,  
That Daunger hadde me chased fro.  
3620 Now have I leave overal to go;  
Now am I raysed, at my devys,  
Fro helle unto paradys.  
Thus Bialacoil, of gentylnesse,  
With al his payne and besynesse,  
Hath shewed me, only of grace,  
The estres of the swote place.  
I saw the Rose, whan I was nygh,  
Was greater woxen and more high,  
Fressh, rodde, and fayr of hewe,  
3630 Of colour ever yliche newe.  
And whan I hadde it longe sen,  
I saw that through the leves gren  
The Rose spredde to spaunysshing;  
To sene it was a goodly thyng.  
But it ne was so spred on bred  
That men within myght knowe the sed;  
For it covert was and close,



Bothe with the leves and with the rose.  
The stalke was even and grene upright,  
3640 It was theron a goodly syght;  
And wel the better, withoute wene,  
For the seed was nat sene.  
Ful fayre it spradde (God it blesse!),  
For such another, as I gesse,  
Aforne ne was, ne more vermayle.  
I was abawed for marveyle,  
For ever the fayrer that it was,  
The more I am bounden in Loves laas.  
Longe I abod there, soth to saye,  
3650 Tyl Bialacoil I gan to praye,  
Whan that I saw him in no wyse  
To me warnen his servyse,  
That he me wolde graunt a thyng,  
Which to remembre is wel syttyng;  
This is to sayn, that of his grace  
He wolde me yeve leysar and space,  
To me that was so desyrous,  
To have a kyssynge precious  
Of the goodly fresshe Rose,  
3660 That so swetely smelleth in my nose.  
"For if it you displeased nought,  
I wolde gladly, as I have sought,  
Have a cos therof freely,  
Of your yefte; for certainly,  
I wol non have but by your leve,  
So loth me were you for to greve."  
He sayde, "Frend, so God me spede,  
Of Chastite I have such drede;  
Thou shuldest nat warned be for me,  
3670 But I dar nat for Chastyte.  
Agayn her dar I nat mysdo,  
For alway byddeth she me so  
To yeve no lover leave to kys,  
For who therto may wynnen, ywis,  
He of the surplus of the pray  
May lyve in hoope to get som day.  
For whoso kyssynge may attayne  
Of loves payne hath (soth to sayne)  
The beste and most avenaunt,

3680 And ernest of the remenaunt."  
Of his answer I sighed sore;  
I durst assaye him tho no more,  
I hadde such drede to greve him ay.  
A man shulde nat to moche assay  
To chafe hys frend out of measure,  
Nor putte his lyf in aventure;  
For no man at the firste strok  
Ne may nat felle down an ok,  
Nor of the reysyns have the wyn,  
3690 Tyl grapes be ripe, and wel afyn  
Be sore empressid, I you ensure,  
And drawen out of the pressure.  
But I, forpeyned wonder stronge,  
Thought that I abood right longe  
Aftir the kis, in peyne and woo,  
Sith I to kis desired soo;  
Till that, rewyng on my distresse,  
Ther to me Venus the goddesse,  
Which ay werreyeth Chastite,  
3700 Cam of hir grace to socoure me,  
Whos myght is knowe fer and wide,  
For she is modir of Cupide,  
The God of Love, blynde as stoon,  
That helpith lovers many oon.  
This lady brought in hir right hond  
Of brennyng fyr a blasynge brond,  
Wherof the flawme and hote fir  
Hath many a lady in desir  
Of love brought, and sore het,  
3710 And in hir servise her hertes set.  
This lady was of good entaile,  
Right wondirfull of apparayle.  
Bi hir atyr so bright and shen  
Men myght perceyve well and sen  
She was not of religioun.  
Nor I nell make mencion  
Nor of robe, nor of tresour,  
Of broche, neithir of hir riche attour,  
Ne of hir girdill aboute hir side,  
3720 For that I nyll not longe abide.  
But knowith wel that certeynly

She was araied richely.  
Devoyd of pryde certeyn she was.  
To Bialacoil she wente apas,  
And to hym shortly, in a clause,  
She seide, "Sir, what is the cause  
Ye ben of port so daungerous  
Unto this lover and deynous,  
To graunte hym nothyng but a kis?  
3730 To werne it hym ye don amys,  
Sith well ye wote how that he  
Is Loves servaunt, as ye may see,  
And hath beaute, wherthrough [he] is  
Worthy of love to have the blis.  
How he is semely, biholde and see,  
How he is fair, how he is free,  
How he is swoote and debonair,  
Of age yong, lusty, and fair.  
Ther is no lady so hawteyn,  
3740 Duchesse, ne countesse, ne chasteleyn,  
That I nolde holde hir ungoodly  
For to refuse hym outterly.  
His breth is also good and swete,  
And eke his lippis rody, and mete  
Oonly to pleyen and to kisse.  
Graunte hym a kis, of gentilnysse!  
His teth arn also white and clene;  
Me thinkith wrong, withouten wene,  
If ye now werne hym, trustith me,  
3750 To graunte that a kis have he.  
The lasse to helpe hym that ye haste,  
The more tyme shul ye waste."  
Whanne the flawme of the verry brond,  
That Venus brought in hir right hond,  
Hadde Bialacoil with hete smete,  
Anoon he bad, withouten lette,  
Graunte to me the Rose kisse.  
Thanne of my peyne I gan to lysse,  
And to the Rose anoon wente I,  
3760 And kyside it full feithfully.  
Thar no man aske if I was blithe,  
Whanne the savour soft and lythe  
Strok to myn herte withoute more,

And me alegged of my sore,  
So was I full of joye and blisse.  
It is fair sich a flour to kisse,  
It was so swoote and saverous.  
I myght not be so angwisshous  
That I [ne] mote glad and joly be,  
3770 Whanne that I remembre me.  
Yit ever among, sothly to seyne,  
I suffre noy and moche peyne.  
The see may never be so stille  
That with a litel wynde it nille  
Overwhelme and turne also,  
As it were wood in wawis goo.  
Aftir the calm the trouble sone  
Mot folowe and chaunge as the moone.  
Right so farith Love, that selde in oon  
3780 Holdith his anker, for right anoon  
Whanne they in ese wene best to lyve,  
They ben with tempest all fordryve.  
Who serveth Love can telle of woo;  
The stoundemele joie mot overgoo.  
Now he hurteth, and now he cureth.  
For selde in oo poynt Love endureth.  
Now is it right me to procede,  
How Shame gan medle and take hede  
Thurgh whom fele angres I have had,  
3790 And how the stronge wall was maad,  
And the castell of brede and lengthe,  
That God of Love wan with his strengthe.  
All this in romance will I sette,  
And for nothyng ne will I lette,  
So that it lykyng to hir be,  
That is the flour of beaute,  
For she may best my labour quyte,  
That I for hir love shal endite.  
Wikkid-Tunge, that the covyne  
3800 Of every lover can devyne  
Worst, and addith more somdell  
(For Wikkid-Tunge seith never well),  
To me-ward bar he right gret hate,  
Espying me erly and late,  
Till he hath sen the grete chere

Of Bialacoil and me ifeere.  
He myghte not his tunge withstond  
Worse to reporte than he fond,  
He was so full of cursed rage.  
3810 It sat hym well of his lynage,  
For hym an Irish womman bar.  
His tunge was fyled sharp and squar,  
Poignaunt, and right kervyng,  
And wonder bitter in spekyng.  
For whanne that he me gan espie,  
He swoor, affermyng sikirlye,  
Bitwene Bialacoil and me  
Was yvel aquayntaunce and pryve.  
He spak therof so folily  
3820 That he awakide Jelousy,  
Which, all afrayed in his risyng,  
Whanne that he herde janglyng,  
He ran anoon, as he were wood,  
To Bialacoil, there that he stod,  
Which hadde lever in this caas  
Have ben at Reynes or Amyas;  
For foot-hoot, in his felonye,  
To hym thus seide Jelousie:  
"Why hast thou ben so negligent  
3830 To kepen, whanne I was absent,  
This verger heere left in thi ward?  
To me thou haddist no reward,  
To truste (to thy confusioun!)  
Hym thus, to whom suspeccioun  
I have right gret, for it is nede;  
It is well shewed by the dede.  
Gret faute in thee now have I founde.  
By God, anoon thou shalt be bounde,  
And faste loken in a tour,  
3840 Withoute refuyt or socour.  
For Shame to longe hath be thee froo;  
Over-soone she was agoo.  
Whanne thou hast lost bothe drede and feere,  
It semede wel she was not heere.  
She was bisy in no wyse  
To kepe thee and chastise,  
And for to helpen Chastite

To kepe the roser, as thenkith me.  
For thanne this boy-knave so booldely  
3850 Ne shulde not have be hardy,  
[Ne] in this verger hadde such game,  
Which now me turneth to gret shame."  
Bialacoil nyste what to sey;  
Full fayn he wolde have fled away,  
For feere han hid, nere that he  
All sodeynly tok hym with me.  
And whanne I saugh he hadde soo,  
This Jelousie, take us twoo,  
I was astoned, and knew no red,  
3860 But fledde away for verrey dred.  
Thanne Shame cam forth full symply  
(She wende have trespaced full gretly),  
Humble of hir port, and made it symple,  
Weryng a vayle in stide of wymple,  
As nonnys don in her abbey.  
By cause hir herte was in affray,  
She gan to speke withynne a throwe  
To Jelousie right wonder lowe.  
First of his grace she bysought,  
3870 And seide, "Sire, ne leveth nought  
Wikkid-Tunge, that false espie,  
Which is so glad to feyne and lye.  
He hath you maad, thurgh flateryng,  
On Bialacoil a fals lesyng.  
His falsnesse is not now a-new;  
It is to long that he hym knew.  
This is not the firste day,  
For Wikkid-Tunge hath custome ay  
Yonge folkis to bewreye,  
3880 And false lesynges on hem leye.  
"Yit nevertheles I see among,  
That the loigne it is so long,  
Of Bialacoil, hertis to lure,  
In Loves servyse for to endure,  
Drawyng suche folk hym to,  
That he hath nothyng with to doo.  
But in sothnesse I trowe nought  
That Bialacoil hadde ever in thought  
To do trespass or vylonye,

3890 But for his modir Curtesie  
Hath taught hym ever to be  
Good of aqueyntaunce and pryve.  
For he loveth noon hevynesse,  
But mirthe and pley and all gladnesse;  
He hateth alle trecherous,  
Soleyn folk, and envious;  
For ye witen how that he  
Wol ever glad and joyfull be  
Honestly with folk to pley.  
3900 I have be negligent, in good fey,  
To chastise hym; therfore now I  
Of herte crye you heere mercy,  
That I have been so recheles  
To tamen hym, withouten lees.  
Of my foly I me repente.  
Now wole I hool sette myn entente  
To kepe, bothe lowde and stille,  
Bialacoil to do youre wille."  
"Shame, Shame," seyde Jelousy,  
3910 "To be bytrashed gret drede have I.  
Leccherie hath clombe so hye  
That almoost blered is myn ye;  
No wonder is, if that drede have I.  
Overall regnyth Lecchery,  
Whos myght growith nyght and day  
Bothe in cloistre and in abbey.  
Chastite is werreyed overall;  
Therfore I wole with siker wall  
Close bothe roses and roser.  
3920 I have to longe in this maner  
Left hem unclosid wilfully;  
Wherfore I am right inwardly  
Sorowfull, and repente me.  
But now they shall no lenger be  
Unclosid; and yit I drede sore,  
I shall repente ferthermore,  
For the game goth all amys.  
Counsell I must newe, ywys.  
I have to longe trusted thee,  
3930 But now it shal no lenger be,  
For he may best, in every cost,

Disceyve, that men tristen most.  
I see wel that I am nygh shent,  
But if I sette my full entent  
Remedye to purveye.  
Therefore close I shall the weye  
Fro hem that wole the Rose espie,  
And come to wayte me vilonye,  
For, in good feith and in trouthe,  
3940 I wole not lette for no slouthe  
To lyve the more in sikirnesse,  
To make anon a forteresse,  
T' enclose the roses of good savour.  
In myddis shall I make a tour  
To putte Bialacoil in prisoun,  
For evere I drede me of tresoun.  
I trowe I shal hym kepe soo  
That he shal have no myght to goo  
Aboute to make companye  
3950 To hem that thenke of vylanye;  
Ne to no such as hath ben heere  
Afor, and founde in hym good chere,  
Which han assailed hym to shende,  
And with her trowandyse to blende.  
A fool is eythe to bigyle;  
But may I lyve a litel while,  
He shal forthenke his fair semblaunt."  
And with that word came Drede avaunt,  
Which was abasshed and in gret fere,  
3960 Whanne he wiste Jelousie was there.  
He was for drede in sich affray  
That not a word durste he say,  
But quakyng stod full still aloon,  
Til Jelousie his weye was gon,  
Save Shame, that him not forsok.  
Bothe Drede and she ful sore quok,  
That atte laste Drede abreyde,  
And to his cosyn Shame seide:  
"Shame," he seide, "in sothfastnesse,  
3970 To me it is gret hevynesse  
That the noyse so fer is go,  
And the sclaundre of us twoo.  
But sithe that it is byfalle,



We may it not ageyn calle  
Whanne onys sprongen is a fame.  
For many a yeer withouten blame  
We han ben, and many a day;  
For many an Aprill and many a May  
We han passed, not shamed,  
3980 Till Jelousie hath us blamed,  
Of mystrust and suspecioune,  
Causeles, withoute enchesoun.  
Go we to Daunger hastily,  
And late us shewe hym openly  
That [he] hath not aright wrought,  
Whanne that [he] sette nought his thought  
To kepe better the purprise;  
In his doying he is not wise.  
He hath to us do gret wrong,  
3990 That hath suffred now so long  
Bialacoil to have his wille,  
All his lustes to fulfille.  
He must amende it utterly,  
Or ellys shall he vilaynesly  
Exiled be out of this lond;  
For he the werre may not withstond  
Of Jelousie, nor the greif,  
Sith Bialacoil is at myscheef."  
To Daunger, Shame and Drede anon  
4000 The righte weye ben goon.  
The cherl thei founden hem afor,  
Liggyng undir an hawethorn;  
Undir his heed no pilowe was,  
But in the stede a trusse of gras.  
He slombred, and a nappe he tok,  
Tyll Shame pitously hym shok,  
And grete manace on hym gan make.  
"Why slepist thou, whanne thou shulde wake?"  
Quod Shame; "Thou doist us vylanye!  
4010 Who tristith thee, he doth folye,  
To kepe roses or botouns,  
Whanne thei ben faire in her sesouns.  
Thou art woxe to familiere,  
Where thou shulde be straunge of chere,  
Stout of thi port, redy to greve.

Thou doist gret folye for to leve  
Bialacoil hereinne to calle  
The yonder man to shenden us alle.  
Though that thou slepe, we may here  
4020 Of Jelousie gret noyse heere.  
Art thou now late? Ris up in hy,  
And stop sone and delyverly  
All the gappis of the haye.  
Do no favour, I thee praye.  
It fallith nothyng to thy name  
To make faire semblaunt, where thou maist blame.  
Yf Bialacoil be sweete and free,  
Dogged and fell thou shuldist be,  
Froward and outrageous, ywis;  
4030 A cherl chaungeth that curteis is.  
This have I herd ofte in seiying,  
That man [ne] may, for no dauntyng,  
Make a sperhawk of a bosard.  
Alle men wole holde thee for musard,  
That debonair have founden thee;  
It sittith thee nought curteis to be.  
To do men plesaunce or servise,  
In thee it is recreaundise.  
Let thi werkis fer and ner  
4040 Be like thi name, which is Daunger."  
Thanne, all abawid in shewing,  
Anoon spak Drede, right thus seiying,  
And seide, "Daunger, I drede me  
That thou ne wolt bisy be  
To kepe that thou hast to kepe:  
Whanne thou shuldist wake, thou art aslepe.  
Thou shalt be greved, certeynly,  
If the asprie Jelousy,  
Or if he fynde thee in blame.  
4050 He hath to-day assailed Shame,  
And chased away with gret manace  
Bialacoil out of this place,  
And swereth shortly that he shall  
Enclose hym in a sturdy wall;  
And all is for thi wikkednesse,  
For that thee faileth straungenesse.  
Thyn herte, I trowe, be failed all;

Thou shalt repente in speciall,  
If Jelousie the soothe knewe;  
4060 Thou shalt forthenke and sore rewe."  
With that the cherl his clubbe gan shake,  
Frounyng his eyen gan to make,  
And hidous chere; as man in rage  
For ire he brente in his visage,  
Whanne that [he] herd hym blamed soo.  
He seide, "Out of my wit I goo!  
To be discomfyt I have gret wrong.  
Certis, I have now lyved to long,  
Sith I may not this closer kepe.  
4070 All quyk I wolde be dolven deepe,  
If ony man shal more repeire  
Into this gardyn, for foule or faire.  
Myn herte for ire goth a-fere,  
That I let ony entre heere.  
I have do folie, now I see,  
But now it shall amended bee.  
Who settith foot heere ony more,  
Truly he shall repente it sore;  
For no man moo into this place  
4080 Of me to entre shal have grace.  
Lever I hadde with swerdis tweyne  
Thurghoute myn herte in every veyne  
Perced to be with many a wounde,  
Thanne slouthe shulde in me be founde.  
From hennes forth, by nyght or day,  
I shall defende it, if I may,  
Withouten ony excepcioun  
Of ech maner condicioun.  
And if I it eny man graunt,  
4090 Holdeth me for recreaunt."  
Thanne Daunger on his feet gan stond,  
And hente a burdoun in his hond.  
Wroth in his ire, ne lefte he nought,  
But thurgh the verger he hath sought.  
If he myght fynde hole or trace,  
Wherethurgh that me mot forth-by pace,  
Or ony gappe, he dide it close,  
That no man myghte touche a rose  
Of the roser all aboute.

