

THE
SEVEN SAGES,

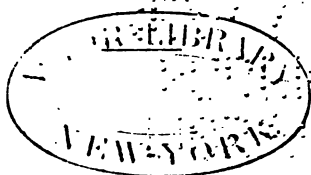
IN
 ENGLISH VERSE,

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V.S.

THE SEVEN SAGES.

IN Rome was an emperour,
A man of swyth mikil honour,
As the book tellys us,
Is name was Deocclicius,
Al the londe hadde to gye,
And hadd a wyfe that hight Helie.
Bitwene thaym twa come an ayer,
A good child and a faire ;
The emperour and is wif
Lovenden the child as hare lyf.
The emperour wax an old man,
And on a day thynke he gan
Uppon his sone that was so bolde,
And was bot sevene wyntur olde.
The emperour for-thoght sore
Tha the child ware sette to lore ;
After the seven sages he sent,
And messangers anon thare went,
And brogthen the clerkes of honour
Ryght byfore the emperour.

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B

Into a chambir out of the halle
 He toke thaym, and refreynde alle,
 Whilk of thaym he myght take
 Hys sone a wyes man to make.

The heldest answerde the emperour,
 That whas a man of mykil honour,
 A lene oor man he was,
 Kyd was callid Baucillas;
 He sayed to the emperour,
 "Woldestow do me that honour,
 To bytake thy sone to me, 30
 Thow scholdest bath here and see,
 Er thys seven ȝer ware a-goon,
 He sholde conne hym self al on,
 By God Almighty that is in heven,
 Also mykyl as we sevene."

The secunde mayster was nawt so holde
 Ase Baucillas, no nawt so bolde;
 A man he was that loved pees,
 And whas callid Ancillees. 40
 "Sire emperoure, zif it so bee
 Thow wille bytake thy sone to me,
 For thy love I wille hym teche,
 Into his hert fort reche
 Al the clergy undir sonne
 That we seven clerkes cunne.
 This I wile sikere the,
 Gyf he schal byleve with me."

The thirde a lene man was,

And couthe mykil solas, 50
 And was callid Lentulus :
 Hee sayed to the emperour thus,
 " Sire emperour, take nowt a-greef,
 Tak me thy childe that is te leve,
 And er ther passe thre and fyve,
 Yf he have wyt and his on lyve,
 He schal conne hym self alone
 As mykil wit as we ilkone."

The fyrde mayster he roos and spake,
 He was nowthir whyit no blake, 60
 And inred man he was,
 And was callid Maladas ;
 " Sire," he sayde, " take me thyn heire,
 That his bothe good and faire ;
 Bote for sothe I wile for-sake
 That my felawes hase undirtake :
 A wondir thyng that were bygyne
 To teche hym that my felawes cune.
 Bot I walde teche hym, as I am a man,
 Also mykil good as I can." 70

The fyfte mayster up araes,
 That of wisdom bare grete loos,
 He was boren in Rome tounne,
 And was callid mayster Caton ;
 He sayd, " Sire emperour, i-wis,
 The sothe tale that his this,
 To teche hym that my felawes cane,
 A grete foly it were bygyne ;

Bote yf thow wilt bitake hym me,
 I wille, for honour of the,
 As I am trewe mane,
 Hym teche the clergy that I can."

The sexte was a 3ong man
 That no berd non bygane,
 And sayed, "Sire, bythoght fening,
 Take thy sone in my kypyng,
 And that wole do so by myn attente,
 That 3e no schal nouȝt repente."
 In this manere answerde he,
 And was callid maystir Jess.

The sevent mayister answerd thus,
 And was hoten Marcus:
 "Sire, I have servyd the 3are,
 Sythen I couthe first of lare,
 Fram that day hidyr to,
 Al that evere I have done
 I queth 3ou, sire emperoure;
 Woltow do me that honour,
 To take me thy childe to 3eme,
 And I wille teche hym the to greme."

The emperour with wordis stille
 Thaynked thaym with good wille;
 "By the deth that I schal dee,
 I nylle party 3oure company,
 I nylle take my sone to one,
 I bytake hym 3ow ilkone,
 To teche hym in chambyr and in halle,

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That I be holden to ȝou alle."

Thay thanked alle the emperour,

That grauntyd hem that honour, 110

To have in hare kepyng

That he loved thorou al thyng.

Thay token leȝe at the emperour,

And ladde the childe with honour,

The sevene mayster alle y-fere,

Ther the childe schulde lere.

Than sayd maystir Catone,

"Yf he dwelle here in the tounne,

Certes it may nought be

That he schal here or see 120

Wylen to don or speke with mouthe,

And that nolde we nought that he couth.

Sykyrly for to telle,

There most he nouȝt dwelle."

The seven maysteres thay hym nome

I note how mykil out of Rome,

For to ordayne and dyvise,

Or the childe ware sette aprise,

Ware thay myȝte a stude make,

A real, for the childes sake, 130

Whare he myght of wit lere,

And none vileny heere.

A studie thay fonden swyth fayre,

And a stude of good eeir;

Fayre welles there wellyde fast,

And fayre trees schadow to kast.

In the fayrest place of alle
They lete reren a halle;
Nought as anothir halle it nas,
Even four cornarde it was. 140
Thay late rere in ilce a syde
Fayre chambirs many and wyde ;
Every mayster hadde oone
In to lygge and to goon.
Than al togydir was wrought,
Er the childe wer thydir brought,
Fyrst gamen to bygynne,
The sevene sciens payent therin.
Whan al togydyr was wrought,
The childe thar-in was brought, 150
Amyd the halle hys bede was made,
When he lay ther-in naked,
Hon ilce half he myȝt byholde
At ilke tyme whane he wolde,
Uppon the wallis he myght see
What hys lesson schulde bee.
Alle hys maystirs were about,
To teche hym, for hys fadir dout ;
Evermore wil he wooke,
When on levede, anothir tooke, 160
That or the sevene ȝere were goon,
Of seven artis nastir noon
That he no couthe good skil inne,
Wastir noon to bygynne.
Whan his maystirs taught noght,

He lernede of his owen thoght;
That on a day in the halle
He disputide with ham alle,
And thay were glad of that he couthe,
And sayed ilcon with othir to mouthe, 170
“The childe wax a wyres man;
Prove we more what he can.”
Thay were bythout in a wile
For to do the childe a gyle,
For to prove of hym more,
How depe he was in lore.
The childes bede was makid in stage,
Of four postis as a kage;
Undir ilc post thay layden,
Aste the clerikus hem selven sayden, 180
Four yven lewes togydir knyht,
For to proven of his wit.
Uppon morwen, tho it was day,
The childe awakid there he lay,
He lokid low, he lokid hee,
And kast wildeliche his hye;
He lokid in ilce half of his bede,
As a man thot ware adrad.
Than come the maystir Baucillas,
And askyde the childe what him was: 190
“Wy lokesttow so aboute thy bede?
Artou of eny thyng adrade?”
The childe answerde in his bede,
“I am of no man adrade;

Bote a lytil I merveyle me
 Of a thyng that I see.
 This house that is so strange dyzt,
 The rofe hys sonkon to nyght,
 Or the flore his resyn on hye,
 Sythen I last the rofe see." 200

"Certys," quod Maladas,
 "That ware a wondir kas!
 For in noone kynne wyse,
 The flore ne may nouzt aryse.
 The post been grete and nouzt smal,
 How myzte the rofe awale?
 Hyt ne may on non wys be,
 Thyng that thow tellyst me."

"By God, maister, I am noght dronken,
 Yf the rofe his nouzt sonken, 210
 Ne the flore rysyn on hye,
 Sithen I last the rofe see,
 Than his my bede undir-layede;
 That no may nouzt bee wyt-sed."
 Thay nolden no langer with hym zede,
 Ne suffry langer lygge in bede.
 Bote while he wente in solas,
 Maden the bedde as hit was:
 Ilkon sayed to other thus,
 "He his a wyse man y-wys." 220

Wyl the childe at scole was,
 Hym byfel a harde caes;
 Hys modir deyde, that hatte Elye,

As we schalle alle dye.
Sone aftir that scho was dede,
Hys fadir hadde anothir rede ;
Grete lordis of honour
Come anone to the emperour,
And sayden, " Thow hase londis y-now ;
Hit were tyme for to wouwe, 230
And to have anothir wyf,
For to ledde with thy lif,
Thou ne havest no childe bot hon,
And mygtyst susteyne many oon."
The emperour was jolyf of blode,
And hare councel undirstood ;
And to thaym alle sayede hee,
" Lordyngs, thanne aspye 3e
A womman worthy to be my make,
And with 3oure consel I wil hire take." 240
Tho thay seen he wolde acente,
For to seche anon thay wente,
Of hye lynage and faire manere
A lady for to be his feere.
Alle the lordis soghten fast,
And fande a lady at the last.
At schorte wordis for to telle,
The emperour ne wolde nou3t dwel,
Hee wedded hirre ase the law was,
And lyveden togydir in solas. 250
Bot it lastid bot a while,
The wyf for-dide hit with a gyle.

The emperasse was sone tolde
Of that childe that was so bolde,
That was the emperour eir,
A good childe and a faire.
He that tolde hire that tale,
Brought hir in mykil bael;
For ever more scho was in thoght,
That the childe were to deth broght.

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In a myry morny[n]g of May,
The emperour in his bedde lay,
And the emperesse in feere;
What we saye now non schal here.
“Sire,” scho sayed, “hit is me tolde,
That thou hase a sone bolde,
A good childe and a faire,
That sal be oure bothe ayere.
For sothe, sire, I hold hym myn,
Also wel as thou dost thyn.
Therefore I besyche the,
For love thou ouwest to me,
Send after hym, yf it his thy wylle,
And late me spek with hym my fylle:
Graunt my bone, and make me glade,
Hyt his the first that ever I badde.”
The emperour lay al stille,
And lete hyre saye al hire wille;
Of falsnesse non heed he nam,
Bot at the last out hit kame.
The emperour answerde tho,

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“ Certis, dame, I have no mo,
No child bot hym i-wis;
And now I wot how hit his
That thow desyres hym to see,
He schal come hom to the.”
The lady sayed thare,
“ Leve sire, this ilke daye
Lat dyght messangers ȝare,
Aftir hym for to fare.”
Quod the emperour, and swor ther-to,
“ For soth, dame, hit sal be doon.”
Bot the emperour wist nought
What was hire wikkyd thought.
An evyl deth mot scho dey!
Scho purchasede thourugt nigremanceye,
That seven dayes and seven nyght
He no schold spek with no wyght,
Yf ony word hym hadde sprong,
That men myght here of his tong,
Anon hys hert scholde to-breke,
Ne schold he never eft more speke.
This hadde the wikkid womman wrout,
For brynge the childe to nowt.

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Than messangers were ȝare,
After the childe for to fare:
He sayed to the messangeres,
That ware bolde and feres,
“ To the seven sages ȝe sal wynde,
And saye that I ham gretyng sende,

310

And bidde thaym withouten delay
Come withinne the thyrdde day,
And bryng with thaym my sone dere
That thay have for to lere."

Thay nolden there longe dwelle,
The messangers were ful snelle,
Hastilich the way thay nomen,
To the seven sages thay comen,
And sayden, " Clerkis of honour,
Wylle 3ow gretis the emperour,
And byddis 3ow within this thrid day
Come to hym, without delay,
And bryng with 3ow his sone dere,
That he betau3t 3ou to lere."

320

Thay were resayved with gret honour,
For love of the emperour.
The childe and his maisters alle
Went downen out of halle

Into a herber to make solas,
And there sawe a wondir kas;
Hit neght fast toward nyght;
And the mone schone wil bryght,
And thay byhelden toward the scky,
Uppon the mone that so hy3e,
And on sternes there bysyde,
Of thyng that after wolde bytyde.

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Than byspake maystir Caton,
" Felaus, I see in the mone,
We have made us alle to-don.

The emperour hase send us sonde,
That we schal brynge his sone alle to honde;
And when he comes his fadir byfore,
And he speke he his lore,
His stepmodir hase thorug nigrimancye
So demed how the child schal dye,
Yf he speke he his y-lore;
And we schal by schend ther-fore.
The emperour, by swete Jhesus!
Alle he wille wyten us.”

The childe kast hys heyn a-hey,
And sawe alle that Caton see;
"Maystir," he sayde, "a! see 3e
Another thyng that I se?
In a stere I see me lyche,
And I myghte forbere speche
Seven dayes and seven nyght,
I scholde covere agayn my syght,
And my woo turne to game,
And 3e alle out of blame."

Than sayd mayster Baucillas, 360
 “ For soth this his wondir cas:
 Tharefore take counsel sone
 What his best to don,
 How we myghte overcome this wyf,
 For to save oure aler lyf.
 For bettir be avisemend,
 Certenlych we be schent.”
 The childe answerd ther he stood,

“ I wyle gyf 3ou counsel good;
Seven dayes I mot forbere
That I ne gyf no answe;re;
And yf I speke loude or stille,
With the forme word I sal deye.
And 3e both, 3e maistires sevene,
The wysesde I holde undir evene,
Fondys ilkon, yf 3e may,
For to holde my lyf a day
With qweyntys of clergie;
For 3e be schent yf I deye.”
Baucillas sayed, “ If I may,
I schal save thy lyf a daye.”
And alle the othir sayed, i-wys,
That ilkon wolde be for hys,
And ilc mayster toke hys day
To kepe hit, withouten delay.
Sonenday hadde Baucillas;
And ilkon wist wylk his was.
Thus thay were at on alle,
And wenten agayen into the halle,
And maden the messangers solas,
And 3ede to bede wan tym was.
O morwe, when the day was lyght.
Thay hyeden that the childe were digt,
He went forth in mykil care,
And left alle hys maysters thare;
With hym toke he nevere oon,
Bot maistir Baucillas aloon.

And anon, are the none,
Ryght to the cité of Rome
The childe into palayes kame, 400
And into halle the way he name.
And hys fadir he gan lowte
And the lordyngs al abowt.

Hys fadir askyd how he ferde,
And the child nowt answerde,
But lowtid to his fadir anon,
And stod stille as a stoon.

The emperour than wroth was,
Spake to the maystir Baucillas,
“Mayster, how his this game goone, 410
That my sone speke wordis noone?
And tho I hym bytoke to 3ow
He spake langage good i-nowe,
And now ne spakys he bettir no wors:
Therefore have Godys curse.”

“Sire,” quod maystir Baucillas,
“For soth hit his a wondir cas:
3yster day he spak as wel
As ony of us, by saynt Myghel.”

Wyle the emperour and Baucillas 420
Spake of that wondir cas,
To the emperesse the worde was broght,
That the childe ne spake noght.
Scho come a-doun into the halle,
And hyre maydens with hire alle,
And welkome the childe anone.

And he stod stille as a ston,
And fayre he gan the lavydy loute,
And hir mayden alle aboute.
He stod stille and spake noughte: 430
He wist ful wille hir wikyd thouȝt.
The lavedy sayed to the emperour,
“ Y grette thy sone for gret honour,
And hys mouth whas fast stoke,
He wolde never a word speke.”
Thanne sayede the emperour,
“ Dame, by saynt Saviour,
He wolde nothyng spek with me,
How scholde he, dam, spek with the?”
The lavedy sayd, that thouȝt gile, 440
“ Sire, lete us twayne bee a wyle
In a chambir togidir steke,
And certis, yf he sal ever speke,
I sal make hym speke, i-wys,
Yf anny speche in hym ys:
For soth I shal bee his leche,
Yf ever more shal have speche.”

