The Canterbury Tales

Fragment I (Group A)

GENERAL PROLOGUE

Here bygynneth the Book of the Tales of Caunterbury.

Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote
The droghte of March hath perced to the
roote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth 5
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his half cours yronne,
And smale foweles maken melodye,
That slepen al the nyght with open ye 10
(So priketh hem nature in hir corages),
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,
And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes,
To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes;
And specially from every shires ende 15
Of Engelond to Caunterbury they wende,
The hooly blisful martir for to seke,
That hem hath holpen whan that they were
seeke.
Bifil that in that seson on a day,
In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay 20
Redy to wenden on my pilgrymage
To Caunterbury with ful devout corage,
At nyght was come into that hostelrye
Wel nyne and twenty in a compaignye
Of sondry folk, by aventure yfalle 25
In felaweshipe, and pilgrimes were they alle,
That toward Caunterbury wolden ryde.
The chambres and the stables weren wyde,
And wel we weren esed atte beste.
And shortly, whan the sonne was to reste, 30
So hadde I spoken with hem everichon
That I was of hir felaweshipe anon,
And made forward erly for to ryse,
To take oure wey ther as I yow devyse.

This text was revised by RALPH HANNA III and LARRY D. BENSON, with materials provided by ROBERT A. PRATT.

1 **his:** its **shoures soote:** sweet, fragrant showers
2 **droghte:** dryness **perced:** pierced
3 **veyne:** vein (of the plants) **swich licour:** such liquid
4 **Of which vertu:** by which power
5 **Zephirus:** the west wind (which blows in Spring)
6 **Inspired:** breathed life into **holt and heeth:** grove and field
7 **croppes:** shoots, new leaves **yonge:** young, because the solar year has just begun with the vernal equinox. The sun has passed through the second half of the zodiacal sign Aries (the Ram); the time is thus late April. April 18 is specified in IntrMLT (II.5).
10 **ye:** eye
11 **priketh hem:** spurs, incites them **hir corages:** their spirits, hearts
13 **palmeres:** professional pilgrims who had been to the Holy Land and carried a palm frond as their emblem **straunge strondes:** foreign shores
14 **ferne halwes:** distant shrines **kowthe in sondry londes:** known in various lands (i.e., famous)
17 **blisful martir:** blessed martyr, St. Thomas à Becket
18 **hem hath holpen:** helped them **seeke:** sick
19 **Bifil:** it happened **seson:** season
20 **Southwerk:** Southwark, across the Thames from London **Tabard:** the Tabard Inn
22 **corage:** spirit, feelings
25 **sondry folk:** various sorts of people
25–26 **by aventure yfalle In felaweshipe:** fallen by chance into fellowship
27 **wolden:** desired, intended to
28 **chambres:** bedrooms
29 **esed atte beste:** accommodated in the best way
30 **shortly:** in brief
31 **everichon:** every one
32 **anon:** straightway
33 **forward:** agreement
34 **devyse:** tell

But nathelees, whil I have tyme and space, 35
Er that I ferther in this tale pace,
Me thynketh it acordaunt to resoun
To telle yow al the condicioun
Of ech of hem, so as it semed me,
And whiche they weren, and of what degree, 40
And eek in what array that they were inne;
And at a knyght than wol I first bigynne.
A KNYGHT ther was, and that a worthy man,
That fro the tyme that he first bigan
To riden out, he loved chivalrie, 45
Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisie.
Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,
And therto hadde he riden, no man ferre,
As wel in cristendom as in hethenesse,
And evere honoured for his worthynesse; 50
At Alisaundre he was whan it was wonne.
Ful ofte tyme he hadde the bord bigonne
Aboven alle nacions in Pruce;
In Lettow hadde he reysed and in Ruce,
No Cristen man so ofte of his degree. 55
In Gernade at the seege eek hadde he be
Of Algezir, and riden in Belmarye.
At Lyeys was he and at Satalye,
Whan they were wonne, and in the Grete See
At many a noble armee hadde he be. 60
At mortal batailles hadde he been fiftene,
And foughten for oure feith at Tramyssene
In lystes thries, and ay slayn his foo.
This ilke worthy knyght hadde been also
Somtyme with the lord of Palatye 65
Agayn another hethen in Turkye;
And everemoore he hadde a sovereyn prys.
And though that he were worthy, he was wys,
And of his port as meeke as is a mayde.
He nevere yet no vileynye ne sayde 70
In al his lyf unto no maner wight.
He was a verray, parfit gentil knyght.
But for to tellen yow of his array,
His hors were goode, but he was nat gay.
Of fustian he wered a gypon 75
Al bismotered with his habergeon,
For he was late ycome from his viage,
And wente for to doon his pilgrymage.
With hym ther was his sone, a yong SQUIER,
A lovyere and a lusty bacheler, 80
With lokkes crulle as they were leyd in presse.
Of twenty yeer of age he was, I gesse.
Of his stature he was of evene lengthe,
And wonderly delyvere, and of greet strengthe.
And he hadde been somtyme in chyvachie 85
In Flaundres, in Artoys, and Pycardie,
And born hym weel, as of so litel space,
In hope to stonden in his lady grace.
Embrouded was he, as it were a meede
Al ful of fresshe floures, whyte and reede. 90
Syngynge he was, or floytynge, al the day;
He was as fressh as is the month of May.

35 **nathelees:** nonetheless **space:** opportunity
36 **pace:** go, proceed
37 **Me thynketh it:** it seems to me, I think it **acordaunt to resoun:** in accord with proper order
38 **condicioun:** state, circumstances
39 **ech:** each (one)
40 **degree:** social rank
41 **array:** dress
42 **wol:** will
45 **chivalrie:** prowess
46 **Trouthe:** fidelity **honour:** good reputation **fredom:** generosity of spirit **curteisie:** refinement of manners
47 **werre:** war
48 **ferre:** farther
49 **hethenesse:** heathen lands
51 **Alisaundre:** Alexandria. The places named in lines 51–66 were places where English knights had campaigned in the fourteenth century.
52 **bord bigonne:** sat in the place of honor
53 **Aboven alle nacions:** above knights from all nations **Pruce:** Prussia
54 **Lettow:** Lithuania **reysed:** ridden on raids **Ruce:** Russia
56 **Gernade:** Granada **seege:** siege **eek:** also **be:** been
57 **Algezir:** Algeciras, in Spain **Belmarye:** Morocco (Benmarin)
58 **Lyeys:** Ayash (in modern Turkey) **Satalye:** Atalia (in modern Turkey)
59 **Grete See:** Mediterranean
60 **armee:** military expedition
62 **Tramyssene:** Tlemcen (near Morocco)
63 **In lystes:** in formal duels **ay:** always
64 **ilke:** same
65 **Somtyme:** once, at one time **Palatye:** Balat (in modern Turkey)
66 **Agayn:** against
67 **sovereyn prys:** outstanding reputation
68 Although he was a distinguished knight (i.e., brave), he was prudent.
69 **port:** bearing, manner
70 **vileynye:** rudeness
71 **no maner wight:** any sort of person
72 **verray:** true **parfit:** perfect (complete) **gentil:** noble
73 **array:** equipment
74 **gay:** gaily dressed, richly attired
75 **fustian:** coarse cloth **gypon:** tunic
76 **bismotered with his habergeon:** stained by (rust from) his coat of mail
77 **viage:** journey, expedition
79 **Squier:** squire, a young knight in the service of another knight
80 **lovyere:** lover **lusty:** lively **bacheler:** young knight, not yet a knight banneret
81 **crulle:** curled **presse:** press (curler)
82 **yeer:** years
83 **evene lengthe:** moderate height
84 **wonderly:** marvelously **delyvere:** agile
85 **somtyme:** for a time, once **in chyvachie:** on a cavalry expedition
86 **Flaundres, Artoys, Pycardie:** Flanders and parts of northern France, where English armies fought
87 **born hym weel:** conducted himself well **space:** time
88 **stonden in his lady grace:** find favor with his lady
89 **Embrouded:** embroidered **meede:** meadow
90 **reede:** red
91 **floytynge:** piping, playing the flute

Short was his gowne, with sleves longe and wyde.
Wel koude he sitte on hors and faire ryde.
He koude songes make and wel endite, 95
Juste and eek daunce, and weel purtreye and write.
So hoote he lovede that by nyghtertale
He sleep namoore than dooth a nyghtyngale.
Curteis he was, lowely, and servysable,
And carf biforn his fader at the table. 100
A YEMAN hadde he and servantz namo
At that tyme, for hym liste ride so,
And he was clad in cote and hood of grene.
A sheef of pecok arwes, bright and kene,
Under his belt he bar ful thriftily 105
(Wel koude he dresse his takel yemanly;
His arwes drouped noght with fetheres lowe),
And in his hand he baar a myghty bowe.
A not heed hadde he, with a broun visage.
Of wodecraft wel koude he al the usage. 110
Upon his arm he baar a gay bracer,
And by his syde a swerd and a bokeler,
And on that oother syde a gay daggere
Harneised wel and sharp as point of spere;
A Cristopher on his brest of silver sheene. 115
An horn he bar, the bawdryk was of grene;
A forster was he, soothly, as I gesse.
Ther was also a Nonne, a PRIORESSE,
That of hir smylyng was ful symple and coy;
Hire gretteste ooth was but by Seinte Loy; 120
And she was cleped madame Eglentyne.
Ful weel she soong the service dyvyne,
Entuned in hir nose ful semely;
And Frenssh she spak ful faire and fetisly,
After the scole of Stratford atte Bowe, 125
For Frenssh of Parys was to hire unknowe.
At mete wel ytaught was she with alle;
She leet no morsel from hir lippes falle,
Ne wette hir fyngres in hir sauce depe;
Wel koude she carie a morsel and wel kepe 130
That no drope ne fille upon hire brest.
In curteisie was set ful muchel hir lest.
Hir over-lippe wyped she so clene
That in hir coppe ther was no ferthyng sene
Of grece, whan she dronken hadde hir draughte.
Ful semely after hir mete she raughte. 136
And sikerly she was of greet desport,
And ful plesaunt, and amyable of port,
And peyned hire to countrefete cheere
Of court, and to been estatlich of manere, 140
And to ben holden digne of reverence.
But for to speken of hire conscience,
She was so charitable and so pitous
She wolde wepe, if that she saugh a mous 144
Kaught in a trappe, if it were deed or bleddc.
Of smale houndes hadde she that she fedde
With rosted flessh, or milk and wastel-breed.
But soore wepte she if oon of hem were deed,
Or if men smoot it with a yerde smerte;
And al was conscience and tendre herte. 150
Ful semyly hir wympul pynched was,
Hir nose tretys, hir eyen greye as glas,
Hir mouth ful smal, and therto softe and reed.

94 **koude:** knew how to
96 **Juste:** joust **eek:** also **weel:** well **purtreye:** draw
97 **hoote:** passionately **by nyghtertale:** at nighttime
98 **sleep:** slept
99 **lowely:** modest (humble) **servysable:** willing to serve, attentive
100 **carf:** carved
101 **Yeman:** yeoman, freeborn servant **he:** the Knight **namo:** no other
102 **hym liste:** he preferred to
105 **bar ful thriftily:** bore very properly
106 **koude:** knew how to **dresse his takel:** care for his arrows, equipment for archery **yemanly:** skillfully, as a good yeoman should
107 **drouped noght with fetheres lowe:** did not fall short because of poorly adjusted feathers
109 **not heed:** close-cropped head **broun:** very dark
111 **gay:** bright **bracer:** archer's arm guard
112 **bokeler:** buckler, small shield
114 **Harneised:** ornamented
115 **Cristopher:** image of St. Christopher **sheene:** bright
116 **bar:** bore **bawdryk:** baldric, shoulder strap for the horn
117 **forster:** forester, game-keeper
119 **ful:** very **symple and coy:** unaffected and quiet
120 **ooth:** oath **Seinte Loy:** St. Eligius
121 **cleped:** called
122 **soong:** sang **service dyvyne:** liturgy
123 **Entuned:** intoned **ful semely:** in a very seemly manner
124 **fetisly:** elegantly
125 **in the manner of** (*After the scole of*) Stratford atte Bowe (rather than that of the royal court)
127 **At mete:** at dinner **with alle:** indeed
128 **leet:** allowed
130 **koude:** knew how to **wel kepe:** take good care
131 **no drope ne fille:** no drop fell
132 Her greatest pleasure (*lest*) was in good manners (*curteisie*).
133 **over-lippe:** upper lip
134 **coppe:** cup **ferthyng:** speck (spot the size of a farthing)
135 **grece:** grease
136 **after hir mete she raughte:** she reached for her food
137 **sikerly:** truly **greet desport:** excellent deportment
138 **port:** bearing, manner
139 **peyned hire:** took pains **countrefete:** imitate
139–40 **cheere Of court:** the manners of the court
140 **estatlich of manere:** dignified in behavior
141 **digne of reverence:** worthy of respect
142 **conscience:** moral sense and solicitude
143 **pitous:** compassionate
144 **saugh:** saw
147 **rosted flessh:** roasted meat **wastel-breed:** expensive fine white bread
148 **soore:** sorely, bitterly
149 **smoot:** beat **yerde:** switch **smerte:** smartly, painfully
151 **Ful semyly:** very properly **wympul:** wimple, a head dress that covers all but the face **pynched:** pleated
152 **tretys:** well formed **greye:** gray (?); the exact color intended is uncertain.
153 **smal:** small, elegant **therto:** moreover **reed:** red

But sikerly she hadde a fair forheed;
It was almoost a spanne brood, I trowe; 155
For, hardily, she was nat undergrowe.
Ful fetys was hir cloke, as I was war.
Of smal coral aboute hire arm she bar
A peire of bedes, gauded al with grene, 159
And theron heng a brooch of gold ful sheene,
On which ther was first write a crowned A,
And after *Amor vincit omnia.*

Another NONNE with hire hadde she,
That was hir chapeleyne, and preestes thre.

A MONK ther was, a fair for the maistrie, 165
An outridere, that lovede venerie,
A manly man, to been an abbot able.
Ful many a deyntee hors hadde he in stable,
And whan he rood, men myghte his brydel heere
Gynglen in a whistlynge wynd als cleere 170
And eek as loude as dooth the chapel belle
Ther as this lord was kepere of the celle.
The reule of Seint Maure or of Seint Beneit—
By cause that it was old and somdel streit
This ilke Monk leet olde thynges pace, 175
And heeld after the newe world the space.
He yaf nat of that text a pulled hen,
That seith that hunters ben nat hooly men,
Ne that a monk, whan he is recchelees,
Is likned til a fissh that is waterlees— 180
This is to seyn, a monk out of his cloystre.
But thilke text heeld he nat worth an oystre;
And I seyde his opinion was good.
What sholde he studie and make hymselven wood,
Upon a book in cloystre alwey to poure, 185
Or swynken with his handes, and laboure,
As Austyn bit? How shal the world be served?
Lat Austyn have his swynk to hym reserved!
Therfore he was a prikasour aright:
Grehoundes he hadde as swift as fowel in flight;
Of prikyng and of huntyng for the hare 191
Was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare.
I seigh his sleves purfiled at the hond
With grys, and that the fyneste of a lond;
And for to festne his hood under his chyn, 195
He hadde of gold ywroght a ful curious pyn;
A love-knotte in the gretter ende ther was.
His heed was balled, that shoon as any glas,
And eek his face, as he hadde been enoynt.
He was a lord ful fat and in good poynt; 200
His eyen stepe, and rollynge in his heed,
That stemed as a forneys of a leed;
His bootes souple, his hors in greet estaat.
Now certeinly he was a fair prelaat;
He was nat pale as a forpyned goost. 205
A fat swan loved he best of any roost.
His palfrey was as broun as is a berye.

A FRERE ther was, a wantowne and a merye,
A lymytour, a ful solempne man.
In alle the ordres foure is noon that kan 210
So muchel of daliaunce and fair langage.
He hadde maad ful many a mariage
Of yonge wommen at his owene cost.
Unto his ordre he was a noble post.

154 **sikerly:** certainly
155 **spanne brood:** about seven to nine inches wide **trowe:** believe
156 **hardily:** certainly
157 **Ful fetys:** very elegant, well made **war:** aware
159 **peire:** set **gauded:** divided by large beads (*gaudes*) marking the Paternosters
160 **sheene:** bright
161 **crowned A:** an A surmounted by a crown
162 **Amor vincit omnia:** love conquers all; the phrase could apply to either divine or earthly love.
164 **chapeleyne:** a nun serving as a secretary to a prioress **preestes thre:** three priests; see n.
165 **a fair for the maistrie:** an extremely fine or handsome one
166 **outridere:** monk with business outside the monastery **venerie:** hunting
167 **manly:** generous, virile
168 **deyntee:** fine
169 **myghte his brydel heere:** could hear his bridle
170 **Gynglen:** jingle **als cleere:** as clearly
172 **celle:** a subordinate monastery
173 **reule of Seint Maure . . . Seint Beneit:** the Benedictine Rule, established by St. Benedict and introduced into France by his follower St. Maurus
174 **somdel streit:** somewhat narrow, strict
175–76 This same monk let old things pass away (*pace*) and followed the customs of modern times.
177 **yaf:** gave **text:** authoritative written statement **pulled:** plucked
179 **recchelees:** heedless of rules
180 **til:** to **waterlees:** out of water
182 **thilke:** that **nat worth an oystre:** i.e., worth nothing
184 **wood:** crazy, mad
185 **alwey:** always **poure:** pore over
186 **swynken:** work
187 **Austyn:** St. Augustine, supposed author of a monastic rule **bit** = *biddeth,* commands
189 **prikasour:** horseman, hunter on horseback **aright:** certainly
190 **Grehoundes:** greyhounds
191 **prikyng:** tracking
192 **lust:** pleasure
193 **seigh:** saw **purfiled:** lined with fur
194 **grys:** expensive squirrel fur **fyneste of a lond:** best to be had
196 **curious:** skillfully made
197 **love-knotte:** elaborate knot **gretter:** larger
198 **balled:** bald
199 **enoynt:** anointed, rubbed with oil
200 **in good poynt:** in good condition
201 **stepe:** prominent or bright
202 His eyes gleamed like a furnace under a cauldron (R.).
203 **souple:** pliant **greet estaat:** excellent condition
204 **prelaat:** ecclesiastical dignitary
205 **forpyned goost:** tormented spirit
208 **wantowne:** jovial, pleasure-loving **merye:** merry
209 **lymytour:** friar licensed (by his order) to beg in a specific district **solempne:** dignified, important
210 **ordres foure:** the four orders of friars **kan:** knows
211 **muchel:** much **daliaunce:** sociability
214 **post:** supporter (pillar of the Church)

Ful wel biloved and famulier was he 215
With frankeleyns over al in his contree,
And eek with worthy wommen of the toun;
For he hadde power of confessioun,
As seyde hymself, moore than a curat,
For of his ordre he was licenciat. 220
Ful swetely herde he confessioun,
And plesaunt was his absolucioun:
He was an esy man to yeve penaunce,
Ther as he wiste to have a good pitaunce.
For unto a povre ordre for to yive 225
Is signe that a man is wel yshryve;
For if he yaf, he dorste make avaunt,
He wiste that a man was repentaunt;
For many a man so hard is of his herte, 229
He may nat wepe, althogh hym soore smerte.
Therfore in stede of wepynge and preyeres
Men moote yeve silver to the povre freres.
His typet was ay farsed ful of knyves
And pynnes, for to yeven faire wyves.
And certeinly he hadde a murye note: 235
Wel koude he synge and pleyen on a rote;
Of yeddynges he baar outrely the pris.
His nekke whit was as the flour-de-lys;
Therto he strong was as a championn.
He knew the tavernes wel in every toun 240
And everich hostiler and tappestere
Bet than a lazar or a beggestere,
For unto swich a worthy man as he
Acorded nat, as by his facultee,
To have with sike lazars aqueyntaunce. 245
It is nat honest; it may nat avaunce,
For to deelen with no swich poraille,
But al with riche and selleres of vitaille.

And over al, ther as profit sholde arise,
Curteis he was and lowely of servyse; 250
Ther nas no man nowher so vertuous.
He was the beste beggere in his hous;
[And yaf a certeyn ferme for the graunt; 252a
Noon of his bretheren cam ther in his
haunt;] 252b
For thogh a wydwe hadde noght a sho,
So plesaunt was his *"In principio,"*
Yet wolde he have a ferthyng, er he wente. 255
His purchas was wel bettre than his rente.
And rage he koude, as it were right a whelp.
In love-dayes ther koude he muchel help,
For ther he was nat lyk a cloysterer
With a thredbare cope, as is a povre scoler, 260
But he was lyk a maister or a pope.
Of double worstede was his semycope,
That rounded as a belle out of the presse.
Somwhat he lipsed, for his wantownesse, 264
To make his Englissh sweete upon his tonge;
And in his harpyng, whan that he hadde songe,
His eyen twynkled in his heed aryght
As doon the sterres in the frosty nyght.
This worthy lymytour was cleped Huberd.

A MARCHANT was ther with a forked berd,
In mottelee, and hye on horse he sat; 271
Upon his heed a Flaundryssh bever hat,
His bootes clasped faire and fetisly.
His resons he spak ful solempnely,
Sownynge alwey th'encrees of his wynnyng.
He wolde the see were kept for any thyng 276
Bitwixe Middelburgh and Orewelle.

216 frankeleyns: landowners over al: everywhere
217 eek: also
220 licenciat: licensed to hear confessions
223 esy: lenient yeve: give
224 wiste: expected pitaunce: gift (literally food allowed to a member of a religious house)
225 povre: poor
226 yshryve: confessed, penitent
227 For if a man gave, he (the Friar) dared to assert (R.)
228 wiste: knew
230 may nat: cannot, is not able to hym soore smerte: he sorely, painfully, suffers
232 moote yeve: must give
233 typet: the dangling tip of the hood farsed: stuffed
234 yeven: give
235 murye: merry, pleasing note: voice
236 rote: stringed instrument
237 For reciting ballads (*yeddynges*), he absolutely (*outrely*) took the prize.
238 flour-de-lys: lily
239 championn: champion, representative in a judicial duel
241 everich: every hostiler: innkeeper tappestere: barmaid
242 Bet: better lazar: leper beggestere: beggar-woman
243 swich: such
244 It was not suitable, in view of his official position.
245 sike: sick
246 honest: honorable, respectable may nat avaunce: cannot be profitable
247 swich poraille: such poor people
248 vitaille: victuals, provisions
249 ther as: where
250 lowely of servyse: graciously humble
251 nas = *ne was*, was not vertuous: capable
252a ferme: fee, fixed payment graunt: grant (of an exclusive territory for begging)
252b haunt: territory
253 sho: shoe
254 In principio: in the beginning (the opening words of Gen. 1 and John 1, popular for devotions)
255 ferthyng: farthing
256 purchas: total income rente: proper income
257 rage: romp, sport (or flirt) whelp: pup
258 love-dayes: days on which disputes were reconciled
260 povre scoler: poor scholar, student
262 double worstede: a very wide (hence expensive) cloth semycope: short cloak
263 rounded: was round presse: casting mold
264 lipsed: lisped wantownesse: affectation
266 songe: sung
267 aryght: exactly
268 sterres: stars
269 cleped: called
271 mottelee: parti-colored cloth hye on horse: in a high saddle
272 Flaundryssh: Flemish
273 fetisly: elegantly, neatly
274 resons: remarks, opinions solempnely: ceremoniously, solemnly
275 Sownynge: concerned with, or, making known wynnyng: profit
276 see: sea kept for any thyng: protected at all costs
277 Middelburgh: a Dutch port Orewelle: Orwell, on the English coast

Wel koude he in eschaunge sheeldes selle.
This worthy man ful wel his wit bisette:
Ther wiste no wight that he was in dette, 280
So estatly was he of his governaunce
With his bargaynes and with his chevyssaunce.
For sothe he was a worthy man with alle,
But, sooth to seyn, I noot how men hym calle.
A CLERK ther was of Oxenford also, 285
That unto logyk hadde longe ygo.
As leene was his hors as is a rake,
And he nas nat right fat, I undertake,
But looked holwe, and therto sobrely.
Ful thredbare was his overeste courtepy, 290
For he hadde geten hym yet no benefice,
Ne was so worldly for to have office.
For hym was levere have at his beddes heed
Twenty bookes, clad in blak or reed,
Of Aristotle and his philosophie 295
Than robes riche, or fithele, or gay sautrie.
But al be that he was a philosophre,
Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre;
But al that he myghte of his freendes hente,
On bookes and on lernynge he it spente, 300
And bisily gan for the soules preye
Of hem that yaf hym wherwith to scoleye.
Of studie took he moost cure and moost heede.
Noght o word spak he moore than was neede,
And that was seyd in forme and reverence, 305
And short and quyk and ful of hy sentence;
Sownynge in moral vertu was his speche,
And gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche.

A SERGEANT OF THE LAWE, war and wys,
That often hadde been at the Parvys, 310
Ther was also, ful riche of excellence.
Discreet he was and of greet reverence—
He semed swich, his wordes weren so wise.
Justice he was ful often in assise,
By patente and by pleyn commissioun. 315
For his science and for his heigh renoun,
Of fees and robes hadde he many oon.
So greet a purchasour was nowher noon:
Al was fee symple to hym in effect;
His purchasyng myghte nat been infect. 320
Nowher so bisy a man as he ther nas,
And yet he semed bisier than he was.
In termes hadde he caas and doomes alle
That from the tyme of kyng William were
falle. 324
Therto he koude endite and make a thyng,
Ther koude no wight pynche at his writyng;
And every statut koude he pleyn by rote.
He rood but hoomly in a medlee cote,
Girt with a ceint of silk, with barres smale;
Of his array telle I no lenger tale. 330
A FRANKELEYN was in his compaignye.
Whit was his berd as is the dayesye;
Of his complexioun he was sangwyn.
Wel loved he by the morwe a sop in wyn;
To lyven in delit was evere his wone, 335
For he was Epicurus owene sone,

278 **sheeldes:** A *sheeld* was a unit of exchange; selling shields was a way of borrowing money, often at a cost to the seller.
279 **his wit bisette:** used his wits
281 **estatly:** dignified **governaunce:** behavior, management
282 **bargaynes:** buying and selling **chevyssaunce:** financial arrangements, borrowing
283 **For sothe:** truly **with alle:** indeed
284 **noot** = *ne woot*, do not know
285 **Clerk:** university student
286 **unto logyk hadde longe ygo:** had taken (studied) logic a long time
288 **right:** very **undertake:** affirm, declare
289 **holwe:** emaciated **sobrely:** grave, serious
290 **overeste:** uppermost **courtepy:** short coat
291 **benefice:** ecclesiastical living
292 **office:** secular employment
293 **hym was levere:** he would rather **his beddes heed:** head of his bed
296 **fithele:** fiddle **gay sautrie:** elegant psaltry (a harp-like instrument)
297 **al be that:** even though **philosophre:** the word can mean either philosopher or alchemist
299 **myghte of his freendes hente:** could get from his friends
301 **gan . . . preye:** did pray, prayed
302 **scoleye:** attend the schools of the university
303 **cure:** care
304 **o:** one **neede:** necessary
305 **in forme and reverence:** with due formality and respect (R.)
306 **quyk:** vivid, lively **hy sentence:** elevated content
307 **Sownynge in:** consonant with
309 **Sergeant of the Lawe:** a lawyer who belonged to the highest order in his profession **war:** prudent
310 **Parvys:** the porch of St. Paul's Cathedral
311 **ful riche of excellence:** well endowed with superior qualities
312 **Discreet . . . and of greet reverence:** judicious and with much dignity
314 **Justice:** judge **assise:** the court of assizes
315 **patente:** letter of appointment from the king **pleyn commissioun:** full jurisdiction
316 **science:** knowledge
317 **fees and robes:** grants of yearly income (a legal formula) **many oon:** many a one
318 **purchasour:** land-buyer
319 **fee symple:** unrestricted possession
320 **been infect:** be invalidated
323–24 He had in Year Books all the cases (*caas*) and judicial decisions (*doomes*) from the time of William I.
325 **endite and make a thyng:** draft and draw up a legal document
326 **pynche at:** find a flaw in
327 And he knew every statute entirely by heart.
328 **hoomly:** simply **medlee:** parti-colored
329 **Girt:** encircled **ceint:** belt **barres:** stripes
330 **array:** dress
331 **Frankeleyn:** landowner
332 **dayesye:** daisy
333 **complexioun:** temperament, balance of the body's fluids, the four "humors"—blood, phlegm, red or yellow bile (choler), black bile (melancholy) **sangwyn:** of the sanguine humor (dominated by blood)
334 **sop in wyn:** piece of bread in wine
335 **delit:** delight, pleasure **wone:** custom, wont
336 **Epicurus owene sone:** an Epicurean

That heeld opinioun that pleyn delit
Was verray felicitee parfit.
An housholdere, and that a greet, was he;
Seint Julian he was in his contree. 340
His breed, his ale, was alweys after oon;
A bettre envyned man was nowher noon.
Withoute bake mete was nevere his hous,
Of fissh and flessh, and that so plentevous
It snewed in his hous of mete and drynke; 345
Of alle deyntees that men koude thynke,
After the sondry sesons of the yeer,
So chaunged he his mete and his soper.
Ful many a fat partrich hadde he in muwe,
And many a breem and many a luce in stuwe.
Wo was his cook but if his sauce were 351
Poynaunt and sharp, and redy al his geere.
His table dormant in his halle alway
Stood redy covered al the longe day.
At sessiouns ther was he lord and sire; 355
Ful ofte tyme he was knyght of the shire.
An anlaas and a gipser al of silk
Heeng at his girdel, whit as morne milk.
A shirreve hadde he been, and a contour.
Was nowher swich a worthy vavasour. 360
AN HABERDASSHERE and a CARPENTER,
A WEBBE, a DYERE, and a TAPYCER—
And they were clothed alle in o lyveree
Of a solempne and a greet fraternitee.
Ful fressh and newe hir geere apiked was; 365
Hir knyves were chaped noght with bras
But al with silver, wroght ful clene and weel,
Hire girdles and hir pouches everydeel.
Wel semed ech of hem a fair burgeys
To sitten in a yeldehalle on a deys. 370
Everich, for the wisdom that he kan,
Was shaply for to been an alderman.
For catel hadde they ynogh and rente,
And eek hir wyves wolde it wel assente;
And elles certeyn were they to blame. 375
It is ful fair to been ycleped "madame,"
And goon to vigilies al bifore,
And have a mantel roialliche ybore.
A COOK they hadde with hem for the nones
To boille the chiknes with the marybones, 380
And poudre-marchant tart and galyngale.
Wel koude he knowe a draughte of Londoun ale.
He koude rooste, and sethe, and broille, and frye,
Maken mortreux, and wel bake a pye.
But greet harm was it, as it thoughte me, 385
That on his shyne a mormal hadde he.
For blankmanger, that made he with the beste.
A SHIPMAN was ther, wonynge fer by weste;
For aught I woot, he was of Dertemouthe.
He rood upon a rouncy, as he kouthe, 390
In a gowne of faldyng to the knee.
A daggere hangynge on a laas hadde he
Aboute his nekke, under his arm adoun.
The hoote somer hadde maad his hewe al broun;
And certeinly he was a good felawe. 395
Ful many a draughte of wyn had he ydrawe

337 **That:** who **pleyn delit:** pure pleasure
338 **verray felicitee parfit:** true perfect happiness
340 **Seint Julian:** patron saint of hospitality
341 **after oon:** of the same (good) quality
342 **envyned:** stocked with wine
343 **bake mete:** pie of meat, fowl, or fish
344 **plentevous:** plenteous
345 **snewed:** snowed
346 **deyntees:** fine food and drink
347 **After the sondry sesons:** according to the various seasons. Seasonal adjustment of the diet was a health measure.
349 **partrich:** partridge **muwe:** pen for birds
350 **breem:** bream (a freshwater fish) **luce:** pike **stuwe:** fish pond
351 **but if:** unless
352 **Poynaunt:** spicy, piercing **geere:** utensils
353 **table dormant:** table permanently in place (rather than taken down between meals)
355 He presided at court sessions.
356 **knyght of the shire:** member of Parliament
357 **anlaas:** broad, two-edged dagger **gipser:** purse
359 **shirreve:** sheriff **contour:** auditor
360 **vavasour:** feudal landholder
361 **Haberdasshere:** a dealer in hats or small wares
362 **Webbe:** weaver **Tapycer:** weaver of tapestries, rugs, etc.
363 **o lyveree:** one livery, distinctive dress worn by members of a guild
364 **solempne:** dignified, important **fraternitee:** parish guild
365 **geere:** equipment **apiked:** trimmed, adorned
366 **chaped:** mounted
368 **girdles:** belts **pouches:** purses **everydeel:** every bit
369 **ech:** each (one) **burgeys:** citizen of a city (tradesman)
370 **yeldehalle:** guildhall **deys:** dais
371 **kan:** knows
372 **shaply:** suitable, fit **alderman:** city official
373 **catel:** property **rente:** income
375 **elles:** otherwise
376 **ycleped "madame":** called "my lady"
377 **vigilies:** vigils, feasts held on the eve of a holy day **al bifore:** in front of everyone, heading the procession
378 **roialliche ybore:** royally carried
379 **for the nones:** for the occasion; see n.
380 **chiknes:** chickens **marybones:** marrow bones
381 **poudre-marchant tart:** a tart spice **galyngale:** powdered aromatic root used as a sweet spice
383 **sethe:** simmer
384 **mortreux:** stews or hashes
385 **harm:** pity **it thoughte me:** it seemed to me
386 **mormal:** ulcer; see n.
387 **blankmanger:** a thick stew or mousse of chopped chicken or fish boiled with rice **with the beste:** excellently
388 **wonynge:** dwelling **fer by weste:** far in the west
389 **For aught I woot:** for all I know **Dertemouthe:** Dartmouth, in Devon, in the south west
390 **rouncy:** carthorse, nag **as he kouthe:** as best he could
391 **faldyng:** coarse woolen cloth
392 **laas:** cord
393 **under his arm adoun:** down under his arm
395 **good felawe:** good companion; see n.

Fro Burdeux-ward, whil that the chapman sleep.
Of nyce conscience took he no keep.
If that he faught and hadde the hyer hond,
By water he sente hem hoom to every lond.
But of his craft to rekene wel his tydes, 401
His stremes, and his daungers hym bisides,
His herberwe, and his moone, his lodemenage,
Ther nas noon swich from Hulle to Cartage.
Hardy he was and wys to undertake; 405
With many a tempest hadde his berd been shake.
He knew alle the havenes, as they were,
Fro Gootlond to the cape of Fynystere,
And every cryke in Britaigne and in Spayne.
His barge ycleped was the Maudelayne. 410
With us ther was a DOCTOUR OF PHISIK;
In al this world ne was ther noon hym lik,
To speke of phisik and of surgerye,
For he was grounded in astronomye.
He kepte his pacient a ful greet deel 415
In houres by his magyk natureel.
Wel koude he fortunen the ascendent
Of his ymages for his pacient.
He knew the cause of everich maladye, 419
Were it of hoot, or coold, or moyste, or drye,
And where they engendred, and of what humour.
He was a verray, parfit praktisour:
The cause yknowe, and of his harm the roote,
Anon he yaf the sike man his boote.
Ful redy hadde he his apothecaries 425
To sende hym drogges and his letuaries,
For ech of hem made oother for to wynne—

397 **Burdeux-ward:** the direction of Bordeaux **chapman:** merchant **sleep:** slept
398 **nyce:** scrupulous **took he no keep:** he took no notice
399 **If that:** if **the hyer hond:** the upper hand
401 **craft to rekene:** skill to reckon
402 **stremes:** currents **daungers hym bisides:** perils near at hand
403 **herberwe:** harbors, anchorages; see n. **moone:** positions of the moon **lodemenage:** skill in navigation
404 **Hulle:** Hull, on the Yorkshire Coast **Cartage:** Carthage, Tunisia, or Cartagena, Spain
405 **wys to undertake:** prudent in his undertakings
408 **Gootlond . . . cape of Fynystere:** Probably Gotland and Cape Finistere
409 **cryke:** inlet **Britaigne:** Brittany
410 **barge:** sailing vessel; see n.
411 **Phisik:** medicine
414 **grounded:** instructed **astronomye:** the science of astrology; see n.
416 **houres:** astronomical hours **magyk natureel:** science
417 **fortunen the ascendent:** calculate the planetary position
418 **ymages:** talismatic figures in astrology
420 **hoot, coold, moyste, drye:** one of the elemental qualities; see n.
421 **humour:** kind of bodily fluid
422 **verray:** true **parfit:** perfect, complete **praktisour:** practitioner
424 **Anon:** at once **boote:** remedy
426 **drogges:** drugs **letuaries:** electuaries, medicinal mixtures
427 **ech:** each (one) **wynne:** profit

Hir frendshipe nas nat newe to bigynne.
Wel knew he the olde Esculapius,
And Deyscorides, and eek Rufus, 430
Olde Ypocras, Haly, and Galyen,
Serapion, Razis, and Avycen,
Averrois, Damascien, and Constantyn,
Bernard, and Gatesden, and Gilbertyn.
Of his diete mesurable was he, 435
For it was of no superfluitee,
But of greet norissyng and digestible.
His studie was but litel on the Bible.
In sangwyn and in pers he clad was al,
Lyned with taffata and with sendal. 440
And yet he was but esy of dispence;
He kepte that he wan in pestilence.
For gold in phisik is a cordial,
Therefore he lovede gold in special.
A good WIF was ther OF biside BATHE, 445
But she was somdel deef, and that was scathe.
Of clooth-makyng she hadde swich an haunt
She passed hem of Ypres and of Gaunt.
In al the parisshe wif ne was ther noon 449
That to the offrynge bifore hire sholde goon;
And if ther dide, certeyn so wrooth was she
That she was out of alle charitee.
Hir coverchiefs ful fyne weren of ground;
I dorste swere they weyeden ten pound
That on a Sonday weren upon hir heed. 455
Hir hosen weren of fyn scarlet reed,
Ful streite yteyd, and shoes ful moyste and newe.
Boold was hir face, and fair, and reed of hewe.
She was a worthy womman al hir lyve: 459
Housbondes at chirche dore she hadde fyve,
Withouten oother compaignye in youthe—

428 **newe to bigynne:** recently begun
429–34 The physician knows the standard medical authorities, from the Greeks (Aesculapius) to the contemporary English Gilbertus Anglicus; see n.
435 **mesurable:** moderate
439 **sangwyn:** red **pers:** blue or bluish gray
440 **taffata, sendal:** varieties of silk
441 **but esy of dispence:** moderate in (careful about) spending
442 **wan:** gained
443 **cordial:** medicine for the heart
444 **in special:** in particular
446 **somdel deef:** somewhat deaf **that was scathe:** that was a pity. See WBPro III.668.
447 **haunt:** skill
448 **Ypres, Gaunt:** Ypres, Ghent, cloth-making centers in modern Belgium
450 **offrynge:** offering (when the people go to the altar with their offerings at Mass)
451 **wrooth:** angry
452 **out of alle charitee:** deeply upset
453 **coverchiefs:** linen coverings for the head **fyne weren of ground:** were fine in texture
454 **dorste swere:** dare swear **weyeden:** weighed
456 **hosen:** stockings
457 **streite yteyd:** closely laced **moyste:** supple
460 **chirche dore:** door of the church
461 **Withouten:** not counting; see n.

But thereof nedeth nat to speke as nowthe.
And thries hadde she been at Jerusalem;
She hadde passed many a straunge strem;
At Rome she hadde been, and at Boloigne, 465
In Galice at Seint-Jame, and at Coloigne.
She koude muchel of wandrynge by the weye.
Gat-tothed was she, soothly for to seye.
Upon an amblere esily she sat,
Ywympled wel, and on hir heed an hat 470
As brood as is a bokeler or a targe;
A foot-mantel aboute hir hipes large,
And on hir feet a paire of spores sharpe.
In felaweshipe wel koude she laughe and carpe.
Of remedies of love she knew per chaunce,
For she koude of that art the olde daunce. 476

A good man was ther of religioun,
And was a povre PERSOUN OF A TOUN,
But riche he was of hooly thoght and werk.
He was also a lerned man, a clerk, 480
That Cristes gospel trewely wolde preche;
His parisshens devoutly wolde he teche.
Benygne he was, and wonder diligent,
And in adversitee ful pacient,
And swich he was ypreved ofte sithes. 485
Ful looth were hym to cursen for his tithes,
But rather wolde he yeven, out of doute,
Unto his povre parisshens aboute
Of his offryng and eek of his substaunce.
He koude in litel thyng have suffisaunce. 490
Wyd was his parisshe, and houses fer asonder,
But he ne lefte nat, for reyn ne thonder,
In siknesse nor in meschief to visite
The ferreste in his parisshe, muche and lite,
Upon his feet, and in his hand a staf. 495
This noble ensample to his sheep he yaf,
That first he wroghte, and afterward he taughte.
Out of the gospel he tho wordes caughte,
And this figure he added eek therto,
That if gold ruste, what shal iren do? 500
For if a preest be foul, on whom we truste,
No wonder is a lewed man to ruste;
And shame it is, if a prest take keep,
A shiten shepherde and a clene sheep.
Wel oghte a preest ensample for to yive, 505
By his clennesse, how that his sheep sholde lyve.
He sette nat his benefice to hyre
And leet his sheep encombred in the myre
And ran to Londoun unto Seinte Poules
To seken hym a chaunterie for soules, 510
Or with a bretherhed to been withholde;
But dwelte at hoom, and kepte wel his folde,
So that the wolf ne made it nat myscarie;
He was a shepherde and noght a mercenarie.
And though he hooly were and vertuous, 515
He was to synful men nat despitous,
Ne of his speche daungerous ne digne,
But in his techyng discreet and benygne.
To drawen folk to hevene by fairnesse,
By good ensample, this was his bisynesse. 520
But it were any persone obstinat,
What so he were, of heigh or lough estat,
Hym wolde he snybben sharply for the nonys.
A bettre preest I trowe that nowher noon ys.
He waited after no pompe and reverence, 525
Ne maked him a spiced conscience,

462 as nowthe: now
463–66 Jerusalem, Rome, *Boloigne* (Boulogne in France), *in Galice at Seint-Jame* (St. James of Compostella in Galicia, Spain), and *Coloigne* (Cologne) were celebrated places of pilgrimage.
464 straunge strem: foreign sea
468 Gat-tothed: with teeth set wide apart (R.)
469 amblere: a pacing horse esily: comfortably
470 Ywympled wel: wearing a large wimple, a head dress that covers all but the face
471 brood as is a bokeler or a targe: broad as a buckler or shield
472 foot-mantel: an apron-like overskirt
473 spores: spurs
474 carpe: chatter
475 remedies of love: remedies for love-sickness per chaunce: as it happened
476 olde daunce: tricks of the trade, game of love
478 povre Persoun: poor parson
482 parisshens: parishioners
483 Benygne: gracious
485 ypreved: proven ofte sithes: many times
486 He was very reluctant (*Ful looth*) to excommunicate (*cursen*) those who did not pay the tithes (one-tenth of their income) legally due their priest.
489 offryng: voluntary offerings of the people at Mass substaunce: fixed income (from property of the Church)
491 asonder: apart
492 ne lefte nat: did not omit
493 meschief: trouble
494 ferreste: those farthest away muche and lite: great and small, everyone
496 ensample: model
498 tho: those
499 figure: metaphor
501 foul: evil
502 lewed man: uneducated man, layman
503 take keep: is concerned
504 shiten: defiled, foul
506 clennesse: purity
507 sette nat . . . to hyre: did not farm out
508 leet: left encombred: stuck
509 Seinte Poules: St. Paul's Cathedral
510 chaunterie: appointment as a chantry priest, to serve in a chapel endowed for prayers for the soul of its patron
511 bretherhed to been withholde: to be retained, hired, as its chaplain by a guild
513 myscarie: go wrong
516 despitous: scornful
517 daungerous: domineering digne: haughty
518 discreet: courteous
519 fairnesse: graciousness, kindness
522 heigh or lough estat: high or low rank
523 snybben: rebuke for the nonys: then, at that time
524 trowe: believe
525 waited after: expected reverence: ceremony
526 spiced: over-fastidious; see n.

But Cristes loore and his apostles twelve
He taughte; but first he folwed it hymselve.
With hym ther was a PLOWMAN, was his brother,
That hadde ylad of dong ful many a fother;
A trewe swynkere and a good was he, 531
Lyvynge in pees and parfit charitee.
God loved he best with al his hoole herte
At alle tymes, thogh him gamed or smerte,
And thanne his neighebor right as hymselve.
He wolde thresshe, and therto dyke and delve,
For Cristes sake, for every povre wight, 537
Withouten hire, if it lay in his myght.
His tithes payde he ful faire and wel,
Bothe of his propre swynk and his catel. 540
In a tabard he rood upon a mere.
Ther was also a REVE, and a MILLERE,
A SOMNOUR, and a PARDONER also,
A MAUNCIPLE, and myself—ther were namo.
The MILLERE was a stout carl for the nones;
Ful byg he was of brawn, and eek of bones. 546
That proved wel, for over al ther he cam,
At wrastlynge he wolde have alwey the ram.
He was short-sholdred, brood, a thikke knarre;
Ther was no dore that he nolde heve of harre,
Or breke it at a rennyng with his heed. 551
His berd as any sowe or fox was reed,
And therto brood, as though it were a spade.
Upon the cop right of his nose he hade
A werte, and theron stood a toft of herys, 555
Reed as the brustles of a sowes erys;
His nosethirles blake were and wyde.
A swerd and a bokeler bar he by his syde.

His mouth as greet was as a greet forneys.
He was a janglere and a goliardeys, 560
And that was moost of synne and harlotries.
Wel koude he stelen corn and tollen thries;
And yet he hadde a thombe of gold, pardee.
A whit cote and a blew hood wered he. 564
A baggepipe wel koude he blowe and sowne,
And therwithal he broghte us out of towne.
A gentil MAUNCIPLE was ther of a temple,
Of which achatours myghte take exemple
For to be wise in byynge of vitaille;
For wheither that he payde or took by taille,
Algate he wayted so in his achaat 571
That he was ay biforn and in good staat.
Now is nat that of God a ful fair grace
That swich a lewed mannes wit shal pace
The wisdom of an heep of lerned men? 575
Of maistres hadde he mo than thries ten,
That weren of lawe expert and curious,
Of which ther were a duszeyne in that hous
Worthy to been stywardes of rente and lond
Of any lord that is in Engelond, 580
To make hym lyve by his propre good
In honour dettelees (but if he were wood),
Or lyve as scarsly as hym list desire;
And able for to helpen al a shire
In any caas that myghte falle or happe. 585
And yet this Manciple sette hir aller cappe.
The REVE was a sclendre colerik man.
His berd was shave as ny as ever he kan;

530 Who had hauled (*ylad*) full many a cartload (*fother*) of dung (*dong*)
531 **swynkere:** worker
532 **pees:** peace
534 **thogh him gamed or smerte:** whether it pleased or pained him
535 **right as:** exactly as
536 **therto:** moreover **dyke and delve:** make ditches and dig
537 **wight:** person
538 **hire:** payment **myght:** power
540 **propre swynk:** own labor **catel:** possessions
541 **tabard:** workman's loose, sleeveless outer garment **mere:** mare
544 **namo:** no others
545 **carl:** fellow **for the nones:** indeed
546 **byg:** strong **brawn:** muscle
547 **over al:** wherever
548 **have alwey the ram:** always win the ram (given as a prize)
549 **short-sholdred:** stoutly built (with a thick neck) **thikke knarre:** stout fellow
550 **nolde** = *ne wolde*, would not **heve of harre:** lift off its hinges
551 **at a rennyng:** by running against it
554 **cop:** top
555 **werte:** wart **toft of herys:** tuft of hairs
556 **brustles:** bristles **sowes erys:** sow's ears
557 **nosethirles:** nostrils

559 **greet forneys:** large cauldron
560 **janglere:** a teller of dirty stories **goliardeys:** buffoon
561 **harlotries:** deeds of harlotry, obscenities
562 **stelen corn:** steal grain **tollen thries:** take toll (payment) three times
563 **thombe of gold:** golden thumb; an ironic reference to a proverb, with the implication that there are no honest millers **pardee:** indeed
564 **blew:** blue
565 **sowne:** play
567 **Mauncipie . . . of a temple:** business agent, purchaser of provisions for a *temple*, an Inn of Court (school of law)
568 **achatours:** buyers **myghte:** could
569 **byynge of vitaille:** purchase of victuals, provisions
570 **by taille:** on credit
571 **Algate:** always **wayted so in his achaat:** watched so carefully (for his opportunity) in his purchases
572 **ay biforn:** always ahead
574 **lewed:** uneducated **pace:** surpass
576 **mo:** more
577 **curious:** skillful
578 **duszeyne:** dozen
579 **stywardes:** stewards **rente:** income
581 **propre good:** own wealth
582 **dettelees:** without debts **but if he were wood:** unless he was crazy
583 **as scarsly as hym list desire:** as economically as he pleased
585 **caas:** case, circumstances **happe:** occur by chance
586 **sette hir aller cappe:** deceived them all
587 **Reve:** reeve, manager of an estate or farm **sclendre:** lean **colerik:** dominated by the humor choler
588 **ny:** close **kan:** can

His heer was by his erys ful round yshorn;
His top was dokked lyk a preest biforn. 590
Ful longe were his legges and ful lene,
Ylyk a staf; ther was no calf ysene.
Wel koude he kepe a gerner and a bynne;
Ther was noon auditour koude on him wynne.
Wel wiste he by the droghte and by the reyn
The yeldynge of his seed and of his greyn. 596
His lordes sheep, his neet, his dayerye,
His swyn, his hors, his stoor, and his pultrye
Was hoolly in this Reves governynge,
And by his covenant yaf the rekenynge, 600
Syn that his lord was twenty yeer of age.
Ther koude no man brynge hym in arrerage.
Ther nas baillif, ne hierde, nor oother hyne,
That he ne knew his sleighte and his covyne;
They were adrad of hym as of the deeth. 605
His wonyng was ful faire upon an heeth;
With grene trees yshadwed was his place.
He koude bettre than his lord purchace.
Ful riche he was astored pryvely.
His lord wel koude he plesen subtilly, 610
To yeve and lene hym of his owene good,
And have a thank, and yet a cote and hood.
In youthe he hadde lerned a good myster:
He was a wel good wrighte, a carpenter.
This Reve sat upon a ful good stot 615
That was al pomely grey and highte Scot.
A long surcote of pers upon he hade,
And by his syde he baar a rusty blade.
Of Northfolk was this Reve of which I telle,
Biside a toun men clepen Baldeswelle. 620
Tukked he was as is a frere aboute,
And evere he rood the hyndreste of oure route.

A SOMONOUR was ther with us in that place,
That hadde a fyr-reed cherubynnes face,
For saucefleem he was, with eyen narwe. 625
As hoot he was and lecherous as a sparwe,
With scalled browes blake and piled berd.
Of his visage children were aferd.
Ther nas quyk-silver, lytarge, ne brymstoon,
Boras, ceruce, ne oille of tartre noon, 630
Ne oynement that wolde clense and byte,
That hym myghte helpen of his whelkes white,
Nor of the knobbes sittynge on his chekes.
Wel loved he garleek, oynons, and eek lekes,
And for to drynken strong wyn, reed as blood; 635
Thanne wolde he speke and crie as he were wood.
And whan that he wel dronken hadde the wyn,
Thanne wolde he speke no word but Latyn.
A fewe termes hadde he, two or thre,
That he had lerned out of som decree— 640
No wonder is, he herde it al the day;
And eek ye knowen wel how that a jay
Kan clepen "Watte" as wel as kan the pope.
But whoso koude in oother thyng hym grope,
Thanne hadde he spent al his philosophie; 645
Ay *"Questio quid iuris"* wolde he crie.
He was a gentil harlot and a kynde;
A bettre felawe sholde men noght fynde.
He wolde suffre for a quart of wyn
A good felawe to have his concubyn 650
A twelf month, and excuse hym atte fulle;
Ful prively a fynch eek koude he pulle.

589 **erys:** ears **round yshorn:** closely cropped
590 **top:** top of his head **dokked:** cut short **biforn:** in the front
592 **Ylyk a staf:** like a stick
593 **gerner:** granary **bynne:** bin (for storing grain)
594 **on him wynne:** earn anything (by catching him out)
597 **neet:** cattle **dayerye:** herd of dairy cattle
598 **hors:** horses **stoor:** livestock **pultrye:** poultry
600 **covenant:** agreement, contract
601 **Syn that:** since **yeer:** years
602 **arrerage:** arrears
603 **nas** = *ne was,* was not **baillif:** manager of a farm **hierde:** herdsman **hyne:** servant
604 **sleighte:** trickery **covyne:** treachery
605 **adrad:** afraid **the deeth:** the plague (?); see n.
606 **wonyng:** dwelling
608 **purchace:** buy property
609 **riche:** richly **astored:** provided **pryvely:** secretly
610–12 He could please his lord by lending him some of his (the lord's) own possessions (i.e., what he had stolen from him) and thus obtain thanks and a reward besides (R.).
613 **myster:** craft
615 **stot:** horse
616 **pomely:** dapple **highte:** was called
617 **surcote:** outer coat **pers:** dark blue
620 **clepen:** call
621 **Tukked he was as is a frere:** having his long coat hitched up and held by a girdle (R.), like a friar
622 **hyndreste:** last **route:** company
623 **Somonour:** a server of summonses for an ecclesiastical court
624 **fyr-reed:** fire-red **cherubynnes:** cherub's
625 **saucefleem:** pimpled **eyen narwe:** swollen eyelids
627 **scalled:** infected with the scall, a skin disease; cf. Adam 3 **piled:** with hair fallen out
629–30 Mercury, lead monoxide (*lytarge*), sulphur (*brymstoon*), borax (*boras*), white lead (*ceruce*), and cream of tartar were all used in medicine.
631 **oynement:** ointment **byte:** burn
632 **whelkes:** pimples, pustules
633 **knobbes:** swellings
634 **garleek, oynons, lekes:** garlic, onions, leeks
636 **wood:** crazy
639 **termes:** technical terms
640 **decree:** decretal, text of ecclesiastical law
643 **clepen "Watte":** say "Walter"
644 **grope:** examine
644–45 But anyone who knew how to test him further found that to be the extent of his learning.
646 **Questio quid iuris:** The question is, what point of the law (applies)?
647 **harlot:** buffoon, jester
649 **suffre:** allow
651 **atte fulle:** completely
652 Secretly (discreetly) he also knew how to pluck a finch (trick or swindle someone).

And if he foond owher a good felawe,
He wolde techen him to have noon awe
In swich caas of the ercedekenes curs, 655
But if a mannes soule were in his purs;
For in his purs he sholde ypunysshed be.
"Purs is the ercedekenes helle," seyde he.
But wel I woot he lyed right in dede; 659
Of cursyng oghte ech gilty man him drede,
For curs wol slee right as assoillyng savith,
And also war hym of a *Significavit.*
In daunger hadde he at his owene gise
The yonge girles of the diocise,
And knew hir conseil, and was al hir reed. 665
A gerland hadde he set upon his heed,
As greet as it were for an ale-stake.
A bokeleer hadde he maad hym of a cake.
With hym ther rood a gentil PARDONER
Of Rouncivale, his freend and his compeer, 670
That streight was comen fro the court of Rome.
Ful loude he soong "Com hider, love, to me!"
This Somonour bar to hym a stif burdoun;
Was nevere trompe of half so greet a soun.
This Pardoner hadde heer as yelow as wex, 675
But smothe it heeng as dooth a strike of flex;
By ounces henge his lokkes that he hadde,
And therwith he his shuldres overspradde;
But thynne it lay, by colpons oon and oon.
But hood, for jolitee, wered he noon, 680
For it was trussed up in his walet.
Hym thoughte he rood al of the newe jet;
Dischevelee, save his cappe, he rood al bare.

653 owher: anywhere
655 caas: case, circumstances ercedekenes curs: excommunication
656 But if: unless
659 woot: know
660 cursyng: archdeacon's curse, excommunication him drede: be afraid
661 wol slee: will slay assoillyng: absolution
662 war hym: let him beware Significavit: order for imprisonment
663 In daunger: in (his) control at his owene gise: as he pleased
664 girles: young women or young people
665 conseil: secrets al hir reed: adviser of them all
666 gerland: wreath
667 ale-stake: sign of an alehouse
668 cake: loaf of bread
669 Pardoner: a seller of indulgences
670 Rouncivale: a hospital at Charing Cross compeer: companion
671 court of Rome: papal court
672 "Com hider . . .": Probably the refrain of a popular song
673 stif burdoun: strong bass
674 trompe: trumpet soun: sound
675 heer: hair wex: wax
676 strike: clump, hank flex: flax
677 ounces: small strands
679 colpons: strands oon and oon: one by one
680 for jolitee: to make an attractive appearance
681 trussed: packed walet: pouch, knapsack
682 Hym thoughte: it seemed to him, he thought al of the newe jet: in the very latest fashion
683 Dischevelee: with hair unbound, hanging loose save: save for, except

Swiche glarynge eyen hadde he as an hare.
A vernycle hadde he sowed upon his cappe.
His walet, biforn hym in his lappe, 686
Bretful of pardoun comen from Rome al hoot.
A voys he hadde as smal as hath a goot.
No berd hadde he, ne nevere sholde have;
As smothe it was as it were late shave. 690
I trowe he were a geldyng or a mare.
But of his craft, fro Berwyk into Ware
Ne was ther swich another pardoner.
For in his male he hadde a pilwe-beer,
Which that he seyde was Oure Lady veyl; 695
He seyde he hadde a gobet of the seyl
That Seint Peter hadde, whan that he wente
Upon the see, til Jhesu Crist hym hente.
He hadde a croys of latoun ful of stones,
And in a glas he hadde pigges bones. 700
But with thise relikes, whan that he fond
A povre person dwellynge upon lond,
Upon a day he gat hym moore moneye
Than that the person gat in monthes tweye;
And thus, with feyned flaterye and japes, 705
He made the person and the peple his apes.
But trewely to tellen atte laste,
He was in chirche a noble ecclesiaste.
Wel koude he rede a lessoun or a storie,
But alderbest he song an offertorie; 710
For wel he wiste, whan that song was songe,
He moste preche and wel affile his tonge
To wynne silver, as he ful wel koude;
Therefore he song the murierly and loude. 714
Now have I toold you soothly, in a clause,
Th'estaat, th'array, the nombre, and eek the cause

684 glarynge eyen: staring eyes
685 vernycle: Veronica, a reproduction of St. Veronica's cloth, bearing the imprint of Christ's face; a badge of the pilgrimage to Rome sowed: sewn
686 walet: pouch, knapsack lappe: large pocket (in a fold of his clothing)
687 Bretful: brimful pardoun: papal indulgences
688 voys: voice smal: high goot: goat
691 trowe: believe geldyng or a mare: a eunuch or a homosexual
692 fro Berwyk into Ware: from one end of England to the other
694 male: pouch, bag pilwe-beer: pillow-case
695 Oure Lady veyl: Our Lady's veil
696 gobet of the seyl: piece of the sail
698 see: sea til: until hente: took
699 croys: cross latoun: a brass-like alloy
702 person: parson upon lond: in the countryside
703 gat hym: got himself
704 tweye: two
705 japes: tricks
706 He made fools (*apes*) of the parson and the people.
707 atte laste: at the last, finally
709 lessoun, storie: liturgical texts, often from the Bible, read during Mass
710 alderbest: best of all offertorie: Offertory (said or sung when offerings are made at Mass)
712 affile his tonge: smooth his speech
714 song: sang murierly: more merrily
715 in a clause: briefly

Why that assembled was this compaignye
In Southwerk at this gentil hostelrye
That highte the Tabard, faste by the Belle.
But now is tyme to yow for to telle 720
How that we baren us that ilke nyght,
Whan we were in that hostelrie alyght;
And after wol I telle of our viage
And al the remenaunt of oure pilgrimage.
But first I pray yow, of youre curteisye, 725
That ye n'arette it nat my vileynye,
Thogh that I pleynly speke in this mateere,
To telle yow hir wordes and hir cheere,
Ne thogh I speke hir wordes proprely.
For this ye knowen al so wel as I: 730
Whoso shal telle a tale after a man,
He moot reherce as ny as evere he kan
Everich a word, if it be in his charge,
Al speke he never so rudeliche and large,
Or ellis he moot telle his tale untrewe, 735
Or feyne thyng, or fynde wordes newe.
He may nat spare, althogh he were his brother;
He moot as wel seye o word as another.
Crist spak hymself ful brode in hooly writ,
And wel ye woot no vileynye is it. 740
Eek Plato seith, whoso kan hym rede,
The wordes moote be cosyn to the dede.
Also I prey yow to foryeve it me,
Al have I nat set folk in hir degree 744
Heere in this tale, as that they sholde stonde.
My wit is short, ye may wel understonde.
Greet chiere made oure Hoost us everichon,
And to the soper sette he us anon.
He served us with vitaille at the beste; 749
Strong was the wyn, and wel to drynke us leste.
A semely man OURE HOOSTE was withalle
For to been a marchal in an halle.