4100 He shitteth every man withoute.  
Thus day by day Daunger is wers,  
More wondirfull and more dyvers,  
And feller eke than evere he was.  
For hym full ofte I synge "Allas!"  
For I ne may nought, thurgh his ire,  
Recovere that I moost desire.  
Myn herte, alas, wole brest a-twoo,  
For Bialacoil I wratthed soo.  
For certeynly, in every membre  
4110 I quake, whanne I me remembre  
Of the botoun, which I wolde  
Full ofte a day sen and biholde.  
And whanne I thenke upon the kiss,  
And how myche joye and bliss  
I hadde thurgh the savour swete,  
For want of it I grone and grete.  
Me thenkith I fele yit in my nose  
The swete savour of the Rose.  
And now I woot that I mot goo  
4120 So fer the freshe floures froo,  
To me full welcome were the deth.  
Absens therof, alas, me sleeth.  
For whilom with this Rose -- alas! --  
I touched nose, mouth, and face;  
But now the deth I must abide.  
But Love consente another tyde  
That onys I touche may and kisse,  
I trowe my peyne shall never lisse;  
Theron is all my coveitise,  
4130 Which brent myn herte in many wise.  
Now shal repaire agayn sighinge,  
Long wacche on nyghtis, and no slepinge,  
Thought in wisshing, torment and woo,  
With many a turnyng to and froo,  
That half my peyne I can not telle.  
For I am fallen into helle  
From paradys, and wel the more  
My turment greveth. more and more  
Anoieth now the bittirnesse,  
4140 That I toforn have felt swetnesse.  
And Wikkid-Tunge, thurgh his falshede,

Causeth all my woo and drede.  
On me he leieth a pitous charge,  
Bicause his tunge was to large.  
Now it is tyme, shortly, that I  
Telle you som thyng of Jelousy,  
That was in gret suspecioun.  
Aboute hym lefte he no masoun,  
That stoon coude leye, ne querroure;  
4150 He hirede hem to make a tour.  
And first, the roses for to kep,  
Aboute hem made he a dicke deep,  
Right wondir large, and also brood;  
Upon the whiche also stod  
Of squared stoon a sturdy wall,  
Which on a cragge was founded all;  
And right gret thikkenesse eke it bar.  
Aboute, it was founded squar,  
An hundred fademe on every sid;  
4160 It was all liche longe and wid.  
Lest ony tyme it were assayled,  
Ful wel aboute it was batayled,  
And rounde envirooun eke were set  
Ful many a riche and fair touret.  
At every corner of this wall  
Was set a tour full pryncipall;  
And everich hadde, withoute fable,  
A porte-colys defensable  
To kepe of enemyes, and to greve,  
4170 That there her force wolde preve.  
And eke amydd this purprise  
Was maad a tour of gret maistrise;  
A fairer saugh no man with sight,  
Large and wid, and of gret myght.  
They dredde noon assaut  
Of gyn, gunne, nor skaffaut.  
The temperure of the mortar  
Was maad of lycour wonder der,  
Of quykke lym, persant and egre,  
4180 The which was tempred with vynegre.  
The stoon was hard, of ademan,  
Wherof they made the foundement.  
The tour was round, maad in compas;

In all this world no riccher was,  
Ne better ordeigned therwithall.  
Aboute the tour was maad a wall,  
So that bitwixt that and the tour  
Rosers were sette of swete savour,  
With many roses that thei bere;  
4190 And eke withynne the castell were  
Spryngoldes, gunnes, bows, and archers;  
And eke above, atte corners,  
Men seyn over the wall stonde  
Grete engynes, who were nygh honde.  
And in the kernels, heere and there,  
Of arblasters gret plente were;  
Noon armure myght her strok withstonde;  
It were foly to prece to honde.  
Withoute the dicke were lystes maad,  
4200 With wall batayled large and brad,  
For men and hors shulde not atteyne  
To neigh the dyche over the pleyne.  
Thus Jelousie hath enviroun  
Set aboute his garnysoun  
With walles rounde and dicke dep,  
Oonly the roser for to kep.  
And Daunger, erly and late,  
The keyes [kepte] of the utter gate,  
The which openeth toward the eest.  
4210 And he hadde with hym atte leest  
Thritty servauntes, echon by name.  
That other gate kepte Shame,  
Which openede, as it was couth,  
Toward the partie of the south.  
Sergeauntes assigned were hir to  
Ful many, hir wille for to doo.  
Thanne Drede hadde in hir baillie  
The kepyng of the conestablerye  
Toward the north, I undirstond,  
4220 That openyde upon the lyft hond;  
The which for nothyng may be sure,  
But if she do bisy cure,  
Erly on morowe and also late,  
Strongly to shette and barre the gate.  
Of every thing that she may see

Drede is aferd, wherso she be;  
For with a puff of litell wynd  
Drede is astonyed in hir mynd.  
Therefore, for stelyng of the Rose,  
4230 I rede hir nought the yate uncloze.  
A foulis flight wol make hir flee,  
And eke a shadowe, if she it see.  
Thanne Wikked-Tunge, ful of envye,  
With soudiours of Normandye,  
As he that causeth all the bate,  
Was keper of the fourthe gate,  
And also to the tother three  
He wente full ofte for to see.  
Whanne his lot was to wake anyght,  
4240 His instrumentis wolde he dight,  
For to blowe and make sown  
Ofter thanne he hath enchesoun,  
And walken oft upon the wall,  
Corners and wikettis overall  
Full narwe serchen and espie;  
Though he nought fond, yit wolde he lye.  
Discordaunt ever fro armonye,  
And distoned from melodie,  
Controve he wolde, and foule fayle,  
4250 With hornepipes of Cornewaile.  
In floytes made he discordaunce,  
And in his musyk -- with myschaunce! --  
He wolde seyn, with notes newe,  
That he fond no womman trewe,  
Ne that he saugh never in his lyf  
Unto hir husbonde a trewe wyf,  
Ne noon so ful of honeste  
That she nyl laughe and mery be  
Whanne that she hereth, or may espie,  
4260 A man speken of leccherie.  
Everich of hem hath som vice:  
Oon is dishonest, another is nyce;  
If oon be full of vylanye,  
Another hath a likerous ye;  
If oon be full of wantonesse,  
Another is a chideresse.  
Thus Wikked-Tunge -- God yeve him shame! --

Can putt hem everychon in blame,  
Withoute desert and causeles;  
4270 He lieth, though they ben giltles.  
I have pite to sen the sorwe  
That waketh bothe eve and morwe,  
To innocentis doith such grevaunce.  
I pray God yeve him evel chaunce,  
That he ever so bisy is  
Of ony womman to seyn amys!  
Eke Jelousie God confound,  
That hath maad a tour so round,  
And made aboute a garisoun,  
4280 To sette Bealacoil in prisoun,  
The which is shet there in the tour  
Ful longe to holde there sojour,  
There for to lyve in penaunce.  
And for to do hym more grevaunce,  
Ther hath ordeyned Jelousie  
An olde vekke, for to espye  
The maner of his governaunce;  
The whiche devel in hir enfaunce  
Hadde lerned of loves art,  
4290 And of his pleyes tok hir part;  
She was expert in his servise.  
She knew ech wrench and every gise  
Of love, and every wile;  
It was [the] harder hir to gile.  
Of Bealacoil she tok ay hede,  
That evere he lyveth in woo and drede.  
He kepte hym koy and eke pryve,  
Lest in hym she hadde see  
Ony folly countenaunce,  
4300 For she knew all the olde daunce.  
And aftir this, whanne Jelousie  
Hadde Bealacoil in his baillie,  
And shette hym up that was so fre,  
For seur of hym he wolde be,  
He trusteth sore in his castell;  
The stronge werk hym liketh well.  
He dradde not that no glotouns  
Shulde stele his roses or botouns.  
The roses weren assured all,



4310 Defenced with the stronge wall.  
Now Jalousie full well may be  
Of drede devoid in liberte,  
Whether that he slepe or wake,  
For his roses may noon be take.  
But I -- alas! -- now morne shall;  
Bicause I was withoute the wall,  
Full moche dool and moone I made.  
Who hadde wist what woo I hadde,  
I trowe he wolde have had pite.  
4320 Love to deere hadde soold to me  
The good that of his love hadde I.  
I wende a bought it all queyntly;  
But now, thurgh doublyng of my peyn,  
I see he wolde it selle ageyn,  
And me a newe bargeyn leere,  
The which all-oute the more is deere,  
For the solas that I have lorn,  
Thanne I hadde it never afor.  
Certayn, I am ful lik in deed  
4330 To hym that cast in erthe his seed,  
And hath joie of the newe spryng,  
Whanne it greneth in the gynnyng,  
And is also fair and fresh of flour,  
Lusty to seen, swoote of odour;  
But er he it in sheves shere,  
May falle a weder that shal it dere,  
And make it to fade and falle,  
The stalke, the greyn, and floures alle,  
That to the tylyer is fordon  
4340 The hope that he hadde to soon.  
I drede, certeyn, that so fare I;  
For hope and travaile sikerly  
Ben me byraft all with a storm;  
The flour nyl seeden of my corn.  
For Love hath so avaunced me,  
Whanne I bigan my pryvite  
To Bialacoil all for to tel,  
Whom I ne fond froward ne fel,  
But tok a-gree all hool my play.  
4350 But Love is of so hard assay,  
That al at oonys he reved me,

Whanne I wende best aboven to have be.  
It is of Love, as of Fortune,  
That chaungeth ofte, and nyl contune,  
Which whilom wol on folk smyle,  
And glowmbe on hem another while.  
Now freend, now foo, [thow] shalt hir feel,  
For [in] a twynklyng turneth hir wheel.  
She can writhe hir heed away;  
4360 This is the concours of hir pley.  
She can areise that doth morne,  
And whirle adown, and overturne  
Who sittith hiest, but as hir lust.  
A fool is he that wole hir trust;  
For it is I that am come down  
Thurgh change and revolucioun!  
Sith Bealacoil mot fro me twynne,  
Shet in the prisoun yond withynne,  
His absence at myn herte I fele;  
4370 For all my joye and all myn hele  
Was in hym and in the Rose,  
That but yon wal, which hym doth close,  
Opene that I may hym see,  
Love nyl not that I cured be  
Of the peynes that I endure,  
Nor of my cruel aventure.  
A, Bialacoil, myn owne deer!  
Though thou be now a prisoner,  
Kep atte leste thyn herte to me  
4380 And suffre not that it daunted be;  
Ne lat not Jelousie, in his rage,  
Putten thin herte in no servage.  
Although he chastice thee withoute  
And make thy body unto hym loute,  
Have herte as hard as dyamaunt,  
Stedefast and nought pliaunt.  
In prisoun though thi body be,  
At large kep thyn herte free;  
A trewe herte wole not plie  
4390 For no manace that it may drye.  
If Jelousie doth thee payn,  
Quyte hym his while thus agayn,  
To venge thee, atte leest in thought,

If other way thou maist nought;  
And in this wise sotilly  
Worche, and wyne the maistry.  
But yit I am in gret affray  
Lest thou do not as I say.  
I drede thou canst me gret maugre,  
4400 That thou enprisoned art for me;  
But that [is. not for my trespas,  
For thurgh me never discovred was  
Yit thyng that oughte be secree.  
Wel more anoy is in me,  
Than is in thee, of this myschaunce;  
For I endure more hard penaunce,  
Than ony can seyn or thynke,  
That for the sorwe almost I synke.  
Whanne I remembre me of my woo,  
4410 Full nygh out of my witt I goo.  
Inward myn herte I feeble blede,  
For comfortles the deth I drede.  
Owe I not wel to have distresse,  
Whanne false, thurgh hir wikkednesse,  
And traitours, that are envious,  
To noyen me be so corajous?  
A, Bialacoil, full wel I see  
That they hem shape to disceyve thee,  
To make thee buxom to her lawe,  
4420 And with her corde thee to drawe  
Where so hem lust, right at her will.  
I drede they have thee brought thertill.  
Withoute comfort, thought me sleeth.  
This game wole brynge me to my deeth.  
For if youre goode wille I leese,  
I mot be deed, I may not chese.  
And if that thou foryete me,  
Myn herte shal nevere in likyng be,  
Nor elleswhere fynde solas,  
4430 If I be putt out of youre gras --  
As it shal never been, I hope --  
Thanne shulde I falle in wanhope.  
Allas, in wanhope? Nay, pardee!  
For I wole never dispeired be.  
If hope me faile, thanne am I

Ungracious and unworthy.  
In hope I wole comforted be,  
For Love, whanne he bitaught hir me,  
Seide that Hope, whereso I goo,  
4440 Shulde ay be relees to my woo.  
But what and she my baalis beete,  
And be to me curteis and sweete?  
She is in nothyng full certeyn.  
Lovers she putt in full gret peyn,  
And makith hem with woo to deele.  
Hir faire biheeste disceyveth feele,  
For she wole byhote, sikirly,  
And failen aftir outrely.  
A, that is a full noyous thyng!  
4450 For many a lover, in lovyng,  
Hangeth upon hir, and trusteth faste,  
Whiche leese her travel at the laste.  
Of thyng to comen she woot right nought;  
Therefore, if it be wysely sought,  
Hir counseill foly is to take.  
For many tymes, whanne she wole make  
A full good silogisme, I dreede  
That aftirward ther shal in deede  
Folwe an evell conclusioun.  
4460 This put me in confusioun.  
For many tymes I have it seen,  
That many have bigyled been  
For trust that they have set in Hope,  
Which fell hem aftirward a-slope.  
But nevertheles, yit gladly she wolde  
That he, that wole hym with hir holde,  
Hadde alle tymes his purpos cler,  
Withoute deceyte or ony wer --  
That she desireth sikirly.  
4470 Whanne I hir blamed, I dide foly.  
But what avayleth hir good wille,  
Whanne she ne may staunche my stounde ille?  
That helpith litel that she may doo,  
Out-take biheest unto my woo.  
And heeste certeyn, in no wise,  
Withoute yift, is not to prise.  
Whanne heest and deede a-sundry varie,

They doon a gret contrarie.  
Thus am I possed up and down  
4480 With dool, thought, and confusioun;  
Of my disese ther is no noumbre.  
Daunger and Shame me encumbre,  
Drede also, and Jelousie,  
And Wikked-Tunge, full of envie,  
Of whiche the sharpe and cruel ire  
Full ofte me putte in gret martire.  
They han my joye fully let,  
Sith Bialacoil they have bishet  
Fro me in prisoun wikkidly,  
4490 Whom I love so entierly  
That it wole my bane bee  
But I the sonner may hym see.  
And yit moreover, wurst of alle,  
Ther is set to kepe -- foule hir bifalle! --  
A rympled vekke, fer ronne in age,  
Frownyng and yelow in hir visage,  
Which in awayt lyth day and nyght,  
That noon of him may have a sight.  
Now mote my sorwe enforced be.  
4500 Full soth it is that Love yaf me  
Three wonder yiftes of his grace,  
Whiche I have lorn now in this place,  
Sith they ne may, withoute drede,  
Helpen but lytel, who taketh heede.  
For here availeth no Swete-Thought,  
And Sweete-Speche helpith right nought.  
The thridde was called Swete-Lokyng,  
That now is lorn, without lesyng.  
Yiftes were faire, but not forthy  
4510 They helpe me but symply,  
But Bialacoil loosed be,  
To gon at large and to be free.  
For hym my lyf lyth all in doute,  
But if he come the rather oute.  
Allas, I trowe it wole not ben!  
For how shuld I evermore hym sen?  
He may not out, and that is wrong,  
By cause the tour is so strong.  
How shulde he out? By whos prowesse,

4520 Out of so strong a forteresse?  
By me, certeyn, it nyl be doo;  
God woot, I have no wit therto!  
But, wel I woot, I was in rage,  
Whonne I to Love dide homage.  
Who was in cause, in sothfastnesse,  
But hirsilf, Dame Idelnesse,  
Which me conveied, thurgh my praier,  
To entre into that faire verger.  
She was to blame me to leve,  
4530 The which now doth me soore greve.  
A foolis word is nought to trowe,  
Ne worth an appel for to lowe;  
Men shulde hym snybbe bittirly,  
At pryme temps of his foly.  
I was a fool, and she me leaved,  
Thurgh whom I am right nought releved.  
She accomplisshid all my will,  
That now me greveth wondir ill.  
Resoun me seide what shulde falle.  
4540 A fool mysilf I may well calle,  
That love asyde I had [nat] leyde,  
And trowed that Dame Resoun seide.  
Resoun hadde bothe skile and ryght,  
Whanne she me blamed, with all hir myght,  
To medle of love that hath me shent;  
But certeyn, now I wole repent.  
And shulde I repente? Nay, parde!  
A fals traitour thanne shulde I be.  
The develes engynnes wolde me take,  
4550 If I my lord wolde forsake,  
Or Bialacoil falsly bitraye.  
Shulde I at myscheef hate hym? Nay,  
Sith he now, for his curtesie,  
Is in prisoun of Jelousie.  
Curtesie certeyn dide he me,  
So mych that may not yolden be,  
Whanne he the hay passen me let,  
To kisse the Rose, faire and swet.  
Shulde I therfore cunne hym mawgre?  
4560 Nay, certeynly, it shal not be;  
For Love shal nevere, yif God wille,

Here of me, thurgh word or wille,  
Offence or complaynt, more or lesse,  
Neither of Hope nor Idilnesse.  
For certis, it were wrong that I  
Hated hem for her curtesy.  
Ther is not ellys but suffre and thynke,  
And waken whanne I shulde wynke;  
Abide in hope, til Love, thurgh chaunce,  
4570 Sende me socour or allegeaunce,  
Expectant ay till I may mete  
To geten mercy of that swete.  
Whilom I thenke how Love to me  
Seide he wolde take att gree  
My servise, if unpacience  
[Ne] caused me to don offence.  
He seide, "In thank I shal it take,  
And high maister eke thee make,  
If wikkednesse ne reve it thee;  
4580 But sone, I trowe, that shall not be."  
These were his wordis, by and by;  
It semede he lovede me trewely.  
Now is ther not but serve hym wel,  
If that I thenke his thank to fel.  
My good, myn harm lyth hool in me.  
In Love may no defaute be,  
For trewe Love ne failide never man.  
Sothly the faute mot nedys than --  
As God forbede! -- be founde in me;  
4590 And how it cometh, I can not see.  
Now late it goon as it may goo;  
Whether Love wole socoure me or sloo,  
He may do hool on me his will.  
I am so sore bounde hym till,  
From his servise I may not fleen;  
For lyf and deth, withouten wen,  
Is in his hand -- I may not chese --  
He may me doo bothe wynne and leese.  
And sith so sore he doth me greve,  
4600 Yit, if my lust he wolde acheve,  
To Bialacoil goodly to be,  
I yeve no force what felle on me.  
For though I dye, as I mot nede,

I praye Love, of his goodlyhede,  
To Bialacoil do gentylnesse,  
For whom I lyve in such distresse  
That I mot deyen for penaunce.  
But first, withoute repentaunce,  
I wole me confesse in good entent,  
4610 And make in haste my testament,  
As lovers doon that feelen smert:  
To Bialacoil leve I myn hert  
All hool, withoute departyng,  
Doublenesse of repentyng.  
Thus, as I made my passage  
In compleynt and in cruel rage,  
And I not where to fynde a leche  
That couth. unto myn helpyng eche,  
Sodeynly agayn comen down  
4620 Out of hir tour I saugh Resoun,  
Discret and wis and full plesaunt,  
And of hir port full avenaunt.  
The righte weye she took to me,  
Which stod in gret perplexite,  
That was possshed in every side,  
That I nyst where I myght abide,  
Till she, demurely sad of cher,  
Seide to me, as she com ner,  
"Myn owne freend, art thou yit greved?  
4630 How is this quarell yit acheved  
Of Loves side? Anoon me telle.  
Hast thou not yit of love thi fille?  
Art thou not wery of thy servise,  
That the hath [greved] in sich wise?  
What joye hast thou in thy lovyng?  
Is it swete or bitter thing?  
Canst thou yit chese, lat me see,  
What best thi socour myghte be?  
"Thou servest a full noble lord,  
4640 That maketh thee thrall for thi reward,  
Which ay renewith thy turment,  
With foly so he hath thee blent.  
Thou fell in myscheef thilke day  
Whanne thou didist, the sothe to say,  
Obeysaunce and eke homage.