The emperour of alle the londe
Tok hys sone by the honde,
And sayed, “ Dame, take hym here, 450
And wende wydir ȝe wille i-fere;
I vowch hym wylle save on the,
To do what thy wylle bee.”
The emperesse of alle the londe
Tok the childe by the honde,

And wente into a chambyr i-fere,
And ful evyly, as 3e mowe hyre,
Ful sone scho hadde a lesyng wrou3t,
For to bryng the childe to nou3t.

When scho into the chambur cam,
The childe by the honde scho nam,
And sayed to hym, "Lemman dere,
Men wenes I be thy faderes fere:
By hym that made sone and mone,
He ne hade nevere with me done,
No nevere more he ne schal;
My body, maydenhod and alle,
I have tokyn hyt to the,

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To do with what thy wille bee."
The childe stod and spake nought,
And was in swyth gret thought.

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Aboute hys neke hyre armees ho layed,
And with hir fals tonge sayed,
"Kys me, yf thy wyllle bee,
Alle my lyfe hys longe on the."
The childe thou3t on hevene blys,
He nolde nought the lavedy kys,
And non othir thyng do,
Bot crepe out of hire armes two.

Anon as the lady see,
Out of hire armes that he flee,
Al that on hir hed was layed
Scho brayd hit a-don at on brayd,
To-rente hyre clothes and foule ferde,
And cryde at the emperour herde ;

480

For men scholde tak hed,
Scho made hyre vysages for to bled.
Than the emperour herde hyr crye,
Into the chambir he gan hye;
And anon has he cam, 490
A grete scryke up ho nam,
And sayde, "My lord, syre emperour,
Lo hyre what a grete honour
Thy sone walde have done the,
Here he walde have strangyl me,
Or he walde have lyen my by,
Bot I hadde areryd cry.
For soth he nys nouȝt thy blode;
Hit his a devel, and his wode:
For sothe, bot he be bondon anon, 500
He wil schende us ilc oon."
The emperour was nere wode,
When he sawe hys wyfys bloode,
Hire heved bare, hire clothes rente;
He swore anon, by saynt Vyncent,
"I schal nevere hete brede,
Here the thyfe traytour by dede."
Anon ryght the emperour
Callid to hym a tormentour,
And anothir, and the thyrd, 510
And sayde, "I ȝow hote and byde,
Take thys thyf, and bynde hym fast,
Whyle the cordis wyle laste,
And ledis ȝe hym thare thyfys hyng,
Anon that he have hys endyng;

And loke that he no tarye nouȝt,
Er he be to deth brought.”
None durste wyth-sytte hys heste,
Nouthir the lest no the moste.
Thay tokyn hym, and bandyn hym fast, 520
Whyle the cordis wolde laste,
Thourth the emperours commandement,
Thay laddyn hym toward juggement.
Knyghtys and levedys in the halle,
Squyers and maydens alle,
Hadde wondire in hir thouth
What wo was in the chambir wrought.
Erlis and barrons in the halle
Wenton to the emperour alle,
And sayed, “Lord, syr emperour, 530
Thow doost thy selfe lytil honour,
For to suffyre thy sone by slawe,
Withouten any proses of lawe.
Lat hym leve al this nyght,
Til to morwe that day by lyght,
And than yf he schal by schent,
Lat hym passe thourgh juggement.”
Than answerde the emperour
To the lordis of honour,
“Lordyngs, I wil ȝow telle, 540
For ȝoure love he schal dwelle
On lyve tyl to morwe day,
And by than as hit may.”
Thay thank hit al the emperour,
That hadde don ham that honour,

That he grauntit ham that bone,
And that thay hadden hit so sone.
The emperour comandede anone,
Afftir the childe for to goon;
And thay brought hym into the halle, 560
Among the gret lordis all.

The emperour comanded anone
That he scholde to prison goon,
And in prison he lay ale nyght,
Til on the morwen the day lyȝt.
Now his the childe the prison brouȝt;
Mykile sorowe was in hys thout.
God that sytys in magesté,
Delyvere hym whan his wil bee!

The emperes was sory in thout, 560
That the childe agayn was broȝt;
Scho morned and made mykil wo,
Til the day was a-go,
Than thay were in bed brought,
For to change hir lordis thouht,
When thay were in bedde i-fere.
What scho sayed ȝe schulle here,
How ho brought hire lorde in wille,
Er hit was daye, the childe to spille.
Scho wippe and hir hondis wronge, 570
And afte syked sore amange.

The emperour laye and herde,
And asked hyre why ho so ferde,
And sayed, "Tel me anon
Why thow makyst al this mon."

"Sire," quod the lady tho,
 "Hit his no wondir tho me be wo!
 Thow were bettir to be dede,
 Than wyrke eftyr sory rede.
 Thou brewest thy self mykil bale, 580
 To leve ilke mans tale:
 Also mote bytide the
 As dyde the fyne appul-tre,
 For a branche that sprange biside
 The grettir les alle hir pride."
 "Certis, dame," quod [the] emperour,
 "I woot thow lovyste my honour,
 And thare-fore, dame, I the bydde,
 Tel me how that bytydde,
 And latte us studye thare-uppon 590
 What his best for to doon."

FYRST TALLE.

Anon the lavedy hire tale bygan,
 And sayd, "Sire, hit was a man,
 As men sayen, hit was a knyzt,
 And hadde a herber fayr dyght!
 Now schaltou here how hit bytyde.
 In the herber ryght amyde,
 Oppon the appul-tre thare stooode,
 A fayre tre and a goode;
 Bothe harlyche and latte 600
 The lorde was of tyme thare-atte,
 And grette daynté he hadde
 The tree see fayre spradde.
 Withinne a wylle, hit is nouzt longe,

A branche out of the tre spronge,
And the knyght dayenteth hadde,
How hit wax and fayre spradde.
Oppon a day kam the knyght,
And sawe hym crokyn a lytil wyght;
A bou of the grette tre 610
Lettyde hym that he myȝt nout the.
Quod the lorde to his gardinere,
'Go feche an ax wil I ham here,
And hew a-down this mykyl bowe,
And latte the branche have rome y-now.'
The gardiner was sone went
To do the lordis commaundement.
Thus he lette norische the ȝong
That was out of the holde sprong,
And of hold he lete hewe ' 620
Many bowes and nowght fewe.
They lette the ȝonge branche sprede,
And the holde tre bygan to dede.
"The gardiner sawe alle the rote,
For sothe, sir, thare his no bote,
Al the vertu ther scholde bee,
Is lupon into the lytyl tre.
'*Par fay!*' quod the lorde tho,
Gardynere, when hit hys sooe,
Ther nyl bee non other botte, 630
Bot dyggyt up by the rote.
Thus was the tre bodun wronge,
For the braunche that of hym spronge.
Than the mykil tree wax al badde,

And the lytil the maystré he hadde.
Thus sal the branche that of the spronge
Fondon for to do the wronge,
And hewes thy bowys in ilke a syde,
That hys thy power that spredis so wide;
Thus when he bygynnys to bolde, 640
He wille brynge the a-down in olde."

Thus whas the wykkyd womman tale,
For to browe the childes bale.
" Dame," quod the emperour,
" By lorde saynt Savour,
For alle the men that beres brethe,
He sal to morwen thole dethe."
On the morwen, tho hit was day bryzt,
The emperour clepid a knyght:
" To my pryson thou schalt goon, 650
And say my tormentours anoon,
Thay do my sone to tormentrie:
Certis, this day he schal dee."
The knyght was sory in hys thought,
Bote withsaye hym dorst he nought,
Bote bade the tormentours ilkon
Do the childe to dethe anoone.
Anoon the childe was lade to spyle,
To doo the emperours wille.
To-ward the deth as he was, 660
He mette with mayster Baucillas.
The childe was aferde to dee,
A kast on hym a ruful hye.
He rade forth and sayed nought;

He wyst wylle the childis thought.
For to save the childes honour,
He come wille sone to the emperour.
“Sire,” quod maystir Baucillas,
“Certis, this his a wondir cas,
That thou art in wille pytte, 670
To sle thy sone withouten gylte.”
Thanne sayed the emperour anoon,
“I have enchesone mo than oon.
3e sevene have haddyn in 3oure powere
My sone al this seven 3ere,
To teche nortyre and wyt,
And 3e have hys tonge cnyt.
Whan I prayd hym for charité,
He walde nought speke a worde with me.
And anothir cheson I have goode, 680
The fule thefe, the unky[n]de blode,
He was aboute my wyf to spyle,
For he no most nought have hys wille
To by hyr flesche lygge.
He schal dee syrtnlyche,
And 3e also, by Good in hevene,
3e schal dee al sevene.”
Than sayde Baucillas,
“A! sire emperour, alas!
That thou grevest the so sore, 690
Or thou haddyst queryd more.
Certys, I dare lygge my lyf,
Of that thou tellis of thy wyf,
The childe ne thought nought bot gode,

Wymman been of wundyr mode."
The [emperour] that wroth was,
Answerde Baucillas,
"Baucillas, lat be thy fare,
I see my wyfys hed bare,
And hir clothes al to-rent,
Afte the thef wold hir have schent."

700

Baucillas answerd tho,
For the childe hym wa[s] wo,
And sayed, "Sire, for thy lyf,
Bynym nought thy sonnys lyf;
And yf thou dost, so mot byfalle,
As fel the knyght in hys halle,
That byname hys growhund lyf,
That hadde savyd hys sonnys lyfe;
And for the dule he made ther-fore,
The knyght hym selven he was for-lore."

710

Quod [the] emperour than to Baucillas,
"Tel me how that tale was."
"Sire," quod Baucillas, "Wer-to?
Wat awantage were that to do?
Er the tale were tolde,
The childes blode wolde bee colde."
The emperour commande tho,
Afftir the childe for to goo.
The childe, that glad was of sokur,
Was brought byfore the emperour;
Thourow the emperour commandement,
Agayn to prison he was sende.
Anoon as the childe was agoon,
The mayster bygan hys tale anoon.

720

A TALE OF THE MAYSTER.

He sayed how ther was a knyght,
A ryche man of gret myghte,
And had a good womman to wyf,
And a womman of good lyf.
Bytwen thaym thare cam a ayer, 730
A good child and a fayre,
And 3onge hagge hit was,
A twelmowth holde it was.
Ther was no thing syrcurliche,
That the knyght lovyd so myche.
The knyght hadde another juel,
That he lovyd swyth wel,
A grewhond that was good and snel,
And the knyght lovyde hit wel,
And was swyth good of dede. 740
To alle bestis that he to 3ode;
And for his godnesse he was lore,
And the knyght was sory ther-fore.
[The] knyght ordaynde a day,
In a tyme, hit was in May,
Elcon with othir wolde play,
And fond to breke a schaft or twey.
The knyght of hit [herde] tell,
In his felde thay wolde dwelle,
Ryght a lytil fram his halle, 750
Ther thay were asembild alle;
Al that in the court was,
Wente to see the solas,
Save the childe norises two,

Thay ne durst nower ware goo.
Wen thay seen al ware goo,
And noman leved bot thay two,
And herdyn tronpe and taburne,
Thay forgate hare honoure;
Thay left the childe anon tho, 760
And dyde ham bothe forth goo,
In a toure thay clymbyd on hyghe
Pryvyliche tha[t] no man see;
Thare thay stode both stille,
And seen the gam al at wille.
In the court ther was wrowt
An olde toure that servyd of nouȝt,
And in a crevas there was brede
A nedder, and hadde there-in a bedde.
Tho the nadder wok and herde 770
Al the pepyl how hit ferde,
Trumpe, tabur, and melodye,
And heraudis loude crye,
The nadder sowt way ower alle,
Til scho come out of the walle.
Out of the walle scho came,
Into the halle the way scho name,
And drow hym toward the credile ther-byne,
To sle the child that was ther-inne.
Toward the credyl as he suythe, 780
The good grew-hond lay and syȝe,
And was swyth wrothe withalle
That he cam into the alle.
The grewhond stood uppe anon,

And to the naddir he gan goon;
 Ther thay faugthen togydir long,
 And ayther wondid othyr strong.
 As thay foghten, here 3e moun,
 The credyl went uppe-so-doun;
 The credyl uppone the pomels stooode, 790
 The child hadde nought bote goode;
 Hyt no woke, no hyt no wyppe,
 Bote alle stille and sleppe.
 The grewhond 3ede the worme so nyghe,
 That into the 3erd the worme flyghe;
 The grewhonde sewed hym so faste,
 That he slew hym at the last.
 Tho the naddir was falle,
 The grewhonde layde hym in the halle,
 Evelle wo[n]dyd over alle, 800
 And for sothe he lay and 3al.
 When the justis were doon,
 The norise hiede ham in ful sone,
 Thay ne durst no langer dwelle,
 Thay fande the grewhond lye and 3elle,
 And ferd as he were wodde,
 And hys hed al by-bledde;
 Thay two norise was were and seghe,
 The credyl bothume turnyd on hyghe,
 And sawe the grewhond al by-bled, 810
 Thay war both sore a-drede.
 "Felaw," scho sayed, "be my blode,
 Thys grewhond his waxyn woode,
 And hase eten the childe ther-fore:

Alas! that ever we were bore!"

The tother noris sayed i-wis,

"Certis, felaw, sothe hit his:

Alas! that stonde," sayde schoe,

"That we 3eden justys to see!"

Thay were ful of sorow and wo,

820

And dyde thaym bothe for to goo.

As thay flowen toward the felde,

The lavydy lay and byhelde,

And hyre herte bygane to colde,

As womman herte sone wolde;

And wondird wat hit myght bee,

Tho he segh hir noris flee;

And clepid hir anoon a swayn,

And badde hym faste fete the noris agayne.

Byfore the lady thay were brought;

830

The lavydy was sory in hire thoght,

And askid ware the childe was.

And thay veppe and sayed, alas!

"Certis, dam," quod that oon,

"As wel mow we telle anoon:

My lordis grewhond his wexen wode,

And hase etten hym flesche and blode."

The lady swyth sory was,

And bygan to cry, alas.

The lord herde the lady crye,

840

And thydirward he gan hye,

And sayed, "Dam, wat is this fare?

Tel me anoon, nought no spare."

The lady, that was so woo,

Sayed to hyre lorde tho,
“Sire,” ho sayed, “sycurlyche,
The childe that thou lovedest so myche,
Thy grewhond has waxen woode,
And hase eten hym flesche and blood.”
Than was the lorde sory i-nowe;
In towarde the halle he hym drowe,
And the lady with hym nam.
Into the halle sone he kam:
The grewhond hys lorde syghe,
And sete bothe hys fete on hyghe
Oppon hys brest to make solas;
And the more harme was.
The knyght drow out hys swerd anoon,
And smot out the rygge boon.
The knyght comanded anoon ryght,
Bere the cradyl out of hys syght.
Ther stood a man that was glad
To do that the knyght bade,
And bare the credyl out in hys arme,
And sawe the childe hadde no harme.
In hys arme the childe he hent,
And into the halle he went,
And sayed, “Alas, thy good grewhond!
Hire isti sone hole and sounde.”
Tho that weren in the halle
Hadden grette wondyr alle,
That the chylde on lyve was,
And sayden hit was a wondir cas.
At the last thay fanden alle,

850

860

870

How the cas was byfalle,
How the naddir was y-slawe,
That the grewhond hadde to-drawe.
“ Alas!” quod the knyght tho,
“ My good grewhond hys a-goo.”
The knyght was sory ther-fore, 880
That hys grewhond was for-lore;
Into hys horchard thay way he nome,
And to a fische-pole he come,
And for dule of hys hounde
He lepe in and sanke to gronde.
“ Sire,” quod maystir Baucillas,
“ Now thow havest herde this cas,
Yf thow wolt thy sone spille,
For to suffyre thy wyves wylle,
Also mote the byfalle 890
As dyde the knyght in hys halle,
That slew hys hounde and lyse hys lyfe,
For a worde of hyse wyfe.”
Tho the emperour herde
Of that tale, how hit ferde,
He sayed, “ Maystir Baucillas,
Me ne schal nouȝt bytyde that cas
For no word of my wyf,
To day ne schal he lyse hys lyfe;
No nouȝt he ne schal by boundon so sore, 900
Arre I have inquiryd more.”
Thus thorow the maystir Baucillas,
That day the childe savyd was.
Myghte no man the lady glade,

Scho syghyd and sory semlant made,
 And was sory in hyre thought
 That the childe agayne was brought,
 And bythought hire agayens nyght,
 And dyd thare-to alle hyre myghte,
 To brynge the emperour in wille 910
 Uppon morwen the childe to spylle.
 In bedde than thay were brought,
 "Sire," scho sayed, "What have ȝe thoght?
 Ne see thou nouȝt with thyn eyen
 Were I was in poynt to deyen,
 As thy sone me wolde a schent,
 That hys agayn to prison sente.
 Also mote bytyde the,
 As dyde the bore undyr the tre,
 That was clavyd, and thought hit gode, 920
 And lese ther-fore hys hert blode."
 Quod the emperour to hys wyfe,
 "Dame, lete be thy stryf,
 And tel me now, I the byde,
 Of the bore how hit bytydde.
 And
 Anoon hire tale by-gane.