719 faste by: close to Belle: a tavern
721 baren us: behaved ilke: same
722 alyght: arrived
723 wol: will viage: journey
726 n'arette it nat: do not attribute it to vileynye: rudeness
728 cheere: behavior
730 al so: as
731 Whoso: whoever shal: must
732 moot reherce: must repeat ny: close kan: knows how
733 Everich a: every in his charge: his responsibility
734 Al speke he: although he may speak rudeliche: ignorantly, crudely large: freely
735 moot: must untrewe: inaccurately
736 feyne thyng: make up things
738 o: one
739 brode: plainly
740 woot: know vileynye: rudeness
741 kan hym rede: knows how to interpret him
742 cosyn: cousin, closely related
744 Al: although degree: social rank
746 may: can
747 Greet chiere: good cheer us everichon: every one of us
749 vitaille: victuals, provisions at the beste: of the best sort
750 wel to drynke us leste: we were well pleased to drink
751 semely: seemly, impressive withalle: indeed
752 marchal: master of ceremonies

A large man he was with eyen stepe—
A fairer burgeys was ther noon in Chepe— 754
Boold of his speche, and wys, and wel ytaught,
And of manhod hym lakkede right naught.
Eek therto he was right a myrie man;
And after soper pleyen he bigan,
And spak of myrthe amonges othere thynges,
Whan that we hadde maad oure rekenynges, 760
And seyde thus: "Now, lordynges, trewely,
Ye been to me right welcome, hertely;
For by my trouthe, if that I shal nat lye,
I saugh nat this yeer so myrie a compaignye
Atones in this herberwe as is now. 765
Fayn wolde I doon yow myrthe, wiste I how.
And of a myrthe I am right now bythoght,
To doon yow ese, and it shal coste noght.
"Ye goon to Caunterbury—God yow speede,
The blisful martir quite yow youre meede! 770
And wel I woot, as ye goon by the weye,
Ye shapen yow to talen and to pleye;
For trewely, confort ne myrthe is noon
To ride by the weye doumb as a stoon;
And therfore wol I maken yow disport, 775
As I seyde erst, and doon yow som confort.
And if yow liketh alle by oon assent
For to stonden at my juggement,
And for to werken as I shal yow seye,
Tomorwe, whan ye riden by the weye, 780
Now, by my fader soule that is deed,
But ye be myrie, I wol yeve yow myn heed!
Hoold up youre hondes, withouten moore speche."
Oure conseil was nat longe for to seche. 784
Us thoughte it was noght worth to make it wys,
And graunted hym withouten moore avys,

753 eyen stepe: bright or large eyes; see n.
754 burgeys: citizen of a city (tradesman) Chepe: Cheapside
756 manhod: manliness, qualities proper to a good man right naught: nothing at all
758 pleyen: to play, provide amusement
760 maad oure rekenynges: paid our bills
763 trouthe: faith
764 saugh: saw
765 Atones: at one time herberwe: lodging
766 Fayn: gladly doon yow myrthe: make you happy wiste I: if I knew
767 am . . . bythoght: have thought
768 doon yow ese: give you pleasure
769 yow speede: give you success
770 quite yow youre meede: give you your reward
772 shapen yow: you intend talen: tell tales pleye: amuse yourselves
776 erst: before
777 yow liketh alle: it pleases all of you by oon assent: unanimously
779 werken: do
781 Now by the soul of my father, who is dead
782 But ye be: unless you are, if you are not
784 conseil: decision nat longe for to seche: i.e., ready at hand
785 worth: worthwhile make it wys: deliberate on it, raise difficulties
786 avys: discussion

And bad him seye his voirdit as hym leste.
"Lordynges," quod he, "now herkneth for the beste;
But taak it nought, I prey yow, in desdeyn. 789
This is the poynt, to speken short and pleyn,
That ech of yow, to shorte with oure weye,
In this viage shal telle tales tweye
To Caunterbury-ward, I mene it so,
And homward he shal tellen othere two,
Of aventures that whilom han bifalle. 795
And which of yow that bereth hym best of alle—
That is to seyn, that telleth in this caas
Tales of best sentence and moost solaas—
Shal have a soper at oure aller cost
Heere in this place, sittynge by this post, 800
Whan that we come agayn fro Caunterbury.
And for to make yow the moore mury,
I wol myselven goodly with yow ryde,
Right at myn owene cost, and be youre gyde;
And whoso wole my juggement withseye 805
Shal paye al that we spenden by the weye.
And if ye vouche sauf that it be so,
Tel me anon, withouten wordes mo,
And I wol erly shape me therfore."
This thyng was graunted, and oure othes swore 810
With ful glad herte, and preyden hym also
That he wolde vouche sauf for to do so,
And that he wolde been oure governour,
And of oure tales juge and reportour,
And sette a soper at a certeyn pris, 815
And we wol reuled been at his devys
In heigh and lough; and thus by oon assent
We been acorded to his juggement.
And therupon the wyn was fet anon;
We dronken, and to reste wente echon, 820
Withouten any lenger taryynge.

787 **voirdit:** verdict
788 **quod:** said **for the beste:** the best course of action
790 **short and pleyn:** clearly and briefly
791 **to shorte with:** in order (with which) to shorten
792 **shal:** must **tweye:** two
794 **othere two:** two others
795 **whilom:** once, in former times **han bifalle:** have happened
796 **bereth hym best:** does best
798 **sentence:** meaning, significance **solaas:** pleasure
799 **at oure aller cost:** at the cost of all of us
803 **goodly:** gladly
804 **gyde:** guide
805 **withseye:** gainsay
806 **Shal:** must
807 **vouche sauf:** grant, agree
808 **anon:** straightway **mo:** more
809 **shape me:** get ready
811 **preyden:** The understood subject is "we."
814 **juge:** judge **reportour:** record keeper
815 **pris:** price
816 **at his devys:** as he wishes
817 **In heigh and lough:** in every respect **by oon assent:** unanimously
819 **fet:** fetched
820 **echon:** each one

Amorwe, whan that day bigan to sprynge,
Up roos oure Hoost, and was oure aller cok,
And gadrede us togidre alle in a flok,
And forth we riden a litel moore than paas 825
Unto the Wateryng of Seint Thomas;
And there oure Hoost bigan his hors areste
And seyde, "Lordynges, herkneth, if yow leste.
Ye woot youre foreward, and I it yow recorde.
If even-song and morwe-song accorde, 830
Lat se now who shal telle the firste tale.
As evere mote I drynke wyn or ale,
Whoso be rebel to my juggement
Shal paye for al that by the wey is spent. 834
Now draweth cut, er that we ferrer twynne;
He which that hath the shorteste shal bigynne.
Sire Knyght," quod he, "my mayster and my lord,
Now draweth cut, for that is myn accord.
Cometh neer," quod he, "my lady Prioresse.
And ye, sire Clerk, lat be youre shamefastnesse,
Ne studieth noght; ley hond to, every man!"
Anon to drawen every wight bigan, 842
And shortly for to tellen as it was,
Were it by aventure, or sort, or cas,
The sothe is this: the cut fil to the Knyght, 845
Of which ful blithe and glad was every wyght,
And telle he moste his tale, as was resoun,
By foreward and by composicioun,
As ye han herd; what nedeth wordes mo?
And whan this goode man saugh that it was so,
As he that wys was and obedient 851
To kepe his foreward by his free assent,
He seyde, "Syn I shal bigynne the game,
What, welcome be the cut, a Goddes name!
Now lat us ryde, and herkneth what I seye." 855
And with that word we ryden forth oure weye,
And he bigan with right a myrie cheere
His tale anon, and seyde as ye may heere.

823 **oure aller cok:** rooster of us all (awakened us all)
825 **paas:** walk, the slowest gait of a horse
826 **the Wateryng of Seint Thomas:** a brook about two miles from London
827 **areste:** stop
828 **if yow leste:** if you please
829 **foreward:** agreement **recorde:** recall, bring to mind
830 *That is,* if you still agree this morning with what you said last night.
832 **mote:** may
835 **draweth cut:** draw lots **ferrer twynne:** depart further (from London)
838 **accord:** decision
839 **neer:** nearer
840 **lat be:** leave off **shamefastnesse:** modesty
844 **aventure, or sort, or cas:** chance, luck, or destiny
845 **sothe:** truth
847 **resoun:** reasonable, just
848 **composicioun:** agreement
853 **Syn:** since **shal:** must
854 **a:** in
857 **cheere:** expression

THE KNIGHT'S TALE

Heere bigynneth the Knyghtes Tale.

Iamque domos patrias, Scithice post aspera gentis
Prelia, laurigero, &c.

Whilom, as olde stories tellen us,
Ther was a duc that highte Theseus; 860
Of Atthenes he was lord and governour,
And in his tyme swich a conquerour
That gretter was ther noon under the sonne.
Ful many a riche contree hadde he wonne;
What with his wysdom and his chivalrie, 865
He conquered al the regne of Femenye,
That whilom was ycleped Scithia,
And weddede the queene Ypolita,
And broghte hire hoom with hym in his contree
With muchel glorie and greet solempnytee,
And eek hir yonge suster Emelye. 871
And thus with victorie and with melodye
Lete I this noble duc to Atthenes ryde,
And al his hoost in armes hym bisyde.
And certes, if it nere to long to heere, 875
I wolde have toold yow fully the manere
How wonnen was the regne of Femenye
By Theseus and by his chivalrye;
And of the grete bataille for the nones
Bitwixen Atthenes and Amazones; 880
And how asseged was Ypolita,
The faire, hardy queene of Scithia;
And of the feste that was at hir weddynge,
And of the tempest at hir hoom-comynge;
But al that thyng I moot as now forbere. 885
I have, God woot, a large feeld to ere,
And wayke been the oxen in my plough.
The remenant of the tale is long ynough.
I wol nat letten eek noon of this route;
Lat every felawe telle his tale aboute, 890
And lat se now who shal the soper wynne;
And ther I lefte, I wol ayeyn bigynne.
This duc, of whom I make mencioun,
Whan he was come almoost unto the toun,
In al his wele and in his mooste pride, 895
He was war, as he caste his eye aside,
Where that ther kneled in the heighe weye
A compaignye of ladyes, tweye and tweye,
Ech after oother clad in clothes blake;
But swich a cry and swich a wo they make 900
That in this world nys creature lyvynge
That herde swich another waymentynge;
And of this cry they nolde nevere stenten
Til they the reynes of his brydel henten.
"What folk been ye, that at myn hom-
comynge 905
Perturben so my feste with criynge?"
Quod Theseus. "Have ye so greet envye
Of myn honour, that thus compleyne and crye?
Or who hath yow mysboden or offended?
And telleth me if it may been amended, 910
And why that ye been clothed thus in blak."
The eldeste lady of hem alle spak,
Whan she hadde swowned with a deedly cheere,
That it was routhe for to seen and heere;
She seyde, "Lord, to whom Fortune hath yiven
Victorie, and as a conqueror to lyven, 916

Iamque domos, *etc.*: And now (Theseus, drawing nigh his) native land in laurelled car after fierce battling with the Scithian folk, etc. [is heralded by glad applause and the heaven-flung shout of the populace and the merry trump of warfare ended]. The lines are from Statius's *Thebaid.*
859 **Whilom:** once **stories:** histories
860 **duc:** duke **highte:** was called
866 **regne of Femenye:** country of the Amazons, land of women
870 **solempnytee:** splendor, ceremony
871 **suster:** sister
875 **certes:** certainly **nere** = *ne were,* were not **heere:** hear
878 **chivalrye:** knights
881 **asseged:** besieged
883 **feste:** festivity
884 **tempest:** storm
885 **moot as now forbere:** must now forgo
886 **ere:** plow
887 **wayke:** weak
889 **letten:** hinder **route:** company
890 **aboute:** in turn
892 **ther:** where **ayeyn:** again
895 **wele:** prosperity
896 **war:** aware
898 **tweye and tweye:** two by two
901 **nys** = *ne ys,* is not
902 **waymentynge:** lamentation
903 **nolde** = *ne wolde,* would not **stenten:** cease
904 **Til:** until **henten:** siezed
906 **Perturben:** disturb **feste:** festival
908 **compleyne:** lament
909 **mysboden:** injured
913 **swowned:** swooned, fainted **deedly cheere:** deathlike look
914 **routhe:** pity, a sorrowful matter
915 **yiven:** given

Nat greveth us youre glorie and youre honour,
But we biseken mercy and socour.
Have mercy on oure wo and oure distresse!
Som drope of pitee, thurgh thy gentillesse,
Upon us wrecched wommen lat thou falle, 921
For, certes, lord, ther is noon of us alle
That she ne hath been a duchesse or a queene.
Now be we caytyves, as it is wel seene,
Thanked be Fortune and hire false wheel, 925
That noon estaat assureth to be weel.
And certes, lord, to abyden youre presence,
Heere in this temple of the goddesse Clemence
We han ben waitynge al this fourtenyght.
Now help us, lord, sith it is in thy myght. 930
"I, wrecche, which that wepe and wayle thus,
Was whilom wyf to kyng Cappaneus,
That starf at Thebes — cursed be that day! —
And alle we that been in this array
And maken al this lamentacioun, 935
We losten alle oure housbondes at that toun,
Whil that the seege theraboute lay.
And yet now the olde Creon — weylaway! —
That lord is now of Thebes the citee,
Fulfild of ire and of iniquitee, 940
He, for despit and for his tirannye,
To do the dede bodyes vileynye
Of alle oure lordes whiche that been yslawe,
Hath alle the bodyes on an heep ydrawe,
And wol nat suffren hem, by noon assent, 945
Neither to been yburyed nor ybrent,
But maketh houndes ete hem in despit."
And with that word, withouten moore respit,
They fillen gruf and criden pitously, 949
"Have on us wrecched wommen som mercy,
And lat oure sorwe synken in thyn herte."
This gentil duc doun from his courser sterte
With herte pitous, whan he herde hem speke.
Hym thoughte that his herte wolde breke, 954
Whan he saugh hem so pitous and so maat,
That whilom weren of so greet estaat;
And in his armes he hem alle up hente,
And hem conforteth in ful good entente,
And swoor his ooth, as he was trewe knyght,
He wolde doon so ferforthly his myght 960
Upon the tiraunt Creon hem to wreke
That al the peple of Grece sholde speke
How Creon was of Theseus yserved
As he that hadde his deeth ful wel deserved.
And right anoon, withouten moore abood, 965
His baner he desplayeth, and forth rood
To Thebes-ward, and al his hoost biside.
No neer Atthenes wolde he go ne ride,
Ne take his ese fully half a day,
But onward on his wey that nyght he lay, 970
And sente anon Ypolita the queene,
And Emelye, hir yonge suster sheene,
Unto the toun of Atthenes to dwelle,
And forth he rit; ther is namoore to telle.
The rede statue of Mars, with spere and targe, 975
So shyneth in his white baner large
That alle the feeldes glyteren up and doun;
And by his baner born is his penoun
Of gold ful riche, in which ther was ybete 979
The Mynotaur, which that he wan in Crete.
Thus rit this duc, thus rit this conquerour,
And in his hoost of chivalrie the flour,
Til that he cam to Thebes and alighte
Faire in a feeld, ther as he thoughte to fighte.
But shortly for to speken of this thyng, 985
With Creon, which that was of Thebes kyng,
He faught, and slough hym manly as a knyght
In pleyn bataille, and putte the folk to flyght;
And by assaut he wan the citee after,

917 **Nat greveth us:** does not grieve us
918 **biseken:** beseech, ask for
920 **thurgh:** through, because of
924 **caytyves:** miserable wretches
926 **weel:** well
927 **abyden:** wait for
929 **han ben:** have been
930 **sith:** since
933 **starf:** died
934 **array:** state
937 **seege:** siege
938 **weylaway:** alas
941 **despit:** spite
942 **vileynye:** shame, dishonor
943 **yslawe:** slain
944 **on an heep ydrawe:** dragged in a heap
945 **suffren hem:** allow them
946 **yburyed nor ybrent:** buried nor burned, cremated
947 **in despit:** in spite
948 **respit:** delay, respite
949 **fillen gruf:** fell face down
951 **sorwe:** sorrow
952 **gentil:** noble **courser:** charger, war-horse **sterte:** leapt
953 **pitous:** compassionate
955 **pitous:** pitiful **maat:** dejected
956 **whilom:** once, formerly **so greet estaat:** such high rank
957 **hem alle up hente:** picked them all up
958 **in ful good entente:** with a good will, kindly
959 **trewe:** faithful
960 **so ferforthly:** so completely
961 **wreke:** avenge
963 **of Theseus yserved:** served, treated by Theseus
965 **right anoon:** immediately **abood:** delay
967 **To Thebes-ward:** toward Thebes
968 **neer:** nearer **go ne ride:** walk nor ride
970 **on his wey that nyght he lay:** he spent the night on the road
972 **sheene:** bright
974 **rit** = *rideth,* rides
975 **targe:** shield
977 **feeldes glyteren up and doun:** fields glitter all about
979 **ybete:** embroidered
980 **Mynotaur:** the monster slain by Theseus; see LGW 1886–2227. **wan:** conquered
984 **thoughte:** intended
988 **pleyn bataille:** open battle
989 **assaut:** assault

And rente adoun bothe wall and sparre and rafter;
And to the ladyes he restored agayn 991
The bones of hir freendes that were slayn,
To doon obsequies, as was tho the gyse.
But it were al to longe for to devyse
The grete clamour and the waymentynge 995
That the ladyes made at the brennynge
Of the bodies, and the grete honour
That Theseus, the noble conquerour,
Dooth to the ladyes, whan they from hym wente;
But shortly for to telle is myn entente. 1000

Whan that this worthy duc, this Theseus,
Hath Creon slayn and wonne Thebes thus,
Stille in that feeld he took al nyght his reste,
And dide with al the contree as hym leste.

To ransake in the taas of bodyes dede, 1005
Hem for to strepe of harneys and of wede,
The pilours diden bisynesse and cure
After the bataille and disconfiture.
And so bifel that in the taas they founde, 1009
Thurgh-girt with many a grevous blody wounde,
Two yonge knyghtes liggynge by and by,
Bothe in oon armes, wroght ful richely,
Of whiche two Arcita highte that oon,
And that oother knyght highte Palamon.
Nat fully quyke, ne fully dede they were, 1015
But by hir cote-armures and by hir gere
The heraudes knewe hem best in special
As they that weren of the blood roial
Of Thebes, and of sustren two yborn.
Out of the taas the pilours han hem torn, 1020
And han hem caried softe unto the tente
Of Theseus; and he ful soone hem sente
To Atthenes, to dwellen in prisoun
Perpetuelly — he nolde no raunsoun. 1024

And whan this worthy duc hath thus ydon,
He took his hoost, and hoom he rit anon
With laurer crowned as a conquerour;
And ther he lyveth in joye and in honour
Terme of his lyf; what nedeth wordes mo?
And in a tour, in angwissh and in wo, 1030
This Palamon and his felawe Arcite
For everemoore; ther may no gold hem quite.

This passeth yeer by yeer and day by day,
Till it fil ones, in a morwe of May,
That Emelye, that fairer was to sene 1035
Than is the lylie upon his stalke grene,
And fressher than the May with floures newe —
For with the rose colour stroof hire hewe,
I noot which was the fyner of hem two —
Er it were day, as was hir wone to do, 1040
She was arisen and al redy dight,
For May wole have no slogardie anyght.
The sesoun priketh every gentil herte,
And maketh it out of his slep to sterte,
And seith "Arys, and do thyn observaunce."
This maked Emelye have remembraunce 1046
To doon honour to May, and for to ryse.
Yclothed was she fressh, for to devyse:
Hir yelow heer was broyded in a tresse
Bihynde hir bak, a yerde long, I gesse. 1050
And in the gardyn, at the sonne upriste,
She walketh up and doun, and as hire liste
She gadereth floures, party white and rede,
To make a subtil gerland for hire hede;
And as an aungel hevenysshly she soong. 1055
The grete tour, that was so thikke and stroong,
Which of the castel was the chief dongeoun
(Ther as the knyghtes weren in prisoun
Of which I tolde yow and tellen shal),
Was evene joynant to the gardyn wal 1060
Ther as this Emelye hadde hir pleyynge.

990 **rente adoun:** tore down **sparre:** beam
992 **freendes:** husbands
993 **tho the gyse:** then the custom
994 **devyse:** tell
995 **waymentynge:** lamentation
996 **brennynge:** burning
1000 **entente:** intention
1004 **as hym leste:** as he pleased
1005 **ransake:** search **taas:** heap
1006 **strepe:** strip **harneys:** armor **wede:** clothing
1007 **pilours:** scavengers **diden bisynesse and cure:** took great pains, worked hard
1008 **disconfiture:** defeat
1010 **Thurgh-girt:** pierced through
1011 **liggynge by and by:** lying side by side
1012 **in oon armes:** with the same heraldic device
1015 **quyke:** living
1016 **cote-armures:** tunics embroidered with heraldic devices, worn over the armor **gere:** armor
1017 **heraudes:** heralds **in special:** in particular
1019 **sustren:** sisters
1021 **softe:** gently
1024 **nolde no raunsoun:** would not accept any ransom
1026 **rit** = *rideth,* rides
1027 **laurer:** laurel
1029 **Terme:** for the duration
1030 **tour:** tower
1032 **may . . . hem quite:** can ransom them
1034 **fil ones:** once happened
1035 **to sene:** to be seen, to look upon
1038 **stroof hire hewe:** her hue strove (vied with)
1039 **noot** = *ne woot,* do not know
1040 **wone:** custom, wont
1041 **dight:** prepared
1042 **slogardie:** sluggishness, laziness **anyght:** at night
1043 **sesoun:** season **priketh:** spurs, incites
1044 **sterte:** move suddenly, awake
1049 **broyded:** braided
1050 **yerde:** yard
1051 **sonne upriste:** rising of the sun
1052 **hire liste:** it pleased her, she liked
1054 **subtil gerland:** ingenious, skillfully made, wreath
1055 **hevenysshly:** in a heavenly manner
1057 **dongeoun:** keep, main fortification of a castle
1060 **evene joynant:** just next to
1061 **pleyynge:** amusement

Bright was the sonne and cleer that morwenynge,
And Palamoun, this woful prisoner,
As was his wone, by leve of his gayler,
Was risen and romed in a chambre an heigh,
In which he al the noble citee seigh, 1066
And eek the gardyn, ful of braunches grene,
Ther as this fresshe Emelye the shene
Was in hire walk, and romed up and doun.
This sorweful prisoner, this Palamoun, 1070
Goth in the chambre romynge to and fro
And to hymself compleynynge of his wo.
That he was born, ful ofte he seyde, "allas!"
And so bifel, by aventure or cas, 1074
That thurgh a wyndow, thikke of many a barre
Of iren greet and square as any sparre,
He cast his eye upon Emelya,
And therwithal he bleynte and cride, "A!"
As though he stongen were unto the herte.
And with that cry Arcite anon up sterte 1080
And seyde, "Cosyn myn, what eyleth thee,
That art so pale and deedly on to see?
Why cridestow? Who hath thee doon offence?
For Goddes love, taak al in pacience
Oure prisoun, for it may noon oother be. 1085
Fortune hath yeven us this adversitee.
Som wikke aspect or disposicioun
Of Saturne, by som constellacioun,
Hath yeven us this, although we hadde it sworn;
So stood the hevene whan that we were born. 1090
We moste endure it; this is the short and playn."
This Palamon answerde and seyde agayn,
"Cosyn, for sothe, of this opinioun
Thow hast a veyn ymaginacioun.
This prison caused me nat for to crye, 1095
But I was hurt right now thurghout myn ye
Into myn herte, that wol my bane be.
The fairnesse of that lady that I see
Yond in the gardyn romen to and fro
Is cause of al my criyng and my wo. 1100
I noot wher she be womman or goddesse,
But Venus is it soothly, as I gesse."
And therwithal on knees doun he fil,
And seyde, "Venus, if it be thy wil
Yow in this gardyn thus to transfigure 1105
Bifore me, sorweful, wrecched creature,
Out of this prisoun help that we may scapen.
And if so be my destynee be shapen
By eterne word to dyen in prisoun,
Of oure lynage have som compassioun, 1110
That is so lowe ybroght by tirannye."
And with that word Arcite gan espye
Wher as this lady romed to and fro,
And with that sighte hir beautee hurte hym so,
That, if that Palamon was wounded sore, 1115
Arcite is hurt as muche as he, or moore.
And with a sigh he seyde pitously,
"The fresshe beautee sleeth me sodeynly
Of hire that rometh in the yonder place;
And but I have hir mercy and hir grace, 1120
That I may seen hire atte leeste weye,
I nam but deed; ther nis namoore to seye."
This Palamon, whan he tho wordes herde,
Dispitously he looked and answerde, 1124
"Wheither seistow this in ernest or in pley?"
"Nay," quod Arcite, "in ernest, by my fey!
God helpe me so, me list ful yvele pleye."
This Palamon gan knytte his browes tweye.
"It nere," quod he, "to thee no greet honour
For to be fals, ne for to be traitour 1130
To me, that am thy cosyn and thy brother
Ysworn ful depe, and ech of us til oother,
That nevere, for to dyen in the peyne,
Til that the deeth departe shal us tweyne,
Neither of us in love to hyndre oother, 1135
Ne in noon oother cas, my leeve brother,

1064 **by leve of his gayler:** with permission of his jailer
1065 **an heigh:** on high
1066 **seigh:** saw
1068 **shene:** bright
1072 **compleynynge of:** lamenting
1074 And so it happened by chance or accident
1075 **thurgh:** through **thikke of:** thick(ly set) with
1076 **sparre:** wooden beam
1078 **bleynte:** turned pale
1080 **sterte:** leapt up
1081 **Cosyn:** kinsman **eyleth:** ails
1082 **on to see:** to look upon
1083 **cridestow** = *cridest thou*, did you cry out
1087–89 Some evil aspect or disposition of the planet Saturn, by arrangement of the heavenly bodies (*constellacioun*) has given us this (fate, which we must suffer) although we had sworn the contrary (would befall).
1091 **this is:** pronounced as one syllable
1092 **agayn:** in reply
1094 **veyn ymaginacioun:** idle, foolish conception
1096 **ye:** eye
1097 **bane:** killer
1101 **noot** = *ne woot*, know not **wher:** whether
1107 **scapen:** escape
1108 **shapen:** ordained
1110 **lynage:** noble birth
1112 **gan espye:** did espy, saw
1118 **sodeynly:** suddenly
1120 **but:** unless
1121 **atte leeste weye:** at least
1122 **I nam but deed:** I am as good as dead
1123 **tho:** those
1124 **Dispitously:** angrily
1125 **Wheither seistow:** tell me whether you say (*seistow* = *seiest thou*) this
1126 **fey:** faith
1127 **me list ful yvele pleye:** I have very little desire to play
1129 **nere** = *ne were*, would not be (subj.)
1131–32 **brother Ysworn:** sworn brother
1132 **ful depe:** very deeply, sincerely **til:** to
1133 Never, though we had to die by torture (*in the peyne*)
1136 **leeve:** dear

But that thou sholdest trewely forthren me
In every cas, as I shal forthren thee —
This was thyn ooth, and myn also, certeyn;
I woot right wel, thou darst it nat withseyn.
Thus artow of my conseil, out of doute, 1141
And now thow woldest falsly been aboute
To love my lady, whom I love and serve,
And evere shal til that myn herte sterve.
Nay, certes, false Arcite, thow shalt nat so.
I loved hire first, and tolde thee my wo 1146
As to my conseil and my brother sworn
To forthre me, as I have toold biforn.
For which thou art ybounden as a knyght
To helpen me, if it lay in thy myght, 1150
Or elles artow fals, I dar wel seyn."
This Arcite ful proudly spak ageyn:
"Thow shalt," quod he, "be rather fals than I;
And thou art fals, I telle thee outrely,
For paramour I loved hire first er thow. 1155
What wiltow seyen? Thou woost nat yet now
Wheither she be a womman or goddesse!
Thyn is affeccioun of hoolynesse,
And myn is love as to a creature;
For which I tolde thee myn aventure 1160
As to my cosyn and my brother sworn.
I pose that thow lovedest hire biforn;
Wostow nat wel the olde clerkes sawe,
That 'who shal yeve a lovere any lawe?'
Love is a gretter lawe, by my pan, 1165
Than may be yeve to any erthely man;
And therfore positif lawe and swich decree
Is broken al day for love in ech degree.
A man moot nedes love, maugree his heed;
He may nat fleen it, thogh he sholde be deed,
Al be she mayde, or wydwe, or elles wyf. 1171
And eek it is nat likly al thy lyf
To stonden in hir grace; namoore shal I;
For wel thou woost thyselven, verraily,

1137 **forthren:** help
1140 **darst it nat withseyn:** dare not deny it
1141 Thus you are (*artow* = *art thou*, you are) in my confidence without doubt (*out of doute*); i.e., you know of my love.
1144 **sterve:** die
1152 **ageyn:** in return
1154 **outrely:** utterly, flatly
1155 **paramour:** mistress, human love
1156 **woost:** know
1158 **affeccioun of hoolynesse:** religious feeling, love of a deity
1162 **pose:** posit, suppose for the sake of argument
1163 **clerkes:** scholars' **sawe:** saying
1165 **by my pan:** by my skull
1167 **positif lawe:** man-made, legislated (as opposed to natural) law
1168 **al day:** daily
1169 **moot nedes:** must necessarily **maugree his heed:** despite his care, in spite of all he could do about it
1170 **fleen:** escape
1171 **Al be she:** whether she be
1173 **stonden in hir grace:** be in her good favor
1174 **verraily:** truly

That thou and I be dampned to prisoun 1175
Perpetuelly; us gayneth no raunsoun.
We stryve as dide the houndes for the boon;
They foughte al day, and yet hir part was noon.
Ther cam a kyte, whil that they were so wrothe,
And baar awey the boon bitwixe hem bothe.
And therfore, at the kynges court, my brother,
Ech man for hymself, ther is noon oother. 1182
Love, if thee list, for I love and ay shal;
And soothly, leeve brother, this is al.
Heere in this prisoun moote we endure, 1185
And everich of us take his aventure."
Greet was the strif and long bitwix hem tweye,
If that I hadde leyser for to seye;
But to th'effect. It happed on a day,
To telle it yow as shortly as I may, 1190
A worthy duc that highte Perotheus,
That felawe was unto duc Theseus
Syn thilke day that they were children lite,
Was come to Atthenes his felawe to visite,
And for to pleye as he was wont to do; 1195
For in this world he loved no man so,
And he loved hym als tendrely agayn.
So wel they lovede, as olde bookes sayn,
That whan that oon was deed, soothly to telle,
His felawe wente and soughte hym doun in helle —
But of that storie list me nat to write. 1201
Duc Perotheus loved wel Arcite,
And hadde hym knowe at Thebes yeer by yere,
And finally at requeste and preyere
Of Perotheus, withouten any raunsoun, 1205
Duc Theseus hym leet out of prisoun
Frely to goon wher that hym liste over al,
In swich a gyse as I you tellen shal.
This was the forward, pleynly for t'endite,
Bitwixen Theseus and hym Arcite: 1210
That if so were that Arcite were yfounde
Evere in his lif, by day or nyght, oo stounde
In any contree of this Theseus,
And he were caught, it was acorded thus,
That with a swerd he sholde lese his heed.

1175 **dampned:** condemned
1176 **us gayneth no raunsoun:** no ransom avails (can help) us
1179 **wrothe:** angry
1182 **noon oother:** no other (way)
1183 **ay:** always
1184 **leeve:** dear
1186 **everich:** each
1189 **th'effect:** the point
1193 **Syn:** since **thilke:** that **lite:** little
1203 **yeer by yere:** year after year, for a long time
1208 **gyse:** manner
1209 **forward:** agreement
1210 **hym Arcite:** this Arcite
1212 **oo stounde:** at one (i.e., any) moment
1215 **lese:** lose

Ther nas noon oother remedie ne reed; 1216
But taketh his leve, and homward he him spedde.
Lat hym be war! His nekke lith to wedde.
How greet a sorwe suffreth now Arcite!
The deeth he feeleth thurgh his herte smyte;
He wepeth, wayleth, crieth pitously; 1221
To sleen hymself he waiteth prively.
He seyde, "Allas that day that I was born!
Now is my prisoun worse than biforn;
Now is me shape eternally to dwelle 1225
Noght in purgatorie, but in helle.
Allas, that evere knew I Perotheus!
For elles hadde I dwelled with Theseus,
Yfetered in his prisoun everemo. 1229
Thanne hadde I been in blisse and nat in wo.
Oonly the sighte of hire whom that I serve,
Though that I nevere hir grace may deserve,
Wolde han suffised right ynough for me.
O deere cosyn Palamon," quod he,
"Thyn is the victorie of this aventure. 1235
Ful blisfully in prison maistow dure —
In prison? Certes nay, but in paradys!
Wel hath Fortune yturned thee the dys,
That hast the sighte of hire, and I th'absence.
For possible is, syn thou hast hire presence,
And art a knyght, a worthy and an able, 1241
That by som cas, syn Fortune is chaungeable,
Thow maist to thy desir somtyme atteyne.
But I, that am exiled and bareyne
Of alle grace, and in so greet dispeir 1245
That ther nys erthe, water, fir, ne eir,
Ne creature that of hem maked is,
That may me helpe or doon confort in this,
Wel oughte I sterve in wanhope and distresse.
Farwel my lif, my lust, and my gladnesse! 1250
"Allas, why pleynen folk so in commune
On purveiaunce of God, or of Fortune,
That yeveth hem ful ofte in many a gyse
Wel bettre than they kan hemself devyse?
Som man desireth for to han richesse, 1255

1216 reed: course of action
1217 him spedde: hurried
1218 lith to wedde: lies as a pledge
1222 sleen: slay, kill waiteth: awaits an occasion prively: secretly
1225 is me shape: I am destined
1236 maistow dure: you can live
1237 Certes nay: certainly not
1238 yturned thee the dys: cast the dice for you
1242 by som cas, syn: by some chance, since
1244 bareyne: barren
1246 nys = *ne ys,* is not erthe, water, fir, ne eir: earth, water, fire, nor air (the four elements; i.e., all creation)
1249 sterve: die wanhope: despair
1250 lust: delight
1251 pleynen: complain
1252 purveiaunce: foresight, providence
1253 yeveth: gives
1254 devyse: imagine

That cause is of his mordre or greet siknesse;
And som man wolde out of his prisoun fayn,
That in his hous is of his meynee slayn.
Infinite harmes been in this mateere. 1259
We witen nat what thing we preyen heere;
We faren as he that dronke is as a mous.
A dronke man woot wel he hath an hous,
But he noot which the righte wey is thider,
And to a dronke man the wey is slider.
And certes, in this world so faren we; 1265
We seken faste after felicitee,
But we goon wrong ful often, trewely.
Thus may we seyen alle, and namely I,
That wende and hadde a greet opinioun
That if I myghte escapen from prisoun, 1270
Thanne hadde I been in joye and parfit heele,
Ther now I am exiled fro my wele.
Syn that I may nat seen you, Emelye,
I nam but deed; ther nys no remedye."
Upon that oother syde Palamon, 1275
Whan that he wiste Arcite was agon,
Swich sorwe he maketh that the grete tour
Resouneth of his youlyng and clamour.
The pure fettres on his shynes grete
Weren of his bittre, salte teeres wete. 1280
"Allas," quod he, "Arcita, cosyn myn,
Of al oure strif, God woot, the fruyt is thyn.
Thow walkest now in Thebes at thy large,
And of my wo thow yevest litel charge. 1284
Thou mayst, syn thou hast wisdom and manhede,
Assemblen alle the folk of oure kynrede,
And make a werre so sharp on this citee
That by som aventure or some tretee
Thow mayst have hire to lady and to wyf
For whom that I moste nedes lese my lyf. 1290
For, as by wey of possibilitee,
Sith thou art at thy large, of prisoun free,

1256 mordre: murder
1257 wolde . . . fayn: eagerly desires (to be)
1258 of his meynee: by the members of his household
1260 witen: know
1261 faren: act
1263 thider: thither, there
1264 slider: slippery
1265 certes: certainly
1269 wende: supposed
1271 heele: well-being
1272 wele: prosperity
1274 I nam but deed: I am as good as dead nys = *ne ys.* is not
1278 Resouneth of: resounded with youlyng: howling
1279 pure fettres: very fetters grete: large (probably to be construed with *fetters*)
1283 at thy large: freely
1284 yevest litel charge: give little care
1286 kynrede: family
1287 werre: war
1289 to: as
1290 moste nedes lese: must necessarily lose

And art a lord, greet is thyn avauntage
Moore than is myn, that sterve here in a cage.
For I moot wepe and wayle, whil I lyve, 1295
With al the wo that prison may me yive,
And eek with peyne that love me yeveth also,
That doubleth al my torment and my wo."
Therwith the fyr of jalousie up sterte 1299
Withinne his brest, and hente him by the herte
So woodly that he lyk was to biholde
The boxtree or the asshen dede and colde.
Thanne seyde he, "O crueel goddes that governe
This world with byndyng of youre word eterne,
And writen in the table of atthamaunt 1305
Youre parlement and youre eterne graunt,
What is mankynde moore unto you holde
Than is the sheep that rouketh in the folde?
For slayn is man right as another beest,
And dwelleth eek in prison and arreest, 1310
And hath siknesse and greet adversitee,
And ofte tymes giltelees, pardee.
"What governance is in this prescience,
That giltelees tormenteth innocence? 1314
And yet encresseth this al my penaunce,
That man is bounden to his observaunce,
For Goddes sake, to letten of his wille,
Ther as a beest may al his lust fulfille.
And whan a beest is deed he hath no peyne;
But man after his deeth moot wepe and pleyne, 1320
Though in this world he have care and wo.
Withouten doute it may stonden so.
The answere of this lete I to dyvynys,
But wel I woot that in this world greet pyne ys.
Allas, I se a serpent or a theef, 1325
That many a trewe man hath doon mescheef,
Goon at his large, and where hym list may turne.

1293 avauntage: advantage
1301 woodly: madly, passionately lyk was to biholde: to look upon was like
1304 eterne: eternal
1305 table of atthamaunt: tablet of adamant (hardest of stones)
1306 parlement: decision graunt: decree
1307 holde: obligated
1308 rouketh: cowers
1310 arreest: restraint
1312 giltelees: innocent pardee: indeed
1313–14 What (sort of) governance is there in this (providential) foreknowledge (*prescience*) that (thus) torments guiltless innocence?
1315 penaunce: suffering
1316 observaunce: duty
1317 to letten of his wille: to refrain from his desire (R.)
1318 Ther as: whereas lust: desire
1320 pleyne: lament
1323 lete: leave dyvynys: theologians
1324 pyne: pain
1326 trewe: honest mescheef: wrong
1327 at his large: freely

But I moot been in prisoun thurgh Saturne,
And eek thurgh Juno, jalous and eek wood,
That hath destroyed wel ny al the blood 1330
Of Thebes with his waste walles wyde;
And Venus sleeth me on that oother syde
For jalousie and fere of hym Arcite."
Now wol I stynte of Palamon a lite,
And lete hym in his prisoun stille dwelle, 1335
And of Arcita forth I wol yow telle.
The somer passeth, and the nyghtes longe
Encressen double wise the peynes stronge
Bothe of the lovere and the prisoner.
I noot which hath the wofuller mester. 1340
For, shortly for to seyn, this Palamoun
Perpetuelly is dampned to prisoun,
In cheynes and in fettres to been deed;
And Arcite is exiled upon his heed
For everemo, as out of that contree, 1345
Ne nevere mo ne shal his lady see.
Yow loveres axe I now this questioun:
Who hath the worse, Arcite or Palamoun?
That oon may seen his lady day by day,
But in prison he moot dwelle alway; 1350
That oother wher hym list may ride or go,
But seen his lady shal he nevere mo.
Now demeth as yow liste, ye that kan,
For I wol telle forth as I bigan. 1354

Explicit prima pars

Sequitur pars secunda

Whan that Arcite to Thebes comen was,
Ful ofte a day he swelte and seyde "Allas!"
For seen his lady shal he nevere mo.
And shortly to concluden al his wo,
So muche sorwe hadde nevere creature 1359
That is, or shal, whil that the world may dure.
His slep, his mete, his drynke, is hym biraft,
That lene he wex and drye as is a shaft;
His eyen holwe and grisly to biholde,
His hewe falow and pale as asshen colde,
And solitarie he was and evere allone, 1365

1328 thurgh: through, because of
1331 waste: wasted, devastated
1333 fere: fear hym Arcite: this Arcite
1334 stynte of: cease (speaking) of
1340 mester: occupation
1344 upon his heed: on threat of losing his head
1345 as out of: (to be) out of
1347 questioun: logical problem (of love); see n.
1351 ride or go: ride or walk
1353 demeth: judge kan: know how
Explicit, *etc.*: Here ends the first part. Sequitur, *etc.*: Here follows the second part.
1356 swelte: grew faint
1360 dure: last
1361 biraft: taken away from
1362 lene he wex: he became lean shaft: stick
1363 holwe: sunken
1364 falow: sickly yellow

And waillynge al the nyght, makynge his mone;
And if he herde song or instrument,
Thanne wolde he wepe, he myghte nat be stent.
So feble eek were his spiritz, and so lowe, 1369
And chaunged so, that no man koude knowe
His speche nor his voys, though men it herde.
And in his geere for al the world he ferde
Nat oonly lik the loveris maladye
Of Hereos, but rather lyk manye,
Engendred of humour malencolik 1375
Biforen, in his celle fantastik.
And shortly, turned was al up so doun
Bothe habit and eek disposicioun
Of hym, this woful lovere daun Arcite.
What sholde I al day of his wo endite? 1380
Whan he endured hadde a yeer or two
This crueel torment and this peyne and wo,
At Thebes, in his contree, as I seyde,
Upon a nyght in sleep as he hym leyde, 1384
Hym thoughte how that the wynged god Mercurie
Biforn hym stood and bad hym to be murie.
His slepy yerde in hond he bar uprighte;
An hat he werede upon his heris brighte.
Arrayed was this god, as he took keep,
As he was whan that Argus took his sleep; 1390
And seyde hym thus: "To Atthenes shaltou wende,
Ther is thee shapen of thy wo an ende."
And with that word Arcite wook and sterte.
"Now trewely, hou soore that me smerte," 1394
Quod he, "to Atthenes right now wol I fare,
Ne for the drede of deeth shal I nat spare
To se my lady, that I love and serve.
In hire presence I recche nat to sterve."
And with that word he caughte a greet mirour, 1399

And saugh that chaunged was al his colour,
And saugh his visage al in another kynde.
And right anon it ran hym in his mynde,
That, sith his face was so disfigured
Of maladye the which he hadde endured,
He myghte wel, if that he bar hym lowe, 1405
Lyve in Atthenes everemoore unknowe,
And seen his lady wel ny day by day.
And right anon he chaunged his array,
And cladde hym as a povre laborer,
And al allone, save oonly a squier 1410
That knew his privetee and al his cas,
Which was disgised povrely as he was,
To Atthenes is he goon the nexte way.
And to the court he wente upon a day,
And at the gate he profreth his servyse 1415
To drugge and drawe, what so men wol devyse.
And shortly of this matere for to seyn,
He fil in office with a chamberleyn
The which that dwellynge was with Emelye,
For he was wys and koude soone espye, 1420
Of every servaunt, which that serveth here.
Wel koude he hewen wode, and water bere,
For he was yong and myghty for the nones,
And therto he was long and big of bones
To doon that any wight kan hym devyse. 1425
A yeer or two he was in this servyse,
Page of the chambre of Emelye the brighte,
And Philostrate he seyde that he highte.
But half so wel biloved a man as he
Ne was ther nevere in court of his degree;
He was so gentil of condicioun 1431
That thurghout al the court was his renoun.
They seyden that it were a charitee
That Theseus wolde enhauncen his degree,
And putten hym in worshipful servyse, 1435

1366 **makynge his mone:** lamenting
1368 **stent:** stopped
1371 **voys:** voice
1372 **geere:** behavior **ferde:** behaved
1373–74 **loveris maladye Of Hereos:** love-sickness; see n. to lines 1355–76.
1374 **manye:** mania
1375 **humour malencolik:** melancholy humor
1376 **celle fantastik:** the part of the brain that controls the imagination
1377 **up so doun:** topsy turvy
1378 **habit:** physical condition
1379 **daun:** sir
1380 **al day:** at length **endite:** write
1385 **Mercurie:** Mercury
1387 **slepy yerde:** sleep-inducing staff
1389 **he took keep:** Arcite took heed, noticed
1390 **Argus:** mythical guardian of Io, whom Mercury put to sleep and then killed
1392 **shapen:** destined
1394 **hou soore that me smerte:** however sorely it may pain me
1395 **fare:** go
1398 **recche nat to sterve:** care not if I die
1401 **in another kynde:** (changed) into another sort
1403 **sith:** since
1404 **Of maladye:** by illness
1405 **myghte:** could **bar hym lowe:** conducted himself humbly
1408 **right anon:** at once
1411 **privetee:** private affairs **cas:** situation
1412 **povrely:** poorly
1413 **nexte:** nearest
1415 **profreth:** offers
1416 **drugge and drawe:** drudge and draw water **devyse:** command
1418 **fil in office:** fell in service, was employed **chamberleyn:** household attendant
1420–21 **espye, Of:** take notice, take the measure of
1422 **bere:** bear, carry
1424 **long:** tall **big:** strong
1425 **wight:** person
1427 **Page of the chambre:** personal servant
1428 **highte:** was called
1431 **condicioun:** disposition, manner
1432 **renoun:** fame, renown
1434 **enhauncen his degree:** advance, enhance his rank
1435 **worshipful servyse:** honorable, noble employment

Ther as he myghte his vertu excercise.
And thus withinne a while his name is spronge,
Bothe of his dedes and his goode tonge,
That Theseus hath taken hym so neer 1439
That of his chambre he made hym a squier,
And gaf hym gold to mayntene his degree.
And eek men broghte hym out of his contree,
From yeer to yeer, ful pryvely his rente;
But honestly and slyly he it spente, 1444
That no man wondred how that he it hadde.
And thre yeer in this wise his lif he ladde,
And bar hym so, in pees and eek in werre,
Ther was no man that Theseus hath derre.
And in this blisse lete I now Arcite,
And speke I wole of Palamon a lite. 1450
In derknesse and horrible and strong prisoun
Thise seven yeer hath seten Palamoun
Forpyned, what for wo and for distresse.
Who feeleth double soor and hevynesse
But Palamon, that love destreyneth so 1455
That wood out of his wit he goth for wo?
And eek therto he is a prisoner
Perpetuelly, noght oonly for a yer.
Who koude ryme in Englyssh proprely
His martirdom? For sothe it am nat I; 1460
Therfore I passe as lightly as I may.
It fel that in the seventhe yer, of May
The thridde nyght (as olde bookes seyn,
That al this storie tellen moore pleyn),
Were it by aventure or destynee — 1465
As, whan a thyng is shapen, it shal be —
That soone after the mydnyght Palamoun,
By helpyng of a freend, brak his prisoun
And fleeth the citee faste as he may go.
For he hadde yeve his gayler drynke so 1470
Of a clarree maad of a certeyn wyn,
With nercotikes and opie of Thebes fyn,
That al that nyght, thogh that men wolde him shake,
The gayler sleep; he myghte nat awake. 1474
And thus he fleeth as faste as evere he may.

1436 vertu: abilities
1437 name: reputation
1439 neer: near (though this is usually the comparative *nearer*)
1446 wise: manner
1447 pees: peace
1448 hath derre: holds dearer
1449 lete: leave
1453 Forpyned: wasted by suffering
1454 soor: pain hevynesse: sadness
1455 destreyneth: afflicts
1465 aventure or destynee: chance or fate
1470 gayler: jailer
1471 clarree: a spiced and sweetened wine
1472 opie: opium
1474 sleep: slept
1475 fleeth: flees, hastens

The nyght was short and faste by the day
That nedes cost he moot hymselven hyde,
And til a grove faste ther bisyde
With dredeful foot thanne stalketh Palamon.
For, shortly, this was his opinion: 1480
That in that grove he wolde hym hyde al day,
And in the nyght thanne wolde he take his way
To Thebes-ward, his freendes for to preye
On Theseus to helpe him to werreye;
And shortly, outher he wolde lese his lif 1485
Or wynnen Emelye unto his wyf.
This is th'effect and his entente pleyn.
Now wol I turne to Arcite ageyn,
That litel wiste how ny that was his care, 1489
Til that Fortune had broght him in the snare.
The bisy larke, messager of day,
Salueth in hir song the morwe gray,
And firy Phebus riseth up so bright
That al the orient laugheth of the light,
And with his stremes dryeth in the greves 1495
The silver dropes hangynge on the leves.
And Arcita, that in the court roial
With Theseus is squier principal,
Is risen and looketh on the myrie day.
And for to doon his observaunce to May, 1500
Remembrynge on the poynt of his desir,
He on a courser, startlynge as the fir,
Is riden into the feeldes hym to pleye,
Out of the court, were it a myle or tweye.
And to the grove of which that I yow tolde
By aventure his wey he gan to holde 1506
To maken hym a gerland of the greves,
Were it of wodebynde or hawethorn leves,
And loude he song ayeyn the sonne shene:
"May, with alle thy floures and thy grene,
Welcome be thou, faire, fresshe May, 1511
In hope that I som grene gete may."
And from his courser, with a lusty herte,
Into the grove ful hastily he sterte,
And in a path he rometh up and doun, 1515
Ther as by aventure this Palamoun
Was in a bussh, that no man myghte hym se,
For soore afered of his deeth was he.

1477 nedes cost: necessarily
1478 faste: close
1479 dredeful: fearful
1484 werreye: wage war
1485 outher: either
1487 th'effect: the purpose
1495 stremes: rays greves: groves
1502 courser: war-horse, charger startlynge: leaping about
1506 gan to holde: did hold, held (took his way)
1507 greves: branches
1509 ayeyn the sonne: in the sun
1512 som grene: something green
1514 sterte: rushed

No thyng ne knew he that it was Arcite;
God woot he wolde have trowed it ful lite.
But sooth is seyd, go sithen many yeres, 1521
That "feeld hath eyen and the wode hath eres."
It is ful fair a man to bere hym evene,
For al day meeteth men at unset stevene.
Ful litel woot Arcite of his felawe, 1525
That was so ny to herknen al his sawe,
For in the bussh he sitteth now ful stille.
Whan that Arcite hadde romed al his fille,
And songen al the roundel lustily,
Into a studie he fil sodeynly, 1530
As doon thise loveres in hir queynte geres,
Now in the crope, now doun in the breres,
Now up, now doun, as boket in a welle.
Right as the Friday, soothly for to telle,
Now it shyneth, now it reyneth faste, 1535
Right so kan geery Venus overcaste
The hertes of hir folk; right as hir day
Is gereful, right so chaungeth she array.
Selde is the Friday al the wowke ylike. 1539
Whan that Arcite had songe, he gan to sike
And sette hym doun withouten any moore.
"Allas," quod he, "that day that I was bore!
How longe, Juno, thurgh thy crueltee,
Woltow werreyen Thebes the citee?
Allas, ybroght is to confusioun 1545
The blood roial of Cadme and Amphioun —
Of Cadmus, which that was the firste man
That Thebes bulte, or first the toun bigan,
And of the citee first was crouned kyng.
Of his lynage am I and his ofspryng 1550
By verray ligne, as of the stok roial,
And now I am so caytyf and so thral,
That he that is my mortal enemy,
I serve hym as his squier povrely.

1521 go sithen many yeres: since many years ago
1523 bere hym evene: act calmly, moderately
1524 meeteth men: people meet at unset stevene: with an unexpected (not set) time
1526 sawe: speech
1529 roundel: a short poetic and musical form; for an example, see PF 680–92.
1530 sodeynly: suddenly
1531 thise loveres: lovers in general queynte geres: strange manners
1532 crope: leaves (top) breres: briars
1533 boket: bucket
1536 geery: fickle overcaste: sadden
1538 gereful: changeable
1539 Friday is seldom like all the rest of the week.
1540 sike: sigh
1544 werreyen: wage war on
1545 confusioun: ruin
1546 Cadme and Amphioun: Cadmus and Amphion, founders of Thebes
1548 or: ere
1551 verray ligne: true lineage stok: stock, family
1552 caytyf: wretched captive thral: enslaved
1554 povrely: poor

And yet dooth Juno me wel moore shame, 1555
For I dar noght biknowe myn owene name;
But ther as I was wont to highte Arcite,
Now highte I Philostrate, noght worth a myte.
Allas, thou felle Mars! Allas, Juno!
Thus hath youre ire oure lynage al fordo, 1560
Save oonly me and wrecched Palamoun,
That Theseus martireth in prisoun.
And over al this, to sleen me outrely
Love hath his firy dart so brennyngly
Ystiked thurgh my trewe, careful herte 1565
That shapen was my deeth erst than my sherte.
Ye sleen me with youre eyen, Emelye!
Ye been the cause wherfore that I dye.
Of al the remenant of myn oother care
Ne sette I nat the montance of a tare, 1570
So that I koude doon aught to youre plesaunce."
And with that word he fil doun in a traunce
A longe tyme, and after he up sterte.
This Palamoun, that thoughte that thurgh his herte
He felte a coold swerd sodeynliche glyde, 1575
For ire he quook; no lenger wolde he byde.
And whan that he had herd Arcites tale,
As he were wood, with face deed and pale,
He stirte hym up out of the buskes thikke
And seide: "Arcite, false traytour wikke, 1580
Now artow hent, that lovest my lady so,
For whom that I have al this peyne and wo,
And art my blood, and to my conseil sworn,
As I ful ofte have told thee heerbiforn,
And hast byjaped heere duc Theseus, 1585
And falsly chaunged hast thy name thus!
I wol be deed, or elles thou shalt dye.
Thou shalt nat love my lady Emelye,
But I wol love hire oonly and namo;
For I am Palamon, thy mortal foo. 1590

1556 biknowe: acknowledge
1557 highte: be called
1558 myte: a small Flemish coin of little value
1559 felle: fierce
1560 fordo: destroyed
1562 martireth: torments
1563 sleen: slay, kill
1564 brennyngly: ardently
1565 Ystiked: struck, stabbed trewe: faithful careful: sorrowful
1566 My death was destined before my first garment was made for me (before my birth).
1570 montance: amount, value tare: weed (i.e., nothing)
1571 plesaunce: pleasure
1576 quook: trembled
1579 buskes: bushes
1580 wikke: wicked
1585 byjaped: tricked
1589 namo: no others

And though that I no wepene have in this
place,
But out of prison am astert by grace,
I drede noght that outher thow shalt dye,
Or thow ne shalt nat loven Emelye.
Chees which thou wolt, or thou shalt nat
asterte!" 1595
This Arcite, with ful despitous herte,
Whan he hym knew, and hadde his tale herd,
As fiers as leon pulled out his swerd,
And seyde thus: "By God that sit above,
Nere it that thou art sik and wood for love, 1600
And eek that thow no wepne hast in this place,
Thou sholdest nevere out of this grove pace,
That thou ne sholdest dyen of myn hond.
For I defye the seurete and the bond 1604
Which that thou seist that I have maad to thee.
What! Verray fool, thynk wel that love is free,
And I wol love hire maugree al thy myght!
But for as muche thou art a worthy knyght
And wilnest to darreyne hire by bataille,
Have heer my trouthe; tomorwe I wol nat faille,
Withoute wityng of any oother wight, 1611
That heere I wol be founden as a knyght,
And bryngen harneys right ynough for thee;
And ches the beste, and leef the worste for me.
And mete and drynke this nyght wol I
brynge 1615
Ynough for thee, and clothes for thy beddynge.
And if so be that thou my lady wynne,
And sle me in this wode ther I am inne,
Thow mayst wel have thy lady as for me."
This Palamon answerde, "I graunte it thee."
And thus they been departed til amorwe, 1621
Whan ech of hem had leyd his feith to borwe.
O Cupide, out of alle charitee!
O regne, that wolt no felawe have with thee!
Ful sooth is seyd that love ne lordshipe 1625
Wol noght, his thankes, have no felaweshipe.
Wel fynden that Arcite and Palamoun.

1591 wepene: weapons
1592 astert: escaped
1593 drede: doubt outher: either
1595 Chees: choose
1596 despitous: scornful
1599 sit = *sitteth,* sits
1600 sik: sick
1604 defye: repudiate seurete: pledge
1606 What!: an exclamation
1607 maugree: in spite of
1609 wilnest: desire darreyne hire: decide the right to her
1610 trouthe: pledge
1611 wityng: knowledge
1613 harneys: armor
1614 leef: leave
1618 ther: where
1620 graunte it thee: agree
1622 to borwe: as a pledge
1626 his thankes: willingly felaweshipe: equal partnership

Arcite is riden anon unto the toun,
And on the morwe, er it were dayes light,
Ful prively two harneys hath he dight, 1630
Bothe suffisaunt and mete to darreyne
The bataille in the feeld bitwix hem tweyne;
And on his hors, allone as he was born,
He carieth al the harneys hym biforn.
And in the grove, at tyme and place yset, 1635
This Arcite and this Palamon ben met.
To chaungen gan the colour in hir face;
Right as the hunters in the regne of Trace,
That stondeth at the gappe with a spere,
Whan hunted is the leon or the bere, 1640
And hereth hym come russhyng in the greves,
And breketh bothe bowes and the leves,
And thynketh, "Heere cometh my mortal
enemy!
Withoute faille, he moot be deed, or I, 1644
For outher I moot sleen hym at the gappe,
Or he moot sleen me, if that me myshappe."
So ferden they in chaungyng of hir hewe,
As fer as everich of hem oother knewe.
Ther nas no good day, ne no saluyng, 1649
But streight, withouten word or rehersyng,
Everich of hem heelp for to armen oother
As freendly as he were his owene brother;
And after that, with sharpe speres stronge
They foynen ech at oother wonder longe.
Thou myghtest wene that this Palamon 1655
In his fightyng were a wood leon,
And as a crueel tigre was Arcite;
As wilde bores gonne they to smyte,
That frothen whit as foom for ire wood.
Up to the ancle foghte they in hir blood. 1660
And in this wise I lete hem fightyng dwelle,
And forth I wole of Theseus yow telle.
The destinee, ministre general,
That executeth in the world over al 1664
The purveiaunce that God hath seyn biforn,
So strong it is that, though the world had
sworn
The contrarie of a thyng by ye or nay,

1630 two harneys: two suits of armor dight: prepared
1631 mete: suitable, fitting
1631–32 darreyne The bataille: engage in, decide the battle
1638 regne of Trace: kingdom of Thrace
1639 gappe: gap (toward which the game is driven)
1646 me myshappe: I should suffer misfortune
1649 saluyng: greeting
1650 rehersyng: conversation
1654 foynen: thrust ech at oother: at each other
1655 wene: suppose
1658 bores: boars
1659 frothen: foam at the mouth
1664 executeth: administers
1665 purveiaunce: foresight, providence

Yet somtyme it shal fallen on a day
That falleth nat eft withinne a thousand yeer.
For certeinly, oure appetites heer, 1670
Be it of werre, or pees, or hate, or love,
Al is this reuled by the sighte above.
This mene I now by myghty Theseus,
That for to hunten is so desirus,
And namely at the grete hert in May, 1675
That in his bed ther daweth hym no day
That he nys clad, and redy for to ryde
With hunte and horn and houndes hym bisyde.
For in his huntyng hath he swich delit
That it is al his joye and appetit 1680
To been hymself the grete hertes bane,
For after Mars he serveth now Dyane.
Cleer was the day, as I have toold er this,
And Theseus with alle joye and blis,
With his Ypolita, the faire queene, 1685
And Emelye, clothed al in grene,
On huntyng be they riden roially.
And to the grove that stood ful faste by,
In which ther was an hert, as men hym tolde,
Duc Theseus the streighte wey hath holde.
And to the launde he rideth hym ful right, 1691
For thider was the hert wont have his flight,
And over a brook, and so forth on his weye.
This duc wol han a cours at hym or tweye
With houndes swiche as that hym list comaunde. 1695
And whan this duc was come unto the launde,
Under the sonne he looketh, and anon
He was war of Arcite and Palamon,
That foughten breme as it were bores two.
The brighte swerdes wenten to and fro 1700
So hidously that with the leeste strook
It semed as it wolde felle an ook.
But what they were, no thyng he ne woot.
This duc his courser with his spores smoot,
And at a stert he was bitwix hem two, 1705
And pulled out a swerd and cride, "Hoo!
Namoore, up peyne of lesynge of youre heed!
By myghty Mars, he shal anon be deed
That smyteth any strook that I may seen.
But telleth me what myster men ye been, 1710
That been so hardy for to fighten heere
Withouten juge or oother officere,
As it were in a lystes roially."
This Palamon answerde hastily 1714
And seyde, "Sire, what nedeth wordes mo?
We have the deeth disserved bothe two.
Two woful wrecches been we, two caytyves,
That been encombred of oure owene lyves;
And as thou art a rightful lord and juge,
Ne yif us neither mercy ne refuge, 1720
But sle me first, for seinte charitee!
But sle my felawe eek as wel as me;
Or sle hym first, for though thow knowest it lite,
This is thy mortal foo, this is Arcite, 1724
That fro thy lond is banysshed on his heed,
For which he hath deserved to be deed.
For this is he that cam unto thy gate
And seyde that he highte Philostrate.
Thus hath he japed thee ful many a yer,
And thou hast maked hym thy chief squier;
And this is he that loveth Emelye. 1731
For sith the day is come that I shal dye,
I make pleynly my confessioun
That I am thilke woful Palamoun
That hath thy prisoun broken wikkedly. 1735
I am thy mortal foo, and it am I
That loveth so hoote Emelye the brighte
That I wol dye present in hir sighte.
Wherfore I axe deeth and my juwise;
But sle my felawe in the same wise, 1740
For bothe han we deserved to be slayn."
This worthy duc answerde anon agayn,
And seyde, "This is a short conclusioun.
Youre owene mouth, by youre confessioun,
Hath dampned yow, and I wol it recorde; 1745
It nedeth noght to pyne yow with the corde.
Ye shal be deed, by myghty Mars the rede!"