Thou wroughtest nothyng as the sage,  
Whanne thou bicam his liege man.  
Thou didist a gret foly than,  
Thou wistest not what fell therto,  
4650 With what lord thou haddist to do.  
If thou haddist hym wel knowe,  
Thou haddist nought be brought so lowe;  
For if thou wistest what it wer,  
Thou noldist serve hym half a yeer,  
Not a weke, nor half a day,  
Ne yit an hour, withoute delay,  
Ne never han loved paramours,  
His lordshipp is so full of shours.  
Knowest hym ought?" L'amaunt "Ye, dame, parde!"  
4660 Raisoun "Nay, nay." L'amaunt "Yis, I." Raisoun "Wherof? Late se."  
4661 L'amaunt "Of that he seide I shulde be  
Glad to have sich lord as he,  
And maister of sich seignorie."  
Raisoun "Knowist hym no more?" L'amaunt "Nay, certis, I,  
Save that he yaf me rewles there,  
And wente his wey, I nyste where,  
And I abood, bounde in balaunce."  
Raisoun "Lo, there a noble conisaunce!  
But I wille that thou knowe hym now,  
4670 Gynnyng and eende, sith that thou  
Art so anguisshous and mate,  
Disfigured out of astate;  
Ther may no wrecche have more of woo,  
Ne caytyf noon enduren soo.  
It were to every man sitting  
Of his lord have knowleching;  
For if thou knewe hym, out of doute,  
Lightly thou shulde escapen oute  
Of the prisoun that marreth thee."  
4680 L'amant "Ye, dame, sith my lord is he,  
And I his man, maad with myn hond,  
I wolde right fayn undirstond  
To knowe of what kynde he be,  
If ony wolde enforme me."  
Raisoun "I wolde," seide Resoun, "thee ler,  
Sith thou to lerne hast sich desir,  
And shewe thee, withouten fable,

A thyng that is not demonstrable.  
Thou shalt [wite] withouten science,  
4690 And knowe withouten experience,  
The thyng that may not knowen be,  
Ne wist, ne shewid, in no degre.  
Thou maist the sothe of it not witen,  
Though in thee it were writen.  
Thou shalt not knowe therof more,  
While thou art reuled by his lore;  
But unto hym that love wole flee,  
The knotte may unclosed bee,  
Which hath to thee, as it is founde,  
4700 So long be knet and not unbounde.  
Now set wel thyn entencioun,  
To here of love discripcioun.  
"Love, it is an hatefull pees,  
A free acquitaunce, withoute relees,  
A trouthe, fret full of falsheede,  
A sikernesse all set in drede.  
In herte is a dispeiryng hope,  
And full of hope, it is wanhope;  
Wis woodnesse, and wod resoun;  
4710 A swete perell in to droun;  
An hevy birthen, lyght to bere;  
A wikked wawe, away to were.  
It is Karibdous perilous,  
Disagreable and gracious.  
It is discordaunce that can accorde,  
And accordaunce to discorde.  
It is kunnyng withoute science,  
Wisdom withoute sapience,  
Wit withoute discrecioun,  
4720 Havoir withoute possessioun.  
It is sike hele and hool seknesse,  
A thirst drowned in dronknesse,  
And helthe full of maladie,  
And charite full of envie,  
And hunger full of habundaunce,  
And a gredy suffisaunce;  
Delit right full of hevynesse,  
And drerihed full of gladnesse;  
Bitter swetnesse and swete errour,

4730 Right evell savoured good savour;  
Sin that pardoun hath withynne,  
And pardoun spotted withoute [with] synne.  
A peyne also it is, joious,  
And felonye right pitous;  
Also pley that selde is stable,  
And stedefast [stat], right mevable;  
A strengthe, weyked to stonde upright,  
And feblenesse full of myght;  
Wit unavised, sage folie,  
4740 And joie full of turmentrie;  
A laughter it is, weping ay;  
Reste that traveyleth nyght and day;  
Also a swete helle it is,  
And a soroufull paradys;  
A pleasant gayl and esy prisoun,  
And, full of froste, somer sesoun;  
Pryme temps full of frostes whit,  
And May devoide of al delit,  
With seer braunches, blossoms ungrene,  
4750 And newe fruyt, fillid with wynter tene.  
It is a slowe, may not forbere  
Ragges, ribaned with gold, to were;  
For also wel wol love be set  
Under ragges, as riche rochet;  
And eke as wel be amourettes  
In mournyng blak, as bright burnettes.  
For noon is of so mochel pris,  
Ne no man founden so wys,  
Ne noon so high is of parage,  
4760 Ne no man founde of wit so sage,  
No man so hardy ne so wight,  
Ne no man of so mochel myght,  
Noon so fulfilled of bounte,  
That he with love [ne] may daunted be.  
All the world holdith this wey;  
Love makith all to goon myswey,  
But it be they of yvel lyf,  
Whom Genius cursith, man and wyf,  
That wrongly werke ageyn nature.  
4770 Noon such I love, ne have no cure  
Of sich as Loves servauntes ben,

And wole not by my counsel flen.  
For I ne preise that lovyng  
Wherthurgh men, at the laste eendying,  
Shall calle hem wrecchis full of woo,  
Love greveth hem and shendith soo.  
But if thou wolt wel Love eschewe,  
For to escape out of his mewe,  
And make al hool thi sorwe to slake,  
4780 No bettir counsel maist thou take  
Than thynke to fleen wel, iwis.  
May nought helpe elles, for wite thou this:  
If thou fle it, it shal flee thee;  
Folowe it, and folowen shal it thee."  
L'amant Whanne I hadde herde all Resoun seyn,  
Which hadde spilt hir speche in veyn,  
"Dame," seide I, "I dar wel sey,  
Of this avaunt me wel I may  
That from youre scole so devyaunt  
4790 I am, that never the more avaunt  
Right nought am I thurgh youre doctrine.  
I dulle under youre discipline.  
I wot no more than [I] wist er,  
To me so contrarie and so fer  
Is every thing that ye me ler,  
And yit I can it all par cuer.  
Myn herte foryetith therof right nought,  
It is so writen in my thought;  
And depe greven it is so tendir  
4800 That all by herte I can it rendre,  
And rede it over comunely;  
But to mysilf lewedist am I.  
But sith ye love discreven so,  
And lak and preise it, bothe twoo,  
Defyneth it into this letter,  
That I may thenke on it the better;  
For I herde never diffyne it er,  
And wilfully I wolde it ler."  
Raisoun "If love be serched wel and sought,  
4810 It is a syknesse of the thought  
Annexed and knet bitwixe tweyne,  
Which male and female, with oo cheyne,  
So frely byndith that they nyll twynne,

Whether so therof they leese or wyne.  
The roote springith thurgh hoot brennyng  
Into disordinat desiryng  
For to kissen and embrace,  
And at her lust them to solace.  
Of other thyng love recchith nought,  
4820 But setteth her herte and all her thought  
More for delectacioun  
Than ony procreacioun  
Of other fruyt by engendring,  
Which love to God is not plesyng;  
For of her body fruyt to get  
They yeve no force, they are so set  
Upon delit to pley in-feere.  
And somme have also this manere,  
To feynen hem for love sek;  
4830 Sich love I preise not at a lek.  
For paramours they do but feyne;  
To love truly they disdayne.  
They falsen ladies traitoursly,  
And swern hem othes utterly,  
With many a lesyng and many a fable,  
And all they fynden deceyvable.  
And whanne they han her lust gotten,  
The hote ernes they al foryeten.  
Wymmen, the harm they bien full sore;  
4840 But men this thenken evermore,  
That lasse harm is, so mote I the,  
Deceyve them than deceyved be;  
And namely, where they ne may  
Fynde non other mene wey.  
For I wot wel, in sothfastnesse,  
[What man] doth now his bisynesse  
With ony womman for to dele,  
For ony lust that he may fele,  
But if it be for engendrure,  
4850 He doth trespas, I you ensure.  
For he shulde setten all his wil  
To gotten a likly thyng hym til,  
And to sustene, if he myght,  
And kepe forth, by Kyndes right,  
His owne lyknesse and semblable;

And faile shulde successioun,  
Ne were ther generacioun  
Oure sectis strene for to save.  
4860 Whanne fader or moder arn in grave,  
Her children shulde, whanne they ben deede,  
Full diligent ben, in her steede,  
To use that werk on such a wise  
That oon may thurgh another rise.  
Therefore sette Kynde therynne delit,  
For men therynne shulde hem delit,  
And of that deede be not erk,  
But ofte sithes haunt that werk.  
For noon wolde drawe therof a draught,  
4870 Ne were delit, which hath hym kaught.  
Thus hath sotilled dame Nature;  
For noon goth right, I thee ensure,  
Ne hath entent hool ne parfit;  
For her desir is for delyt,  
The which fortene crece and eke  
The pley of love for-ofte seke,  
And thrall hemsilf, they be so nyce,  
Unto the prince of every vice.  
For of ech synne it is the rote,  
4880 Unlefull lust, though it be sote,  
And of all yvell the racyne,  
As Tullius can determyne,  
Which in his tyme was full sage,  
In a bok he made 'Of Age,'  
Where that more he preyseth eelde,  
Though he be croked and unweelde,  
And more of commendacioun  
Than youthe in his discripcioun.  
For youthe set bothe man and wyf  
4890 In all perell of soule and lyf;  
And perell is, but men have grace,  
The tyme of youthe for to pace  
Withoute any deth or distresse,  
It is so full of wyldenesse,  
So ofte it doth shame or damage  
To hym or to his lynage.  
It ledith man now up, now down,  
In mochel dissolucioun,

And makith hym love yvell company,  
4900 And lede his lyf disrewlily,  
And halt hym payed with noon estat.  
Withynne hymself is such debat,  
He chaungith purpos and entent,  
And yalt [him] into som covent,  
To lyven aftir her emprise,  
And lesith fredom and fraunchise,  
That Nature in hym hadde set,  
The which ageyn he may not get,  
If he there make his mansioun,  
4910 For to abide professioun.  
Though for a tyme his herte absente,  
It may not fayle, he shal repente,  
And eke abide thilke day  
To leve his abit, and gon his way,  
And lesith his worshipp and his name,  
And dar not come ageyn for shame;  
But al his lyf he doth so mourne,  
By cause he dar not hom retourne.  
Fredom of kynde so lost hath he  
4920 That never may recured be,  
But if that God hym graunte grace  
That he may, er he hennes pace,  
Conteyne undir obedience  
Thurgh the vertu of pacience.  
For Youthe sett man in all folye,  
In unthrift and in ribaudie,  
In leccherie and in outrage,  
So ofte it chaungith of corage.  
Youthe gynneth ofte sich bargeyn,  
4930 That may not eende withouten peyn.  
In gret perell is sett youthede,  
Delit so doth his bridil leede.  
Delit thus hangith, dred thee nought,  
Bothe mannys body and his thought,  
Oonly thurgh Youthe, his chaumberere,  
That to don yvell is customere,  
And of nought elles taketh hede  
But oonly folkes for to lede  
Into disport and wyldenesse,  
4940 So is [she] froward from sadnesse.

"But Eelde drawith hem therfro;  
Who wot it nought, he may wel goo  
Demande of hem that now arn olde,  
That whilom Youthe hadde in holde,  
Which yit remembre of tendir age,  
Hou it hem brought in many a rage,  
And many a foly therynne wrought.  
But now that Eelde hath hem thourgh-sought,  
They repente hem of her folye,  
4950 That Youthe hem putte in jupardye,  
In perell, and in myche woo,  
And made hem ofte amys to do,  
And suen yvell companye,  
Riot and avouterie.

"But Eelde can ageyn restreyne  
From sich foly, and refreyne,  
And sette men by her ordinaunce  
In good reule and in governaunce.  
But yvell she spendith hir servise,  
4960 For no man wole hir love neither prise;  
She is hated, this wot I wel.  
Hir acqueyntaunce wolde no man fel,  
Ne han of Elde companye;  
Men hate to be of hir alye.  
For no man wolde bicomen old,  
Ne dye whanne he is yong and bold.  
And Eelde merveilith right gretly,  
Whanne thei remembre hem inwardly  
Of many a perelous emprise,  
4970 Which that they wrought in sondry wise,  
Houever they myght, withoute blame,  
Escape away withoute shame,  
In youthe, withoute damage  
Or reproof of her lynage,  
Loss of membre, shedyng of blod,  
Perell of deth, or los of good.  
Wost thou nought where Youthe abit,  
That men so preisen in her wit?  
With Delit she halt sojour,  
4980 For bothe they dwellen in oo tour.  
As longe as Youthe is in sesoun,  
They dwellen in oon mansioun.



Delit of Youthe wole have servise  
To do what so he wole devise;  
And Youthe is redy evermore  
For to obey, for smert of sore,  
Unto Delit, and hym to yive  
Hir servise, while that she may lyve.  
"Where Elde abit I wol thee telle  
4990 Shortly, and no while dwelle,  
For thidir byhoveth thee to goo.  
If Deth in youthe thee not sloo,  
Of this journey thou maist not faile.  
With hir Labour and Travaile  
Logged ben, with Sorwe and Woo,  
That never out of hir court goo.  
Peyne and Distresse, Syknesse and Ire,  
And Malencoly, that angry sire,  
Ben of hir paleys senatours;  
5000 Gronyng and Grucchyng, hir herbejours.  
The day and nyght, hir to turmente,  
With cruell Deth they hir presente,  
And tellen hir, erliche and late,  
That Deth stondeth armed at hir gate.  
Thanne brynge they to her remembraunce  
The foly dedis of hir infaunce,  
Whiche causen hir to mourne in woo  
That Youthe hath hir bigiled so,  
Which sodeynly away is hasted.  
5010 She wepeth the tyme that she hath wasted,  
Compleynyng of the preterit,  
And the present that not abit,  
And of hir olde vanite,  
That, but aforh hir she may see  
In the future som socour,  
To leggen hir of hir dolour,  
To graunte hir tyme of repentaunce,  
For her synnes to do penaunce,  
And at the laste so hir governe  
5020 To wynne the joy that is eterne,  
Fro which go bakward Youthe hir made,  
In vanite to droune and wade.  
For present tyme abidith nought;  
It is more swift than any thought.

So litel while it doth endure  
That ther nys compte ne mesure.  
But hou that evere the game go,  
Who list to have joie and mirth also  
Of love, be it he or she,  
5030 High or lowe, who it be,  
In fruyt they shulde hem delyte;  
Her part they may not elles quyte,  
To save hemsilf in honeste.  
And yit full many on I se  
Of wymmen, sothly for to seyn,  
That desire and wolde fayn  
The pley of love, they be so wilde,  
And not coveite to go with childe.  
And if with child they be, perchaunce,  
5040 They wole it holde a gret myschaunce;  
But whatsomever woo they fele,  
They wole not pleyne but concele;  
But if it be ony fool or nyce,  
In whom that Shame hath no justice.  
For to delyt echon they drawe,  
That haunte this werk, bothe high and lawe,  
Save sich that arn worth right nought,  
That for money wole be bought.  
Such love I preise in no wise,  
5050 Whanne it is goven for coveitise.  
I preise no womman, though she be wood,  
That yeveth hirsilf for ony good.  
For litel shulde a man telle  
Of hir, that wole hir body selle,  
Be she mayde, be she wyf,  
That quyk wole selle hir, bi hir lif.  
Hou faire chere that evere she make,  
He is a wrecche, I undirtake,  
That loveth such on, for swete or sour,  
5060 Though she hym calle hir paramour,  
And laugheth on hym, and makith hym feeste.  
For certeynly no such beeste  
To be loved is not worthy,  
Or bere the name of druery.  
Noon shulde hir please, but he were wood,  
That wole dispoile hym of his good.

Yit nevertheles, I wol not sey  
That she, for solas and for pley,  
[Ne] may a jewel or other thyng  
5070 Take of her loves fre yevyng;  
But that she aske it in no wise,  
For drede of shame of coveitise.  
And she of hirs may hym, certeyn,  
Withoute sclaundre yeven ageyn,  
And joyne her hertes togidre so  
In love, and take and yeve also.  
Trowe not that I wolde hem twynne,  
Whanne in her love ther is no synne;  
I wol that they togedre go,  
5080 And don al that they han ado,  
As curteis shulde and debonaire,  
And in her love beren hem faire,  
Withoute vice, bothe he and she,  
So that alwey, in honeste,  
Fro foly love they kepe hem cler,  
That brenneth hertis with his fer;  
And that her love, in any wise,  
Be devoide of coveitise.  
Good love shulde engendrid be  
5090 Of trewe herte, just, and secre,  
And not of such as sette her thought  
To have her lust and ellis nought --  
So are they caught in Loves las,  
Truly, for bodily solas.  
Fleshly delit is so present  
With thee, that sette all thyn entent  
Withoute more (what shulde I glose?)  
For to gete and have the Rose,  
Which makith [thee] so mat and wood  
5100 That thou desirest noon other good.  
But thou art not an inche the nerre,  
But evere abidist in sorwe and werre,  
As in thi face it is sene.  
It makith thee bothe pale and lene;  
Thy myght, thi vertu goth away.  
A sory gest, in goode fay,  
Thou herberest than in thyn inn,  
The God of Love whanne thou let inn!