A TALE.

And sayed, "Syre, hit was a bore,
 And woned in a holde hor;
 Ther was a tre in the forest 930
 That the bore loved best,
 To ete the fruyte that thare was oon.

Every day that cam to maane
 He come thydyr aboute undiren,
 To ete the fruyte that laye ther-under.
 A h[e]rde man hadde a best lore,
 And mykyl dule made ther-fore;
 Longe nolde he nought abyde,
 He soughte hys best in hilk a syde.
 Into the forest the way he nam, 940
 And byfore the tre he cam,
 There the bore was wont by fede,
 And her he ȝede he was a-drede.
 Hym thought that the fruyt was goode,
 And gadderd bret ful hys hoode.
 The bore come rennyng towarde the tree
 There hys mete was wounte to bee;
 Tho the knave hadde a fryȝt,
 Of the bore he hadde a syȝt,
 And the bore neghyd nee; 950
 He clam uppon the tree on hyghe.
 The bore byhyde hym thydyr faste,
 And uvele spede at the laste.
 And has he come, ful wyle he syghe
 How the knave clam on hyghe,
 And bygan tothes to wette,
 And to the tre byre he fette,
 And layden as he were wode,
 Til hys mouthe famed of blode.
 And thau the tree were rote faste, 960
 ȝyt was the knave agaste;
 Of the fruyt that was browne

The knave kast the bore a-doune,
 And he was for-ungrid sore,
 And ete, and nolde hew no more.
 Undir the tre he stode ful stille,
 And of the fruyt ete hys fyller.
 The knave stode uppon a bowghe,
 And kest a-downe fruyt i-noughe,
 When the bore hase eten hys fyller, 970
 Undir the tree he stode ful stille.
 That knave kest hym fruyt y-nowe,
 And clam a-doune fra bough to boghe,
 And with hys on hond at the laste
 And with hys legges held hym fast;
 The tohir honde he lete down glidde,
 And claude the bore undir the syde.
 The bore lykyde the clavyng wele,
 And anoon to grounde felle,
 And lay slepyng stille as stoon. 980
 The knave drowe out a knyf anoon,
 And rent hys wombe with the knyf,
 And bynam the bore hys lyf.
 Thus schaltou be clovyd also
 With fykyl wordis and with false,
 An[d] thy sone the traytur
 Schal be madde a emperour:
 Thorugh thy false clerkis sevene
 Thow wylt by gylled, by Good in heven!"
 Quod the emperour, "By saynt Brydde, 990
 That no sal me nougt bytydde;
 He ne sal do no more sorowe,

Certis, he sal dee to-morne."
 Oppon the morwen, wen hit was day,
 The eemperour made grete ray,
 And commaunde hys men anoon
 To slee the childe thay schuld gone.
 Thay took the childe out of prison,
 And ladde hym withouten toun:
 As thay ladde hym by the strete,
 On of hys maystirs he gan mete,
 Toward the emperour he rode,
 And welne al to longe he bode.
 When he hadde the child mette,
 The maystir made hys hor go bete,
 For to save the childe fram schame.

1000

Ancillas was hys name.
 Ful hastylich the way he nam,
 Byfore the emperour he cam,
 A clerk he was of grete honour,
 And gret anoon the emperour.
 The emperour answerde with ire,
 "Maugré have thow, bone sire,
 I 3ow took my sone to teche,
 And 3e have raft hym hys speche:
 By Jhesu Crist, that hys in hevene,
 3e sal to prison al sevene."

1010

"A! sire," quod mayster Ancilles,
 "God almighty send us pees!
 Sire, ne make 3ow nougt so wroth,
 Thow wost nowght alle how hit goth;
 And yf thy sone lyse hys lyfe,

1020

For the talys of thy wyfe,
 I bysyke God in hevene,
 For hys dyrworth mannys sevene,
 That ȝe bytyde swilk a cas
 As bytyde Ypocras,
 That slow hys cosyn withouten gylt,
 And hym selven ther-fore was spylt."

Quod the emperour to Ancilles, 1030
 "Certis, thou schalt never have pees,
 Er I wyt of that cas,
 That bytyde Ypocras."
 Quod Ancillas, "Sire, were-to?
 Wat advantage were that y-do?
 Er my tale wer tolde,
 The childys blode wolde be colde;
 Bote yf I mote hys lyf borowe
 Al thys nyght tyl to-morwen,
 Gyf he myght on lyf dwelle, 1040
 Of Ypocras I wylle telle."
 Anon the childe was aftir sent,
 Thorow the emperoures commandement.
 Than was the mayster a glad man,
 And anon hys tale bygane.

A TALLE.

"A nobile fysysian thar was,
 And was callid Ypocras;
 He hadde a cosyn of hys blode
 That longe walde leren no goode,
 Of the world lytyl he thought, 1050

Bote at the laste he hym bythought,

How and in what manere

He myghte any goodys lere.

Hys emys bokis he unselde,

And ilk a day on thaym byhelde,

And bycam a fysysian,

Also good as anny mane.

The kynge sone of Hungrye

Hadde a woundir maladye:

The kynge sent aftir Ypocras,

1060

For to wyten wat hym was.

Ypocras was ale olde,

And hys blode wax ale colde,

He let atyre wile a[nd] fyne,

And sent thydyre hys cosyne.

Anon as he was comen,

By the hande he was nome,

And he was ladde anoon,

Also stille as a ston,

Ther the kynge sone laye,

1070

That hadde by syke many day.

The childe couthe of fysenamyne,

That he saw wyl with hys eye,

When he hade a wyle syttyne,

That the childe was mys-gettyne.

Syche wyse clerkys were goo;

Now no byther non of tho:

Thay late be al the clergie,

And tornys to pryde and lycherie.

Thanne the childe were gode of lore,

1080

3yt he wolde aqwere more;
Fram hyre maydens ten or twelve,
He took the quene by hyre selvene,
And sayde, 'Madame, be nought wroth,
To telle 3e me thynke nowt lothe,
Yf thou wilt have thy sone on lyve,
For sothe, dame, thou most the schryve:
Tel me how thow havest wroght,
For sothe the kyng ne gat hym nouȝt,
And bot thow telle how hit hys, 1090
I may nought hel thy sone i-wys.
Of hys hele he ase ne swat,
Bot thow telle wo hym bygate.'
The quen that was the kyngys wyf,
Was lothe to lesyn hyre sone lyfe,
And sayd to hym privyliche,
Bytween thaym two specialiche,
'Thare was a prince hire bysyde,
And oft sythes he wolde ryde
With my lorde for to play, 1100
And love wax bytween us twey,
And so [was] he getyn i-wys:
Now thow wost how hit hys.'
When he wyst al the cas,
He tornyd hit al [to] solas,
And the childe undirtoke,
As taught hym Ypocras booke;
And he helyd the childe ol and sound,
And hadde ther-fore many a pound,
And of the quene many gyftis fele, 1110

For he schulde hire counsel hele;
 And went hom to Ypocras,
 And told hym al how hit was.
 Ypocras was welny wode,
 That hys cosin couthe so mykyl good,
 And thout anoon a wylkyd thout,
 For to bryng hys cosyn to nowt.
 Oppon a day thay went to pleye,
 He and hys cosyn thay twey,
 Into a swyth fayre mede, 1120
 There fayre floure gan sprede.
 Ipocras stille stood,
 And saw a gras that was god:
 'Bon cosyn,' quod Ypocras,
 'I se a gras of grete solas,
 Were hyt dyggyd uppe by the rote,
 Of many thyngs hit myght be bote.'
 Than sayd the childe to Ypocras,
 'Leve syre, were hys that gras?'
 Quod Ypocras, ever vorthym wo, 1130
 'Loe, were hyt stondis at my too.
 Knele a-doun oppon thy knee,
 And dyggyd uppe and bryng hit me,
 And I wyl the telle, i-wys,
 What vertu ther-inne hys.'
 The childe knelið anoon a-doun:
 Ypocras drow anoon fauchon,
 And slow hys cosyn, the more arme was,
 Wyle he dyggyd aftyr the gras.
 Tho went he hom anoon, 1140

And bernyd hys bokys ilkon,
 In wrat, as a man that were wode,
 For noman schuld lerne of ham good.
 When he hadde hys bokys brent,
 And hys cosyn was schent,
 He fel in a maladye,
 That he was in poynt to dye.
 Than was ale hys bokys lore,
 And he ne couthe medycyne ther-fore:
 Tho hadde he slane hys cosyne,
 That couthe wel of medycyne;
 For faut of helpe he ferde amys,
 And at the laste he deyde, i-wys.

1150

"Thus was Ypocras dede,
 And, sire, ther-fore take thy rede.
 Thow no havest no sone bote oon;
 Yf thow lattis hym to deth gon,
 Whan helde byndys thy bones stoute,
 Thare hys bote fewe that wyle the doute.
 And yf thou havest thy sone bolde,
 For soth, were thow never so holde,
 For thy sone men wyle the drede,
 Let hym lyve, I wylle the rede."

1160

Quod the emperour, "By myn hede,
 To nyght no schal he nought be dede,
 Bytwene thys and to morwen day,
 Be thanne as hit be may."
 Al that in the palas was
 Maden myrth and solas,
 Bothe more and the lesse;

1170

Save the wykkyd emperesse,
Scho syghed and swore amonge,
Ala! alas! was hyre songge.

The emperour herd hyre say, alas!
And askyd hyre what hyre was.
“Sire,” scho sayed, “Wo hys me!
And al togydyr hit hys for the;
Thare thow art both lorde and sire,
And maystir over al the emperire,
Thow arte abowte thy selven to spylle; 1180
Yf thy clerkys have thare wylle,
Thay wille make hym emperour,
That thyf that lyes in the tour.
And yf thou lovest hym more thane me,
Also mote bytyde the,
As hym that in the lym was dede,
That made hys sone smyt of hys hede.”

Quod the emperour, “I the byde,
Telle me how that bytydde.”

A TALE.

The emperesse hire tale bygane, 1190
And sayd, “Sire, hit was a mane,
Emperour of Rome he was,
And nowt lovyd no solas,
Bot was about to fylle a toure
Ful of golde and ryche tresour.
Swylke seven clerkys hadde hee
Undir hym as have 3e.
The seven clerkis that with hym were,

Alle at hom nouȝt thay were;
Thorow the emperour comandement, 1200
The fyve were out wente,
And the twa at home thay byeth,
For to do that he thaym bydeth.
That othir ladde myry lyf,
And haddyn both childryn a[nd] wyf;
Hit was a man withouten kare,
And ryclych he wolde fare,
What he spendid he nouȝt rought,
And that hys nek sore abought.
When hys catel bygan to slake, 1210
And he ne myght no fest make,
There felle a wyl in hys thoute,
And ther-thourow he wente to nowt,
And bitidde a wondir kas,
And ȝe schal here how hit was.
He adde a sone that was heyre,
A good childe and a fayre;
Thay wente and breken that tour,
And bare away mykyl tresoure,
And mad hym myry, and spendid faste, 1220
Al the wylle that hit wolde laste.
He that lokyd the tresour,
Come a day into the tour,
And over-al he keste hys syght,
To loke whehir hit ferde ryght.
He was freche, he was nought dronke,
He saw the tresour was sonke;
He lette remue the tresour anone,

And fand ware the thyf was goon.
Byfore thare the hole was, 1230
He sette a deppe caudron of bras,
A manere of glowe he dyde thare-inne,
To halden all that com thare inne,
And helyd thare the cawdron stode,
As thare were nought bot gode.
He that the tresour stale,
Hadde spendid hit and wastyd alle:
He sayes, 'Sone, by Goddys sore,
Of the tresour we wyll have more.'
He and hys sone were at on, 1240
And thydyr-ward thay gan goon,
In the wanyng of the mone;
The fadir was desavyde sone.
In at the hole the fadir crepe,
And in the caudron sone he lepe,
And anoon he styked faste.
Than was hys sone sore agaste.
'Sone,' he sayed, 'I ham hent;
Fle anoon ar thow art schent.'
'A! fadir,' he sayed, 'alas! 1250
Certys thys hys a wondyr kas.
For soth I can no rede now:
Leve fadir, how reddyst thow?'
'Certis,' he sayd, 'hit his no rede,
Bot hastilich smyt of my hede,
And god laysyr when thou myght have,
Byrye hit in cristyne grave.'
The childe was in grete thought,

To helpe his fadir he myght nouȝt,
And saw thare was non othir rede, 1260
Bote smote of his fadir hede,
And knyht hit in hys lappe onoon,
And dyde hym hastilyche to goon;
And anoon has he ham came,
Out of hys lape the hede he name,
And in a forme he let hit fale,
And dyde a wykkyd torne withalle.
Thane he hadde hys fadir gode,
Thane wax he hote of blode;
No sorow in hert he ne hadde, 1270
How foul deth hys fadyr hadde.
Than he had that hys fadir gate,
Hys fadir deth he al for-gat.
Certis, sire, thus woltu fare:
Ther-fore hys al my kare.
Thou schalt lese thyn honour,
And thy sone be emperour,
As othir have doon thou schalt als,
Thorow talys of thy clerkys fals.”
Quod the emperour to the emperesse, 1280
“ So I ever here mas,
My sone ne schale never do me that sorowe,
Certys he schal dee to-morwen.”
Thus hys wyf, that cursyd lyfte,
Brewed the childys deth that nyght.
Uppe of the morwen lange are prime,
The emperour ros by tyme,
And thys was hys commandement,

That the childe anoon where schent.
The tormentours wer ful rade 1290
To do tha[t] the emperour bade;
Thay ne made noon delay,
Bot took the child, and went hare way,
And toward the studye thay hym lede
There men schulde the chylde byhede.
Ryght as thay come atte the zate,
Hys o maystir hym mette thare-atte,
In hys hert was no game,
Lentulus was hys name.

Oppon the childe he cast hys eie, 1300
Hym thought for sorow he myght dee:
Anoon the way he nam,
And byfore the emperour cam,
And sayed, "My lord, syr emperour,
God the save and thyn honour!"
The emperour answerde anoon,
"A! tratour, thow art that oon
That I bytook my sone teche,
And he hase loste hys speche,
And wolde have lyne by my wyf: 1310
He schal dee, by my lyf!"