1669 **eft:** again
1672 **sighte:** foresight
1673 **mene:** say **by:** concerning
1675 **grete hert:** large hart, worthy of hunting
1676 **daweth hym:** dawns for him
1678 **hunte:** huntsman
1681 **bane:** killer
1682 **after Mars:** next to Mars, the god of war **Dyane:** Diana, goddess of hunting
1688 **ful faste by:** very close by
1692 **thider:** thither, there
1694 **cours:** run
1696 **launde:** clearing
1697 **Under the sonne:** in the direction of the sun
1699 **breme:** fiercely
1705 **at a stert:** with a sudden movement, instantly
1706 **Hoo!:** stop!
1707 **up peyne of:** on the penalty of
1710 **what myster men:** what sort of men
1712 **juge or oother officere:** judge or some other officer, as in a properly conducted legal duel (*in a lystes roially*)
1717 **caytyves:** wretches
1718 **encombred:** burdened
1721 **for seinte charitee:** by holy charity (*seinte* is pronounced with two syllables)
1729 **japed:** tricked
1734 **thilke:** that
1737 **hoote:** passionately
1739 **axe:** ask **juwise:** judicial sentence
1745 **dampned:** condemned **recorde:** pronounce
1746 **to pyne yow with the corde:** to torture you (to force a confession) with a cord (twisted about your heads)

The queene anon, for verray wommanhede,
Gan for to wepe, and so dide Emelye,
And alle the ladyes in the compaignye. 1750
Greet pitee was it, as it thoughte hem alle,
That evere swich a chaunce sholde falle,
For gentil men they were of greet estaat,
And no thyng but for love was this debaat;
And saugh hir blody woundes wyde and soore,
And alle crieden, bothe lasse and moore, 1756
"Have mercy, Lord, upon us wommen alle!"
And on hir bare knees adoun they falle
And wolde have kist his feet ther as he stood;
Til at the laste aslaked was his mood, 1760
For pitee renneth soone in gentil herte.
And though he first for ire quook and sterte,
He hath considered shortly, in a clause,
The trespas of hem bothe, and eek the cause,
And although that his ire hir gilt accused, 1765
Yet in his resoun he hem bothe excused,
As thus: he thoghte wel that every man
Wol helpe hymself in love, if that he kan,
And eek delivere hymself out of prisoun.
And eek his herte hadde compassioun 1770
Of wommen, for they wepen evere in oon,
And in his gentil herte he thoughte anon,
And softe unto hymself he seyde, "Fy
Upon a lord that wol have no mercy,
But been a leon, bothe in word and dede, 1775
To hem that been in repentaunce and drede,
As wel as to a proud despitous man
That wol mayntene that he first bigan.
That lord hath litel of discrecioun,
That in swich cas kan no divisioun 1780
But weyeth pride and humblesse after oon."
And shortly, whan his ire is thus agoon,
He gan to looken up with eyen lighte
And spak thise same wordes al on highte:
"The god of love, a benedicite! 1785
How myghty and how greet a lord is he!
Ayeyns his myght ther gayneth none obstacles.
He may be cleped a god for his myracles,
For he kan maken, at his owene gyse,
Of everich herte as that hym list divyse. 1790
Lo heere this Arcite and this Palamoun,
That quitly weren out of my prisoun,
And myghte han lyved in Thebes roially,
And witen I am hir mortal enemy,
And that hir deth lith in my myght also, 1795
And yet hath love, maugree hir eyen two,
Broght hem hyder bothe for to dye.
Now looketh, is nat that an heigh folye?
Who may been a fool but if he love?
Bihoold, for Goddes sake that sit above, 1800
Se how they blede! Be they noght wel arrayed?
Thus hath hir lord, the god of love, ypayed
Hir wages and hir fees for hir servyse!
And yet they wenen for to been ful wyse
That serven love, for aught that may bifalle.
But this is yet the beste game of alle, 1806
That she for whom they han this jolitee
Kan hem therfore as muche thank as me.
She woot namoore of al this hoote fare,
By God, than woot a cokkow or an hare! 1810
But all moot ben assayed, hoot and coold;
A man moot ben a fool, or yong or oold —
I woot it by myself ful yore agon,
For in my tyme a servant was I oon.
And therfore, syn I knowe of loves peyne 1815
And woot hou soore it kan a man distreyne,
As he that hath ben caught ofte in his laas,
I yow foryeve al hoolly this trespaas,
At requeste of the queene, that kneleth heere,
And eek of Emelye, my suster deere. 1820
And ye shul bothe anon unto me swere
That nevere mo ye shal my contree dere,
Ne make werre upon me nyght ne day,
But been my freendes in all that ye may.
I yow foryeve this trespas every deel." 1825

1748 **wommanhede:** womanliness (having the qualities proper to a woman)
1760 **aslaked:** calmed
1761 **renneth:** moves
1762 **quook:** shook **sterte:** trembled
1763 **in a clause:** briefly
1771 **evere in oon:** continually
1773 **softe:** quietly
1778 **mayntene:** persist in
1779 **discrecioun:** sound judgment
1780 **kan no divisioun:** knows no distinctions
1781 **weyeth:** weighs **after oon:** alike
1784 **on highte:** aloud
1785 **benedicite:** (the Lord) bless you
1787 **gayneth:** avail
1789 **at his owene gyse:** after his own fashion
1790 **divyse:** command
1792 **quitly:** freely
1794 **witen:** know
1796 **maugree:** in spite of
1799 Who can be a fool unless (*but if*) he is in love?
1800 **sit** = *sitteth*, sits
1802 **ypayed:** paid
1804 **wenen for to been:** think themselves
1806 **game:** joke
1807 **jolitee:** passion
1808 Owes them as much gratitude for this as she owes me
1809 **hoote fare:** rash conduct
1810 **cokkow:** cuckoo
1811 **assayed:** experienced
1813 **yore agon:** long ago
1814 **servant:** servant of Love, lover
1816 **distreyne:** afflict
1817 **laas:** snare
1821 **shul:** must
1822 **dere:** harm
1825 **every deel:** completely

And they hym sworen his axyng faire and weel,
And hym of lordshipe and of mercy preyde,
And he hem graunteth grace, and thus he seyde:
"To speke of roial lynage and richesse,
Though that she were a queene or a princesse,
Ech of you bothe is worthy, doutelees, 1831
To wedden whan tyme is; but nathelees —
I speke as for my suster Emelye,
For whom ye have this strif and jalousye —
Ye woot yourself she may nat wedden two 1835
Atones, though ye fighten everemo,
That oon of you, al be hym looth or lief,
He moot go pipen in an yvy leef;
This is to seyn, she may nat now han bothe,
Al be ye never so jalouse ne so wrothe. 1840
And forthy I yow putte in this degree,
That ech of yow shal have his destynee
As hym is shape, and herkneth in what wyse;
Lo, heere youre ende of that I shal devyse.
My wyl is this, for plat conclusioun, 1845
Withouten any repplicacioun —
If that you liketh, take it for the beste:
That everich of you shal goon where hym leste
Frely, withouten raunson or daunger,
And this day fifty wykes, fer ne ner, 1850
Everich of you shal brynge an hundred knyghtes
Armed for lystes up at alle rightes,
Al redy to darreyne hire by bataille.
And this bihote I yow withouten faille,
Upon my trouthe, and as I am a knyght, 1855
That wheither of yow bothe that hath myght —
This is to seyn, that wheither he or thow
May with his hundred, as I spak of now,
Sleen his contrarie, or out of lystes dryve,
Thanne shal I yeve Emelya to wyve 1860
To whom that Fortune yeveth so fair a grace.
The lystes shal I maken in this place,

1827 **of lordshipe**: to be their lord, protector
1829 **richesse**: wealth
1832 **nathelees**: none the less
1836 **Atones**: at once, at the same time
1837 **al be hym looth or lief**: whether he likes it or not
1838 He may as well go whistle (for consolation).
1840 **wrothe**: angry
1841 **forthy**: therefore **degree**: situation
1843 **wyse**: manner
1845 **plat**: flat, blunt
1846 **repplicacioun**: reply
1849 **daunger**: resistance
1850 **fer ne ner**: more or less; see n.
1852 **for lystes**: for battle in the lists **at alle rightes**: in all respects
1853 **darreyne hire**: decide the right to her
1854 **bihote**: promise
1856 **wheither**: whichever
1860 **to wyve**: as a wife

And God so wisly on my soule rewe
As I shal evene juge been and trewe. 1864
Ye shul noon oother ende with me maken,
That oon of yow ne shal be deed or taken.
And if yow thynketh this is weel ysayd,
Seyeth youre avys, and holdeth you apayd.
This is youre ende and youre conclusioun."
Who looketh lightly now but Palamoun?
Who spryngeth up for joye but Arcite? 1871
Who kouthe telle, or who kouthe it endite,
The joye that is maked in the place
Whan Theseus hath doon so fair a grace? 1874
But doun on knees wente every maner wight,
And thonked hym with al hir herte and myght,
And namely the Thebans often sithe.
And thus with good hope and with herte blithe
They taken hir leve, and homward gonne they ride
To Thebes with his olde walles wyde. 1880

Explicit secunda pars

Sequitur pars tercia

I trowe men wolde deme it necligence
If I foryete to tellen the dispence
Of Theseus, that gooth so bisily
To maken up the lystes roially,
That swich a noble theatre as it was 1885
I dar wel seyen in this world ther nas.
The circuit a myle was aboute,
Walled of stoon, and dyched al withoute.
Round was the shap, in manere of compas,
Ful of degrees, the heighte of sixty pas, 1890
That whan a man was set on o degree,
He letted nat his felawe for to see.
Estward ther stood a gate of marbul whit,
Westward right swich another in the opposit.
And shortly to concluden, swich a place 1895
Was noon in erthe, as in so litel space;
For in the lond ther was no crafty man
That geometrie or ars-metrike kan,
Ne portreyour, ne kervere of ymages,

1863 **rewe**: have mercy
1864 **evene**: impartial
1865 **shul**: shall
1868 **avys**: opinion **apayd**: satisfied
1870 **lightly**: cheerfully
1872 **endite**: describe in writing
1874 **doon so fair a grace**: behaved so graciously
Explicit, *etc.*: Here ends the second part. **Sequitur**, *etc.*: Here follows the third part.
1882 **dispence**: expenditures
1888 **dyched**: surrounded by a ditch
1889 **manere of compas**: the shape of a circle
1890 **degrees**: tiers, rows of seats **pas**: paces
1892 **letted**: hindered
1896 **space**: time
1897 **crafty**: skillful, ingenious
1898 **ars-metrike**: art of measurement (arithmetic) **kan**: knows
1899 **portreyour**: painter **kervere of ymages**: sculptor

That Theseus ne yaf him mete and wages
The theatre for to maken and devyse. 1901
And for to doon his ryte and sacrifise,
He estward hath, upon the gate above,
In worshipe of Venus, goddesse of love,
Doon make an auter and an oratorie; 1905
And on the gate westward, in memorie
Of Mars, he maked hath right swich another,
That coste largely of gold a fother.
And northward, in a touret on the wal,
Of alabastre whit and reed coral, 1910
An oratorie, riche for to see,
In worshipe of Dyane of chastitee,
Hath Theseus doon wroght in noble wyse.
But yet hadde I foryeten to devyse
The noble kervyng and the portreitures, 1915
The shap, the contenaunce, and the figures
That weren in thise oratories thre.
First in the temple of Venus maystow se
Wroght on the wal, ful pitous to biholde,
The broken slepes, and the sikes colde, 1920
The sacred teeris, and the waymentynge,
The firy strokes of the desirynge
That loves servantz in this lyf enduren;
The othes that hir covenantz assuren; 1924
Plesaunce and Hope, Desir, Foolhardynesse,
Beautee and Youthe, Bauderie, Richesse,
Charmes and Force, Lesynges, Flaterye,
Despense, Bisynesse, and Jalousye,
That wered of yelewe gooldes a gerland,
And a cokkow sittynge on hir hand; 1930
Festes, instrumentz, caroles, daunces,
Lust and array, and alle the circumstaunces
Of love, which that I rekned and rekne shal,
By ordre weren peynted on the wal,
And mo than I kan make of mencioun. 1935
For soothly al the mount of Citheroun,
Ther Venus hath hir principal dwellynge,
Was shewed on the wal in portreyynge,

1901 devyse: contrive
1905 auter: altar oratorie: shrine, chapel
1908 fother: cartload
1909 touret: turret
1912 Dyane of chastitee: the chaste Diana
1913 doon wroght: had made
1915 kervyng: sculpture portreitures: paintings
1916 contenaunce: appearance
1920 sikes: sighs
1921 waymentynge: lamentation
1924 covenantz: agreements
1925 Plesaunce: Pleasure, amusement
1926 Bauderie: Mirth, jollity
1927 Lesynges: Falsehood, deceit
1928 Despense: expenditures Bisynesse: attentiveness
1929 yelewe: yellow gooldes: marigolds
1930 cokkow: cuckoo (a symbol of cuckoldry)
1931 caroles: dance-songs
1934 By ordre: sequentially
1936 Citheroun: Cithaeron, here confused with the island Cytherea

With al the gardyn and the lustynesse.
Nat was foryeten the porter, Ydelnesse, 1940
Ne Narcisus the faire of yore agon,
Ne yet the folye of kyng Salomon,
Ne yet the grete strengthe of Ercules —
Th'enchauntementz of Medea and Circes —
Ne of Turnus, with the hardy fiers corage,
The riche Cresus, kaytyf in servage. 1946
Thus may ye seen that wysdom ne richesse,
Beautee ne sleighte, strengthe ne hardynesse,
Ne may with Venus holde champartie, 1949
For as hir list the world than may she gye.
Lo, alle thise folk so caught were in hir las,
Til they for wo ful ofte seyde "allas!"
Suffiseth heere ensamples oon or two,
And though I koude rekene a thousand mo.
The statue of Venus, glorious for to se, 1955
Was naked, fletynge in the large see,
And fro the navele doun al covered was
With wawes grene, and brighte as any glas.
A citole in hir right hand hadde she,
And on hir heed, ful semely for to se, 1960
A rose gerland, fressh and wel smellynge;
Above hir heed hir dowves flikerynge.
Biforn hire stood hir sone Cupido;
Upon his shuldres wynges hadde he two,
And blynd he was, as it is often seene; 1965
A bowe he bar and arwes brighte and kene.
Why sholde I noght as wel eek telle yow al
The portreiture that was upon the wal
Withinne the temple of myghty Mars the rede?
Al peynted was the wal, in lengthe and brede,
Lyk to the estres of the grisly place 1971
That highte the grete temple of Mars in Trace,
In thilke colde, frosty regioun
Ther as Mars hath his sovereyn mansioun.

1939 lustynesse: pleasure
1941 Narcisus: Narcissus, for whom the nymph Echo died; for the story, see Rom 1469–1638.
1942 folye: lechery Salomon: Solomon, who had many wives
1943 Ercules: Hercules, whose beloved killed him; see MkT VII.2095–142.
1944 Medea and Circes: famous sorceresses, who tried to hold their loves by magic
1945 Turnus: whose love for Lavinia led to his fatal duel with Aeneas; cf. HF 457–58.
1946 Cresus, kaytyf in servage: Croesus, wretched in captivity; see MkT VII.2727–66.
1948 sleighte: trickery hardynesse: bravery
1949 champartie: partnership in power
1950 gye: rule
1951 las: snare
1956 fletynge: floating
1958 wawes: waves
1959 citole: a stringed instrument, like a zither
1962 flikerynge: fluttering
1967 eek: also
1970 brede: breadth
1971 estres: interior apartments
1974 sovereyn: best, most excellent

First on the wal was peynted a forest, 1975
In which ther dwelleth neither man ne best,
With knotty, knarry, bareyne trees olde,
Of stubbes sharpe and hidouse to biholde,
In which ther ran a rumbel in a swough, 1979
As though a storm sholde bresten every bough.
And dounward from an hille, under a bente,
Ther stood the temple of Mars armypotente,
Wroght al of burned steel, of which the entree
Was long and streit, and gastly for to see.
And therout came a rage and swich a veze
That it made al the gate for to rese. 1986
The northren lyght in at the dores shoon,
For wyndowe on the wal ne was ther noon,
Thurgh which men myghten any light discerne.
The dore was al of adamant eterne, 1990
Yclenched overthwart and endelong
With iren tough; and for to make it strong,
Every pyler, the temple to sustene,
Was tonne-greet, of iren bright and shene.
Ther saugh I first the derke ymaginyng
Of Felonye, and al the compassyng; 1996
The crueel Ire, reed as any gleede;
The pykepurs, and eek the pale Drede;
The smylere with the knyf under the cloke;
The shepne brennynge with the blake
smoke; 2000
The tresoun of the mordrynge in the bedde;
The open werre, with woundes al bibledde;
Contek, with blody knyf and sharp manace.
Al ful of chirkyng was that sory place. 2004
The sleere of hymself yet saugh I ther —
His herte-blood hath bathed al his heer —
The nayl ydryven in the shode anyght;
The colde deeth, with mouth gapyng upright.
Amyddes of the temple sat Meschaunce,
With disconfort and sory contenaunce. 2010
Yet saugh I Woodnesse, laughynge in his rage,
Armed Compleint, Outhees, and fiers Outrage;
The careyne in the busk, with throte ycorve;
A thousand slayn, and nat of qualm ystorve;
The tiraunt, with the pray by force yraft; 2015
The toun destroyed, ther was no thyng laft.
Yet saugh I brent the shippes hoppesteres;
The hunte strangled with the wilde beres;
The sowe freten the child right in the cradel;
The cook yscalded, for al his longe ladel. 2020
Noght was foryeten by the infortune of Marte.
The cartere overryden with his carte —
Under the wheel ful lowe he lay adoun.
Ther were also, of Martes divisioun, 2024
The barbour, and the bocher, and the smyth,
That forgeth sharpe swerdes on his styth.
And al above, depeynted in a tour,
Saugh I Conquest, sittynge in greet honour,
With the sharpe swerd over his heed
Hangynge by a soutil twynes threed. 2030
Depeynted was the slaughtre of Julius,
Of grete Nero, and of Antonius;
Al be that thilke tyme they were unborn,
Yet was hir deth depeynted ther-biforn
By manasynge of Mars, right by figure; 2035
So was it shewed in that portreiture,
As is depeynted in the sterres above
Who shal be slayn or elles deed for love.
Suffiseth oon ensample in stories olde; 2039
I may nat rekene hem alle though I wolde.
The statue of Mars upon a carte stood
Armed, and looked grym as he were wood;

1977 **knarry:** gnarled **bareyne:** barren
1978 **stubbes:** stumps
1979 **rumbel:** rumbling noise **swough:** sound of wind
1980 **bresten:** burst
1981 **under:** close to **bente:** grassy slope
1982 **armypotente:** powerful in arms
1983 **burned:** burnished
1984 **streit:** narrow, small **gastly:** terrifying
1985 **rage:** rush of wind **veze:** rush, blast
1986 **rese:** shake
1987 **northren lyght:** light from the north
1990 **adamant:** the hardest of stones
1991 **Yclenched:** bound, clinched **overthwart:** crosswise **endelong:** lengthwise
1993 **pyler:** pillar **sustene:** sustain, support
1994 **tonne-greet:** big around as a large barrel
1995 **derke ymaginyng:** malicious plotting
1996 **Felonye:** Wickedness **compassyng:** scheming
1997 **gleede:** glowing coal
1998 **pykepurs:** pick-purse, thief **Drede:** Fear
2000 **shepne:** stable
2001 **mordrynge:** murder
2002 **with woundes al bibledde:** all covered with blood from wounds
2003 **Contek:** strife
2004 **chirkyng:** groaning, creaking **sory:** sorry, wretched
2005 **sleere:** slayer
2007 **shode:** parting of the hair, temple
2008 **upright:** upwards
2009 **Meschaunce:** Misfortune
2011 **Woodnesse:** Madness
2012 **Compleint:** Grievance, discontent **Outhees:** Outcry, alarm **Outrage:** Violence, excessive cruelty
2013 **careyne:** corpse **busk:** woods **ycorve:** cut
2014 **of qualm ystorve:** killed by the plague
2015 **pray:** prey **yraft:** taken away
2017 **brent:** burned **hoppesteres:** dancing (on a stormy sea)
2018 **hunte:** hunter **strangled with:** killed by
2019 **freten:** devour
2020 **for al his longe ladel:** despite his long-handled spoon
2021 **infortune of Marte:** evil influence of Mars
2022 **overryden with:** run over by
2024 **Martes divisioun:** those influenced by Mars
2025 **bocher:** butcher
2026 **styth:** anvil
2027 **depeynted:** painted
2030 **soutil twynes threed:** thin thread of twine
2031–32 **Julius, Nero, Antonius:** the Roman emperors
2035 **manasynge:** menace, threat **by figure:** according to the configuration of the planets; "perhaps a technical reference to a horoscope" (R.)
2036 **portreiture:** painting
2039 **ensample:** illustrative story **stories:** histories
2041 **carte:** chariot

And over his heed ther shynen two figures
Of sterres, that been cleped in scriptures,
That oon Puella, that oother Rubeus — 2045
This god of armes was arrayed thus.
A wolf ther stood biforn hym at his feet
With eyen rede, and of a man he eet;
With soutil pencel was depeynted this storie
In redoutynge of Mars and of his glorie. 2050
Now to the temple of Dyane the chaste,
As shortly as I kan, I wol me haste,
To telle yow al the descripsioun.
Depeynted been the walles up and doun
Of huntyng and of shamefast chastitee. 2055
Ther saugh I how woful Calistopee,
Whan that Diane agreved was with here,
Was turned from a womman til a bere,
And after was she maad the loode-sterre. 2059
Thus was it peynted; I kan sey yow no ferre.
Hir sone is eek a sterre, as men may see.
Ther saugh I Dane, yturned til a tree —
I mene nat the goddesse Diane,
But Penneus doghter, which that highte Dane.
Ther saugh I Attheon an hert ymaked, 2065
For vengeaunce that he saugh Diane al naked;
I saugh how that his houndes have hym caught
And freeten hym, for that they knewe hym naught.
Yet peynted was a litel forther moor
How Atthalante hunted the wilde boor, 2070
And Meleagre, and many another mo,
For which Dyane wroghte hym care and wo.
Ther saugh I many another wonder storie,
The which me list nat drawen to memorie.
This goddesse on an hert ful hye seet, 2075
With smale houndes al aboute hir feet,
And undernethe hir feet she hadde a moone —
Wexynge it was and sholde wanye soone.
In gaude grene hir statue clothed was,
With bowe in honde and arwes in a cas. 2080
Hir eyen caste she ful lowe adoun
Ther Pluto hath his derke regioun.
A womman travaillynge was hire biforn;
But for hir child so longe was unborn,
Ful pitously Lucyna gan she calle 2085
And seyde, "Help, for thou mayst best of alle!"
Wel koude he peynten lifly that it wroghte;
With many a floryn he the hewes boghte.
Now been thise lystes maad, and Theseus,
That at his grete cost arrayed thus 2090
The temples and the theatre every deel,
Whan it was doon, hym lyked wonder weel.
But stynte I wole of Theseus a lite,
And speke of Palamon and of Arcite.
The day approcheth of hir retournynge, 2095
That everich sholde an hundred knyghtes brynge
The bataille to darreyne, as I yow tolde.
And til Atthenes, hir covenant for to holde,
Hath everich of hem broght an hundred knyghtes,
Wel armed for the werre at alle rightes. 2100
And sikerly ther trowed many a man
That nevere, sithen that the world bigan,
As for to speke of knyghthod of hir hond,
As fer as God hath maked see or lond,
Nas of so fewe so noble a compaignye. 2105
For every wight that lovede chivalrye
And wolde, his thankes, han a passant name,
Hath preyed that he myghte been of that game;
And wel was hym that therto chosen was,
For if ther fille tomorwe swich a cas, 2110
Ye knowen wel that every lusty knyght
That loveth paramours and hath his myght,
Were it in Engelond or elleswhere,
They wolde, hir thankes, wilnen to be there —
To fighte for a lady, benedicitee! 2115
It were a lusty sighte for to see.
And right so ferden they with Palamon.
With hym ther wenten knyghtes many on;
Som wol ben armed in an haubergeoun,
And in a brestplate and a light gypoun; 2120

2044 **scriptures:** books
2045 **Puella, Rubeus:** figures in geomancy; see n.
2048 **eet:** ate
2055 **shamefast:** modest
2056 **Calistopee:** Callisto, who was metamorphosed into Ursa Major
2057 **agreved:** angered
2059 **loode-sterre:** polestar, North star
2060 **ferre:** further
2062 **Dane:** Daphne, pursued by Apollo and metamorphosed into the laurel tree
2065 **Attheon:** Actaeon, metamorphosed into a hart by Diana
2068 **freeten:** devoured
2070 **Atthalante:** Atalanta, for whom Meleager (*Meleagre*) hunted the Calydonian boar; see Tr 5.1464–84.
2075 **seet:** sat
2078 **Wexynge:** waxing **wanye:** wane
2079 **gaude:** yellowish
2083 **travaillynge:** in labor
2085 **Lucyna:** Lucina, Diana as goddess of childbirth
2086 **thou mayst best:** you are best able, have most power
2088 **floryn:** florin, a gold coin **hewes:** pigments
2090 **arrayed:** prepared
2091 **every deel:** in all respects
2097 **darreyne:** decide
2100 **at alle rightes:** in all respects
2101 **sikerly:** truly **trowed:** believed
2103 **of hir hond:** of the deeds of their hand, their prowess
2107 **his thankes:** willingly **passant name:** outstanding reputation
2112 **paramours:** passionately
2114 **wilnen:** desire
2116 **lusty:** pleasing
2119 **Som:** a certain one **haubergeoun:** coat of mail
2120 **gypoun:** tunic

And som wol have a paire plates large;
And som wol have a Pruce sheeld or a targe;
Som wol ben armed on his legges weel,
And have an ax, and som a mace of steel —
Ther is no newe gyse that it nas old. 2125
Armed were they, as I have yow told,
Everych after his opinioun.
Ther maistow seen, comynge with Palamoun,
Lygurge hymself, the grete kyng of Trace.
Blak was his berd, and manly was his face;
The cercles of his eyen in his heed, 2131
They gloweden bitwixen yelow and reed,
And lik a grifphon looked he aboute,
With kempe heeris on his browes stoute; 2134
His lymes grete, his brawnes harde and stronge,
His shuldres brode, his armes rounde and longe;
And as the gyse was in his contree,
Ful hye upon a chaar of gold stood he,
With foure white boles in the trays.
In stede of cote-armure over his harnays, 2140
With nayles yelewe and brighte as any gold,
He hadde a beres skyn, col-blak for old.
His longe heer was kembd bihynde his bak;
As any ravenes fethere it shoon for blak; 2144
A wrethe of gold, arm-greet, of huge wighte,
Upon his heed, set ful of stones brighte,
Of fyne rubyes and of dyamauntz.
Aboute his chaar ther wenten white alauntz,
Twenty and mo, as grete as any steer,
To hunten at the leoun or the deer, 2150
And folwed hym with mosel faste ybounde,
Colered of gold, and tourettes fyled rounde.
An hundred lordes hadde he in his route,
Armed ful wel, with hertes stierne and stoute.
With Arcita, in stories as men fynde, 2155
The grete Emetreus, the kyng of Inde,
Upon a steede bay trapped in steel,
Covered in clooth of gold, dyapred weel,
Cam ridynge lyk the god of armes, Mars.
His cote-armure was of clooth of Tars 2160
Couched with perles white and rounde and grete;
His sadel was of brend gold newe ybete;
A mantelet upon his shulder hangynge,
Bret-ful of rubyes rede as fyr sparklynge;
His crispe heer lyk rynges was yronne, 2165
And that was yelow, and glytered as the sonne.
His nose was heigh, his eyen bright citryn,
His lippes rounde, his colour was sangwyn;
A fewe frakenes in his face yspreynd,
Bitwixen yelow and somdel blak ymeynd; 2170
And as a leon he his lookyng caste.
Of fyve and twenty yeer his age I caste.
His berd was wel bigonne for to sprynge;
His voys was as a trompe thonderynge.
Upon his heed he wered of laurer grene 2175
A gerland, fressh and lusty for to sene.
Upon his hand he bar for his deduyt
An egle tame, as any lilye whyt.
An hundred lordes hadde he with hym there,
Al armed, save hir heddes, in al hir gere, 2180
Ful richely in alle maner thynges.
For trusteth wel that dukes, erles, kynges
Were gadered in this noble compaignye,
For love and for encrees of chivalrye.
Aboute this kyng ther ran on every part 2185
Ful many a tame leon and leopart.
And in this wise thise lordes, alle and some,
Been on the Sonday to the citee come
Aboute pryme, and in the toun alight. 2189
This Theseus, this duc, this worthy knyght,
Whan he had broght hem into his citee,
And inned hem, everich at his degree,
He festeth hem, and dooth so greet labour
To esen hem and doon hem al honour

2121 paire plates: set of plate armor
2122 Pruce: Prussian
2125 There is no new fashion (*gyse*) that has not been old. (R.)
2127 after: according to
2129 Lygurge: Lycurgus
2133 grifphon: griffin (mythical beast with the body of a lion and the head of an eagle)
2134 kempe: shaggy
2135 lymes greet: large limbs brawnes: muscles
2138 chaar: chariot
2139 boles: bulls trays: traces, harness
2140 cote-armure: a tunic embroidered with a heraldic device, worn over the armor
2141 nayles: rivets yelewe: yellow
2142 col-blak: coal-black for old: because of age
2143 kembd: combed
2144 for blak: because of blackness
2145 arm-greet: thick as an arm wighte: weight
2147 dyamauntz: diamonds
2148 alauntz: wolfhounds
2151 mosel: muzzle
2152 Colered: wearing collars tourettes: rings for leashes fyled: smoothed
2153 route: company
2154 stierne: stern, cruel
2156 Inde: India

2157 bay: reddish-brown trapped: equipped with trappings
2158 dyapred: decorated with small geometric patterns
2160 clooth of Tars: silk from Tarsia in Turkestan
2161 Couched: adorned perles: pearls
2162 brend gold: refined (pure) gold ybete: adorned
2163 mantelet: short cloak
2164 Bret-ful: brimful
2165 crispe: curly yronne: fashioned (literally, *run*)
2167 citryn: lemon-colored
2168 sangwyn: ruddy
2169 frakenes: freckles yspreynd: sprinkled
2170 ymeynd: mingled
2171 lookyng caste: looked about
2177 deduyt: delight
2184 encrees: increase
2185 on every part: on all sides
2187 alle and some: one and all, everyone
2189 pryme: around 9 A.M. alight: dismounted, arrived
2192 inned hem: provided them lodging
2193 dooth so greet labour: makes such an effort
2194 esen: accommodate, entertain

That yet men wenen that no mannes wit 2195
Of noon estaat ne koude amenden it.
The mynstralcye, the service at the feeste,
The grete yiftes to the meeste and leeste,
The riche array of Theseus paleys,
Ne who sat first ne last upon the deys, 2200
What ladyes fairest been or best daunsynge,
Or which of hem kan dauncen best and synge,
Ne who moost felyngly speketh of love;
What haukes sitten on the perche above,
What houndes liggen on the floor adoun —
Of al this make I now no mencioun, 2206
But al th'effect; that thynketh me the beste.
Now cometh the point, and herkneth if yow leste.
The Sonday nyght, er day bigan to sprynge,
Whan Palamon the larke herde synge 2210
(Although it nere nat day by houres two,
Yet song the larke) and Palamon right tho
With hooly herte and with an heigh corage,
He roos to wenden on his pilgrymage
Unto the blisful Citherea benigne — 2215
I mene Venus, honurable and digne.
And in hir houre he walketh forth a pas
Unto the lystes ther hire temple was,
And doun he kneleth, and with humble cheere
And herte soor he seyde as ye shal heere: 2220
"Faireste of faire, O lady myn, Venus,
Doughter to Jove and spouse of Vulcanus,
Thow gladere of the mount of Citheron,
For thilke love thow haddest to Adoon,
Have pitee of my bittre teeris smerte, 2225
And taak myn humble preyere at thyn herte.
Allas! I ne have no langage to telle
Th'effectes ne the tormentz of myn helle;
Myn herte may myne harmes nat biwreye;
I am so confus that I kan noght seye 2230
But 'Mercy, lady bright, that knowest weele
My thought and seest what harmes that I feele!'
Considere al this and rewe upon my soore,
As wisly as I shal for everemoore, 2234
Emforth my myght, thy trewe servant be,
And holden werre alwey with chastitee.
That make I myn avow, so ye me helpe!
I kepe noght of armes for to yelpe,
Ne I ne axe nat tomorwe to have victorie,
Ne renoun in this cas, ne veyne glorie 2240
Of pris of armes blowen up and doun;
But I wolde have fully possessioun
Of Emelye, and dye in thy servyse.
Fynd thow the manere hou and in what wyse:
I recche nat but it may bettre be 2245
To have victorie of hem, or they of me,
So that I have my lady in myne armes.
For though so be that Mars is god of armes,
Youre vertu is so greet in hevene above
That if yow list, I shal wel have my love. 2250
Thy temple wol I worshipe everemo,
And on thyn auter, where I ride or go,
I wol doon sacrifice and fires beete.
And if ye wol nat so, my lady sweete,
Thanne preye I thee, tomorwe with a spere
That Arcita me thurgh the herte bere. 2256
Thanne rekke I noght, whan I have lost my lyf,
Though that Arcita wynne hire to his wyf.
This is th'effect and ende of my preyere:
Yif me my love, thow blisful lady deere." 2260
Whan the orison was doon of Palamon,
His sacrifice he dide, and that anon,
Ful pitously, with alle circumstaunces,
Al telle I noght as now his observaunces;
But atte laste the statue of Venus shook, 2265
And made a signe, wherby that he took
That his preyere accepted was that day.
For thogh the signe shewed a delay,
Yet wiste he wel that graunted was his boone,
And with glad herte he wente hym hoom ful soone. 2270
The thridde houre inequal that Palamon
Bigan to Venus temple for to gon,

2195 **wenen:** suppose
2197 **mynstralcye:** music
2198 **yiftes:** gifts **to the meeste and leeste:** to everyone
2199 **array:** adornment
2200 **deys:** dais
2203 **moost felyngly:** with the most delicate understanding
2205 **liggen:** lie **adoun:** below
2207 **th'effect:** the substance
2212 **tho:** then
2215 **Citherea:** a name for Venus, who rose from the sea at the island Cythera **benigne:** gracious
2216 **digne:** worthy of honor
2217 **houre:** planetary hour; see Astr 2.12. **a pas:** slowly
2219 **cheere:** expression
2223 **gladere:** one who brings joy
2224 **Adoon:** Adonis
2228 **tormentz:** tortures
2229 **biwreye:** reveal
2232 **harmes:** sorrows
2233 **rewe:** have mercy **soore:** pain, misery
2234 **As wisly as:** as surely as
2235 **Emforth:** according to
2237 **so ye me helpe:** providing you help me
2238 **kepe noght:** care nothing **yelpe:** boast
2239 **Ne I:** to be pronounced as one syllable (n'I)
2241 **pris of armes blowen:** praise for deeds of arms proclaimed
2245 **recche nat but:** care not if
2249 **vertu:** power
2252 **where I ride or go:** wherever I ride or walk (whatever I do)
2253 **beete:** kindle
2260 **Yif:** give
2263 **circumstaunces:** ceremony, due propriety
2264 **Al:** although
2269 **boone:** request
2271 **houre inequal:** planetary hour; see Astr 2.10.

Up roos the sonne, and up roos Emelye
And to the temple of Dyane gan hye.
Hir maydens, that she thider with hire ladde,
Ful redily with hem the fyr they hadde, 2276
Th'encens, the clothes, and the remenant al
That to the sacrifice longen shal;
The hornes fulle of meeth, as was the gyse —
Ther lakked noght to doon hir sacrifise. 2280
Smokynge the temple, ful of clothes faire,
This Emelye, with herte debonaire,
Hir body wessh with water of a welle.
But hou she dide hir ryte I dar nat telle,
But it be any thing in general; 2285
And yet it were a game to heeren al.
To hym that meneth wel it were no charge;
But it is good a man been at his large.
Hir brighte heer was kembd, untressed al;
A coroune of a grene ook cerial 2290
Upon hir heed was set ful fair and meete.
Two fyres on the auter gan she beete,
And dide hir thynges, as men may biholde
In Stace of Thebes and thise bookes olde.
Whan kyndled was the fyr, with pitous cheere
Unto Dyane she spak as ye may heere: 2296
"O chaste goddesse of the wodes grene,
To whom bothe hevene and erthe and see is sene,
Queene of the regne of Pluto derk and lowe,
Goddesse of maydens, that myn herte hast knowe 2300
Ful many a yeer, and woost what I desire,
As keepe me fro thy vengeaunce and thyn ire,
That Attheon aboughte cruelly.
Chaste goddesse, wel wostow that I
Desire to ben a mayden al my lyf, 2305
Ne nevere wol I be no love ne wyf.
I am, thow woost, yet of thy compaignye,
A mayde, and love huntynge and venerye,
And for to walken in the wodes wilde, 2309
And noght to ben a wyf and be with childe.
Noght wol I knowe compaignye of man.
Now help me, lady, sith ye may and kan,
For tho thre formes that thou hast in thee.
And Palamon, that hath swich love to me,
And eek Arcite, that loveth me so soore, 2315
This grace I preye thee withoute moore,
As sende love and pees bitwixe hem two,
And fro me turne awey hir hertes so
That al hire hoote love and hir desir,
And al hir bisy torment, and hir fir 2320
Be queynt, or turned in another place.
And if so be thou wolt nat do me grace,
Or if my destynee be shapen so
That I shal nedes have oon of hem two,
As sende me hym that moost desireth me. 2325
Bihoold, goddesse of clene chastitee,
The bittre teeris that on my chekes falle.
Syn thou art mayde and kepere of us alle,
My maydenhede thou kepe and wel conserve,
And whil I lyve, a mayde I wol thee serve."
The fires brenne upon the auter cleere, 2331
Whil Emelye was thus in hir preyere.
But sodeynly she saugh a sighte queynte,
For right anon oon of the fyres queynte
And quyked agayn, and after that anon 2335
That oother fyr was queynt and al agon;
And as it queynte it made a whistelynge,
As doon thise wete brondes in hir brennynge,
And at the brondes ende out ran anon
As it were blody dropes many oon; 2340
For which so soore agast was Emelye
That she was wel ny mad and gan to crye,
For she ne wiste what it signyfied,
But oonly for the feere thus hath she cried,
And weep that it was pitee for to heere. 2345
And therwithal Dyane gan appeere,
With bowe in honde, right as an hunteresse,
And seyde, "Doghter, stynt thyn hevynesse.
Among the goddes hye it is affermed, 2349
And by eterne word writen and confermed,

2274 **gan hye:** hurried
2278 **longen:** belong
2279 **meeth:** mead
2281 **Smokynge:** censing
2282 **debonaire:** gentle
2283 **wessh:** washed
2287 **charge:** burden
2288 **at his large:** without restriction
2289 **kembd:** combed **untressed:** loose
2290 **ook cerial:** an evergreen oak of southern Europe (Quercus Cerris)
2291 **meete:** suitable, fitting
2292 **beete:** kindle, feed
2293 **thynges:** business, duties
2294 **Stace of Thebes:** Statius's *Thebaid* (quoted as an epigraph to this tale)
2298 **sene:** visible
2299 **Pluto:** god of the underworld
2302 **As keepe:** keep (*as* is not translated)
2303 **Attheon aboughte:** Actaeon paid for
2308 **venerye:** hunting
2311 **compaignye of man:** sexual intercourse
2313 **tho thre formes:** those three forms (as goddess of the chase, the moon, the underworld — cf. 2297–99 above)
2320 **bisy:** intense
2321 **queynt:** extinguished
2324 **nedes:** of necessity
2333 **queynte:** curious
2334 **queynte:** went out, was extinguished
2335 **quyked:** rekindled
2336 **queynt:** extinguished
2337 **whistelynge:** roaring sound
2341 **agast:** frightened
2345 **weep:** wept
2348 **stynt:** cease

Thou shalt ben wedded unto oon of tho
That han for thee so muchel care and wo,
But unto which of hem I may nat telle.
Farwel, for I ne may no lenger dwelle.
The fires which that on myn auter brenne 2355
Shulle thee declaren, er that thou go henne,
Thyn aventure of love, as in this cas."
And with that word, the arwes in the caas
Of the goddesse clateren faste and rynge,
And forth she wente and made a vanysshynge;
For which this Emelye astoned was, 2361
And seyde, "What amounteth this, allas?
I putte me in thy protecciouu,
Dyane, and in thy disposicioun."
And hoom she goth anon the nexte weye. 2365
This is th'effect; ther is namoore to seye.
The nexte houre of Mars folwynge this,
Arcite unto the temple walked is
Of fierse Mars to doon his sacrifise,
With alle the rytes of his payen wyse. 2370
With pitous herte and heigh devocioun,
Right thus to Mars he seyde his orisoun:
"O stronge god, that in the regnes colde
Of Trace honoured art and lord yholde,
And hast in every regne and every lond 2375
Of armes al the brydel in thyn hond,
And hem fortunest as thee lyst devyse,
Accepte of me my pitous sacrifise.
If so be that my youthe may deserve, 2379
And that my myght be worthy for to serve
Thy godhede, that I may been oon of thyne,
Thanne preye I thee to rewe upon my pyne.
For thilke peyne and thilke hoote fir
In which thow whilom brendest for desir,
Whan that thow usedest the beautee 2385
Of faire, yonge, fresshe Venus free,
And haddest hire in armes at thy wille —
Although thee ones on a tyme mysfille,
Whan Vulcanus hadde caught thee in his las
And foond thee liggynge by his wyf, allas! —
For thilke sorwe that was in thyn herte, 2391
Have routhe as wel upon my peynes smerte.
I am yong and unkonnynge, as thow woost,

2351 tho: those
2356 henne: hence, away
2361 astoned: astonished
2365 nexte: nearest
2367 houre: planetary hour
2370 payen wyse: pagan manner (of worship)
2377 hem fortunest: grant them fortune, control their destinies
2382 pyne: pain
2388 mysfille: things went wrong (for) you
2389 Vulcanus: Vulcan
2390 liggynge: lying
2393 unkonnynge: ignorant, unskillful

And, as I trowe, with love offended moost
That evere was any lyves creature, 2395
For she that dooth me al this wo endure
Ne reccheth nevere wher I synke or fleete.
And wel I woot, er she me mercy heete,
I moot with strengthe wynne hire in the place,
And wel I woot, withouten help or grace 2400
Of thee ne may my strengthe noght availle.
Thanne help me, lord, tomorwe in my bataille,
For thilke fyr that whilom brente thee,
As wel as thilke fyr now brenneth me,
And do that I tomorwe have victorie. 2405
Myn be the travaille, and thyn be the glorie!
Thy sovereyn temple wol I moost honouren
Of any place, and alwey moost labouren
In thy plesaunce and in thy craftes stronge,
And in thy temple I wol my baner honge 2410
And alle the armes of my compaignye,
And everemo, unto that day I dye,
Eterne fir I wol bifore thee fynde.
And eek to this avow I wol me bynde:
My beerd, myn heer, that hongeth long adoun,
That nevere yet ne felte offensioun 2416
Of rasour nor of shere, I wol thee yive,
And ben thy trewe servant whil I lyve.
Now, lord, have routhe upon my sorwes soore;
Yif me [victorie]; I aske thee namoore." 2420
The preyere stynt of Arcita the stronge,
The rynges on the temple dore that honge,
And eek the dores, clatereden ful faste,
Of which Arcita somwhat hym agaste. 2424
The fyres brenden upon the auter brighte
That it gan al the temple for to lighte;
A sweete smel the ground anon up yaf,
And Arcita anon his hand up haf,
And moore encens into the fyr he caste,
With othere rytes mo; and atte laste 2430
The statue of Mars bigan his hauberk rynge,
And with that soun he herde a murmurynge
Ful lowe and dym, and seyde thus, "Victorie!"

2394 with: by
2395 lyves: living
2396 dooth: makes
2397 wher I synke or fleete: whether I sink or float
2398 heete: promise
2399 place: area where the action takes place, i.e., lists
2405 do: cause, bring about
2406 travaille: labor
2407 sovereyn: best, most excellent
2413 fynde: provide
2416 offensioun: injury
2417 shere: scissors
2421 stynt: stinted, stopped
2424 hym agaste: was afraid
2428 haf: raised
2431 hauberk: coat of mail
2432 soun: sound

For which he yaf to Mars honour and glorie.
And thus with joye and hope wel to fare 2435
Arcite anon unto his in is fare,
As fayn as fowel is of the brighte sonne.
And right anon swich strif ther is bigonne,
For thilke grauntyng, in the hevene above,
Bitwixe Venus, the goddesse of love, 2440
And Mars, the stierne god armypotente,
That Juppiter was bisy it to stente,
Til that the pale Saturnus the colde,
That knew so manye of aventures olde,
Foond in his olde experience an art 2445
That he ful soone hath plesed every part.
As sooth is seyd, elde hath greet avantage;
In elde is bothe wysdom and usage;
Men may the olde atrenne and noght atrede.
Saturne anon, to stynten strif and drede, 2450
Al be it that it is agayn his kynde,
Of al this strif he gan remedie fynde.
"My deere doghter Venus," quod Saturne,
"My cours, that hath so wyde for to turne,
Hath moore power than woot any man. 2455
Myn is the drenchyng in the see so wan;
Myn is the prison in the derke cote;
Myn is the stranglyng and hangyng by the throte,
The murmure and the cherles rebellyng,
The groynynge, and the pryvee empoysonyng;
I do vengeance and pleyn correccioun, 2461
Whil I dwelle in the signe of the leoun.
Myn is the ruyne of the hye halles,
The fallynge of the toures and of the walles
Upon the mynour or the carpenter. 2465
I slow Sampsoun, shakynge the piler;
And myne be the maladyes colde,
The derke tresons, and the castes olde;
My lookyng is the fader of pestilence.
Now weep namoore; I shal doon diligence 2470

2436 in: inn, lodgings
2437 fayn: glad
2441 stierne: stern, cruel armypotente: powerful in arms
2443 Saturnus the colde: Saturn the hostile
2445 art: plan
2446 part: party, side
2447 elde: old age
2448 usage: experience
2449 One can outrun the old but not outwit them.
2451 kynde: nature
2453 quod: said
2454 cours: orbit
2456 drenchyng: drowning wan: dark
2457 cote: cell
2459 murmure: grumbling cherles: peasants'
2460 groynynge: grumbling pryvee: secret empoysonyng: poisoning
2461 do . . . correccioun: punish
2462 leoun: the zodiacal sign Leo
2465 mynour: miner, digging under the walls
2466 slow: slew Sampsoun: Sampson, the biblical hero; cf. MkT VII.2015–94.
2468 derke: malicious castes: plots
2469 lookyng is the fader: (astrological) aspect is the cause

That Palamon, that is thyn owene knyght,
Shal have his lady, as thou hast him hight.
Though Mars shal helpe his knyght, yet nathelees
Bitwixe yow ther moot be som tyme pees,
Al be ye noght of o compleccioun, 2475
That causeth al day swich divisioun.
I am thyn aiel, redy at thy wille;
Weep now namoore; I wol thy lust fulfille."
Now wol I stynten of the goddes above,
Of Mars, and of Venus, goddesse of love, 2480
And telle yow as pleynly as I kan
The grete effect, for which that I bygan.

Explicit tercia pars

Sequitur pars quarta

Greet was the feeste in Atthenes that day,
And eek the lusty seson of that May 2484
Made every wight to been in swich plesaunce
That al that Monday justen they and daunce,
And spenden it in Venus heigh servyse.
But by the cause that they sholde ryse
Eerly, for to seen the grete fight,
Unto hir reste wenten they at nyght. 2490
And on the morwe, whan that day gan sprynge,
Of hors and harneys noyse and claterynge
Ther was in hostelryes al aboute,
And to the paleys rood ther many a route
Of lordes upon steedes and palfreys. 2495
Ther maystow seen devisynge of harneys
So unkouth and so riche, and wroght so weel
Of goldsmythrye, of browdynge, and of steel;
The sheeldes brighte, testeres, and trappures,
Gold-hewen helmes, hauberkes, cote-armures;
Lordes in parementz on hir courseres, 2501
Knyghtes of retenue, and eek squieres
Nailynge the speres, and helmes bokelynge;
Giggynge of sheeldes, with layneres lacynge —
There as nede is they weren no thyng ydel;

2472 hight: promised
2473 nathelees: nonetheless
2475 o compleccioun: the same temperament (as determined by the humors)
2477 aiel: grandfather
2478 lust: desire
Explicit, *etc.*: Here ends the third part. Sequitur, *etc.*: Here follows the fourth part.
2485 plesaunce: delight
2486 justen: joust
2496 devisynge of harneys: preparation of armor
2497 unkouth: exotic
2498 browdynge: embroidery
2499 testeres: head-armor for war horses trappures: horse armor
2500 Gold-hewen: gold-colored
2501 parementz: richly decorated robes
2502 of retenue: in his service
2503 Nailynge the speres: fastening the heads to the shafts (R.) helmes bokelynge: buckling on helms
2504 Giggynge of sheeldes: fitting the shields with straps (OF *guige*, thong) (R.) layneres lacynge: fastening of straps

The fomy steedes on the golden brydel 2506
Gnawynge, and faste the armurers also
With fyle and hamer prikynge to and fro;
Yemen on foote, and communes many oon
With shorte staves, thikke as they may goon;
Pypes, trompes, nakers, clariounes, 2511
That in the bataille blowen blody sounes;
The paleys ful of peple up and doun,
Heere thre, ther ten, holdynge hir questioun,
Dyvynynge of thise Thebane knyghtes two. 2515
Somme seyden thus, somme seyde "it shal be so";
Somme helden with hym with the blake berd,
Somme with the balled, somme with the thikke herd;
Somme seyde he looked grymme, and he wolde fighte:
"He hath a sparth of twenty pound of wighte."
Thus was the halle ful of divynynge, 2521
Longe after that the sonne gan to sprynge.
The grete Theseus, that of his sleep awaked
With mynstralcie and noyse that was maked,
Heeld yet the chambre of his paleys riche
Til that the Thebane knyghtes, bothe yliche
Honured, were into the paleys fet. 2527
Duc Theseus was at a wyndow set,
Arrayed right as he were a god in trone.
The peple preesseth thiderward ful soone 2530
Hym for to seen, and doon heigh reverence,
And eek to herkne his heste and his sentence.
An heraud on a scaffold made an "Oo!"
Til al the noyse of peple was ydo, 2534
And whan he saugh the peple of noyse al stille,
Tho shewed he the myghty dukes wille:
"The lord hath of his heigh discrecioun
Considered that it were destruccioun
To gentil blood to fighten in the gyse
Of mortal bataille now in this emprise. 2540
Wherfore, to shapen that they shal nat dye,
He wol his firste purpos modifye.
No man therfore, up peyne of los of lyf,
No maner shot, ne polax, ne short knyf
Into the lystes sende or thider brynge; 2545
Ne short swerd, for to stoke with poynt bitynge,
No man ne drawe, ne bere it by his syde.
Ne no man shal unto his felawe ryde
But o cours with a sharpe ygrounde spere;
Foyne, if hym list, on foote, hymself to were.
And he that is at meschief shal be take 2551
And noght slayn, but be broght unto the stake
That shal ben ordeyned on either syde;
But thider he shal by force, and there abyde.
And if so falle the chieftayn be take 2555
On outher syde, or elles sleen his make,
No lenger shal the turneiynge laste.
God spede you! Gooth forth and ley on faste!
With long swerd and with mace fighteth youre fille.
Gooth now youre wey; this is the lordes wille." 2560
The voys of peple touchede the hevene,
So loude cride they with murie stevene,
"God save swich a lord, that is so good
He wilneth no destruccion of blood!"
Up goon the trompes and the melodye, 2565
And to the lystes rit the compaignye,
By ordinance, thurghout the citee large,
Hanged with clooth of gold, and nat with sarge.
Ful lik a lord this noble duc gan ryde,
Thise two Thebans upon either syde, 2570
And after rood the queene and Emelye,
And after that another compaignye
Of oon and oother, after hir degree.
And thus they passen thurghout the citee,
And to the lystes come they by tyme. 2575
It nas nat of the day yet fully pryme
Whan set was Theseus ful riche and hye,
Ypolita the queene, and Emelye,
And othere ladys in degrees aboute.
Unto the seetes preesseth al the route. 2580

2509 **communes:** common soldiers
2510 **goon:** walk
2511 **nakers:** kettle drums **clariounes:** bugles
2512 **blody:** warlike **sounes:** sounds
2514 **holdynge hir questioun:** debating
2515 **Dyvynynge of:** conjecturing about
2518 **balled:** bald **thikke herd:** thickly haired (man)
2519 **he:** that fellow
2520 **sparth:** battle-axe **wighte:** weight
2521 **divynynge:** speculation
2526 **yliche:** alike
2527 **fet:** fetched, brought
2529 **trone:** throne
2530 **preesseth:** push **thiderward:** thither, toward there
2532 **heste:** command **sentence:** decision
2537 **discrecioun:** sound judgment
2540 **emprise:** undertaking
2542 **firste:** previous
2543 **up:** on
2544 **shot:** arrow **polax:** battle axe
2546 **stoke:** stab, jab
2549 **But o:** only one **cours:** run (in a joust)
2550 **Foyne:** let him thrust **were:** protect
2551 **at meschief:** in distress, at a disadvantage
2554 **abyde:** remain
2556 **make:** opponent
2557 **turneiynge:** tournament
2558 **spede you:** give you success
2562 **stevene:** voice
2568 **sarge:** serge
2573 **after hir degree:** according to their rank
2576 **pryme:** 9 A.M.
2577 **riche:** splendidly
2579 **degrees:** tiers, rows of seats

And westward, thurgh the gates under Marte,
Arcite, and eek the hondred of his parte,
With baner reed is entred right anon;
And in that selve moment Palamon
Is under Venus, estward in the place, 2585
With baner whyt and hardy chiere and face.
In al the world, to seken up and doun,
So evene, withouten variacioun,
Ther nere swiche compaignyes tweye,
For ther was noon so wys that koude seye 2590
That any hadde of oother avauntage
Of worthynesse, ne of estaat, ne age,
So evene were they chosen, for to gesse.
And in two renges faire they hem dresse.
Whan that hir names rad were everichon,
That in hir nombre gyle were ther noon, 2596
Tho were the gates shet, and cried was loude:
"Do now youre devoir, yonge knyghtes proude!"
The heraudes lefte hir prikyng up and doun;
Now ryngen trompes loude and clarioun. 2600
Ther is namoore to seyn, but west and est
In goon the speres ful sadly in arrest;
In gooth the sharpe spore into the syde.
Ther seen men who kan juste and who kan ryde; 2604
Ther shyveren shaftes upon sheeldes thikke;
He feeleth thurgh the herte-spoon the prikke.
Up spryngen speres twenty foot on highte;
Out goon the swerdes as the silver brighte;
The helmes they tohewen and toshrede; 2609
Out brest the blood with stierne stremes rede;
With myghty maces the bones they tobreste.
He thurgh the thikkeste of the throng gan threste;
Ther stomblen steedes stronge, and doun gooth al,
He rolleth under foot as dooth a bal; 2614
He foyneth on his feet with his tronchoun,
And he hym hurtleth with his hors adoun;
He thurgh the body is hurt and sithen take,
Maugree his heed, and broght unto the stake;
As forward was, right there he moste abyde.
Another lad is on that oother syde. 2620
And some tyme dooth hem Theseus to reste,
Hem to refresshe and drynken, if hem leste.
Ful ofte a day han thise Thebanes two
Togydre ymet, and wroght his felawe wo;
Unhorsed hath ech oother of hem tweye. 2625
Ther nas no tygre in the vale of Galgopheye,
Whan that hir whelp is stole whan it is lite,
So crueel on the hunte as is Arcite
For jelous herte upon this Palamon.
Ne in Belmarye ther nys so fel leon, 2630
That hunted is, or for his hunger wood,
Ne of his praye desireth so the blood,
As Palamon to sleen his foo Arcite.
The jelous strokes on hir helmes byte; 2634
Out renneth blood on bothe hir sydes rede.
Som tyme an ende ther is of every dede.
For er the sonne unto the reste wente,
The stronge kyng Emetreus gan hente
This Palamon, as he faught with Arcite,
And made his swerd depe in his flessh to byte,
And by the force of twenty is he take 2641
Unyolden, and ydrawen to the stake.
And in the rescus of this Palamoun
The stronge kyng Lygurge is born adoun,
And kyng Emetreus, for al his strengthe, 2645
Is born out of his sadel a swerdes lengthe,
So hitte him Palamoun er he were take.
But al for noght; he was broght to the stake.
His hardy herte myghte hym helpe naught:
He moste abyde, whan that he was caught,
By force and eek by composicioun. 2651
Who sorweth now but woful Palamoun,
That moot namoore goon agayn to fighte?
And whan that Theseus hadde seyn this sighte,
Unto the folk that foghten thus echon 2655
He cryde, "Hoo! namoore, for it is doon!
I wol be trewe juge, and no partie.