Wherfore I rede, thou shette hym oute,  
5110 Or he shall greve thee, out of doute;  
For to thi profit it wol turne,  
If he nomore with thee sojourne.  
In gret myscheef and sorwe sonken  
Ben hertis that of love arn dronken,  
As thou peraventure knowen shall,  
Whanne thou hast lost thy tyme all,  
And spent thy youthe in ydilnesse,  
In waste and wofull lustynesse.  
If thou maist lyve the tyme to se  
5120 Of love for to delyvered be,  
Thy tyme thou shalt biwepe sore,  
The whiche never thou maist restore;  
For tyme lost, as men may see,  
For nothyng may recured be.  
And if thou scape yit, atte laste,  
Fro Love, that hath thee so faste  
Knytt and bounden in his las,  
Certeyn I holde it but a gras.  
For many oon, as it is seyn,  
5130 Have lost and spent also in veyn,  
In his servise, withoute socour,  
Body and soule, good and tresour,  
Wit and strengthe, and eke richesse,  
Of which they hadde never redresse."  
L'amant Thus taught and preched hath  
Resoun, but Love spilte hir sermoun,  
That was so ymped in my thought,  
That hir doctrine I sette at nought.  
And yitt ne seide she never a del  
5140 That I ne undirstod it wel,  
Word by word, the mater all;  
But unto Love I was so thrall,  
Which callith overall his pray,  
He chasith so my thought alway,  
And holdith myn herte undir his sel  
As trust and trew as ony stel;  
So that no devocioun  
Ne hadde I in the sermoun  
Of dame Resoun, ne of hir red.  
5150 It tok no sojour in myn hed,

For all yede out at oon ere  
That in that other she dide lere.  
Fully on me she lost hir lore;  
Hir speche me greved wondir sore.  
Than unto hir for ire I seide,  
For anger, as I dide abraide:  
"Dame, and is it youre wille algate  
That I not love, but that I hate  
Alle men, as ye me teche?  
5160 For if I do aftir youre speche,  
Sith that ye seyn love is not good,  
Thanne must I nedis ay with mood,  
If I it leve, in hatrede ay  
Lyven, and voide love away  
From me, [and] [ben] a synfull wrecche  
Hated of all [that] [love] that tecche.  
I may not go noon other gate,  
For other must I love or hate.  
And if I hate men of-newe  
5170 More than love, it wol me rewe,  
As by youre preching semeth me,  
For Love nothing ne preisith thee.  
Ye yeve good counsel, sikirly,  
That prechith me alday that I  
Shulde not Loves lore alowe.  
He were a fool, wolde you not trowe!  
In speche also ye han me taught  
Another love, that knowen is naught,  
Which I have herd you not repreve,  
5180 To love ech other. By youre leve,  
If ye wolde diffyne it me,  
I wolde gladly here, to se,  
At the leest, if I may lere  
Of sondry loves the manere."  
Raisoun "Certis, freend, a fool art thou,  
Whan that thou nothyng wolt allow  
That I for thi profit say.  
Yit wole I sey thee more in fay,  
For I am redy, at the leste,  
5190 To accomplishe thi requeste.  
But I not where it wole avayle;  
In veyn, perauntre, I shal travayle.

Love ther is in sondry wise,  
As I shal thee heere devise.  
For som love leful is and good --  
I mene not that which makith thee wood,  
And bringith thee in many a fit,  
And ravysshith fro thee al thi wit,  
It is so merveilous and queynt;  
5200 With such love be no more aqueynt.  
"Love of freendshipp also ther is,  
Which makith no man don amys,  
Of wille knytt bitwixe two,  
That wole not breke for wele ne woo;  
Which long is likly to contune,  
Whanne wille and goodis ben in comune;  
Grounded by Goddis ordinaunce,  
Hool, withoute discordaunce;  
With hem holdyng comune  
5210 Of all her good in charite,  
That ther be noon excepcioun  
Thurgh chaungyng of entencioun;  
That ech helpe other at her neede,  
And wisely hele bothe word and dede;  
Trewe of menyng, devoide of slouthe,  
For witt is nought withoute trouthe;  
So that the ton dar all his thought  
Seyn to his freend, and spare nought,  
As to hymself, without dredyng  
5220 To be discovered by wreyng.  
For glad is that conjunccioun,  
Whanne ther is noon susspecioun  
[Of] [blame] [in] [hem], whom they wolde prove  
That trewe and parfit weren in love.  
For no man may be amyable,  
But if he be so ferme and stable  
That fortune chaunge hym not, ne blynde,  
But that his freend allwey hym fynde,  
Bothe pore and riche, in oo state.  
5230 For if his freend, thurgh ony gate,  
Wole compleyne of his poverté,  
He shulde not bide so long til he  
Of his helpyng hym requere;  
For good dede, don thurgh praieré,

Is sold and bought to deere, iwys,  
To hert that of gret valour is.  
For hert fulfilled of gentilnesse  
Can yvel demene his distresse;  
And man that worthy is of name  
5240 To asken often hath gret shame.  
A good man brenneth in his thought  
For shame, whanne he axeth ought.  
He hath gret thought and dredeth ay  
For his disese, whanne he shal pray  
His freend, lest that he warned be,  
Til that he preve his stabilte.  
But whanne that he hath founden oon  
That trusty is and trewe as ston,  
And assaied hym at all,  
5250 And founde hym stedefast as a wall,  
And of his freendshipp be certeyn,  
He shal hym shewe bothe joye and peyn,  
And all that [he] dar thynke or sey,  
Withoute shame, as he wel may.  
For how shulde he ashamed be  
Of sich on as I tolde thee?  
For whanne he woot his secre thought,  
The thridde shal knowe therof right nought;  
For tweyne of noumbre is bet than thre  
5260 In every counsell and secre.  
Repreve he dredeth never a deel,  
Who that bisett his wordis wel;  
For every wise man, out of drede,  
Can kepe his tunge til he se nede;  
And fooles can not holde her tunge;  
A fooles belle is soone runge.  
Yit shal a trewe freend do more  
To helpe his felowe of his sore,  
And socoure hym, whanne he hath neede,  
5270 In all that he may don in deede,  
And gladder [be] that he hym plesith,  
Than his felowe that he esith.  
And if he do not his requeste,  
He shal as mochel hym moleste  
As his fellow, for that he  
May not fulfille his volunte

Fully, as he hath requered.  
If bothe the hertis Love hath fered,  
Joy and woo they shull depart,  
5280 And take evenly ech his part.  
Half his anoy he shal have ay,  
And comfort [him] what that he may;  
And of his blisse parte shal he,  
If love wel departed be.  
"And whilom of this amyte  
Spak Tullius in a ditee:  
'Man shulde maken his request  
Unto his freend, that is honest;  
And he goodly shulde it fulfille,  
5290 But it the more were out of skile,  
And otherwise not graunte therto,  
Except oonly in causes twoo:  
If men his freend to deth wolde drive,  
Lat hym be bisy to save his lyve;  
Also if men wolen hym assayle,  
Of his wurshipp to make hym faile,  
And hyndren hym of his renoun,  
Lat hym, with full entencioun,  
His dever don in ech degre  
5300 That his freend ne shamed be.  
In thise two caas with his myght,  
Taking no kep to skile nor right,  
As fer as love may hym excuse,  
This oughte no man to refuse.'  
This love that I have told to thee  
Is nothing contrarie to me;  
This wole I that thou folowe wel,  
And leve the tother everydel.  
This love to vertu all entendith,  
5310 The tothir fooles blent and shendith.  
"Another love also there is  
That is contrarie unto this,  
Which desir is so constreyned  
That [it] is but wille feyned.  
Away fro trouthe it doth so varie  
That to good love it is contrarie;  
For it maymeth, in many wise,  
Sike hertis with coveitise.



All in wynnyng and in profit  
5320 Sich love settith his delit.  
This love so hangeth in balaunce  
That, if it lese his hope, perchaunce,  
Of lucre, that he is sett upon,  
It wole faile and quenche anoon;  
For no man may be amerous,  
Ne in his lyvyng vertuous,  
But he love more, in mood,  
Men for hemsilf than for her good.  
For love that profit doth abide  
5330 Is fals, and bit not in no tyde.  
[This] love cometh of dame Fortune,  
That litel while wol contune;  
For it shal chaungen wonder soone,  
And take eclips, right as the moone,  
Whanne she is from us lett  
Thurgh erthe, that bitwixe is sett  
The sonne and hir, as it may fall,  
Be it in partie, or in all.  
The shadowe maketh her bemys merke,  
5340 And hir hornes to shewe derke,  
That part where she hath lost hir lyght  
Of Phebus fully, and the sight;  
Til, whanne the shadowe is overpast,  
She is enlumyned ageyn as fast,  
Thurgh the brightnesse of the sonne bemes,  
That yeveth to hir ageyn hir lemes.  
That love is right of sich nature;  
Now is faire, and now obscure,  
Now bright, now clipsi of manere,  
5350 And whilom dym, and whilom clere.  
As soone as Poverte gynneth take,  
With mantel and wedis blake  
Hidith of love the light away,  
That into nyght it turneth day,  
It may not see Richesse shyne  
Till the blak shadowes fyne.  
For, whanne Richesse shyneth bright,  
Love recovereth ageyn his light;  
And whanne it failith he wol flit,  
5360 And as she groweth, so groweth it.

Of this love -- here what I sey! --  
The riche men are loved ay,  
And namely tho that sparand ben,  
That wole not wasshe her hertes clen  
Of the filthe nor of the vice  
Of gredy brennyng avarice.  
The riche man full fonnid is, ywys,  
That weneth that he loved is.  
If that his herte it undirstod,  
5370 It is not he, it is his good;  
He may wel witen in his thought,  
His good is loved, and he right nought.  
For if he be a nygard ek,  
Men wole not sette by hym a lek,  
But haten hym; this is the soth.  
Lo, what profit his catell doth.  
Of every man that may hym see  
It geteth hym nought but enmyte.  
But he amende hym of that vice,  
5380 And knowe hymself, he is not wys.  
Certys, he shulde ay freendly be,  
To gete hym love also ben free,  
Or ellis he is not wise ne sage  
Nomore than is a goot ramage.  
That he not loveth, his dede proveth,  
Whan he his richesse so wel loveth  
That he wole hide it ay and spare,  
His pore freendis sen forfare,  
To kepen ay his purpos,  
5390 Til for drede his yen clos,  
And til a wikked deth hym take.  
Hym hadde lever asondre shake,  
And late alle his lymes asondre ryve,  
Than leve his richesse in his lyve.  
He thenkith parte it with no man;  
Certayn, no love is in hym than.  
How shulde love withynne hym be,  
Whanne in his herte is no pite?  
That he trespasseth, wel I wat,  
5400 For ech man knowith his estat;  
For wel hym ought to be reproved  
That loveth nought, ne is not loved.

"But sith we arn to Fortune comen,  
And han oure sermoun of hir nomen,  
A wondir will Y telle thee now,  
Thou herddest never sich oon, I trow.  
I not where thou me leven shall,  
Though sothfastnesse it be all,  
As it is writen, and is soth,  
5410 That unto men more profit doth  
The froward Fortune and contraire  
Than the swote and debonaire.  
And if thee thynke it is doutable,  
It is thurgh argument provable;  
For the debonaire and softe  
Falsith and bigilith ofte;  
For lyche a moder she can cherish,  
And mylken as doth a norys,  
And of hir goode to hem deles,  
5420 And yeveth hem part of her joweles,  
With gret riches and dignite;  
And hem she hoteth stabilite  
In a stat that is not stable,  
But chaungynge ay and variable;  
And fedith hem with glorie veyn,  
And worldly blisse noncerteyn.  
Whanne she hem settith on hir whel,  
Thanne wene they to be right wel,  
And in so stable stat withalle,  
5430 That never they wene for to falle.  
And whanne they sette so highe be,  
They wene to have in certeynte  
Of hertly freendis so gret noumbre,  
That nothyng myght her stat encombre.  
They trust hem so on every side,  
Wenyng with hem they wolde abide  
In every perell and myschaunce,  
Withoute chaunge or variaunce,  
Bothe of catell and of good;  
5440 And also for to spende her blood,  
And all her membris for to spille,  
Only to fulfille her wille.  
They maken it hool in many wise,  
And hoten hem her full servise,

How sore that it do hem smerte,  
Into her naked sherte!  
Herte and all so hool they yive,  
For the tyme that they may lyve,  
So that with her flaterie  
5450 They maken foolis glorifie  
Of her wordis spekyng,  
And han therof a rejoysyng,  
And trowe hem as the Evangile;  
And it is all falsheede and gile,  
As they shal aftirward se,  
Whanne they arn falle in poverté  
And ben of good and catell bare;  
Thanne shulde they sen who freendis ware.  
For of an hundred, certeynly,  
5460 Nor of a thousand full scarsly,  
Ne shal they fynde unnethis oon,  
Whanne poverté is comen upon.  
For this Fortune that I of telle,  
With men whanne hir lust to dwelle,  
Makith hem to leese her conisaunce,  
And norishith hem in ignoraunce.  
"But froward Fortune and pervers,  
Whanne high estatis she doth revers,  
And maketh hem to tumble down  
5470 Of hir whel, with sodeyn tourn,  
And from her richesse doth hem fle,  
And plongeth hem in poverté,  
As a stepmoder envious,  
And leieth a plastre dolorous  
Unto her hertis, wounded egre,  
Which is not tempred with vynegre,  
But with poverté and indigence,  
For to shewe, by experience,  
That she is Fortune verely,  
5480 In whom no man shulde affy,  
Nor in hir yeftis have fiaunce,  
She is so full of variaunce --  
Thus kan she maken high and lowe,  
Whanne they from richesse arn throwe,  
Fully to knowen, without were,  
Freend of affect and freend of chere,

And which in love weren trewe and stable,  
And whiche also weren variable,  
After Fortune, her goddesse,  
5490 In poverte outhur in richesse.  
For all she yeveth here, out of drede,  
Unhap bereveth it in dede;  
For Infortune lat not oon  
Of freendis, whanne Fortune is gon;  
I mene tho freendis that wole fle  
Anoon as entreth poverte.  
And yit they wole not leve hem so,  
But in ech place where they go  
They calle hem `wrecche,' scorne, and blame,  
5500 And of her myshappe hem diffame;  
And namely siche as in richesse  
Pretendith moost of stablenesse,  
Whanne that they sawe hym sett on lofte,  
And weren of hym socoured ofte,  
And most yholpe in all her neede.  
But now they take no maner heede,  
But seyn in voice of flaterie,  
That now apperith her folye,  
Overall where so they fare,  
5510 And synge, `Go, farewell, feldefare.'  
All suche freendis I beshrewe,  
For of trewe ther be to fewe.  
But sothfast freendis, what so bitide,  
In every fortune wolen abide;  
Thei han her hertis in such noblesse  
That they nyl love for no richesse,  
Nor for that Fortune may hem sende  
Thei wolen hem socoure and defende,  
And chaunge for softe ne for sore;  
5520 For who is freend, loveth evermore.  
Though men drawe swerd his freend to slo,  
He may not hewe her love a-two.  
But, in cas that I shall sey,  
For pride and ire lese it he may,  
And for reprove by nycete,  
And discovering of privite,  
With tonge woundyng, as feloun,  
Thurgh venemous detraccioun.

Frend in this cas wole gon his way,  
5530 For nothyng greve hym more ne may;  
And for nought ellis wole he fle,  
If that he love in stabilite.  
And certeyn, he is wel bigon,  
Among a thousand that fyndith oon.  
For ther may be no richesse  
Ageyns frendshipp, of worthynesse;  
For it ne may so high atteigne  
As may the valour, soth to seyne,  
Of hym that loveth trew and well.  
5540 Frendshipp is more than is catell.  
For freend in court ay better is  
Than peny in purs, certis;  
And Fortune myshappyng  
Whanne upon men she is fallyng,  
Thurgh mysturnyng of hir chaunce,  
And casteth hem out of balaunce,  
She makith, thurgh hir adversite,  
Men full clerly for to se  
Hym that is freend in existence  
5550 From hym that is by apparence.  
For Ynfortune makith anoon  
To knowe thy freendis fro thy foon,  
By experience, right as it is,  
The which is more to preise, ywis,  
Than is myche richesse and tresour.  
For more doth profit and valour  
Poverté and such adversite  
Bifore, than doth prosperite;  
For the toon yeveth conysaunce,  
5560 And the tother ignoraunce.  
"And thus in poverté is in dede  
Trouthe declared fro falsheede;  
For feynte freendis it wole declare,  
And trewe also, what wey they fare.  
For whanne he was in his richesse,  
These freendis, ful of doublenesse,  
Offrid hym in many wise  
Hert, and body, and servise.  
What wolde he thanne ha yove to ha bought  
5570 To knowen openly her thought,

That he now hath so clerly seen?  
The lasse bigiled he shulde have ben,  
And he hadde thanne perceyved it;  
But richesse nold not late hym wit.  
Wel more avauntage doth hym than,  
Sith that it makith hym a wise man,  
The gret myscheef that he receyveth,  
Than doth richesse that hym deceyveth.  
Richesse riche ne makith nought  
5580 Hym that on tresour set his thought;  
For richesse stont in suffisaunce  
And nothyng in habundaunce;  
For suffisaunce all oonly  
Makith men to lyve richely.  
For he that at mycches tweyne  
Ne valued [is. in his demeigne,  
Lyveth more at ese, and more is riche,  
Than doth he that is chiche,  
And in his berne hath, soth to seyn,  
5590 An hundred mowis of whete greyn,  
Though he be chapman or marchaunt,  
And have of gold many besaunt.  
For in the getyng he hath such woo,  
And in the kepyng drede also,  
And set evermore his bisynesse  
For to encrese, and not to lesse,  
For to aument and multiply.  
And though on hepis it lye hym by,  
Yit never shal make his richesse  
5600 Asseth unto his gredynesse.  
But the povre that recchith nought,  
Save of his lyflode, in his thought,  
Which that he getith with his travaile,  
He dredith nought that it shall faile,  
Though he have lytel worldis good,  
Mete, and drynke, and esy food,  
Upon his travel and lyvyng,  
And also suffisaunt clothynge.  
Or if in syknesse that he falle,  
5610 And loth. mete and drynke withalle,  
Though he have noght his mete to by,  
He shal bithynke hym hastily,

To putte hym oute of all daunger,  
That he of mete hath no myster;  
Or that he may with lytel ek  
Be founden, while that he is sek;  
Or that men shull hym beren in hast,  
To lyve til his syknesse be past,  
To som maysondew biside;  
5620 He cast nought what shal hym bitide.  
He thenkith nought that evere he shall  
Into ony syknesse fall.  
"And though it falle, as it may be,  
That all betyme spare shall he  
As mochel as shal to hym suffice,  
While he is sik in ony wise,  
He doth [it] for that he wole be  
Content with his poverté  
Withoute nede of ony man.  
5630 So myche in litel have he can,  
He is apaied with his fortune;  
And for he nyl be importune  
Unto no wight, ne onerous,  
Nor of her goodes coveitous,  
Therefore he spareth, it may wel ben,  
His pore estat for to susten.  
"Or if hym lust not for to spare,  
But suffrith forth, as noght ne ware,  
Atte last it hapneth, as it may,  
5640 Right unto his laste day,  
And taketh the world as it wolde be;  
For evere in herte thenkith he,  
The sonner that deth hym slo,  
To paradys the sonner go  
He shal, there for to lyve in blisse,  
Where that he shal noo good misse.  
Thider he hopith God shal hym sende  
Aftir his wrecchid lyves ende.  
Pictigoras hymself rehearses  
5650 In a book that 'The Golden Verses'  
Is clepid, for the nobilite  
Of the honourable ditee: --  
'Thanne, whanne thou gost thy body fro,  
Fre in the eir thou shalt up go,



And leven al humanite,  
And purely lyve in deite.'  
He is a fool, withouten were,  
That trowith have his countre heere.  
'In erthe is not oure countre,'  
5660 That may these clerkis seyn and see  
In Boece of Consolacioun,  
Where it is maked mencion  
Of oure contre pleyn at the ye,  
By teching of Philosophie,  
Where lewid men myght lere wit,  
Whoso that wolde translaten it.  
If he be sich that can wel lyve  
Aftir his rente may hym yive,  
And not desireth more to have  
5670 Than may fro poverté hym save,  
A wise man seide, as we may seen,  
Is no man wrecched, but he it wen,  
Be he kyng, knyght, or ribaud.  
And many a ribaud is mery and baud,  
That swynkith, and berith, bothe day and nyght,  
Many a burthen of gret myght,  
The whiche doth hym lasse offense  
For he suffrith in pacience.  
They laugh and daunce, trippe and synge,  
5680 And ley not up for her lyvyng,  
But in the taverne all dispendith  
The wynnyng that God hem sendith.  
Thanne goth he, fardeles for to ber  
With as good chere as he dide er.  
To swynke and traveile he not feynith,  
For for to robben he disdeynith.  
But right anon aftir his swynk  
He goth to taverne for to drynk.  
All these ar riche in abundaunce  
5690 That can thus have suffisaunce  
Wel more than can an usurere,  
As God wel knowith, withoute were.  
For an usurer, so God me se,  
Shal nevere for richesse riche be,  
But evermore pore and indigent,  
Scarce and gredy in his entent.