"Syre," quod maystir Lentulus,
"I ne leve hit nouzt, by my lyf,
To do vylany by thy wyf;
Bot yf thou brewyst thy childis bale,
For hys stepmodir tale,
So mote the bytyde in thy lyfe,
As dyd the olde man in hys lyf."

Quod the emperour, "I the byde,
 Tel me how that cas bytyde." 1320
 "Sire," quod maystir Lentulus,
 "I nylle, by swet Jhesus,
 Bot thy chylde deth by let,
 That he ben agayen fet,
 And mot lyve al this nyght
 Til to-morwen til day be bryght."
 The emperour comaunde anoon
 Aftyr the childe for to goon :
 Thorow commaundement of the emperour
 The childe was ladde into the tour. 1330
 Lentulus was a glad man,
 And anoon hys tale bygane.

A TALE.

"Hyt was a man and hadde a wyfe,
 And loved hyre as hire owen lyf ;
 Scho was both zong and bolde,
 And the housband whas holde,
 Hys myrth in bede bygan to slake,
 And scho tooke another make.
 In bed as thay lay in fere,
 The wyf aros, as ze moun here, 1340
 Fram hire hosbonde thare he lay,
 A lytyl wyl byfore daye,
 Witouten dore at the zate
 Scho mete hyre lemman thare-atte.
 The godman withinne a while
 Myssyd hys wyf, and thout gyle.

He ros uppe as stille as a stone,
And to the dore he gane goone,
And bygan ful stille to spye,
And herde of hyre putrye, 1350
And went hym stille as stoone,
And steke to the dore anoone.
When thay hadde done thayre wyle,
And spoken togydir or fylle,
The wyf fonde the dore faste ;
Than whas scho sore agaste.
Scho pute at the dore in hye,
And bygan loud to crye,
And badde the delve hys neke to breke
That the dore hadde steke. 1360
The sylyman lay and herde,
And hys wyf answerd,
'Dame,' he sayed, 'go thy way,
Thow havest bygonne a sory play ;
To morwen sal oppon the gonne
As many men as been in toun.'
Walaway scho gan to synge,
And hyr hondis for to wryng :
'Mercy, sire, I am thy spouse,
For Goddys love lat me to house !' 1370
Quod the godman anoon,
'Goo thare thow hast to goon :
So God almyghty gyf me wyne,
Thou ne schalt to come hyre-ine,
Ar alle our frendys ilkon
Have gounde oppon thy body alon.'

Quod the wyf, 'So moti i-thryve,
I wylle nought so lange be alyve.'
Hastilich within a wylle,
Scho was bythought oppon a gylle ; 1380
Byfore the dore, as I ȝow telle,
Thare was a mykyl deppe welle,
And a stoon lay thare by
As mykil as a manys the,
As hit tellys in the booke,
In hyr armes scho hit tooke,
In the wel ho lette hit falle.
The godman herdit into the halle,
And hadde reuthe of hys wenche,
And wende ho wold hyre self adrynge, 1390
And ros uppe in hys serke anoon,
And to the wel he gan goon,
As man that was in good lyf,
And thout for to save hys wyf.
The wyf was ful wyly,
And stod the dore swyth nee,
Into the halle scho gan goon,
And stek to the dore anoon.
The godman was ful uvele myght,
He sowt hys wyf in the pytte, 1400
And hurt hym, and hent harme,
And scho lay in hyr bedde warme.
On evyl deth mote scho dee !
So bleryd the sely manys ee,
And love hir so myche,
Ful falle alle syche.

When he fandir nouȝt in the welle,
He walde ther no langer dwelle,
At hys dore he wolde inne,
And hit was stoken with a pyne. 1410
He schof ther-onne, and bade undo:
Scho lay stille and let hym doo.
The lawe was than so harde bounden,
Yf a housbond were in hurdom founden,
He schuld have a juggement,
Were-thorow he schuld be schent;
And armyd men by nyght thare ȝede.
The godman was ful sore agaste,
That he fande the dore faste;
He knockede, and was in mykyl kare. 1420
The wyf askyd wo was there,
The goodman was ful sore adrade,
That herd hys wyf in hys bede,
And sayed, 'Dame, I ham here,
Thy spouse and thy trewe fere:
Arys uppe, and draw oute the pyne,
Goode lef, and let me inne.'
'A! traytour!' quod scho tho,
'Ga bylyve were thou havest to go,
To thyn hore there tho[u] were, 1430
Go agayn and herborowe thare.'
To speke fayre he to hede,
For he saw hit was ned:
'Dame, lete me in to my bede,
And now be thow nought adrede;
For by the lorde saynt Nycolas,

I wyl forgyve the thy trespass.
 'Nay, traytour,' quod scho tho,
 'Certis also wel thow myght goo;
 By Good that hys ful of myght, 1440
 Thow schal nowt come here-in to nyght.'
 As thay spoken lowde togyder,
 The wakmen herde and come thydyr;
 The toon sayed, 'Wat art thow,
 That standys here thys tyme nowe?'
 'A! sire,' he sayed, 'mercy!
 And I wille 3ow telle resoun why:
 I hadde a spangel good of plyght,
 I have hit mysde al thys seven-nyght,
 And I not how hit ferde, 1450
 Me thought here-out I hym herde,
 And cam out to clepyn hym inne,
 And my wyf hase put in the pyne
 In the dore oppon hyre game:
 Go forth, a Godys name!"
 'Certis he lyes,' quod hys wyf,
 'Hyt hys a man of wykkyd lyfe.
 I have helyd, for I wende
 That he wolde somtyme amende;
 Therfore now 3e have hym hent, 1460
 Lat hym passe by juggement.'
 The wakmen nolde no langer abyde,
 They token hym in ilke a syde,
 And lad hym into the toune,
 And put hym in prisone,
 And lay alle nyght in mykyl sorowe,

And hadde hys juggement a-morwen.
 Thus he hadde hys juggement,
 And thorow hys wyf he was schent. 1470
 So wyltoun, sire emperour,
 Certis lese thyn honour,
 To bynym thy sonys lyf
 For a tale of thy wyffe."

Quod the emperour, "By swet Jhesus,
 For thy tale, sire Lentulus,
 To day ne schal he lese the lyffe
 For no tale of my wyf."
 Than commande the emperour
 Do hys sone into the tour. 1480
 Thay dyden anoon as he bade :
 Tho was Lentulus glad.
 When the emperes that undirstode,
 For wrat scho was welne wode,
 That the emperours thout was went,
 And the childe to prison sent.
 Al that day scho fonded hyre flygt,
 How scho myght agayens nyght
 Fonden a tale al newe,
 The childe deth for to brewe. 1490
 Scho was al redy bythout,
 Wen scho was to bede brogt ;
 Of[t] sythes scho sygkyd sore,
 And stilly scho sayed, "Lord, thy ȝore!"
 The emperour lay and herde,
 And acsyd hyre why scho so ferde.
 "Sire," quod [the] emperesse tho,

"It his no wondir tho me be wo :
 Now hys my wo to bygyne,
 Now we sal parten in twynne.
 I nylle no langer hyre abyde,
 To se the wo that 3e sal bytyde.
 By God Almyghty that hys in hevene,
 Thy sonne and thy clerkys sevene
 Thay ben alle at on asent ;
 Certys, syre, thow worst schent.
 And, syre, bot thow leve me,
 Also mote bytyde the
 As dyde the styward of hy[s] lyf,
 That gret gyng hys wyf."
 "Dame," quod the emperour,
 "I bysyke the *par amour*,
 Tel me now of that kas,
 Whilk maner and how hyt was."

500

1510

A TALLE.

"Certis," quod the emperes,
 "Thow schalt here of wykkydnesse.
 In Pule was som tyme a kynge
 That hatyd wymmen of alle thyng ;
 Never 3yt in alle hys lyf
 He nolde never have no wyf.
 In Romauns hyt tellys in a booke,
 That a grete ivel hym tooke ;
 The ivel passyd over alle,
 That hys body al to-swal,
 That hys body was al to-blaw
 No man myght hys membris know.
 Into Salner he sent a man

1520

Aftyr a nobile fesisian ;
Anoon has he was come,
By the honde he was nome,
Into the chambyr he was lade 1530
For to make the kyng glade.
When he saw the kyng pyne,
He askyd anoon hys uryne;
Anoon as he the uryne sawe,
He wyst were hys ivel lay,
And sayed, ' Sire, ne amay the nouȝt,
For soth thy bote hys broght.'
When [he] herde thys thythyng,
Thane comfordede the kyng.
The mayster was wys and snel, 1540
And made hys medicyne wille,
And anoon gaf he hit the kyng,
And abatyd the swellyng.
' Syre,' quod the fysisian,
' The behoves have a womman
To do thy wyl by a-nyght,
Yf I schal helle the aryght.'
Quod the kyng, ' So mot I the,
Astow wylt hyt schal bee.'
The kyng callyd hys senescal, 1550
That hadde hys hows to kepe alle,
And sayed to hym, ' Thow moste aspye,
And hastylich thou most hye,
A fayr lady of colour bryght
For to lygge by me a-nyght,
And at scho be of he lynage,

And a lady of 3ong age.'
 'Sire,' quod the stiwarde anoon,
 'Al byssi schal I fynde oon:
 For los of thy malydye 1560
 Thay wille be aferd to dye.'
 Quod the kyng, 'Thow sayest thi wille,
 With gold and silver thow schal thaym tylle ;
 Gyf thaym golde and silvyr i-nowe:
 I am ryche man i-nowhe?'
 Than the styward undirstood
 The kyng wald gyve so mykyl good,
 He took hys lyve and hom he cam,
 And by the hond hys wyf name,
 And sayed, "By sayent Benedyght, 1570
 Tho[u] schalt ly by the kyng to nyght,
 Golde and sylver thow schalt wynne,
 And ben asolyd of thy synne.'
 'Certis, syre,' quod hys wyfe,
 'Now thow lovest lytil my lyf.'
 For covetyse that he hadde,
 To the kynges hys wyf he ladde.
 He went unto the kynges bedde,
 And sayed, 'Syre, I have spede,
 I have a lady of hegh bloode, 1580
 Bot scho wyl have mykyl good,
 And dyrke scho wolde that hit bee,
 Scho nylle that no man hyre see.'
 'Parfay!' quod the kyng anoon,
 'Lette quenche the torches ilkon.'
 Ho lette quenche the torche ilkone,

And took hys wyf by honde anoon,
And dyde hyre to bed with [the] kyng,
That covetous gadlyng.

Al the nyght thare scho lay, 1590
Til a myl byfor the day:

Al nyght scho sykkyd and sorow made;
The kyng no myghte hyre nothyng glade.
The styward was of day adrede,
And kam to the kynges bede,
And sayed, ' Syre, on al wys,
Thow most that lady ryse.'

Quod the kyng, ' By saynt Jon,
3yt no schal scho nou3t gon.'
He heldyr thare tyl hit was day; 1600

And anoon as he saye
Hyt was the stiward wyf,
There bygan to ryse stryfe.
Than sayed the kyng,
That was wrothe som thyng,
' Styward, so God the rede,
Who made the do thys dyde?

Be thow in my court founde
Whanne the sonne gos to grounde,
Withouten any othyr lawe 1610

Thow schalt be angyd and to-drawe;
Loke withouten any delay
That I see the never aftyr thys day.'
The senescal drade thys wordys sore,
He ne durst dwel ther no more;
Out of the court the way he name,

Wyste thay never were he bycam.

Lo, my lord syre emperour,

How he lese hys honour!

The styward for hys covetyse, 1620

Hys wyf he lost and hys servys.

Certis, sire, so saltow also,

For covetyse of thy tales false

That thyn fals clerkys tellen;

For soth y nylle nouȝt longe dwellen,

That thou nult lese thyn honour,

And thyn sone ben emperour.

I the telle as hit his,

Do now what thy wille hys."

Quod the emperour to the emperesse, 1630

"By hym that made matyns and messe,

I nyll to morwen ete no brede

Er the thef traytour be ded."

O-morwen commande the emperour

Tak hys sone out of the tour,

And leden hym to hys juggement,

Anon that he were schent.

Withoutyn ony more chest

Thay dyden the emperour hest.

Without the palas tho he was, 1640

He mete with hys maystyr Maladas.

Into the halle the way he nam,

Byfore the emperour he cam,

And sayd, "Alas! sir emperour,

Thou dost thy self lytyl honour,

That thy sone schal be slawe,

Withouten proses of lawe."

"Certys," quod the emperour,
 "Bade men sle the wykkyd tratour,
 And thow thy felaws 3e ben fals, 1660
 Thay schal ben hangede and thow else."

"Certys, syre," quod Maladas,
 "Thys hys a wondyr cas,
 To bynym thy sonys lyf,
 For a tale of thy wyf;
 And yf thou dost, syre emperour,
 God leve the falle swilk honour
 As the olde man hadde welne hent,
 Ne hadde hys wyf have had chastement,
 That hadde mynt, without respyte, 1660
 Have doon hire a ful despyte."

Quod the emperour to Maladas,
 "Thow sal tel me of that cas,
 For I ne herde never in my lyve
 Old man chasty zong wyf."
 "Sire," quod mayster Maladas,
 "Yf thow wylt here of that cas,
 By Jhesu Cryst omnypotent,
 The chylde schal ben aftyr sent."
 Thorow commandement of the emperour, 1670
 The childe was lade into the toure;
 Ther-fore gladdyd many a man,
 And Maladas hys tale bygane.

A TALE.

"Sire," quod maystir Maladas,
 "Herkyn how fel that cas.

Hyt was a man of olde lyfe,
And hadde a 3ong womman to wyfe,
And hys blode bygan to colde,
And the wenche bygane to bolde.
Than he slakyd of hys werke,
Scho bygan to love a clerke.
O day to the kyrke scho came,
And hyr modyr in councel nam,
And sayed to hyr modyr anoon,
'My lordys merryghe hys welne gone,
Now he slakys to lygge above;
I wyl have another love.'
'Dougter,' quod the moder tho,
'I ne rede nouzt thow do soe:
Thow an old man holde hym stille,
Dougter, thou wost nought al hys wille.
Ar thou do swylk a dede,
Prove hym first, I wyle the rede.'
The douter took hire leve anoon,
And dyde hyre hastylych to gon,
And thout hyr lorde for to prove.
The lorde hadde an hympe gode,
Tha[t] in a fayr herber stood,
And the lorde loved hit myche;
For in his orcher nere non syche,
So nobil pers as hyt bare.
Thare-of the wyf [was] ware,
On of hyr men with hyr he nam,
And to the hymp sone he cam,
And dyde anoon as a schrewe,

1680

1690

1700

On the tre gobettys lette hewe,
And in the halle let hit lygge,
To loke what he wolde sygge.

“ When the lord in cam,
Of the tre hed he nam ; 1710
‘ Dame,’ he sayd, ‘ were grew this tre,
That lyes thus hewen in trhe ?’
‘ Sire,’ scho sayed, ‘ in thyn erber,
Hyt grewe nowthir fer no ner.’
‘ Depardus! dame,’ quod he tho,
‘ Now hit hewen hys, let hit go.’
In hys hert he was wroth,
Bote to contak he was loth ;
He ne sayed nouzt al that he thout.
The dougter anoon the way nam, 1720
And to the modir sone he cam,
And sayed, ‘ Modir, so mot I the,
I have doon as thow bade me;
Hys fayre hympe that thow see,
That sprade so brood and so heye,
I lete hewyt by the more,
And 3yt was he nowt wroth ther-fore.’