2582 **parte:** party, side
2584 **selve:** same
2593 **evene:** equally **for to gesse:** as an estimate
2594 **renges:** ranks **hem dresse:** arrange themselves
2595 **rad:** read
2596 **gyle:** deception
2597 **shet:** shut
2598 **devoir:** duty
2602 **sadly:** firmly **arrest:** lance rest (on the breast plate)
2603 **spore into the syde:** spur into the flank
2605 **shyveren:** shiver, break
2606 **herte-spoon:** the spoon-shaped hollow at the end of the breastbone
2609 **tohewen and toshrede:** hew to pieces and cut into shreds
2610 **brest:** burst **stierne:** strong
2611 **tobreste:** break to pieces
2615 **foyneth:** stabs **tronchoun:** spear shaft
2616 **hurtleth . . . adoun:** knocks down
2618 **Maugree his heed:** despite all he can do
2619 **abyde:** remain
2621 **dooth hem Theseus to reste:** Theseus makes them rest
2626 **Galgopheye:** probably Gargaphia, a valley in Boetia (Greece)
2627 **whelp:** cub
2630 **Belmarye:** Benmarin (Morocco)
2632 **praye:** prey
2634 **jelous:** fervent, vigorous
2635 **renneth:** runs
2642 **Unyolden:** without having surrendered
2643 **rescus:** rescue
2651 **composicioun:** agreement (that he had made)
2652 **sorweth:** grieves
2655 **echon:** each one
2656 **Hoo!:** stop!
2657 **partie:** partisan

Arcite of Thebes shal have Emelie,
That by his fortune hath hire faire ywonne."
Anon ther is a noyse of peple bigonne 2660
For joye of this, so loude and heighe withalle
It semed that the lystes sholde falle.
What kan now faire Venus doon above?
What seith she now? What dooth this queene of love,
But wepeth so, for wantynge of hir wille, 2665
Til that hir teeres in the lystes fille?
She seyde, "I am ashamed, doutelees."
Saturnus seyde, "Doghter, hoold thy pees!
Mars hath his wille, his knyght hath al his boone, 2669
And, by myn heed, thow shalt been esed soone."
The trompours, with the loude mynstralcie,
The heraudes, that ful loude yelle and crie,
Been in hire wele for joye of daun Arcite.
But herkneth me, and stynteth noyse a lite,
Which a myracle ther bifel anon. 2675
This fierse Arcite hath of his helm ydon,
And on a courser, for to shewe his face,
He priketh endelong the large place
Lokynge upward upon this Emelye;
And she agayn hym caste a freendlich ye 2680
(For wommen, as to speken in comune,
Thei folwen alle the favour of Fortune)
And was al his chiere, as in his herte.
Out of the ground a furie infernal sterte,
From Pluto sent at requeste of Saturne, 2685
For which his hors for fere gan to turne,
And leep aside, and foundred as he leep;
And er that Arcite may taken keep,
He pighte hym on the pomel of his heed,
That in the place he lay as he were deed, 2690
His brest tobrosten with his sadel-bowe.
As blak he lay as any cole or crowe,
So was the blood yronnen in his face.
Anon he was yborn out of the place,
With herte soor, to Theseus paleys. 2695
Tho was he korven out of his harneys
And in a bed ybrought ful faire and blyve,
For he was yet in memorie and alyve,
And alwey criynge after Emelye.
Duc Theseus, with al his compaignye, 2700
Is comen hoom to Atthenes his citee,
With alle blisse and greet solempnitee.
Al be it that this aventure was falle,
He nolde noght disconforten hem alle.
Men seyde eek that Arcite shal nat dye; 2705
He shal been heeled of his maladye.
And of another thyng they weren as fayn,
That of hem alle was ther noon yslayn,
Al were they soore yhurt, and namely oon,
That with a spere was thirled his brest boon.
To othere woundes and to broken armes 2711
Somme hadden salves, and somme hadden charmes;
Fermacies of herbes, and eek save
They dronken, for they wolde hir lymes have.
For which this noble duc, as he wel kan, 2715
Conforteth and honoureth every man,
And made revel al the longe nyght
Unto the straunge lordes, as was right.
Ne ther was holden no disconfitynge
But as a justes or a tourneiynge; 2720
For soothly ther was no disconfiture.
For fallyng nys nat but an aventure,
Ne to be lad by force unto the stake
Unyolden, and with twenty knyghtes take,
O persone allone, withouten mo, 2725
And haryed forth by arme, foot, and too,
And eke his steede dryven forth with staves
With footmen, bothe yemen and eek knaves —
It nas arretted hym no vileynye;
Ther may no man clepen it cowardye. 2730
For which anon duc Theseus leet crye,
To stynten alle rancour and envye,

2665 **wantynge:** lack
2666 **teeres in the lystes fille:** i.e., it rained
2667 **ashamed:** disgraced
2669 **boone:** request
2670 **esed:** relieved
2671 **trompours:** trumpeters
2673 **wele:** prosperity
2675 **Which a:** what a
2676 **of his helm ydon:** taken off his helmet
2677 **shewe:** show
2678 **endelong:** from end to end
2680 **agayn:** toward
2681 **in comune:** in general
2683 **chiere:** source of pleasure
2687 **foundred:** stumbled **leep:** leapt
2688 **taken keep:** take heed
2689 **pighte hym:** struck himself **pomel:** pommel (knob on a saddle)
2691 **tobrosten:** shattered
2692 **cole:** coal
2696 **Tho:** then **korven:** cut
2697 **blyve:** quickly
2698 **in memorie:** conscious
2699 **after:** for
2704 **disconforten:** distress
2707 **fayn:** happy
2709 **namely:** especially
2710 whose breastbone was pierced *(thirled)* by a spear
2713 **Fermacies:** medicines **save:** sage, in a concoction
2718 **straunge:** foreign
2719 **disconfitynge:** defeat, dishonor
2720 **justes or a tourneiynge:** joust or a tournament
2721 **disconfiture:** dishonor
2724 **Unyolden:** without having surrendered
2725 **mo:** others
2726 **haryed:** dragged **too:** toe
2728 **knaves:** male servants
2729 He incurred no shameful blame for it
2731 **leet crye:** had proclaimed
2732 **envye:** ill-will

The gree as wel of o syde as of oother,
And eyther syde ylik as ootheres brother;
And yaf hem yiftes after hir degree, 2735
And fully heeld a feeste dayes three,
And conveyed the kynges worthily
Out of his toun a journee largely.
And hoom wente every man the righte way.
Ther was namoore but "Fare wel, have good day!"
Of this bataille I wol namoore endite, 2741
But speke of Palamon and of Arcite.
Swelleth the brest of Arcite, and the soore
Encreesseth at his herte moore and moore.
The clothered blood, for any lechecraft, 2745
Corrupteth, and is in his bouk ylaft,
That neither veyne-blood, ne ventusynge,
Ne drynke of herbes may ben his helpynge.
The vertu expulsif, or animal,
Fro thilke vertu cleped natural 2750
Ne may the venym voyden ne expelle.
The pipes of his longes gonne to swelle,
And every lacerte in his brest adoun
Is shent with venym and corrupcioun.
Hym gayneth neither, for to gete his lif, 2755
Vomyt upward, ne dounward laxatif.
Al is tobrosten thilke regioun;
Nature hath now no dominacioun.
And certeinly, ther Nature wol nat wirche,
Fare wel phisik! Go ber the man to chirche!
This al and som, that Arcita moot dye; 2761
For which he sendeth after Emelye,
And Palamon, that was his cosyn deere.
Thanne seyde he thus, as ye shal after heere:
"Naught may the woful spirit in myn herte
Declare o point of alle my sorwes smerte 2766
To yow, my lady, that I love moost,
But I biquethe the servyce of my goost
To yow aboven every creature,

2733 gree: victory
2735 yiftes: gifts
2738 journee: day's journey
2741 endite: write
2743–56 The sense is that Arcite's breast swells, increasing the pain at his heart. The clotted blood left in the trunk of the body, despite the efforts of medical science in letting blood and administering herbs, cannot be voided by the expulsive spirit. The tubes of the lungs begin to swell, and every muscle in the breast is destroyed by the venom. Neither purgatives to induce vomiting nor laxatives help.
2745 clothered: clotted
2746 Corrupteth: decays bouk: trunk
2747 veyne-blood: blood-letting at a vein ventusynge: cupping
2749 expulsif: expulsive
2751 venym: poison voyden: remove
2752 longes: lungs
2753 lacerte: muscle
2754 shent: destroyed corrupcioun: decayed matter
2755 Hym gayneth: it avails him gete: preserve
2759 wirche: work
2760 phisik: medicine
2761 This = *this is*

Syn that my lyf may no lenger dure. 2770
Allas, the wo! Allas, the peynes stronge,
That I for yow have suffred, and so longe!
Allas, the deeth! Allas, myn Emelye!
Allas, departynge of oure compaignye!
Allas, myn hertes queene! Allas, my wyf, 2775
Myn hertes lady, endere of my lyf!
What is this world? What asketh men to have?
Now with his love, now in his colde grave
Allone, withouten any compaignye.
Fare wel, my sweete foo, myn Emelye! 2780
And softe taak me in youre armes tweye,
For love of God, and herkneth what I seye.
"I have heer with my cosyn Palamon
Had strif and rancour many a day agon
For love of yow, and for my jalousye. 2785
And Juppiter so wys my soule gye,
To speken of a servaunt proprely,
With alle circumstances trewely —
That is to seyen, trouthe, honour, knyghthede,
Wysdom, humblesse, estaat, and heigh kynrede,
Fredom, and al that longeth to that art — 2791
So Juppiter have of my soule part,
As in this world right now ne knowe I non
So worthy to ben loved as Palamon,
That serveth yow, and wol doon al his lyf.
And if that evere ye shul ben a wyf, 2796
Foryet nat Palamon, the gentil man."
And with that word his speche faille gan,
For from his feet up to his brest was come
The coold of deeth, that hadde hym overcome,
And yet mooreover, for in his armes two 2801
The vital strengthe is lost and al ago.
Oonly the intellect, withouten moore,
That dwelled in his herte syk and soore,
Gan faillen whan the herte felte deeth. 2805
Dusked his eyen two, and failled breeth,
But on his lady yet caste he his ye;
His laste word was, "Mercy, Emelye!"
His spirit chaunged hous and wente ther,
As I cam nevere, I kan nat tellen wher. 2810
Therfore I stynte; I nam no divinistre;
Of soules fynde I nat in this registre,
Ne me ne list thilke opinions to telle

2770 dure: last
2777 asketh men: does one ask
2781 softe: gently
2786 gye: guide
2790 heigh kynrede: noble lineage
2791 Fredom: nobility of character
2792 So: as of my soule part: interest in, concern for, my soul
2798 faille gan: began to fail
2806 Dusked: grew dark
2811 nam = *ne am*, am not divinistre: theologian

Of hem, though that they writen wher they dwelle.
Arcite is coold, ther Mars his soule gye! 2815
Now wol I speken forth of Emelye.
Shrighte Emelye, and howleth Palamon,
And Theseus his suster took anon
Swownynge, and baar hire fro the corps away.
What helpeth it to tarien forth the day 2820
To tellen how she weep bothe eve and morwe?
For in swich cas wommen have swich sorwe,
Whan that hir housbondes ben from hem ago,
That for the moore part they sorwen so,
Or ellis fallen in swich maladye 2825
That at the laste certeinly they dye.
Infinite been the sorwes and the teeres
Of olde folk and folk of tendre yeeres
In al the toun for deeth of this Theban. 2829
For hym ther wepeth bothe child and man;
So greet wepyng was ther noon, certayn,
Whan Ector was ybroght, al fressh yslayn,
To Troye. Allas, the pitee that was ther,
Cracchynge of chekes, rentynge eek of heer.
"Why woldestow be deed," thise wommen crye, 2835
"And haddest gold ynough, and Emelye?"
No man myghte gladen Theseus,
Savynge his olde fader Egeus,
That knew this worldes transmutacioun,
As he hadde seyn it chaunge bothe up and doun,
Joye after wo, and wo after gladnesse, 2841
And shewed hem ensamples and liknesse.
"Right as ther dyed nevere man," quod he,
"That he ne lyvede in erthe in some degree,
Right so ther lyvede never man," he seyde, 2845
"In al this world, that som tyme he ne deyde.
This world nys but a thurghfare ful of wo,
And we been pilgrymes, passynge to and fro.
Deeth is an ende of every worldly soore."
And over al this yet seyde he muchel moore
To this effect, ful wisely to enhorte 2851
The peple that they sholde hem reconforte.
Duc Theseus, with al his bisy cure,
Caste now wher that the sepulture

2815 ther Mars his soule gye: may Mars guide his soul
2817 Shrighte: shrieked
2821 weep: wept
2824 for the moore part: mostly
2834 Cracchynge: scratching
2837 gladen: comfort
2838 Savynge: except for
2849 soore: pain, misery
2851 enhorte: encourage
2852 hem reconforte: take heart
2853 bisy cure: careful attention
2854 Caste: considered

Of goode Arcite may best ymaked be, 2855
And eek moost honurable in his degree.
And at the laste he took conclusioun
That ther as first Arcite and Palamoun
Hadden for love the bataille hem bitwene,
That in that selve grove, swoote and grene,
Ther as he hadde his amorouse desires, 2861
His compleynte, and for love his hoote fires,
He wolde make a fyr in which the office
Funeral he myghte al accomplice. 2864
And leet comande anon to hakke and hewe
The okes olde, and leye hem on a rewe
In colpons wel arrayed for to brenne.
His officers with swifte feet they renne
And ryde anon at his comandement.
And after this, Theseus hath ysent 2870
After a beere, and it al overspradde
With clooth of gold, the richeste that he hadde.
And of the same suyte he cladde Arcite;
Upon his hondes hadde he gloves white, 2874
Eek on his heed a coroune of laurer grene,
And in his hond a swerd ful bright and kene.
He leyde hym, bare the visage, on the beere;
Therwith he weep that pitee was to heere.
And for the peple sholde seen hym alle,
Whan it was day, he broghte hym to the halle,
That roreth of the criyng and the soun. 2881
Tho cam this woful Theban Palamoun,
With flotery berd and ruggy, asshy heeres,
In clothes blake, ydropped al with teeres;
And, passynge othere of wepynge, Emelye,
The rewefulleste of al the compaignye. 2886
In as muche as the servyce sholde be
The moore noble and riche in his degree,
Duc Theseus leet forth thre steedes brynge,
That trapped were in steel al gliterynge, 2890
And covered with the armes of daun Arcite.
Upon thise steedes, that weren grete and white,
Ther seten folk, of whiche oon baar his sheeld,
Another his spere up on his hondes heeld,
The thridde baar with hym his bowe Turkeys 2895
(Of brend gold was the caas and eek the harneys);

2860 selve: same swoote: sweet-smelling
2862 compleynte: lament
2865 leet comande: ordered
2866 on a rewe: in a row
2867 colpons: piles arrayed: arranged
2871 beere: funeral bier overspradde: overspread
2883 flotery: waving ruggy: rough
2886 rewefulleste: most pitiful
2889 leet forth . . . brynge: had brought forth
2890 trapped: equipped with trappings
2891 armes: heraldic devices
2895 bowe Turkeys: Turkish bow
2896 brend gold: refined (pure) gold

And riden forth a paas with sorweful cheere
Toward the grove, as ye shul after heere.
The nobleste of the Grekes that ther were
Upon hir shuldres caryeden the beere, 2900
With slakke paas and eyen rede and wete,
Thurghout the citee by the maister strete,
That sprad was al with blak, and wonder hye
Right of the same is the strete ywrye.
Upon the right hond wente olde Egeus, 2905
And on that oother syde duc Theseus,
With vessels in hir hand of gold ful fyn,
Al ful of hony, milk, and blood, and wyn;
Eek Palamon, with ful greet compaignye;
And after that cam woful Emelye, 2910
With fyr in honde, as was that tyme the gyse,
To do the office of funeral servyse.
Heigh labour and ful greet apparaillynge
Was at the service and the fyr-makynge, 2914
That with his grene top the hevene raughte;
And twenty fadme of brede the armes straughte —
This is to seyn, the bowes weren so brode.
Of stree first ther was leyd ful many a lode.
But how the fyr was maked upon highte,
Ne eek the names that the trees highte, 2920
As ook, firre, birch, aspe, alder, holm, popler,
Wylugh, elm, plane, assh, box, chasteyn, lynde, laurer,
Mapul, thorn, bech, hasel, ew, whippeltree —
How they weren feld shal nat be toold for me;
Ne hou the goddes ronnen up and doun, 2925
Disherited of hire habitacioun,
In which they woneden in reste and pees,
Nymphes, fawnes and amadrides;
Ne hou the beestes and the briddes alle 2929
Fledden for fere, whan the wode was falle;
Ne how the ground agast was of the light,
That was nat wont to seen the sonne bright;
Ne how the fyr was couched first with stree,
And thanne with drye stikkes cloven a thre,

2897 a paas: slowly
2900 beere: funeral bier
2901 slakke: slow
2902 maister strete: main street
2913 apparaillynge: preparation
2915 raughte: reached to
2916 fadme of brede: fathoms broad armes straughte: sides projected
2918 stree: straw lode: load
2921 holm: probably the holm oak
2922 Wylugh: willow chasteyn: chestnut tree laurer: laurel
2923 bech: beech ew: yew whippeltree: cornel-tree, dogwood
2925 ronnen: ran
2927 woneden: dwelt
2928 fawnes: fauns amadrides: Hamadryads (wood nymphs)
2931 agast was of: was frightened by
2933 couched: laid stree: straw
2934 stikkes: tree trunks

And thanne with grene wode and spicerye,
And thanne with clooth of gold and with perrye, 2936
And gerlandes, hangynge with ful many a flour;
The mirre, th'encens, with al so greet odour;
Ne how Arcite lay among al this,
Ne what richesse aboute his body is; 2940
Ne how that Emelye, as was the gyse,
Putte in the fyr of funeral servyse;
Ne how she swowned whan men made the fyr,
Ne what she spak, ne what was hir desir;
Ne what jeweles men in the fyre caste, 2945
Whan that the fyr was greet and brente faste;
Ne how somme caste hir sheeld, and somme hir spere,
And of hire vestimentz, whiche that they were,
And coppes fulle of wyn, and milk, and blood,
Into the fyr, that brente as it were wood; 2950
Ne how the Grekes, with an huge route,
Thries riden al the fyr aboute
Upon the left hand, with a loud shoutynge,
And thries with hir speres claterynge;
And thries how the ladyes gonne crye; 2955
And how that lad was homward Emelye;
Ne how Arcite is brent to asshen colde;
Ne how that lyche-wake was yholde
Al thilke nyght; ne how the Grekes pleye
The wake-pleyes; ne kepe I nat to seye 2960
Who wrastleth best naked with oille enoynt,
Ne who that baar hym best, in no disjoynt.
I wol nat tellen eek how that they goon
Hoom til Atthenes, whan the pley is doon;
But shortly to the point thanne wol I wende
And maken of my longe tale an ende. 2966
By processe and by lengthe of certeyn yeres,
Al stynted is the moornynge and the teres
Of Grekes, by oon general assent.
Thanne semed me ther was a parlement 2970
At Atthenes, upon certein pointz and caas;
Among the whiche pointz yspoken was,
To have with certein contrees alliaunce,
And have fully of Thebans obeisaunce.
For which this noble Theseus anon 2975
Leet senden after gentil Palamon,
Unwist of hym what was the cause and why,
But in his blake clothes sorwefully

2935 spicerye: mixture of spices
2936 perrye: precious stones
2938 mirre: myrrh
2948 vestimentz: costumes, garbs
2958 lyche-wake: wake
2960 wake-pleyes: funeral games
2962 disjoynt: difficulty
2967 processe: course of events
2970 parlement: parliament
2977 Unwist of: unknown by

He cam at his comandement in hye.
Tho sente Theseus for Emelye. 2980
Whan they were set, and hust was al the place,
And Theseus abiden hadde a space
Er any word cam fram his wise brest,
His eyen sette he ther as was his lest.
And with a sad visage he siked stille, 2985
And after that right thus he seyde his wille:
"The Firste Moevere of the cause above,
Whan he first made the faire cheyne of love,
Greet was th'effect, and heigh was his entente.
Wel wiste he why, and what thereof he mente,
For with that faire cheyne of love he bond 2991
The fyr, the eyr, the water, and the lond
In certeyn boundes, that they may nat flee.
That same Prince and that Moevere," quod he,
"Hath stablissed in this wrecched world adoun
Certeyne dayes and duracioun 2996
To al that is engendred in this place,
Over the whiche day they may nat pace,
Al mowe they yet tho dayes wel abregge. 2999
Ther nedeth noght noon auctoritee t'allegge,
For it is preeved by experience,
But that me list declaren my sentence.
Thanne may men by this ordre wel discerne
That thilke Moevere stable is and eterne.
Wel may men knowe, but it be a fool, 3005
That every part dirryveth from his hool,
For nature hath nat taken his bigynnyng
Of no partie or cantel of a thyng,
But of a thyng that parfit is and stable,
Descendynge so til it be corrumpable. 3010
And therfore, of his wise purveiaunce,
He hath so wel biset his ordinaunce
That speces of thynges and progressiouns
Shullen enduren by successiouns,
And nat eterne, withouten any lye. 3015
This maystow understonde and seen at ye.

2979 in hye: in haste
2981 hust: quiet
2982 abiden: waited
2984 lest: pleasure
2986 seyde his wille: pronounced his decision
2989 entente: plan
2992 The four elements — fire, air, water, earth
2993 certeyn: definite, specific
2995 adoun: below
2999 mowe: can abregge: abridge, shorten
3000 noon auctoritee t'allegge: to cite no written authorities
3001 preeved: proven
3002 Unless I wish to make my meaning more clear
3006 his: its
3008 partie: part cantel: portion
3010 corrumpable: corruptible
3011 of his wise purveiaunce: by his wise foresight
3012 biset: established
3013 speces: species (types of being) progressiouns: natural processes
3014 by successiouns: one after another
3016 at ye: plainly

"Loo the ook, that hath so long a norisshynge
From tyme that it first bigynneth to sprynge,
And hath so long a lif, as we may see,
Yet at the laste wasted is the tree. 3020
"Considereth eek how that the harde stoon
Under oure feet, on which we trede and goon,
Yet wasteth it as it lyth by the weye.
The brode ryver somtyme wexeth dreye; 3024
The grete tounes se we wane and wende.
Thanne may ye se that al this thyng hath ende.
"Of man and womman seen we wel also
That nedes, in oon of thise termes two —
This is to seyn, in youthe or elles age —
He moot be deed, the kyng as shal a page;
Som in his bed, som in the depe see, 3031
Som in the large feeld, as men may see;
Ther helpeth noght; al goth that ilke weye.
Thanne may I seyn that al this thyng moot deye.
"What maketh this but Juppiter, the kyng,
That is prince and cause of alle thyng, 3036
Convertynge al unto his propre welle
From which it is dirryved, sooth to telle?
And heer-agayns no creature on lyve,
Of no degree, availleth for to stryve. 3040
"Thanne is it wysdom, as it thynketh me,
To maken vertu of necessitee,
And take it weel that we may nat eschue,
And namely that to us alle is due.
And whoso gruccheth ought, he dooth folye,
And rebel is to hym that al may gye. 3046
And certeinly a man hath moost honour
To dyen in his excellence and flour,
Whan he is siker of his goode name; 3049
Thanne hath he doon his freend, ne hym, no shame.
And gladder oghte his freend been of his deeth,
Whan with honour up yolden is his breeth,
Than whan his name apalled is for age,
For al forgeten is his vassellage.
Thanne is it best, as for a worthy fame, 3055
To dyen whan that he is best of name.
"The contrarie of al this is wilfulnesse.
Why grucchen we, why have we hevynesse,
That goode Arcite, of chivalrie flour,

3024 wexeth: becomes
3028 termes: periods of time
3030 page: servant boy
3033 ilke: same
3037 Causing everything to return to its own source (*welle*)
3039 heer-agayns: against this
3043 eschue: escape
3045 gruccheth ought: complains in any way
3049 siker: sure
3052 up yolden: given up (died)
3053 apalled: faded
3054 vassellage: prowess

Departed is with duetee and honour 3060
Out of this foule prisoun of this lyf?
Why grucchen heere his cosyn and his wyf
Of his welfare, that loved hem so weel?
Kan he hem thank? Nay, God woot, never a deel,
That both his soule and eek hemself offende,
And yet they mowe hir lustes nat amende. 3066
"What may I conclude of this longe serye,
But after wo I rede us to be merye
And thanken Juppiter of al his grace?
And er that we departen from this place 3070
I rede that we make of sorwes two
O parfit joye, lastynge everemo.
And looketh now, wher moost sorwe is herinne,
Ther wol we first amenden and bigynne.
"Suster," quod he, "this is my fulle assent,
With al th'avys heere of my parlement, 3076
That gentil Palamon, youre owene knyght,
That serveth yow with wille, herte, and myght,
And ever hath doon syn ye first hym knewe,
That ye shul of youre grace upon hym rewe,
And taken hym for housbonde and for lord. 3081
Lene me youre hond, for this is oure accord.
Lat se now of youre wommanly pitee.
He is a kynges brother sone, pardee;
And though he were a povre bacheler, 3085
Syn he hath served yow so many a yeer,
And had for yow so greet adversitee,
It moste been considered, leeveth me,
For gentil mercy oghte to passen right." 3089
Thanne seyde he thus to Palamon the knight:
"I trowe ther nedeth litel sermonyng
To make yow assente to this thyng.
Com neer, and taak youre lady by the hond."
Bitwixen hem was maad anon the bond
That highte matrimoigne or mariage, 3095
By al the conseil and the baronage.
And thus with alle blisse and melodye
Hath Palamon ywedded Emelye.
And God, that al this wyde world hath wroght,
Sende hym his love that hath it deere aboght;
For now is Palamon in alle wele, 3101
Lyvynge in blisse, in richesse, and in heele,
And Emelye hym loveth so tendrely,
And he hire serveth so gentilly,
That nevere was ther no word hem bitwene
Of jalousie or any oother teene. 3106
Thus endeth Palamon and Emelye;
And God save al this faire compaignye! Amen.

Heere is ended the Knyghtes Tale.

THE MILLER'S PROLOGUE

Heere folwen the wordes bitwene the Hoost and the Millere.

Whan that the Knyght had thus his tale ytoold,
In al the route nas ther yong ne oold 3110
That he ne seyde it was a noble storie
And worthy for to drawen to memorie,
And namely the gentils everichon.
Oure Hooste lough and swoor, "So moot I gon,
This gooth aright; unbokeled is the male. 3115
Lat se now who shal telle another tale;
For trewely the game is wel bigonne.
Now telleth ye, sir Monk, if that ye konne,
Somwhat to quite with the Knyghtes tale."

3060 **with duetee and honour:** with all proper honor
3064 **Kan he hem thank?:** Can he show them his gratitude?
never a deel: not a bit, not at all
3067 **serye:** process of thought, argument
3068 **rede:** advise
3074 **amenden:** make amends
3075 **assent:** opinion
3076 **parlement:** parliament, assembly

3112 **drawen to memorie:** remember
3113 **gentils:** gentlefolk

3085 **bacheler:** young knight
3089 Noble mercy ought to prevail over justice
3091 **sermonyng:** discourse
3100 **deere aboght:** dearly paid for
3101 **alle wele:** complete happiness
3102 **heele:** health, well-being
3106 **teene:** vexation

3115 **unbokeled is the male:** the pouch is opened; i.e., the game is well begun
3118 **konne:** know
3119 **quite with:** with which to repay, or match

The Millere, that for dronken was al pale,
So that unnethe upon his hors he sat, 3121
He nolde avalen neither hood ne hat,
Ne abyde no man for his curteisie,
But in Pilates voys he gan to crie,
And swoor, "By armes, and by blood and bones,
I kan a noble tale for the nones, 3126
With which I wol now quite the Knyghtes tale."
Oure Hooste saugh that he was dronke of ale,
And seyde, "Abyd, Robyn, my leeve brother;
Som bettre man shal telle us first another.
Abyd, and lat us werken thriftily." 3131
"By Goddes soule," quod he, "that wol nat I;
For I wol speke or elles go my wey."
Oure Hoost answerde, "Tel on, a devel wey!
Thou art a fool; thy wit is overcome." 3135
"Now herkneth," quod the Millere, "alle and some!
But first I make a protestacioun
That I am dronke; I knowe it by my soun.
And therfore if that I mysspeke or seye,
Wyte it the ale of Southwerk, I you preye.
For I wol telle a legende and a lyf 3141
Bothe of a carpenter and of his wyf,
How that a clerk hath set the wrightes cappe."
The Reve answerde and seyde, "Stynt thy clappe!
Lat be thy lewed dronken harlotrye. 3145
It is a synne and eek a greet folye
To apeyren any man, or hym defame,
And eek to bryngen wyves in swich fame.
Thou mayst ynogh of othere thynges seyn."
This dronke Millere spak ful soone ageyn
And seyde, "Leve brother Osewold, 3151
Who hath no wyf, he is no cokewold.
But I sey nat therfore that thou art oon;
Ther been ful goode wyves many oon, 3154
And evere a thousand goode ayeyns oon badde.
That knowestow wel thyself, but if thou madde.
Why artow angry with my tale now?
I have a wyf, pardee, as wel as thow;
Yet nolde I, for the oxen in my plogh,
Take upon me moore than ynogh, 3160
As demen of myself that I were oon;
I wol bileve wel that I am noon.
An housbonde shal nat been inquisityf
Of Goddes pryvetee, nor of his wyf.
So he may fynde Goddes foyson there, 3165
Of the remenant nedeth nat enquere."
What sholde I moore seyn, but this Millere
He nolde his wordes for no man forbere,
But tolde his cherles tale in his manere.
M'athynketh that I shal reherce it heere. 3170
And therfore every gentil wight I preye,
For Goddes love, demeth nat that I seye
Of yvel entente, but for I moot reherce
Hir tales alle, be they bettre or werse,
Or elles falsen som of my mateere. 3175
And therfore, whoso list it nat yheere,
Turne over the leef and chese another tale;
For he shal fynde ynowe, grete and smale,
Of storial thyng that toucheth gentillesse,
And eek moralitee and hoolynesse. 3180
Blameth nat me if that ye chese amys.
The Millere is a cherl; ye knowe wel this.
So was the Reve eek and othere mo,
And harlotrie they tolden bothe two.
Avyseth yow, and put me out of blame; 3185
And eek men shal nat maken ernest of game.

3120 **for dronken:** because of being drunk
3121 **unnethe:** hardly
3122 **avalen:** take off
3124 **Pilates voys:** a loud, ranting voice
3125 By the arms, blood, and bones of Christ
3127 **quite:** pay back, requite
3129 **Abyd:** wait **leeve:** dear
3131 **thriftily:** properly
3134 **a devel wey:** in the Devil's name
3136 **alle and some:** one and all
3139 **mysspeke or seye:** The prefix *mys-* applies to both verbs.
3140 **Wyte it:** blame it on
3141 **legende:** saint's life; see n.
3143 **set the wrightes cappe:** deceived, made a fool of the carpenter
3144 **Stynt thy clappe:** stop your noisy talk, hold your tongue
3145 **harlotrye:** ribaldry
3147 **apeyren:** injure
3150 **ageyn:** in reply
3152 **cokewold:** cuckold
3155 **ayeyns:** as opposed to
3156 **madde:** go mad
3161 **demen of:** to judge, believe of **oon:** i.e., a cuckold
3162 **wol bileve:** want to believe
3164 **pryvetee:** secrets
3165 **Goddes foyson:** God's plenty
3169 **cherles:** low-born fellows'
3170 **M'athynketh:** it displeases me, I regret **reherce:** repeat, narrate
3177 **chese:** choose
3178 **grete and smale:** of every sort
3179 **storial:** historical, true **toucheth:** concerns
3184 **harlotrie:** ribaldry, dirty stories
3185 **Avyseth yow:** consider, think about (this)
3186 **maken ernest of game:** take a joke seriously

THE MILLER'S TALE

Heere bigynneth the Millere his tale.

Whilom ther was dwellynge at Oxenford
A riche gnof, that gestes heeld to bord,
And of his craft he was a carpenter. 3189
With hym ther was dwellynge a poure scoler,
Hadde lerned art, but al his fantasye
Was turned for to lerne astrologye,
And koude a certeyn of conclusiouns,
To demen by interrogaciouns,
If that men asked hym, in certein houres 3195
Whan that men sholde have droghte or elles shoures,
Or if men asked hym what sholde bifalle
Of every thyng; I may nat rekene hem alle.
This clerk was cleped hende Nicholas.
Of deerne love he koude and of solas; 3200
And therto he was sleigh and ful privee,
And lyk a mayden meke for to see.
A chambre hadde he in that hostelrye
Allone, withouten any compaignye,
Ful fetisly ydight with herbes swoote; 3205
And he hymself as sweete as is the roote
Of lycorys or any cetewale.
His Almageste, and bookes grete and smale,
His astrelabie, longynge for his art,
His augrym stones layen faire apart, 3210
On shelves couched at his beddes heed;
His presse ycovered with a faldyng reed;
And al above ther lay a gay sautrie,
On which he made a-nyghtes melodie
So swetely that all the chambre rong; 3215
And *Angelus ad virginem* he song;
And after that he song the Kynges Noote.
Ful often blessed was his myrie throte.
And thus this sweete clerk his tyme spente
After his freendes fyndyng and his rente. 3220
This carpenter hadde wedded newe a wyf,
Which that he lovede moore than his lyf;
Of eighteteene yeer she was of age.
Jalous he was, and heeld hire narwe in cage,
For she was wylde and yong, and he was old
And demed hymself been lik a cokewold. 3226
He knew nat Catoun, for his wit was rude,
That bad man sholde wedde his simylitude.
Men sholde wedden after hire estaat,
For youthe and elde is often at debaat. 3230
But sith that he was fallen in the snare,
He moste endure, as oother folk, his care.
Fair was this yonge wyf, and therwithal
As any wezele hir body gent and smal.
A ceynt she werede, barred al of silk, 3235
A barmclooth as whit as morne milk
Upon hir lendes, ful of many a goore.
Whit was hir smok, and broyden al bifoore
And eek bihynde, on hir coler aboute,
Of col-blak silk, withinne and eek withoute.
The tapes of hir white voluper 3241
Were of the same suyte of hir coler;

3187 **Oxenford:** Oxford
3188 **gnof:** churl **gestes:** lodgers **to bord:** as boarders
3190 **poure scoler:** impoverished student
3191 **art:** the arts curriculum at the university, esp. logic **fantasye:** fancy, desire
3193 **koude:** knew **a certeyn of conclusiouns:** a certain number of astrological operations
3194 To determine by scientific calculations
3195 **in certein houres:** at specific (astrological) hours
3199 **hende:** courteous
3200 **deerne:** secret **solas:** pleasure, satisfaction (of sexual desires)
3201 **sleigh:** sly **privee:** discreet, secretive
3205 Very elegantly adorned with sweet-smelling herbs
3207 **cetewale:** zedoary (a spice resembling ginger, used as a condiment and stimulant)
3208 **Almageste:** Ptolemy's treatise on astrology
3209 **astrelabie:** astrolabe **longynge for:** belonging to, necessary for (his *art*, astronomy)
3210 **augrym stones:** counters, for use on an abacus
3211 **couched:** arranged
3212 **presse:** cupboard, linen press **faldyng reed:** coarse red woolen cloth
3213 **sautrie:** psaltry
3214 **a-nyghtes:** at night
3216 **Angelus ad virginem:** "The angel to the virgin [Mary]"
3217 **the Kynges Noote:** the King's Tune (not identified)
3220 According to what his friends provided (*freendes fyndyng*) and his income (*rente*)
3224 **narwe:** closely
3226 **lik:** like (?)
3227 **Catoun:** Cato, author of an elementary school text **rude:** ignorant, unlearned
3228 **simylitude:** equal, counterpart
3230 **elde:** old age
3231 **snare:** trap
3234 **wezele:** weasel **gent:** delicate **smal:** slender
3235 **ceynt:** belt **barred:** with decorative strips
3236 **barmclooth:** apron **morne:** morning
3237 **lendes:** loins **goore:** flounce
3238 **smok:** shift, undergarment (over which aprons and more elaborate items of clothing are worn) **broyden:** embroidered
3239 **coler:** collar
3241 **tapes:** ribbons **voluper:** cap
3242 **same suyte of:** same color as

Hir filet brood of silk, and set ful hye.
And sikerly she hadde a likerous ye;
Ful smale ypulled were hire browes two, 3245
And tho were bent and blake as any sloo.
She was ful moore blisful on to see
Than is the newe pere-jonette tree,
And softer than the wolle is of a wether.
And by hir girdel heeng a purs of lether, 3250
Tasseled with silk and perled with latoun.
In al this world, to seken up and doun,
There nys no man so wys that koude thenche
So gay a popelote or swich a wenche. 3254
Ful brighter was the shynyng of hir hewe
Than in the Tour the noble yforged newe.
But of hir song, it was as loude and yerne
As any swalwe sittynge on a berne.
Therto she koude skippe and make game,
As any kyde or calf folwynge his dame. 3260
Hir mouth was sweete as bragot or the meeth,
Or hoord of apples leyd in hey or heeth.
Wynsynge she was, as is a joly colt,
Long as a mast, and upright as a bolt.
A brooch she baar upon hir lowe coler, 3265
As brood as is the boos of a bokeler.
Hir shoes were laced on hir legges hye.
She was a prymerole, a piggesnye,
For any lord to leggen in his bedde,
Or yet for any good yeman to wedde. 3270
Now, sire, and eft, sire, so bifel the cas
That on a day this hende Nicholas
Fil with this yonge wyf to rage and pleye,
Whil that hir housbonde was at Oseneye, 3274
As clerkes ben ful subtile and ful queynte;

3243 filet: headband
3244 sikerly: truly likerous: flirtatious
3245 ypulled: plucked
3246 sloo: sloe (a plum-like fruit)
3247 blisful: pleasing
3248 pere-jonette: early-ripe pear
3249 wolle: wool wether: sheep (ram)
3250 girdel: belt
3251 perled: adorned latoun: a brass-like alloy
3253 thenche: imagine
3254 popelote: little doll wenche: lower-class woman
3256 Tour: Tower of London (the mint) noble: a gold coin (6 shillings, 8 pence)
3257 yerne: eager, lively
3258 swalwe: swallow berne: barn
3260 dame: mother (dam)
3261 bragot: country drink meeth: mead
3263 Wynsynge: skittish joly: spirited
3264 upright: straight bolt: cross-bow bolt
3266 boos of a bokeler: raised center of a shield
3268 prymerole, piggesnye: primrose, "pig's eye," names of flowers
3269 leggen: lay
3271 eft: again
3273 rage: sport (sexually)
3274 Oseneye: Osney
3275 queynte: ingenious, clever

And prively he caughte hire by the queynte,
And seyde, "Ywis, but if ich have my wille,
For deerne love of thee, lemman, I spille."
And heeld hire harde by the haunchebones,
And seyde, "Lemman, love me al atones, 3280
Or I wol dyen, also God me save!"
And she sproong as a colt dooth in the trave,
And with hir heed she wryed faste awey,
And seyde, "I wol nat kisse thee, by my fey!
Why, lat be!" quod she. "Lat be, Nicholas,
Or I wol crie 'out, harrow' and 'allas'! 3286
Do wey youre handes, for youre curteisye!"
This Nicholas gan mercy for to crye,
And spak so faire, and profred him so faste,
That she hir love hym graunted atte laste,
And swoor hir ooth, by Seint Thomas of Kent,
That she wol been at his comandement, 3292
Whan that she may hir leyser wel espie.
"Myn housbonde is so ful of jalousie
That but ye wayte wel and been privee, 3295
I woot right wel I nam but deed," quod she.
"Ye moste been ful deerne, as in this cas."
"Nay, therof care thee noght," quod Nicholas.
"A clerk hadde litherly biset his whyle,
But if he koude a carpenter bigyle." 3300
And thus they been accorded and ysworn
To wayte a tyme, as I have told biforn.
Whan Nicholas had doon thus everideel
And thakked hire aboute the lendes weel,
He kiste hire sweete and taketh his sawtrie,
And pleyeth faste, and maketh melodie. 3306
Thanne fil it thus, that to the paryssh chirche,
Cristes owene werkes for to wirche,
This goode wyf went on an haliday.
Hir forheed shoon as bright as any day, 3310
So was it wasshen whan she leet hir werk.
Now was ther of that chirche a parissh clerk,
The which that was ycleped Absolon.
Crul was his heer, and as the gold it shoon,

3276 queynte: elegant, pleasing (thing); i.e., pudendum
3277 Ywis: truly, indeed
3278 deerne: secret lemman: my love, sweetheart spille: die
3279 haunchebones: thighs
3280 al atones: at once, immediately
3281 also: as
3282 sproong: sprang trave: frame for holding a horse to be shod
3283 wryed faste: turned rapidly, twisted
3286 out, harrow: help
3289 profred him: pressed his suit
3291 Seint Thomas of Kent: Thomas Becket
3293 leyser: opportunity
3295 wayte: await, watch for (an opportunity) privee: discreet
3297 deerne: secretive
3299 litherly biset his whyle: wasted his time
3304 thakked: patted lendes: loins
3309 haliday: holy day
3311 leet: left
3314 Crul: curled

And strouted as a fanne large and brode;
Ful streight and evene lay his joly shode. 3316
His rode was reed, his eyen greye as goos.
With Poules wyndow corven on his shoos,
In hoses rede he wente fetisly.
Yclad he was ful smal and proprely 3320
Al in a kirtel of a lyght waget;
Ful faire and thikke been the poyntes set.
And therupon he hadde a gay surplys
As whit as is the blosme upon the rys.
A myrie child he was, so God me save. 3325
Wel koude he laten blood, and clippe and shave,
And maken a chartre of lond or acquitaunce.
In twenty manere koude he trippe and daunce
After the scole of Oxenforde tho,
And with his legges casten to and fro, 3330
And pleyen songes on a smal rubible;
Therto he song som tyme a loud quynyble;
And as wel koude he pleye on a giterne.
In al the toun nas brewhous ne taverne
That he ne visited with his solas, 3335
Ther any gaylard tappestere was.
But sooth to seyn, he was somdeel squaymous
Of fartyng, and of speche daungerous.
This Absolon, that jolif was and gay,
Gooth with a sencer on the haliday, 3340
Sensynge the wyves of the parisshe faste;
And many a lovely look on hem he caste,
And namely on this carpenteris wyf.
To looke on hire hym thoughte a myrie lyf,
She was so propre and sweete and likerous.
I dar wel seyn, if she hadde been a mous, 3346
And he a cat, he wolde hire hente anon.

3315 strouted as a fanne: stretched out like a fan
3316 joly: pretty shode: parted hair
3317 rode: complexion
3318 Poules wyndow: window of St. Paul's corven: carved
3319 fetisly: elegantly
3320 smal: tightly, in close-fitting clothes
3321 kirtel: tunic lyght waget: light blue
3322 poyntes: laces
3323 surplys: surplice (ecclesiastical gown)
3324 rys: twig
3325 child: young man so: as
3326 laten blood: let blood (as a medical treatment) clippe: cut hair
3327 chartre: deed acquitaunce: quitance (legal release of property)
3328 twenty manere: twenty ways
3329 After the scole: in the style, fashion tho: then
3330 casten: move quickly
3331 rubible: rebeck, a kind of fiddle
3332 quynyble: high treble
3333 giterne: cithern, a stringed instrument
3335 solas: entertainment
3336 gaylard tappestere: merry barmaid
3337 somdeel squaymous: somewhat squeamish
3338 daungerous: fastidious
3339 jolif: pretty, lively
3340 sencer: censer
3341 Sensynge: censing
3342 lovely: loving

This parissh clerk, this joly Absolon,
Hath in his herte swich a love-longynge
That of no wyf took he noon offrynge; 3350
For curteisie, he seyde, he wolde noon.
The moone, whan it was nyght, ful brighte shoon,
And Absolon his gyterne hath ytake;
For paramours he thoghte for to wake.
And forth he gooth, jolif and amorous, 3355
Til he cam to the carpenteres hous
A litel after cokkes hadde ycrowe,
And dressed hym up by a shot-wyndowe
That was upon the carpenteris wal.
He syngeth in his voys gentil and smal, 3360
"Now, deere lady, if thy wille be,
I praye yow that ye wole rewe on me,"
Ful wel acordaunt to his gyternynge.
This carpenter awook, and herde him synge,
And spak unto his wyf, and seyde anon, 3365
"What! Alison! Herestow nat Absolon,
That chaunteth thus under oure boures wal?"
And she answerde hir housbonde therwithal,
"Yis, God woot, John, I heere it every deel."
This passeth forth; what wol ye bet than weel?
Fro day to day this joly Absolon 3371
So woweth hire that hym is wo bigon.
He waketh al the nyght and al the day;
He kembeth his lokkes brode, and made hym gay;
He woweth hire by meenes and brocage, 3375
And swoor he wolde been hir owene page;
He syngeth, brokkynge as a nyghtyngale;
He sente hire pyment, meeth, and spiced ale,
And wafres, pipyng hoot out of the gleede;
And, for she was of town, he profred meede;
For som folk wol ben wonnen for richesse, 3381
And somme for strokes, and somme for gentillesse.

3354 For paramours: for the sake of love wake: remain awake
3358 dressed hym: took his place shot-wyndowe: hinged window (one that opens and closes)
3360 smal: high
3362 rewe: have mercy
3363 acordaunt to: in harmony with gyternynge: playing on the cithern
3367 chaunteth: sings under oure boures: next to our bed chamber's
3369 Yis: yes, indeed every deel: every bit
3370 bet than weel: better than well (i.e., what more would you have?)
3374 kembeth: combs
3375 meenes: go-betweens brocage: use of an agent
3376 page: servant
3377 brokkynge: trilling
3378 pyment: spiced, sweetened wine meeth: mead
3379 wafres: cakes pipyng: whistling, hissing gleede: fire
3380 profred meede: offered money
3382 for strokes: i.e., by force

Somtyme, to shewe his lightnesse and maistrye,
He pleyeth Herodes upon a scaffold hye.
But what availleth hym as in this cas? 3385
She loveth so this hende Nicholas
That Absolon may blowe the bukkes horn;
He ne hadde for his labour but a scorn.
And thus she maketh Absolon hire ape,
And al his ernest turneth til a jape. 3390
Ful sooth is this proverbe, it is no lye,
Men seyn right thus: "Alwey the nye slye
Maketh the ferre leeve to be looth."
For though that Absolon be wood or wrooth,
By cause that he fer was from hire sight, 3395
This nye Nicholas stood in his light.
Now ber thee wel, thou hende Nicholas,
For Absolon may waille and synge "allas."
And so bifel it on a Saterday,
This carpenter was goon til Osenay; 3400
And hende Nicholas and Alisoun
Acorded been to this conclusioun,
That Nicholas shal shapen hym a wyle
This sely jalous housbonde to bigyle;
And if so be the game wente aright, 3405
She sholde slepen in his arm al nyght,
For this was his desir and hire also.
And right anon, withouten wordes mo,
This Nicholas no lenger wolde tarie, 3409
But dooth ful softe unto his chambre carie
Bothe mete and drynke for a day or tweye,
And to hire housbonde bad hire for to seye,
If that he axed after Nicholas,
She sholde seye she nyste where he was;
Of al that day she saugh hym nat with ye;
She trowed that he was in maladye, 3416
For, for no cry hir mayde koude hym calle,
He nolde answere for thyng that myghte falle.
This passeth forth al thilke Saterday,
That Nicholas stille in his chambre lay, 3420
And eet and sleep, or dide what hym leste,
Til Sonday, that the sonne gooth to reste.
This sely carpenter hath greet merveyle
Of Nicholas, or what thyng myghte hym eyle,

3383 lightnesse: agility maistrye: skill
3384 Herodes: the part of Herod scaffold hye: stage
3387 blowe the bukkes horn: go whistle
3389 ape: fool, dupe
3390 jape: joke
3392 nye slye: nigh (at hand) sly one
3393 ferre leeve to be looth: distant loved one to be disliked
3396 in his light: in his way (i.e., prevented his being seen)
3403 wyle: trick
3404 sely: innocent, simple, hapless
3416 trowed: believed in maladye: ill
3418 falle: befall, happen
3421 eet: ate sleep: slept
3423–24 hath greet merveyle Of: wondered about
3424 eyle: ail

And seyde, "I am adrad, by Seint Thomas,
It stondeth nat aright with Nicholas. 3426
God shilde that he deyde sodeynly!
This world is now ful tikel, sikerly.
I saugh today a cors yborn to chirche 3429
That now, on Monday last, I saugh hym wirche.
"Go up," quod he unto his knave anoon,
"Clepe at his dore, or knokke with a stoon.
Looke how it is, and tel me boldely."
This knave gooth hym up ful sturdily, 3434
And at the chambre dore whil that he stood,
He cride and knokked as that he were wood,
"What, how! What do ye, maister Nicholay?
How may ye slepen al the longe day?"
But al for noght; he herde nat a word.
An hole he foond, ful lowe upon a bord, 3440
Ther as the cat was wont in for to crepe,
And at that hole he looked in ful depe,
And at the laste he hadde of hym a sight.
This Nicholas sat evere capyng upright,
As he had kiked on the newe moone. 3445
Adoun he gooth, and tolde his maister soone
In what array he saugh this ilke man.
This carpenter to blessen hym bigan,
And seyde, "Help us, Seinte Frydeswyde!
A man woot litel what hym shal bityde. 3450
This man is falle, with his astromye,
In some woodnesse or in som agonye.
I thoghte ay wel how that it sholde be!
Men sholde nat knowe of Goddes pryvetee.
Ye, blessed be alwey a lewed man 3455
That noght but oonly his bileve kan!
So ferde another clerk with astromye;
He walked in the feeldes for to prye
Upon the sterres, what ther sholde bifalle,
Til he was in a marle-pit yfalle; 3460
He saugh nat that. But yet, by Seint Thomas,

3427 God forbid (*shilde*) that he should die suddenly.
3428 tikel: unstable, ticklish
3429 cors: corpse
3430 That . . . hym: whom wirche: work
3431 knave: servant
3432 Clepe: call out
3434 sturdily: boldly
3444 capyng upright: gaping straight up
3445 kiked: gazed
3446 soone: immediately
3447 array: condition
3449 Seinte Frydeswyde: St. Frideswide, noted for her healing powers
3451 astromye: astronomy
3452 agonye: fit
3454 Goddes pryvetee: God's secrets
3455 Ye: yes
3456 Who knows nothing but his creed (*bileve*)
3457 ferde: fared
3458 prye: gaze
3460 marle-pit: clay pit

Me reweth soore of hende Nicholas.
He shal be rated of his studiyng,
If that I may, by Jhesus, hevene kyng!
Get me a staf, that I may underspore, 3465
Whil that thou, Robyn, hevest up the dore.
He shal out of his studiyng, as I gesse."
And to the chambre dore he gan hym dresse.
His knave was a strong carl for the nones,
And by the haspe he haaf it of atones; 3470
Into the floor the dore fil anon.
This Nicholas sat ay as stille as stoon,
And evere caped upward into the eir.
This carpenter wende he were in despeir,
And hente hym by the sholdres myghtily, 3475
And shook hym harde, and cride spitously,
"What! Nicholay! What, how! What, looke adoun!
Awak, and thenk on Cristes passioun!
I crouche thee from elves and fro wightes."
Therwith the nyght-spel seyde he anon-rightes
On foure halves of the hous aboute, 3481
And on the thresshfold of the dore withoute:
"Jhesu Crist and Seinte Benedight,
Blesse this hous from every wikked wight,
For nyghtes verye, the white *pater-noster!* 3485
Where wentestow, Seinte Petres soster?"
And atte laste this hende Nicholas
Gan for to sik soore, and seyde, "Allas!
Shal al the world be lost eftsoones now?" 3489
This carpenter answerde, "What seystow?
What! Thynk on God, as we doon, men that swynke."
This Nicholas answerde, "Fecche me drynke,
And after wol I speke in pryvetee
Of certeyn thyng that toucheth me and thee.
I wol telle it noon oother man, certeyn." 3495

3462 **Me reweth soore of:** I feel sorry for
3463 **rated of:** scolded for
3465 **underspore:** pry up from under
3467 **shal:** shall come (verb of motion is understood)
3469 **carl:** fellow
3470 **haaf it of:** heaved it off **atones:** at once, immediately
3473 **caped:** gaped
3474 **wende he were:** supposed he was
3476 **spitously:** vigorously, loudly
3479 **crouche:** make the sign of the cross as a blessing over **elves:** evil spirits **wightes:** (evil) creatures
3480 **nyght-spel:** a charm **anon-rightes:** straightaway
3481 **halves:** sides
3482 **thresshfold:** threshold
3483 **Seinte Benedight:** St. Benedict
3484 **wight:** creature
3485 **For nyghtes verye:** against the evil spirits of the night (?) **white pater-noster:** a charm
3486 **wentestow:** did you go **Seinte Petres soster:** St. Peter's sister
3488 **sik:** sigh
3489 **eftsoones now:** right now
3491 **swynke:** work
3493 **in pryvetee:** in secret, confidentially
3494 **toucheth:** concerns

This carpenter goth doun, and comth ageyn,
And broghte of myghty ale a large quart;
And whan that ech of hem had dronke his part,
This Nicholas his dore faste shette,
And doun the carpenter by hym he sette. 3500
He seyde "John, myn hooste, lief and deere,
Thou shalt upon thy trouthe swere me heere
That to no wight thou shalt this conseil wreye,
For it is Cristes conseil that I seye,
And if thou telle it man, thou art forlore; 3505
For this vengeaunce thou shalt han therfore,
That if thou wreye me, thou shalt be wood."
"Nay, Crist forbede it, for his hooly blood!"
Quod tho this sely man, "I nam no labbe, 3509
Ne, though I seye, I nam nat lief to gabbe.
Sey what thou wolt, I shal it nevere telle
To child ne wyf, by hym that harwed helle!"
"Now John," quod Nicholas, "I wol nat lye;
I have yfounde in myn astrologye,
As I have looked in the moone bright, 3515
That now a Monday next, at quarter nyght,
Shal falle a reyn, and that so wilde and wood
That half so greet was nevere Noes flood.
This world," he seyde, "in lasse than an hour
Shal al be dreynt, so hidous is the shour. 3520
Thus shal mankynde drenche, and lese hir lyf."
This carpenter answerde, "Allas, my wyf!
And shal she drenche? Allas, myn Alisoun!"
For sorwe of this he fil almoost adoun, 3524
And seyde, "Is ther no remedie in this cas?"
"Why, yis, for Gode," quod hende Nicholas,
"If thou wolt werken after loore and reed.
Thou mayst nat werken after thyn owene heed;
For thus seith Salomon, that was ful trewe:
'Werk al by conseil, and thou shalt nat rewe.'
And if thou werken wolt by good conseil, 3531
I undertake, withouten mast and seyl,
Yet shal I saven hire and thee and me.
Hastow nat herd hou saved was Noe, 3534
Whan that oure Lord hadde warned hym biforn

3497 **myghty:** strong **large:** full
3499 **shette:** shut
3501 **lief:** beloved
3503 **wreye:** reveal
3505 **forlore:** lost
3507 **wreye:** betray
3509 **sely:** innocent, ignorant, hapless **labbe:** blabbermouth
3510 **nam nat lief to gabbe:** do not like to gab
3512 **hym that harwed helle:** Christ, who despoiled Hell of its captives
3516 **a:** on **quarter nyght:** a quarter way through the night; in April, after midnight
3518 Noes: Noah's
3520 **dreynt:** drowned
3521 **drenche:** drown **hir lyf:** their lives
3526 **yis:** yes indeed
3527 **loore:** learning **reed:** (good) advice
3528 **heed:** head (i.e., ideas)
3530 **rewe:** be sorry
3532 **undertake:** affirm, declare

That al the world with water sholde be lorn?"
"Yis," quod this Carpenter, "ful yoore ago."
"Hastou nat herd," quod Nicholas, "also
The sorwe of Noe with his felaweshipe,
Er that he myghte gete his wyf to shipe? 3540
Hym hadde be levere, I dar wel undertake,
At thilke tyme, than alle his wetheres blake
That she hadde had a ship hirself allone.
And therfore, woostou what is best to doone?
This asketh haste, and of an hastif thyng 3545
Men may nat preche or maken tariyng.
"Anon go gete us faste into this in
A knedyng trogh, or ellis a kymelyn,
For ech of us, but looke that they be large,
In which we mowe swymme as in a barge,
And han therinne vitaille suffisant 3551
But for a day — fy on the remenant!
The water shal aslake and goon away
Aboute pryme upon the nexte day. 3554
But Robyn may nat wite of this, thy knave,
Ne eek thy mayde Gille I may nat save;
Axe nat why, for though thou aske me,
I wol nat tellen Goddes pryvetee.
Suffiseth thee, but if thy wittes madde,
To han as greet a grace as Noe hadde. 3560
Thy wyf shal I wel saven, out of doute.
Go now thy wey, and speed thee heer-aboute.
"But whan thou hast, for hire and thee and me,
Ygeten us thise knedyng tubbes thre, 3564
Thanne shaltow hange hem in the roof ful hye,
That no man of oure purveiaunce espye.
And whan thou thus hast doon as I have seyd,
And hast oure vitaille faire in hem yleyd,
And eek an ax to smyte the corde atwo, 3569
Whan that the water comth, that we may go
And breke an hole an heigh, upon the gable,
Unto the gardyn-ward, over the stable,
That we may frely passen forth oure way,

3536 **lorn:** lost
3537 **yoore ago:** long ago
3539 **Noe:** Noah, here as a character in the popular mystery plays
3541–43 He would have preferred (*Hym hadde be levere*), I dare affirm, that she had a ship all to herself, than have all his black sheep (*wetheres*); i.e., he would have given all his sheep for this.
3547 **in:** house
3548 **knedyng trogh:** large trough for kneading dough
kymelyn: large tub for brewing beer
3550 **swymme:** float **barge:** sailing vessel
3551 **vitaille suffisant:** enough food
3553 **aslake:** subside
3554 **pryme:** around 9 A.M.
3559 **madde:** go mad
3562 **speed thee:** hurry **heer-aboute:** about this matter
3566 **purveiaunce:** preparations
3569 **atwo:** in two
3571 **an heigh:** above
3572 **Unto the gardyn-ward:** toward the garden

Whan that the grete shour is goon away.
Thanne shaltou swymme as myrie, I undertake,
As dooth the white doke after hire drake. 3576
Thanne wol I clepe, 'How, Alison! How, John!
Be myrie, for the flood wol passe anon.'
And thou wolt seyn, 'Hayl, maister Nicholay!
Good morwe, I se thee wel, for it is day.' 3580
And thanne shul we be lordes al oure lyf
Of al the world, as Noe and his wyf.
"But of o thyng I warne thee ful right:
Be wel avysed on that ilke nyght
That we ben entred into shippes bord, 3585
That noon of us ne speke nat a word,
Ne clepe, ne crie, but be in his preyere;
For it is Goddes owene heeste deere.
"Thy wyf and thou moote hange fer atwynne;
For that bitwixe yow shal be no synne, 3590
Namoore in lookyng than ther shal in deede.
This ordinance is seyd. Go, God thee speede!
Tomorwe at nyght, whan men ben alle aslepe,
Into oure knedyng-tubbes wol we crepe,
And sitten there, abidyng Goddes grace. 3595
Go now thy wey; I have no lenger space
To make of this no lenger sermonyng.
Men seyn thus, 'sende the wise, and sey no thyng.'
Thou art so wys, it needeth thee nat teche.
Go, save oure lyf, and that I the biseche." 3600
This sely carpenter goth forth his wey.
Ful ofte he seide "Allas and weylawey,"
And to his wyf he tolde his pryvetee, 3603
And she was war, and knew it bet than he,
What al this queynte cast was for to seye.
But nathelees she ferde as she wolde deye,
And seyde, "Allas! go forth thy wey anon,
Help us to scape, or we been dede echon!
I am thy trewe, verray wedded wyf; 3609
Go, deere spouse, and help to save oure lyf."
Lo, which a greet thyng is affeccioun!
Men may dyen of ymaginacioun,
So depe may impressioun be take.
This sely carpenter bigynneth quake;
Hym thynketh verraily that he may see 3615

3584 **wel avysed:** well warned
3587 **but be:** unless it be
3588 **heeste:** commandment
3589 **atwynne:** apart
3592 **ordinance:** command
3595 **abidyng:** awaiting
3596 **space:** time
3597 **sermonyng:** talk
3604 **bet:** better
3605 **queynte cast:** ingenious plot **seye:** mean
3608 **scape:** escape **echon:** each one
3611 **which a:** what a **affeccioun:** emotion
3612 **ymaginacioun:** fantasy
3614 **quake:** tremble

Noees flood come walwynge as the see
To drenchen Alisoun, his hony deere.
He wepeth, weyleth, maketh sory cheere;
He siketh with ful many a sory swogh; 3619
He gooth and geteth hym a knedyng trogh,
And after that a tubbe and a kymelyn,
And pryvely he sente hem to his in,
And heng hem in the roof in pryvetee.
His owene hand he made laddres thre, 3624
To clymben by the ronges and the stalkes
Unto the tubbes hangynge in the balkes,
And hem vitailled, bothe trogh and tubbe,
With breed, and chese, and good ale in a jubbe,
Suffisynge right ynogh as for a day.
But er that he hadde maad al this array, 3630
He sente his knave, and eek his wenche also,
Upon his nede to London for to go.
And on the Monday, whan it drow to nyght,
He shette his dore withoute candel-lyght,
And dressed alle thyng as it sholde be. 3635
And shortly, up they clomben alle thre;
They seten stille wel a furlong way.
"Now, *Pater-noster,* clom!" seyde Nicholay,
And "Clom!" quod John, and "Clom!" seyde Alisoun.
This carpenter seyde his devocioun, 3640
And stille he sit, and biddeth his preyere,
Awaitynge on the reyn, if he it heere.
The dede sleep, for wery bisynesse,
Fil on this carpenter right, as I gesse,
Aboute corfew-tyme, or litel moore; 3645
For travaille of his goost he groneth soore,
And eft he routeth, for his heed myslay.
Doun of the laddre stalketh Nicholay,
And Alisoun ful softe adoun she spedde;
Withouten wordes mo they goon to bedde,
Ther as the carpenter is wont to lye. 3651
Ther was the revel and the melodye;

3616 **walwynge:** surging
3618 **maketh sory cheere:** looks sad, wretched
3619 **swogh:** groan
3624 **His owene hand:** by himself
3625 **stalkes:** uprights (of the ladder)
3626 **balkes:** beams
3627 **vitailled:** stocked with provisions
3628 **jubbe:** large container, jug
3630 **array:** preparation
3631 **wenche:** servant girl
3632 **nede:** business
3635 **dressed:** arranged
3637 **furlong way:** a couple of minutes
3638 Now say a Paternoster (Lord's Prayer) and then hush (*clom*).
3641 **sit** = *sitteth,* sits **biddeth:** prays
3643 **for wery bisynesse:** wearied by this work
3645 **corfew-tyme:** dusk
3646 **travaille of his goost:** suffering of his spirit, mental anguish
3647 **eft:** likewise **routeth:** snores **myslay:** lay wrong
3651 **Ther as:** where **wont:** accustomed

And thus lith Alison and Nicholas,
In bisynesse of myrthe and of solas,
Til that the belle of laudes gan to rynge, 3655
And freres in the chauncel gonne synge.
This parissh clerk, this amorous Absolon,
That is for love alwey so wo bigon,
Upon the Monday was at Oseneye 3659
With compaignye, hym to disporte and pleye,
And axed upon cas a cloisterer
Ful prively after John the carpenter;
And he drough hym apart out of the chirche,
And seyde, "I noot; I saugh hym heere nat wirche
Syn Saterday; I trowe that he be went 3665
For tymber, ther oure abbot hath hym sent;
For he is wont for tymber for to go
And dwellen at the grange a day or two;
Or elles he is at his hous, certeyn.
Where that he be, I kan nat soothly seyn." 3670
This Absolon ful joly was and light,
And thoghte, "Now is tyme to wake al nyght,
For sikirly I saugh hym nat stirynge
Aboute his dore, syn day bigan to sprynge.
"So moot I thryve, I shal, at cokkes crowe,
Ful pryvely knokken at his wyndowe 3676
That stant ful lowe upon his boures wal.
To Alison now wol I tellen al
My love-longynge, for yet I shal nat mysse
That at the leeste wey I shal hire kisse. 3680
Som maner confort shal I have, parfay.
My mouth hath icched al this longe day;
That is a signe of kissyng atte leeste.
Al nyght me mette eek I was at a feeste. 3684
Therfore I wol go slepe an houre or tweye,
And al the nyght thanne wol I wake and pleye."
Whan that the firste cok hath crowe, anon
Up rist this joly lovere Absolon,
And hym arraieth gay, at poynt-devys.
But first he cheweth greyn and lycorys, 3690
To smellen sweete, er he hadde kembd his heer.