"For soth it is, whom it displese,  
Ther may no marchaunt lyve at ese;  
His herte in sich a were is sett  
5700 That it quyk brenneth [more] to get,  
Ne never shal ynogh have geten,  
Though he have gold in gerneris yeten,  
For to be neddy he dredith sore.  
Wherfore to geten more and more  
He set his herte and his desir;  
So hote he brennyth in the fir  
Of coveitise, that makith hym wood  
To purchase other mennes good.  
He undirfongith a gret peyne,  
5710 That undirtakith to drynke up Seyne;  
For the more he drynkith, ay  
The more he leveth, the soth to say.  
Thus is thurst of fals getyng,  
That last ever in coveityng,  
And the angwisshe and distresse  
With the fir of gredynesse.  
She fightith with hym ay, and stryveth,  
That his herte asondre ryveth.  
Such gredynesse hym assaylith  
5720 That whanne he most hath, most he failith.  
Phisiciens and advocates  
Gon right by the same yates;  
They selle her science for wynnyng,  
And haunte her craft for gret getyng.  
Her wynnyng is of such swetnesse  
That if a man falle in siknesse,  
They are full glad for her encres;  
For by her wille, withoute lees,  
Everich man shulde be sek,  
5730 And though they die, they sette not a lek.  
After, whanne they the gold have take,  
Full litel care for hem they make.  
They wolde that fourty were seke at onys,  
Ye, two hundred, in flesh and bonys,  
And yit two thousand, as I gesse,  
For to encrecen her richesse.  
They wole not worchen, in no wise,  
But for lucre and coveitise.

For fysic gynneth first by fy,  
5740 The physicien also sothely;  
And sithen it goth fro fy to sy:  
To truste on hem is foly;  
For they nyl, in no maner gre,  
Do right nought for charite.  
"Eke in the same secte ar sett  
All tho that prechen for to get  
Worshipes, honour, and richesse.  
Her hertis arn in gret distresse  
That folk lyve not holily.  
5750 But aboven all, specialy,  
Sich as prechen [for] veynglorie,  
And toward God have no memorie,  
But forth as ypocrites trace,  
And to her soules deth purchase,  
And outward shewen holynesse,  
Though they be full of cursidnesse.  
Not liche to the apostles twelve,  
They deceyve other and hemselfe.  
Bigiled is the giler than,  
5760 For prechyng of a cursed man,  
Though [it] to other may profite,  
Hymself it availeth not a myte;  
For ofte good predicacioun  
Cometh of evel entencioun.  
To hym not vailith his preching,  
All helpe he other with his teching;  
For where they good ensauple take,  
There is he with veynglorie shake.  
"But late us leven these prechoures,  
5770 And speke of hem that in her toures  
Hepe up hir gold, and faste shette,  
And sore theron her herte sette.  
They neither love God ne drede;  
They kepe more than it is nede,  
And in her bagges sore it bynde,  
Out of the sonne and of the wynde.  
They putte up more than nede ware,  
Whanne they seen pore folk forfare,  
For hunger die, and for cold quake.  
5780 God can wel vengeance therof take!

Three gret myscheves hem assailith,  
And thus in gadring ay travaylith.  
With myche peyne they wynne richesse;  
And drede hem holdith in distresse  
To kepe that they gadre faste;  
With sorwe they leve it at the laste.  
With sorwe they bothe dye and lyve,  
That unto richesse her hertis yive;  
And in defaute of love it is,  
5790 As it shewith ful wel, iwys.  
For if thise gredy, the sothe to seyn,  
Loveden and were loved ageyn,  
And good love regned overall,  
Such wikkidnesse ne shulde fall;  
But he shulde yeve that most good had  
To hem that weren in nede bidad,  
And lyve withoute false usure,  
For charite full clene and pure.  
If they hem yeve to goodnesse,  
5800 Defendyng hem from ydelnesse,  
In all this world thanne pore noon  
We shulde fynde, I trowe, not oon.  
But chaunged is this world unstable,  
For love is overall vendable.  
We se that no man loveth now,  
But for wynnyng and for prow;  
And love is thralled in servage,  
Whanne it is sold for avauntage.  
Yit wommen wole her bodyes selle;  
5810 Suche soules goth to the devel of helle!"



## FRAGMENT C

Whanne Love hadde told hem his entente,  
The baronage to councel wente.  
In many sentences they fille,  
And dyversely they seide hir wille;  
But aftir discord they accorded,  
And her accord to Love recorded.  
"Sir," seiden they, "we ben at on,  
Bi evene accord of everichon,  
Out-take Richesse al oonly,  
5820 That sworn hath ful hauteynly,  
That she the castel nyl not assaile,  
Ne smyte a strok in this bataile,  
With darte, ne mace, spere, ne knyf,  
For man that spekith or berith the lyf,  
And blameth youre emprise, iwys,  
And from oure hoost departed is,  
Atte leste wey, as in this plyt,  
So hath she this man in dispit.  
For she seith he ne loved hir never,  
5830 And therfore she wole hate hym evere.  
For he wole gadre no tresor,  
He hath hir wrath for evermor.  
He agylte hir never in other caas,  
Lo, heere all hoolly his trespas!  
She seith wel that this other day  
He axide hir leve to gon the way  
That is clepid To-Moche-Yevyng,  
And spak full faire in his praiyng;  
But whanne he praiede hir, pore was he,  
5840 Therfore she warned hym the entre.  
Ne yit is he not thryven so  
That he hath gotten a peny or two  
That quyrtly is his owne in hold.  
Thus hath Richesse us alle told,  
And whanne Richesse us this recorded,  
Withouten hir we ben accorded.  
"And we fynde in oure accordaunce  
That Fals-Semblant and Abstinaunce,  
With all the folk of her bataille,  
5850 Shull at the hyndre gate assayle,

That Wikkid-Tunge hath in kepyng,  
With his Normans full of janglyng.  
And with hem Curtesie and Largesse,  
That shull shewe her hardynesse  
To the olde wyf that kepte so harde  
Fair-Welcomyng withynne her warde.  
Thanne shal Delit and Wel-Heelynge  
Fonde Shame adown to brynge;  
With all her oost, erly and late,  
5860 They shull assailen that ilke gate.  
Agaynes Drede shall Hardynesse  
Assayle, and also Sikernesse,  
With all the folk of her ledyng,  
That never wist what was fleyng.  
"Fraunchise shall fight, and eke Pite,  
With Daunger, full of cruelte.  
Thus is youre hoost ordeyned wel.  
Doun shall the castell every del,  
If everich do his entent,  
5870 So that Venus be present,  
Youre modir, full of vasselage,  
That can ynough of such usage.  
Withouten hir may no wight spede  
This werk, neithir for word ne deede;  
Therefore is good ye for hir sende,  
For thurgh hir may this werk amende."  
"Lordynges, my modir, the goddesse,  
That is my lady and my maistresse,  
Nis not [at] all at my willyng,  
5880 Ne doth not all my desiryng.  
Yit can she som tyme don labour,  
Whanne that hir lust, in my socour,  
Al my nedes for to acheve,  
But now I thenke hir not to greve.  
My modir is she, and of childhede  
I bothe worshipe hir and eke drede;  
For who that dredith sire ne dame,  
Shal it aby in body or name.  
And, natheles, yit kunne we  
5890 Sende aftir hir, if nede be;  
And were she nygh, she comen wolde;  
I trowe that nothyng myght hir holde.

"Mi modir is of gret prowesse;  
She hath tan many a forteresse,  
That cost hath many a pound, er this,  
There I nas not present, ywis.  
And yit men seide it was my dede;  
But I com never in that stede,  
Ne me ne likith, so mote I the,  
5900 That such toures ben take withoute me.  
For-why me thenkith that, in no wise,  
It may ben clepid but marchandise.  
"Go bye a courser, blak or whit,  
And pay therfore; than art thou quyt.  
The marchaunt owith thee right nought,  
Ne thou hym, whanne thou it bought.  
I wole not sellyng clepe yevyng,  
For sellyng axeth no guerdonyng:  
Here lith no thank ne no merit;  
5910 That oon goth from that other al quyt.  
But this sellyng is not semblable;  
For whanne his hors is in the stable,  
He may it selle ageyn, parde,  
And wynnen on it, such hap may be;  
All may the man not leese, iwys,  
For at the leest the skyn is his.  
Or ellis, if it so bitide  
That he wole kepe his hors to ride,  
Yit is he lord ay of his hors.  
5920 But thilke chaffare is wel wors,  
There Venus entremetith ought.  
For whoso such chaffare hath bought,  
He shal not worchen so wisely  
That he ne shal leese al outerly  
Bothe his money and his chaffare;  
But the seller of the ware  
The prys and profit have shall.  
Certeyn, the bier shal leese all.  
For he ne can so dere it bye  
5930 To have lordship and full maistrie,  
Ne have power to make lettyng,  
Neithir for yift ne for prechyng,  
That of his chaffare, maugre his,  
Another shal have as moche, iwys,

If he wol yeve as myche as he,  
Of what contrey so that he be --  
Or for right nought, so happe may,  
If he can flater hir to hir pay.  
Ben thanne siche marchauntz wise?  
5940 No, but fooles in every wise,  
Whanne they bye sich thyng wilfully,  
There as they leese her good fully.  
But natheles, this dar I saye,  
My modir is not wont to paye,  
For she is neither so fool ne nyce  
To entremete hir of sich vice.  
But truste wel, he shal pay all,  
That repent of his bargeyn shall,  
Whanne poverte putte hym in distresse,  
5950 All were he scoler to Richesse,  
That is for me in gret yernyng,  
Whanne she assentith to my willyng.  
"But [by] my modir, seint Venus,  
And by hir fader Saturnus,  
That hir engendride by his lyf --  
But not upon his weddid wyf --  
Yit wole I more unto you swer,  
To make this thyng the seurere --  
Now by that feith and that leaute  
5960 That I owe to all my britheren fre,  
Of which ther nys wight undir heven  
That kan her fadris names neven,  
So dyverse and so many ther be  
That with my modir have be prive!  
Yit wolde I swere, for sikirnesse,  
The pol of helle to my witnesse --  
Now drynke I not this yeer clarre,  
If that I lye or forsworn be!  
(For of the goddes the usage is  
5970 That whoso hym forswereth amys  
Shal that yeer drynke no clarre.)  
Now have I sworn ynough, pardee,  
If I forswere me, thanne am I lorn,  
But I wole never be forsworn.  
Syth Richesse hath me failed heere,  
She shal abyge that trespas ful dere,



Atte leeste wey, but [she] hir arme  
With swerd, or sparth, or gysarme.  
For certis, sith she loveth not me,  
5980 Fro thilke tyme that she may se  
The castell and the tour toshake,  
In sory tyme she shal awake.  
If I may grype a riche man,  
I shal so pulle hym, if I can,  
That he shal in a fewe stoundes  
Lese all his markis and his poundis.  
I shal hym make his pens outslynge,  
But they in his gerner sprynge.  
Oure maydens shal eke pluk hym so  
5990 That hym shal neden fetheres mo,  
And make hym selle his lond to spende,  
But he the bet kunne hym defende.  
"Pore men han maad her lord of me;  
Although they not so myghty be  
That they may fede me in delit,  
I wol not have hem in despit.  
No good man hateth hem, as I gesse,  
For chynche and feloun is Richesse,  
That so can chase hem and dispise,  
6000 And hem defoule in sondry wise.  
They loven full bet, so God me spede,  
Than doth the riche, chynchy gnede,  
And ben, in good feith, more stable  
And trewer and more serviab;le;  
And therfore it suffisith me  
Her goode herte and her leaute.  
They han on me set all her thought,  
And therfore I forgete hem nought.  
I wol hem bringe in gret noblesse,  
6010 If that I were god of richesse,  
As I am god of love sothly,  
Sich routhe upon her pleynt have I.  
Therfore I must his socour be,  
That peyneth hym to serven me,  
For if he deide for love of this,  
Thanne semeth in me no love ther is."  
"Sir," seide they, "soth is every deel  
That ye reherce, and we wote wel

Thilk oth to holde is resonable;  
6020 For it is good and covenable  
That ye on riche men han sworn.  
For, sir, this wote we wel biforn:  
If riche men don you homage,  
That is as fooles don outrage;  
But ye shall not forsworn be,  
Ne lette therfore to drynke clarre,  
Or pyment makid fresh and newe.  
Ladies shall hem such pepir brewe,  
If that they fall into her laas,  
6030 That they for woo mowe seyn `allas!'  
Ladies shullen evere so curteis be  
That they shal quyte youre oth all free.  
Ne sekith never othir vicaire,  
For they shal speke with hem so faire  
That ye shal holde you paied full wel,  
Though ye you medle never a del.  
Late ladies worche with her thyngis,  
They shal hem telle so fele tidynges,  
And move hem eke so many requestis  
6040 Bi flateri, that not honest is,  
And therto yeve hem such thankynges,  
What with kysyng and with talkynges,  
That, certis, if they trowed be,  
Shal never leve hem lond ne fee  
That it nyl as the moeble fare,  
Of which they first delyverid are.  
Now may ye telle us all youre wille,  
And we youre heestes shal fulfille.  
"But Fals-Semblant dar not, for drede  
6050 Of you, sir, medle hym of this dede,  
For he seith that ye ben his foo;  
He not if ye wole worche hym woo.  
Wherfore we pray you alle, beau sire,  
That ye forgyve hym now your ire,  
And that he may dwelle, as your man,  
With Abstinence, his dere lemman;  
Thisoure accord and oure wille now."  
"Parfay," seide Love, "I graunte it yow.  
I wole wel holde hym for my man;  
6060 Now late hym come" -- and he forth ran.

"Fals-Semblant," quod Love, "in this wise  
I take thee heere to my servise,  
That thou oure freendis helpe alway,  
And hyndre hem neithir nyght ne day,  
But do thy myght hem to releve,  
And eke oure enemyes that thou greve.  
Thyn be this myght, I graunte it thee,  
My kyng of harlotes shalt thou be;  
We wole that thou have such honour.  
6070 Certeyn, thou art a fals traitour,  
And eke a theef; sith thou were born,  
A thousand tyme thou art forsworn.  
But natheles, in oure heryng,  
To putte oure folk out of doutyng,  
I bidde thee teche hem, wostow how,  
Bi som general signe now,  
In what place thou shalt founden be,  
If that men had myster of thee;  
And how men shal thee best espye,  
6080 For thee to knowe is gret maistrie.  
Telle in what place is thyn hauntyng."  
"Sir, I have fele dyvers wonyng,  
That I kepe not rehersed be,  
So that ye wolde respiten me.  
For if that I telle you the sothe,  
I may have harm and shame bothe.  
If that my felowes wisten it,  
My talis shulden me be quytt;  
For certeyn, they wolde hate me,  
6090 If ever I knewe her cruelte.  
For they wolde overall holde hem stille  
Of trouthe that is ageyne her wille;  
Suche tales kepen they not here.  
I myght eftsoone bye it full deere,  
If I seide of hem ony thing  
That ought displesith to her heryng.  
For what word that hem prikke or biteth,  
In that word noon of hem deliteth,  
Al were it gospel, the evangile,  
6100 That wolde reprove hem of her gile,  
For they are cruel and hauteyn.  
And this thyng wot I well, certeyn,

If I speke ought to peire her loos,  
Your court shal not so well be cloos  
That they ne shall wite it atte last.  
Of good men am I nought agast,  
For they wole taken on hem nothyng,  
Whanne that they knowe al my menyng;  
But he that wole it on hym take,  
6110 He wole hymself suspicious make,  
That he his lyf let covertly  
In Gile and in Ipocrisy  
That me engendred and yaf fostryng."  
"They made a full good engendryng,"  
Quod Love, "for whoso sothly telle,  
They engendred the devel of helle!  
But nedely, howsoever it be,"  
Quod Love, "I wole and charge thee  
To telle anon thy wonyng places,  
6120 Heryng ech wight that in this place is.  
And what lyf that thou lyvest also.  
Hide it no lenger now; wherto?  
Thou most discovere all thi wurchyng,  
How thou servest, and of what thyng,  
Though that thou shuldist for thi soth-sawe  
Ben al tobeten and todrawe --  
And yit art thou not wont, pardee.  
But natheles, though thou beten be,  
Thou shalt not be the first that so  
6130 Hath for sothsawe suffred woo."  
"Sir, sith that it may liken you,  
Though that I shulde be slayn right now,  
I shal don youre comaundement,  
For therto have I gret talent."  
Withouten wordis mo, right than,  
Fals-Semblant his sermon bigan,  
And seide hem thus in audience:  
"Barouns, take heede of my sentence!  
That wight that list to have knowing  
6140 Of Fals-Semblant, full of flatering,  
He must in worldly folk hym seke,  
And, certes, in the cloistres eke.  
I wone nowhere but in hem tweye,  
But not lyk even, soth to seye.