“ ‘ Dogter,’ quod the moder tho,
‘ I walde red the, as I mot go,
Prove hym 3yt anothir stound, 1730
Are love thow have to ard bound.
Thow he were stille and spake nouzt,
Thou wost never what hys thout.’
3yt [scho] sewyd hyr modyr wylle,
And went hom al ston stille,

And bythout hire al by the way
Oppon a schrewydschyp or tway,
And anoon in the stude
A gret schrewnes he dude.
The lord a lytyl kenet hadde,
He loved hit wel, the hit were bad.
Hyt byfelle that ilke day
The kenet on hir lappe lay;
God gyfe hyre ivel happe!
Scho slowe the kenet oppon hire lappe.
'Dame,' quod he, 'why dustou soo?
That was nouȝt wyl doo.'
'Sire,' scho sayed, 'be nouȝt wroth,
Lo he hase byfoulyd my clothes.'
'Dame,' he sayed, 'by saynt Rycher,
Thou myghtyst drawe thy clothes nere,
And late my hondis on lyf go:
I pray the, dame, sle no mo,
Thow thay lyge oppon thy clothe;
Yf thou dost, I wylle be wrothe.'
Scho thout tho, 'Thay that wil spare
To have a lemman for hys fare.'
That ilke day scho the way nam,
And to hir modir sone he cam.
'Dam,' scho sayed, 'So God my rede,
I have donn asstow me bede:
Mi lorde hade a kenet fel,
That he loved swyth wel;
So God gyf me good happe,
I hym slow on my lappe,

1740

1750

1760

And made hym lese hys hert blode,
 And he sayed nouȝt bot good.
 I nylle wounde nowt i-wys,
 To love were my wille hys;
 For sothe, dame, I may wel, 1770
 I have spyde he hys nouȝt fel.
 ‘Doughter,’ quod the modir tho,
 ‘I reed that thow do nouȝt soo:
 Old men wille thole mykil wronge,
 Bot for soth hys wreche hys stronge;
 Ther-for my rede hys thys,
 Prove thrys ar thou doo amys.’
 ‘Dame,’ quod the dogter tho,
 ‘Gladlych, so mot I goo;
 Bot thau he wrothe hym never so sore, 1780
 For sothe I nylle prove hym no more.’
 And at hir moder leve he nam;
 Toward hyr oun house ho cam,
 And by the way as scho ȝode,
 Scho thout oppon a schreud dede.
 • “Sone after hit bytydde,
 That the godman lete byde
 A swythe fayre companye,
 And made a fayre maungerye.
 As thay sytten and mad ham glade, 1790
 The goodman fayre semlant made;
 The wyf fast hyre keyes wrothe,
 In the ende of the borde clothe,
 Scho roos uppe and dyde hyre to gone,
 And drow doun coppys and dyschys ilkone,

And schent robys of riche grene,
And broght al the gestis in tene.
The goodman was ful wroth,
And let castyn anothir cloth,
And made hare clothes be wypit and dyzt, 1800
And solace thaym as wel as he myght.
When alle hys gestys were a-goo,
Than bygan to wakken wo;
Bytween the goodman and hys wyf,
Than bygan to ryse a stryfe.
'Dame,' he sayed, 'so mot I the,
Thou havest don me despites thre;
So God mak me good man,
Thou schalt be chastid, yf I cane.
Dame, thow havest ben thryes wode, 1810
For soth thow shalt be latyn blode.'
He ladde hyr into a chambyr,
He and hys brothyrr,
And late the on arm blood ther,
And after the thothyrr;
He leved no blode in hys wyf,
Bot a lytil to holde hyre lyf.
When sche hadde so blede,
He layed hyre in a fayre bede.
When scho wok out of a swoune, 1820
He gaf hyre met and drynk anoone,
And, 'Dame,' sayed, 'ly al styлле,
Thou schalt have met and drynke at wile,
And ever when thou waxist wode
Thou schalt be latyn blood.'

‘Sire,’ scho sayed, ‘mercy, I aske ȝore,
And I wyllle wrathe the no more.’

‘Par fay, dame,’ quod he tho,
‘For-why that thou doo no moo

Swilke trespas, while I leve, 1830

This thre schal be forgyven.’

Than walde sche no more

Leven of the clerkis lore,

For fere to be lat bloode;

Bot heldir algat trew and good.

“Sir,” quod maystir Maladas,

“Lo swilke a woundir kas

Hadde welne bytyde the olde wise;

Ne hadde he lerned to chatyse

Hys wyf at hys comaundement, 1840

How evilliche he hadde ben schent.

Sertis, sire emperour,

Thus schaltou lese thyn honour,

And thow suffry thy wywys wille,

That thow wilt thy sone spille.

Aftir that mysdyde scho wile do mo,

And bryng the into more wo.”

Quod the emperour, “By saynt Martyn,

That schal scho nowt, wyf hys scho myn:

So I evere broke myn hede, 1850

To day ne schal my sone be dede.”

Than the emperes herde this,

Scho was swith sori i-wys,

Scho syghyd, and sory chere made,

Myght hyr that day no man glade.

When scho was to bede broght,

Scho syghyd sore and sayed noght.
 The emperour, that lay fol softe,
 Herde hys wyf syghen ofte,
 And sayed, "Dame, saye me thy wylle,
 Why mornes thou and syghys so stille?"

1860

Quod the emperes to the emperour,
 "Certys, sire, for thyn honour:
 Thow art smytyn in covatyse,
 Whare-of thy sorowe wylle aryse.
 Thou covetes in alle manere
 Thyn seven clerkis for to here.
 Thou schalt lese thyn honour,
 As dyde Crassus the emperour,
 That for covetyse was slawe
 Withouten any proses of lawe."

1870

Quod the emperour, "By saynt Jon,
 Thou schalt telle me anon
 How Crassus lese thourow covetyse
 Is lyf, and on wilk wyse."

A TALLE.

The emperes hire tale bygane,
 And sayde, "Sire, hit was a mane,
 Merlyn he hatte, and was a clerke,
 And bygan a wondir werke;
 He made in Rome thourow clergyse
 A piler that stode fol heyghe,
 Heyer wel than ony tour,
 And ther-oppon a myrrour,
 That schon over al the toun by nyght

1880

As hyt were day lyght,
That the wayetys myght see;
Yf any man come to cité
Any harme for to doon, 1890
The cité was warnyd soone.
Thare was contek ofte and lome
Bytween Pule and the cité of Rome.
The kyng of Pule hadde no myght
To stele oppon the town by nyght,
For the myrrour was so clere,
That kest lyght fer and nere.
Twa clerkys was in hys londe,
Twa bryther, that token on honde
For to kast the myrrour down, 1900
That lyght over al Rome toune.
The kyng asked the clerk bathe,
What he scholde gyf hem twae.
That oon clerk sayed to the kyng,
' Certis, sire, we wylle no thyng,
Er the myrrour be broght a-doune,
And than gyf us oure warrysoun.'
Quod the kyng, ' So mot I the,
I graunt wel at hit so be.'
Thanne sayed the heldest brothir, 1910
' Sire kyng, thou most do anothyr;
Ale prevyliche and stille
Twa coffyns thou most fylle
Of golde and of preciouise stonnys.
Let make the coffynys for the nones,
Hye that thay were dyght,

And the myrour schal lese hys lyght.'

"The kyng hadde em redy dyght,
And fylde thaym fulle that ilk nyght.
Oppon the morne the way the nome,
Ryght to the cité of Rome.

1920

On morwen thay wenten messe to here,
And after went to play i-fere;
Into the felde the way thay nome,
And lokyd that no man come,
And maden lytyl pyttys twaye,
And byrid the coffyns bathe,
And setten redy markys there
Wydyr-out the coffyns were,
A[nd] went forth as stille a ston,
And comen to the emperour anon,
And sayed, 'We wyte, sire emperour,
About this cité gret tresour,
Undyr the erth hit hys hyde;
And yf thou wylt, hyt schal be kyde.
For a sweven us come to nyght,
Were the tresour hys undir erth dyght.'

1930

"Quod the emperour, 'By saynt Martyn,
And I wole do wefor of myn.'

Atte the emperour thay toke leve,
Ant wenten hom tho hyt was even;
On the morwen wen the day wa[s] bryzt,
To the emperour thay come ful ryzt,
And sayden, 'Certis, syre emperour,
We have aspyed wher hys the tresour;
Therfore, sire, tak with ous a man,

1940

That be wys man, ant can
 Stond by ous a lytil stounde,
 To save the tresour whan hit hys founde.'

"The emperour toke with thaym a man anon, 1960

And thay dydden ham to goon,
 And dolven a lytyl withinne the grounde,
 And the tresour was sone founde.

Thay wenten anoon to the emperour,
 And schewden hym that nobil tresour.

The emperour was payed ful wel,
 And wende hit were al gospel
 That the clerkys dyden hym to wite,
 And al was fals every smyte.

Tho hyt neghyt toward evene, 1960

The twa clerkys token leve,
 And went toward hare in agayen,
 Thare thay haddyn al nyght layen.

Wyth myche myrthe to bede thay jede,
 For thay hoppen for to spede.

A-morwen when the day spronge,
 In thayr bede thay thought longe,
 To the emperour they gune hye,
 For to blere more hys eye.

That on clerke sayed anoon, 1970

'*Par fay*, syre, we moten goon,

That the tresour were fete,

That we have of to nyzt mete:

Let senden a man the tresour to bede,

As he that instay with ous jede.

Ham to-lywryd a man anon,

And thider fast thay gone gone;
 Thay ne dyggyd bot a lytil stounde,
 The coffyn was ful sone founde,
 Hyt was no need depe to delve, 1980
 He may wel fynde that hyde hym selven.
 Thay brogten anoon the tresour
 Ryght byfore the emperour.
 The emperour was glad tho,
 That he hadde sylke clerkys two,
 That wyste ware to fynde so evene
 Ware were tresour hyd so evene.
 Tho the emperour herde thaym lye,
 And wend hit were al profecye,
 And grete love to ham kaste, 1990
 And al was lorne at the laste.
 Tho hyt neghit toward hevene,
 The clerkys token anoon hare leve,
 Ant went hom with myche honour,
 And louhe to scorne the emperour,
 And made ham at ese that nyght,
 Til on morwen the day bryght.
 On the morwen, tho the day sprong,
 'Thaym thought in hare bed ful longe;
 Alle both thay goon goon 2000
 To the emperour anoon.
 The ton sayed, 'Sire emperour,
 Undir the pyler that berys merour,
 Ther hys a golde hord bygune,
 One the noblest undir sone.'
 " 'Certis,' quod the emperour,

‘I wolde nought for half the tresour
That the myrrour fel a-down,
Hyt helpis for to save the toun.’
‘Sire,’ quod that on clerke, 2010
‘We conne ordeyn so our werke,
Of the tresour to have oure wille,
And late the myrrour stande stille.’
Quod the emperour, ‘By sayent Myghel,
To swylke a forwarde I graunt wel;
Go, and God almyghty 3oue spede,
And to the myrrour take hede.’
The clerkys take mynours anoon,
And to the piler thay goon;
Thay bygune to dygge faste, 2020
Than thay sayen at the laste
How the piler stode in bras,
And with sowdyng sowdyt faste.
Than sayed the tone clerke,
‘Mynours, lat be 3oure werke.’
When the mynours were goon,
The clerkys made a fyre anoon,
The pylar fot al about,
And closyd the fyere al witout.
When thay hadden thus doon, 2030
Thay wentyn hom, and hyt was non,
Byfore the emperoure thay come,
And anoon lef thay nome
To whend hom into thayr in,
To ordayn and dyvyse a gyne,
For to holde the piler up-ryght,

And the myrrour that was so lyst,
The emperour gaf thaym leve;
And thay wolde no langer byleve,
To hare in son thay come, 2040
And at thayre ostage leve thay nome.
The fyere was hote and bernyd faste,
And malt the soudyng at the last;
Thay were bot a lytil withouten toun,
That the pyler fel a-down.
Alle the lordys of the cité
Were ful sory, and myghte wel be;
Thay wente anoon to the emperour,
And asked of the myrour,
Why he let kast a-down 2050
That help for to save the toune.
Non answeere couth the emperour,
Bot for covetyse of tresoure,
For to wyte of the wundyre,
Wat tresour was hyd ther-undyre.
Al that in Rome was,
Riche and pore, none ther nas,
That thay nere al at on
To sle the emperour anoon;
And a wyle yf 3e wille dwelle, 2060
How he was slawe I wyl 3ow telle.
For he let falle the myrour
For the covetyse of tresour,
Thay were al at on red,
Thourow tresour he scholde be dede.
Thay token gold a grete bal,

And letten grynde hyt ryght smal,
And puttyn out hys eyen two,
And fylden the hollys folle bothe,
Hys eyen, hys nose, and hys throte, 2070
Thay fylden wit golde every grote ;
Thus thay were at on acent,
For to gyfe hym that juggement."

Quod the emperesse to the emperour,
" Thus for golde and tresour
The emperour was slawe,
Withouten any proses of lawe.
Thus ar thou falle in covetyse also,
Thorow thy clerkys tales false;
Thou wylt by schent, by swyte Jhesus, 2080
As was the emperour Crassus."

Quod the emperour, " By sayent Colas,
I ne schal nouzt bytyde that cas,
For no lesyng that thay men telle.
My sone i-wys schal nouzt dwelle
On lyve lengur than to morwen,
So Gode schilde me fra sorowe!"
And anon has hyt was day,
The emperour made non delay,
To sla the childe he was ful rade, 2090
He ferde as man that were made:
He badde hys tormentours ilchon
Doe thys childe to deth anoon.
Thay dyden as the emperour bade.
When the childe schulde dee,
Thare was many a wyppyng hee.

Ryght withouten the palyes zate,
Thay mete mayster Caton thare-ate;
The childe lette hys [eyen] glyede
Oppon hys maystyr al asyde. 2100

Mayistyr Caton that was wyse,
Lokyd on hys prentyse;
He loutyd to hym, and lete hym goon,
Ant went to the emperour anoon,
And gret hym with gret honour,
As men schulde an emperour;
And he answerd ryght in the place,
“Maugré have thou and male grace!”

“A! sire,” quod he,
“*Mercy per saynt charité!*” 2110

For Goddis love, syre emperoure,
Hyre me speke for thyn honour.”
“Have doo. traytour,” quod he,
“Late see what thy resooun schal be.”
“Sire,” quod mayster Caton,
“Hyt hys al agayen reson,
That a dome man schal bere juggment,
And for lesyngs been schent.

Yf thy sone to day hys slawe,
Withouten any prossesse of lawe, 2120
Also mote the befallé,
As dyde the burgees in hys halle,
That bynam hys byrdys lyf,
For the tale of hys wyfe.”

Quod the emperour, “By seynt Colas,
Thou schalt telle me of that cas,

That thou sayest that was bytyde,
Of the burges and hys berde."

"Sire," quod mayster Caton tho,

"Thy sone that hys to dethe go, 2130

Lete a knyght or a swayn

Anon brynge the chylde agayne,

And lete hym on lyfe dwelle,

Whille that I my talle telle;

Or by Good that alle wrought,

I nylle telle the ryght nowt,

Bot the childe be eftyr sent,

That hys toward hys deth went."

The emperour comande anoon

Aftyr the childe for to goon. 2140

Than gladdyd many a man,

And mayster Caton hys tale bygane.

ATTALE.

"Hit was a burgeis and hadde a wyf,

And love hyre as hys ouen lyfe;

And hadde a popynjay at spake,

And wyst by hys wyf a lake,

And tolde hym when he ham cam,

Anothyр lotby scho nam;

And than bygane to wax stryfe

Bytween the godman and hys wyfe. 2150

The godman went a day to playe,

Out on jornay or twae,

To frendys that he sawe nowt zore,

No wyste when he schulde more.