3655 **laudes:** an early morning service, before daybreak
3661 **upon cas:** by chance
3663 **drough:** drew
3668 **grange:** outlying farm
3671 **light:** happy
3672 **wake:** remain awake
3675 **So moot I thryve:** as I may prosper
3677 **stant** = *stondith,* stands
3679 **mysse:** fail
3680 **at the leeste wey:** at least
3681 **parfay:** indeed, by my faith
3682 **icched:** itched
3684 **me mette:** I dreamed
3688 **rist** = *riseth,* rises
3689 **hym arraieth gay:** dresses himself handsomely **at poynt-devys:** in every detail, completely
3690 **greyn:** Grain of Paradise, cardamom seed, a breath-sweetener

Under his tonge a trewe-love he beer,
For therby wende he to ben gracious.
He rometh to the carpenteres hous, 3694
And stille he stant under the shot-wyndowe —
Unto his brest it raughte, it was so lowe —
And softe he cougheth with a semy soun:
"What do ye, hony-comb, sweete Alisoun,
My faire bryd, my sweete cynamome? 3699
Awaketh, lemman myn, and speketh to me!
Wel litel thynken ye upon my wo,
That for youre love I swete ther I go.
No wonder is thogh that I swelte and swete;
I moorne as dooth a lamb after the tete. 3704
Ywis, lemman, I have swich love-longynge
That lik a turtel trewe is my moornynge.
I may nat ete na moore than a mayde."
"Go fro the wyndow, Jakke fool," she sayde;
"As help me God, it wol nat be 'com pa me.'
I love another — and elles I were to blame —
Wel bet than thee, by Jhesu, Absolon. 3711
Go forth thy wey, or I wol casté a ston,
And lat me slepe, a twenty devel wey!"
"Allas," quod Absolon, "and weylawey,
That trewe love was evere so yvel biset! 3715
Thanne kysse me, syn it may be no bet,
For Jhesus love, and for the love of me."
"Wiltow thanne go thy wey therwith?" quod she.
"Ye, certes, lemman," quod this Absolon.
"Thanne make thee redy," quod she, "I come anon."
And unto Nicholas she seyde stille, 3721
"Now hust, and thou shalt laughen al thy fille."
This Absolon doun sette hym on his knees
And seyde, "I am a lord at alle degrees;
For after this I hope ther cometh moore. 3725
Lemman, thy grace, and sweete bryd, thyn oore!"
The wyndow she undoth, and that in haste.
"Have do," quod she, "com of, and speed the faste,
Lest that oure neighebores thee espie." 3729
This Absolon gan wype his mouth ful drie.
Derk was the nyght as pich, or as the cole,
And at the wyndow out she putte hir hole,
And Absolon, hym fil no bet ne wers,
But with his mouth he kiste hir naked ers
Ful savourly, er he were war of this. 3735
Abak he stirte, and thoughte it was amys,
For wel he wiste a womman hath no berd.
He felte a thyng al rough and long yherd,
And seyde, "Fy! allas! what have I do?"
"Tehee!" quod she, and clapte the wyndow to,
And Absolon gooth forth a sory pas. 3741
"A berd! A berd!" quod hende Nicholas,
"By Goddes corpus, this goth faire and weel."
This sely Absolon herde every deel,
And on his lippe he gan for anger byte, 3745
And to hymself he seyde, "I shal thee quyte."
Who rubbeth now, who froteth now his lippes
With dust, with sond, with straw, with clooth, with chippes,
But Absolon, that seith ful ofte, "Allas!"
"My soule bitake I unto Sathanas, 3750
But me were levere than al this toun," quod he,
"Of this despit awroken for to be.
Allas," quod he, "allas, I ne hadde ybleynt!"
His hoote love was coold and al yqueynt;
For fro that tyme that he hadde kist hir ers,
Of paramours he sette nat a kers, 3756
For he was heeled of his maladie.
Ful ofte paramours he gan deffie,
And weep as dooth a child that is ybete.
A softe paas he wente over the strete 3760
Until a smyth men cleped daun Gerveys,
That in his forge smythed plough harneys;

3692 trewe-love: a four-leafed sprig of herb paris (Paris quadrifolia) in the shape of a fourfold true-love knot
3693 gracious: attractive
3695 stant = *stondeth*, stands under: next to shot-wyndowe: hinged window
3696 raughte: reached
3697 semy soun: small, gentle sound
3699 bryd: bird (i.e., sweetheart) cynamome: cinnamon
3700 lemman: sweetheart
3703 swelte: grow faint swete: sweat
3704 moorne: yearn
3705 Ywis: truly, indeed
3706 turtel: turtledove
3708 Jakke fool: you idiot
3709 com pa me: come kiss me
3713 a twenty devel wey: in the name of twenty devils
3715 so yvel biset: in such miserable circumstances
3722 hust: be quiet
3724 at alle degrees: in every way
3726 bryd: bird (i.e., sweetheart) oore: mercy, grace
3727 undoth: opens
3728 Have do: finish up com of: hurry up speed the faste: be quick
3731 pich: pitch
3733 wers: worse
3735 savourly: with relish
3738 long yherd: long-haired
3741 a sory pas: sadly
3742 A berd! A berd!: a beard! a trick!
3743 corpus: body
3744 every deel: every bit
3746 quyte: pay back (revenge)
3747 froteth: rubs
3750 bitake: give
3751 If I would not rather than (own) all this town
3752 despit: insult awroken: avenged
3753 ybleynt: turned away
3754 yqueynt: quenched
3756 kers: cress (i.e., something of no value)
3758 deffie: repudiate
3761 Until: to daun: sir
3762 plough harneys: ploughing equipment

He sharpeth shaar and kultour bisily.
This Absolon knokketh al esily, 3764
And seyde, "Undo, Gerveys, and that anon."
"What, who artow?" "It am I, Absolon."
"What, Absolon! for Cristes sweete tree,
Why rise ye so rathe? Ey, benedicitee!
What eyleth yow? Som gay gerl, God it woot,
Hath broght yow thus upon the viritoot. 3770
By Seinte Note, ye woot wel what I mene."
This Absolon ne roghte nat a bene
Of al his pley; no word agayn he yaf;
He hadde moore tow on his distaf 3774
Than Gerveys knew, and seyde, "Freend so deere,
That hoote kultour in the chymenee heere,
As lene it me; I have therwith to doone,
And I wol brynge it thee agayn ful soone."
Gerveys answerde, "Certes, were it gold,
Or in a poke nobles alle untold, 3780
Thou sholdest have, as I am trewe smyth.
Ey, Cristes foo! What wol ye do therwith?"
"Therof," quod Absolon, "be as be may.
I shal wel telle it thee to-morwe day" —
And caughte the kultour by the colde stele.
Ful softe out at the dore he gan to stele, 3786
And wente unto the carpenteris wal.
He cogheth first, and knokketh therwithal
Upon the wyndowe, right as he dide er.
This Alison answerde, "Who is ther 3790
That knokketh so? I warante it a theef."
"Why, nay," quod he, "God woot, my sweete leef,
I am thyn Absolon, my deerelyng.
Of gold," quod he, "I have thee broght a ryng.
My mooder yaf it me, so God me save; 3795
Ful fyn it is, and therto wel ygrave.
This wol I yeve thee, if thou me kisse."

3763 **sharpeth:** sharpens **shaar:** ploughshare **kultour:** vertical blade at the front of the plough
3764 **esily:** gently
3765 **Undo:** open up
3767 **sweete tree:** dear cross
3768 **rathe:** early
3769 **gay gerl:** good-looking girl
3770 **upon the viritoot:** astir (?)
3771 **Seinte Note:** St. Neot
3772 **roghte nat a bene:** cared not a bean (i.e., nothing)
3774 **tow on his distaf:** flax on his distaff (i.e., more business on hand)
3776 **chymenee:** hearth
3777 **As lene:** lend (*as* is not translated)
3780 **poke:** bag **nobles:** gold coins **untold:** countless
3782 **Ey, Cristes foo!:** Ah, by Christ's foe (i.e., the Devil)
3783 **be as be may:** whatever may be
3785 **stele:** handle
3791 **warante:** swear
3792 **leef:** beloved
3793 **deerelyng:** darling
3796 **ygrave:** engraved

This Nicholas was risen for to pisse,
And thoughte he wolde amenden al the jape;
He sholde kisse his ers er that he scape. 3800
And up the wyndowe dide he hastily,
And out his ers he putteth pryvely
Over the buttok, to the haunche-bon;
And therwith spak this clerk, this Absolon,
"Spek, sweete bryd, I noot nat where thou art."
This Nicholas anon leet fle a fart 3806
As greet as it had been a thonder-dent,
That with the strook he was almoost yblent;
And he was redy with his iren hoot,
And Nicholas amydde the ers he smoot. 3810
Of gooth the skyn an hande-brede aboute,
The hoote kultour brende so his toute,
And for the smert he wende for to dye.
As he were wood, for wo he gan to crye, 3814
"Help! Water! Water! Help, for Goddes herte!"
This carpenter out of his slomber sterte,
And herde oon crien "water!" as he were wood,
And thoughte, "Allas, now comth Nowelis flood!"
He sit hym up withouten wordes mo, 3819
And with his ax he smoot the corde atwo,
And doun gooth al; he foond neither to selle,
Ne breed ne ale, til he cam to the celle
Upon the floor, and ther aswowne he lay.
Up stirte hire Alison and Nicholay, 3824
And criden "Out" and "Harrow" in the strete.
The neighebores, bothe smale and grete,
In ronnen for to gauren on this man,
That yet aswowne lay, bothe pale and wan,
For with the fal he brosten hadde his arm.
But stonde he moste unto his owene harm;
For whan he spak, he was anon bore doun 3831
With hende Nicholas and Alisoun.
They tolden every man that he was wood;
He was agast so of Nowelis flood

3799 **amenden al the jape:** make the joke even better
3803 **haunche-bon:** thigh
3806 **leet fle:** let fly
3807 **thonder-dent:** thunderstroke
3808 **yblent:** blinded
3811 **Of:** off **hande-brede aboute:** width of a hand all around
3812 **toute:** rump
3813 **smert:** pain **wende for to dye:** thought he would die
3815 **herte:** heart
3818 **Nowelis:** Noah's
3821–22 He did not stop to sell bread or ale on the way (i.e., he wasted no time).
3822 **celle:** floor
3823 **aswowne:** in a faint
3826 **smale and grete:** i.e., everyone
3827 **ronnen:** ran **gauren on:** stare at
3829 **brosten:** broken
3830 But he had to stand up, though it turned out badly for him.
3832 **With:** by
3834 **agast:** frightened

Thurgh fantasie that of his vanytee 3835
He hadde yboght hym knedyng tubbes thre,
And hadde hem hanged in the roof above;
And that he preyed hem, for Goddes love,
To sitten in the roof, *par compaignye.*
The folk gan laughen at his fantasye; 3840
Into the roof they kiken and they cape,
And turned al his harm unto a jape.
For what so that this carpenter answerde,
It was for noght; no man his reson herde.
With othes grete he was so sworn adoun 3845
That he was holde wood in al the toun;
For every clerk anonright heeld with oother.
They seyde, "The man is wood, my leeve brother";
And every wight gan laughen at this stryf.
Thus swyved was this carpenteris wyf, 3850
For al his kepyng and his jalousye,
And Absolon hath kist hir nether ye,
And Nicholas is scalded in the towte.
This tale is doon, and God save al the rowte!

Heere endeth the Millere his tale.

THE REEVE'S PROLOGUE

The prologe of the Reves Tale.

Whan folk hadde laughen at this nyce cas
Of Absolon and hende Nicholas, 3856
Diverse folk diversely they seyde,
But for the moore part they loughe and pleyde.
Ne at this tale I saugh no man hym greve,
But it were oonly Osewold the Reve. 3860
By cause he was of carpenteris craft,
A litel ire is in his herte ylaft;
He gan to grucche, and blamed it a lite.
"So theek," quod he, "ful wel koude I thee quite
With bleryng of a proud milleres ye, 3865
If that me liste speke of ribaudye.
But ik am oold; me list not pley for age;
Gras tyme is doon; my fodder is now forage;
This white top writeth myne olde yeris;
Myn herte is also mowled as myne heris, 3870
But if I fare as dooth an open-ers —
That ilke fruyt is ever lenger the wers,
Til it be roten in mullok or in stree.
We olde men, I drede, so fare we:
Til we be roten, kan we nat be rype; 3875
We hoppen alwey whil that the world wol pype.
For in oure wyl ther stiketh evere a nayl,
To have an hoor heed and a grene tayl,
As hath a leek; for thogh oure myght be goon,
Oure wyl desireth folie evere in oon. 3880
For whan we may nat doon, than wol we speke;
Yet in oure asshen olde is fyr yreke.
"Foure gleedes han we, which I shal devyse —
Avauntyng, liyng, anger, coveitise;
Thise foure sparkles longen unto eelde. 3885

3835 **vanytee:** foolishness
3839 **par compaignye:** for fellowship's sake, to keep him company
3841 **kiken:** stare **cape:** gape
3845 **sworn adoun:** overcome by oaths

3847 **anonright:** immediately **heeld:** held, agreed
3850 **swyved:** copulated with
3851 **kepyng:** guarding
3852 **nether ye:** lower eye

3855 **nyce cas:** foolish business
3859 **hym greve:** get angry
3863 **grucche:** complain
3864 **So theek:** as I may prosper (I swear)
3865 **bleryng of a proud milleres ye:** deluding, tricking a proud miller
3866 **ribaudye:** ribaldry, coarse jesting
3867 **ik:** I
3868 I have left the pasture for the stable.
3869 My white hairs declare my old age.
3870 **also:** as **mowled:** molded

3871 **open-ers:** fruit of the medlar
3872 **ever lenger the wers:** increasingly worse
3873 **roten:** rotten **mullok:** mullock (rubbish, refuse) **stree:** straw
3876 **hoppen:** dance
3877 We are always goaded by desire (*nayl* = nail).
3878 **hoor:** white-haired
3880 **evere in oon:** continually
3882 Still in our old ashes, fire is raked over (*yreke;* i.e., covered).
3883 **gleedes:** embers, live coals
3884 **Avauntyng:** boasting **coveitise:** greed, avarice
3885 **eelde:** old age

Oure olde lemes mowe wel been unweelde,
But wyl ne shal nat faillen, that is sooth.
And yet ik have alwey a coltes tooth,
As many a yeer as it is passed henne
Syn that my tappe of lif bigan to renne. 3890
For sikerly, whan I was bore, anon
Deeth drough the tappe of lyf and leet it gon,
And ever sithe hath so the tappe yronne
Til that almoost al empty is the tonne. 3894
The streem of lyf now droppeth on the chymbe.
The sely tonge may wel rynge and chymbe
Of wrecchednesse that passed is ful yoore;
With olde folk, save dotage, is namoore!"
Whan that oure Hoost hadde herd this sermonyng,
He gan to speke as lordly as a kyng. 3900
He seide, "What amounteth al this wit?
What shul we speke alday of hooly writ?
The devel made a reve for to preche,
Or of a soutere a shipman or a leche.
Sey forth thy tale, and tarie nat the tyme. 3905
Lo Depeford, and it is half-wey pryme!
Lo Grenewych, ther many a shrewe is inne!
It were al tyme thy tale to bigynne."
"Now, sires," quod this Osewold the Reve,
"I pray yow alle that ye nat yow greve, 3910
Thogh I answere, and somdeel sette his howve;
For leveful is with force force of-showve.
"This dronke Millere hath ytoold us heer
How that bigyled was a carpenteer,
Peraventure in scorn, for I am oon. 3915
And, by youre leve, I shal hym quite anoon;
Right in his cherles termes wol I speke.
I pray to God his nekke mote to-breke;
He kan wel in myn eye seen a stalke,
But in his owene he kan nat seen a balke." 3920

THE REEVE'S TALE

Heere bigynneth the Reves Tale.

At Trumpyngtoun, nat fer fro Cantebrigge,
Ther gooth a brook, and over that a brigge,
Upon the whiche brook ther stant a melle;
And this is verray sooth that I yow telle:
A millere was ther dwellynge many a day. 3925
As any pecok he was proud and gay.
Pipen he koude and fisshe, and nettes beete,
And turne coppes, and wel wrastle and sheete;
Ay by his belt he baar a long panade,
And of a swerd ful trenchant was the blade.
A joly poppere baar he in his pouche; 3931
Ther was no man, for peril, dorste hym touche.
A Sheffeld thwitel baar he in his hose.
Round was his face, and camus was his nose;
As piled as an ape was his skulle. 3935
He was a market-betere atte fulle.
Ther dorste no wight hand upon hym legge,

3886 lemes: limbs unweelde: feeble
3887 wyl: will, desire
3888 coltes tooth: young man's desires
3889 henne: hence, away
3892 drough the tappe: drew the tap, turned on the spigot
3894 tonne: barrel, cask
3895 chymbe: rim
3896 chymbe: chime
3897 ful yoore: long ago
3901 What does all this wisdom amount to? (R.)
3902 What: why alday: all day

3904 soutere: cobbler leche: physician
3906 Depeford: Deptford, about five miles from London half-wey pryme: about 7:30 A.M. (?)
3907 Grenewych: Greenwich (where Chaucer was probably living), about a half mile past Deptford shrewe: scoundrel
3908 al tyme: high time
3911 somdeel: somewhat sette his howve: tip his hood, make a fool of him; cf. GP I.586.
3912 For it is permitted (*leveful*) to repel (*of-showve*) force with force
3914 bigyled: tricked
3915 Peraventure: perhaps oon: one (i.e., a carpenter)
3916 quite: pay back, exact vengeance on (him)
3917 cherles termes: churlish words, rude expressions
3918 to-breke: break in pieces
3919 stalke: piece of straw
3920 balke: beam

3921 Trumpyngtoun: Trumpington Cantebrigge: Cambridge
3922 brigge: bridge
3923 stant = *stondith*, stands melle: mill
3927 Pipen: play the bagpipes beete: mend
3928 turne coppes: turn up the cups (?), play a drinking game sheete: shoot (arrows)
3929 panade: cutlass
3930 trenchant: sharp

3931 poppere: small dagger pouche: pocket
3932 dorste: dared
3933 Sheffeld thwitel: Sheffield knife
3934 camus was his nose: he had a pug nose
3935 piled: bald
3936 market-betere: bully, quarrelsome swaggerer
3937 legge: lay

That he ne swoor he sholde anon abegge.
A theef he was for sothe of corn and mele,
And that a sly, and usaunt for to stele. 3940
His name was hoote deynous Symkyn.
A wyf he hadde, ycomen of noble kyn;
The person of the toun hir fader was.
With hire he yaf ful many a panne of bras,
For that Symkyn sholde in his blood allye.
She was yfostred in a nonnerye; 3946
For Symkyn wolde no wyf, as he sayde,
But she were wel ynorissed and a mayde,
To saven his estaat of yomanrye.
And she was proud, and peert as is a pye. 3950
A ful fair sighte was it upon hem two;
On halydayes biforn hire wolde he go
With his typet wounde aboute his heed,
And she cam after in a gyte of reed;
And Symkyn hadde hosen of the same. 3955
Ther dorste no wight clepen hire but "dame";
Was noon so hardy that wente by the weye
That with hire dorste rage or ones pleye,
But if he wolde be slayn of Symkyn
With panade, or with knyf, or boidekyn. 3960
For jalous folk ben perilous everemo —
Algate they wolde hire wyves wenden so.
And eek, for she was somdel smoterlich,
She was as digne as water in a dich,
And ful of hoker and of bisemare. 3965
Hir thoughte that a lady sholde hire spare,
What for hire kynrede and hir nortelrie
That she hadde lerned in the nonnerie.
A doghter hadde they bitwixe hem two
Of twenty yeer, withouten any mo, 3970
Savynge a child that was of half yeer age;
In cradel it lay and was a propre page.

3938 abegge: pay for (it)
3939 corn: grain mele: ground meal
3940 sly: sly one usaunt for to stele: accustomed to stealing
3941 hoote: called deynous: haughty
3943 person: parson, priest
3945 in his blood allye: make an alliance with his family
3946 yfostred: raised
3948 But: unless ynorissed: raised, educated mayde: virgin
3949 To maintain his state of free (rather than servile) birth
3950 peert: impudent pye: magpie
3953 typet: the dangling tip of the hood
3954 gyte: gown, mantle
3956 dame: lady
3958 rage: flirt
3960 panade: cutlass boidekyn: dagger
3961 everemo: always
3962 At least they would like their wives to think so.
3963 smoterlich: besmirched, sullied (in reputation, by her illegitimacy)
3964 as digne as water in a dich: literally, as haughty as ditch-water (OED: "stinking with pride")
3965 hoker: disdain bisemare: scorn
3966 hire spare: be aloof
3967 kynrede: lineage nortelrie: nurture, education
3972 page: boy

This wenche thikke and wel ygrowen was,
With kamus nose and eyen greye as glas,
With buttokes brode and brestes rounde and hye.
But right fair was hire heer; I wol nat lye. 3976
This person of the toun, for she was feir,
In purpos was to maken hire his heir,
Bothe of his catel and his mesuage,
And straunge he made it of hir mariage. 3980
His purpos was for to bistowe hire hye
Into som worthy blood of auncetrye;
For hooly chirches good moot been despended
On hooly chirches blood, that is descended.
Therfore he wolde his hooly blood honoure, 3985
Though that he hooly chirche sholde devoure.
Greet sokene hath this millere, out of doute,
With whete and malt of al the land aboute;
And nameliche ther was a greet collegge 3989
Men clepen the Soler Halle at Cantebregge;
Ther was hir whete and eek hir malt ygrounde.
And on a day it happed, in a stounde,
Sik lay the maunciple on a maladye;
Men wenden wisly that he sholde dye. 3994
For which this millere stal bothe mele and corn
An hundred tyme moore than biforn;
For therbiforn he stal but curteisly,
But now he was a theef outrageously,
For which the wardeyn chidde and made fare.
But therof sette the millere nat a tare; 4000
He craketh boost, and swoor it was nat so.
Thanne were ther yonge povre scolers two,
That dwelten in this halle, of which I seye.
Testif they were, and lusty for to pleye,
And, oonly for hire myrthe and revelrye, 4005
Upon the wardeyn bisily they crye
To yeve hem leve, but a litel stounde,
To goon to mille and seen hir corn ygrounde;

3974 kamus nose: pug nose
3978 In purpos was: intended
3979 catel: property mesuage: house and its contents
3980 And he made difficulties about her marriage.
3981 hye: nobly
3982 auncetrye: noble lineage
3987 Greet sokene: large, profitable monopoly (*sokene* = exclusive right to grind grain in a given area)
3990 Soler Halle: a name for King's Hall, a college at Cambridge
3992 in a stounde: at a time, once
3994 wisly: surely
3995 stal: stole
3997 therbiforn: previously
3998 outrageously: to excess
3999 wardeyn: master of the college chidde and made fare: chided and made a fuss
4000 tare: weed (i.e., nothing)
4001 craketh boost: blustered fiercely
4002 povre scolers: impoverished students
4004 Testif: testy, headstrong
4005 revelrye: pleasure, delight
4007 stounde: time, while

And hardily they dorste leye hir nekke 4009
The millere sholde not stele hem half a pekke
Of corn by sleighte, ne by force hem reve;
And at the laste the wardeyn yaf hem leve.
John highte that oon, and Aleyn highte that oother;
Of o toun were they born, that highte Strother,
Fer in the north; I kan nat telle where. 4015
This Aleyn maketh redy al his gere,
And on an hors the sak he caste anon.
Forth goth Aleyn the clerk, and also John,
With good swerd and with bokeler by hir syde.
John knew the wey — hem nedede no gyde —
And at the mille the sak adoun he layth. 4021
Aleyn spak first: "Al hayl, Symond, y-fayth!
Hou fares thy faire doghter and thy wyf?"
"Aleyn, welcome," quod Symkyn, "by my lyf!
And John also, how now, what do ye heer?" 4025
"Symond," quod John, "by God, nede has na peer.
Hym boes serve hymself that has na swayn,
Or elles he is a fool, as clerkes sayn.
Oure manciple, I hope he wil be deed,
Swa werkes ay the wanges in his heed; 4030
And forthy is I come, and eek Alayn,
To grynde oure corn and carie it ham agayn;
I pray yow spede us heythen that ye may."
"It shal be doon," quod Symkyn, "by my fay! 4034
What wol ye doon whil that it is in hande?"
"By God, right by the hopur wil I stande,"
Quod John, "and se howgates the corn gas in.
Yet saugh I nevere, by my fader kyn,
How that the hopur wagges til and fra."
Aleyn answerde, "John, and wiltow swa?
Thanne wil I be bynethe, by my croun, 4041
And se how that the mele falles doun
Into the trough; that sal be my disport.
For John, y-faith, I may been of youre sort;
I is as ille a millere as ar ye." 4045
This millere smyled of hir nycetee,
And thoghte, "Al this nys doon but for a wyle.
They wene that no man may hem bigyle,
But by my thrift, yet shal I blere hir ye,
For al the sleighte in hir philosophye. 4050
The moore queynte crekes that they make,
The moore wol I stele whan I take.
In stide of flour yet wol I yeve hem bren.
'The gretteste clerkes been noght wisest men,'
As whilom to the wolf thus spak the mare.
Of al hir art counte I noght a tare." 4056
Out at the dore he gooth ful pryvely,
Whan that he saugh his tyme, softely.
He looketh up and doun til he hath founde
The clerkes hors, ther as it stood ybounde 4060
Bihynde the mille, under a levesel;
And to the hors he goth hym faire and wel;
He strepeth of the brydel right anon.
And whan the hors was laus, he gynneth gon
Toward the fen, ther wilde mares renne, 4065
And forth with "wehee," thurgh thikke and thurgh thenne.
This millere gooth agayn, no word he seyde,
But dooth his note, and with the clerkes pleyde
Til that hir corn was faire and weel ygrounde.
And whan the mele is sakked and ybounde,
This John goth out and fynt his hors away, 4071
And gan to crie "Harrow!" and "Weylaway!
Oure hors is lorn, Alayn, for Goddes banes,
Step on thy feet! Com of, man, al atanes!
Allas, our wardeyn has his palfrey lorn." 4075
This Aleyn al forgat, bothe mele and corn;

4009 **hardily:** certainly **leye:** wager
4011 **sleighte:** trickery **reve:** rob
4014 **Strother:** a town in the North of England
4020 **hem nedede:** they needed
4022 The clerks speak a Northern dialect; see n.
4026 **nede has na peer:** need has no equal (i.e., necessity knows no law)
4027 **Hym boes:** he must (Nth) **swayn:** servant
4029 **hope:** expect
4030 **Swa werkes:** so ache (Nth) **wanges:** teeth
4032 **ham:** home (Nth)
4033 **heythen:** hence (Nth) **that ye may:** (as fast) as you can
4035 **in hande:** in process
4036 **hopur:** hopper (of the mill)
4037 **howgates:** how (Nth) **gas:** goes (Nth)
4038 **by my fader kyn:** (I swear) by my father's kin (i.e., on my family's honor)
4039 **wagges til and fra:** wags to and fro (Nth)
4040 **wiltow swa:** will you (do) so (*swa* Nth)
4041 **by my croun:** by my head
4043 **sal:** shall (Nth) **disport:** amusement
4045 **ille:** poor
4046 **nycetee:** foolishness
4047 **wyle:** trick
4049 **by my thrift:** by my w lfare (I swear) **blere hir ye:** trick them
4050 **philosophye:** learning
4051 **queynte:** ingenious, clever **crekes:** tricks
4053 **In stide of:** instead of **bren:** bran
4056 **noght a tare:** not a weed (i.e., nothing)
4061 **levesel:** arbor
4063 **strepeth of:** strips off
4064 **laus:** loose
4065 **fen:** probably Lingay Fen, south of Trumpington
4068 **note:** task, business
4070 **sakked:** put in a sack
4071 **fynt** = *fyndeth*, finds
4072 **Weylaway:** alas
4073 **banes:** bones (Nth)
4074 **Com of:** hurry **al atanes:** at once (Nth)

Al was out of his mynde his housbondrie.
"What, whilk way is he geen?" he gan to crie.
The wyf cam lepynge inward with a ren.
She seyde, "Allas! youre hors goth to the fen
With wilde mares, as faste as he may go. 4081
Unthank come on his hand that boond hym so,
And he that bettre sholde han knyt the reyne!"
"Allas," quod John, "Aleyn, for Cristes peyne
Lay doun thy swerd, and I wil myn alswa.
I is ful wight, God waat, as is a raa; 4086
By Goddes herte, he sal nat scape us bathe!
Why ne had thow pit the capul in the lathe?
Ilhayl! By God, Alayn, thou is a fonne!"
Thise sely clerkes han ful faste yronne 4090
Toward the fen, bothe Aleyn and eek John.
And whan the millere saugh that they were gon,
He half a busshel of hir flour hath take,
And bad his wyf go knede it in a cake.
He seyde, "I trowe the clerkes were aferd.
Yet kan a millere make a clerkes berd, 4096
For al his art; now lat hem goon hir weye!
Lo, wher he gooth! Ye, lat the children pleye.
They gete hym nat so lightly, by my croun."
Thise sely clerkes rennen up and doun 4100
With "Keep! Keep! Stand! Stand! Jossa, warderere,
Ga whistle thou, and I shal kepe hym heere!"
But shortly, til that it was verray nyght,
They koude nat, though they dide al hir myght,
Hir capul cacche, he ran alwey so faste, 4105
Til in a dych they caughte hym atte laste.
Wery and weet, as beest is in the reyn,
Comth sely John, and with him comth Aleyn.
"Allas," quod John, "the day that I was born!
Now are we dryve til hethyng and til scorn.
Oure corn is stoln; men wil us fooles calle, 4111
Bathe the wardeyn and oure felawes alle,
And namely the millere, weylaway!"
Thus pleyneth John as he gooth by the way
Toward the mille, and Bayard in his hond.

The millere sittynge by the fyr he fond, 4116
For it was nyght, and forther myghte they noght;
But for the love of God they hym bisoght
Of herberwe and of ese, as for hir peny. 4119
The millere seyde agayn, "If ther be eny,
Swich as it is, yet shal ye have youre part.
Myn hous is streit, but ye han lerned art;
Ye konne by argumentes make a place
A myle brood of twenty foot of space.
Lat se now if this place may suffise, 4125
Or make it rowm with speche, as is youre gise."
"Now, Symond," seyde John, "by Seint Cutberd,
Ay is thou myrie, and this is faire answerd.
I have herd seyd, 'Man sal taa of twa thynges:
Slyk as he fyndes, or taa slyk as he brynges.'
But specially I pray thee, hooste deere, 4131
Get us som mete and drynke, and make us cheere,
And we wil payen trewely atte fulle.
With empty hand men may na haukes tulle;
Loo, heere oure silver, redy for to spende."
This millere into toun his doghter sende 4136
For ale and breed, and rosted hem a goos,
And boond hire hors, it sholde namoore go loos,
And in his owene chambre hem made a bed,
With sheetes and with chalons faire yspred 4140
Noght from his owene bed ten foot or twelve.
His doghter hadde a bed, al by hirselve,
Right in the same chambre by and by.
It myghte be no bet, and cause why? 4144
Ther was no roumer herberwe in the place.
They soupen and they speke, hem to solace,
And drynken evere strong ale atte beste.
Aboute mydnyght wente they to reste.
Wel hath this millere vernysshed his heed;
Ful pale he was for dronken, and nat reed. 4150
He yexeth, and he speketh thurgh the nose
As he were on the quakke, or on the pose.

4078 **whilk:** which (Nth) **geen:** gone (Nth)
4079 **with a ren:** at a run, running
4082 **Unthank:** curses
4083 **knyt:** tied
4085 **alswa:** also (Nth)
4086 **wight:** strong **waat:** knows (Nth) **raa:** roe (Nth)
4087 **sal:** shall (Nth) **bathe:** both (Nth)
4088 **pit:** put **capul:** horse **lathe:** barn (Nth)
4089 **Ilhayl:** bad luck **fonne:** fool
4094 **cake:** loaf of bread
4095 **aferd:** leery
4096 **make a . . . berd:** outwit, fool
4100 **Thise sely clerkes:** these poor, hapless clerks
4101 **Keep:** stay **Jossa:** down here **warderere:** watch out behind
4102 **Ga:** go (Nth)
4110 **til hethyng:** to contempt
4119 **herberwe:** lodging **ese:** refreshment, food
4122 **streit:** narrow, small **art:** the arts curriculum at the university, esp. logic
4123 **konne by argumentes make:** know how by logical disputation to make
4126 **rowm:** large, roomy
4127 **Seint Cutberd:** St. Cuthbert
4129–30 Of two things one must take (*taa*) such (*Slyk*) as he finds or take such as he brings.
4134 **tulle:** lure
4140 **chalons:** blankets **yspred:** spread
4143 **by and by:** side by side
4145 **roumer:** larger **herberwe:** lodging
4147 **atte beste:** of the best sort
4149 **vernysshed his heed:** made his head shine
4151 **yexeth:** belches
4152 **on the quakke:** had hoarseness **on the pose:** had a cold

To bedde he goth, and with hym goth his wyf.
As any jay she light was and jolyf,
So was hir joly whistle wel ywet. 4155
The cradel at hir beddes feet is set,
To rokken, and to yeve the child to sowke.
And whan that dronken al was in the crowke,
To bedde wente the doghter right anon;
To bedde goth Aleyn and also John; 4160
Ther nas na moore — hem nedede no dwale.
This millere hath so wisely bibbed ale
That as an hors he fnorteth in his sleep,
Ne of his tayl bihynde he took no keep.
His wyf bar hym a burdon, a ful strong; 4165
Men myghte hir rowtyng heere two furlong;
The wenche rowteth eek, *par compaignye.*
Aleyn the clerk, that herde this melodye,
He poked John, and seyde, "Slepestow?
Herdestow evere slyk a sang er now? 4170
Lo, swilk a complyn is ymel hem alle;
A wilde fyr upon thair bodyes falle!
Wha herkned evere slyk a ferly thyng?
Ye, they sal have the flour of il endyng.
This lange nyght ther tydes me na reste; 4175
But yet, na fors, al sal be for the beste.
For, John," seyde he, "als evere moot I thryve,
If that I may, yon wenche wil I swyve.
Som esement has lawe yshapen us,
For, John, ther is a lawe that says thus: 4180
That gif a man in a point be agreved,
That in another he sal be releved.
Oure corn is stoln, sothly, it is na nay,
And we han had an il fit al this day;
And syn I sal have neen amendement 4185
Agayn my los, I will have esement.
By Goddes sale, it sal neen other bee!"

4157 **sowke:** suck
4158 **crowke:** crock
4161 **hem nedede:** they needed **dwale:** sleeping potion
4162 **wisely:** surely **bibbed:** imbibed
4163 **fnorteth:** snorts
4165 **burdon:** bass accompaniment
4166 **rowtyng:** snoring
4167 **par compaignye:** for fellowship's sake, to keep them company
4170 **slyk a sang:** such a song (Nth)
4171 **swilk a complyn:** such a compline, last service of the day **ymel:** among (Nth)
4172 **wilde fyr:** erysipelas, an acute inflammation of the skin (?)
4173 **Wha:** who (Nth) **ferly:** amazing
4174 **flour of il endyng:** the best (i.e., worst) of a bad end
4175 **lange:** long (Nth) **tydes me na reste:** I get no sleep
4176 **na fors:** no matter
4178 **swyve:** copulate with
4179 **esement:** compensation, redress
4181 **gif:** if **a point:** one point **agreved:** injured
4182 **sal be releved:** shall be compensated
4183 **it is na nay:** it cannot be denied
4184 **il fit:** hard time
4185 **neen:** none, no (Nth)
4186 **Agayn:** in return for
4187 **sale:** soul (Nth)

This John answerde, "Alayn, avyse thee!
The millere is a perilous man," he seyde,
"And gif that he out of his sleep abreyde, 4190
He myghte doon us bathe a vileynye."
Aleyn answerde, "I counte hym nat a flye."
And up he rist, and by the wenche he crepte.
This wenche lay uprighte and faste slepte,
Til he so ny was, er she myghte espie, 4195
That it had been to late for to crie,
And shortly for to seyn, they were aton.
Now pley, Aleyn, for I wol speke of John.
This John lith stille a furlong wey or two,
And to hymself he maketh routhe and wo. 4200
"Allas!" quod he, "this is a wikked jape;
Now may I seyn that I is but an ape.
Yet has my felawe somwhat for his harm;
He has the milleris doghter in his arm.
He auntred hym, and has his nedes sped, 4205
And I lye as a draf-sak in my bed;
And when this jape is tald another day,
I sal been halde a daf, a cokenay!
I wil arise and auntre it, by my fayth!
'Unhardy is unseely,' thus men sayth." 4210
And up he roos, and softely he wente
Unto the cradel, and in his hand it hente,
And baar it softe unto his beddes feet.
Soone after this the wyf hir rowtyng leet,
And gan awake, and wente hire out to pisse, 4215
And cam agayn, and gan hir cradel mysse,
And groped heer and ther, but she foond noon.
"Allas!" quod she, "I hadde almoost mysgoon;
I hadde almoost goon to the clerkes bed.
Ey, benedicite! Thanne hadde I foule ysped!"
And forth she gooth til she the cradel fond.
She gropeth alwey forther with hir hond, 4222
And foond the bed, and thoghte noght but good,
By cause that the cradel by it stood,
And nyste wher she was, for it was derk; 4225

4188 **avyse thee:** think carefully
4190 **abreyde:** start, awake
4191 **vileynye:** injury
4192 **nat a flye:** i.e., not at all
4197 **aton:** at one, together
4199 **a furlong wey or two:** five minutes or so
4200 **maketh routhe:** pities (feels sorry for himself)
4201 **jape:** trick
4202 **ape:** fool
4205 **auntred hym:** took a risk **his nedes sped:** accomplished his purpose
4206 **draf-sak:** sack of chaff or rubbish
4208 **halde a daf:** considered a fool **cokenay:** weakling
4210 **Unhardy is unseely:** the timid one is unlucky **men sayth:** it is said (*men* = one)
4214 **hir rowtyng leet:** stopped her snoring
4218 **mysgoon:** gone astray
4225 **nyste** = *ne wiste,* did not know

But faire and wel she creep in to the clerk,
And lith ful stille, and wolde han caught a sleep.
Withinne a while this John the clerk up leep,
And on this goode wyf he leith on soore.
So myrie a fit ne hadde she nat ful yoore; 4230
He priketh harde and depe as he were mad.
This joly lyf han thise two clerkes lad
Til that the thridde cok bigan to synge.
Aleyn wax wery in the dawenynge,
For he had swonken al the longe nyght, 4235
And seyde, "Fare weel, Malyne, sweete wight!
The day is come; I may no lenger byde;
But everemo, wher so I go or ryde,
I is thyn awen clerk, swa have I seel!" 4239
"Now, deere lemman," quod she, "go, far weel!
But er thow go, o thyng I wol thee telle:
Whan that thou wendest homward by the melle,
Right at the entree of the dore bihynde
Thou shalt a cake of half a busshel fynde
That was ymaked of thyn owene mele, 4245
Which that I heelp my sire for to stele.
And, goode lemman, God thee save and kepe!"
And with that word almoost she gan to wepe.
Aleyn up rist, and thoughte, "Er that it dawe,
I wol go crepen in by my felawe," 4250
And fond the cradel with his hand anon.
"By God," thoughte he, "al wrang I have mysgon.
Myn heed is toty of my swynk to-nyght,
That makes me that I ga nat aright.
I woot wel by the cradel I have mysgo; 4255
Heere lith the millere and his wyf also."
And forth he goth, a twenty devel way,
Unto the bed ther as the millere lay.
He wende have cropen by his felawe John,
And by the millere in he creep anon, 4260
And caughte hym by the nekke, and softe he spak.
He seyde, "Thou John, thou swynes-heed, awak,
For Cristes saule, and heer a noble game.
For by that lord that called is Seint Jame,
As I have thries in this shorte nyght 4265
Swyved the milleres doghter bolt upright,
Whil thow hast, as a coward, been agast."
"Ye, false harlot," quod the millere, "hast?
A, false traitour! False clerk!" quod he,
Thow shalt be deed, by Goddes dignitee! 4270
Who dorste be so boold to disparage
My doghter, that is come of swich lynage?"
And by the throte-bolle he caughte Alayn,
And he hente hym despitously agayn, 4274
And on the nose he smoot hym with his fest.
Doun ran the blody streem upon his brest;
And in the floor, with nose and mouth tobroke,
They walwe as doon two pigges in a poke;
And up they goon, and doun agayn anon,
Til that the millere sporned at a stoon, 4280
And doun he fil bakward upon his wyf,
That wiste no thyng of this nyce stryf;
For she was falle aslepe a lite wight
With John the clerk, that waked hadde al nyght,
And with the fal out of hir sleep she breyde. 4285
"Help! hooly croys of Bromeholm," she seyde,
"*In manus tuas!* Lord, to thee I calle!
Awak, Symond! The feend is on me falle.
Myn herte is broken; help! I nam but deed!
Ther lyth oon upon my wombe and on myn heed. 4290
Help, Symkyn, for the false clerkes fighte!"
This John stirte up as faste as ever he myghte,
And graspeth by the walles to and fro,
To fynde a staf; and she stirte up also,
And knew the estres bet than dide this John,
And by the wal a staf she foond anon, 4296
And saugh a litel shymeryng of a light,

4226 **creep:** crept
4228 **leep:** leapt
4230 **So myrie a fit:** such a good time **ful yoore:** for a long time
4231 **priketh:** stabs, pierces
4233 **thridde cok:** third crow of the cock, an hour before dawn
4235 **swonken:** worked
4239 **awen:** own (Nth) **swa have I seel:** as I may prosper (I swear)
4246 **heelp:** helped **sire:** father
4252 **wrang:** wrong (Nth)
4253 **toty:** dizzy, fuddled
4254 **ga nat aright:** lose my way
4257 **a twenty devel way:** in the name of twenty devils
4259 **cropen:** crept
4262 **swynes-heed:** pig's head
4263 **saule:** soul
4264 **Seint Jame:** St. James
4266 **Swyved:** copulated with **bolt upright:** lying flat on her back
4271 **disparage:** degrade one's lineage (by a union with someone of lower birth)
4273 **throte-bolle:** Adam's apple
4274 **hente hym:** fetched him, struck him **despitously:** angrily
4278 **poke:** bag
4280 **sporned at:** stumbled on
4283 **a lite wight:** a short time
4285 **breyde:** started up
4286 **hooly croys of Bromeholm:** a famous shrine in Norfolk
4287 **In manus tuas:** "Into thy hands (I commend my spirit)."
4295 **estres:** arrangement of the interior, the nooks and crannies

For at an hole in shoon the moone bright,
And by that light she saugh hem bothe two,
But sikerly she nyste who was who, 4300
But as she saugh a whit thyng in hir ye.
And whan she gan this white thyng espye,
She wende the clerk hadde wered a volupeer,
And with the staf she drow ay neer and neer,
And wende han hit this Aleyn at the fulle, 4305
And smoot the millere on the pyled skulle,
That doun he gooth, and cride, "Harrow!
I dye!"
Thise clerkes beete hym weel and lete hym
lye,
And greythen hem, and tooke hir hors anon,
And eek hire mele, and on hir wey they gon.
And at the mille yet they tooke hir cake 4311
Of half a busshel flour, ful wel ybake.
Thus is the proude millere wel ybete,
And hath ylost the gryndynge of the whete,
And payed for the soper everideel 4315
Of Aleyn and of John, that bette hym weel.
His wyf is swyved, and his doghter als.
Lo, swich it is a millere to be fals!
And therfore this proverbe is seyd ful sooth,
"Hym thar nat wene wel that yvele dooth."
A gylour shal hymself bigyled be. 4321
And God, that sitteth heighe in magestee,
Save al this compaignye, grete and smale!
Thus have I quyt the Millere in my tale. 4324

Heere is ended the Reves Tale.

THE COOK'S PROLOGUE

The prologe of the Cokes Tale.

The Cook of Londoun, whil the Reve spak,
For joye him thoughte he clawed him on the
bak.
"Ha! ha!" quod he, "For Cristes passion,
This millere hadde a sharp conclusion
Upon his argument of herbergage!
Wel seyde Salomon in his langage, 4330
'Ne bryng nat every man into thyn hous,'
For herberwynge by nyghte is perilous.
Wel oghte a man avysed for to be
Whom that he broghte into his pryvetee.
I pray to God, so yeve me sorwe and care 4335
If evere, sithe I highte Hogge of Ware,
Herde I a millere bettre yset a-werk.
He hadde a jape of malice in the derk.
But God forbede that we stynte heere;
And therfore, if ye vouche-sauf to heere 4340
A tale of me, that am a povre man,
I wol yow telle, as wel as evere I kan,
A litel jape that fil in oure citee."
Oure Hoost answerde and seide, "I graunte
it thee.
Now telle on, Roger; looke that it be good,
For many a pastee hastow laten blood, 4346
And many a Jakke of Dovere hastow soold
That hath been twies hoot and twies coold.
Of many a pilgrym hastow Cristes curs,
For of thy percely yet they fare the wors, 4350
That they han eten with thy stubbel goos,
For in thy shoppe is many a flye loos.

4303 **volupeer:** nightcap
4305 **at the fulle:** squarely
4306 **pyled:** bald
4307 **Harrow!:** Help!
4309 **greythen hem:** dress

4326 **clawed him on the bak:** scratched his back (he so enjoyed the tale it seemed as if the Reeve were scratching his back)
4328–29 **conclusion Upon his argument:** proposition derived from disputation
4332 **herberwynge:** providing lodging
4333 **avysed for to be:** to take heed
4336 **Hogge of Ware:** Roger of Ware (a town in Hertfordshire, some thirty miles from London)
4337 **yset a-werk:** tricked (cf. III.215)

4311 **cake:** loaf
4316 **bette:** beat
4320 One who does evil should not (literally, need not) expect good.
4321 **gylour:** deceiver
4324 **quyt:** repaid

4340 **vouche-sauf:** grant, agree
4344 **graunte it thee:** agree
4346 **pastee:** meat pie **laten blood:** let blood (draw off the gravy from unsold pies to make them keep longer)
4347 **Jakke of Dovere:** a kind of pie
4349 **Cristes curs:** damnation
4350 **percely:** parsley
4351 **stubbel goos:** fat goose that had been fed on stubble

Now telle on, gentil Roger by thy name.
But yet I pray thee, be nat wroth for game;
A man may seye ful sooth in game and pley."
"Thou seist ful sooth," quod Roger, "by my fey!
But 'sooth pley, quaad pley,' as the Flemyng seith.
And therfore, Herry Bailly, by thy feith,
Be thou nat wrooth, er we departen heer,
Though that my tale be of an hostileer.
But nathelees I wol nat telle it yit;
But er we parte, ywis, thou shalt be quit."
And therwithal he lough and made cheere,
And seyde his tale, as ye shul after heere.

THE COOK'S TALE

Heere bigynneth the Cookes Tale.

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

4357 **sooth pley, quaad pley:** A true jest is a bad jest.

4360 **hostileer:** innkeeper
4363 **lough:** laughed

4365 **prentys:** apprentice
4366 **vitailliers:** victuallers, sellers of food
4367 **Gaillard:** merry **shawe:** wood, thicket
4368 **Broun as a berye:** very dark-complexioned
4372 **paramour:** wenching
4375 **bridale:** wedding party **hoppe:** dance
4377 **ridyng:** procession, equestrian display **Chepe:** Cheapside
4381 **meynee:** company
4383 **setten stevene:** made an appointment
4388 **place of pryvetee:** a private place
4389 **chaffare:** business

4390 **box:** strongbox
4391 **revelour:** reveller, profligate
4392 **haunteth:** makes a habit of **dys:** dicing, gambling **riot:** debauchery **paramour:** womanizing
4393 **abye:** pay for
4394 **he:** the master **mynstralcye:** entertainment (for which he pays)
4395 **convertible:** interchangeable
4396 Even though he knows how to play a cithern (*gyterne*) or fiddle (*ribible*, rebeck)
4397–98 Revelling and honesty, in a man of low rank, are always angry (i.e., incompatible) with each other.
4399 **bood:** remained
4400 **prentishood:** apprenticeship
4401 **snybbed:** rebuked
4402 **Newegate:** Newgate prison
4404 **he:** Perkyn **papir:** probably his written certificate of release
4407 **rotie:** rot
4408 **by:** with respect to, with **riotous:** dissolute

It is ful lasse harm to lete hym pace, 4409
Than he shende alle the servantz in the place.
Therfore his maister yaf hym acquitance,
And bad hym go, with sorwe and with mes-
chance!
And thus this joly prentys hadde his leve.
Now lat hym riote al the nyght or leve. 4414
And for ther is no theef withoute a lowke,
That helpeth hym to wasten and to sowke
Of that he brybe kan or borwe may,
Anon he sente his bed and his array
Unto a compeer of his owene sort,
That lovede dys, and revel, and disport, 4420
And hadde a wyf that heeld for contenance
A shoppe, and swyved for hir sustenance.

4409 **pace:** go away
4410 **shende:** corrupt
4412 **meschance:** bad luck to him
4413 **leve:** permission to leave
4414 **riote:** revel, engage in debauchery
4415 There is no thief without an accomplice (*lou·ke*).
4416 **sowke:** suck (expend)
4417 **brybe:** steal
4419 **compeer:** companion
4421 **contenance:** the sake of appearances
4422 **swyved for hir sustenance:** copulated for a living

Fragment II (Group B[1])

INTRODUCTION TO THE MAN OF LAW'S TALE

The wordes of the Hoost to the compaignye.

Oure Hooste saugh wel that the brighte sonne
The ark of his artificial day hath ronne
The ferthe part, and half an houre and moore,
And though he were nat depe ystert in loore;
He wiste it was the eightetethe day 5
Of Aprill, that is messager to May;
And saugh wel that the shadwe of every tree
Was as in lengthe the same quantitee
That was the body erect that caused it.
And therfore by the shadwe he took his wit 10
That Phebus, which that shoon so clere and brighte,
Degrees was fyve and fourty clombe on highte,
And for that day, as in that latitude,
It was ten of the clokke, he gan conclude,
And sodeynly he plighte his hors aboute. 15
"Lordynges," quod he, "I warne yow, al this route,
The fourthe party of this day is gon.
Now for the love of God and of Seint John,
Leseth no tyme, as ferforth as ye may. 19
Lordynges, the tyme wasteth nyght and day,
And steleth from us, what pryvely slepynge,
And what thurgh necligence in oure wakynge,
As dooth the streem that turneth nevere agayn,
Descendynge fro the montaigne into playn.
Wel kan Senec and many a philosophre 25
Biwaillen tyme moore than gold in cofre;
For 'Los of catel may recovered be,
But los of tyme shendeth us,' quod he.
It wol nat come agayn, withouten drede, 29
Namoore than wole Malkynes maydenhede,
Whan she hath lost it in hir wantownesse.
Lat us nat mowlen thus in ydelnesse.
"Sire Man of Lawe," quod he, "so have ye blis,
Telle us a tale anon, as forward is. 34
Ye been submytted, thurgh youre free assent,
To stonden in this cas at my juggement.
Acquiteth yow now of youre biheeste;
Thanne have ye do youre devoir atte leeste."
"Hooste," quod he, "*depardieux*, ich assente;
To breke forward is nat myn entente. 40
Biheste is dette, and I wole holde fayn
Al my biheste, I kan no bettre sayn.
For swich lawe as a man yeveth another wight,
He sholde hymselven usen it, by right;
Thus wole oure text. But nathelees, certeyn,
I kan right now no thrifty tale seyn 46
That Chaucer, thogh he kan but lewedly
On metres and on rymyng craftily,
Hath seyd hem in swich Englissh as he kan
Of olde tyme, as knoweth many a man; 50
And if he have noght seyd hem, leve brother,
In o book, he hath seyd hem in another.
For he hath toold of loveris up and doun
Mo than Ovide made of mencioun
In his Episteles, that been ful olde. 55
What sholde I tellen hem, syn they been tolde?
"In youthe he made of Ceys and Alcione,
And sitthen hath he spoken of everichone,
Thise noble wyves and thise loveris eke.
Whoso that wole his large volume seke, 60

2 ark of his artificial day: the time the sun is above the horizon; see n. for the Host's calculation of time.
3 ferthe: fourth
4 depe ystert in loore: far advanced in learning
5 eightetethe: eighteenth; see textual notes
10 took his wit: judged
11 Phebus: the sun
12 was . . . clombe: had climbed
15 plighte: pulled
17 party: part
19 as ferforth as: insofar as
21 what: what with
28 shendeth: ruins
29 drede: doubt
30 Malkynes maydenhede: Malkin's virginity
32 mowlen: grow moldy
37 Acquiteth yow . . . of: acquit yourself of (fulfill) biheeste: promise
38 devoir: duty
39 depardieux: in God's name
41 Biheste is dette: A promise is an obligation
45 wole: says
46 thrifty: suitable
47–8 kan but lewedly On: knows little about
49 Hath = *nath*, has not; see n.
50 Of olde tyme: long ago
54 made of mencioun: made mention of
55 Episteles: Ovid's *Heroides*
57 made of Ceys and Alcione: wrote about Ceyx and Alcion; see BD 62–220.
59 eke: also
60 seke: examine

Cleped the Seintes Legende of Cupide;
Ther may he seen the large woundes wyde
Of Lucresse, and of Babilan Tesbee;
The swerd of Dido for the false Enee;
The tree of Phillis for hire Demophon; 65
The pleinte of Dianire and of Hermyon,
Of Adriane, and of Isiphilee —
The bareyne ile stondynge in the see —
The dreynte Leandre for his Erro;
The teeris of Eleyne, and eek the wo 70
Of Brixseyde, and of the, Ladomya;
The crueltee of the, queene Medea,
Thy litel children hangynge by the hals,
For thy Jason, that was of love so fals!
O Ypermystra, Penelopee, Alceste, 75
Youre wifhod he comendeth with the beste!
"But certeinly no word ne writeth he
Of thilke wikke ensample of Canacee,
That loved hir owene brother synfully —
Of swiche cursed stories I sey fy! — 80
Or ellis of Tyro Appollonius,
How that the cursed kyng Antiochus
Birafte his doghter of hir maydenhede,
That is so horrible a tale for to rede,
Whan he hir threw upon the pavement. 85
And therfore he, of ful avysement,
Nolde nevere write in none of his sermons
Of swiche unkynde abhomynacions,
Ne I wol noon reherce, if that I may.
"But of my tale how shal I doon this day? 90
Me were looth be likned, doutelees,
To Muses that men clepe Pierides —
Methamorphosios woot what I mene;
But nathelees, I recche noght a bene
Though I come after hym with hawebake 95
I speke in prose, and lat him rymes make."

61 **the Seintes Legende of Cupide:** the Legend of Good Women
63 **Lucresse, and of Babilan Tesbee:** Lucretia, Thisbe of Babylon; see LGW for the stories of the women listed in lines 63–76, except for *Dianire* (Deianira; see MkT VII.2119–35), *Hermyon* (Hermione, the lover of Orestes), *Erro* (Hero, the lover of *Leandre*, Leander), *Eleyne* (Helen of Troy), *Brixseyde* (Briseyde, the lover of Achilles; see HF 398), *Ladomya* (Laodomia, who killed herself on the death of her husband Protesilaus), and *Penelopee* (Penelope, faithful wife of Ulysses).
66 **pleinte:** complaint, lament
68 **bareyne:** barren
69 **dreynte:** drowned
73 **hals:** neck
76 **wifhod:** fidelity as a wife
78 **Canacee:** heroine of a tale of incest told by Gower; see n.
81 **Tyro Appollonius:** Apollonius of Tyre, hero of a popular story, also involving incest, told in Gower's *Confessio Amantis*
83 **Birafte:** deprived
86 **of ful avysement:** after careful consideration
88 **unkynde:** unnatural
91 **Me were looth:** I would hate
92 **Pierides:** the Muses; see n.
93 **Methamorphosios:** Ovid's *Metamorphoses*
94 **recche noght a bene:** don't care a bean
95 **hawebake:** baked hawthorn berries (a poor dish)

And with that word he, with a sobre cheere,
Bigan his tale, as ye shal after heere.

The prologe of the
Mannes Tale of Lawe.

O hateful harm, condicion of poverte! 99
With thurst, with coold, with hunger so confoundid!
To asken help thee shameth in thyn herte;
If thou noon aske, with nede artow so woundid
That verray nede unwrappeth al thy wounde hid!
Maugree thyn heed, thou most for indigence
Or stele, or begge, or borwe thy despence! 105

Thow blamest Crist and seist ful bitterly
He mysdeparteth richesse temporal;
Thy neighebor thou wytest synfully,
And seist thou hast to lite and he hath al. 109
"Parfay," seistow, "somtyme he rekene shal,
Whan that his tayl shal brennen in the gleede,
For he noght helpeth needfulle in hir neede."

Herkne what is the sentence of the wise:
"Bet is to dyen than have indigence";
"Thy selve neighebor wol thee despise." 115
If thou be povre, farwel thy reverence!
Yet of the wise man take this sentence:
"Alle the dayes of povre men been wikke."
Be war, therfore, er thou come to that prikke!

If thou be povre, thy brother hateth thee, 120
And alle thy freendes fleen from thee, allas!
O riche marchauntz, ful of wele been yee,
O noble, o prudent folk, as in this cas!
Youre bagges been nat fild with ambes as,
But with sys cynk, that renneth for youre chaunce;
At Cristemasse myrie may ye daunce! 126

97 **a sobre cheere:** a solemn expression
99 **harm:** misfortune
100 **confoundid:** distressed
103 **unwrappeth:** discloses
104 **Maugree thyn heed:** against your will, despite all you can do
105 **Or . . . or:** either . . . or **despence:** living expenses
107 **mysdeparteth:** wrongly allots
108 **wytest:** accuse
109 **to lite:** too little
110 **Parfay:** by my faith **rekene:** take account (of it)
111 **brennen in the gleede:** burn in the live coals
112 **needfulle:** the needy
115 **selve:** very
116 **reverence:** respect (that others show you)
118 **wikke:** miserable
119 **prikke:** point
124 **ambes as:** two ones, a losing throw in dice
125 **sys cynk:** six and five, a winning throw **renneth for youre chaunce:** runs in favor of your luck (*chaunce* = winning number)

Ye seken lond and see for yowre wynnynges;
As wise folk ye knowen al th'estaat
Of regnes; ye been fadres of tidynges
And tales, bothe of pees and of debaat. 130

I were right now of tales desolaat,
Nere that a marchant, goon is many a yeere,
Me taughte a tale, which that ye shal heere.

THE MAN OF LAW'S TALE

Heere begynneth the Man of Lawe his tale.

In Surrye whilom dwelte a compaignye
Of chapmen riche, and therto sadde and trewe,
That wyde-where senten hir spicerye, 136
Clothes of gold, and satyns riche of hewe.
Hir chaffare was so thrifty and so newe
That every wight hath deyntee to chaffare
With hem, and eek to sellen hem hire ware.

Now fil it that the maistres of that sort 141
Han shapen hem to Rome for to wende;
Were it for chapmanhod or for disport,
Noon oother message wolde they thider sende,
But comen hemself to Rome; this is the ende.
And in swich place as thoughte hem avantage
For hire entente, they take hir herbergage. 147

Sojourned han thise marchantz in that toun
A certein tyme, as fil to hire plesance.
And so bifel that th'excellent renoun 150
Of the Emperoures doghter, dame Custance,
Reported was, with every circumstance,
Unto thise Surryen marchantz in swich wyse,
Fro day to day, as I shal yow devyse. 154

This was the commune voys of every man:
"Oure Emperour of Rome — God hym see! —
A doghter hath that, syn the world bigan,
To rekene as wel hir goodnesse as beautee,
Nas nevere swich another as is shee.
I prey to God in honour hire susteene, 160
And wolde she were of al Europe the queene.

"In hire is heigh beautee, withoute pride,
Yowthe, withoute grenehede or folye;
To alle hire werkes vertu is hir gyde;
Humblesse hath slayn in hire al tirannye. 165
She is mirour of alle curteisye;
Hir herte is verray chambre of hoolynesse,
Hir hand, ministre of fredam for almesse."

And al this voys was sooth, as God is trewe.
But now to purpos lat us turne agayn. 170
Thise marchantz han doon fraught hir shippes newe,
And whan they han this blisful mayden sayn,
Hoom to Surrye been they went ful fayn,
And doon hir nedes as they han doon yoore,
And lyven in wele; I kan sey yow namoore. 175

Now fil it that thise marchantz stode in grace
Of hym that was the Sowdan of Surrye;
For whan they cam from any strange place,
He wolde, of his benigne curteisye,
Make hem good chiere, and bisily espye 180

130 **debaat:** conflict

134 **Surrye:** Syria
135 **chapmen:** merchants **sadde:** trustworthy
136 **wyde-where:** far and wide **spicerye:** oriental goods (spices, cloths, and such)
138 **chaffare:** merchandise **thrifty:** serviceable
139 **hath deyntee to chaffare:** is eager to do business
140 **ware:** wares
142 **shapen hem:** arranged
143 **chapmanhod:** business dealings **disport:** amusement
144 **message:** messenger
146 **avantage:** advantageous
147 **herbergage:** lodging
148 **Sojourned:** remained
149 **fil to hire plesance:** accorded with their desires
152 **circumstance:** detail
155 **voys:** opinion
156 **God hym see:** may God look after him

131 **of tales desolaat:** lacking in tales
132 **Nere** = *ne were*, were (it) not

160 **susteene:** sustain
163 **grenehede:** immaturity
168 **fredam for almesse:** generosity in giving alms
169 **voys:** report
170 **to purpos:** to the point
171 **han doon fraught:** have had loaded **newe:** anew
172 **sayn:** seen
174 **doon hir nedes:** conducted their business **yoore:** formerly
176 **grace:** the good graces
177 **Sowdan:** sultan
178 **strange:** foreign
179 **benigne:** gracious

Tidynges of sondry regnes, for to leere
The wondres that they myghte seen or heere.

Amonges othere thynges, specially,
Thise marchantz han hym toold of dame Custance
So greet noblesse in ernest, ceriously, 185
That this Sowdan hath caught so greet plesance
To han hir figure in his remembrance,
That al his lust and al his bisy cure
Was for to love hire while his lyf may dure.

Paraventure in thilke large book 190
Which that men clepe the hevene ywriten was
With sterres, whan that he his birthe took,
That he for love sholde han his deeth, allas!
For in the sterres, clerer than is glas,
Is writen, God woot, whoso koude it rede, 195
The deeth of every man, withouten drede.

In sterres, many a wynter therbiforn,
Was writen the deeth of Ector, Achilles,
Of Pompei, Julius, er they were born;
The strif of Thebes; and of Ercules, 200
Of Sampson, Turnus, and of Socrates
The deeth; but mennes wittes ben so dulle
That no wight kan wel rede it atte fulle.

This Sowdan for his privee conseil sente
And, shortly of this matiere for to pace, 205
He hath to hem declared his entente,
And seyde hem, certein, but he myghte have grace
To han Custance withinne a litel space,
He nas but deed; and charged hem in hye
To shapen for his lyf som remedye. 210

Diverse men diverse thynges seyden;
They argumenten, casten up and doun;

181 sondry: various leere: learn
185 ceriously: in detail
186 plesance: desire
187 figure: image
188 lust: pleasure bisy cure: intent concern
190 Paraventure: perhaps
195 rede: interpret
198 Ector, Achilles: Hector and Achilles, the Greek heroes
199 Pompei, Julius: Pompey the Great, Julius Caesar; see MkT VII.2671–2726.
200 strif of Thebes: the siege of Thebes, told in part in Tr 5.1457–1512 Ercules: Hercules; see MkT VII.2095–2142.
201 Sampson: the biblical hero; see MkT VII.2015–94. Turnus: opponent of Aeneas; see HF 457–58. Socrates: the philosopher; see Bo 1.pr3.26–28.
204 privee conseil: privy council, confidential advisors
205 pace: pass over
208 space: time
209 nas but deed: was as good as dead charged: commanded in hye: in haste
212 casten up and doun: consider alternatives

Many a subtil resoun forth they leyden;
They speken of magyk and abusioun.
But finally, as in conclusioun, 215
They kan nat seen in that noon avantage,
Ne in noon oother wey, save mariage.