Shortly, I wole herberwe me  
There I hope best to hulstred be,  
And certeynly, sikerest hidyng  
Is undirnethe humblest clothing.  
Religiouse folk ben full covert;  
6150 Seculer folk ben more appert.  
But natheles, I wole not blame  
Religious folk, ne hem diffame,  
In what habit that ever they go.  
Religioun umble and trewe also,  
Wole I not blame ne dispise;  
But I nyl love it, in no wise.  
I mene of fals religious,  
That stoute ben and malicious,  
That wolen in an abit goo,  
6160 And setten not her herte therto.  
"Religious folk ben al pitous;  
Thou shalt not seen oon dispitous.  
They loven no pride ne no strif,  
But humbly they wole lede her lyf.  
With swich folk wole I never be,  
And if I dwelle, I feyne me.  
I may wel in her abit go;  
But me were lever my nekke a-two,  
Than lete a purpos that I take,  
6170 What covenaut that ever I make.  
I dwelle with hem that proude be,  
And full of wiles and subtilte,  
That worship of this world coveiten,  
And grete nedes kunnen espleiten,  
And gon and gadren gret pitaunces,  
And purchase hem the acqueyntaunces  
Of men that myghty lyf may leden;  
And feyne hem pore, and hemsilf feden  
With gode morcels delicious,  
6180 And drinken good wyn precious,  
And preche us povert and distresse,  
And fisshen hemsilf gret richesse  
With wily nettis that they caste.  
It wole come foule out at the laste.  
They ben fro clene religioun went;  
They make the world an argument

That [hath. a foul conclusioun.  
`I have a robe of religioun,  
Thanne am I all religious.'  
6190 This argument is all roignous;  
It is not worth a croked brere.  
Abit ne makith neithir monk ne frere,  
But clene lyf and devocioun  
Makith gode men of religioun.  
Natheles, ther kan noon answe, re,  
How high that evere his heed he shere,  
With resoun whetted never so kene,  
That Gile in braunches kut thrittene;  
Ther can no wight distincte it so,  
6200 That he dar sey a word therto.  
"But what herberwe that ever I take,  
Or what semblant that evere I make,  
I mene but gile, and folowe that;  
For right no mo than Gibbe oure cat,  
Ne entende I but to bigilyng.  
Ne no wight may by my clothing  
Wite with what folk is my dwellyng,  
Ne by my wordis yit, parde,  
6210 So softe and so plesaunt they be.  
Bihold the dedis that I do;  
But thou be blynd, thou oughtest so;  
For, varie her wordis fro her deede,  
They thenke on gile, withoute dreede,  
What maner clothing that they were,  
Or what estat that evere they bere,  
Lered or lewde, lord or lady,  
Knyght, squyer, burgeis, or bayly."  
Right thus while Fals-Semblant sermoneth,  
6220 Eftsones Love hym aresoneth,  
And brak his tale in his spekyng,  
As though he had hym told lesyng,  
And seide, "What, devel, is that I here?  
What folk hast thou us nempned heere?  
May men fynde religioun  
In worldly habitacioun?"  
"Ye, sir; it folowith not that they  
Shulde lede a wikked lyf, parfey,  
Ne not therefore her soules leese

6230 That hem to worldly clothes chese;  
For, certis, it were gret pitee.  
Men may in seculer clothes see  
Florishen hooly religioun.  
Full many a seynt in feeld and toun,  
With many a virgine glorious,  
Devout, and full religious,  
Han deied, that comun cloth ay beeren,  
Yit seyntes nevere the lesse they weren.  
I cowde reken you many a ten;  
6240 Ye, wel nygh [al] these hooly wymmen  
That men in chirchis herie and seke,  
Bothe maydens and these wyves eke  
That baren full many a fair child heere,  
Wered alwey clothis seculere,  
And in the same dieden they  
That seyntes weren, and ben alwey.  
The eleven thousand maydens deere  
That beren in heven hir ciergis clere,  
Of whiche men rede in chirche and synge,  
6250 Were take in seculer clothinge  
Whanne they resseyved martirdom,  
And wonnen hevene unto her hom.  
Good herte makith the goode thought;  
The clothing yeveth ne reveth nought.  
The goode thought and the worching,  
That makith the religioun flowryng,  
Ther lyth the good religioun,  
Aftir the right entencioun.  
"Whoso took a wethers skyn,  
6260 And wrapped a gredy wolf theryn,  
For he shulde go with lambis whyte,  
Wenest thou not he wolde hem bite?  
Yis, neverthelasse, as he were wood,  
He wolde hem wery and drinke the blood,  
And wel the rather hem disceyve;  
For, sith they cowde not perceyve  
His treget and his cruelte,  
They wolde hym folowe, al wolde he fle.  
"If ther be wolves of sich hewe  
6270 Amonges these apostlis newe,  
Thou hooly chirche, thou maist be wailed!

Sith that thy citee is assayled  
Thourgh knyghtis of thyn owne table,  
God wot thi lordship is doutable!  
If thei enforce [hem] it to wynne  
That shulde defende it fro withynne,  
Who myght defense ayens hem make?  
Withoute strok it mot be take  
Of trepeget or mangonel,  
6280 Without displaiyng of pensel.  
And if God nyl don it socour,  
But lat [hem] renne in this colour,  
Thou most thyn heestis laten be.  
Thanne is ther nought but yelde thee,  
Or yeve hem tribut, doutelees,  
And holde it of hem to have pees,  
But gretter harm bitide thee,  
That they al maister of it be.  
Wel konne they scorne thee withal;  
6290 By day stuffen they the wall,  
And al the nyght they mynen there.  
Nay, thou planten most elleswhere  
Thyn ympes, if thou wolt fruyt have;  
Abid not there thisilf to save.  
"But now pees! Heere I turne ageyn.  
I wole nomore of this thing seyn,  
If I may passen me herby;  
I myghte maken you wery.  
But I wole heten you alway  
6300 To helpe youre freendis what I may,  
So they wollen my company;  
For they be shent al outerly,  
But if so falle that I be  
Ofte with hem, and they with me.  
And eke my lemman mote they serve,  
Or they shull not my love deserve.  
Forsothe, I am a fals traitour;  
God jugged me for a thief trichour.  
Forsworn I am, but wel nygh non  
6310 Wot of my gile, til it be don.  
"Thourgh me hath many oon deth resseyved,  
That my treget nevere aperceyved;  
And yit resseyveth, and shal resseyve,



That my falsnesse shal nevere aperceyve.  
But whoso doth, if he wis be,  
Hym is right good be war of me,  
But so sligh is the deceyvyng  
For Protheus, that cowde hym chaunge  
6320 In every shap, homly and straunge,  
Cowde nevere sich gile ne tresoun  
As I; for I com never in toun  
There as I myghte knowen be,  
Though men me bothe myght here and see.  
Full wel I can my clothis chaunge,  
Take oon, and make another straunge.  
Now am I knyght, now chasteleyn,  
Now prelat, and now chapeleyn,  
Now prest, now clerk, and now forster;  
6330 Now am I maister, now scoler,  
Now monk, now chanoun, now baily;  
Whatever myster man am I.  
Now am I prince, now am I page,  
And kan by herte every langage.  
Som tyme am I hor and old;  
Now am I yong, stout, and bold;  
Now am I Robert, now Robyn,  
Now Frere Menour, now Jacobyn;  
And with me folwith my loteby,  
6340 To don me solas and company,  
That hight Dame Abstinence-Streyned,  
In many a queynte array feyned.  
Ryght as it cometh to hir lykyng,  
I fulfille al hir desiryng.  
Somtyme a wommans cloth take I;  
Now am I a mayde, now lady.  
Somtyme I am religious;  
Now lyk an anker in an hous.  
Somtyme am I prioresse,  
6350 And now a nonne, and now abbesse;  
And go thurgh alle regiouns,  
Sekyng alle religious.  
But to what ordre that I am sworn,  
I take the strawe, and lete the corn.  
To gyle folk I enhabit;  
I axe nomore but her abit.

What wole ye more in every wise?  
Right as me lyst, I me disgise.  
Wel can I wre me undir wede;  
6360 Unlyk is my word to my dede.  
[I] make into my trappis falle,  
Thurgh my pryveleges, alle  
That ben in Cristendom alyve.  
I may assoile and I may shryve,  
That no prelat may lette me,  
All folk, where evere thei founde be.  
I not no prelat may don so,  
But it the pope be, and no mo,  
That made thilk establisshing.  
6370 Now is not this a propre thing?  
But, were my sleightis aperceyved  
As I was wont, and wostow why?  
For I dide hem a tregetry.  
But therof yeve I lytel tale;  
I have the silver and the male.  
So have I prechid, and eke shriven,  
So have I take, so have me given,  
Thurgh her foly, husbonde and wyf,  
6380 That I lede right a joly lyf,  
Thurgh symplesse of the prelacye --  
They knowe not al my tregettrie.  
"But forasmoche as man and wyf  
Shulde shewe her paroch-prest her lyf,  
Onys a yeer, as seith the book,  
Er ony wight his housel took,  
Thanne have I pryvylegis large,  
That may of myche thing discharge.  
For he may seie right thus, parde:  
6390 `Sir preest, in shrift I telle it thee,  
That he to whom that I am shryven  
Hath me assoiled, and me given  
Penaunce, sothly, for my synne,  
Which that I fond me gilty ynne;  
Ne I ne have nevere entencioun  
To make double confessioun,  
Ne reherce eft my shrift to thee.  
O shrift is right ynough to me.  
This oughte thee suffice wel;

6400 Ne be not rebel never a del.  
For certis, though thou haddist it sworn,  
I wot no prest ne prelat born,  
That may to shrift eft me constreyne;  
And if they don, I wole me pleyne,  
For I wot where to pleyne wel.  
Thou shalt not streyne me a del,  
Ne enforce me, ne not me trouble,  
To make my confessioun double.  
Ne I have non affeccioun  
6410 To have double absolucioun.  
The firste is right ynough to me;  
This latter assoilyng quyte I thee.  
I am unbounde -- what maist thou fynde  
More of my synnes me to unbynde?  
For he, that myght hath in his hond,  
Of all my synnes me unbond.  
And if thou wolt me thus constreyne  
That me mot nedis on thee pleyne,  
There shall no jugge imperial,  
6420 Ne bisshop, ne official,  
Don jugement on me; for I  
Shal gon and pleyne me openly  
Unto my shrifte-fadir newe  
(That hight not Frere Wolf untrewe!),  
And he shal cheveys hym for me,  
For I trowe he can hampre thee.  
But, Lord, he wolde be wrooth withalle,  
If men hym wolde Frere Wolf calle!  
For he wolde have no pacience,  
6430 But don al cruel vengeaunce.  
He wolde his myght don at the leeste,  
Nothing spare for Goddis heeste.  
And, God so wys be my socour,  
But thou yeve me my Savyour  
At Ester, whanne it likith me,  
Withoute presyng more on thee,  
I wole forth, and to hym gon,  
And he shal housel me anon.  
For I am out of thi grucching;  
6440 I kepe not dele with thee nothing.'  
"Thus may he shryve hym, that forsaketh

His paroch-prest, and to me taketh.  
And if the prest wole hym refuse,  
I am full redy hym to accuse,  
And hym punysshē and hampre so  
That he his chirche shal forgo.  
"But whoso hath in his felyng  
The consequence of such shryvving,  
Shal sen that prest may never have myght  
6450 To knowe the conscience aright  
Of hym that is undir his cure.  
And this ageyns holy scripture,  
That biddith every heerde honest  
Have verry knowing of his beest.  
But pore folk that gone by strete,  
That have no gold, ne sommes grete,  
Hem wolde I lete to her prelates,  
Or lete her prestis knowe her states,  
For to me right nought yeve they.  
6460 And why? It is for they ne may.  
They ben so bare, I take no kep,  
But I wole have the fatte sheep;  
Lat parish prestis have the lene.  
I yeve not of her harm a bene!  
And if that prelates grucchen it,  
That oughten wroth be in her wit  
To leese her fatte beestes so,  
I shal yeve hem a strok or two,  
That they shal leesen with force,  
6470 Ye, bothe her mytre and her croce.  
Thus jape I hem, and have do longe,  
My pryveleges ben so stronge."  
Fals-Semblant wolde have stynted heere,  
But Love ne made hym no such cheere  
That he was wery of his sawe;  
But for to make hym glad and fawe,  
He seide, "Telle on more specialy  
Hou that thou servest untrewly.  
Telle forth, and shame thee never a del;  
6480 For, as thyn abit shewith wel,  
Thou semest an hooly heremyte."  
"Soth is, but I am an ypocrite."  
"Thou gost and prechest poverte."

"Ye, sir, but richesse hath pouste."  
"Thou prechest abstinence also."  
"Sir, I wole fillen, so mote I go,  
My paunche of good mete and wyn,  
As shulde a maister of dyvyn;  
For how that I me pover feyne,  
6490 Yit alle pore folk I disdeyne.  
"I love bettir th' acqueyntaunce,  
Ten tyme, of the kyng of Fraunce  
Than of a pore man of mylde mod,  
Though that his soule be also god.  
For whanne I see beggers quakyng,  
Naked on myxnes al stynkyng,  
For hungre crie, and eke for care,  
I entremete not of her fare.  
They ben so pore and ful of pyne,  
6500 They myght not oonys yeve me dyne,  
For they have nothing but her lyf.  
What shulde he yeve that likketh his knyf?  
It is but foly to entremete,  
To seke in houndes nest fat mete.  
Lete bere hem to the spitel anoon,  
But, for me, comfort gete they noon.  
But a riche sik usurer  
Wolde I visite and drawe ner;  
Hym wole I comforte and rehet,  
6510 For I hope of his gold to gete.  
And if that wikkid deth hym have,  
I wole go with hym to his grave.  
And if ther ony reprove me,  
Why that I lete the pore be,  
Wostow how I mot ascape?  
I sey, and swere hym ful rape,  
That riche men han more tecches  
Of synne than han pore wrecches,  
And han of counsel more mister,  
6520 And therfore I wole drawe hem ner.  
But as gret hurt, it may so be,  
Hath a soule in right gret poverté  
As soule in gret richesse, forsothe,  
Al be it that they hurten bothe.  
For richesse and mendicitees

Ben clepid two extremytees;  
The mene is cleped suffisaunce;  
Ther lyth of vertu the aboundaunce.  
For Salamon, full wel I wot,  
6530 In his Parablis us wrot,  
As it is knowe to many a wight,  
In his thrittene chapitre right,  
'God thou me kepe, for thi pouste,  
Fro richesse and mendicite;  
For if a riche man hym dresse  
To thenke to myche on richesse,  
His herte on that so fer is set  
That he his creatour foryet;  
And hym that begging wole ay greve,  
6540 How shulde I bi his word hym leve?  
Unnethe that he nys a mycher  
Forsworn, or ellis God is lyer.'  
Thus seith Salamones sawes.  
Ne we fynde writen in no lawis,  
And namely in oure Cristen lay,  
(Whoso seith 'ye,' I dar sey 'nay')  
That Crist, ne his apostlis dere,  
While that they walkide in erthe heere,  
Were never seen her bred beggyng,  
6550 For they nolden beggen for nothing.  
And right thus was men wont to teche,  
And in this wise wolde it preche  
The maistres of divinite  
Somtyme in Parys the citee.  
"And if men wolde ther-geyn appose  
The nakid text, and lete the glose,  
It myghte soone assoiled be;  
For men may wel the sothe see,  
That, parde, they myght aske a thing  
6560 Pleyonly forth, without begging.  
For they weren Goddis herdis deere,  
And cure of soules hadden heere,  
They nolde nothing begge her fode;  
For aftir Crist was don on rode,  
With ther propre hondis they wrought,  
And with travel, and ellis nought,  
They wonnen all her sustenaunce,

And lyveden forth in her penaunce,  
And the remenaunt yave away  
6570 To other pore folkis alwey.  
They neither biden tour ne halle,  
But ley in houses smale withalle.  
A myghty man, that can and may,  
Shulde with his hond and body alway  
Wynne hym his fode in laboring,  
If he ne have rent or sich a thing,  
Although he be religious,  
And God to serven curious.  
Thus mot he don, or do trespas,  
6580 But if it be in certeyn cas,  
That I can reherce, if myster be,  
Right wel, whanne the tyme I se.  
"Sek the book of Seynt Austyn,  
Be it in papir or perchemyn,  
There as he writ of these worchynges,  
Thou shalt seen that noon excusynges  
A parfit man ne shulde seke  
Bi wordis ne bi dedis eke,  
Although he be religious,  
6590 And God to serven curious,  
That he ne shal, so mote I go,  
With propre hondis and body also,  
Gete his fode in laboryng,  
If he ne have proprete of thing.  
Yit shulde he selle all his substaunce,  
And with his swynk have sustenaunce,  
If he be parfit in bounte.  
Thus han tho bookes told me.  
For he that wole gon ydilly,  
6600 And usith it ay besily  
To haunten other mennes table,  
He is a trechour, ful of fable;  
Ne he ne may, by god resoun,  
Excuse hym by his orisoun.  
For men bihoveth, in som gise,  
Somtyme leven Goddis servise  
To gon and purchasen her nede.  
Men mote eten, that is no drede,  
And slepe, and eke do other thing;

6610 So longe may they leve praiyng.  
So may they eke her praier blynne,  
While that they werke, her mete to wynne.  
Seynt Austyn wole therto accorde,  
In thilke book that I recorde.  
Justinian eke, that made lawes,  
Hath thus forboden, by olde dawes:  
'No man, up peyne to be ded,  
Mighty of body, to begge his bred,  
If he may swynke it for to gete;  
6620 Men shulde hym rather mayme or bete,  
Or don of hym apert justice,  
Than suffren hym in such malice.'  
They don not wel, so mote I go,  
That taken such almesse so,  
But if they have som pryvelege,  
That of the peyne hem wole allege.  
But how that is, can I not see,  
But if the prince disseyved be;  
Ne I ne wene not, sikerly,  
6630 That they may have it rightfully.  
But I wole not determine  
Of prynces power, ne defyne,  
Ne by my word comprende, iwys,  
If it so fer may strecche in this.  
I wole not entremete a del;  
But I trowe that the book seith wel,  
Who that takith almessis that be  
Dewe to folk that men may se  
Lame, feble, wery, and bare,  
6640 Pore, or in such maner care --  
That konne wynne hem never mo,  
For they have no power therto --  
He etith his owne dampnyng,  
But if he lye, that made al thing.  
And if ye such a truaunt fynde,  
Chastise hym wel, if ye be kynde.  
But they wolde hate you, percas,  
And, if ye fillen in her laas,  
They wolde eftsoonys do you scathe,  
6650 If that they myghte, late or rathe;  
For they be not full pacient