When the goodman was went,

Than was the lemman after sent,
And madyn myrth and melodye,
Ryght byfore the bryddys eie.
The wyf she thout oppon a wylle
For to do the birde a gyle, 2160
And ful sone scho was thought
How that gyle myght be wrought.
Scho hadde a knave al at hyr wile,
That wyst hyr priveté loude and stille ;
Scho madde hym sette a ledly[r] on hygh,
And oppon the laddyr he styghe,
A piger of watyr he fete
And oppon the rof he hyt sette ;
Oppon the rof he made an hole,
He went don a[nd] bare uppe a cole, 2170
And a torche up ther-myde,
And as the wyf hym badde he dyde.
When thay were a-bede y-fere,
The wyf and hyre topinyere,
The knave hadde al hys thynges dyzt,
He lokyd in and sawe lyght,
And bygan onnoon hys rage,
And cast watyr oppon the kage.
When he hadde caste twyes or thrye,
He dyde anothyr maystrie, 2180
Grete blowen bladdys he brake,
And thay gave a gret crake.
He tende hys torche at a cole,
And putte in ate the hole.
The wyf sat oppon hire bede,

And made has scho were a-drede ;

Bote ofte sayed, ' Benedicite !

What thyng may thys be ?

" Quod hire horlyng in the bede,

' Ly stille a[nd] be nought a-drede ; 2190

Hyt hys lyghtyn, thondyr, and rayne :

Ly down in thy bede agayn.'

The byrde stode and sawe and herde

Al that gile hou hyt ferde,

And whende hyt were soth that ho sayed,

And bylle undyr wynges layede,

And toke rest tyl hyt was daye,

And the horlynge went hys way.

When the godman hame cam,

To the cage the waye he nam, 2200

And askyd the byrde how hyt ferde ;

And the byrde answerde,

And sayed, ' sythyn I sawe the laste,

I have been ful sore agaste.'

" Quod the goodman to hys birde,

' Tel me what was the bytydde.'

' Sire,' he sayed, ' when thou wer gon,

Oure dame lemman cam anoon,

He was sent aftyr fol sone,

And dyde as was to done— 2210

And the nyght that was

There byfel a wondyr cas,

Hyt raynyd and lygnyd and thonryd fast,

And alle we were sore agaste.'

The godman went to hys wyf,

And abrayder of hyr lyf,
 That scho hadde don wil he was oute,
 And callyd hys wyf foule scout.
 'Alas! sire,' quod the wyf,
 'Why schul we lede thys lyf? 2220
 Thou lovest to myche thy byrdys lore,
 And al he lyees, by Goddy[s] hore.'
 'Dame,' he sayed, 'by my hals,
 Now thow schalt be proved fals:
 While I was out he was here,
 And in my chambyr 3e lay i-fere,
 And that nyght the wedyr was strong,
 Hyt laytyd, thondred, and reynned among,
 Al that nyght til hyt was day,
 Thyn horlyng in that bede lay.' 2230
 " 'A! sire,' quod scho, and was bolde,
 'He that that lesyng hase tolde,
 He lyed, by Good that alle hase wrought,
 Hyt raynyd ne thondryd ne layt nout
 Sythen thou wentyst out of thys tounne,
 And by neighbours prove 3e moune.'
 'Certis,' quod the godman,
 'I wil foundyn yf I can
 Prove the fals ryght anoon.'
 He clepyd hys neghburs ilkon: 2240
 When thay were al come,
 In concel thay were al nome,
 Whethyr anny rayn, thondyr, or lyzt
 Hadde be of al that seven-nyght.
 Than the neighbours answerd anoon,
 'Swylk wedyr wastyr noon

Of al thys seven-nyght and more.
Than for-thout the burges sore,
That he hadde hys wyf myssayde,
And dyde anoon a lyther brayed; 2250
Ryght in that ilke selve rage
He slowe the byrde in the cage.
Thus the burges thowrow hys wyf
Bynam hys good byrd hys lyfe.
So woltou, sire emperour,
Do thy self lytyl honour,
For the wordys of thy wyf
To bynyme thy sonne lyfe.”
Quod the emperour anon,
“For love of hym, by Saynt Symon, 2260
That was so foule bleryd hy[s] eye,
To day no schal my sone dee.”
Tho the emperes herde telle
That he scholde on lyf dwel
Al that nyght tyl on morwen,
Than madde scho mykyl sorowe;
Al that day to nyght come
Alas! was ofte oppe y-nome;
When thay comen to bede y-fere,
The lady made sory chere. 2270
Quod the emperour, “How may this be?
Dame, what hys wyth the?”
“Sire,” scho sayed, “no thyng goode,
For soth thou makest me welny wode.
Thou art about thy selve to greve,
For thou wyl no concel leve,

No good conceal undir hevene,
 Bot of thyn fals clerkis sevene.
 Therefore I ware the sykirlich,
 Thou wylt love ham so myche, 2280
 That thou wilt [lese] thyn honour,
 As dyde Herode the emperour,
 That levyd conceal agayn hys prowē,
 Of seven clerkis, as dostou."

Quod the emperour, "By Goddis belle,
 Of that cas thou most me telle."
 "Gladlich," sayed scho,
 "The bettyr yf hyt wylle bee."
 For to brew the childes bale,
 Anon scho bygan hyr tale. 2290

A TALE.

Scho sayed, "Hit was a emperour,
 A man of ful mykil honour,
 And hadde seven clerkys wyse,
 And broghten up a usage,
 That dyde swyth gret damage.
 Who so anny swevene by nyght,
 O morne when the day was bryght,
 And ryche gyftis with hym nam,
 For the clerkis schuld telle
 Of the sweven that walde byfalle, 2300
 And wannyn riches to hare byhove,
 And broghten men in mysbyleve.
 And the emperour for wyne,
 Mayntend hom in synne,
 At lete ham have al hare wille,

And ate the last speddyn ille.
The emperour hadde a maladye,
A wondyrful for the maystry;
Whan he wolde by any way
Out of Rome wende to play, 2310
Withouten toun as he come,
Anon hys syght hym was bynom.
Thare-fore he was sore agremed,
And oft sythes sore aschamed.
Of hys clerkis cautel he toke,
And badde ham loke in hyr booke,
Yf thay myghten with ony clergie,
Hele hym of that maladye.
Bot thare was non of ham that couthe
Telle hym no thyng with mouthe, 2320
How he myghte hele wyne
Of that maladye that he was inne.
At the last hyt was hym tolde
Of a wys clerke and a bolde,
That was hotyn Merlyn,
That couthe many a medicyn;
And anon he was sought,
And byfore the emperour broght.
Merlyn onon with gret honour
Gret anon the emperour. 2330
Ate schortys wordys for to telle,
The emperour wolde no langer dwel,
Bot tolde Merlyn al hys cas,
Wych maner and how hit was.
'Sire,' quod Merlyn, that was bolde,

‘ Of thynges that thou haves tolde,
 Cawe unto thy chambyr y-fere,
 And in skyle 3e schal here
 Why and whare-fore hyt hys,
 That 3oure syght fares amys.’
 The emperour and Merlyn anoon
 Into the chambyr thay gonne gone; ” 2340
 When thay were in chambyr brought,
 Merlyn told hym of hys thought,
 And sayed, ‘ Syre emperour, i-wys,
 Undyr thy bede a caudron hys,
 That buyles both day and nyght,
 And that revys the thy syght,
 And thy lyf there-fore hys worthy forlore,
 Bot any medicyne ben don ther-fore;
 And yf thow levest nought me,
 Remou thi bed and thow mayst se.’ 2350
 The bed was remoude sone;
 Bot thare was more fyrst to doon,
 Er the caudron wer founde:
 Hyt was depe withinne the grounde.
 The emperour sawe atte the laste,
 That the caudron boylyd faste;
 And anoon undirstood
 Merlyn was trew and couthe gode,
 And sayed, ‘ Merlyn, *par charité*,
 What mervyle may thys bee?’ 2360
 ‘ Sire,’ quod Merlyn, ‘ i-wys
 I wyll telle the how hyt hys.
 Thys sevene walmes sygnyfye

Seven devels in thy companye,
 That ben thy seven clerkys,
 That wyssys the to wykkyd werkys.
 Thay been rycher of tresour
 Than artou, sire emperour.

2370

Thou havest maynted thaym ther-ine,
 And God hys wroth for that synne.'

'Maystyr,' quod the emperour,
 'Myght we wet with ony tresour,
 With any concel arly or late,
 Thys sevene walmys for to abate?'

'3e, sire,' quod Merlyn,
 'Thow myght don hyt wylle a[nd] fyne.

Thyn sevene clerkys in the halle,
 Sende after the grettest mayster of alle,
 And smyte of hys hede,

2380

And anoon when he hys dede
 Thow schalt fynde abatynge adone
 The gretyst walme of the caudrone.'
 The emperour taryd nowt,

The grettest mayster in was broght,
 And fulfylde Merlyns rede,

And lete smytte of hys hede;

And went to the caudron anoon,

Than was the maystyr walme' agoon.

2390

"Quod [the] emperour, 'by saynt Martyne,
 I fynde the trewe, mayster Merlyn;
 For oght that man kan saye thare-to,
 As thou concels I wole doe.'

"Quod Merlyn, 'Sire, so mot I waxe,

Thane most thou slae thy clerkys;
For by the deth that I schal dee,
Thou schal never see with eye
Withoute Rome tounne i-wys,
Wille ony of ham on lyve hys.' 2400

"Quod the emperour, 'So mot I thryve,
Thare schal none leve on lyve.'
He clepyd hys tormentours anoon,
And lete gyrde of the hedes ilkon,
And went to the caudron tho;
Than were the walmes a-goo.
When thay were all slawe,
Than the caudron was up-drawe.

"Quod Merlyn to the emperour,
'Sire, take knyghtes of honour, 2410
And leppe to hors and wend to play
Out of thys cité a jorne or twae,
And say anon ryght
How lykkys the nou thy syght.'
The emperour wolde no langer abyde,
He dyde hym anoon to ryde,
And lopyn to hors ilkon,
And wente out of the cité anoon.
Tho the emperour come without the 3ate,
Til he was lyght hym thought to late, 2420
To knele and thanke the kynge of myght,
That he hadde hys eyen syght.
Than hadde Merlyn grete honour,
And lafte with the emperour.
Lo, sire," quod the emperesse,

"Wylke a mykyl wykkednes
 The sevene clerkys hadde welne do,
 Ne hadde Merlyne take hede ther-to.
 By God almygty that hys in hevene,
 Thus wil thy clerkys sevene
 Do by the, or ellys worse,
 Yf thou lyvest, thow schal have cursse."

2430

Quod the emperour, "by Goddys hore,
 He schal never tene me more;
 He that makes al thys sorowe,
 Certys he schal be dede to morwen."
 The day was comen, and nyght gon,
 The emperour raes onnoon,
 There ne most be no lete,
 Anon hys sone was forthe fete,
 And ladde ther he schulde dee;
 There was many a wepyng heye
 As the childe was forth ladde,
 Ryght als God almyghty bade.

2440

The sexte maystir than com be,
 That was hoten maystir Jesse,
 And sayed anoon, "Sire emperour,
 Certys thou dost lytil honour,
 For word of a womman
 To do deth swylk a man
 And thy sone scholde bee,
 And he leve langer than 3e.
 And yf thou lattys hym lese the lyfe
 For tales of thy wyf,
 Also mot the bytyde

2450

As dyde the knyght in hys pryde,
 That deyed for dole of hys wyfe
 Was woundyt wyth a lytyl knyfe."

Quod the emperour, "By Goddys belle,
 That tale thou schalt me telle."

2460

"By God," quod mayster Jesse,
 "Thou schalt nout here a worde of me,
 Bot thy sone be after sent,
 That hys went to juggement."
 The emperour comaunded anoon
 After the childe for to goon.
 Than waster many a glad man,
 And mayster Jesse hys talle bygane.

A TALE.

He sayed, "Sire emperour, i-wys,
 Hyt hys nowt lese, soth hyt hys,
 Hyt was a knyght a riche schyreve,
 That was lot hys wyf to greve.

2470

He sate a daye by hys wyf,
 And in hys honde helde a knyfe,
 At schort wordis for to telle,
 In gamen bothe as thay felle,
 With a lytil croume knyfe

The schyref woundyt hys wyf,
 And took to hym so myche sorowe,
 That he deyde oppon the morowen.

2480

For al so mykyl as he slew hym selven,
 In kyrke zarde men wolde hym nout delve,
 He was beryd bon and fel
 Withouten the toun at a chapel.

When in erth he was broght,
Hys wyf wolde goo thyn nouȝt,
Bot sayed for non wordlys wyne
Schulde no man parte hom a-twyne.
Of hyre frendys that were thare,
Baden hire lat be hyre fare;
At schort wordys, hyt was nought,
Myghte no mane torne hyre thoght,
Bote thare scho wolde be sykyrlyche
With hym that lovyd hyr so myche.
Quod on of thaym that was thare,
'Lete we been al thys fare,
Lete hyr dwel al hyer scille,
And when thys hete passid hys,
Scho wille come hom hire selve, i-wys.'
After clothes scho sent a knave,
And made hyre bede bysyde the grave.
At schort wordys for to telle,
There moste no man with hir dwelle.
The nyght was comen and day gon,
Scho made a good fyer anoon,
And sete hir doun thare bysyde,
For hyt was colde wyntir tyde,
Scho wype and hyr hondys wronge.
Fram the chappel a lytil wyght
Ther hovyde a ȝong knyght,
Bysyde galows were thare strange,
Ther were thre thefys an hangede;
That was hys rent for hys londe,
For to take theves on honde,
To saven thaym with al hys myght,

2490

2500

2510

That no man stelle ham the forme nyȝt.
Than the knyght was both ȝonge and bolde,
He was swith sore a-colde,
And ate the chappel fyre he sawe lyght,
And rode thyderward ful ryght. 2520
He lyght adoun of hys stede,
And into the chappel ȝede,
And the lavedy anoon he grete,
And by the fyre he hym sete,
And sayed, ' Dame, by the leve,
To warme me a wylle I mot have leve.'
The lavedy than sayed, ' ȝae,
Sire, welcome mot thou bee,
Yf thow thynkyst non othyr harme,
Bot to syst and make the warme.' 2530
Than the knyght in hys atyre
Was warm of that fyere,
Hym thout hyt was a fayer leef,
And he was withouten a wyf,
And bygan onnoon to wowe,
And hyr hert bygan to bowe,
And knew wel hym by syght,
And wyst wel he was a knyght.
And anoon the lady bygane
To have love toward the mane; 2540
Er hyt was passyd mydde-nyght
The lady was kast uppe-ryght,
And the knyght lay above,
And thus he wan the lady love.
The knyght leppe uppon hys stede,
For to wende and take hede

Whethir the thefys hange stille,
Wylle he was aboute hys wylle.
Wylle he was aboute hys playe
The ton thef was awaye. 2550

To the chappel he pryked anoon,
And to the lady he made hys mone,
And sayed, 'Dame, me hys wo,
Myn on thef hys a-goo;
I am ful sore agast thare-fore,
Lest myn landys been lore.'

'Sire,' quod the lady tho,
'Ther-fore be nought wo,
Ne make thou dole ther-fore,
Ne schal nouzt thy lond be lore. 2560

To thys beriel we wyl goone,
And dyggyn uppe the cors anoone,
And hangge hym in hys stede
As fayer as the othyr dyde.'

'Dame,' quod he tho,
'On ilke half me hys wo:
There the thefys was funde,
The toon hadde a myche wounde;
He was woundyd, and no mo, 2570
And that body hys a-goo,

And yf he were founde,
And he ne hadde no syche wounde,
Thanne were my londys lore,
And I were schent there-fore.'

'Sire,' quod scho, 'lat be thy stryfe,
Now havest thou bothe swerd and knyf;
Tak the toon or the tothir,

And gyf hym swylk anothir.'