Thanne sawe they therinne swich difficultee
By wey of reson, for to speke al playn,
By cause that ther was swich diversitee 220
Bitwene hir bothe lawes, that they sayn
They trowe that no "Cristen prince wolde fayn
Wedden his child under oure lawe sweete
That us was taught by Mahoun, oure prophete."

And he answerde, "Rather than I lese 225
Custance, I wol be cristned, doutelees.
I moot been hires; I may noon oother chese.
I prey yow hoold youre argumentz in pees;
Saveth my lyf, and beth noght recchelees
To geten hire that hath my lyf in cure, 230
For in this wo I may nat longe endure."

What nedeth gretter dilatacioun?
I seye, by tretys and embassadrie,
And by the popes mediacioun,
And al the chirche, and al the chivalrie, 235
That in destruccioun of mawmettrie,
And in encrees of Cristes lawe deere,
They been acorded, so as ye shal heere:

How that the Sowdan and his baronage
And alle his liges sholde ycristned be, 240
And he shal han Custance in mariage,
And certein gold, I noot what quantitee;
And heer-to founden sufficient suretee.
This same accord was sworn on eyther syde;
Now, faire Custance, almyghty God thee gyde!

Now wolde som men waiten, as I gesse, 246
That I sholde tellen al the purveiance
That th'Emperour, of his grete noblesse,
Hath shapen for his doghter, dame Custance.
Wel may men knowen that so greet ordinance
May no man tellen in a litel clause 251
As was arrayed for so heigh a cause.

214 abusioun: deception
221 hir bothe lawes: religions of both parties
222 trowe: suppose, judge
224 Mahoun: Mohammed
229 recchelees: negligent
230 in cure: in her keeping
232 dilatacioun: increase of words
233 tretys: treaty embassadrie: negociation
236 mawmettrie: idolatry
243 heer-to founden: for this provided
246 waiten: expect
247 purveiance: preparations
250 ordinance: preparations

Bisshopes been shapen with hire for to wende,
Lordes, ladies, knyghtes of renoun,
And oother folk ynowe, this is th'ende; 255
And notified is thurghout the toun
That every wight, with greet devocioun,
Sholde preyen Crist that he this mariage
Receyve in gree and spede this viage.

The day is comen of hir departynge; 260
I seye, the woful day fatal is come,
That ther may be no lenger tariynge,
But forthward they hem dressen, alle and some.
Custance, that was with sorwe al overcome,
Ful pale arist, and dresseth hire to wende; 265
For wel she seeth ther is noon oother ende.

Allas, what wonder is it thogh she wepte,
That shal be sent to strange nacioun
Fro freendes that so tendrely hire kepte,
And to be bounden under subjeccioun 270
Of oon, she knoweth nat his condicioun?
Housbondes been alle goode, and han ben yoore;
That knowen wyves; I dar sey yow na moore.

"Fader," she seyde, "thy wrecched child Custance,
Thy yonge doghter fostred up so softe, 275
And ye, my mooder, my soverayn plesance
Over alle thyng, out-taken Crist on-lofte,
Custance youre child hire recomandeth ofte
Unto youre grace, for I shal to Surrye,
Ne shal I nevere seen yow moore with ye. 280

"Allas, unto the Barbre nacioun
I moste anoon, syn that it is youre wille;
But Crist, that starf for our redempcioun
So yeve me grace his heestes to fulfille! 284
I, wrecche womman, no fors though I spille!
Wommen are born to thraldom and penance,
And to been under mannes governance."

256 notified: made known
259 in gree: favorably
263 hem dressen: prepare themselves alle and some: one and all
265 arist = *ariseth*, arises
271 condicioun: disposition
272 yoore: long since
275 softe: tenderly
277 out-taken: except on-lofte: on high
278 hire recomandeth: commends herself
279 shal: must go (the verb of motion is understood)
281 Barbre nacioun: pagan world
282 moste: must go
283 starf: died
285 wrecche: exiled no fors: no matter spille: die
286 penance: suffering
287 governance: control

I trowe at Troye, whan Pirrus brak the wal
Or Ilion brende, at Thebes the citee,
N'at Rome, for the harm thurgh Hanybal 290
That Romayns hath venquysshed tymes thre,
Nas herd swich tendre wepyng for pitee
As in the chambre was for hire departynge;
But forth she moot, wher-so she wepe or synge.

O firste moevyng! Crueel firmament, 295
With thy diurnal sweigh that crowdest ay
And hurlest al from est til occident
That naturelly wolde holde another way,
Thy crowdyng set the hevene in swich array
At the bigynnyng of this fiers viage, 300
That crueel Mars hath slayn this mariage.

Infortunat ascendent tortuous,
Of which the lord is helplees falle, allas,
Out of his angle into the derkeste hous!
O Mars, o atazir, as in this cas! 305
O fieble moone, unhappy been thy paas!
Thou knyttest thee ther thou art nat receyved;
Ther thou were weel, fro thennes artow weyved.

Imprudent Emperour of Rome, allas!
Was ther no philosophre in al thy toun? 310
Is no tyme bet than oother in swich cas?
Of viage is ther noon eleccioun,
Namely to folk of heigh condicioun?
Noght whan a roote is of a burthe yknowe?
Allas, we been to lewed or to slowe! 315

288 Pirrus: Pyrrhus, one of the Greek warriors at Troy
289 Or: ere Ilion: the citadel of Troy Thebes: destroyed in a siege
290 Hanybal: Hannibal, the Carthaginian general who attacked Rome
294 wher-so: whether
295 firste moevyng: primum mobile, the outermost of the nine heavenly spheres; see n.
296 diurnal sweigh: daily motion crowdest: pushes
297 est til occident: east to west
298 The stars are naturally inclined to move from west to east (see n. for the astronomical details).
299 array: arrangement
300 fiers: dangerous
302–8 According to the theory of judicial astronomy, at the time of Custance's departure the position of the heavenly bodies was unfavorable, especially because of the evil influence of Mars. See n. for a detailed analysis of the technical vocabulary.
302 Infortunat ascendent tortuous: inauspicious oblique ascending sign; see Astr 2.4 and 2.28.
303 lord: the "lord of the ascendent" (see Astr 2.4.44–56)
304 angle: a "house" at one of the cardinal compass points
305 atazir: the dominant planetary influence
306 unhappy: unfortunate paas: steps
307 You move into conjunction (*knyttest thee*) where you are not welcomed (by an auspicious planet).
308 weyved: banished
310 philosophre: astrologer
312 eleccioun: choice of an astrologically favorable time
313 condicioun: social position
314 roote . . . of a burthe: exact time of birth, which provides a date (*roote*) from which an astrological calculation can be made

To shippe is brought this woful faire mayde
Solempnely, with every circumstance.
"Now Jhesu Crist be with yow alle!" she sayde;
Ther nys namoore, but "Farewel, faire Custance!"
She peyneth hire to make good contenance;
And forth I lete hire saille in this manere, 321
And turne I wole agayn to my matere.

The mooder of the Sowdan, welle of vices,
Espied hath hir sones pleyn entente,
How he wol lete his olde sacrifices; 325
And right anon she for hir conseil sente,
And they been come to knowe what she mente.
And whan assembled was this folk in-feere,
She sette hire doun, and seyde as ye shal heere.

"Lordes," quod she, "ye knowen everichon,
How that my sone in point is for to lete 331
The hooly lawes of our Alkaron,
Yeven by Goddes message Makomete.
But oon avow to grete God I heete,
The lyf shal rather out of my body sterte 335
Or Makometes lawe out of myn herte!

"What sholde us tyden of this newe lawe
But thraldom to oure bodies and penance,
And afterward in helle to be drawe,
For we reneyed Mahoun oure creance? 340
But, lordes, wol ye maken assurance,
As I shal seyn, assentynge to my loore,
And I shal make us sauf for everemoore?"

They sworen and assenten, every man,
To lyve with hire and dye, and by hire stonde,
And everich, in the beste wise he kan, 346
To strengthen hire shal alle his frendes fonde,
And she hath this emprise ytake on honde,
Which ye shal heren that I shal devyse, 349
And to hem alle she spak right in this wyse:

"We shul first feyne us cristendom to take —
Coold water shal nat greve us but a lite! —
And I shal swich a feeste and revel make
That, as I trowe, I shal the Sowdan quite. 354
For thogh his wyf be cristned never so white,
She shal have nede to wasshe awey the rede,
Thogh she a font-ful water with hire lede."

O Sowdanesse, roote of iniquitee!
Virago, thou Semyrame the secounde!
O serpent under femynynytee, 360
Lik to the serpent depe in helle ybounde!
O feyned womman, al that may confounde
Vertu and innocence, thurgh thy malice,
Is bred in thee, as nest of every vice!

O Sathan, envious syn thilke day 365
That thou were chaced from oure heritage,
Wel knowestow to wommen the olde way!
Thou madest Eva brynge us in servage;
Thou wolt fordoon this Cristen mariage. 369
Thyn instrument so — weylawey the while! —
Makestow of wommen, whan thou wolt bigile.

This Sowdanesse, whom I thus blame and warye,
Leet prively hire conseil goon hire way.
What sholde I in this tale lenger tarye?
She rydeth to the Sowdan on a day, 375
And seyde hym that she wolde reneye hir lay,
And cristendom of preestes handes fonge,
Repentynge hire she hethen was so longe,

Bisechynge hym to doon hire that honour,
That she moste han the Cristen folk to feeste — 380
"To plesen hem I wol do my labour."
The Sowdan seith, "I wol doon at youre heeste,"
And knelynge thanketh hire of that requeste.
So glad he was, he nyste what to seye.
She kiste hir sone, and hoom she gooth hir weye. 385

Explicit prima pars.

317 circumstance: ceremony
320 peyneth hire: takes pains
325 lete: abandon
328 in-feere: together
331 in point . . . for to lete: on the point of leaving, forsaking
332 Alkaron: the Koran
333 message: messenger Makomete: Mohammed
334 heete: promise
336 Or: before
337 tyden: happen to
340 reneyed: renounced creance: belief
341 maken assurance: pledge
342 loore: teaching, advice
343 sauf: safe
346 wise: way
347 fonde: try (i.e., persuade to support her)
348 emprise: enterprise

351 feyne us: feign
357 font-ful: baptismal font full of lede: bring
359 Virago: woman usurping man's office; see n. Semyrame: Semiramus, a queen famed for her wickedness
360 under femynynytee: in a female form
361 serpent: Satan
362 confounde: destroy
369 fordoon: destroy
372 warye: curse
376 reneye: renounce lay: religion
377 fonge: receive
381 do my labour: make an effort
382 doon at youre heeste: act according to your command
Explicit, *etc.*: Here ends the first part.

Sequitur pars secunda.

Arryved been this Cristen folk to londe
In Surrye, with a greet solempne route,
And hastifliche this Sowdan sente his sonde
First to his mooder, and al the regne aboute,
And seyde his wyf was comen, out of doute,
And preyde hire for to ryde agayn the queene,
The honour of his regne to susteene. 392

Greet was the prees, and riche was th'array
Of Surryens and Romayns met yfeere;
The mooder of the Sowdan, riche and gay, 395
Receyveth hire with also glad a cheere
As any mooder myghte hir doghter deere,
And to the nexte citee ther bisyde
A softe paas solempnely they ryde.

Noght trowe I the triumphe of Julius, 400
Of which that Lucan maketh swich a boost,
Was roialler ne moore curius
Than was th'assemblee of this blisful hoost.
But this scorpioun, this wikked goost,
The Sowdanesse, for al hire flaterynge, 405
Caste under this ful mortally to stynge.

The Sowdan comth hymself soone after this
So roially that wonder is to telle,
And welcometh hire with alle joye and blis.
And thus in murthe and joye I lete hem dwelle;
The fruyt of this matiere is that I telle. 411
Whan tyme cam, men thoughte it for the beste
That revel stynte, and men goon to hir reste.

The tyme cam, this olde Sowdanesse 414
Ordeyned hath this feeste of which I tolde,
And to the feeste Cristen folk hem dresse
In general, ye, bothe yonge and olde.
Heere may men feeste and roialtee biholde,
And deyntees mo than I kan yow devyse;
But al to deere they boghte it er they ryse. 420

O sodeyn wo, that evere art successour
To worldly blisse, spreynd with bitternesse,
The ende of the joye of oure worldly labour!
Wo occupieth the fyn of oure gladnesse.
Herke this conseil for thy sikernesse: 425
Upon thy glade day have in thy mynde
The unwar wo or harm that comth bihynde.

For shortly for to tellen, at o word,
The Sowdan and the Cristen everichone
Been al tohewe and stiked at the bord, 430
But it were oonly dame Custance allone.
This olde Sowdanesse, cursed krone,
Hath with hir freendes doon this cursed dede,
For she hirself wolde al the contree lede.

Ne ther was Surryen noon that was converted,
That of the conseil of the Sowdan woot, 436
That he nas al tohewe er he asterted.
And Custance han they take anon, foot-hoot,
And in a ship al steerelees, God woot,
They han hir set, and bidde hire lerne saille
Out of Surrye agaynward to Ytaille. 441

A certein tresor that she thider ladde,
And, sooth to seyn, vitaille greet plentee
They han hire yeven, and clothes eek she hadde,
And forth she sailleth in the salte see. 445
O my Custance, ful of benignytee,
O Emperoures yonge doghter deere,
He that is lord of Fortune be thy steere!

She blesseth hire, and with ful pitous voys
Unto the croys of Crist thus seyde she: 450
"O cleere, o welful auter, hooly croys,
Reed of the Lambes blood ful of pitee,
That wessh the world fro the olde iniquitee,
Me fro the feend and fro his clawes kepe,
That day that I shal drenchen in the depe. 453

"Victorious tree, protecciou of trewe, 456
That oonly worthy were for to bere
The Kyng of Hevene with his woundes newe,
The white Lamb, that hurt was with a spere,

Sequitur, *etc.*: The second part follows.
388 **sonde:** message
391 **agayn:** toward
393 **prees:** crowd
394 **met yfeere:** met together
399 **A softe paas:** slowly
400 **triumphe:** triumphal procession **Julius:** Julius Caesar
401 **Lucan:** author of the Pharsalia **boost:** boast
402 **curius:** elaborate
404 **goost:** demon
406 **Caste:** planned
411 **fruyt:** essential part
419 **deyntees:** delicacies
420 **al to deere they boghte it:** they paid only too dearly for it
422 **spreynd:** sprinkled
424 **fyn:** end
425 **sikernesse:** safety
427 **unwar:** unexpected
430 **tohewe:** cut to pieces **stiked:** stabbed **bord:** table
431 **But it were:** except for
432 **krone:** hag
437 **asterted:** escaped
438 **foot-hoot:** immediately
439 **steerelees:** without a rudder
441 **agaynward to:** back again to
442 **tresor:** treasure
443 **vitaille:** food
446 **benignytee:** goodness
448 **lord of Fortune:** i.e., God **steere:** rudder, guide
451 **welful auter:** blessed altar
452 **Reed of:** red with
453 **wessh:** washed

Flemere of feendes out of hym and here 460
On which thy lymes feithfully extenden,
Me kepe, and yif me myght my lyf t'amenden."

Yeres and dayes fleet this creature
Thurghout the See of Grece unto the Strayte
Of Marrok, as it was hire aventure. 465
On many a sory meel now may she bayte;
After hir deeth ful often may she wayte,
Er that the wilde wawes wol hire dryve
Unto the place ther she shal arryve. 469

Men myghten asken why she was nat slayn
Eek at the feeste? Who myghte hir body save?
And I answere to that demande agayn,
Who saved Danyel in the horrible cave
Ther every wight save he, maister and knave,
Was with the leon frete er he asterte? 475
No wight but God that he bar in his herte.

God liste to shewe his wonderful myracle
In hire, for we sholde seen his myghty werkis;
Crist, which that is to every harm triacle; 479
By certeine meenes ofte, as knowen clerkis,
Dooth thyng for certein ende that ful derk is
To mannes wit, that for oure ignorance
Ne konne noght knowe his prudent purveiance.

Now sith she was nat at the feeste yslawe,
Who kepte hire fro the drenchyng in the see?
Who kepte Jonas in the fisshes mawe 486
Til he was spouted up at Nynyvee?
Wel may men knowe it was no wight but he
That kepte peple Ebrayk from hir drenchynge,
With drye feet thurghout the see passynge.

Who bad the foure spirites of tempest 491
That power han t'anoyen lond and see,
Bothe north and south, and also west and est,
"Anoyeth neither see, ne land, ne tree"?
Soothly, the comandour of that was he 495
That fro the tempest ay this womman kepte
As wel whan she wook as whan she slepte.

Where myghte this womman mete and
drynke have 498
Thre yeer and moore? How lasteth hire vitaille?
Who fedde the Egipcien Marie in the cave,
Or in desert? No wight but Crist, sanz faille.
Fyve thousand folk it was as greet mervaille
With loves fyve and fisshes two to feede.
God sente his foyson at hir grete neede.

She dryveth forth into oure occian 505
Thurghout oure wilde see, til atte laste
Under an hoold that nempnen I ne kan,
Fer in Northhumberlond the wawe hire caste,
And in the sond hir ship stiked so faste
That thennes wolde it noght of al a tyde; 510
The wyl of Crist was that she sholde abyde.

The constable of the castel doun is fare
To seen this wrak, and al the ship he soghte,
And foond this wery womman ful of care;
He foond also the tresor that she broghte. 515
In hir langage mercy she bisoghte,
The lyf out of hir body for to twynne,
Hire to delivere of wo that she was inne.

A maner Latyn corrupt was hir speche,
But algates therby was she understonde. 520
The constable, whan hym lyst no longer seche,
This woful womman broghte he to the londe.
She kneleth doun and thanketh Goddes sonde;
But what she was she wolde no man seye,
For foul ne fair, thogh that she sholde deye.

She seyde she was so mazed in the see 526
That she forgat hir mynde, by hir trouthe.

460–61 Banisher of evil spirits from the man and woman over whom thy limbs faithfully extend (i.e., on whom the sign of the Cross has been made)
463 fleet = *fleeteth*, drifts
464 See of Grece: the eastern Mediterranean
464–65 Strayte Of Marrok: the strait of Gibraltar
466 bayte: feed
467 After: for
468 wawes: waves
472 demande: question
475 frete: devoured
479 triacle: medicine
481 derk: mysterious
483 purveiance: providence
486 Jonas: Jonah
487 Nynyvee: Nineveh
489 peple Ebrayk: Hebrews
491 spirites: angels
500 Egipcien Marie: St. Mary the Egyptian
501 sanz faille: doubtless
503 loves: loaves
504 foyson: plenty
505 occian: ocean
507 hoold: castle nempnen: name
508 wawe: wave
509 stiked: stuck
510 of al a tyde: for the duration of an entire tide
513 wrak: wreck soghte: searched
517 twynne: separate
519 Latyn corrupt: corrupted Latin (?); see n.
520 algates: nevertheless
521 seche: look about
523 Goddes sonde: divine providence (literally, God's sending, what He sends)
525 For foul ne fair: under any circumstances
526 mazed: bewildered
527 forgat hir mynde: lost her memory

The constable hath of hire so greet pitee,
And eek his wyf, that they wepen for routhe.
She was so diligent, withouten slouthe, 530
To serve and plesen everich in that place
That alle hir loven that looken in hir face.

This constable and dame Hermengyld, his wyf,
Were payens, and that contree everywhere;
But Hermengyld loved hire right as hir lyf,
And Custance hath so longe sojourned there,
In orisons, with many a bitter teere, 537
Til Jhesu hath converted thurgh his grace
Dame Hermengyld, constablesse of that place.

In al that lond no Cristen dorste route; 540
Alle Cristen folk been fled fro that contree
Thurgh payens, that conquereden al aboute
The plages of the north, by land and see.
To Walys fledde the Cristyanytee
Of olde Britons dwellynge in this ile; 545
Ther was hir refut for the meene while.

But yet nere Cristene Britons so exiled
That ther nere somme that in hir privetee
Honoured Crist and hethen folk bigiled, 549
And ny the castel swiche ther dwelten three.
That oon of hem was blynd and myghte nat see,
But it were with thilke eyen of his mynde
With whiche men seen, after that they ben blynde.

Bright was the sonne as in that someres day,
For which the constable and his wyf also 555
And Custance han ytake the righte way
Toward the see a furlong wey or two,
To pleyen and to romen to and fro,
And in hir walk this blynde man they mette,
Croked and oold, with eyen faste yshette. 560

"In name of Crist," cride this blinde Britoun,
"Dame Hermengyld, yif me my sighte agayn!"
This lady weex affrayed of the soun,
Lest that hir housbonde, shortly for to sayn,
Wolde hire for Jhesu Cristes love han slayn,
Til Custance made hire boold, and bad hire wirche 566
The wyl of Crist, as doghter of his chirche.

The constable weex abasshed of that sight,
And seyde, "What amounteth al this fare?"
Custance answerde, "Sire, it is Cristes myght,
That helpeth folk out of the feendes snare."
And so ferforth she gan oure lay declare 572
That she the constable, er that it was eve
Converteth, and on Crist made hym bileve.

This constable was nothyng lord of this place
Of which I speke, ther he Custance fond, 576
But kepte it strongly many a wyntres space
Under Alla, kyng of al Northhumbrelond,
That was ful wys, and worthy of his hond
Agayn the Scottes, as men may wel heere; 580
But turne I wole agayn to my mateere.

Sathan, that evere us waiteth to bigile,
Saugh of Custance al hire perfeccioun,
And caste anon how he myghte quite hir while,
And made a yong knyght that dwelte in that toun
Love hire so hoote, of foul affeccioun, 586
That verraily hym thoughte he sholde spille,
But he of hire myghte ones have his wille.

He woweth hire, but it availleth noght;
She wolde do no synne, by no weye. 590
And for despit he compassed in his thoght
To maken hire on shameful deeth to deye.
He wayteth whan the constable was aweye,
And pryvely upon a nyght he crepte
In Hermengyldes chambre, whil she slepte.

Wery, forwaked in hire orisouns, 596
Slepeth Custance, and Hermengyld also.
This knyght, thurgh Sathanas temptaciouns,
Al softely is to the bed ygo,
And kitte the throte of Hermengyld atwo, 600
And leyde the blody knyf by dame Custance,
And wente his wey, ther God yeve hym meschance!

530 slouthe: sloth
534 payens: pagans
537 orisons: prayers
540 route: assemble
543 plages: coastal regions
544 Cristyanytee: Christian community
546 refut: refuge
557 furlong wey: about an eighth of a mile
563 weex: became affrayed: frightened

568 abasshed: troubled
569 fare: commotion
572 so ferforth: to such an extent
579 worthy of his hond: brave in battle
582 waiteth: seeks an occasion
584 caste: plotted quite hir while: repay her
586 of . . . affeccioun: with passion
587 spille: die
591 compassed: plotted
596 Exhausted from lack of sleep because of praying
600 kitte: cut atwo: in two

Soone after cometh this constable hoom agayn,
And eek Alla, that kyng was of that lond,
And saugh his wyf despitously yslayn, 605
For which ful ofte he weep and wroong his hond,
And in the bed the blody knyf he fond
By Dame Custance. Allas, what myghte she seye?
For verray wo hir wit was al aweye. 609

To kyng Alla was toold al this meschance,
And eek the tyme, and where, and in what wise
That in a ship was founden this Custance,
As heer-biforn that ye han herd devyse.
The kynges herte of pitee gan agryse
Whan he saugh so benigne a creature 615
Falle in disese and in mysaventure.

For as the lomb toward his deeth is broght,
So stant this innocent bifore the kyng.
This false knyght, that hath this tresoun wroght,
Berth hire on hond that she hath doon thys thyng. 620
But nathelees, ther was greet moornyng
Among the peple, and seyn they kan nat gesse
That she had doon so greet a wikkednesse,

For they han seyn hire evere so vertuous,
And lovynge Hermengyld right as hir lyf. 625
Of this baar witnesse everich in that hous,
Save he that Hermengyld slow with his knyf.
This gentil kyng hath caught a greet motyf
Of this witnesse, and thoghte he wolde enquere
Depper in this, a trouthe for to lere. 630

Allas! Custance, thou hast no champioun,
Ne fighte kanstow noght, so weylaway!
But he that starf for our redempcioun,
And boond Sathan (and yet lith ther he lay),
So be thy stronge champion this day! 635

For, but if Crist open myracle kithe,
Withouten gilt thou shalt be slayn as swithe.

She sette hire doun on knees, and thus she sayde:
"Immortal God, that savedest Susanne
Fro false blame, and thou, merciful mayde,
Marie I meene, doghter to Seint Anne, 641
Bifore whos child angeles synge Osanne,
If I be giltlees of this felonye,
My socour be, for ellis shal I dye!"

Have ye nat seyn somtyme a pale face, 645
Among a prees, of hym that hath be lad
Toward his deeth, wher as hym gat no grace,
And swich a colour in his face hath had
Men myghte knowe his face that was bistad
Amonges alle the faces in that route? 650
So stant Custance, and looketh hire aboute.

O queenes, lyvynge in prosperitee,
Duchesses, and ye ladyes everichone,
Haveth som routhe on hire adversitee!
An Emperoures doghter stant allone; 655
She hath no wight to whom to make hir mone.
O blood roial, that stondest in this drede,
Fer been thy freendes at thy grete nede!

This Alla kyng hath swich compassioun,
As gentil herte is fulfild of pitee, 660
That from his eyen ran the water doun.
"Now hastily do fecche a book," quod he,
"And if this knyght wol sweren how that she
This womman slow, yet wol we us avyse 664
Whom that we wole that shal been oure justise."

A Britoun book, written with Evaungiles,
Was fet, and on this book he swoor anoon
She gilty was, and in the meene whiles
An hand hym smoot upon the nekke-boon,
That doun he fil atones as a stoon, 670

605 **despitously**: cruelly
613 **herd devyse**: heard tell
614 **gan agryse**: trembled
616 **disese**: distress
618 **stant** = *stondith*, stands
620 **Berth hire on hond**: accuses her falsely
622 **seyn**: seen
627 **slow**: slew
628 **caught a greet motyf**: was deeply moved
630 **Depper**: more deeply **lere**: learn
631 **champioun**: champion, representative in a judicial duel
633 **starf**: died
636 **kithe**: reveal
637 **Withouten gilt**: guiltless **as swithe**: immediately
639 **Susanne**: Susannah (falsely accused by the Elders in the apocryphal Book of Susannah)
641 **Seint Anne**: the mother of the Virgin
642 **Osanne**: Hosanna
646 **prees**: crowd
649 **bistad**: in trouble
656 **make hir mone**: lament
658 **Fer**: far away
662 **do fecche a book**: have a book brought
664 **us avyse**: think over carefully
667 **fet**: fetched

And bothe his eyen broste out of his face
In sighte of every body in that place.

A voys was herd in general audience,
And seyde, "Thou hast desclaundred, giltelees,
The doghter of hooly chirche in heigh presence; 675
Thus hastou doon, and yet holde I my pees!"
Of this mervaille agast was al the prees;
As mazed folk they stoden everichone,
For drede of wreche, save Custance allone.

Greet was the drede and eek the repentance
Of hem that hadden wrong suspecioun 681
Upon this sely innocent, Custance;
And for this miracle, in conclusioun,
And by Custances mediacioun, 684
The kyng — and many another in that place —
Converted was, thanked be Cristes grace!

This false knyght was slayn for his untrouthe
By juggement of Alla hastifly;
And yet Custance hadde of his deeth greet routhe.
And after this Jhesus, of his mercy, 690
Made Alla wedden ful solempnely
This hooly mayden, that is so bright and sheene;
And thus hath Crist ymaad Custance a queene.

But who was woful, if I shal nat lye,
Of this weddyng but Donegild, and namo, 695
The kynges mooder, ful of tirannye?
Hir thoughte hir cursed herte brast atwo.
She wolde noght hir sone had do so;
Hir thoughte a despit that he sholde take
So strange a creature unto his make. 700

Me list nat of the chaf, ne of the stree,
Maken so long a tale as of the corn.
What sholde I tellen of the roialtee
At mariage, or which cours goth biforn;
Who bloweth in a trumpe or in an horn? 705
The fruyt of every tale is for to seye:

They ete, and drynke, and daunce, and synge, and pleye.

They goon to bedde, as it was skile and right;
For thogh that wyves be ful hooly thynges,
They moste take in pacience at nyght 710
Swiche manere necessaries as been plesynges
To folk that han ywedded hem with rynges,
And leye a lite hir hoolynesse aside,
As for the tyme — it may no bet bitide.

On hire he gat a knave child anon, 715
And to a bisshop, and his constable eke,
He took his wyf to kepe, whan he is gon
To Scotlond-ward, his foomen for to seke.
Now faire Custance, that is so humble and meke,
So longe is goon with childe, til that stille 720
She halt hire chambre, abidyng Cristes wille.

The tyme is come a knave child she beer;
Mauricius at the fontstoon they hym calle.
This constable dooth forth come a messageer,
And wroot unto his kyng, that cleped was Alle,
How that this blisful tidyng is bifalle, 726
And othere tidynges spedeful for to seye.
He taketh the lettre, and forth he gooth his weye.

This messager, to doon his avantage,
Unto the kynges mooder rideth swithe, 730
And salueth hire ful faire in his langage:
"Madame," quod he, "ye may be glad and blithe,
And thanketh God an hundred thousand sithe!
My lady queene hath child, withouten doute,
To joye and blisse to al this regne aboute. 735

"Lo, heere the lettres seled of this thyng,
That I moot bere with al the haste I may.
If ye wol aught unto youre sone the kyng,
I am youre servant, bothe nyght and day."

671 **broste:** burst
673 **in general audience:** in the hearing of all
674 **desclaundred:** slandered
675 **in heigh presence:** in presence of the High One (God)
677 **prees:** crowd
678 **mazed:** bewildered, dazed
679 **wreche:** vengeance
682 **sely:** blessed
687 **untrouthe:** perjury
697 **brast atwo:** broke in two
700 **unto his make:** as his spouse
701 **chaf:** chaff (husks) **stree:** straw
702 **corn:** fruit, essential part, of the story

708 **skile:** reasonable
711 **necessaries:** necessities
715 **gat:** begot **knave child:** boy
717 **took:** gave
718 **to Scotlond-ward:** towards Scotland
721 **halt** = *holdeth,* holds, keeps to
723 **fontstoon:** baptismal font
726 **tidyng:** event
727 **spedeful:** useful
729 **to doon his avantage:** to do himself good
730 **swithe:** quickly
733 **sithe:** times
736 **seled:** marked with his seal
738 **wol aught:** want (to send) anything

Donegild answerde, "As now at this tyme, nay; 740
But heere al nyght I wol thou take thy reste.
To-morwe wol I seye thee what me leste."

This messager drank sadly ale and wyn,
And stolen were his lettres pryvely
Out of his box, whil he sleep as a swyn; 745
And countrefeted was ful subtilly
Another lettre, wroght ful synfully,
Unto the kyng direct of this mateere
Fro his constable, as ye shal after heere.

The lettre spak the queene delivered was 750
Of so horrible a feendly creature
That in the castel noon so hardy was
That any while dorste ther endure.
The mooder was an elf, by aventure
Ycomen, by charmes or by sorcerie, 755
And every wight hateth hir compaignye.

Wo was this kyng whan he this lettre had sayn,
But to no wight he tolde his sorwes soore,
But of his owene hand he wroot agayn,
"Welcome the sonde of Crist for everemoore
To me that am now lerned in his loore! 761
Lord, welcome be thy lust and thy plesaunce;
My lust I putte al in thyn ordinaunce.

"Kepeth this child, al be it foul or feir,
And eek my wyf, unto myn hoom-comynge.
Crist, whan hym list, may sende me an heir 766
Moore agreable than this to my likynge."
This lettre he seleth, pryvely wepynge,
Which to the messager was take soone,
And forth he gooth; ther is na moore to doone.

O messager, fulfild of dronkenesse, 771
Strong is thy breeth, thy lymes faltren ay,
And thou biwreyest alle secreenesse.
Thy mynde is lorn; thou janglest as a jay,
Thy face is turned in a newe array. 775
Ther dronkenesse regneth in any route,
Ther is no conseil hyd, withouten doute.

743 sadly: steadily
748 direct: addressed
754 elf: evil spirit
757 sayn: seen
760 sonde: dispensation
763 in thyn ordinaunce: in your control
768 seleth: marks with his seal
769 take: given
772 faltren: are unsteady
773 biwreyest: betray secreenesse: secret information
774 lorn: lost janglest: chatter

O Donegild, I ne have noon Englissh digne
Unto thy malice and thy tirannye!
And therfore to the feend I thee resigne; 780
Lat hym enditen of thy traitorie!
Fy, mannysh, fy! — o nay, by God, I lye —
Fy, feendlych spirit, for I dar wel telle,
Thogh thou heere walke, thy spirit is in helle!

This messager comth fro the kyng agayn,
And at the kynges moodres court he lighte, 786
And she was of this messager ful fayn,
And plesed hym in al that ever she myghte.
He drank, and wel his girdel underpighte;
He slepeth, and he fnorteth in his gyse 790
Al nyght, til the sonne gan aryse.

Eft were his lettres stolen everychon,
And countrefeted lettres in this wyse:
"The king comandeth his constable anon, 794
Up peyne of hangyng, and on heigh juyse,
That he ne sholde suffren in no wyse
Custance in-with his reawme for t'abyde
Thre dayes and o quarter of a tyde;

"But in the same ship as he hire fond,
Hire, and hir yonge sone, and al hir geere, 800
He sholde putte, and croude hire fro the lond,
And charge hire that she never eft coome theere."
O my Custance, wel may thy goost have feere,
And, slepynge, in thy dreem been in penance,
Whan Donegild cast al this ordinance. 805

This messager on morwe, whan he wook,
Unto the castel halt the nexte way,
And to the constable he the lettre took;
And whan that he this pitous lettre say,
Ful ofte he seyde, "Allas and weylaway!" 810
"Lord Crist," quod he, "how may this world endure,
So ful of synne is many a creature?

778 digne: fit
780 resigne: consign
781 enditen: write traitorie: treachery
786 lighte: alighted, dismounted
789 his girdel underpighte: stuffed (drink) under his belt
790 fnorteth: snores
792 Eft: again
795 Up peyne of: on the penalty of juyse: judicial sentence
797 reawme: realm
798 tyde: hour, or duration of a tide (ebb and flow)
801 croude: push
802 charge: command
807 halt the nexte way: takes (*halt* = *holdeth*) the shortest (literally, nearest) way
808 took: gave
809 say: saw

"O myghty God, if that it be thy wille,
Sith thou art rightful juge, how may it be
That thou wolt suffren innocentz to spille, 815
And wikked folk regne in prosperitee?
O goode Custance, allas, so wo is me
That I moot be thy tormentour, or deye
On shames deeth; ther is noon oother weye."

Wepen bothe yonge and olde in al that place 820
Whan that the kyng this cursed lettre sente,
And Custance, with a deedly pale face,
The ferthe day toward hir ship she wente.
But nathelees she taketh in good entente 824
The wyl of Crist, and knelynge on the stronde,
She seyde, "Lord, ay welcome be thy sonde!

"He that me kepte fro the false blame
While I was on the lond amonges yow,
He kan me kepe from harm and eek fro shame
In salte see, althogh I se noght how. 830
As strong as evere he was, he is yet now.
In hym triste I, and in his mooder deere,
That is to me my seyl and eek my steere."

Hir litel child lay wepyng in hir arm,
And knelynge, pitously to hym she seyde, 835
"Pees, litel sone, I wol do thee noon harm."
With that hir coverchief of hir heed she breyde,
And over his litel eyen she it leyde,
And in hir arm she lulleth it ful faste,
And into hevene hire eyen up she caste. 840

"Mooder," quod she, "and mayde bright, Marie,
Sooth is that thurgh wommanes eggement
Mankynde was lorn, and damned ay to dye,
For which thy child was on a croys yrent.
Thy blisful eyen sawe al his torment; 845
Thanne is ther no comparison bitwene
Thy wo and any wo man may sustene.

"Thow sawe thy child yslayn bifore thyne yen,
And yet now lyveth my litel child, parfay! 849
Now, lady bright, to whom alle woful cryen,
Thow glorie of wommanhede, thow faire may,

815 spille: die
823 ferthe: fourth
825 stronde: strand, shore
826 sonde: dispensation
832 triste: trust
833 steere: rudder, guide
837 coverchief: kerchief of . . . breyde: drew off
842 eggement: instigation
844 yrent: stretched (literally, *torn*)
849 parfay: by my faith
851 wommanhede: femininity may: maid

Thow haven of refut, brighte sterre of day,
Rewe on my child, that of thy gentillesse
Rewest on every reweful in distresse.

"O litel child, allas! What is thy gilt, 855
That nevere wroghtest synne as yet, pardee?
Why wil thyn harde fader han thee spilt?
O mercy, deere constable," quod she,
"As lat my litel child dwelle heer with thee;
And if thou darst nat saven hym, for blame,
So kys hym ones in his fadres name!" 861

Therwith she looked bakward to the londe,
And seyde, "Farewel, housbonde routheleeis!"
And up she rist, and walketh doun the stronde
Toward the ship — hir folweth al the prees —
And evere she preyeth hire child to holde his pees; 866
And taketh hir leve, and with an hooly entente
She blisseth hire, and into ship she wente.

Vitailled was the ship, it is no drede,
Habundantly for hire ful longe space, 870
And othere necessaries that sholde nede
She hadde ynogh — heryed be Goddes grace!
For wynd and weder almyghty God purchace,
And brynge hire hoom! I kan no bettre seye,
But in the see she dryveth forth hir weye. 875

Explicit secunda pars.

Sequitur pars tercia.

Alla the kyng comth hoom soone after this
Unto his castel, of the which I tolde,
And asketh where his wyf and his child is.
The constable gan aboute his herte colde,
And pleynly al the manere he hym tolde 880
As ye han herd — I kan telle it no bettre —
And sheweth the kyng his seel and eek his lettre,

And seyde, "Lord, as ye comanded me
Up peyne of deeth, so have I doon, certein."
This messager tormented was til he 885

852 refut: refuge sterre: star
853 Rewe: take pity
857 spilt: put to death
863 routheleeis: without compassion
869 Vitailled: stocked with provisions
870 space: time
871 necessaries: necessities nede: be needed
872 heryed: praised
873 weder: weather purchace: provide
Explicit, *etc.*: Here ends the second part.
Sequitur, *etc.*: The third part follows.
880 al the manere: the whole affair
884 Up peyne of: on the penalty of
885 tormented: tortured

Moste biknowe and tellen, plat and pleyn,
Fro nyght to nyght, in what place he had leyn;
And thus, by wit and sotil enquerynge,
Ymagined was by whom this harm gan sprynge.

The hand was knowe that the lettre wroot,
And al the venym of this cursed dede, 891
But in what wise, certeinly, I noot.
Th'effect is this: that Alla, out of drede,
His mooder slow — that may men pleynly rede —
For that she traitour was to hire ligeance. 895
Thus endeth olde Donegild, with meschance!

The sorwe that this Alla nyght and day
Maketh for his wyf, and for his child also,
Ther is no tonge that it telle may.
But now wol I unto Custance go, 900
That fleteth in the see, in peyne and wo,
Fyve yeer and moore, as liked Cristes sonde,
Er that hir ship approched unto londe.

Under an hethen castel, atte laste, 904
Of which the name in my text noght I fynde,
Custance, and eek hir child, the see up caste.
Almyghty God, that saveth al mankynde,
Have on Custance and on hir child som mynde,
That fallen is in hethen hand eft soone,
In point to spille, as I shal telle yow soone. 910

Doun fro the castel comth ther many a wight
To gauren on this ship and on Custance.
But shortly, from the castel, on a nyght,
The lordes styward — God yeve hym meschance! —
A theef, that hadde reneyed oure creance, 915
Cam into ship allone, and seyde he sholde
Hir lemman be, wher-so she wolde or nolde.

Wo was this wrecched womman tho bigon;
Hir child cride, and she cride pitously.
But blisful Marie heelp hire right anon; 920
For with hir struglyng wel and myghtily
The theef fil over bord al sodeynly,
And in the see he dreynte for vengeance;
And thus hath Crist unwemmed kept Custance.

O foule lust of luxurie, lo, thyn ende! 925
Nat oonly that thou feyntest mannes mynde,
But verraily thou wolt his body shende.
Th'ende of thy werk, or of thy lustes blynde,
Is compleynyng. Hou many oon may men fynde
That noght for werk somtyme, but for th'entente 930
To doon this synne, been outher slayn or shente!

How may this wayke womman han this strengthe
Hire to defende agayn this renegat?
O Golias, unmesurable of lengthe,
Hou myghte David make thee so maat, 935
So yong and of armure so desolaat?
Hou dorste he looke upon thy dredful face?
Wel may men seen, it nas but Goddes grace.

Who yaf Judith corage or hardynesse
To sleen hym Olofernus in his tente, 940
And to deliveren out of wrecchednesse
The peple of God? I seye, for this entente,
That right as God spirit of vigour sente
To hem and saved hem out of meschance,
So sente he myght and vigour to Custance. 945

Forth gooth hir ship thurghout the narwe mouth
Of Jubaltare and Septe, dryvynge ay
Somtyme west, and somtyme north and south,
And somtyme est, ful many a wery day,
Til Cristes mooder — blessed be she ay! — 950
Hath shapen, thurgh hir endelees goodnesse,
To make an ende of al hir hevynesse.

Now lat us stynte of Custance but a throwe,
And speke we of the Romayn Emperour,

886 **biknowe:** reveal **plat:** bluntly
888 **wit:** knowledge **sotil enquerynge:** subtle, skillful questioning
889 **Ymagined:** deduced
891 **venym:** poison
893 **out of drede:** doubtless
895 **ligeance:** allegiance
901 **fleteth:** floats
908 **mynde:** thought
909 **eft soone:** again
910 **In point to:** on the point of
912 **gauren on:** stare at
914 **styward:** steward
915 **reneyed:** renounced **creance:** belief
917 **lemman:** lover **wher-so:** whether
918 **Wo . . . bigon:** in a sad plight
924 **unwemmed:** undefiled
925 **luxurie:** lechery
926 **feyntest:** weaken
927 **shende:** destroy
929 **compleynyng:** lamentation
930 **werk:** the deed
932 **wayke:** weak
934 **Golias:** Goliath, the biblical giant slain by David
935 **maat:** defeated
936 **of armure so desolaat:** so lacking in arms and armor
937 **dredful:** frightening
939–40 Judith slew the lecherous Holofernes (*Olofernus*); for the story see MkT VII.2551–74.
946 **narwe mouth:** the narrow strait between Gibraltar (*Jubaltare*) and Morocco (*Septe*)
952 **hevynesse:** sadness
953 **throwe:** short while

That out of Surrye hath by lettres knowe 955
The slaughtre of cristen folk, and dishonour
Doon to his doghter by a fals traytour,
I mene the cursed wikked Sowdanesse
That at the feeste leet sleen bothe moore and lesse.

For which this Emperour hath sent anon 960
His senatour, with roial ordinance,
And othere lordes, God woot, many oon,
On Surryens to taken heigh vengeance.
They brennen, sleen, and brynge hem to meschance
Ful many a day; but shortly — this is th'ende —
Homward to Rome they shapen hem to wende.

This senatour repaireth with victorie 967
To Rome-ward, saillynge ful roially,
And mette the ship dryvynge, as seith the storie,
In which Custance sit ful pitously. 970
Nothyng ne knew he what she was, ne why
She was in swich array, ne she nyl seye
Of hire estaat, althogh she sholde deye.

He bryngeth hire to Rome, and to his wyf
He yaf hire, and hir yonge sone also; 975
And with the senatour she ladde hir lyf.
Thus kan Oure Lady bryngen out of wo
Woful Custance, and many another mo.
And longe tyme dwelled she in that place,
In hooly werkes evere, as was hir grace. 980

The senatoures wyf hir aunte was,
But for al that she knew hire never the moore.
I wol no lenger tarien in this cas,
But to kyng Alla, which I spak of yoore,
That for his wyf wepeth and siketh soore, 985
I wol retourne, and lete I wol Custance
Under the senatoures governance.

Kyng Alla, which that hadde his mooder slayn,
Upon a day fil in swich repentance
That, if I shortly tellen shal and playn, 990
To Rome he comth to receyven his penance;
And putte hym in the Popes ordinance
In heigh and logh, and Jhesu Crist bisoghte
Foryeve his wikked werkes that he wroghte.

The fame anon thurgh Rome toun is born,
How Alla kyng shal comen in pilgrymage, 996
By herbergeours that wenten hym biforn;
For which the senatour, as was usage,
Rood hym agayns, and many of his lynage,
As wel to shewen his heighe magnificence
As to doon any kyng a reverence. 1001

Greet cheere dooth this noble senatour
To kyng Alla, and he to hym also;
Everich of hem dooth oother greet honour.
And so bifel that in a day or two 1005
This senatour is to kyng Alla go
To feste, and shortly, if I shal nat lye,
Custances sone wente in his compaignye.

Som men wolde seyn at requeste of Custance
This senatour hath lad this child to feeste;
I may nat tellen every circumstance — 1011
Be as be may, ther was he at the leeste.
But sooth is this, that at his moodres heeste
Biforn Alla, durynge the metes space, 1014
The child stood, lookynge in the kynges face.

This Alla kyng hath of this child greet wonder,
And to the senatour he seyde anon,
"Whos is that faire child that stondeth yonder?"
"I noot," quod he, "by God, and by Seint John!
A mooder he hath, but fader hath he noon 1020
That I of woot" — and shortly, in a stounde,
He tolde Alla how that this child was founde.

"But God woot," quod this senatour also,
"So vertuous a lyvere in my lyf
Ne saugh I nevere as she, ne herde of mo, 1025
Of worldly wommen, mayde, ne of wyf.
I dar wel seyn hir hadde levere a knyf
Thurghout hir brest, than ben a womman wikke;
There is no man koude brynge hire to that prikke."

959 leet sleen: had (caused to be) slain
972 nyl = *ne wyl*, will not
992 ordinance: governance
993 In heigh and logh: in all things

997 herbergeours: servants who travel ahead to arrange lodging
999 hym agayns: toward him
1000 his heighe magnificence: his own noble state
1012 Be as be may: whatever may be
1014 metes space: dinner time
1021 stounde: little time
1024 lyvere: being
1028 wikke: evil
1029 prikke: point

Now was this child as lyk unto Custance
As possible is a creature to be. 1031
This Alla hath the face in remembrance
Of dame Custance, and ther on mused he
If that the childes mooder were aught she
That is his wyf, and pryvely he sighte, 1035
And spedde hym fro the table that he myghte.

"Parfay," thoghte he, "fantome is in myn heed!
I oghte deme, of skilful juggement,
That in the salte see my wyf is deed."
And afterward he made his argument: 1040
"What woot I if that Crist have hyder ysent
My wyf by see, as wel as he hire sente
To my contree fro thennes that she wente?"

And after noon, hoom with the senatour
Goth Alla, for to seen this wonder chaunce.
This senatour dooth Alla greet honour, 1046
And hastifly he sente after Custaunce.
But trusteth weel, hire liste nat to daunce
Whan that she wiste wherfore was that sonde;
Unnethe upon hir feet she myghte stonde. 1050

Whan Alla saugh his wyf, faire he hire grette,
And weep that it was routhe for to see;
For at the firste look he on hire sette
He knew wel verraily that it was she.
And she, for sorwe, as doumb stant as a tree,
So was hir herte shet in hir distresse, 1056
Whan she remembred his unkyndenesse.

Twyes she swowned in his owene sighte;
He weep, and hym excuseth pitously.
"Now God," quod he, "and his halwes brighte
So wisly on my soule as have mercy, 1061
That of youre harm as giltelees am I
As is Maurice my sone, so lyk youre face;
Elles the feend me fecche out of this place!"

Long was the sobbyng and the bitter peyne,
Er that hir woful hertes myghte cesse; 1066
Greet was the pitee for to heere hem pleyne,

1034 aught: in any way
1035 sighte: sighed
1036 that he myghte: as soon as he could
1037 fantome: hallucination
1038 skilful: discerning
1048 hire liste nat to daunce: she did not want to dance (for joy)
1050 Unnethe: hardly
1051 grette: greeted
1052 routhe: pity
1056 shet: shut up, pressed by emotion
1060 halwes: saints
1061 So wisly: surely
1066 cesse: cease

Thurgh whiche pleintes gan hir wo encresse.
I pray yow alle my labour to relesse;
I may nat telle hir wo until to-morwe, 1070
I am so wery for to speke of sorwe.

But finally, whan that the sothe is wist
That Alla giltelees was of hir wo,
I trowe an hundred tymes been they kist,
And swich a blisse is ther bitwix hem two 1075
That, save the joye that lasteth everemo,
Ther is noon lyk that any creature
Hath seyn or shal, whil that the world may dure.

Tho preyde she hir housbonde mekely,
In relief of hir longe, pitous pyne, 1080
That he wolde preye hir fader specially
That of his magestee he wolde enclyne
To vouche sauf som day with hym to dyne.
She preyde hym eek he sholde by no weye
Unto hir fader no word of hire seye. 1085

Som men wolde seyn how that the child Maurice
Dooth this message unto this Emperour;
But, as I gesse, Alla was nat so nyce
To hym that was of so sovereyn honour
As he that is of Cristen folk the flour, 1090
Sente any child, but it is bet to deeme
He wente hymself, and so it may wel seeme.

This Emperour hath graunted gentilly
To come to dyner, as he hym bisoughte;
And wel rede I he looked bisily 1095
Upon this child, and on his doghter thoghte.
Alla goth to his in, and as hym oghte,
Arrayed for this feste in every wise
As ferforth as his konnyng may suffise. 1099

The morwe cam, and Alla gan hym dresse,
And eek his wyf, this Emperour to meete;
And forth they ryde in joye and in gladnesse.
And whan she saugh hir fader in the strete,
She lighte doun, and falleth hym to feete. 1104
"Fader," quod she, "youre yonge child Custance
Is now ful clene out of youre remembrance.

1069 relesse: relieve
1074 been they kist: they kissed each other
1080 pyne: pain
1083 vouche sauf: grant
1088 nyce: foolish
1091 Sente: to have sent
1095 rede I: I read (in my source) bisily: intently
1104 hym to feete: at his feet
1106 ful clene: completely

"I am youre doghter Custance," quod she,
"That whilom ye han sent unto Surrye.
It am I, fader, that in the salte see
Was put allone and dampned for to dye. 1110
Now, goode fader, mercy I yow crye!
Sende me namoore unto noon hethenesse,
But thonketh my lord heere of his kyndenesse."

Who kan the pitous joye tellen al
Bitwixe hem thre, syn they been thus ymette?
But of my tale make an ende I shal; 1116
The day goth faste, I wol no lenger lette.
This glade folk to dyner they hem sette;
In joye and blisse at mete I lete hem dwelle
A thousand foold wel moore than I kan
telle. 1120

This child Maurice was sithen Emperour
Maad by the Pope, and lyved cristenly;
To Cristes chirche he dide greet honour.
But I lete al his storie passen by;
Of Custance is my tale specially. 1125
In the olde Romayn geestes may men fynde
Maurices lyf; I bere it noght in mynde.

This kyng Alla, whan he his tyme say,
With his Custance, his hooly wyf so sweete,
To Engelond been they come the righte way,
Wher as they lyve in joye and in quiete. 1131
But litel while it lasteth, I yow heete,
Joye of this world, for tyme wol nat abyde;
Fro day to nyght it changeth as the tyde.

Who lyved euere in swich delit o day 1135
That hym ne moeved outher conscience,
Or ire, or talent, or som kynnes affray,
Envye, or pride, or passion, or offence?
I ne seye but for this ende this sentence,
That litel while in joye or in plesance 1140
Lasteth the blisse of Alla with Custance.

For Deeth, that taketh of heigh and logh his
rente,
Whan passed was a yeer, evene as I gesse,
Out of this world this kyng Alla he hente,
For whom Custance hath ful greet hevynesse.
Now lat us prayen God his soule blesse! 1146
And dame Custance, finally to seye,
Toward the toun of Rome goth hir weye.

To Rome is come this hooly creature,
And fyndeth hire freendes hoole and sounde;
Now is she scaped al hire aventure. 1151
And whan that she hir fader hath yfounde,
Doun on hir knees falleth she to grounde;
Wepynge for tendrenesse in herte blithe,
She heryeth God an hundred thousand sithe.

In vertu and in hooly almus-dede 1156
They lyven alle, and nevere asonder wende;
Til deeth departeth hem, this lyf they lede.
And fareth now weel! my tale is at an ende.
Now Jhesu Crist, that of his myght may sende
Joye after wo, governe us in his grace, 1161
And kepe us alle that been in this place! Amen

Heere endeth the tale of the Man of Lawe.

THE EPILOGUE OF THE MAN OF LAW'S TALE

[Owre Hoost upon his stiropes stood anon,
And seyde, "Goode men, herkeneth everych
on!
This was a thrifty tale for the nones! 1165
Sir Parisshe Prest," quod he, "for Goddes bones,
Telle us a tale, as was thi forward yore.
I se wel that ye lerned men in lore
Can moche good, by Goddes dignitee!" 1169
The Parson him answerde, "Benedicite!
What eyleth the man, so synfully to swere?"

1117 **lette:** delay
1126 **Romayn geestes:** Roman histories
1128 **say:** saw
1130 **righte way:** direct route

1165 **thrifty:** worthwhile

1136 **moeved:** moved **outher:** either
1137 **som kynnes:** some kind of **affray:** fear
1138 **Envye:** ill-will
1144 **hente:** snatched
1155 **heryeth:** praises **sithe:** times
1156 **almus-dede:** charitable works
1157 **asonder wende:** parted

1169 **Can moche good:** know what you are about

Oure Host answerde, "O Jankin, be ye there?
I smelle a Lollere in the wynd," quod he.
"Now! goode men," quod oure Hoste, "herkeneth me;
Abydeth, for Goddes digne passioun, 1175
For we schal han a predicacioun;
This Lollere heer wil prechen us somwhat."
"Nay, by my fader soule, that schal he nat!"
Seyde the Shipman, "Heer schal he nat preche;
He schal no gospel glosen here ne teche. 1180
We leven alle in the grete God," quod he;
"He wolde sowen som difficulte,
Or springen cokkel in our clene corn.
And therfore, Hoost, I warne thee biforn,
My joly body schal a tale telle, 1185
And I schal clynken you so mery a belle,
That I schal waken al this compaignie.
But it schal not ben of philosophie,
Ne phislyas, ne termes queinte of lawe.
Ther is but litel Latyn in my mawe!"] 1190

1172 **Jankin:** derisive name for a priest
1173 **Lollere:** Lollard, a heretic
1176 **predicacioun:** sermon
1179 **Shipman:** The identity of the speaker is uncertain; see n.
1180 **glosen:** interpret
1181 **leven:** believe
1183 **springen:** sprinkle **cokkel:** corn cockle (a weed)
1189 **phislyas:** files, cases (?); see n. **queinte:** learned, complex

Fragment III (Group D)

THE WIFE OF BATH'S PROLOGUE

The Prologe of the Wyves Tale of Bathe.

"Experience, though noon auctoritee
Were in this world, is right ynogh for me
To speke of wo that is in mariage;
For, lordynges, sith I twelve yeer was of age,
Thonked be God that is eterne on lyve, 5
Housbondes at chirche dore I have had fyve —
If I so ofte myghte have ywedded bee —
And alle were worthy men in hir degree.
But me was toold, certeyn, nat longe agoon is,
That sith that Crist ne wente nevere but onis
To weddyng, in the Cane of Galilee, 11
That by the same ensample taughte he me
That I ne sholde wedded be but ones.
Herkne eek, lo, which a sharp word for the nones,
Biside a welle, Jhesus, God and man, 15
Spak in repreeve of the Samaritan:
'Thou hast yhad fyve housbondes,' quod he,
'And that ilke man that now hath thee
Is noght thyn housbonde,' thus seyde he certeyn.
What that he mente therby, I kan nat seyn; 20
But that I axe, why that the fifthe man
Was noon housbonde to the Samaritan?
How manye myghte she have in mariage?
Yet herde I nevere tellen in myn age
Upon this nombre diffinicioun. 25
Men may devyne and glosen, up and doun,
But wel I woot, expres, withoute lye,
God bad us for to wexe and multiplye;
That gentil text kan I wel understonde.
Eek wel I woot, he seyde myn housbonde 30
Sholde lete fader and mooder and take to me.
But of no nombre mencion made he,
Of bigamye, or of octogamye;
Why sholde men thanne speke of it vileynye?
Lo, heere the wise kyng, daun Salomon; 35
I trowe he hadde wyves mo than oon.
As wolde God it leveful were unto me
To be refresshed half so ofte as he!
Which yifte of God hadde he for alle his wyvys!
No man hath swich that in this world alyve is.
God woot, this noble kyng, as to my wit, 41
The firste nyght had many a myrie fit
With ech of hem, so wel was hym on lyve.
Yblessed be God that I have wedded fyve!
[Of whiche I have pyked out the beste, 44a
Bothe of here nether purs and of here cheste.
Diverse scoles maken parfyt clerkes,
And diverse practyk in many sondry werkes
Maketh the werkman parfyt sekirly;
Of fyve husbondes scoleiyng am I.] 44f
Welcome the sixte, whan that evere he shal.
For sothe, I wol nat kepe me chaast in al. 46
Whan myn housbonde is fro the world ygon,
Som Cristen man shal wedde me anon,
For thanne th'apostle seith that I am free
To wedde, a Goddes half, where it liketh me.
He seith that to be wedded is no synne; 51
Bet is to be wedded than to brynne.
What rekketh me, thogh folk seye vileynye
Of shrewed Lameth and his bigamye?
I woot wel Abraham was an hooly man, 55
And Jacob eek, as ferforth as I kan;
And ech of hem hadde wyves mo than two,

1 **auctoritee:** written authority
10 **onis:** once
11 **Cane:** the town of Cana
14 **Herkne:** listen
16 **repreeve:** reproof
21 **axe:** ask
26 **devyne:** conjecture **glosen, up and doun:** interpret in every way
27 **expres:** clearly
28 **wexe:** increase (breed)
31 **lete:** leave
33 **octogamye:** marrying eight times
34 **vileynye:** in reproach
35 **daun:** sir **Salomon:** Solomon
37 **leveful:** lawful, permissible
39 **Which yifte:** what a gift
41 **wit:** judgment
44b **nether:** lower
44d **practyk:** practice
44e **sekirly:** certainly
44f **scoleiyng:** schooling
46 **chaast:** chaste
49 **th'apostle:** St. Paul
50 **a Goddes half:** by God's side, by God
52 **brynne:** burn
53 **rekketh me:** do I care
54 **shrewed:** cursed, evil **Lameth:** the biblical Lamech, the first bigamist
55-56 **Abraham, Jacob:** the biblical patriarchs

And many another holy man also.
Wher can ye seye, in any manere age,
That hye God defended mariage 60
By expres word? I pray yow, telleth me.
Or where comanded he virginitee?
I woot as wel as ye, it is no drede,
Th'apostel, whan he speketh of maydenhede,
He seyde that precept therof hadde he noon.
Men may conseille a womman to been oon, 66
But conseillyng is no comandement.
He putte it in oure owene juggement;
For hadde God comanded maydenhede,
Thanne hadde he dampned weddyng with the dede.
And certes, if ther were no seed ysowe, 71
Virginitee, thanne wherof sholde it growe?
Poul dorste nat comanden, atte leeste,
A thyng of which his maister yaf noon heeste.
The dart is set up for virginitee; 75
Cacche whoso may, who renneth best lat see.
But this word is nat taken of every wight,
But ther as God lust gyve it of his myght.
I woot wel that th'apostel was a mayde; 79
But nathelees, thogh that he wroot and sayde
He wolde that every wight were swich as he,
Al nys but conseil to virginitee.
And for to been a wyf he yaf me leve
Of indulgence; so nys it no repreve
To wedde me, if that my make dye, 85
Withouten excepcion of bigamye.
Al were it good no womman for to touche —
He mente as in his bed or in his couche,
For peril is bothe fyr and tow t'assemble;
Ye knowe what this ensample may resemble.
This is al and som: he heeld virginitee 91
Moore parfit than weddyng in freletee.
Freletee clepe I, but if that he and she
Wolde leden al hir lyf in chastitee.