That han the world thus foule blent.  
And witeth wel that [ther] God bad  
The good-man selle al that he had,  
And folowe hym, and to pore it yive,  
He wolde not therfore that he lyve  
To serven hym in mendience,  
For it was nevere his sentence;  
But he bad wirken whanne that neede is,  
6660 And folwe hym in goode dedis.  
Seynt Poul, that loved al hooly chirche,  
He bad th' appostles for to wirche,  
And wynnen her lyflode in that wise,  
And hem defended truandise,  
And seide, `Wirketh with youre honden.'  
Thus shulde the thing be undirstonden:  
He nolde, iwys, have bidde hem begging,  
Ne sellen gospel, ne prechyng,  
Lest they berafte, with her askyng,  
6670 Folk of her catel or of her thing.  
For in this world is many a man  
That yeveth his good, for he ne can  
Werne it for shame; or ellis he  
Wolde of the asker delyvered be,  
And, for he hym encombrith so,  
He yeveth hym good to late hym go.  
But it can hym nothyng profite;  
They lese the yift and the meryte.  
The goode folk, that Poul to preched,  
6680 Profred hym ofte, whan he hem teched,  
Som of her good in charite.  
But therof right nothing tok he;  
But of his hondwerk wolde he gete  
Clothes to wryen hym, and his mete."  
"Telle me thanne how a man may lyven,  
That al his good to pore hath yiven,  
And wole but oonly bidde his bedis  
May he do so?" "Ye, sir." "And how?"  
6690 "Sir, I wole gladly telle yow:  
Seynt Austyn seith a man may be  
In houses that han proprete,  
As Templers and Hospitellers,  
And as these Chanouns Regulers,

Or White Monkes, or these Blake --  
I wole no mo ensamplis make --  
And take therof his sustenyng,  
For therynne lyth no begging;  
But other weyes not, ywys,  
6700 Yif Austyn gabbith not of this.  
And yit full many a monk laboureth,  
That God in hooly chirche honoureth.  
For whanne her swynkyng is agon,  
They rede and synge in chirche anon.  
"And for ther hath ben gret discord,  
As many a wight may bere record,  
Upon the estat of mendience,  
I wole shortly, in youre presence,  
Telle how a man may begge at nede,  
6710 That hath not wherwith hym to fede,  
Maugre his felones jangelyngis,  
For sothfastnesse wole none hidyngis.  
And yit, percas, I may abeye  
That I to yow sothly thus seye.  
"Lo, heere the caas especial:  
If a man be so bestial  
That he of no craft hath science,  
And nought desireth ignorance,  
Thanne may he go a-begging yerne,  
6720 Til he som maner craft kan lerne,  
Thurgh which withoute truaundyng,  
He may in trouthe have his lyvyng.  
Or if he may don no labour,  
For elde, or syknesse, or langour,  
Or for his tendre age also,  
Thanne may he yit a-begging go.  
Or if he have, peraventure,  
Thurgh usage of his noriture,  
Lyved over deliciously,  
6730 Thanne oughten good folk comunly  
Han of his myscheef som pitee,  
And suffren hym also that he  
May gon aboute and begge his breed,  
That he be not for hungur deed.  
Or if he have of craft kunnyng,  
And strengthe also, and desiryng

To wirken, as he hadde what,  
But he fynde neithir this ne that,  
Thanne may he begge til that he  
6740 Have geten his necessite.  
Or if his wynnyng be so lite  
That his labour wole not acquyte  
Sufficiently al his lyvyng,  
Yit may he go his breed begging;  
Fro dore to dore he may go trace,  
Til he the remenaunt may purchace.  
Or if a man wolde undirtake  
Ony emprise for to make  
In the rescous of oure lay,  
6750 And it defenden as he may,  
Be it with armes or lettrure,  
Or other covenable cure,  
If it be so he pore be,  
Thanne may he begge til that he  
May fynde in trouthe for to swynke,  
And gete hym clothes, mete, and drynke,  
Swynke he with his hondis corporell,  
And not with hondis espirituell.  
"In al thise caas, and in semblables,  
6760 If that ther ben mo resonables,  
He may begge, as I telle you heere,  
And ellis nought, in no manere,  
As William Seynt Amour wolde preche,  
And ofte wolde dispute and teche  
Of this mater all openly  
At Parys full solempnely.  
And, also God my soule blesse,  
As he had, in this stedfastnesse,  
The accord of the universite  
6770 And of the puple, as semeth me.  
"No good man oughte it to refuse,  
Ne ought hym therof to excuse,  
Be wroth or blithe whoso be.  
For I wole speke, and telle it thee,  
Al shulde I dye, and be putt down,  
As was Seynt Poul, in derk prisoun;  
Or be exiled in this caas  
With wrong, as maister William was,

That my moder, Ypocrysie,  
6780 Banysshed for hir gret envye.  
"Mi modir flemed hym Seynt Amour;  
The noble dide such labour  
To susteyne evere the loyalte,  
That he to moche agilde me.  
He made a book, and lete it write,  
And wolde ich reneyed begging,  
And lyved by my traveylyng,  
If I ne had rent ne other good.  
6790 What? Wened he that I were wood?  
For labour myght me never plese.  
I have more wille to ben at ese,  
And have wel lever, soth to seye,  
Bifore the puple patre and preye,  
And wrie me in my foxerie  
Under a cope of papelardie."  
Quod Love, "What devel is this that I heere?  
What wordis tellest thou me heere?"  
"What, sir?" "Falsnesse, that apert is.  
6800 Thanne dredist thou not God?" "No, certis;  
For selde in gret thing shal he spede  
In this world, that God wole drede.  
For folk that hem to vertu yiven,  
And truly on her owne lyven,  
And hem in goodnesse ay contene,  
On hem is lytel thrift sene.  
Such folk drinken gret mysese;  
That lyf may me never plese.  
But se what gold han usurers,  
6810 And silver eke in garners,  
Taylagiers, and these monyours,  
Bailifs, bedels, provost, countours;  
These lyven wel nygh by ravyne.  
The smale puple hem mote enclyne,  
And they as wolves wole hem eten.  
Upon the pore folk they geten  
Full moche of that they spende or kepe.  
Nis non of hem that he nyl strepe  
And wrien hemsilf wel atte fulle;  
6820 Withoute scaldyng they hem pulle.  
The stronge the feble overgoth.

But I, that were my symple cloth,  
Robbe bothe robbed and robbours  
And gile giled and gilours.  
By my treget I gadre and threste  
The gret tresour into my cheste,  
That lyth with me so faste bounde.  
Myn highe paleys do I founde,  
And my delites I fulfille  
6830 With wyn at feestes at my wille,  
And tables full of entremees.  
I wole no lyf but ese and pees,  
And wyne gold to spende also.  
For whanne the grete bagge is go,  
It cometh right with my japes.  
Make I not wel tumble myn apes?  
To wynnen is alwey myn entente;  
My purchace is bettir than my rente.  
For though I shulde beten be,  
6840 Overal I entremete me.  
Without me may no wight dure;  
I walke soules for to cure.  
Of al the world cure have I;  
In brede and lengthe boldely  
I wole bothe preche and eke counceilen.  
With hondis wille I not traveilen,  
For of the Pope I have the bulle --  
I ne holde not my wittes dulle.  
I wole not stynten, in my lyve,  
6850 These emperoures for to shryve,  
Or kyngis, dukis, lordis grete;  
But pore folk al quyte I lete.  
I love no such shryvyng, parde,  
But it for other cause be.  
I rekke not of pore men --  
Her astat is not worth an hen.  
Where fyndest thou a swynker of labour  
Have me unto his confessour?  
But emperesses and duchesses,  
6860 Thise queenes, and eke countesses,  
Thise abbessys, and eke bygyns,  
These grete ladyes palasyns,  
These joly knyghtis and baillyves,

Thise nonnes, and thise burgeis wyves,  
That riche ben and eke plesyng,  
And thise maidens welfaryng,  
Wherso they clad or naked be,  
Uncounceiled goth ther noon fro me.  
And, for her soules savete,  
6870 At lord and lady, and her meyne,  
I axe, whanne thei hem to me shryve,  
The proprete of al her lyve,  
And make hem trowe, bothe meest and leest,  
Hir paroch-prest nys but a beest  
Ayens me and my companye,  
That shrewis ben as gret as I;  
Fro whiche I wole not hide in hold  
No pryvete that me is told,  
That I by word or signe, ywis,  
6880 [Ne] wole make hem knowe what it is,  
And they wolen also tellen me;  
They hele fro me no pryvyte.  
And for to make yow hem perceyven,  
That usen folk thus to disceyven,  
I wole you seyn, withouten drede,  
What men may in the gospel rede  
Of Seynt Mathew, the gospelere,  
That seith, as I shal you sey heere:  
"Uppon the chaire of Moyses' --  
6890 Thus is it glosed, douteles,  
That is the Olde Testament,  
For therby is the chaire ment --  
'Sitte Scribes and Pharisen;'  
That is to seyn, the cursid men  
Whiche that we ypocritis calle.  
'Doth that they preche, I rede you alle,  
But doth not as they don a del;  
That ben not wery to seye wel,  
But to do wel no will have they.  
6900 And they wolde bynde on folk alwey,  
That ben to be begiled able,  
Burdons that ben importable;  
On folkes shuldris thinges they couchen,  
That they nyl with her fyngris touchen."  
"And why wole they not touche it?" "Why?

For hem ne lyst not, sikirly;  
For sadde burdons that men taken  
Make folkes shuldris aken.  
And if they do ought that good be,  
6910 That is for folk it shulde se.  
Her bordurs larger maken they,  
And make her hemmes wide alwey,  
And loven setes at the table,  
The firste and most honourable;  
And for to han the first chaieris  
In synagogis, to hem full deere is.  
And willen that folk hem loute and grete,  
Whanne that they passen thurgh the strete,  
And wolen be cleped `maister' also.  
6920 But they ne shulde not willen so;  
The gospel is ther-ageyns, I gesse,  
That shewith wel her wikkidnesse.  
"Another custome use we:  
Of hem that wole ayens us be,  
We hate hem deedly everichon,  
And we wole werrey hem, as oon.  
Hym that oon hatith, hate we alle,  
And congecte hou to don hym falle.  
And if we seen hym wyne honour,  
6930 Richesse, or preis, thurgh his valour,  
Provende, rent, or dignyte,  
Ful fast, iwys, compassen we  
Bi what ladder he is clomben so;  
And for to maken hym doun to go,  
With traisoun we wole hym defame,  
And don hym leese his goode name.  
Thus from his ladder we hym take,  
And thus his freendis foes we make;  
But word ne wite shal he noon,  
6940 Till alle his freendis ben his foon.  
For if we dide it openly,  
We myght have blame redily;  
For hadde he wist of oure malice,  
He hadde hym kept, but he were nyce.  
"Another is this, that if so falle  
That ther be oon amonge us alle  
That doth a good turn, out of drede,

We seyn it is oure alder deede.  
Ye, sikerly, though he it feyned,  
6950 Or that hym list, or that hym deynd  
A man thurgh hym avaunced be;  
Therof all parseners be we,  
And tellen folk, whereso we go,  
That man thurgh us is sprongen so.  
And for to have of men preysyng,  
We purchase, thurgh oure flateryng,  
Of riche men of gret pouse  
Lettres to witnesse oure bounte,  
So that man weneth, that may us see,  
6960 That alle vertu in us be.  
And alwey pore we us feyne;  
But how so that we begge or pleyne,  
We ben the folk, without lesyng,  
That all thing have without havyng.  
Thus be we dred of the puple, iwis.  
And gladly my purpos is this:  
I dele with no wight, but he  
Have gold and tresour gret plente.  
Her acqueyntaunce wel love I;  
6970 This is moche my desir, shortly.  
I entremete me of brokages,  
I make pees and mariages,  
I am gladly executour,  
And many tymes procuratour;  
I am somtyme messenger,  
That fallith not to my myster;  
And many tymes I make enquestes --  
For me that office not honest is.  
To dele with other mennes thing,  
6980 That is to me a gret lykyng.  
And if that ye have ought to do  
In place that I repeire to,  
I shal it speden, thurgh my witt,  
As soone as ye have told me it.  
So that ye serve me to pay,  
My servyse shal be youre alway.  
But whoso wole chastise me,  
Anoon my love lost hath he;  
For I love no man, in no gise,



6990 That wole me repreve or chastise.  
But I wolde al folk undirtake,  
And of no wight no teching take;  
For I, that other folk chastie,  
Wole not be taught fro my folie.  
"I love noon hermitage more.  
All desertes and holtes hore,  
And grete wodes everichon,  
I lete hem to the Baptist John.  
I queth hym quyt and hym relese  
7000 Of Egipt all the wildirnesse.  
To fer were alle my mansiounes  
Fro citees and goode tounes.  
My paleis and myn hous make I  
There men may renne ynnely,  
And sey that I the world forsake,  
But al amydde I bilde and make  
My hous, and swimme and pley therynne,  
Bet than a fish doth with his fynne.  
"Of Antecristes men am I,  
7010 Of whiche that Crist seith openly,  
They have abit of hoolynesse,  
And lyven in such wikkednesse.  
Outward, lambren semen we,  
Fulle of goodnesse and of pitee,  
And inward we, withouten fable,  
Ben gredy wolves ravysable.  
We enviroune bothe lond and se;  
With all the world werreyen we;  
We wole ordeyne of alle thing,  
7020 Of folkis good, and her lyvyng.  
"If ther be castel or citee,  
Wherynne that ony bouger be,  
Although that they of Milayn were  
(For therof ben they blamed there);  
Or if a wight out of mesure  
Wolde lene his gold, and take usure,  
For that he is so coveitous;  
Or if he be to leccherous,  
Or thief [or] haunte symonye,  
7030 Or provost full of trecherie,  
Or prelat lyvyng jolily,

Or prest that halt his quene hym by,  
Or olde horis hostilers,  
Or other bawdes or bordillers,  
Or elles blamed of ony vice  
Of which men shulden don justice:  
Bi all the seyntes that me pray,  
But they defende them with lamprey,  
With luce, with elys, with samons,  
7040 With tendre gees and with capons,  
With tartes, or with cheses fat,  
With deynte flawnes brode and flat,  
With caleweis, or with pullaylle,  
With conynges, or with fyn vitaille,  
That we, undir our clothes wide,  
Maken thourgh oure golet glide;  
Or but he wole do come in haste  
Roo-venysoun, bake in paste;  
Whether so that he loure or groyne,  
7050 He shal have of a corde a loigne,  
With whiche men shal hym bynde and lede,  
To brenne hym for his synful deede,  
That men shall here hym crie and rore  
A myle-wey aboute, and more;  
Or ellis he shal in prisoun dye,  
But if he wole oure frendship bye,  
Or smerten that that he hath do,  
More than his gilt amounteth to.  
But, and he couth. thurgh his sleight,  
7060 Do maken up a tour of height,  
Nought rought I whethir of ston, or tree,  
Or erthe, or turves though it be,  
Though it were of no vounde ston,  
Wrought with squyre and scantilon,  
So that the tour were stuffed well  
With alle richesse temporell,  
And thanne that he wolde updresse  
Engyns, bothe more and lesse,  
To cast at us by every side,  
7070 To bere his goode name wide,  
Such sleghtes [as] I shal yow nevene,  
Barelles of wyn, by sixe or sevene,  
Or gold in sakkis gret plente,

He shulde soone delyvered be.  
And if [he have] noon sich pitaunces,  
Late hym study in equipolences,  
And late lyes and fallaces,  
If that he wolde deserve oure graces;  
Or we shal bere hym such witnesse  
7080 Of synne and of his wrecchidnesse,  
And don his loos so wide renne,  
That al quyk we shulden hym brenne;  
Or ellis yeve hym such penaunce,  
That is wel wors than the pitaunce.  
"For thou shalt never, for nothing,  
Kon knowen aright by her clothing  
The traitours fulle of trecherie,  
But thou her werkis can asprie.  
And ne hadde the goode kepyng be  
7090 Whilom of the universite,  
That kepith the key of Cristendom,  
Suche ben the stynkyng prophetis;  
Nys non of hem that good prophete is,  
For they thurgh wikked entencioun,  
The yeer of the Incarnacioun,  
A thousand and two hundred yeer,  
Fyve and fifty, ferther ne neer,  
Broughten a book, with sory grace,  
7100 To yeven ensample in comune place,  
That seide thus, though it were fable:  
'This is the gospel perdurable,  
That fro the Holy Goost is sent.'  
Wel were it worth to ben brent!  
Entitled was in such manere  
This book, of which I telle heere.  
Ther nas no wight in all Parys,  
Biforne Oure Lady, at parvys,  
7110 To copy if hym talent tok.  
There myght he se, by gret tresoun,  
Full many fals comparisoun:  
'As moche as, thurgh his grete myght,  
Be it of hete or of lyght,  
The sonne sourmounteth the mone,  
That troublere is, and chaungith soone,  
And the note-kernell the shelle

(I scorne not that I yow telle),  
Right so, withouten ony gile,  
7120 Sourmounteth this noble evangile  
The word of ony evangelist.'  
And to her title they token Crist.  
And many a such comparisoun,  
Of which I make no mencion,  
Mighte men in that book fynde,  
Whoso coude of hem have mynde.  
"The universite, that tho was aslep,  
Gan for to braide and taken kep;  
And at the noys the heed upcaste,  
7130 Ne never sithen slept it faste,  
But up it stert, and armes tok  
Ayens this fals horrible bok,  
Al redy bateil [for] to make,  
And to the juge the bok to take.  
But they that broughten the bok there  
Hent it anon away, for fere.  
They nolde shewe more a del,  
But thenne it kept, and kepen will,  
Til such a tyme that they may see  
7140 That they so stronge woxen be  
That no wyght may hem wel withstonde,  
For by that bok [they] durst not stonde.  
Away they gonne it for to bere,  
For they ne durst not answer  
By exposicioun ne glose  
To that that clerkis wole appose  
Ayens the cursednesse, iwys,  
That in that book writen is.  
Now wot I not, ne I can not see  
7150 What maner eende that there shal be  
Of al this [bok] that they hyde;  
But yit algate they shal abide  
Til that they may it bet defende.  
This, trowe I best, wol be her ende.  
"Thus, Antecrist abiden we,  
For we ben alle of his meyne;  
And what man that wole not be so,  
Right soone he shal his lyf forgo.  
We wole a puple upon hym areyse,

7160 And thurgh oure gile don hym seise,  
And hym on sharpe speris ryve,  
Or other weyes brynge hym fro lyve,  
But if that he wole folowe, iwis,  
That in oure book writen is.  
"Thus mych wole oure book signifie,  
That while Petre hath maistrie,  
May never John shewe well his myght.  
Now have I you declared right  
The menyng of the bark and rynde,  
7170 That makith the entenciouns blynde;  
But now at erst I wole bigynne  
To expowne you the pith withynne:  
And the seculers comprehende,  
That Cristes lawe wole defende,  
And shulde it kepen and mayntenen  
Ayenes hem that all sustenen,  
And falsly to the puple techen.  
And John bitokeneth hem that prechen  
That ther nys lawe covenantable  
7180 But thilke gospel perdurable,  
That fro the Holy Gost was sent  
To turne folk that ben myswent.  
"The strengthe of John they undirstonde  
The grace, in which they seie they stonde,  
That doth the synfull folk converte,  
And hem to Jesus Crist reverte.  
Full many another orribilite  
May men in that book se,  
That ben comaunded, douteles,  
7190 Ayens the lawe of Rome expres;  
And all with Antecrist they holden,  
As men may in the book biholden.  
And thanne comaunden they to sleen  
Alle tho that with Petre been;  
But they shal nevere have that myght,  
And, God toforn, for strif to fight,  
That they ne shal ynowe fynde  
That Petres lawe shal have in mynde,  
And evere holde, and so mayntene,  
7200 That at the last it shal be sene  
That they shal alle come therto,