'Certis, dame,' quod he tho,

'Erst me schulde be ful wo,

2580

Er I wolde been ate the rede

To smyt a man that hys dede.'

" 'Sire,' quod scho tho, 'ther-of al,

And drew a knyf out of hire schete,

That was kenne aud scharpe grounde,

And made in hys hed a wounde,

And put up hyr a knyf anoon,

And sayed, 'Sire, wel we goon.'

'Dame,' quod he, 'verrament,

3it myght I be schent :

2590

In a countek he hadde lore

Twa of hys teth byfore.'

'Sire,' quod scho tho, 'by myn hede,

Thare-to goos a good rede ;

He schal be markyd as was he,

Tak and bete out two or thre.'

'Dame,' quod he, 'by sayent Joon,

I nyl bet out never on.'

'Sire,' quod scho, 'by sayent Marie,

Yf thou ne wolt nowt than schal I.'

2600

In hyr hoond scho took a stoon,

And knockyd out twa teth anoon !

'Sire,' scho sayed, 'this char hys heved,

Hye that we hadden i-sped

That he ware up drawe,

Er any day bygan to dawe.'

Thay token the corse anoon,

And to the galowes gone goone,

And hanged hym in that ilke stede
Ryght thare that othyr dyde.

2610

“Lo, sire,” quod maystir Jesse,
“Was nowt thys grete pyté,
That he was schent thus for hys wyf,
That for hir love lese hyse lyfe?
Thus wol thou, sir emperour,
Certes, lese thyn honour,
And thou bynym thyn sone the lyf
For the tales of thy wyf.”

Quod the emperour to mayster Jesse,
“That cas no schal nouȝt betyd me ;
So ever I broke my hede,
To day ne schal my sone be dede !”
The emperesse, when scho hit wyste,
What scho myght do scho no wyst ;
So wo and so wroth scho was,
Myght hyr glade no solas.
To bede a even when scho cam,
A gret sygh up scho nam,
And sayed, “Alas ! that harde stounde
That evere I was to man bounde !”
The emperour lay and herde,
And askyd hyr why scho so ferde.
Quod the emperesse, “So mot I the,
Al togyder hyt hys for the.
I see the wounde, hyt hys so wente,
Thourow thyn clerkys thow wil be schent ;
Thay wylle gyle the wyth hare werke,
As dyde Genever the clerke,
That wyth qweyntyes and with bost

2620

2630

Schend the kyng and hys hoste."
 Quod the emperour, "By saynt Colas;
 Thou schalt telle me of that cas;
 Hyt hys the wounderest that ever I herde,
 I wylle wetyn how that ferde."

2610

The emperesse bygan hyr tale,
 For to brew the childes bale.

A TALE.

The emperesse, as ȝe mowe here,
 Bygane hyre tale in thys manere,
 And sayed, "Thre haythyn kynges thay come
 Som tyme to bysege Rome;
 And the pope thay walden have slawe,
 And a gyed Rome aftyr thayr lawe,
 And have been maystys of the toun,
 And broght crystondom adon.
 The haythyn men was ful strange,
 And segyde the town lange;
 Seven clerkys were in Rome,
 And holpen for to take game,
 Both day and the nyght,
 That the cité were lokyd aryght.
 On ther was that was olde,
 And of speche he was bolde,
 And sayed, 'We been in thys cité
 Seven clerkys of grete bounté;
 Ilkon fonde, yf he may,
 Fram harm save the cité a day.
 Lete ilkon do what he can:
 And for I am an old man,

2650

2660

Lete me have the last daye,
And fonde to do what I may.' 2670
The hold man bythout hym faste
How he myght at the laste
Any thyng dyvyse
To make the haythyn kyngys to gryse;
And dyvysyde at the laste
A gyn that made ham alle agaste,
And alle was of hys oun thout,
And woundyrlych hyt was wroght.
When hys day was come,
Hys concel was sonne nome; 2680
He comaunded alle with mouthe
Arme thaym al wel as thay couthe.
Alle that in the cité were
Dyden as the olde mane gan lere;
And hym self anoon he styghe
Into the heyghest tour on hyghe,
And dyde oppon hym a wondir tyre,
Alle hyt glowyd as fyere;
In the othyr honde a swerde he tooke,
As tellys the Romauns booke, 2690
And turnyd toward that syde,
There the Sarsyns were strawyd wyde,
And bygane to skyrme bylyve,
As al the worlde schul to-dryve;
With a qweyntyse fyere he keste
Ryght bytwene hys swyrdys in lenkthe,
As tho he smytte hyt out with strenthe.
The Sarsyns byhelde faste,
And many were ful sore agaste,

For nowt on of thaym thare wase 2700
That couthe dyvyse wat hyt was.
The heythyn kyngys that there were
For-thought sore that thay com thare,
For al thay were sore a-fryght,
When thay seyen that woundir syght;
Ilkon askyd othyr tho
What thyng hyt was that ferde soe.
Tha oon kynge was an olde mane,
And hys reson thus bygane:
' Lordys, 3e schul here, y-wys, 2710
What me thynke that hyt hys;
The crysten men hase non myght
Agayens us for to fyght,
And hare gode hys of grete myght,
And hys into erth lyght,
Certynlyche that hys he.
For sothe I rede that we fle;
For certis and he come adoune,
He wylle sle syre Mahoune,
And oure othyr goddys ilkon,
And leve of us on lyve nought on.'
When the kynge hadde thus tolde, 2720
Thare was non of hem so bolde,
That durst langer abyde fyghte,
And anon turnyd to flyght.
When thay of Rome sawe that syght,
That Sarzyns turnyd to flyght,
Thay wenten out harmyd ilkon,
Al that myghten ryde or goon,
And withinne a lytyl stounde

The Sarsyns ȝeden al to grounde.
Thys Gynever the clerke, 2730
With hys wylys and hys werke,
Made to fle with hys boste
Thre kyngys and hare hoste.
Thus wyle thyn clerkys false
With hare wylys schende the alse;
And thou schalt lese thyn emperyre,
And thy sone be lorde and sire.
Thus is thy concel wrought.
For to brynge the to nought."

Quod the emperour, "So mot I the, 2740
Emperour schal he nought bee;
Na schal hym no man lenger borowe;
Certys, he schal by dede to morowen."
Than hadde the emperesse hire wylle;
Thay felle on slepe, and lay stille.
O morwen he ne forgat hyt nouȝt,
The childe was outen of the toun brouȝt,
Toward the deth he was lade;
Than was the emperes glade.

The sevenet mayster rode bylyve, 2750
For to holden hym on lyve,
And was hoten Marcus,
And sayed to the emperour thus:
"Syre, ryghtwys emperour,
Thou dost thy selven lytyl honour,
Thou levest wykked concel i-wys,
That makes the fare amys;
And yf thy sone hys don to dede,
And slaue for thy wyfvys rede,

Gode, that tholyd deth on tree, 2760
 Leve so bytyde the,
 As dyde hym that levyd more
 The falnesse of hys wyfvis lore,
 Thane that hym selven sawe and herde,
 And ther-fore he mys-ferde."

Quod [the] emperour, "By sayent Gervas,
 Thou schalt telle me of that cas."

Quod Marcius to the emperour,
 "Nowt a word, by sayent Saveour,
 Bot thow slake thy sonnys sorowe, 2770
 And late hym lybbe tyl to morwen."

Quod the emperour, "By sone and mone,
 I not what hys best to doone ;
 3e be about to save my sonys lyffe,
 And yf hit hys sothe that sayes my wyf,
 Certes, mayster, 3e were worthe
 To be sete qwyke in erthe."

"Sire, sire," quod Marcius,
 "Hyt hys nowt so, by swet Jhesus !
 That thou schalt wet by tyme 2780
 To morwen lange or pryde."
 The emperour comandyd anon
 After the childe for to goon.

A TALE.

Than gladdyd maystyr Marcius,
 And bygan hys tale thus,
 To the emperour anon ryght :—
 And sayed, "In Hungerye was a knyght,
 And mete a sweven byfore the daye,

That a levedy by hym laye ;
Bot hyt was a wondir cas,
He wyst never what the lady was.
When he wok, hyt was so faste
Hys love oppon that lady caste,
Tha[t] hym thout withine a prowē,
And he see hyr, he couth hir knowe.

2790

“ And the levedy, that self nyght,
Mete ryght so of the knyght.

“ The knyght tok hors and armes anon,
And tok hys leve, and dyde hym to gon,
To loke were he myght hir fet,
The levedy that he of met.

2800

He rode hys way thre wykkes and more,
And oft sythes syghyde sore ;
And hys way forth he name,
Into Puyle than he came.

As he rode in the londe,
O day a toun he fandē,
And a castel was ther-inne,
That was ivel for to wyne.

The lorde of the castel

2810

Hadde swythe a fayerē juwel,
On the fayerest womman to wyfe
That ever myght here lyfe;
And the godman was gelous,
And in a tour mad hyr a hous,
And ther-in most no lyfe
Bot a mayden and hys wyfe.
And for he wolde of gyle be ware,
Hys owen body the keye he bare ;

And never more was the dore undo, 2820
Bot when [he] wolde comen hyr to.
The knyght that met that sweven at nyght,
Of that lady was so bryght,
Thorow the toun as he rode,
A whyle he hovede and abode
Ryght a lytyl fram the toure
Thare was the lady of honour
That mete the sweven of the knyght,
In bede thare scho lay al nyght.
The knyght kest hys hee on hyghe, 2830
And ate the wyndow the lady he see,
And by the syght he wyst hir thocht,
That was the lady that he hadde sowt;
And in the levedy hert hyt felle,
That was the knyght that ho loved wel.
Bothe thare hertys were ful lyghte,
That hayther hadde of othyr syght.
The knyght wente into the toune,
And took hys ine, and lyght adoune;
Hys hoste he in councel nam, 2840
And sayed, 'Who hys thys castel,
That hys touryde and kernelde wel?'
 " 'Sire,' quod he, 'by saynt Symyoun,
Hyt hys the lordes of thys toun,
A swythe godman y-wys,
And in mykyle tene hys.
In thys contré hys a knyght
That werys on hym day and nyght,
And hase done twa ȝere and more,
And that greves hym ful sore. 2850

He mande hym wel ate the knyght
 Al the daye and al the nyght;
 On morwen tho the day came,
 Towarde the castel the waye he nam,
 And wyth the lorde sone he mete,
 And ful hendlych hym grete,
 And sayed, ' Syre, I am comen
 For were that thou havest undirnome,
 For to helpe the for of thyne,
 Thy werre for to hende and fine.' 2860

"Quod the lorde, ' So mot I the,
 Thou art ful welcome to me.'
 Atte schorte wordis for to telle
 He made the knyght with hym to dwelle;
 And he was good werroure and wyes,
 And conquerd al his enmys.
 The lord lovye hym as hys lyfe,
 And al hys good, so hys wyfe,
 He bytoke undyr hys hond,
 And made hym stywarde of al hys londe. 2870

"Oppon a day he went to playe,
 Undir the tour he made hys waye;
 The lady loked oute on heygh,
 And in the face the kynghte scho see,
 And kende anon that was hee
 That scho desired so mykyl to see.
 The knyght kest upe hys hee
 To the lady that sat so hye.
 The levedy durst speke nowte,
 Bot of a qweyntys scho was bythoute; 2880

There were in hyr chambyr y-nowe
Fayer reschys and longe growe,
With that on and with that othir
Scho putte ilke resche in other,
And made a karole in a stounde,
The ton hende touched to grounde,
And the othir scho helde on heygh.
And the knyght byhelde and see,
And wyst wylle in hys thowt,
Why that nicote was y-wroght.
The knyght privelyche and styлле
Asayed alle the lordys wille,
And thout wydyr-out and were,
That he wolde a toure rere
Lenand to the mykyl toure,
To do in hys tresour.
Thorow a qweyntyse he thout to wyne
The lady that was loke there-inne.

2890

“ Quod the lorde, ‘ Ne spare nought,
Bot hye that hyt were wroght.’
Oppon a day styлле as stoon
He sent eftyr masons anoon,
Thay schuld ordeyn and dyvyssse
To make a waye with qweyntysse
Out of on tour into that othyr.
And a mason and hys brothyr
Undirtoke anon ryght
Hyt schulde be qwentlyche dyght,
That he schulde with hir speke
That was in the toure steke.

2900

2910

That on masson was a clerke,
And made so qwentilich the werke,
That to levedy come the knyghte,
When he wolde, daye and nyghte,
That no man myght the wyser be,
Bote the levedy hyr selfe and hee.
So qweyntlich hit was wrought,
The lorde persaved hit nowt.
O daye to hire he cam,
And hys leve than he name 2920
A rynge of hir fynger scho tooke,
As tellys the Romans booke,
And put hyt on hys,
And, 'Lemman, were thou thys,
And late my lorde see hit aryght,
And brynge hyt me agayn er nyght.'
He dyde on the renge anoon,
And took hys leve, and dyde hym to gon.
Ate the met as he sate,
The lorde the rynge undirrat, 2930
And hadde merveyle in hys thout
How the rynge was thydir broght.
After mete the way he nam,
And to the levedy sone he cam;
Tho the lorde hadde y-swore,
3yt cam he in byfore,
And kest the rynge in hyre barme,
For to save hom bothe fra harme,
And tok hys leve, and dyd hym to gon.
And the lorde cam in anoon, 2940

And sayed, 'Dam, were hys thyn rynge,
That was ate our bygynnyng
The first gyfte that I gaf the,
That rynge late me see.'
'Sire,' scho sayed, 'thou myght wel,
And many anothir juwel.'
'Dame,' he sayed, 'lat ham bee,
I wyl no mo than that see.'
To hyre forcer scho gan goon,
And broght the rynge anoon 2950
That lay loken in hir tie;
Thus scho bleryd hyre lordys eie.
Anoon as the lorde was agoone,
The styward come in anoon;
Tho levedy tolde hym al that cas,
How hyr lord bygyld was,
And sayed, 'Sire, doute the nowt,
Al thy wylle schal be wroute,
And I wylle telle the anoon
Whilke manere and howe. 2960
Saye thou havest in thyn contree
Slane a man of grete bounté,
There-fore were thy londys lore,
And thou were outlawde ther-fore;
And saye thou hase a leve wyfe,
A lemman that hys nouzt thy wyfe,
And scho hys comen in a message
To come hom to thyn erytage;
And he wylle besyche the
That he mot thy lemman see. 2970

And thou schalt graunt hym anon;
And I wyl be redy to goon
In anothir tyre than thys,
To se me whan hys wyl hys.
And whan he hase sene me hys fylle,
Thanne mowe we haven oure wylle
To gone wan we wyllen in fere,
Thanne wylle he no talys here
Nowthyr of me no of the,
Bot wene that I thy lemman be.' 2980

"Quod the stywarde, 'That may nouzt fye,
And he se the with hys eye,
Anon as he haves a syght,
He wyl knowe the anoon ryghte.'