61 expres: explicit
63 drede: doubt
64 Th'apostel: St. Paul
73 Poul: St. Paul
74 of which his maister yaf noon heeste: about which his Master made no commandment
75 dart: dart offered as a prize
76 Cacche whoso may: catch it whoever can
77 is nat taken of: does not apply to
78 lust: pleases
79 mayde: virgin, without sexual experience
82 Al nys but: although it is only
84 Of indulgence: by permission repreve: shame
85 make: mate
86 excepcion of: objection on the grounds of
89 tow: flax
91 al and som: the entire matter
92 in freletee: because of weakness
93 but if that: unless
94 chastitee: abstinence from sexual intercourse

I graunte it wel; I have noon envie, 95
Thogh maydenhede preferre bigamye.
It liketh hem to be clene, body and goost;
Of myn estaat I nyl nat make no boost,
For wel ye knowe, a lord in his houshold,
He nath nat every vessel al of gold; 100
Somme been of tree, and doon hir lord servyse.
God clepeth folk to hym in sondry wyse,
And everich hath of God a propre yifte —
Som this, som that, as hym liketh shifte.
Virginitee is greet perfeccion, 105
And continence eek with devocion,
But Crist, that of perfeccion is welle,
Bad nat every wight he sholde go selle
Al that he hadde, and gyve it to the poore,
And in swich wise folwe hym and his foore.
He spak to hem that wolde lyve parfitly; 111
And lordynges, by youre leve, that am nat I.
I wol bistowe the flour of al myn age
In the actes and in fruyt of mariage.
Telle me also, to what conclusion 115
Were membres maad of generacion,
And of so parfit wys a [wright] ywroght?
Trusteth right wel, they were nat maad for noght.
Glose whoso wole, and seye bothe up and doun
That they were maked for purgacioun 120
Of uryne, and oure bothe thynges smale
Were eek to knowe a femele from a male,
And for noon oother cause — say ye no?
The experience woot wel it is noght so.
So that the clerkes be nat with me wrothe, 125
I sey this: that they maked ben for bothe;
That is to seye, for office and for ese
Of engendrure, ther we nat God displese.
Why sholde men elles in hir bookes sette
That man shal yelde to his wyf hire dette? 130
Now wherwith sholde he make his paiement,
If he ne used his sely instrument?
Thanne were they maad upon a creature
To purge uryne, and eek for engendrure. 134

96 preferre: may have precedence over bigamye: in this instance, marriage by or with a widower or widow
98 nyl = *ne wyl*, will not
101 of tree: made of wood
103 propre yifte: special, individual gift
104 hym liketh shifte: it pleases God to provide
110 foore: footsteps
111 parfitly: perfectly
115 conclusion: purpose
117 And made by so perfectly wise a maker
119 Glose: interpret scripture up and doun: in all respects
125 So that: providing that
127 office: function (of excretion) ese: pleasure
128 engendrure: procreation
130 yelde: pay dette: marital debt (obligation to engage in intercourse; see ParsT X.940)
132 sely instrument: blessed, innocent tool

But I seye noght that every wight is holde,
That hath swich harneys as I to yow tolde,
To goon and usen hem in engendrure.
Thanne sholde men take of chastitee no cure.
Crist was a mayde and shapen as a man,
And many a seint, sith that the world bigan;
Yet lyved they evere in parfit chastitee. 141
I nyl envye no virginitee.
Lat hem be breed of pured whete-seed,
And lat us wyves hoten barly-breed;
And yet with barly-breed, Mark telle kan, 145
Oure Lord Jhesu refresshed many a man.
In swich estaat as God hath cleped us
I wol persevere; I nam nat precius.
In wyfhod I wol use myn instrument
As frely as my Makere hath it sent. 150
If I be daungerous, God yeve me sorwe!
Myn housbonde shal it have bothe eve and morwe,
Whan that hym list come forth and paye his dette.
An housbonde I wol have — I wol nat lette —
Which shal be bothe my dettour and my thral,
And have his tribulacion withal 156
Upon his flessh, whil that I am his wyf.
I have the power durynge al my lyf
Upon his propre body, and noght he.
Right thus the Apostel tolde it unto me, 160
And bad oure housbondes for to love us weel.
Al this sentence me liketh every deel" —
Up stirte the Pardoner, and that anon;
"Now, dame," quod he, "by God and by Seint John!
Ye been a noble prechour in this cas. 165
I was aboute to wedde a wyf; allas!
What sholde I bye it on my flessh so deere?
Yet hadde I levere wedde no wyf to-yeere!"
"Abyde!" quod she, "my tale is nat bigonne.
Nay, thou shalt drynken of another tonne, 170
Er that I go, shal savoure wors than ale.
And whan that I have toold thee forth my tale
Of tribulacion in mariage,
Of which I am expert in al myn age — 174

135 **holde**: obligated
143 **pured**: refined
144 **hoten**: be called **barly-breed**: an inexpensive bread
148 **precius**: fussy, fastidious
151 **daungerous**: grudging, niggardly
154 **lette**: leave off, desist
155 **thral**: servant, slave
156 **withal**: also
165 **prechour**: preacher
167 **What**: why **bye it on**: pay for it with
168 **to-yeere**: this year
170 **tonne**: barrel
171 **savoure**: taste

This is to seyn, myself have been the whippe —
Than maystow chese wheither thou wolt sippe
Of thilke tonne that I shal abroche.
Be war of it, er thou to ny approche;
For I shal telle ensamples mo than ten.
'Whoso that nyl be war by othere men, 180
By hym shul othere men corrected be.'
The same wordes writeth Ptholomee;
Rede in his Almageste, and take it there."
"Dame, I wolde praye yow, if youre wyl it were,"
Seyde this Pardoner, "as ye bigan, 185
Telle forth youre tale, spareth for no man,
And teche us yonge men of youre praktike."
"Gladly," quod she, "sith it may yow like;
But yet I praye to al this compaignye,
If that I speke after my fantasye, 190
As taketh not agrief of that I seye,
For myn entente nys but for to pleye.
Now, sire, now wol I telle forth my tale.
As evere moote I drynken wyn or ale, 194
I shal seye sooth; tho housbondes that I hadde,
As thre of hem were goode, and two were badde.
The thre were goode men, and riche, and olde;
Unnethe myghte they the statut holde
In which that they were bounden unto me.
Ye woot wel what I meene of this, pardee! 200
As help me God, I laughe whan I thynke
How pitously a-nyght I made hem swynke!
And, by my fey, I tolde of it no stoor.
They had me yeven hir lond and hir tresoor;
Me neded nat do lenger diligence 205
To wynne hir love, or doon hem reverence.
They loved me so wel, by God above,
That I ne tolde no deyntee of hir love!
A wys womman wol bisye hire evere in oon
To gete hire love, ye, ther as she hath noon.

177 **abroche**: open
178 **to ny**: too close
180–81 He who will not (*nyl* = *ne wyll*) be admonished by examples offered by others must himself become an example for the correction of others.
182 **Ptholomee**: Ptolemy, the Greek mathematician and astronomer, author of the *Almageste* (cf. MilT I.3208)
187 **praktike**: practice
190 **after my fantasye**: according to my fancy, desire
191 **As taketh not agrief of**: do not be annoyed with (*as* is not translated)
198 **Unnethe**: hardly **statut**: the conjugal debt (see 130 above)
202 **a-nyght**: at night **swynke**: work
203 **fey**: faith **tolde of it no stoor**: set no store by it, regarded it as useless
204 **tresoor**: treasure
208 **ne tolde no deyntee of**: did not value, reckoned little of
209 **bisye hire evere in oon**: be constantly busy

But sith I hadde hem hoolly in myn hond, 211
And sith they hadde me yeven al hir lond,
What sholde I taken keep hem for to plese,
But it were for my profit and myn ese?
I sette hem so a-werke, by my fey, 215
That many a nyght they songen 'Weilawey!'
The bacon was nat fet for hem, I trowe,
That som men han in Essex at Dunmowe.
I governed hem so wel, after my lawe,
That ech of hem ful blisful was and fawe 220
To brynge me gaye thynges fro the fayre.
They were ful glad whan I spak to hem faire,
For, God it woot, I chidde hem spitously.
Now herkneth hou I baar me proprely,
Ye wise wyves, that kan understonde. 225
Thus shulde ye speke and bere hem wrong on honde,
For half so boldely kan ther no man
Swere and lyen, as a womman kan.
I sey nat this by wyves that been wyse,
But if it be whan they hem mysavyse. 230
A wys wyf, if that she kan hir good,
Shal beren hym on honde the cow is wood,
And take witnesse of hir owene mayde
Of hir assent. But herkneth how I sayde:
'Sire olde kaynard, is this thyn array? 235
Why is my neighebores wyf so gay?
She is honoured overal ther she gooth;
I sitte at hoom; I have no thrifty clooth.
What dostow at my neighebores hous?
Is she so fair? Artow so amorous? 240
What rowne ye with oure mayde? Benedicite!
Sire olde lecchour, lat thy japes be!
And if I have a gossib or a freend,
Withouten gilt, thou chidest as a feend,
If that I walke or pleye unto his hous! 245
Thou comest hoom as dronken as a mous,
And prechest on thy bench, with yvel preef!
Thou seist to me it is a greet meschief
To wedde a povre womman, for costage;
And if that she be riche, of heigh parage, 250
Thanne seistow that it is a tormentrie
To soffre hire pride and hire malencolie.
And if that she be fair, thou verray knave,
Thou seyst that every holour wol hire have;
She may no while in chastitee abyde, 255
That is assailled upon ech a syde.
Thou seyst som folk desiren us for richesse,
Somme for oure shap, and somme for oure fairnesse,
And som for she kan outher synge or daunce,
And som for gentillesse and daliaunce; 260
Som for hir handes and hir armes smale;
Thus goth al to the devel, by thy tale.
Thou seyst men may nat kepe a castel wal,
It may so longe assailled been overal.
And if that she be foul, thou seist that she
Coveiteth every man that she may se, 266
For as a spanyel she wol on hym lepe,
Til that she fynde som man hire to chepe.
Ne noon so grey goos gooth ther in the lake
As, seistow, wol been withoute make. 270
And seyst it is an hard thyng for to welde
A thyng that no man wole, his thankes, helde.
Thus seistow, lorel, whan thow goost to bedde,
And that no wys man nedeth for to wedde,
Ne no man that entendeth unto hevene. 275
With wilde thonder-dynt and firy levene
Moote thy welked nekke be tobroke!
Thow seyst that droppyng houses, and eek smoke,
And chidyng wyves maken men to flee
Out of hir owene houses; a, benedicitee! 280
What eyleth swich an old man for to chide?
Thow seyst we wyves wol oure vices hide
Til we be fast, and thanne we wol hem shewe —
Wel may that be a proverbe of a shrewe!

213 **taken keep:** take care
215 **sette hem so a-werke:** worked them so hard (or, tricked them; cf. I.4337)
217–18 **bacon . . . in Essex at Dunmowe:** side of bacon awarded to spouses who lived a year and a day without quarrelling
220 **fawe:** eager
223 **chidde hem spitously:** chided, scolded them cruelly
226 **bere hem wrong on honde:** accuse them wrongfully
229 **by:** concerning, about
231 **kan hir good:** knows what's good for her
232 **beren hym on honde:** deceive him by swearing **cow:** chough, a crow-like bird, which can talk
234 **Of hir assent:** of her agreement (i.e., the maid agrees with what she says)
235 **kaynard:** dotard
237 **overal ther:** wherever
238 **thrifty clooth:** serviceable clothing
241 **rowne:** whisper
243 **gossib:** close friend
244 **chidest as:** scold like
247 **with yvel preef:** bad luck to you
249 **costage:** expense
250 **heigh parage:** high birth
251 **tormentrie:** torture
252 **malencolie:** anger, sullenness (due to an excess of the humor)
254 **holour:** lecher
256 **ech a:** every
260 **daliaunce:** socializing
261 **smale:** slender
262 **by thy tale:** according to what you say
268 **chepe:** buy (i.e., take)
270 **make:** mate
271 **welde:** control
272 **his thankes:** willingly **helde:** holde
273 **lorel:** scoundrel
275 **entendeth unto:** hopes (to go) to
276 **thonder-dynt:** thunderstroke **levene:** lightning
277 **welked:** withered **tobroke:** broken to pieces
278 **droppyng:** dripping, leaky
279 **chidyng:** scolding
283 **fast:** securely tied (in marriage)
284 **shrewe:** scoundrel

Thou seist that oxen, asses, hors, and houndes,
They been assayed at diverse stoundes; 286
Bacyns, lavours, er that men hem bye,
Spoones and stooles, and al swich housbondrye,
And so been pottes, clothes, and array;
But folk of wyves maken noon assay, 290
Til they be wedded — olde dotard shrewe! —
And thanne, seistow, we wol oure vices shewe.
Thou seist also that it displeseth me
But if that thou wolt preyse my beautee,
And but thou poure alwey upon my face, 295
And clepe me "faire dame" in every place.
And but thou make a feeste on thilke day
That I was born, and make me fressh and gay;
And but thou do to my norice honour,
And to my chamberere withinne my bour, 300
And to my fadres folk and his allyes —
Thus seistow, olde barel-ful of lyes!
And yet of oure apprentice Janekyn,
For his crispe heer, shynynge as gold so fyn,
And for he squiereth me bothe up and doun,
Yet hastow caught a fals suspecioun. 306
I wol hym noght, thogh thou were deed tomorwe!
But tel me this: why hydestow, with sorwe,
The keyes of thy cheste awey fro me?
It is my good as wel as thyn, pardee! 310
What, wenestow make an ydiot of oure dame?
Now by that lord that called is Seint Jame,
Thou shalt nat bothe, thogh that thou were wood,
Be maister of my body and of my good; 314
That oon thou shalt forgo, maugree thyne yen.
What helpith it of me to enquere or spyen?
I trowe thou woldest loke me in thy chiste!
Thou sholdest seye, "Wyf, go wher thee liste;
Taak youre disport; I wol nat leve no talys.
I knowe yow for a trewe wyf, dame Alys."
We love no man that taketh kep or charge 321
Wher that we goon; we wol ben at oure large.

286 **diverse stoundes:** different times
287 **Bacyns:** basins **lavours:** wash bowls **bye:** pay for, buy
288 **housbondrye:** household equipment
290 **assay:** trial
291 **dotard shrewe:** senile scoundrel
295 **poure:** gaze intently
299 **norice:** nurse
300 **chamberere:** chambermaid **bour:** bedchamber
301 **allyes:** kinsmen
302 **lyes:** lees (dregs)
304 **crispe:** curly
305 **squiereth:** formally attends
308 **hydestow:** do you hide **with sorwe:** bad luck to you
311 **wenestow:** do you expect **oure dame:** the lady of our house (me)
312 **Seint Jame:** St. James of Compostella
317 **loke:** lock **chiste:** strongbox, coffer
319 **leve:** believe
322 **at oure large:** free to act as we wish

Of alle men yblessed moot he be,
The wise astrologien, Daun Ptholome,
That seith this proverbe in his Almageste: 325
"Of alle men his wysdom is the hyeste
That rekketh nevere who hath the world in honde."
By this proverbe thou shalt understonde,
Have thou ynogh, what thar thee recche or care
How myrily that othere folkes fare? 330
For, certeyn, olde dotard, by youre leve,
Ye shul have queynte right ynogh at eve.
He is to greet a nygard that wolde werne
A man to lighte a candle at his lanterne;
He shal have never the lasse light, pardee. 335
Have thou ynogh, thee thar nat pleyne thee.
Thou seyst also, that if we make us gay
With clothyng, and with precious array,
That it is peril of oure chastitee; 339
And yet — with sorwe! — thou most enforce thee,
And seye thise wordes in the Apostles name:
"In habit maad with chastitee and shame
Ye wommen shul apparaille yow," quod he,
"And noght in tressed heer and gay perree,
As perles, ne with gold, ne clothes riche." 345
After thy text, ne after thy rubriche,
I wol nat wirche as muchel as a gnat.
Thou seydest this, that I was lyk a cat;
For whoso wolde senge a cattes skyn, 349
Thanne wolde the cat wel dwellen in his in;
And if the cattes skyn be slyk and gay,
She wol nat dwelle in house half a day,
But forth she wole, er any day be dawed,
To shewe hir skyn and goon a-caterwawed.
This is to seye, if I be gay, sire shrewe, 355
I wol renne out my borel for to shewe.
Sire olde fool, what helpeth thee to spyen?
Thogh thou preye Argus with his hundred yen
To be my warde-cors, as he kan best,

327 **in honde:** in his control
331 **dotard:** senile fool
332 **queynte:** my elegant, pleasing thing (sexual favors)
333 **werne:** refuse
336 **thar nat pleyne thee:** need not complain
340 **enforce thee:** make an effort
341 **Apostles:** St. Paul's
342 **habit:** clothing
343 **apparaille yow:** dress yourselves
344 **tressed heer:** carefully arranged hair **perree:** precious stones
346 **rubriche:** words written in red as a heading to a text
349 **senge:** singe
350 **wolde the cat:** the cat would want **dwellen:** remain **his in:** his dwelling-place
351 **slyk:** sleek, shining
353 **dawed:** dawned
354 **a-caterwawed:** caterwauling
356 **borel:** coarse, poor cloth (of which my clothes are made)
358 **Argus:** the mythical guardian of Io, one of Zeus's loves
359 **warde-cors:** bodyguard

In feith, he shal nat kepe me but me lest; 360
Yet koude I make his berd, so moot I thee!
Thou seydest eek that ther been thynges thre,
The whiche thynges troublen al this erthe,
And that no wight may endure the ferthe.
O leeve sire shrewe, Jhesu shorte thy lyf! 365
Yet prechestow and seyst an hateful wyf
Yrekened is for oon of thise meschances.
Been ther none othere maner resemblances
That ye may likne youre parables to,
But if a sely wyf be oon of tho? 370
Thou liknest eek wommenes love to helle,
To bareyne lond, ther water may nat dwelle.
Thou liknest it also to wilde fyr;
The moore it brenneth, the moore it hath desir
To consume every thyng that brent wole be.
Thou seyest, right as wormes shende a tree, 376
Right so a wyf destroyeth hire housbonde;
This knowe they that been to wyves bonde.'
Lordynges, right thus, as ye have understonde,
Baar I stifly myne olde housbondes on honde
That thus they seyden in hir dronkenesse; 381
And al was fals, but that I took witnesse
On Janekyn, and on my nece also.
O Lord! The peyne I dide hem and the wo,
Ful giltelees, by Goddes sweete pyne! 385
For as an hors I koude byte and whyne.
I koude pleyne, and yit was in the gilt,
Or elles often tyme hadde I been spilt.
Whoso that first to mille comth, first grynt;
I pleyned first, so was oure werre ystynt. 390
They were ful glade to excuse hem blyve
Of thyng of which they nevere agilte hir lyve.
Of wenches wolde I beren hem on honde,
Whan that for syk unnethes myghte they stonde.
Yet tikled I his herte, for that he 395
Wende that I hadde of hym so greet chiertee!

361 **make his berd:** deceive him **so moot I thee:** as I may prosper
373 **wilde fyr:** Greek fire, an inflammable mixture, used in warfare
376 **shende:** destroy
378 **bonde:** bound
380 **Baar I stifly . . . on honde:** I firmly swore
382 **but that:** except that
383 **nece:** kinswoman
385 **pyne:** suffering
386 **whyne:** whinny, whine
387 **in the gilt:** in the wrong
388 **spilt:** ruined
389 **grynt** = *gryndeth,* grinds
391 **blyve:** quickly
392 **agilte hir lyve:** been guilty in their lives
393 **beren hem on honde:** accuse them
394 **syk:** illness **unnethes:** hardly
395 **tikled:** tickled, pleased
396 **chiertee:** fondness

I swoor that al my walkynge out by nyghte
Was for t'espye wenches that he dighte;
Under that colour hadde I many a myrthe. 399
For al swich wit is yeven us in oure byrthe;
Deceite, wepyng, spynnyng God hath yive
To wommen kyndely, whil that they may lyve.
And thus of o thyng I avaunte me:
Atte ende I hadde the bettre in ech degree,
By sleighte, or force, or by som maner thyng,
As by continueel murmur or grucchyng. 406
Namely abedde hadden they meschaunce:
Ther wolde I chide and do hem no plesaunce;
I wolde no lenger in the bed abyde,
If that I felte his arm over my syde, 410
Til he had maad his raunson unto me;
Thanne wolde I suffre hym do his nycetee.
And therfore every man this tale I telle,
Wynne whoso may, for al is for to selle;
With empty hand men may none haukes lure.
For wynnyng wolde I al his lust endure, 416
And make me a feyned appetit;
And yet in bacon hadde I nevere delit.
That made me that evere I wolde hem chide,
For thogh the pope hadde seten hem biside,
I wolde nat spare hem at hir owene bord, 421
For, by my trouthe, I quitte hem word for word.
As helpe me verray God omnipotent,
Though I right now sholde make my testament,
I ne owe hem nat a word that it nys quit. 425
I broghte it so aboute by my wit
That they moste yeve it up, as for the beste,
Or elles hadde we nevere been in reste;
For thogh he looked as a wood leon,
Yet sholde he faille of his conclusion. 430
Thanne wolde I seye, 'Goode lief, taak keep
How mekely looketh Wilkyn, oure sheep!
Com neer, my spouse, lat me ba thy cheke!
Ye sholde been al pacient and meke,

398 **dighte:** copulated with
399 **colour:** pretense
402 **kyndely:** naturally
403 **avaunte me:** boast
404 **in ech degree:** in all respects
406 **murmur:** grumbling **grucchyng:** complaining
407 **abedde:** in bed
411 **maad his raunson:** paid his penalty
412 **nycetee:** foolishness, lust
416 **wynnyng:** profit
417 **feyned:** pretended
418 **bacon:** bacon (i.e., preserved old meat)
421 **bord:** table
422 **quitte:** repaid
424 **testament:** will
430 **faille of his conclusion:** fail to attain his goal
431 **Goode lief:** sweetheart
432 **mekely:** meekly **Wilkyn:** Willie
433 **neer:** nearer **ba:** kiss

And han a sweete spiced conscience, 435
Sith ye so preche of Jobes pacience.
Suffreth alwey, syn ye so wel kan preche;
And but ye do, certein we shal yow teche
That it is fair to have a wyf in pees.
Oon of us two moste bowen, doutelees, 440
And sith a man is moore resonable
Than womman is, ye moste been suffrable.
What eyleth yow to grucche thus and grone?
Is it for ye wolde have my queynte allone?
Wy, taak it al! Lo, have it every deel! 445
Peter! I shrewe yow, but ye love it weel;
For if I wolde selle my *bele chose,*
I koude walke as fressh as is a rose;
But I wol kepe it for youre owene tooth.
Ye be to blame, by God! I sey yow sooth.' 450
Swiche manere wordes hadde we on honde.
Now wol I speken of my fourthe housbonde.
My fourthe housbonde was a revelour —
This is to seyn, he hadde a paramour —
And I was yong and ful of ragerye, 455
Stibourn and strong, and joly as a pye.
How koude I daunce to an harpe smale,
And synge, ywis, as any nyghtyngale,
Whan I had dronke a draughte of sweete wyn!
Metellius, the foule cherl, the swyn, 460
That with a staf birafte his wyf hir lyf,
For she drank wyn, thogh I hadde been his wyf,
He sholde nat han daunted me fro drynke!
And after wyn on Venus moste I thynke,
For al so siker as cold engendreth hayl, 465
A likerous mouth moste han a likerous tayl.
In wommen vinolent is no defence —
This knowen lecchours by experience.
But — Lord Crist! — whan that it remembreth me
Upon my yowthe, and on my jolitee, 470

It tikleth me aboute myn herte roote.
Unto this day it dooth myn herte boote
That I have had my world as in my tyme.
But age, allas, that al wole envenyme,
Hath me biraft my beautee and my pith. 475
Lat go. Farewel! The devel go therwith!
The flour is goon; ther is namoore to telle;
The bren, as I best kan, now moste I selle;
But yet to be right myrie wol I fonde.
Now wol I tellen of my fourthe housbonde.
I seye, I hadde in herte greet despit 481
That he of any oother had delit.
But he was quit, by God and by Seint Joce!
I made hym of the same wode a croce;
Nat of my body, in no foul manere, 485
But certeinly, I made folk swich cheere
That in his owene grece I made hym frye
For angre, and for verray jalousye.
By God, in erthe I was his purgatorie,
For which I hope his soule be in glorie. 490
For, God it woot, he sat ful ofte and song,
Whan that his shoo ful bitterly hym wrong.
Ther was no wight, save God and he, that wiste,
In many wise, how soore I hym twiste.
He deyde whan I cam fro Jerusalem, 495
And lith ygrave under the roode beem,
Al is his tombe noght so curyus
As was the sepulcre of hym Daryus,
Which that Appelles wroghte subtilly;
It nys but wast to burye hym preciously. 500
Lat hym fare wel; God yeve his soule reste!
He is now in his grave and in his cheste.
Now of my fifthe housbonde wol I telle.
God lete his soule nevere come in helle!
And yet was he to me the mooste shrewe; 505
That feele I on my ribbes al by rewe,

435 spiced: scrupulous
436 Jobes: (the biblical) Job's
442 suffrable: able to bear suffering
444 queynte: elegant, pleasing thing (sexual favors)
445 have it every deel: have every bit of it
446 Peter!: by, in the name of, St. Peter shrewe yow, but ye: curse you unless you (if you do not)
447 bele chose: beautiful thing (sexual favors)
449 tooth: taste, pleasure
450 I sey yow sooth: I am telling you the truth
453 revelour: reveller, profligate
454 paramour: lady-love, concubine
455 ragerye: wantonness
456 Stibourn: stubborn pye: magpie
460 Metellius: Egnatius Metellius cherl: villain
461 birafte: took away from
462 thogh: although if
463 daunted: frightened
465 al so siker as: as surely as
466 likerous mouth: a glutonous mouth likerous tayl: lecherous tail
467 vinolent: drunken
469 it remembreth me: I remember

471 herte roote: the bottom of my heart
472 dooth myn herte boote: does my heart good
474 envenyme: poison
475 biraft: taken away pith: vigor
478 bren: bran
479 fonde: try
483 Seint Joce: St. Judocus
484 croce: cross
487 grece: grease
490 hope: suppose
492 wrong: pinched
493 wiste: knew
494 twiste: tortured
495 deyde: died
496 ygrave: buried roode beem: beam supporting the cross at the entrance to the choir of the church
498 sepulcre: sepulcher hym Daryus: that Darius
499 Appelles: the Jewish craftsman supposedly responsible for Darius's tomb
500 preciously: expensively
502 cheste: coffin
505 mooste shrewe: greatest scoundrel
506 by rewe: in a row, one after another

And evere shal unto myn endyng day.
But in oure bed he was so fressh and gay,
And therwithal so wel koude he me glose,
Whan that he wolde han my *bele chose;* 510
That thogh he hadde me bete on every bon,
He koude wynne agayn my love anon.
I trowe I loved hym best, for that he
Was of his love daungerous to me.
We wommen han, if that I shal nat lye, 515
In this matere a queynte fantasye:
Wayte what thyng we may nat lightly have,
Therafter wol we crie al day and crave.
Forbede us thyng, and that desiren we;
Preesse on us faste, and thanne wol we fle. 520
With daunger oute we al oure chaffare;
Greet prees at market maketh deere ware,
And to greet cheep is holde at litel prys:
This knoweth every womman that is wys. 524
My fifthe housbonde — God his soule blesse! —
Which that I took for love, and no richesse,
He som tyme was a clerk of Oxenford,
And hadde left scole, and wente at hom to bord
With my gossib, dwellynge in oure toun;
God have hir soule! Hir name was Alisoun. 530
She knew myn herte, and eek my privetee,
Bet than oure parisshe preest, so moot I thee!
To hire biwreyed I my conseil al.
For hadde myn housbonde pissed on a wal,
Or doon a thyng that sholde han cost his lyf,
To hire, and to another worthy wyf, 536
And to my nece, which that I loved weel,
I wolde han toold his conseil every deel.
And so I dide ful often, God it woot,
That made his face often reed and hoot 540
For verray shame, and blamed hymself for he
Had toold to me so greet a pryvetee.
And so bifel that ones in a Lente —
So often tymes I to my gossyb wente,
For evere yet I loved to be gay, 545
And for to walke in March, Averill, and May,
Fro hous to hous, to heere sondry talys —
That Jankyn clerk, and my gossyb dame Alys,

509 glose: flatter
510 bele chose: beautiful thing (sexual favors)
514 daungerous: standoffish, hard to get
516 queynte fantasye: curious, strange inclination
517 Wayte what: note that whatever lightly: easily
520 Preesse: press, entreat
521 With niggardliness (*daunger*) we spread out (*oute*) all our merchandise (*chaffare*).
522 prees: crowd deere: expensive
523 to greet cheep: too good a bargain
527 som tyme: once, formerly
529 gossib: close friend
533 biwreyed: revealed
542 pryvetee: secret

And I myself, into the feeldes wente.
Myn housbonde was at Londoun al that Lente;
I hadde the bettre leyser for to pleye, 551
And for to se, and eek for to be seye
Of lusty folk. What wiste I wher my grace
Was shapen for to be, or in what place?
Therfore I made my visitaciouns 555
To vigilies and to processiouns,
To prechyng eek, and to thise pilgrimages,
To pleyes of myracles, and to mariages,
And wered upon my gaye scarlet gytes. 559
Thise wormes, ne thise motthes, ne thise mytes,
Upon my peril, frete hem never a deel;
And wostow why? For they were used weel.
Now wol I tellen forth what happed me.
I seye that in the feeldes walked we,
Til trewely we hadde swich daliance, 565
This clerk and I, that of my purveiance
I spak to hym and seyde hym how that he,
If I were wydwe, sholde wedde me.
For certeinly — I sey for no bobance —
Yet was I nevere withouten purveiance 570
Of mariage, n'of othere thynges eek.
I holde a mouses herte nat worth a leek
That hath but oon hole for to sterte to,
And if that faille, thanne is al ydo. 574
I bar hym on honde he hadde enchanted me —
My dame taughte me that soutiltee —
And eek I seyde I mette of hym al nyght,
He wolde han slayn me as I lay upright,
And al my bed was ful of verray blood;
'But yet I hope that ye shal do me good, 580
For blood bitokeneth gold, as me was taught.'
And al was fals; I dremed of it right naught,
But as I folwed ay my dames loore,
As wel of this as of othere thynges moore.
But now, sire, lat me se what I shal seyn.
A ha! By God, I have my tale ageyn. 586
Whan that my fourthe housbonde was on beere,

551 leyser: leisure, opportunity
552 seye: seen
554 shapen: destined
556 vigilies: gatherings on the evenings before religious holidays
558 pleyes of myracles: popular dramas on religious subjects
559 gytes: robes
560 motthes: moths mytes: small insects
561 Upon my peril: (I swear) on peril (of my soul) frete: devoured never a deel: not a bit
565 daliance: flirtation
566 purveiance: foresight, provision
569 bobance: boast
576 dame: mother soutiltee: subtlety, trick
577 mette: dreamed
582 right naught: not at all
587 beere: bier

I weep algate, and made sory cheere,
As wyves mooten, for it is usage,
And with my coverchief covered my visage,
But for that I was purveyed of a make, 591
I wepte but smal, and that I undertake.
To chirche was myn housbonde born a-morwe
With neighebores, that for hym maden sorwe;
And Jankyn, oure clerk, was oon of tho. 595
As help me God, whan that I saugh hym go
After the beere, me thoughte he hadde a paire
Of legges and of feet so clene and faire
That al myn herte I yaf unto his hoold.
He was, I trowe, twenty wynter oold, 600
And I was fourty, if I shal seye sooth;
But yet I hadde alwey a coltes tooth.
Gat-tothed I was, and that bicam me weel;
I hadde the prente of seinte Venus seel.
As help me God, I was a lusty oon, 605
And faire, and riche, and yong, and wel bigon,
And trewely, as myne housbondes tolde me,
I hadde the beste *quoniam* myghte be.
For certes, I am al Venerien
In feelynge, and myn herte is Marcien. 610
Venus me yaf my lust, my likerousnesse,
And Mars yaf me my sturdy hardynesse;
Myn ascendent was Taur, and Mars therinne.
Allas, allas! That evere love was synne!
I folwed ay myn inclinacioun 615
By vertu of my constellacioun;
That made me I koude noght withdrawe
My chambre of Venus from a good felawe.
Yet have I Martes mark upon my face,
And also in another privee place. 620
For God so wys be my savacioun,

588 **algate:** continuously
591 **purveyed of:** provided with beforehand
592 **smal:** little **undertake:** affirm, declare
593 **a-morwe:** next morning
599 **hoold:** keeping
600 **wynter:** years
602 **coltes tooth:** youthful tastes, desires
603 **Gat-tothed:** with teeth set wide apart
604 **prente:** imprint, mark **Venus seel:** Venus's mark, a birthmark
606 **wel bigon:** in a good situation
608 **quoniam:** whatsit (literally, *because* or *wherefore*), a euphemism
609 **Venerien:** dominated by the planet Venus
610 **Marcien:** dominated by the planet Mars
612 **hardynesse:** boldness
613 **ascendent was Taur:** ascending sign was Taurus, the bull; see n. for the astro. details in lines 613–20.
615 **inclinacioun:** astrologically determined inclination
616 **constellacioun:** configuration of the heavenly bodies, horoscope
617 **withdrawe:** withhold
619 **Martes mark:** mark of Mars, a reddish birthmark
620 **privee:** secret
621 **God so wys be:** as may God surely be **savacioun:** salvation

I ne loved nevere by no discrecioun,
But evere folwede myn appetit,
Al were he short, or long, or blak, or whit;
I took no kep, so that he liked me, 625
How poore he was, ne eek of what degree.
What sholde I seye but, at the monthes ende,
This joly clerk, Jankyn, that was so hende,
Hath wedded me with greet solempnytee,
And to hym yaf I al the lond and fee 630
That evere was me yeven therbifoore.
But afterward repented me ful soore;
He nolde suffre nothyng of my list.
By God, he smoot me ones on the lyst,
For that I rente out of his book a leef, 635
That of the strook myn ere wax al deef.
Stibourn I was as is a leonesse,
And of my tonge a verray jangleresse,
And walke I wolde, as I had doon biforn, 639
From hous to hous, although he had it sworn;
For which he often tymes wolde preche,
And me of olde Romayn geestes teche;
How he Symplicius Gallus lefte his wyf,
And hire forsook for terme of al his lyf,
Noght but for open-heveded he hir say 645
Lookynge out at his dore upon a day.
Another Romayn tolde he me by name,
That, for his wyf was at a someres game
Withouten his wityng, he forsook hire eke.
And thanne wolde he upon his Bible seke 650
That ilke proverbe of Ecclesiaste
Where he comandeth and forbedeth faste
Man shal nat suffre his wyf go roule aboute.
Thanne wolde he seye right thus, withouten doute:
'Whoso that buyldeth his hous al of salwes,
And priketh his blynde hors over the falwes,

622 **discrecioun:** moderation, prudence
625 **so that:** providing that
628 **hende:** courteous
630 **fee:** property
633 **list:** desires
634 **lyst:** ear
635 **rente:** tore
637 **Stibourn:** stubborn
638 **jangleresse:** chatterbox
640 **it sworn:** sworn the contrary
642 **geestes:** stories
643 **Symplicius Gallus:** His story is told by Valerius Maximus, as is the incident in 647 below.
645 **open-heveded:** bareheaded **say:** saw
647 **Another Romayn:** See 643 above.
648 **someres game:** midsummer revels
649 **wityng:** knowledge
651 **Ecclesiaste:** Ecclesiasticus
652 **he:** the author of Ecclesiasticus
653 **roule:** wander
655 **salwes:** willow branches
656 **falwes:** open fields (idle land)

And suffreth his wyf to go seken halwes, 657
Is worthy to been hanged on the galwes!'
But al for noght, I sette noght an hawe
Of his proverbes n'of his olde sawe, 660
Ne I wolde nat of hym corrected be.
I hate hym that my vices telleth me,
And so doo mo, God woot, of us than I.
This made hym with me wood al outrely;
I nolde noght forbere hym in no cas. 665
Now wol I seye yow sooth, by Seint Thomas,
Why that I rente out of his book a leef,
For which he smoot me so that I was deef.
He hadde a book that gladly, nyght and day,
For his desport he wolde rede alway; 670
He cleped it Valerie and Theofraste,
At which book he lough alwey ful faste.
And eek ther was somtyme a clerk at Rome,
A cardinal, that highte Seint Jerome,
That made a book agayn Jovinian; 675
In which book eek ther was Tertulan,
Crisippus, Trotula, and Helowys,
That was abbesse nat fer fro Parys,
And eek the Parables of Salomon,
Ovides Art, and bookes many on, 680
And alle thise were bounden in o volume.
And every nyght and day was his custume,
Whan he hadde leyser and vacacioun
From oother worldly occupacioun,
To reden on this book of wikked wyves. 685
He knew of hem mo legendes and lyves
Than been of goode wyves in the Bible.
For trusteth wel, it is an impossible
That any clerk wol speke good of wyves,
But if it be of hooly seintes lyves, 690
Ne of noon oother womman never the mo.
Who peyntede the leon, tel me who?

By God, if wommen hadde writen stories,
As clerkes han withinne hire oratories,
They wolde han writen of men moore wikkednesse
Than al the mark of Adam may redresse. 696
The children of Mercurie and of Venus
Been in hir wirkyng ful contrarius;
Mercurie loveth wysdam and science,
And Venus loveth ryot and dispence. 700
And, for hire diverse disposicioun,
Ech falleth in otheres exaltacioun.
And thus, God woot, Mercurie is desolat
In Pisces, wher Venus is exaltat,
And Venus falleth ther Mercurie is reysed. 705
Therfore no womman of no clerk is preysed.
The clerk, whan he is oold, and may noght do
Of Venus werkes worth his olde sho,
Thanne sit he doun, and writ in his dotage
That wommen kan nat kepe hir mariage! 710
But now to purpos, why I tolde thee
That I was beten for a book, pardee!
Upon a nyght Jankyn, that was oure sire,
Redde on his book, as he sat by the fire,
Of Eva first, that for hir wikkednesse 715
Was al mankynde broght to wrecchednesse,
For which that Jhesu Crist hymself was slayn,
That boghte us with his herte blood agayn.
Lo, heere expres of womman may ye fynde
That womman was the los of al mankynde. 720
Tho redde he me how Sampson loste his heres:
Slepynge, his lemman kitte it with hir sheres;
Thurgh which treson loste he bothe his yen.
Tho redde he me, if that I shal nat lyen,
Of Hercules and of his Dianyre, 725
That caused hym to sette hymself afyre.
No thyng forgat he the care and the wo
That Socrates hadde with his wyves two,

657 **seken halwes:** go on pilgrimages
659 **hawe:** haw, hawthorn berry (i.e., nothing)
664 **al outrely:** entirely
665 **forbere:** put up with
671–80 **Valerie and Theofraste:** Valerius, supposed author of the *Dissuasio* (or *Epistola*) *ad Rufinum*, and Theophrastus, author of the *Golden Book on Marriage*, both works attacking marriage. Jankyn's book of "wicked wives" also contains passages from the book by *Jerome* (a father of the Church) *agayn Jovinian* (an unorthodox monk who denied that virginity was necessarily superior to marriage), *Tertulan* (Tertullian, whose works contain misogynist and anti-marriage passages), *Crisippus* (mentioned by Jerome but otherwise unknown), *Trotula* (probably Trotula di Ruggiero, a female physician and author), *Helowys* (Heloïse, lover of Abelard), the *Parables of Salomon* (Prov. 10.1 to 22.16 in the Vulgate), and *Ovides Art* (Ovid's *Ars amatoria*). For further information see n. 669–75.
673 **clerk:** scholar
683 **vacacioun:** spare time
688 **impossible:** impossibility
689 **clerk:** learned man, clergyman
691 **never the mo:** in any way
692 The lion's question when he saw a picture of a man killing a lion

693 **stories:** histories
694 **oratories:** chapels
696 **mark of Adam:** male sex
697 **children of Mercurie:** those dominated by the planet Mercury (scholars) **of Venus:** those dominated by Venus, lovers
698 **wirkyng ful contrarius:** actions directly contrary
699 **science:** knowledge
700 **ryot:** debauchery **dispence:** extravagant expenditures
702 **exaltacioun:** the zodiacal sign in which a planet is most powerful
703 **desolat:** powerless
704 **Pisces:** the zodiacal sign **exaltat:** exalted (has her exaltation, is most powerful)
711 **now to purpos:** now to the point
713 **oure sire:** master of our house
715 **Eva:** Eve
719 **expres:** clearly
721 **Sampson:** For the story see MkT VII.2015–94.
725 **Hercules and . . . Dianyre:** For the story see MkT VII.2119–35.

How Xantippa caste pisse upon his heed.
This sely man sat stille as he were deed; 730
He wiped his heed, namoore dorste he seyn,
But 'Er that thonder stynte, comth a reyn!'
Of Phasipha, that was the queene of Crete,
For shrewednesse, hym thoughte the tale swete;
Fy! Spek namoore — it is a grisly thyng — 735
Of hire horrible lust and hir likyng.
Of Clitermystra, for hire lecherye,
That falsly made hire housbonde for to dye,
He redde it with ful good devocioun.
He tolde me eek for what occasioun 740
Amphiorax at Thebes loste his lyf.
Myn housbonde hadde a legende of his wyf,
Eriphilem, that for an ouche of gold
Hath prively unto the Grekes told
Wher that hir housbonde hidde hym in a place,
For which he hadde at Thebes sory grace. 746
Of Lyvia tolde he me, and of Lucye:
They bothe made hir housbondes for to dye,
That oon for love, that oother was for hate.
Lyvia hir housbonde, on an even late, 750
Empoysoned hath, for that she was his fo;
Lucia, likerous, loved hire housbonde so
That, for he sholde alwey upon hire thynke,
She yaf hym swich a manere love-drynke
That he was deed er it were by the morwe;
And thus algates housbondes han sorwe. 756
Thanne tolde he me how oon Latumyus
Compleyned unto his felawe Arrius
That in his gardyn growed swich a tree
On which he seyde how that his wyves thre
Hanged hemself for herte despitus. 761
'O leeve brother,' quod this Arrius,
'Yif me a plante of thilke blissed tree,
And in my gardyn planted shal it bee.'
Of latter date, of wyves hath he red 765
That somme han slayn hir housbondes in hir bed,
And lete hir lecchour dighte hire al the nyght,
Whan that the corps lay in the floor upright.
And somme han dryve nayles in hir brayn,
Whil that they slepte, and thus they had hem slayn. 770
Somme han hem yeve poysoun in hire drynke.
He spak moore harm than herte may bithynke,
And therwithal he knew of mo proverbes
Than in this world ther growen gras or herbes.
'Bet is,' quod he, 'thyn habitacioun 775
Be with a leon or a foul dragoun,
Than with a womman usynge for to chyde.
Bet is,' quod he, 'hye in the roof abyde,
Than with an angry wyf doun in the hous;
They been so wikked and contrarious, 780
They haten that hir housbondes loven ay.'
He seyde, 'A womman cast hir shame away,
Whan she cast of hir smok'; and forthermo,
'A fair womman, but she be chaast also,
Is lyk a gold ryng in a sowes nose.' 785
Who wolde wene, or who wolde suppose,
The wo that in myn herte was, and pyne?
And whan I saugh he wolde nevere fyne
To reden on this cursed book al nyght,
Al sodeynly thre leves have I plyght 790
Out of his book, right as he radde, and eke
I with my fest so took hym on the cheke
That in oure fyr he fil bakward adoun.
And he up stirte as dooth a wood leoun,
And with his fest he smoot me on the heed
That in the floor I lay as I were deed. 796
And whan he saugh how stille that I lay,
He was agast and wolde han fled his way,
Til atte laste out of my swogh I breyde.
'O! hastow slayn me, false theef?' I seyde, 800
'And for my land thus hastow mordred me?
Er I be deed, yet wol I kisse thee.'
And neer he cam, and kneled faire adoun,
And seyde, 'Deere sûster Alisoun,
As help me God, I shal thee nevere smyte!
That I have doon, it is thyself to wyte. 806
Foryeve it me, and that I thee biseke!'
And yet eftsoones I hitte hym on the cheke,

729 **Xantippa:** Xantippe, shrewish wife of *Socrates*, the Greek philosopher
733 **Phasipha:** Pasiphae, mother of the Minotaur, fathered on her by a bull
734 **shrewednesse:** malignancy
737 **Clitermystra:** Clytemnestra murdered her husband Agamemnon, the Greek king who waged war against Troy.
741 **Amphiorax:** Amphiaraus died at Thebes because he took the advice of his wife Eriphyle (*Eriphilem*).
743 **ouche:** brooch
746 **sory grace:** misfortune
747 **Lyvia:** Livia, lover of Sejanus **Lucye:** Lucia, wife of the Roman poet Lucretius
751 **Empoysoned:** poisoned
756 **algates:** always
757–58 **Latumyus, Arrius:** see n.
767 **dighte:** copulate with
772 **harm:** slander **bithynke:** imagine
777 **usynge for to:** used to
783 **smok:** shift, undergarment
788 **fyne:** cease
790 **plyght:** plucked
791 **radde:** read
792 **took hym:** gave him (a blow)
799 **swogh:** swoon **breyde:** started up, awoke
806 **to wyte:** to blame
808 **eftsoones:** immediately

And seyde, 'Theef, thus muchel am I wreke;
Now wol I dye, I may no lenger speke.' 810
But atte laste, with muchel care and wo,
We fille acorded by us selven two.
He yaf me al the bridel in myn hond,
To han the governance of hous and lond,
And of his tonge, and of his hond also; 815
And made hym brenne his book anon right tho.
And whan that I hadde geten unto me,
By maistrie, al the soveraynetee,
And that he seyde, 'Myn owene trewe wyf,
Do as thee lust the terme of al thy lyf; 820
Keep thyn honour, and keep eek myn estaat' —
After that day we hadden never debaat.
God helpe me so, I was to hym as kynde
As any wyf from Denmark unto Ynde,
And also trewe, and so was he to me. 825
I prey to God, that sit in magestee,
So blesse his soule for his mercy deere.
Now wol I seye my tale, if ye wol heere."

Biholde the wordes bitwene the Somonour and the Frere.

The Frere lough, whan he hadde herd al this;
"Now dame," quod he, "so have I joye or blis,
This is a long preamble of a tale!" 831
And whan the Somonour herde the Frere gale,
"Lo," quod the Somonour, "Goddes armes two!
A frere wol entremette hym everemo.
Lo, goode men, a flye and eek a frere 835
Wol falle in every dyssh and eek mateere.
What spekestow of preambulacioun?
What! amble, or trotte, or pees, or go sit doun!
Thou lettest oure disport in this manere."
"Ye, woltow so, sire Somonour?" quod the Frere;
"Now, by my feith I shal, er that I go, 841
Telle of a somonour swich a tale or two
That alle the folk shal laughen in this place."
"Now elles, Frere, I bishrewe thy face,"
Quod this Somonour, "and I bishrewe me, 845
But if I telle tales two or thre
Of freres er I come to Sidyngborne
That I shal make thyn herte for to morne,
For wel I woot thy pacience is gon." 849
Oure Hooste cride "Pees! And that anon!"
And seyde, "Lat the womman telle hire tale.
Ye fare as folk that dronken ben of ale.
Do, dame, telle forth youre tale, and that is best."
"Al redy, sire," quod she, "right as yow lest,
If I have licence of this worthy Frere." 855
"Yis, dame," quod he, "tel forth, and I wol heere."

Heere endeth the Wyf of Bathe hir Prologe.

THE WIFE OF BATH'S TALE

Heere bigynneth the Tale of the Wyf of Bathe.

In th'olde dayes of the Kyng Arthour,
Of which that Britons speken greet honour,
Al was this land fulfild of fayerye.
The elf-queene, with hir joly compaignye, 860
Daunced ful ofte in many a grene mede.
This was the olde opinion, as I rede;
I speke of manye hundred yeres ago.
But now kan no man se none elves mo,
For now the grete charitee and prayeres 865
Of lymytours and othere hooly freres,
That serchen every lond and every streem,

809 wreke: avenged
818 soveraynetee: sovereignty, mastery
824 Denmark unto Ynde: throughout the whole world
832 gale: cry out

834 entremette hym: interfere
837 preambulacioun: making a preamble
838 amble, or trotte, or pees: amble (an easy lateral walk on horseback; i.e., go slow), trot (i.e., go fast), or keep still
839 lettest: hinder
844 bishrewe: curse
847 Sidyngborne: Sittingbourne, a town between Rochester and Canterbury, about 40 miles from London
848 morne: mourn
852 fare: act
856 Yis: yes indeed

859 The whole country was filled with fairies.
860 elf-queene: fairy queen

866 lymytours: friars (see GP I.209)
867 serchen: haunt

As thikke as motes in the sonne-beem,
Blessynge halles, chambres, kichenes, boures,
Citees, burghes, castels, hye toures, 870
Thropes, bernes, shipnes, dayeryes —
This maketh that ther ben no fayeryes.
For ther as wont to walken was an elf
Ther walketh now the lymytour hymself
In undermeles and in morwenynges, 875
And seyth his matyns and his hooly thynges
As he gooth in his lymytacioun.
Wommen may go saufly up and doun.
In every bussh or under every tree
Ther is noon oother incubus but he, 880
And he ne wol doon hem but dishonour.
And so bifel that this kyng Arthour
Hadde in his hous a lusty bacheler,
That on a day cam ridynge fro ryver,
And happed that, allone as he was born, 885
He saugh a mayde walkynge hym biforn,
Of which mayde anon, maugree hir heed,
By verray force, he rafte hire maydenhed;
For which oppressioun was swich clamour
And swich pursute unto the kyng Arthour 890
That dampned was this knyght for to be deed,
By cours of lawe, and sholde han lost his heed —
Paraventure swich was the statut tho —
But that the queene and other ladyes mo
So longe preyeden the kyng of grace 895
Til he his lyf hym graunted in the place,
And yaf hym to the queene, al at hir wille,
To chese wheither she wolde hym save or spille.
The queene thanketh the kyng with al hir myght,
And after this thus spak she to the knyght, 900
Whan that she saugh hir tyme, upon a day:
"Thou standest yet," quod she, "in swich array
That of thy lyf yet hastow no suretee.
I grante thee lyf, if thou kanst tellen me 904
What thyng is it that wommen moost desiren.
Be war, and keep thy nekke-boon from iren!
And if thou kanst nat tellen it anon,
Yet wol I yeve thee leve for to gon
A twelf-month and a day, to seche and leere
An answere suffisant in this mateere; 910
And suretee wol I han, er that thou pace,
Thy body for to yelden in this place."
Wo was this knyght, and sorwefully he siketh;
But what! He may nat do al as hym liketh.
And at the laste he chees hym for to wende
And come agayn, right at the yeres ende, 916
With swich answere as God wolde hym purveye;
And taketh his leve, and wendeth forth his weye.
He seketh every hous and every place
Where as he hopeth for to fynde grace 920
To lerne what thyng wommen loven moost,
But he ne koude arryven in no coost
Wher as he myghte fynde in this mateere
Two creatures accordynge in-feere. 924
Somme seyde wommen loven best richesse,
Somme seyde honour, somme seyde jolynesse,
Somme riche array, somme seyden lust abedde,
And oftetyme to be wydwe and wedde.
Somme seyde that oure hertes been moost ESED
Whan that we been yflatered and yplesed. 930
He gooth ful ny the sothe, I wol nat lye.
A man shal wynne us best with flaterye,
And with attendance and with bisynesse
Been we ylymed, bothe moore and lesse.
And somme seyen that we loven best 935
For to be free and do right as us lest,
And that no man repreve us of oure vice,
But seye that we be wise and no thyng nyce.
For trewely ther is noon of us alle,
If any wight wol clawe us on the galle, 940
That we nel kike, for he seith us sooth.
Assay, and he shal fynde it that so dooth;

868 motes: specks of dust
869 boures: bedrooms
870 burghes: boroughs
871 Thropes: villages bernes: barns shipnes: stables dayeryes: dairies
875 undermeles: late mornings (from 9 to 12) morwenynges: mornings
876 matyns: matins, morning prayers
877 lymytacioun: territory
878 saufly: safely
880 incubus: evil spirit, said to copulate with women
883 bacheler: young knight
884 ryver: hawking for waterfowl
887 maugree hir heed: against her will, despite all she could do
888 rafte: took
889 oppressioun: wrong
890 pursute: suing for justice
893 Paraventure: perhaps
898 spille: put to death
903 suretee: security
906 iren: iron (i.e., the executioner's axe)
909 seche: search leere: learn
911 suretee: pledge
912 yelden: surrender
917 purveye: provide
922 coost: coast (region)
924 accordynge in-feere: agreeing together, in agreement
931 gooth ful ny the sothe: gets very close to the truth
933 attendance: attention
934 ylymed: caught (as with bird-lime)
936 us lest: we please
937 repreve: reprove
940 clawe us on the galle: rub a sore spot
941 nel kike: will not (*nel* = *ne wil*) kick back

For, be we never so vicious withinne,
We wol been holden wise and clene of synne.
And somme seyn that greet delit han we 945
For to been holden stable, and eek secree,
And in o purpos stedefastly to dwelle,
And nat biwreye thyng that men us telle.
But that tale is nat worth a rake-stele.
Pardee, we wommen konne no thyng hele; 950
Witnesse on Myda — wol ye heere the tale?
Ovyde, amonges othere thynges smale,
Seyde Myda hadde, under his longe heres,
Growynge upon his heed two asses eres, 954
The whiche vice he hydde as he best myghte
Ful subtilly from every mannes sighte,
That, save his wyf, ther wiste of it namo.
He loved hire moost, and trusted hire also;
He preyede hire that to no creature
She sholde tellen of his disfigure. 960
She swoor him, "Nay"; for al this world to wynne,
She nolde do that vileynye or synne,
To make hir housbonde han so foul a name.
She nolde nat telle it for hir owene shame.
But nathelees, hir thoughte that she dyde 965
That she so longe sholde a conseil hyde;
Hir thoughte it swal so soore aboute hir herte
That nedely som word hire moste asterte;
And sith she dorste telle it to no man,
Doun to a mareys faste by she ran — 970
Til she cam there hir herte was afyre —
And as a bitore bombleth in the myre,
She leyde hir mouth unto the water doun:
"Biwreye me nat, thou water, with thy soun,"
Quod she; "to thee I telle it and namo; 975
Myn housbonde hath longe asses erys two!
Now is myn herte al hool; now is it oute.
I myghte no lenger kepe it, out of doute."
Heere may ye se, thogh we a tyme abyde,
Yet out it moot; we kan no conseil hyde. 980
The remenant of the tale if ye wol heere,
Redeth Ovyde, and ther ye may it leere.

This knyght, of which my tale is specially,
Whan that he saugh he myghte nat come therby —
This is to seye, what wommen love moost — 985
Withinne his brest ful sorweful was the goost.
But hoom he gooth; he myghte nat sojourne;
The day was come that homward moste he tourne.
And in his wey it happed hym to ryde,
In al this care, under a forest syde, 990
Wher as he saugh upon a daunce go
Of ladyes foure and twenty, and yet mo;
Toward the whiche daunce he drow ful yerne,
In hope that som wysdom sholde he lerne.
But certeinly, er he cam fully there, 995
Vanysshed was this daunce, he nyste where.
No creature saugh he that bar lyf,
Save on the grene he saugh sittynge a wyf —
A fouler wight ther may no man devyse.
Agayn the knyght this olde wyf gan ryse, 1000
And seyde, "Sire knyght, heer forth ne lith no wey.
Tel me what that ye seken, by youre fey!
Paraventure it may the bettre be;
Thise olde folk kan muchel thyng," quod she.
"My leeve mooder," quod this knyght, "certeyn
I nam but deed but if that I kan seyn 1006
What thyng it is that wommen moost desire.
Koude ye me wisse, I wolde wel quite youre hire."
"Plight me thy trouthe heere in myn hand," quod she,
"The nexte thyng that I requere thee, 1010
Thou shalt it do, if it lye in thy myght,
And I wol telle it yow er it be nyght."
"Have heer my trouthe," quod the knyght, "I grante."
"Thanne," quod she, "I dar me wel avante
Thy lyf is sauf, for I wol stonde therby; 1015
Upon my lyf, the queene wol seye as I.

944 holden: considered
946 secree: discreet, able to keep a secret
948 biwreye: betray, reveal
949 rake-stele: rake handle (i.e., nothing)
950 hele: keep secret
951 Witnesse on: take the evidence of Myda: Midas
952 Ovyde: Ovid, the Roman poet
960 disfigure: deformity
965 dyde: would die
966 conseil: secret
967 swal: swelled
968 nedely: of necessity asterte: escape
970 mareys: marsh
972 bitore bombleth in the myre: bittern bumbles (booms) in the mire
974 Biwreye: betray soun: sound
982 leere: learn

987 sojourne: remain
989 it happed hym: he chanced
990 under: by, near
993 yerne: eagerly
998 wyf: woman
999 devyse: imagine
1000 Agayn: toward (to meet)
1008 wisse: inform, instruct quite youre hire: reward your efforts
1009 Plight: pledge
1010 requere: ask
1013 grante: consent
1014 avante: boast
1015 sauf: safe
1016 seye as I: say as I do, agree with me

Lat se which is the proudeste of hem alle
That wereth on a coverchief or a calle
That dar seye nay of that I shal thee teche.
Lat us go forth withouten lenger speche."
Tho rowned she a pistel in his ere, 1021
And bad hym to be glad and have no fere.
Whan they be comen to the court, this knyght
Seyde he had holde his day, as he hadde hight,
And redy was his answere, as he sayde. 1025
Ful many a noble wyf, and many a mayde,
And many a wydwe, for that they been wise,
The queene hirself sittynge as a justise,
Assembled been, his answere for to heere;
And afterward this knyght was bode appeere.
To every wight comanded was silence, 1031
And that the knyght sholde telle in audience
What thyng that worldly wommen loven best.
This knyght ne stood nat stille as doth a best,
But to his questioun anon answerde 1035
With manly voys, that al the court it herde:
"My lige lady, generally," quod he,
"Wommen desiren to have sovereynetee
As wel over hir housbond as hir love,
And for to been in maistrie hym above. 1040
This is youre mooste desir, thogh ye me kille.
Dooth as yow list; I am heer at youre wille."
In al the court ne was ther wyf, ne mayde,
Ne wydwe that contraried that he sayde,
But seyden he was worthy han his lyf. 1045
And with that word up stirte the olde wyf,
Which that the knyght saugh sittynge on the grene:
"Mercy," quod she, "my sovereyn lady queene!
Er that youre court departe, do me right.
I taughte this answere unto the knyght; 1050
For which he plighte me his trouthe there,
The firste thyng that I wolde hym requere
He wolde it do, if it lay in his myghte.
Bifore the court thanne preye I thee, sir knyght,"
Quod she, "that thou me take unto thy wyf,
For wel thou woost that I have kept thy lyf.
If I seye fals, sey nay, upon thy fey!" 1057
This knyght answerde, "Allas and weylawey!

1018 **calle:** hairnet worn as a headdress
1021 **rowned:** whispered **pistel:** message
1024 **hight:** promised
1030 **bode appeere:** commanded to appear
1034 **best:** beast
1044 **contraried:** denied
1051 **plighte:** pledged

I woot right wel that swich was my biheste.
For Goddes love, as chees a newe requeste!
Taak al my good and lat my body go." 1061
"Nay, thanne," quod she, "I shrewe us bothe two!
For thogh that I be foul, and oold, and poore
I nolde for al the metal, ne for oore
That under erthe is grave or lith above, 1065
But if thy wyf I were, and eek thy love."
"My love?" quod he, "nay, my dampnacioun!
Allas, that any of my nacioun
Sholde evere so foule disparaged be!"
But al for noght; the ende is this, that he 1070
Constreyned was; he nedes moste hire wedde,
And taketh his olde wyf, and gooth to bedde.
Now wolden som men seye, paraventure,
That for my necligence I do no cure
To tellen yow the joye and al th'array 1075
That at the feeste was that ilke day.
To which thyng shortly answeren I shal:
I seye ther nas no joye ne feeste at al;
Ther nas but hevynesse and muche sorwe.
For prively he wedded hire on morwe,
And al day after hidde hym as an owle, 1081
So wo was hym, his wyf looked so foule.
Greet was the wo the knyght hadde in his thoght,
Whan he was with his wyf abedde ybroght;
He walweth and he turneth to and fro. 1085
His olde wyf lay smylynge everemo,
And seyde, "O deere housbonde, benedicitee!
Fareth every knyght thus with his wyf as ye?
Is this the lawe of kyng Arthures hous?
Is every knyght of his so dangerous? 1090
I am youre owene love and youre wyf;
I am she which that saved hath youre lyf,
And, certes, yet ne dide I yow nevere unright;
Why fare ye thus with me this firste nyght?
Ye faren lyk a man had lost his wit. 1095
What is my gilt? For Goddes love, tel it,
And it shal been amended, if I may."
"Amended?" quod this knyght, "Allas, nay, nay!
It wol nat been amended nevere mo.
Thou art so loothly, and so oold also, 1100

1059 **biheste:** promise
1060 **as chees:** choose
1064 **oore:** ore
1068 **nacioun:** family
1069 **disparaged:** degraded by a union with someone of lower birth
1075 **array:** rich display
1085 **walweth:** writhes
1096 **gilt:** offense
1100 **loothly:** loathsome

And therto comen of so lough a kynde,
That litel wonder is thogh I walwe and wynde.
So wolde God myn herte wolde breste!"
"Is this," quod she, "the cause of youre unreste?"
"Ye, certeinly," quod he, "no wonder is."
"Now, sire," quod she, "I koude amende al this, 1106
If that me liste, er it were dayes thre,
So wel ye myghte bere yow unto me.
"But, for ye speken of swich gentillesse
As is descended out of old richesse, 1110
That therfore sholden ye be gentil men,
Swich arrogance is nat worth an hen.
Looke who that is moost vertuous alway,
Pryvee and apert, and moost entendeth ay
To do the gentil dedes that he kan; 1115
Taak hym for the grettest gentil man.
Crist wole we clayme of hym oure gentillesse,
Nat of oure eldres for hire old richesse.
For thogh they yeve us al hir heritage, 1119
For which we clayme to been of heigh parage,
Yet may they nat biquethe for no thyng
To noon of us hir vertuous lyvyng,
That made hem gentil men ycalled be,
And bad us folwen hem in swich degree.
"Wel kan the wise poete of Florence, 1125
That highte Dant, speken in this sentence.
Lo, in swich maner rym is Dantes tale:
'Ful selde up riseth by his branches smale
Prowesse of man, for God, of his goodnesse,
Wole that of hym we clayme oure gentillesse'; 1130
For of oure eldres may we no thyng clayme
But temporel thyng, that man may hurte and mayme.
"Eek every wight woot this as wel as I,
If gentillesse were planted natureelly
Unto a certeyn lynage doun the lyne, 1135
Pryvee and apert thanne wolde they nevere fyne
To doon of gentillesse the faire office;
They myghte do no vileynye or vice.