For ought that they can speke or do.  
And thilke lawe shal not stonde,  
That they by John have undirstonde,  
But, maugre hem, it shal adown,  
And ben brought to confusioun.  
But I wole stynt of this matere,  
For it is wonder longe to here.  
But hadde that ilke book endured,  
7210 Of better estat I were ensured,  
And freendis have I yit, pardee,  
That han me sett in gret degre.  
"Of all this world is emperour  
Gyle my fadir, the trechour,  
And emperisse my moder is,  
Maugre the Holy Gost, iwis.  
Oure myghty lynage and oure rowte  
Regneth in every regne aboute;  
And well is worthy we maistres be,  
7220 For all this world governe we,  
And can the folk so wel disceyve  
That noon oure gile can perceyve.  
And though they don, they dar not seye;  
The sothe dar no wight bywreye.  
But he in Cristis wrath hym ledith,  
That more than Crist my britheren dredith.  
He nys no full good champioun,  
That dredith such simulacioun,  
Nor that for peyne wole refusen  
7230 Us to correcte and accusen.  
He wole not entremete by right,  
Ne have God in his eye-sight,  
And therefore God shal hym punyshe.  
But me ne rekketh of no vice,  
Sithen men us loven comunably,  
And holden us for so worthy  
That we may folk repreve echoon,  
And we nyl have repref of noon.  
Whom shulden folk worshipen so  
7240 But us, that stynten never mo  
To patren while that folk may us see,  
Though it not so bihynde be?  
"And where is more wod folye

Than to enhaunce chyvalrie,  
And love noble men and gay,  
That joly clothis weren alway?  
If they be sich folk as they semen,  
So clene, as men her clothis demen,  
And that her wordis folowe her dede,  
7250 It is gret pite, out of drede,  
For they wole be noon ypocritis!  
Of hem, me thynketh, gret spite is.  
I can not love hem on no side.  
But beggers with these hodes wide,  
With sleighe and pale faces lene,  
And greye clothis not full clene,  
But fretted full of tatarwagges,  
And highe shoos, knopped with dagges,  
That frouncen lyke a quaile pipe,  
7260 Or botis rivelyng as a gype;  
To such folk as I you dyvyse  
Shulde princes, and these lordis wise,  
Take all her londis and her thingis,  
Bothe werre and pees, in governyngis;  
To such folk shulde a prince hym yive,  
That wolde his lyf in honour lyve.  
"And if they be not as they seme,  
That serven thus the world to queme,  
There wolde I dwelle, to disceyve  
7270 The folk, for they shal not perceyve.  
But I ne speke in no such wise,  
That men shulde humble abit dispise,  
So that no pride ther-undir be.  
No man shulde hate, as thynkith me,  
The pore man in sich clothyng.  
But God ne preisith hym nothing,  
That seith he hath the world forsake,  
And hath to worldly glorie hym take,  
And wole of siche delices use.  
7280 Who may that begger wel excuse,  
That papelard, that hym yeldith so,  
And wole to worldly ese go,  
And seith that he the world hath left,  
And gredily it grypeth eft?  
He is the hound, shame is to seyn,

That to his castyng goth ageyn.  
"But unto you dar I not lye.  
But myght I felen or asprie  
That ye perceyved it no thyng,  
7290 Ye shulde have a stark lesyng  
Right in youre honde thus, to bigynne;  
I nolde it lette for no synne."  
The god lough at the wondir tho,  
And every wight gan laugh also,  
And seide, "Lo, heere a man aright  
For to be trusty to every wight!"  
"Fals-Semblant," quod Love, "sey to me,  
Sith I thus have avaunced thee,  
That in my court is thi dwellyng,  
7300 And of ribawdis shalt be my kyng,  
Wolt thou wel holden my forwardis?"  
"Ye, sir, from hennes forwardis;  
Hadde never youre fadir heere-biforn  
Servaunt so trewe, sith he was born."  
"That is ayenes all nature."  
"Sir, putte you in that aventure.  
For though ye borowes take of me,  
The sikerer shal ye never be  
For ostages, ne sikirnesse,  
7310 Or chartres, for to bere witnesse.  
I take youresilf to recorde heere,  
That men ne may in no manere  
Teren the wolf out of his hide,  
Til he be flayn, bak and side,  
Though men hym bete and al defile.  
What! Wene ye that I nil bigile  
For I am clothed mekely?  
Ther-undir is all my trechery;  
Myn herte chaungith never the mo  
7320 For noon abit in which I go.  
Though I have chere of symplenesse,  
I am not wery of shrewidnesse.  
My lemman, Streyned-Abstinaunce,  
Hath myster of my purveaunce;  
She hadde ful longe ago be deed,  
Nere my councel and my red.  
Lete hir allone, and you and me."



And Love answerde, "I truste thee  
Withoute borowe, for I wole noon."  
7330 And Fals-Semblant, the thief, anoon,  
Ryght in that ilke same place,  
That hadde of tresoun al his face  
Ryght blak withynne and whit withoute,  
Thankyth hym, gan on his knees loute.  
Thanne was ther nought but, "Every man  
Now to assaut, that sailen can,"  
Quod Love, "and that full hardyly!"  
Thanne armed they hem comunly  
Of sich armour as to hem fel.  
7340 Whanne they were armed, fers and fel,  
They wente hem forth, alle in a route,  
And set the castel al aboute.  
They will nought away, for no drede,  
Till it so be that they ben dede,  
Or til they have the castel take.  
And foure batels they gan make,  
And parted hem in foure anoon,  
And toke her way, and forth they gon,  
The foure gates for to assaile,  
7350 Of whiche the keepers wole not faile;  
For they ben neithir sike ne dede,  
But hardy folk, and stronge in dede.  
Now wole I seyn the countynaunce  
Of Fals-Semblant and Abstynaunce,  
That ben to Wikkid-Tonge went.  
But first they heelde her parlement,  
Whether it to done were  
To maken hem be knowen there,  
Or elles walken forth disgised.  
7360 But at the laste they devysed  
That they wolde gon in tapinage,  
As it were in a pilgrimage,  
Lyke good and hooly folk unfeyned.  
And Dame Abstinence-Streyned  
Tok on a robe of kamelyne,  
And gan hir graithe as a Bygyne.  
A large coverchief of thred  
She wrapped all aboute hir heed,  
But she forgat not hir sawter;

7370 A peire of bedis eke she ber  
Upon a las, all of whit thred,  
On which that she hir bedes bed.  
But she ne bought hem never a del,  
For they were geven her, I wot wel,  
God wot, of a full hooly frere,  
That seide he was hir fadir dere,  
To whom she hadde after went  
Than ony frere of his covent.  
And he visited hir also,  
7380 And many a sermoun seide hir to;  
He nolde lette, for man on lyve,  
That he ne wolde hir ofte shryve.  
And with so great devocion  
They made her confession,  
That they had ofte, for the nones,  
Two heeddes in oon hood at ones.  
Of fayre shap I devyse her the,  
But pale of face somtyme was she;  
That false traytoursse untrew  
7390 Was lyk that salowe hors of hewe,  
That in the Apocalips is shewed,  
That signifyeth tho folk beshrewed  
That ben al ful of trecherye,  
And pale through hypocrisye;  
For on that hors no colour is,  
But only deed and pale, ywis.  
Of such a colour enlangoured  
Was Abstynence, iwys, coloured;  
Of her estat she her repented,  
7400 As her visage represented.  
She had a burdown al of Thefte,  
That Gyle had yeve her of his yefte;  
And a skryppe of Faynt Distresse,  
That ful was of elengenesse;  
And forth she walked sobrelly.  
And Fals-Semblant saynt, je vous die,  
Had, as it were for such mister,  
Don on the cope of a frer,  
With chere symple and ful pytous.  
7410 Hys loking was not disdeynous,  
Ne proud, but meke and ful pesyble.

About his necke he bar a byble,  
And squierly forth gan he gon,  
And, for to rest his lymmes upon,  
He had of Treason a potente;  
As he were feble, his way he wente.  
But in his sleve he gan to thringe  
A rasour sharp and wel bytynge,  
That was forged in a forge,  
7420 Which that men clepen Coupe-Gorge.  
So longe forth her way they nomen,  
Tyl they to Wicked-Tonge comen,  
That at his gate was syttyng,  
And saw folk in the way passyng.  
The pilgrymes saw he faste by,  
That beren hem ful mekely,  
And humbly they with him mette.  
Dame Abstynence first him grette,  
And sythe him Fals-Semblant salued,  
7430 And he hem; but he not remued,  
For he ne dredde hem not a del.  
For whan he saw her faces wel,  
Alway in herte him thoughte so,  
He shulde knowe hem bothe two,  
For wel he knew Dame Abstynance,  
But he ne knew not Constreynance.  
He knew nat that she was constrayned,  
Ne of her theves lyve fayned,  
But wende she com of wyl al free,  
7440 But she com in another degree,  
And if of good wyl she began,  
That wyl was fayled her than.  
And Fals-Semblant had he sayn als,  
But he knew nat that he was fals.  
Yet fals was he, but his falsnesse  
Ne coude he nat espye nor gesse;  
For Semblant was so slye wrought,  
That Falsnesse he ne espyed nought.  
But haddest thou knowen hym befor,  
7450 Thou woldest on a bok have sworn,  
Whan thou him saugh in thylke aray,  
That he, that whilom was so gay,  
And of the daunce joly Robyn,

Was tho become a Jacobyn.  
But sothly, what so men hym calle,  
Freres Preachours ben good men alle;  
Her order wickedly they beren,  
Suche mynstrelles if they weren.  
So ben Augustyns and Cordyleres,  
7460 And Carmes, and eke Sacked Freeres,  
And alle freres, shodde and bare  
(Though some of hem ben great and square),  
Ful hooly men, as I hem deme;  
Everych of hem wolde good man seme.  
But shalt thou never of apparence  
Sen conclude good consequence  
In non argument, ywis,  
If existens al fayled is.  
For men may fynde alway sophyme  
7470 The consequence to envenyme,  
Whoso that hath the subtelte  
The double sentence for to se.  
Whan the pylgrymes comen were  
To Wicked-Tonge, that dwelled there,  
Her harneys nygh hem was algate;  
By Wicked-Tonge adown they sate,  
That bad hem ner him for to come,  
And of tidynge telle him some,  
And sayd hem, "What cas maketh you  
7480 To come into this place now?"  
"Sir," sayde Strayned-Abstynance,  
"We, for to drye our penaunce,  
With hertes pytous and devoute  
Are comen, as pylgrimes gon aboute.  
Wel nygh on fote alwey we go;  
Ful dusty ben our heeles two;  
And thus bothe we ben sent  
Throughout this world, that is miswent,  
To yeve ensample, and preche also.  
7490 To fysshyn synful men we go,  
For other fysshynge ne fysshe we.  
And, sir, for that charyte,  
As we be wonte, herborowe we crave,  
Your lyf to amende, Christ it save!  
And, so it shulde you nat displese,

We wolden, if it were youre ese,  
A short sermon unto you sayn."  
And Wicked-Tonge answered agayn:  
"The hous," quod he, "such as ye see,  
7500 Shal nat be warned you for me.  
Say what you lyst, and I wol here."  
"Graunt mercy, swete sire dere!"  
Quod alderfirst Dame Abstynence,  
And thus began she her sentence:  
"Sir, the firste vertu, certayn,  
The greatest and moste soverayn  
That may be founde in any man,  
For havynge, or for wyt he can,  
That is his tonge to refrayne;  
7510 Therto ought every wight him payne.  
For it is better styлле be  
Than for to speken harm, parde!  
And he that herkeneth it gladly,  
He is no good man, sykerly.  
"And, sir, aboven al other synne,  
In that art thou most gylty inne.  
Thou spake a jape not longe ago,  
(And, sir, that was ryght yvel do)  
Of a young man that here repayred,  
7520 And never yet this place apayred.  
Thou saydest he awayted nothyng  
But to disceyve Fayr-Welcomyng;  
Ye sayde nothyng soth of that.  
But, sir, ye lye, I tel you plat.  
He ne cometh no more, ne goth, parde!  
I trowe ye shal him never se.  
Fayr-Welcomyng in prison is,  
That ofte hath played with you, er this,  
The fayrest games that he coude,  
7530 Withoute fylthe, styлле or loude.  
Now dar he nat himself solace.  
Ye han also the man do chace,  
That he dar neyther come ne go.  
What meveth you to hate him so,  
But properly your wicked thought,  
That many a fals leasyng hath thought  
That meveth your foole eloquence,

That jangleth ever in audyence,  
And on the folk areyseth blame,  
7540 And doth hem dishonour and shame,  
For thyng that may have no prevyng,  
But lyklynesse, and contryvyng?  
"For I dar sayn that Reson demeth  
It is nat al soth thyng that semeth,  
And it is synne to controve  
Thyng that is to reprove.  
This wote ye wel, and sir, therfore  
Ye arn to blame the more.  
And nathelesse, he recketh lyte;  
7550 He yeveth nat now therof a myte.  
For if he thoughte harm, parfay,  
He wolde come and gon al day;  
He coude himselve nat abstene.  
Now cometh he nat, and that is sene,  
For he ne taketh of it no cure,  
But if it be through aventure,  
And lasse than other folk, algate.  
And thou her watchest at the gate,  
With spere in thyn arest alway;  
7560 There muse, musard, al the day.  
Thou wakest night and day for thought;  
Iwis, thy traveyle is for nought;  
And Jelousye, withouten fayle,  
Shal never quyte the thy traveyle.  
And skathe is that Fayr-Welcomyng,  
Withouten any trespassyng,  
Shal wrongfully in prison be,  
There wepeth and languyssheth he.  
And though thou never yet, ywis,  
7570 Agyltest man no more but this,  
(Take nat a-gref) it were worthy  
To putte the out of this bayly,  
And afterward in prison lye,  
And fettre the tyl that thou dye;  
For thou shalt for this synne dwelle  
Right in the devels ers of helle,  
But if that thou repente thee."  
"Ma fay, thou liest falsly!" quod he.  
"What? Welcome with myschaunce now!

7580 Have I therfore herbered yow,  
To seye me shame, and eke reprove?  
With sory hap, to youre bihove,  
Am I to day youre herberger!  
Go herber yow elleswhere than heer,  
That han a lyer called me!  
Two tregetours art thou and he,  
That in myn hous do me this shame,  
And for my soth-sawe ye me blame.  
Is this the sermoun that ye make?  
7590 To all the develles I me take,  
Or elles, God, thou me confounde,  
But, er men diden this castel founde,  
It passith not ten daies or twelve,  
But it was told right to myselve,  
And as they seide, right so tolde I,  
He kyst the Rose pryvyly!  
Thus seide I now, and have seid yore;  
I not wher he dide ony more.  
Why shulde men sey me such a thyng,  
7600 If it hadde ben gabbyng?  
Ryght so seide I, and wol seye yit;  
I trowe, I lied not of it.  
And with my bemes I wole blowe  
To alle neighboris a-rowe,  
How he hath bothe comen and gon."  
Tho spak Fals-Semblant right anon:  
"All is not gospel, out of doute,  
That men seyn in the town aboute.  
Ley no deaf ere to my spekyng;  
7610 I swere yow, sir, it is gabbyng!  
I trowe ye wote wel, certeynly,  
That no man loveth hym tenderly  
That seith hym harm, if he wot it,  
All he be never so pore of wit.  
And soth is also, sikerly  
(This knowe ye, sir, as wel as I),  
That lovers gladly wole visiten  
The places there her loves habiten.  
This man yow loveth and eke honoureth.  
7620 This man to serve you laboureth,  
And clepith you his freend so deere:

And this man makith you good chere,  
And everywhere that [he] you meteth,  
He yow saloweth, and he you greteth.  
He preseth not so ofte that ye  
Ought of his come encombred be;  
Ther presen other folk on yow  
Full ofter than he doth now.  
And if his herte hym streyned so  
7630 Unto the Rose for to go,  
Ye shulde hym sen so ofte nede,  
That ye shulde take hym with the dede.  
He cowde his comyng not forbere,  
Though me hym thrilled with a spere;  
It nere not thanne as it is now.  
But trusteth wel, I swere it yow,  
That it is clene out of his thought.  
Sir, certis, he ne thenkith it nought;  
No more ne doth Fair-Welcomyng,  
7640 That sore abieth al this thing.  
And if they were of oon assent,  
Full soone were the Rose hent;  
The maugre youres wolde be.  
And sir, of o thing herkeneth me,  
Sith ye this man that loveth yow  
Han seid such harm and shame now,  
Witeth wel, if he gessed it,  
Ye may wel demen in youre wit  
He nolde nothyng love you so,  
7650 Ne callen you his freend also,  
But nyght and day he wolde wake  
The castell to destroie and take,  
If it were soth as ye devise;  
Or som man in som maner wise  
Might it warne hym everydel,  
Or by hymself perceyven wel.  
For sith he myght not come and gon,  
As he was whilom wont to don,  
He myght it sone wite and see;  
7660 But now all other wise doth he.  
Thanne have [ye], sir, al outerly,  
Deserved helle, and jolyly  
The deth of helle, douteles,



That thrallen folk so gilteles."  
Fals-Semblant proveth so this thing  
That he can noon answeyng,  
And seth alwey such apparaunce  
That nygh he fel in repentaunce,  
And seide hym, "Sir, it may wel be.  
7670 Semblant, a good man semen ye,  
And, Abstinence, full wise ye seme.  
Of o talent you bothe I deme.  
What counceil wole ye to me yiven?"  
"Ryght heere anoon thou shalt be shryven,  
And sey thy synne withoute more;  
Of this shalt thou repente sore.  
For I am prest and have pouste  
To shryve folk of most dignyte  
That ben, as wide as world may dure.  
7680 Of all this world I have the cure,  
And that hadde never yit persoun,  
Ne vicarie of no maner toun.  
And, God wot, I have of thee  
A thousand tyme more pitee  
Than hath thi preest parochial,  
Though he thy freend be special.  
I have avauntage, in o wise,  
That youre prelatis ben not so wise  
Ne half so lettred as am I.  
7690 I am licenced boldely  
To reden in divinite,  
And longe have red. . .