"'Sire,' quod scho, 'be myn hede,
My rynge schal make oure parti goode,
That he on thy fynger see,
And sythyn he fande hyt here on heye;
Ther-fore dout the nought,
Thys schal been al hys thought, 2990
As a rynge was lyche anothyr,
So may a womman be lyche anothir.
There schal the knote of gyle be knyt,
The rynge schal blynde hys wyt.'
The styward went, and was glade,
For to make hys lorde made,
And tolde hym that hys pes was nome,
And how hys lemman was comen,
And hadde broght the messages
To come home to crytage; 3000

And asked hym leve for to wende.
And hys loverd was ful hende,
And sayed, 'Yf thy lemman hys comen,
For soth scho hys welcome;
Late hyre take to nyght rest,
To morne scho sal be my geste.'
On the morne to the mete scho cam,
And by the hond the lorde hyre nam,
And faste by hym he hyr sete,
And made hyre to saye hys mete; 3010
And he karf hys mete with hys knyf,
And sat and byhelde hys wyf,
And in gret thout he was
Where hyt were hys wyfe er hit nas.
Also he sat in mornynge,
Anon he thout oppon the rynge,
And thout anoon in hys thought
That hys wyf was hyt nowt,
Bot as a rynge was lyche anothyr,
So was a womman liche anothyr, 3020
And sate stille and made hym glade,
And thus hys wyf made hym made.
Whan the bordis were adoun,
Scho made semlant for to swone,
For scho wolde ben a-gon
Into the toure anoon;
And thyder scho was sone brought
That hire lorde wyste hyt nowt.
The lorde he ne forgat hyt nowt,
Scho was algate in hys thought; 3030

For the merveyle that he syghe,
He went into the tour on hygh.
To the levedy when he cam,
In hir armes scho hym nam;
He was blyth as bryde on bogh,
And wende al were god y-nowe,
And dweld with hir al tha nyght
Til on the morne the day was bright.
The styward let take al hys good,
And bere hit into se flood 3040
Into a god schype and trewe,
That was maked al newe.
When the wynd was good to goon,
The senescal tok hys leve anoon.
The lorde was bothe good and hynd,
And gaf hym leve for to wende,
And hym self broght him in way
Into the see a myle or tway,
Wyth truppys and other mynstralcie,
Wyth many maner of melodye. 3050
The lord halpe with myrthe and playe
Tollyd hys oun wyf away.
Thay token leve and wente o-two,
And cysten as love schulde do.
The schyppe saylyd over the sonde,
The lorde went agayn to londe;
Into the tour the way he nam,
He lokyd both forth and bynne,
And fande noman ther-inne.
Than gaf hym hys hert anoon 3060

That hys wyf was goon
With the senescal away:
Than sayed he, walaway!
That ever was he man boren!
Than was al hys myrthe lorne.
He lepe out of the tour anoon,
And than brake hys neke boon.
Thus was the goodman schent,
And with hys wyvys wyllys blent.
Sire emperour," quod Marcius,
"Ryght on thys manere and thus
Schal thy wyf bygile the,
And thou leve hir, so mot I the.
Hyre self with hyre wyllys alone
Haves gylyd my felawes ilcon,
And me scho wille, yf scho may,
Er to morwen that hyt be day,
For to bryng thy sone to sorowe;
Certys he schal speke to morowe,
Thou schalt wyet er aut longe
Whethir of thaym hase the wronge."
Quod the emperour to Marcius,
"That were me lever, by swet Jhesus,
Than any thyng that men telle couth,
To here my sone speke with mouthe,
For to see the ryght way,
Who were gyilty of thaym tway."
"Sire," quod Marcius, "be stille,
To morwen thou schalt have thy wille."
When the lady herde thys,
Scho was swyth sory, i-wys;

3070

3080

3090

Than wolde scho telle no more,
But al that nyght syghyd sore.
Oppon morwen ryght at prime,
The emperour thout tyme ;
In the paleys withouten the halle
Thare he lette asemblye alle,
Erlys, barouns, sympile knyghtys,
For to here jugge the ryghtys
Bytween hys sone and hys wyfe, 3100
Whethir schuld lese the lyfe ;
For he hadden sworn hys hoth,
Were he lyf, were he loth,
He schuld dye withouten delay
Who were founde gylty that day.
When thay wystyn wat to doone,
The pepyle was semyld sone,
And ilke man hyed bylyve,
For to have the childe on lyve.
The emperour come out of hys halle, 3110
And sete hym down among thaym alle ;
The emperes was broght with pryde,
And set adoun by hys syde.

The childe was anoon efter sent,
To come byfore the parlement.
The childe was forthe broght ;
Many a man was glade in thought.
Byfore hys fader he fal on knee,
And cryed mercy for charyté;
And sayed, ‘Fadyr, I have no gylte 3120
Of thyng that hys oppon me pute,

Certys, no more than hadde he
That hadde ben dronke on the see,
Na hadde Goddys help ben neye,
That broght hym to a roche on hye;
And thourow myght of Godys sonde
He was founden and broght to londe!"

"Certys, sone," quod the emperour,
"Hyt were us lytil honour,
Bot we myght on wyle dwelle,
And suffyre the thy tale telle."
And thay sytyn stille ilke mane,
And the childe hys tale bygane.

3130

A TALE.

"There was a man that was bolde,
And hadde a vertu that was hyghe,
Alle men lovede hym that hym syghe;
Anothyr vertu Gode on hym layed,
He wyst wat alle fouls sayed.
Bysyde hys fadyr court a myle
In the se was an ile,
And was no man in bot on,
A hermete in a roche of ston.
The fadyr and the sone o day
Went thyder for to play,
And thay rowed and were hot;
Ryght byfore oppon the bote
Thre ravenes lyghte adoun,
And made a gret gargoun.
The child was wys and of no bost,

3140

And hadde wyt of the Holy Gost, 3160
And wat thay sayden he undirgat,
And hadde mykyl wondir of that,
And hys ore faste he drowe,
And byhelde hys fadyr, and loughe.

“Hys fadir asked, that by hym sate,
Why he loge and at wat.

‘Fadir,’ quod he, ‘so mot I the,
I louke ate the ravens thre,
That sayden in har gargoun,
Anon as thay seten adoun, 3180
That I schulde hyre-after be
Man of so grete pousté,
That thou schuldest by glad to fonde
To gyf water to my honde,
And myn moder glad to hye
To brynge a towayl myn handys to drye.’
The faders hert was ful of pryde,
And thout hyt schulde nought so bytide,
And tok hys sone by the hode,
And threw hym into the salt flod. 3170

When he was in the se kast,
To dye he was sore agast;
The wynde blew, the se was wod,
And bare the childe into the flod.
Thorow helpe of Gode that syt on hye,
He negyd sone a roche nye;
Out of the water he went anon,
And clame uppon a roche of ston,
And there he was ivel dyght

Twa dayes and twa nyght, 3180
Ther he sat on the roche on hye,
That no sokyr he no see.
Jhesus gan sokur hym sende;
Thare come a fyscher that was hende,
When he come the roche nyghe,
He kest up hys eyen and sygh
The child oppon a roche harde,
And drew hym fast thyderwarde.
To the roche when he cam,
The childe into the bot he nam. 3190
Thar come a strem that was wode,
And bare ham into the salt fiode
So fere fram there the childis was bore,
That alle hys knowlech was lore,
And he aryved fayr and welle
Undir a nobil castille.
Out of the bot the childe he nam,
And into the castle sone he came,
To the warden of the castel,
And solde hym the childe bone and fel. 3200
Anoon aste the childe was knowen,
He was byloved with he and lowe,
Alle that in the castel were;
And many wynter he dwelde there.
In the londe thare he was,
The kynge bytydde a woundir cas:
Thre ravens with a lothly crye
Sewyd the kynge ever ful nye,
Were he rode or were he zede,

That al the londe thare-of tok hede.
The kynge was schamyd ther-fore,
That hym were levere ben unbore;
Over alle hys lond hys bref was sente
To aselen a comuyn parlyment,
To wyt conceyl of ham alle
Of that kas that was byfalle.

3210

The warden of the castel

Let atyren hym ful wel,
And the child with hym nam,
And to the parlement he cam.

3220

When the parlement was nome,
And the pepyle al come,
The kynge walde no lenger dwelle,
Wat hym grevyd he gan telle,
And to the pypyl he sayed this,
' Who can telle me why hyt hys
That the ravens on me crye,
And brynge me out of that vylanye,
That the ravens crye no more,
Where-fore me schames sore,
I wyl gyf hym alf my londe,
And sykyr hym trewly on honde,
That I may gyf, by my lyf,
And my dogter to ben hys wyf.'

3230

" The childe the fram the castel cam,
These wordys undirnam,
And that wyt God hym gafe,
That on fouls lydyn he couthe;
The childe hys mayster in concel nam,

And sayed, 'Mayster, that I am 3240
That can of the sothe telle,
Why thys ravens crye and zelle,
And delyver the kynge
Of alle hare lodly crying?'

" 'Sone,' he sayed, 'yf thou art bolde,
To do that thou havest tolde,
To the kynge wille I goon,
And put forth thy nyddis anoon.'
'Mayster,' he sayed hardylich,
'Put forth oure nedys boldelych.' 3250

Hys mayster tok the way anoon,
And byfore the kynge he gan goon,
And sayed, 'Sire, hire hys a mane
That rydilich telle can
Why the ravens on the crye,
That dos the al that vylanye,
And make ham take away thayr flyght,
And thou wol holden that thow hase hyght.'
The kynge byhelde the childe faste,
And gret love to hym cast, 3260

And sayed, 'Certis, that have het
I wylle holden, and 3yt do bet.'
Byfore alle the baronage
He sykyrd hym of that mariage.
Byfore the kynge he knelyd adoun,
And bygan hys resoun,
And sayed, 'Sire kynge, as 3e moue see,
3onder standys ravens thre,
Twa males and o femel;

That to raven was ful holde, 3270
In a wedyr that was colde,
And for he was nouȝt of myght
To fynde hys make mete aryght,
For glotonye he brake hys fayth,
And bete hys make and drove hire awaye.
Hys make flee hest and weste,
And fond for to do hir best,
And met a raven that was bolde,
A ȝonge raven and nowt holde,
And soght a make and hadde noon, 3280
And took hyr to hys make anoon,
And over al about he drowe,
And fand hys make mete y-nowe.
The colde wedirs was a-goo,
Ungyr, colde, and al wo,
The holde raven was hote of blode,
And sowt hys make has he were wode,
And fande ham both there thay were,
Hire and hyr make y-fere ;
He chalanged hire for hys, 3290
The tohyr sayde he chalanged amys.
Hyre fore thay cryen oppon the,
That art kynge and havest pousté,
And thay been in thy lond lent,
And thou schalt gyfe the juggement ;
Whan the juggement hys gyven,
Yf ever more wyl ȝe leve
Hyre thaym anny more crye,
Hardylich put out my eye.
Ever or he walde goon, 3300

The kyng gaf juggement anoon,
' For the holde raven brak hys fayth,
Wyth wronge drof hys make away,
That juggement I gyfve,
The zonge that helpe hyr for to lyve,
He schal have that he ches,
And the holde go makeless.'

When the juggement was gyven,
The zonge raven schulde ben above,
The kyng no sawe ham never more.

3310

Than levede he the childys lore,
And loved the childe as hys lyf,
And gaf hym dogter to wyf,
And was sesed with alle hys thynges,
And byleved with the kyng,
And ferde swyth myry and wylle.

And hys fader in powerte fel,
In hys countreth, soth to telle,
He ne myght nout for schame dwel,
And wenten thyne hys wyf and hee

3320

Fer into anothyr countré,
And lyved thare, he and hys wyf,
And lade swyth sympyl lyf.

The childe let privelyche inquire
In what stad hys fadyr were ;
Thay fandé hem that went to spyé
In the toun of Plecie.

Than went he agayn anoon,

As fast as he myght goon

With hys fet oppon the grounde,

3330

And sayed, 'Sire, I have founde
That thou byden aspye
In the cité of Plecie.'
The childe dyght hym rychliche,
And went thydir astiliche;
Into Plecie when he was comen,
Ner hys fadir hys in was nome.
To mete when he was redy to gon,
After hys fadir he sent anoon,
And hys modir, a good wyf, 3310
For to gladen hom of hare lyfe.
When thay comen into the halle,
Thay fayer resavyde alle;
The childe askyd watyr anoon,
And hys fadir bygan to goon,
And the water wolde have fet,
Bot he was sone let.
Hys modir wold the towel have broute,
Bot othir wolde suffry hyt nouȝt.
And the child al togydir syghe, 3320
And fadir and modir neghid nee,
And by the honde both he nam,
And sayed, 'For sothe, ȝoure sone I am.
Fadyr, nowe hyt hys byfalle
That I herde the ravens telle;
I tolde ȝou withouten lesyng
What thay sayeden in hyr gavlyng:
For I hire cryhyng undirstode,
Ther-fore thou puttyst me in the flod,
Bot Jhesus held me by the hond, 3330
And broght me sonne to londe.

Fadir, hadde I than be dronken,
And in the salt flod sonkyn,
So God schild me from curs,
Now thou myghtyst fare the wars.'
Than walde the sone speke no mare,
And kyst hym and hys modir in fere,
And made thaym swyth fayer chere,
And gaf thaym londe and tresour,
And thay levedyn in mykyl onour." 3370

Quod the emperour sone to the emperour,
"Hyre fel the fadir lytil honour,
That for a wylle of hyghe blode
Put hys sone in the floode.

"Fadyr, so hase thou talent
To sla me without juggement;
And certys I have no more gylte
Than he that was in the see pute.
Bot the emperes loves me nout,
There-fore hit was hir thout, 3380
With wichecraft and with nygrimancie,
Ordaynde that I schulde dee.
Myn maysters loked in the mone,
And tolde me wat was to doone;
And sythen I was aftir sent,
Hadde I spokyn I hadde ben schent,
And my seven maysters also.
Thus was my welle tornyd into wo;
And alle was thorow thy wyvis rede,
For scho wolde that I hadde ben dede. 3390
Certys, sire, thus hyt hys;
Do now what thy wille hys."

The emperour was ful of godnesse,
And sayed anoon to the emperes,
"Dame," he sayed, "wat sayes thou?
Avisé the wille of thyn answere;
For the hede that I bere,
Bot thou may the fayrer skere
Of that myn sone haves tolde here,
For alle the men that beres breth,
Thou schalt dye on schentfol deth."

3100

The emperes, sothe for to telle,
Was combird wit fynde of helle,
That scho myght nout forsake,
That let the treson make,
With wycheecraft and felonye,
For to make the childe to dye,
And sayed, "My lord, sire emperour,
For Godys love and thyn honour,
Ordeyn wat thy willys bee,
Wat thou thynkest do by me,
For, certis, I may forsake nowt
The fame that on me hys broght.
That thy sone haves sayed i-wys,
Certeynlich soth hyt hys;
Hyt was al togydir my red,
For I wolde he hadde ben dede."

3110

Thus the thef the emperesse
Knowleched hyre wykkednese,
Thorow the fyndys entysment;
And anoon scho was schent,
And bounden swyth fast,
And hadde hire juggement at the last.

3120

Thus the childe wan hys lyf;
 And the emperesse lees hire lyf;
 And maynted hys son aryght
 Bothe by day and by nyght,
 And hys clerkys thre and fyve,
 Tha[t] holpyn to save hys sone on lyve
 With sevene talys that thay tolde,
 The sevene clerkys that were so bolde,
 Agayns the wyle traytoresse,
 Hys stepmoder the emperesse.

3430

There-fore the emperour
 Dyde thaym swyth mykyl honour;
 In alle thynges that he thout,
 By hare concel alle he wroght;
 And was wyduer al hys lyf,
 He wolde never have no wyf,
 That was alगत in his thout;
 For tresoun that scho hadde wrogt,
 He ne durst dele with no mo,
 Lest thay wrogten more wo.

3440

To lyve gode lyf he bygane,
 And bycam a chast man,
 And paynyd hym with al hys myght
 To holde ilke man to ryȝt,
 And lyvede in myrthe and solas,
 And dyed wan Godys wyлле was,
 And went into heven-riche,
 Thare joye and blysse hys evere i-lyche.
 To that ilke blysse brynge us Gode,
 That never in erth ȝed schodde.

3450

Amen, amen, ffor charité.