1101 **comen of so lough a kynde:** descended from such base-born lineage
1102 **wynde:** twist about
1104 **unreste:** distress
1108 **so:** so that **bere yow unto me:** behave towards me
1109 **gentillesse:** nobility
1114 **Pryvee and apert:** in private and public, in all circumstances **entendeth:** strives
1120 **heigh parage:** noble lineage
1126 **Dant:** Dante Alighieri
1130 **Wole:** desires
1132 **mayme:** injure
1136 **fyne:** cease
1137 **office:** duties

"Taak fyr and ber it in the derkeste hous
Bitwix this and the mount of Kaukasous, 1140
And lat men shette the dores and go thenne;
Yet wole the fyr as faire lye and brenne
As twenty thousand men myghte it biholde;
His office natureel ay wol it holde,
Up peril of my lyf, til that it dye. 1145
"Heere may ye se wel how that genterye
Is nat annexed to possessioun,
Sith folk ne doon hir operacioun
Alwey, as dooth the fyr, lo, in his kynde. 1149
For, God it woot, men may wel often fynde
A lordes sone do shame and vileynye;
And he that wole han pris of his gentrye,
For he was boren of a gentil hous
And hadde his eldres noble and vertuous,
And nel hymselven do no gentil dedis 1155
Ne folwen his gentil auncestre that deed is,
He nys nat gentil, be he duc or erl,
For vileyns synful dedes make a cherl.
For gentillesse nys but renomee 1159
Of thyne auncestres, for hire heigh bountee,
Which is a strange thyng to thy persone.
Thy gentillesse cometh fro God allone.
Thanne comth oure verray gentillesse of grace;
It was no thyng biquethe us with oure place.
"Thenketh hou noble, as seith Valerius, 1165
Was thilke Tullius Hostillius,
That out of poverte roos to heigh noblesse.
Reedeth Senek, and redeth eek Boece;
Ther shul ye seen expres that it no drede is
That he is gentil that dooth gentil dedis. 1170
And therfore, leeve housbonde, I thus conclude:
Al were it that myne auncestres were rude,
Yet may the hye God, and so hope I,
Grante me grace to lyven vertuously.
Thanne am I gentil, whan that I bigynne 1175
To lyven vertuously and weyve synne.
"And ther as ye of poverte me repreeve,
The hye God, on whom that we bileeve,

1140 **Kaukasous:** the Caucasus mountains
1141 **thenne:** thence
1142 **lye:** blaze
1146 **genterye:** gentility
1147 **annexed to:** joined with
1148 **ne doon hir operacioun:** do not behave as they should
1152 **pris of his gentrye:** praise for his noble birth
1155 **nel** = *ne wyl,* will not
1159 **renomee:** renown
1160 **bountee:** goodness
1161 **strange thyng:** a thing foreign to, not naturally part of
1165 **Valerius:** Valerius Maximus, the Roman author
1166 **Tullius Hostillius:** legendary third king of Rome
1168 **Senek:** Seneca, Roman author **Boece:** Boethius (see, e.g., Boece 3.pr4)
1172 **Al were:** even though **rude:** humble
1176 **weyve:** abandon

In wilful poverte chees to lyve his lyf.
And certes every man, mayden, or wyf 1180
May understonde that Jhesus, hevene kyng,
Ne wolde nat chese a vicious lyvyng.
Glad poverte is an honest thyng, certeyn;
This wole Senec and othere clerkes seyn.
Whoso that halt hym payd of his poverte, 1185
I holde hym riche, al hadde he nat a sherte.
He that coveiteth is a povre wight,
For he wolde han that is nat in his myght;
But he that noght hath, ne coveiteth have,
Is riche, although ye holde hym but a knave.
Verray poverte, it syngeth proprely; 1191
Juvenal seith of poverte myrily:
'The povre man, whan he goth by the weye,
Bifore the theves he may synge and pleye.'
Poverte is hateful good and, as I gesse, 1195
A ful greet bryngere out of bisynesse;
A greet amendere eek of sapience
To hym that taketh it in pacience.
Poverte is this, although it seme alenge:
Possessioun that no wight wol chalenge. 1200
Poverte ful ofte, whan a man is lowe,
Maketh his God and eek hymself to knowe.
Poverte a spectacle is, as thynketh me,
Thurgh which he may his verray freendes see.
And therfore, sire, syn that I noght yow greve,
Of my poverte namoore ye me repreve. 1206
"Now, sire, of elde ye repreve me;
And certes, sire, thogh noon auctoritee
Were in no book, ye gentils of honour
Seyn that men sholde an oold wight doon favour 1210
And clepe hym fader, for youre gentillesse;
And auctours shal I fynden, as I gesse.
"Now ther ye seye that I am foul and old,
Than drede you noght to been a cokewold;
For filthe and eelde, also moot I thee, 1215
Been grete wardeyns upon chastitee.
But nathelees, syn I knowe youre delit,

1179 wilful: willing, voluntary
1185 halt hym payd: is satisfied
1189 have: to have (anything)
1190 knave: peasant
1192 Juvenal: the Roman poet
1196 bryngere out of bisynesse: one that brings out, encourages, industry
1197 amendere: improver sapience: wisdom
1199 alenge: miserable
1200 chalenge: claim
1203 spectacle: eyeglass
1209 gentils: nobles
1212 auctours: authoritative writers fynden: find (to support this)
1214 cokewold: cuckold
1215 thee: prosper
1216 wardeyns: guardians
1217 delit: desire

I shal fulfille youre worldly appetit.
"Chese now," quod she, "oon of thise thynges tweye:
To han me foul and old til that I deye, 1220
And be to yow a trewe, humble wyf,
And nevere yow displese in al my lyf,
Or elles ye wol han me yong and fair,
And take youre aventure of the repair
That shal be to youre hous by cause of me,
Or in som oother place, may wel be. 1226
Now chese yourselven, wheither that yow liketh."
This knyght avyseth hym and sore siketh,
But atte laste he seyde in this manere:
"My lady and my love, and wyf so deere, 1230
I put me in youre wise governance;
Cheseth youreself which may be moost plesance
And moost honour to yow and me also.
I do no fors the wheither of the two,
For as yow liketh, it suffiseth me." 1235
"Thanne have I gete of yow maistrie," quod she,
"Syn I may chese and governe as me lest?"
"Ye, certes, wyf," quod he, "I holde it best."
"Kys me," quod she, "we be no lenger wrothe,
For, by my trouthe, I wol be to yow bothe —
This is to seyn, ye, bothe fair and good. 1241
I prey to God that I moote sterven wood,
But I to yow be also good and trewe
As evere was wyf, syn that the world was newe.
And but I be to-morn as fair to seene 1245
As any lady, emperice, or queene,
That is bitwixe the est and eke the west,
Dooth with my lyf and deth right as yow lest.
Cast up the curtyn, looke how that it is."
And whan the knyght saugh verraily al this,
That she so fair was, and so yong therto, 1251
For joye he hente hire in his armes two.
His herte bathed in a bath of blisse.
A thousand tyme a-rewe he gan hire kisse,
And she obeyed hym in every thyng 1255
That myghte doon hym plesance or likyng.
And thus they lyve unto hir lyves ende
In parfit joye; and Jhesu Crist us sende
Housbondes meeke, yonge, and fressh abedde,

1224 aventure: chances repair: resort, visitors
1227 wheither: which
1234 I do no fors: I don't care
1235 suffiseth me: is sufficient for me
1242 sterven wood: die insane
1245 to-morn: in the morning
1253 bathed: basked
1254 a-rewe: in succession

And grace t'overbyde hem that we wedde;
And eek I praye Jhesu shorte hir lyves 1261
That noght wol be governed by hir wyves;
And olde and angry nygardes of dispence,
God sende hem soone verray pestilence!

Heere endeth the Wyves Tale of Bathe.

THE FRIAR'S PROLOGUE

The Prologe of the Freres Tale.

This worthy lymytour, this noble Frere, 1265
He made alwey a maner louryng chiere
Upon the Somonour, but for honestee
No vileyns word as yet to hym spak he.
But atte laste he seyde unto the wyf,
"Dame," quod he, "God yeve yow right good lyf! 1270
Ye han heer touched, also moot I thee,
In scole-matere greet difficultee.
Ye han seyd muche thyng right wel, I seye;
But, dame, heere as we ryde by the weye,
Us nedeth nat to speken but of game, 1275
And lete auctoritees, on Goddes name,
To prechyng and to scoles of clergye.
But if it lyke to this compaignye,
I wol yow of a somonour telle a game.
Pardee, ye may wel knowe by the name 1280
That of a somonour may no good be sayd;
I praye that noon of you be yvele apayd.
A somonour is a rennere up and doun
With mandementz for fornicacioun,
And is ybet at every townes ende." 1285
Oure Hoost tho spak, "A, sire, ye sholde be hende
And curteys, as a man of youre estaat;
In compaignye we wol have no debaat.
Telleth youre tale, and lat the Somonour be."
"Nay," quod the Somonour, "lat hym seye to me 1290
What so hym list; whan it comth to my lot,
By God, I shal hym quiten every grot.
I shal hym tellen which a greet honour
It is to be a flaterynge lymytour,
And of many another manere cryme 1295
Which nedeth nat rehercen at this tyme;
And his office I shal hym telle, ywis."
Oure Hoost answerde, "Pees, namoore of this!"
And after this he seyde unto the Frere, 1299
"Tel forth youre tale, leeve maister deere."

1260 t'overbyde: to outlive

1266 a maner louryng chiere: a kind of scowling face
1267 honestee: propriety
1268 vileyns: rude, churlish
1271 also moot I thee: as I may prosper (I swear)
1272 scole-matere: subject for debate at the universities
1276 auctoritees: quoting from authoritative texts
1278 lyke: is pleasing
1282 yvele apayd: displeased
1283 rennere: runner

1263 nygardes of dispence: misers in spending

1284 mandementz: summonses
1285 ybet: beaten
1292 grot: groat, silver coin worth four pence
1297 office: i.e., how he performs his duties

THE FRIAR'S TALE

Heere bigynneth the Freres Tale.

Whilom ther was dwellynge in my contree
An erchedeken, a man of heigh degree,
That boldely dide execucioun
In punysshynge of fornicacioun,
Of wicchecraft, and eek of bawderye, 1305
Of diffamacioun, and avowtrye,
Of chirche reves, and of testamentz,
Of contractes and of lakke of sacramentz,
Of usure, and of symonye also.
But certes, lecchours dide he grettest wo; 1310
They sholde syngen if that they were hent;
And smale tytheres weren foule yshent,
If any persoun wolde upon hem pleyne.
Ther myghte asterte hym no pecunyal peyne.
For smale tithes and for smal offrynge 1315
He made the peple pitously to synge,
For er the bisshop caughte hem with his hook,
They weren in the erchedeknes book.
Thanne hadde he, thurgh his jurisdiccioun,
Power to doon on hem correccioun. 1320
He hadde a somonour redy to his hond;
A slyer boye nas noon in Engelond;
For subtilly he hadde his espiaille,
That taughte hym wel wher that hym myghte availle.
He koude spare of lecchours oon or two, 1325
To techen hym to foure and twenty mo.
For thogh this Somonour wood were as an hare,
To telle his harlotrye I wol nat spare;
For we been out of his correccioun.
They han of us no jurisdiccioun, 1330
Ne nevere shullen, terme of alle hir lyves.
"Peter! so been wommen of the styves,"
Quod the Somonour, "yput out of oure cure!"
"Pees! with myschance and with mysaventure!"
Thus seyde oure Hoost, "and lat hym telle his tale. 1335
Now telleth forth, thogh that the Somonour gale;
Ne spareth nat, myn owene maister deere."
This false theef, this somonour, quod the Frere,
Hadde alwey bawdes redy to his hond,
As any hauk to lure in Engelond, 1340
That tolde hym al the secree that they knewe,
For hire acqueyntance was nat come of newe.
They weren his approwours prively.
He took hymself a greet profit therby;
His maister knew nat alwey what he wan. 1345
Withouten mandement a lewed man
He koude somne, on peyne of Cristes curs,
And they were glade for to fille his purs
And make hym grete feestes atte nale.
And right as Judas hadde purses smale, 1350
And was a theef, right swich a theef was he;
His maister hadde but half his duetee.
He was, if I shal yeven hym his laude,
A theef, and eek a somnour, and a baude.
He hadde eek wenches at his retenue, 1355
That, wheither that sir Robert or sir Huwe,

1302 **erchedeken:** archdeacon
1303 **dide execucioun:** carried out the law
1305 **wicchecraft:** witchcraft **bawderye:** pandering
1306 **diffamacioun:** slander **avowtrye:** adultery
1307 **chirche reves:** robbing of churches
1307–8 **testamentz, contractes:** violations relating to wills and marriage contracts **lakke of sacramentz:** failure to observe any of the sacraments, here probably confession and communion
1309 **usure:** taking interest on loans **symonye:** buying or selling church positions
1312 **smale tytheres:** those who did not pay their full tithes **yshent:** punished
1313 **persoun:** parson
1314 **asterte:** escape **pecunyal peyne:** monetary punishment, fine
1317 **hook:** bishop's staff
1320 **doon . . . correccioun:** punish them
1322 **boye:** knave
1323 **espiaille:** network of spies
1326 **techen:** direct, lead
1328 **harlotrye:** wickedness
1329 **out of his correccioun:** exempt from his authority
1332 **Peter!:** by St. Peter **styves:** brothels, licensed by the archbishop and thus exempt from ecclesiastical intervention
1333 **cure:** jurisdiction
1334 **with myschance and with mysaventure:** bad luck to you
1336 **gale:** complain loudly
1339 **bawdes:** pimps
1340 **lure:** a device to reclaim (call back) hawks
1341 **secree:** secret information
1342 **of newe:** recently
1343 **approwours:** agents
1346 **mandement:** summons
1347 **somne:** summon **Cristes curs:** excommunication
1349 **atte nale:** an ale-house
1350 **purses smale:** small amount of money belonging to the Apostles, entrusted to *Judas*
1352 **duetee:** amount due to him
1353 **laude:** due praise
1355 **at his retenue:** in his service

Or Jakke, or Rauf, or whoso that it were
That lay by hem, they tolde it in his ere.
Thus was the wenche and he of oon assent,
And he wolde fecche a feyned mandement,
And somne hem to chapitre bothe two, 1361
And pile the man, and lete the wenche go.
Thanne wolde he seye, "Freend, I shal for thy sake
Do striken hire out of oure lettres blake;
Thee thar namoore as in this cas travaille. 1365
I am thy freend, ther I thee may availle."
Certeyn he knew of briberyes mo
Than possible is to telle in yeres two.
For in this world nys dogge for the bowe 1369
That kan an hurt deer from an hool yknowe
Bet than this somnour knew a sly lecchour,
Or an avowtier, or a paramour.
And for that was the fruyt of al his rente,
Therfore on it he sette al his entente.
And so bifel that ones on a day 1375
This somnour, evere waityng on his pray,
Rood for to somne an old wydwe, a ribibe,
Feynynge a cause, for he wolde brybe.
And happed that he saugh bifore hym ryde
A gay yeman, under a forest syde. 1380
A bowe he bar, and arwes brighte and kene;
He hadde upon a courtepy of grene,
An hat upon his heed with frenges blake.
"Sire," quod this somnour, "hayl, and wel atake!" 1384
"Welcome," quod he, "and every good felawe!
Wher rydestow, under this grene-wode shawe?"
Seyde this yeman, "Wiltow fer to day?"
This somnour hym answerde and seyde, "Nay;
Heere faste by," quod he, "is myn entente
To ryden, for to reysen up a rente 1390
That longeth to my lordes duetee."

1359 **of oon assent:** agreed, in league together
1361 **chapitre:** a session of the archdeacon's court
1362 **pile:** rob
1364 **Do striken hire out:** cause her to be struck out
1365 **thar:** need **travaille:** trouble yourself
1367 **briberyes:** ways of stealing
1369 **dogge for the bowe:** dog trained to hunt with an archer
1370 **hool:** whole, unhurt
1373 **fruyt of al his rente:** the best portion of his income
1376 **pray:** prey
1377 **Rood:** rode **ribibe:** fiddle, old woman
1378 **cause:** charge **brybe:** extort money
1380 **yeman:** yeoman
1382 **courtepy:** jacket
1383 **frenges:** ornamental fringes
1384 **wel atake:** well met
1386 **shawe:** wood, thicket
1391 **duetee:** what is due (to my lord)

"Artow thanne a bailly?" "Ye," quod he.
He dorste nat, for verray filthe and shame
Seye that he was a somonour, for the name.
"Depardieux," quod this yeman, "deere broother, 1395
Thou art a bailly, and I am another.
I am unknowen as in this contree;
Of thyn aqueyntance I wolde praye thee,
And eek of bretherhede, if that yow leste.
I have gold and silver in my cheste; 1400
If that thee happe to comen in oure shire,
Al shal be thyn, right as thou wolt desire."
"Grant mercy," quod this somonour, "by my feith!"
Everych in ootheres hand his trouthe leith,
For to be sworne bretheren til they deye. 1405
In daliance they ryden forth and pleye.
This somonour, which that was as ful of jangles
As ful of venym been thise waryangles
And evere enqueryng upon every thyng,
"Brother," quod he, "where is now youre dwellyng
Another day if that I sholde yow seche?" 1411
This yeman hym answerde in softe speche,
"Brother," quod he, "fer in the north contree,
Whereas I hope som tyme I shal thee see.
Er we departe, I shal thee so wel wisse 1415
That of myn hous ne shaltow nevere mysse."
"Now, brother," quod this somonour, "I yow preye,
Teche me, whil that we ryden by the weye,
Syn that ye been a baillif as am I,
Som subtiltee, and tel me feithfully 1420
In myn office how that I may moost wynne;
And spareth nat for conscience ne synne,
But as my brother tel me, how do ye."
"Now, by my trouthe, brother deere," seyde he,
"As I shal tellen thee a feithful tale, 1425
My wages been ful streite and ful smale.
My lord is hard to me and daungerous,
And myn office is ful laborous,

1392 **bailly:** bailiff, an agent for a lord's estate who collected revenues and administered justice
1394 **for the name:** because the name itself was so odious
1395 **Depardieux:** by God
1399 **bretherhede:** sworn brotherhood
1403 **Grant mercy:** thank you
1404 **trouthe:** pledge (i.e., they shook hands on it)
1407 **jangles:** gossip
1408 **waryangles:** shrikes, butcher-birds
1415 **wisse:** inform, instruct
1427 **daungerous:** demanding
1428 **laborous:** laborious

And therfore by extorcions I lyve.
For sothe, I take al that men wol me yive. 1430
Algate, by sleyghte or by violence,
Fro yeer to yeer I wynne al my dispence.
I kan no bettre telle, feithfully."
"Now certes," quod this Somonour, "so fare I.
I spare nat to taken, God it woot, 1435
But if it be to hevy or to hoot.
What I may gete in conseil prively,
No maner conscience of that have I.
Nere myn extorcioun, I myghte nat lyven,
Ne of swiche japes wol I nat be shryven. 1440
Stomak ne conscience ne knowe I noon;
I shrewe thise shrifte-fadres everychoon.
Wel be we met, by God and by Seint Jame!
But, leeve brother, tel me thanne thy name,"
Quod this somonour. In this meene while
This yeman gan a litel for to smyle. 1446
"Brother," quod he, "wiltow that I thee telle?
I am a feend; my dwellyng is in helle,
And heere I ryde aboute my purchasyng,
To wite wher men wol yeve me any thyng.
My purchas is th'effect of al my rente. 1451
Looke how thou rydest for the same entente,
To wynne good, thou rekkest nevere how;
Right so fare I, for ryde wolde I now
Unto the worldes ende for a preye." 1455
"A!" quod this somonour, "benedicite! What sey ye?
I wende ye were a yeman trewely.
Ye han a mannes shap as wel as I;
Han ye a figure thanne determinat
In helle, ther ye been in youre estat?" 1460
"Nay, certeinly," quod he, "ther have we noon;
But whan us liketh we kan take us oon,
Or elles make yow seme we been shape;
Somtyme lyk a man, or lyk an ape,
Or lyk an angel kan I ryde or go. 1465
It is no wonder thyng thogh it be so;
A lowsy jogelour kan deceyve thee,
And pardee, yet kan I moore craft than he."

1431 **Algate:** anyhow
1432 **dispence:** living expenses
1440 **shryven:** confessed
1441 **Stomak:** stomach (compassion)
1442 **shrifte-fadres:** confessors
1449 **purchasyng:** acquisition of profits
1451 **purchas:** what is acquired (in this way) **th'effect:** the sum and substance **rente:** income
1459 **figure . . . determinat:** definite shape (as opposed to the shapes devils assume on earth)
1467 **jogelour:** conjurer

"Why," quod this somonour, "ryde ye thanne or goon
In sondry shap, and nat alwey in oon?" 1470
"For we," quod he, "wol us swiche formes make
As moost able is oure preyes for to take."
"What maketh yow to han al this labour?"
"Ful many a cause, leeve sire somonour,"
Seyde this feend, "but alle thyng hath tyme.
The day is short, and it is passed pryme, 1476
And yet ne wan I nothyng in this day.
I wol entende to wynnyng, if I may,
And nat entende oure wittes to declare.
For, brother myn, thy wit is al to bare 1480
To understonde, althogh I tolde hem thee.
But, for thou axest why labouren we —
For somtyme we been Goddes instrumentz
And meenes to doon his comandementz,
Whan that hym list, upon his creatures, 1485
In divers art and in diverse figures.
Withouten hym we have no myght, certayn,
If that hym list to stonden ther-agayn.
And somtyme, at oure prayere, han we leve
Oonly the body and nat the soule greve; 1490
Witnesse on Job, whom that we diden wo.
And somtyme han we myght of bothe two —
This is to seyn, of soule and body eke.
And somtyme be we suffred for to seke
Upon a man and doon his soule unreste 1495
And nat his body, and al is for the beste.
Whan he withstandeth oure temptacioun,
It is a cause of his savacioun,
Al be it that it was nat oure entente
He sholde be sauf, but that we wolde hym hente. 1500
And somtyme be we servant unto man,
As to the erchebisshop Seint Dunstan,
And to the apostles servant eek was I."
"Yet tel me," quod the somonour, "feithfully,
Make ye yow newe bodies thus alway 1505
Of elementz?" The feend answerde, "Nay.
Somtyme we feyne, and somtyme we aryse
With dede bodyes, in ful sondry wyse,
And speke as renably and faire and wel
As to the Phitonissa dide Samuel. 1510

1472 **able:** suitable
1480 **al to bare:** entirely inadequate
1486 **art:** methods
1491 **Witnesse on Job:** take the evidence of the Biblical Job
1494–95 **seke Upon:** harass
1495 **unreste:** distress
1502 **Seint Dunstan:** St. Dunstan was said to control devils
1509 **renably:** readily
1510 **Phitonissa:** the Biblical Witch of Endor

(And yet wol som men seye it was nat he;
I do no fors of youre dyvynytee.)
But o thyng warne I thee, I wol nat jape:
Thou wolt algates wite how we been shape;
Thou shalt herafterward, my brother deere,
Come there thee nedeth nat of me to leere, 1516
For thou shalt, by thyn owene experience,
Konne in a chayer rede of this sentence
Bet than Virgile, while he was on lyve,
Or Dant also. Now lat us ryde blyve, 1520
For I wole holde compaignye with thee
Til it be so that thou forsake me."
"Nay," quod this somonour, "that shal nat bityde!
I am a yeman, knowen is ful wyde;
My trouthe wol I holde, as in this cas. 1525
For though thou were the devel Sathanas,
My trouthe wol I holde to my brother,
As I am sworn, and ech of us til oother,
For to be trewe brother in this cas; 1529
And bothe we goon abouten oure purchas.
Taak thou thy part, what that men wol thee yive,
And I shal myn; thus may we bothe lyve.
And if that any of us have moore than oother,
Lat hym be trewe and parte it with his brother."
"I graunte," quod the devel, "by my fey." 1535
And with that word they ryden forth hir wey.
And right at the entryng of the townes ende,
To which this somonour shoop hym for to wende,
They saugh a cart that charged was with hey,
Which that a cartere droof forth in his wey. 1540
Deep was the wey, for which the carte stood.
The cartere smoot and cryde as he were wood,
"Hayt, Brok! Hayt, Scot! What spare ye for the stones?
The feend," quod he, "yow fecche, body and bones,

1512 do no fors of: care nothing for dyvynytee: theology
1513 jape: deceive (you)
1514 algates: surely
1518 in a chayer rede of: in a (professorial) chair lecture on
1519-20 Virgile, Dant: Virgil, Dante, poets who described Hell
1520 blyve: quickly
1530 purchas: acquisition
1534 parte: share
1538 shoop hym: prepared himself
1539 charged: loaded
1541 Deep was the wey: the road was deep in mud (cf. 1565)
1543 Hayt: giddap spare ye: spare yourselves, stop pulling

As ferforthly as evere were ye foled, 1545
So muche wo as I have with yow tholed!
The devel have al, bothe hors and cart and hey!"
This somonour seyde, "Heere shal we have a pley."
And neer the feend he drough, as noght ne were,
Ful prively, and rowned in his ere: 1550
"Herkne, my brother, herkne, by thy feith!
Herestow nat how that the cartere seith?
Hent it anon, for he hath yeve it thee,
Bothe hey and cart, and eek his caples thre."
"Nay," quod the devel, "God woot, never a deel! 1555
It is nat his entente, trust me weel.
Axe hym thyself, if thou nat trowest me;
Or elles stynt a while, and thou shalt see."
This cartere thakketh his hors upon the croupe,
And they bigonne to drawen and to stoupe.
"Heyt! Now," quod he, "ther Jhesu Crist yow blesse, 1561
And al his handwerk, bothe moore and lesse!
That was wel twight, myn owene lyard boy.
I pray God save thee, and Seinte Loy!
Now is my cart out of the slow, pardee!" 1565
"Lo, brother," quod the feend, "what tolde I thee?
Heere may ye se, myn owene deere brother,
The carl spak oo thing, but he thoghte another.
Lat us go forth abouten oure viage;
Heere wynne I nothyng upon cariage." 1570
Whan that they coomen somwhat out of towne,
This somonour to his brother gan to rowne:
"Brother," quod he, "heere woneth an old rebekke
That hadde almoost as lief to lese hire nekke

1545 As ferforthly as: as sure as foled: foaled (i.e., born)
1546 tholed: suffered
1549 as noght ne were: as if it were nothing (i.e., as if he had no particular purpose)
1550 rowned: whispered
1554 caples: horses
1559 thakketh: pats croupe: hindquarters
1561 Heyt!: giddap ther Jhesu Crist yow blesse: may Jesus Christ bless you
1563 twight: pulled lyard: dappled
1564 Seinte Loy: St. Eligius
1565 slow: mud, mire
1568 carl: fellow
1569 viage: undertaking
1570 cariage: a feudal lord's right to the use of a tenant's horses and cart, waived for a money payment
1572 rowne: whisper
1573 woneth: dwells rebekke: fiddle, old woman
1574 That hadde almoost as lief: who would be almost as willing

As for to yeve a peny of hir good. 1575
I wole han twelf pens, though that she be wood,
Or I wol sompne hire unto oure office;
And yet, God woot, of hire knowe I no vice.
But for thou kanst nat, as in this contree, 1579
Wynne thy cost, taak heer ensample of me."
This somonour clappeth at the wydwes gate.
"Com out," quod he, "thou olde virytrate!
I trowe thou hast som frere or preest with thee."
"Who clappeth?" seyde this wyf, "benedicitee!
God save you, sire, what is youre sweete wille?" 1585
"I have," quod he, "of somonce here a bille;
Up peyne of cursyng, looke that thou be
Tomorn bifore the erchedeknes knee
T'answere to the court of certeyn thynges."
"Now, Lord," quod she, "Crist Jhesu, kyng of kynges, 1590
So wisly helpe me, as I ne may.
I have been syk, and that ful many a day.
I may nat go so fer," quod she, "ne ryde,
But I be deed, so priketh it in my syde.
May I nat axe a libel, sire somonour, 1595
And answere there by my procuratour
To swich thyng as men wole opposen me?"
"Yis," quod this somonour, "pay anon — lat se —
Twelf pens to me, and I wol thee acquite.
I shal no profit han therby but lite; 1600
My maister hath the profit and nat I.
Com of, and lat me ryden hastily;
Yif me twelf pens, I may no lenger tarye."
"Twelf pens!" quod she, "Now, lady Seinte Marie
So wisly help me out of care and synne, 1605
This wyde world thogh that I sholde wynne,
Ne have I nat twelf pens withinne myn hoold.
Ye knowen wel that I am povre and oold;
Kithe youre almesse on me, povre wrecche."
"Nay thanne," quod he, "the foule feend me fecche 1610

1579 **But for:** since
1580 **cost:** expenses
1581 **clappeth:** knocks
1582 **virytrate:** hag
1586 **of somonce . . . a bille:** a writ of summons to court
1587 **cursyng:** excommunication
1588 **Tomorn:** in the morning
1591 **So wisly:** surely
1595 **axe a libel:** ask for a written copy of the indictment
1596 **procuratour:** representative
1597 **opposen:** bring against
1602 **Com of:** come on, hurry up
1607 **hoold:** possession
1609 **Kithe:** show **almesse:** charity

If I th'excuse, though thou shul be spilt!"
"Allas!" quod she, "God woot, I have no gilt."
"Pay me," quod he, "or by the sweete Seinte Anne,
As I wol bere awey thy newe panne
For dette which thou owest me of old. 1615
Whan that thou madest thyn housbonde cokewold,
I payde at hoom for thy correccioun."
"Thou lixt!" quod she, "by my savacioun,
Ne was I nevere er now, wydwe ne wyf,
Somoned unto youre court in al my lyf; 1620
Ne nevere I nas but of my body trewe!
Unto the devel blak and rough of hewe
Yeve I thy body and my panne also!"
And whan the devel herde hire cursen so
Upon hir knees, he seyde in this manere, 1625
"Now, Mabely, myn owene mooder deere,
Is this youre wyl in ernest that ye seye?"
"The devel," quod she, "so fecche hym er he deye,
And panne and al, but he wol hym repente!"
"Nay, olde stot, that is nat myn entente,"
Quod this somonour, "for to repente me 1631
For any thyng that I have had of thee.
I wolde I hadde thy smok and every clooth!"
"Now, brother," quod the devel, "be nat wrooth;
Thy body and this panne been myne by right.
Thou shalt with me to helle yet tonyght, 1636
Where thou shalt knowen of oure privetee
Moore than a maister of dyvynytee."
And with that word this foule feend hym hente;
Body and soule he with the devel wente 1640
Where as that somonours han hir heritage.
And God, that maked after his ymage
Mankynde, save and gyde us, alle and some,
And leve thise somonours goode men bicome!
Lordynges, I koude han toold yow, quod this Frere, 1645
Hadde I had leyser for this Somnour heere,
After the text of Crist, Poul, and John,
And of oure othere doctours many oon,
Swiche peynes that youre hertes myghte agryse,
Al be it so no tonge may it devyse, 1650
Thogh that I myghte a thousand wynter telle

1613 **Seinte Anne:** St. Anne, mother of Mary
1617 **correccioun:** fine
1618 **lixt:** lie
1622 **hewe:** appearance
1630 **stot:** cow, old woman
1644 **leve:** allow
1648 **doctours:** authorities on church doctrine
1649 **agryse:** cause to tremble
1651 **wynter:** years

The peynes of thilke cursed hous of helle.
But for to kepe us fro that cursed place,
Waketh and preyeth Jhesu for his grace
So kepe us fro the temptour Sathanas. 1655
Herketh this word! Beth war, as in this cas:
"The leoun sit in his awayt alway
To sle the innocent, if that he may."
Disposeth ay youre hertes to withstonde
The feend, that yow wolde make thral and bonde. 1660
He may nat tempte yow over youre myght,
For Crist wol be youre champion and knyght.
And prayeth that thise somonours hem repente
Of hir mysdedes, er that the feend hem hente!

Heere endeth the Freres Tale.

THE SUMMONER'S PROLOGUE

The Prologe of the Somonours Tale.

This Somonour in his styropes hye stood;
Upon this Frere his herte was so wood 1666
That lyk an aspen leef he quook for ire.
"Lordynges," quod he, "but o thyng I desire;
I yow biseke that, of youre curteisye,
Syn ye han herd this false Frere lye, 1670
As suffreth me I may my tale telle.
This Frere bosteth that he knoweth helle,
And God it woot, that it is litel wonder;
Freres and feendes been but lyte asonder.
For, pardee, ye han ofte tyme herd telle 1675
How that a frere ravysshed was to helle
In spirit ones by a visioun;
And as an angel ladde hym up and doun,
To shewen hym the peynes that ther were,
In al the place saugh he nat a frere; 1680
Of oother folk he saugh ynowe in wo.
Unto this angel spak the frere tho:
'Now, sire,' quod he, 'han freres swich a grace
That noon of hem shal come to this place?'
'Yis,' quod this angel, 'many a millioun!'
And unto Sathanas he ladde hym doun. 1686
'And now hath Sathanas,' seith he, 'a tayl
Brodder than of a carryk is the sayl.
Hold up thy tayl, thou Sathanas!' quod he;
'Shewe forth thyn ers, and lat the frere se
Where is the nest of freres in this place!' 1691
And er that half a furlong wey of space,
Right so as bees out swarmen from an hyve,
Out of the develes ers ther gonne dryve
Twenty thousand freres on a route, 1695
And thurghout helle swarmed al aboute,
And comen agayn as faste as they may gon,
And in his ers they crepten everychon.
He clapte his tayl agayn and lay ful stille.
This frere, whan he looked hadde his fille 1700
Upon the tormentz of this sory place,
His spirit God restored, of his grace,
Unto his body agayn, and he awook.
But natheles, for fere yet he quook,
So was the develes ers ay in his mynde, 1705
That is his heritage of verray kynde.
God save yow alle, save this cursed Frere!
My prologe wol I ende in this manere."

1657 in . . . awayt: in ambush

1660 bonde: enslaved
1662 champion: champion, representative in a judicial duel
1664 mysdedes: sins

1667 quook: trembled
1685 Yis: yes indeed

1688 carryk: large sailing ship
1692 half a furlong wey of space: in a couple of minutes

THE SUMMONER'S TALE

Heere bigynneth the Somonour his Tale.

Lordynges, ther is in Yorkshire, as I gesse,
A mersshy contree called Holdernesse, 1710
In which ther wente a lymytour aboute
To preche, and eek to begge, it is no doute.
And so bifel that on a day this frere
Hadde preched at a chirche in his manere,
And specially, aboven every thyng, 1715
Excited he the peple in his prechyng
To trentals, and to yeve, for Goddes sake,
Wherwith men myghte hooly houses make,
Ther as divine servyce is honoured,
Nat ther as it is wasted and devoured, 1720
Ne ther it nedeth nat for to be yive,
As to possessioners, that mowen lyve,
Thanked be God, in wele and habundaunce.
"Trentals," seyde he, "deliveren fro penaunce
Hir freendes soules, as wel olde as yonge —
Ye, whan that they been hastily ysonge, 1726
Nat for to holde a preest joly and gay —
He syngeth nat but o masse in a day.
Delivereth out," quod he, "anon the soules!
Ful hard it is with flesshhook or with oules
To been yclawed, or to brenne or bake. 1731
Now spede yow hastily, for Cristes sake!"
And whan this frere had seyd al his entente,
With *qui cum patre* forth his wey he wente.
Whan folk in chirche had yeve him what hem leste, 1735
He wente his wey; no lenger wolde he reste.
With scrippe and tipped staf, ytukked hye,
In every hous he gan to poure and prye,
And beggeth mele and chese, or elles corn.
His felawe hadde a staf tipped with horn, 1740
A peyre of tables al of yvory,
And a poyntel polysshed fetisly,
And wroot the names alwey, as he stood,
Of alle folk that yaf hym any good,
Ascaunces that he wolde for hem preye. 1745
"Yif us a busshel whete, malt, or reye,
A Goddes kechyl, or a trype of chese,
Or elles what yow lyst, we may nat cheese;
A Goddes halfpeny, or a masse peny,
Or yif us of youre brawn, if ye have eny; 1750
A dagon of youre blanket, leeve dame,
Oure suster deere — lo! Heere I write youre name —
Bacon or beef, or swich thyng as ye fynde."
A sturdy harlot wente ay hem bihynde,
That was hir hostes man, and bar a sak, 1755
And what men yaf hem, leyde it on his bak.
And whan that he was out at dore, anon
He planed awey the names everichon
That he biforn had writen in his tables; 1759
He served hem with nyfles and with fables.
"Nay, ther thou lixt, thou Somonour!" quod the Frere.
"Pees," quod oure Hoost, "for Cristes mooder deere!
Tel forth thy tale, and spare it nat at al."
"So thryve I," quod this Somonour, "so I shal!"
So longe he wente, hous by hous, til he 1765
Cam til an hous ther he was wont to be
Refresshed moore than in an hundred placis.
Syk lay the goode man whos that the place is;
Bedrede upon a couche lowe he lay.

1710 **mersshy:** marshy **Holdernesse:** a town in Yorkshire
1711 **lymytour:** friar
1717 **trentals:** office of thirty requiem Masses sung for a soul in Purgatory
1722 **possessioners:** secular and monastic clergy living on endowments **mowen:** are able
1730 **flesshhook:** meat-hook **oules:** awls
1731 **yclawed:** torn, lacerated **brenne:** burn
1734 **qui cum patre:** "Who with the Father" (beginning of a closing formula for a prayer or sermon)
1737 **scrippe:** bag, satchel **tipped staf:** staff tipped with metal, a symbol of his authority **ytukked hye:** with the skirts of his coat tucked up under his belt
1738 **poure and prye:** pore (look intently) and peer
1741 **peyre of tables:** folding set of writing tablets
1742 **poyntel:** stylus (for writing on wax)
1745 **Ascaunces:** as if
1746 **reye:** rye
1747 **A Goddes kechyl:** a little cake given as alms **trype:** bit
1749 **Goddes halfpeny:** a halfpenny given as alms **masse peny:** money offered for the singing of a Mass
1750 **brawn:** meat
1751 **dagon:** piece **blanket:** undyed woolen cloth
1754 **harlot:** servant
1755 **hostes man:** servant of the host at their inn
1760 **nyfles:** trifles, silly stories **fables:** falsehoods
1761 **lixt:** lie
1768 **goode man:** goodman, head of the household
1769 **Bedrede:** bedridden

"Deus hic!" quod he, "O Thomas, freend, good day!" 1770
Seyde this frere, curteisly and softe.
"Thomas," quod he, "God yelde yow! Ful ofte
Have I upon this bench faren ful weel;
Heere have I eten many a myrie meel."
And fro the bench he droof awey the cat, 1775
And leyde adoun his potente and his hat,
And eek his scrippe, and sette hym softe adoun.
His felawe was go walked into toun
Forth with his knave, into that hostelrye
Where as he shoop hym thilke nyght to lye.
"O deere maister," quod this sike man, 1781
"How han ye fare sith that March bigan?
I saugh yow noght this fourtenyght or moore."
"God woot," quod he, "laboured I have ful soore,
And specially for thy savacion 1785
Have I seyd many a precious orison,
And for oure othere freendes, God hem blesse!
I have to day been at youre chirche at messe,
And seyd a sermon after my symple wit —
Nat al after the text of hooly writ, 1790
For it is hard to yow, as I suppose,
And therfore wol I teche yow al the glose.
Glosynge is a glorious thyng, certeyn,
For lettre sleeth, so as we clerkes seyn —
There have I taught hem to be charitable, 1795
And spende hir good ther it is resonable;
And there I saugh oure dame — A! Where is she?"
"Yond in the yerd I trowe that she be,"
Seyde this man, "and she wol come anon."
"Ey, maister, welcome be ye, by Seint John!"
Seyde this wyf, "How fare ye, hertely?" 1801
The frere ariseth up ful curteisly,
And hire embraceth in his armes narwe,
And kiste hire sweete, and chirketh as a sparwe
With his lyppes: "Dame," quod he, "right weel,
As he that is youre servant every deel, 1806
Thanked be God, that yow yaf soule and lyf!
Yet saugh I nat this day so fair a wyf
In al the chirche, God so save me!"

1770 Deus hic!: God be here
1772 yelde: reward
1776 potente: walking stick
1778 was go walked: was gone
1780 shoop hym: intended
1792 glose: interpretation
1798 yerd: enclosed garden
1801 hertely: cordially (I ask it)
1803 narwe: closely, tightly
1804 chirketh: makes a chirping sound
1806 every deel: every bit, completely

"Ye, God amende defautes, sire," quod she.
"Algates, welcome be ye, by my fey!" 1811
"Graunt mercy, dame, this have I founde alwey.
But of youre grete goodnesse, by youre leve,
I wolde prey yow that ye nat yow greve,
I wole with Thomas speke a litel throwe. 1815
Thise curatz been ful necligent and slowe
To grope tendrely a conscience
In shrift; in prechyng is my diligence,
And studie in Petres wordes and in Poules.
I walke and fisshe Cristen mennes soules 1820
To yelden Jhesu Crist his propre rente;
To sprede his word is set al myn entente."
"Now, by youre leve, o deere sire," quod she,
"Chideth him weel, for seinte Trinitee!
He is as angry as a pissemyre, 1825
Though that he have al that he kan desire;
Though I hym wrye a-nyght and make hym warm,
And over hym leye my leg outher myn arm,
He groneth lyk oure boor, lith in oure sty.
Oother desport right noon of hym have I; 1830
I may nat plese hym in no maner cas."
"O Thomas, *je vous dy,* Thomas! Thomas!
This maketh the feend; this moste ben amended.
Ire is a thyng that hye God defended,
And therof wol I speke a word or two." 1835
"Now, maister," quod the wyf, "er that I go,
What wol ye dyne? I wol go theraboute."
"Now, dame," quod he, "now *je vous dy sanz doute,*
Have I nat of a capon but the lyvere,
And of youre softe breed nat but a shyvere,
And after that a rosted pigges heed — 1841
But that I nolde no beest for me were deed —
Thanne hadde I with yow hoomly suffisaunce.

1810 amende defautes: correct my faults (a self-deprecating response)
1814 yow greve: get angry
1815 throwe: while
1817 grope: examine (a penitent's conscience)
1818 shrift: confession
1821 yelden: pay
1825 pissemyre: ant
1827 wrye: cover
1829 boor: boar, pig lith: that lies
1832 je vous dy: I tell you
1834 Ire: the deadly sin of wrath (see ParsT X.533–676) defended: forbad
1837 theraboute: (see) about it
1838 je vous dy sanz doute: I say to you indeed
1839 lyvere: liver
1840 shyvere: sliver
1843 hoomly suffisaunce: enough plain food, family fare

I am a man of litel sustenaunce;
My spirit hath his fostryng in the Bible. 1845
The body is ay so redy and penyble
To wake, that my stomak is destroyed.
I prey yow, dame, ye be nat anoyed,
Though I so freendly yow my conseil shewe.
By God! I wolde nat telle it but a fewe." 1850
"Now, sire," quod she, "but o word er I go.
My child is deed withinne thise wykes two,
Soone after that ye wente out of this toun."
"His deeth saugh I by revelacioun,"
Seide this frere, "at hoom in oure dortour. 1855
I dar wel seyn that, er that half an hour
After his deeth, I saugh hym born to blisse
In myn avision, so God me wisse!
So dide oure sexteyn and oure fermerer,
That han been trewe freres fifty yeer; 1860
They may now — God be thanked of his loone! —
Maken hir jubilee and walke allone.
And up I roos, and al oure covent eke,
With many a teere trillyng on my cheke,
Withouten noyse or claterynge of belles; 1865
Te Deum was oure song, and nothyng elles,
Save that to Crist I seyde an orison,
Thankynge hym of his revelacion.
For, sire and dame, trusteth me right weel,
Oure orisons been moore effectueel, 1870
And moore we seen of Cristes secree thynges,
Than burel folk, although they weren kynges.
We lyve in poverte and in abstinence,
And burell folk in richesse and despence
Of mete and drynke, and in hir foul delit.
We han this worldes lust al in despit. 1876
Lazar and Dives lyveden diversly,
And divers gerdon hadden they therby.
Whoso wol preye, he moot faste and be clene,
And fatte his soule, and make his body lene. 1880
We fare as seith th'apostle; clooth and foode

1844 a man of litel sustenaunce: one who eats little
1845 fostryng: nourishment
1846 penyble: accustomed to suffering
1847 wake: spend the night in prayer and meditation
1855 dortour: dormitory (in the convent)
1857 born to blisse: carried to heaven
1858 wisse: guide
1859 sexteyn: sacristan, friar in charge of the liturgical vestments and vessels fermerer: friar in charge of the infirmary
1861 loone: grace
1862 jubilee: fiftieth anniversary
1864 trillyng: trickling
1866 Te Deum: "To You O God" (a hymn of praise)
1872 burel: lay, secular
1877 Lazar and Dives: the poor man and rich man of the New Testament
1878 gerdon: reward

Suffisen us, though they be nat ful goode.
The clennesse and the fastynge of us freres
Maketh that Crist accepteth oure preyeres.
"Lo, Moyses fourty dayes and fourty nyght
Fasted, er that the heighe God of myght 1886
Spak with hym in the mountayne of Synay.
With empty wombe, fastynge many a day,
Receyved he the lawe that was writen
With Goddes fynger; and Elye, wel ye witen,
In mount Oreb, er he hadde any speche 1891
With hye God, that is oure lyves leche,
He fasted longe and was in contemplaunce.
"Aaron, that hadde the temple in governaunce,
And eek the othere preestes everichon, 1895
Into the temple whan they sholde gon
To preye for the peple and do servyse,
They nolden drynken in no maner wyse
No drynke which that myghte hem dronke make,
But there in abstinence preye and wake, 1900
Lest that they deyden. Taak heede what I seye!
But they be sobre that for the peple preye,
War that — I seye namoore, for it suffiseth.
"Oure Lord Jhesu, as hooly writ devyseth,
Yaf us ensample of fastynge and preyeres. 1905
Therfore we mendynantz, we sely freres,
Been wedded to poverte and continence,
To charite, humblesse, and abstinence,
To persecucioun for rightwisnesse,
To wepynge, misericorde, and clennesse. 1910
And therfore may ye se that oure preyeres —
I speke of us, we mendynantz, we freres —
Been to the hye God moore acceptable
Than youres, with youre feestes at the table.
Fro Paradys first, if I shal nat lye, 1915
Was man out chaced for his glotonye;
And chaast was man in Paradys, certeyn.
"But herkne now, Thomas, what I shal seyn.
I ne have no text of it, as I suppose,
But I shal fynde it in a maner glose, 1920
That specially oure sweete Lord Jhesus
Spak this by freres, whan he seyde thus:
'Blessed be they that povere in spirit been.'

1883 clennesse: purity
1885 Moyses: Moses
1890 Elye: the biblical Elijah
1891 Oreb: Horeb
1892 leche: healer
1906 mendynantz: mendicants sely: good, blessed
1909 rightwisnesse: righteousness
1910 misericorde: charity, mercy
1919 text: biblical text
1920 in a maner glose: in some interpretation

And so forth al the gospel may ye seen,
Wher it be likker oure professioun, 1925
Or hirs that swymmen in possessioun.
Fy on hire pompe and on hire glotonye!
And for hir lewednesse I hem diffye.
"Me thynketh they been lyk Jovinyan,
Fat as a whale, and walkynge as a swan, 1930
Al vinolent as botel in the spence.
Hir preyere is of ful greet reverence,
Whan they for soules seye the psalm of Davit:
Lo, 'buf!' they seye, *'cor meum eructavit!'*
Who folweth Cristes gospel and his foore, 1935
But we that humble been, and chaast, and poore,
Werkeris of Goddes word, nat auditours?
Therfore, right as an hauk up at a sours
Up springeth into th'eir, right so prayeres
Of charitable and chaste bisy freres 1940
Maken hir sours to Goddes eres two.
Thomas, Thomas! So moote I ryde or go,
And by that lord that clepid is Seint Yve,
Nere thou oure brother, sholdestou nat thryve.
In our chapitre praye we day and nyght 1945
To Crist, that he thee sende heele and myght
Thy body for to weelden hastily."
"God woot," quod he, "no thyng therof feele I!
As help me Crist, as I in fewe yeres,
Have spent upon diverse manere freres 1950
Ful many a pound; yet fare I never the bet.
Certeyn, my good have I almoost biset.
Farwel, my gold, for it is al ago!"
The frere answerde, "O Thomas, dostow so?
What nedeth yow diverse freres seche? 1955
What nedeth hym that hath a parfit leche
To sechen othere leches in the toun?
Youre inconstance is youre confusioun.
Holde ye thanne me, or elles oure covent,
To praye for yow been insufficient? 1960
Thomas, that jape nys nat worth a myte.

1925 **it be likker:** it (the Gospel) more closely resembles
professioun: religious order
1928 **lewednesse:** ignorance **diffye:** repudiate
1929 **Jovinyan:** Jovinianus, who provoked St. Jerome's *Adversus Jovinianum*
1930 **walkynge as:** waddling like
1931 Full of wine as a bottle in the pantry
1934 **buf!:** the sound of a belch **cor meum eructavit:** "My heart has uttered (a good word)," the opening of Psalm 45
1935 **foore:** tracks, path (i.e., example)
1937 **auditours:** hearers (who merely listen)
1938 **sours:** upward flight
1944 **brother:** lay member of our order (see 2126–28)
1945 **chapitre:** assembly of the members of the convent
1946 **heele:** health
1947 **weelden:** move with ease
1952 **biset:** disposed of
1958 **confusioun:** ruin
1961 **myte:** a small Flemish coin of little value

Youre maladye is for we han to lyte.
A, yif that covent half a quarter otes!
A, yif that covent foure and twenty grotes!
A, yif that frere a peny, and lat hym go! 1965
Nay, nay, Thomas, it may no thyng be so!
What is a ferthyng worth parted in twelve?
Lo, ech thyng that is oned in himselve
Is moore strong than whan it is toscatered.
Thomas, of me thou shalt nat been yflatered;
Thou woldest han oure labour al for noght. 1971
The hye God, that al this world hath wroght,
Seith that the werkman worthy is his hyre.
Thomas, noght of youre tresor I desire
As for myself, but that al oure covent 1975
To preye for yow is ay so diligent,
And for to buylden Cristes owene chirche.
Thomas, if ye wol lernen for to wirche,
Of buyldynge up of chirches may ye fynde
If it be good in Thomas lyf of Inde. 1980
Ye lye heere ful of anger and of ire,
With which the devel set youre herte afyre,
And chiden heere the sely innocent,
Youre wyf, that is so meke and pacient. 1984
And therfore, Thomas, trowe me if thee leste,
Ne stryve nat with thy wyf, as for thy beste;
And ber this word awey now, by thy feith;
Touchynge swich thyng, lo, what the wise seith:
'Withinne thyn hous ne be thou no leon;
To thy subgitz do noon oppression, 1990
Ne make thyne aqueyntances nat to flee.'
And, Thomas, yet eft-soones I charge thee,
Be war from Ire that in thy bosom slepeth;
War fro the serpent that so slily crepeth
Under the gras and styngeth subtilly. 1995
Be war, my sone, and herkne paciently
That twenty thousand men han lost hir lyves
For stryvyng with hir lemmans and hir wyves.
Now sith ye han so hooly meke a wyf,
What nedeth yow, Thomas, to maken stryf?
Ther nys, ywys, no serpent so cruel, 2001
Whan man tret on his tayl, ne half so fel,

1962 **to lyte:** too little
1963 **otes:** oats
1964 **grotes:** groats, silver coins worth four pence
1967 **ferthyng:** farthing
1968 **oned:** united
1969 **toscatered:** scattered, dispersed
1978 **for to wirche:** i.e., to do good works
1980 **Thomas lyf of Inde:** the life of St. Thomas of India
1988 **Touchynge:** concerning **the wise:** the wise man (i.e., Jesus, son of Sirach, author of the Vulgate Ecclesiasticus)
1992 **eft-soones:** again **charge:** command
1998 **lemmans:** sweethearts
2000 **maken stryf:** cause trouble
2002 **tret** = *tredeth,* steps

As womman is, whan she hath caught an ire;
Vengeance is thanne al that they desire.
Ire is a synne, oon of the grete of sevene, 2005
Abhomynable unto the God of hevene;
And to hymself it is destruccion.
This every lewed viker or person
Kan seye, how ire engendreth homycide.
Ire is, in sooth, executour of pryde. 2010
I koude of ire seye so muche sorwe,
My tale sholde laste til to-morwe.
And therfore preye I God bothe day and nyght
An irous man, God sende hym litel myght!
It is greet harm and certes greet pitee 2015
To sette an irous man in heigh degree.
"Whilom ther was an irous potestat,
As seith Senek, that, durynge his estaat,
Upon a day out ryden knyghtes two,
And as Fortune wolde that it were so, 2020
That oon of hem cam hoom, that oother noght.
Anon the knyght bifore the juge is broght,
That seyde thus, 'Thou hast thy felawe slayn,
For which I deme thee to the deeth, certayn.'
And to another knyght comanded he, 2025
'Go lede hym to the deeth, I charge thee.'
And happed, as they wente by the weye
Toward the place ther he sholde deye,
The knyght cam which men wenden had be deed.
Thanne thoughte they it were the beste reed
To lede hem bothe to the juge agayn. 2031
They seiden, 'Lord, the knyght ne hath nat slayn
His felawe; heere he standeth hool alyve.'
'Ye shul be deed,' quod he, 'so moot I thryve!
That is to seyn, bothe oon, and two, and thre!' 2035
And to the firste knyght right thus spak he,
'I dampned thee; thou most algate be deed.
And thou also most nedes lese thyn heed,
For thou art cause why thy felawe deyth.' 2039
And to the thridde knyght right thus he seith,
'Thou hast nat doon that I comanded thee.'
And thus he dide doon sleen hem alle thre.
"Irous Cambises was eek dronkelewe,
And ay delited hym to been a shrewe.
And so bifel, a lord of his meynee 2045

2003 caught an ire: become angry
2008 lewed: ignorant, uneducated viker: vicar
2010 executour of pryde: one who carries out Pride's orders
2016 irous: angry
2017 potestat: potentate
2018 Senek: Seneca estaat: term of office
2030 reed: plan
2042 dide doon sleen: had (caused to be) slain
2043 Cambises: king of Persia, son of Cyrus the Elder (line 2079) dronkelewe: addicted to drink
2045 meynee: household

That loved vertuous moralitee
Seyde on a day bitwix hem two right thus:
" 'A lord is lost, if he be vicius;
And dronkenesse is eek a foul record
Of any man, and namely in a lord. 2050
Ther is ful many an eye and many an ere
Awaityng on a lord, and he noot where.
For Goddes love, drynk moore attemprely!
Wyn maketh man to lesen wrecchedly
His mynde and eek his lymes everichon.' 2055
" 'The revers shaltou se,' quod he, 'anon,
And preve it by thyn owene experience,
That wyn ne dooth to folk no swich offence.
Ther is no wyn bireveth me my myght
Of hand ne foot, ne of myne eyen sight.' 2060
And for despit he drank ful muchel moore,
An hondred part, than he hadde don bifoore;
And right anon this irous, cursed wrecche
Leet this knyghtes sone bifore hym fecche,
Comandynge hym he sholde bifore hym stonde.
And sodeynly he took his bowe in honde, 2066
And up the streng he pulled to his ere,
And with an arwe he slow the child right there.
'Now wheither have I a siker hand or noon?'
Quod he; 'Is al my myght and mynde agon?
Hath wyn bireved me myn eyen sight?' 2071
What sholde I telle th'answere of the knyght?
His sone was slayn; ther is namoore to seye.
Beth war, therfore, with lordes how ye pleye.
Syngeth *Placebo* and 'I shal, if I kan,' 2075
But if it be unto a povre man.
To a povre man men sholde his vices telle,
But nat to a lord, thogh he sholde go to helle.
"Lo irous Cirus, thilke Percien,
How he destroyed the ryver of Gysen, 2080
For that an hors of his was dreynt therinne,
Whan that he wente Babiloigne to wynne.
He made that the ryver was so smal
That wommen myghte wade it over al.
Lo, what seyde he that so wel teche kan? 2085
'Ne be no felawe to an irous man,
Ne with no wood man walke by the weye,
Lest thee repente;' I wol no ferther seye.

2049 record: reputation
2052 Awaityng on: observing
2053 attemprely: moderately
2054 lesen: lose
2064 Leet . . . fecche: had fetched
2068 slow: slew
2069 wheither: tell me whether
2075 Placebo: "I shall please" (Psalm 114:9)
2079 Cirus: Cyrus the Elder (the Great) Percien: Persian
2080 Gysen: the river Gyndes
2081 dreynt: drowned
2082 Babiloigne: Babylon
2085 he: Solomon

"Now, Thomas, leeve brother, lef thyn ire;
Thou shalt me fynde as just as is a squyre. 2090
Hoold nat the develes knyf ay at thyn herte —
Thyn angre dooth thee al to soore smerte —
But shewe to me al thy confessioun."
"Nay," quod the sike man, "by Seint Symoun!
I have be shryven this day at my curat. 2095
I have hym toold hoolly al myn estat;
Nedeth namoore to speken of it," seith he,
"But if me list, of myn humylitee."
"Yif me thanne of thy gold, to make oure cloystre,"
Quod he, "for many a muscle and many an oystre, 2100
Whan othere men han ben ful wel at eyse,
Hath been oure foode, our cloystre for to reyse.
And yet, God woot, unnethe the fundement
Parfourned is, ne of our pavement
Nys nat a tyle yet withinne oure wones. 2105
By God, we owen fourty pound for stones.
"Now help, Thomas, for hym that harwed helle!
For elles moste we oure bookes selle.
And if yow lakke oure predicacioun, 2109
Thanne goth the world al to destruccioun.
For whoso wolde us fro this world bireve,
So God me save, Thomas, by youre leve,
He wolde bireve out of this world the sonne.
For who kan teche and werchen as we konne?
And that is nat of litel tyme," quod he, 2115
"But syn Elye was, or Elise,
Han freres been — that fynde I of record —
In charitee, ythanked be oure Lord!
Now Thomas, help, for seinte charitee!" 2119
And doun anon he sette hym on his knee.
This sike man wax wel ny wood for ire;
He wolde that the frere had been on-fire
With his false dissymulacioun.
"Swich thyng as is in my possessioun," 2124
Quod he, "that may I yeve, and noon oother.
Ye sey me thus, how that I am youre brother?"
"Ye, certes," quod the frere, "trusteth weel.
I took oure dame oure lettre with oure seel."
"Now wel," quod he, "and somwhat shal I yive
Unto youre hooly covent whil I lyve; 2130
And in thyn hand thou shalt it have anon,
On this condicion, and oother noon,
That thou departe it so, my deere brother,
That every frere have also muche as oother.
This shaltou swere on thy professioun, 2135
Withouten fraude or cavillacioun."
"I swere it," quod this frere, "by my feith!"
And therwithal his hand in his he leith,
"Lo, heer my feith; in me shal be no lak." 2139
"Now thanne, put in thyn hand doun by my bak,"
Seyde this man, "and grope wel bihynde.
Bynethe my buttok there shaltow fynde
A thyng that I have hyd in pryvetee."
"A!" thoghte this frere, "That shal go with me!"
And doun his hand he launcheth to the clifte
In hope for to fynde there a yifte. 2146
And whan this sike man felte this frere
Aboute his tuwel grope there and heere,
Amydde his hand he leet the frere a fart;
Ther nys no capul, drawynge in a cart, 2150
That myghte have lete a fart of swich a soun.
The frere up stirte as dooth a wood leoun —
"A, false cherl," quod he, "for Goddes bones!
This hastow for despit doon for the nones.
Thou shalt abye this fart, if that I may!" 2155
His meynee, whiche that herden this affray,
Cam lepynge in and chaced out the frere;
And forth he gooth, with a ful angry cheere,
And fette his felawe, ther as lay his stoor.
He looked as it were a wilde boor; 2160
He grynte with his teeth, so was he wrooth.
A sturdy paas doun to the court he gooth,
Wher as ther woned a man of greet honour,
To whom that he was alwey confessour.

2090 **just:** true, exact **squyre:** carpenter's square
2094 **Seint Symoun:** unidentified; possibly Simon Magus, the false apostle; see n.
2095 **shryven:** confessed
2100 **muscle:** mussel
2102 **reyse:** build
2103 **fundement:** foundation
2104 **Parfourned:** completed
2105 **wones:** dwelling place
2107 **hym that harwed helle:** Christ, who despoiled Hell of its captives
2109 **predicacioun:** preaching
2111 **bireve:** take away
2113 **sonne:** sun
2116 **Elye, Elise:** Elijah, Elisha; see n.
2126 **youre brother:** lay member of your order
2133 **departe:** share, divide
2134 **also:** as
2135 **professioun:** religious vows
2136 **cavillacioun:** quibbling
2139 **lak:** flaw
2145 **launcheth:** thrusts **clifte:** cleft of the buttocks
2148 **tuwel:** anus
2150 **capul:** horse
2155 **abye:** pay for
2156 **affray:** disturbance
2159 **fette:** fetched **stoor:** store (what he had collected)
2161 **grynte with:** ground
2162 **sturdy paas:** quick pace **court:** manor house
2163 **woned:** dwelt

This worthy man was lord of that village. 2165
This frere cam as he were in a rage,
Where as this lord sat etyng at his bord;
Unnethes myghte the frere speke a word,
Til atte laste he seyde, "God yow see!" 2169
This lord gan looke, and seide, "Benedicitee!
What, frere John, what maner world is this?
I se wel that som thyng ther is amys;
Ye looken as the wode were ful of thevys.
Sit doun anon, and tel me what youre grief is,
And it shal been amended, if I may." 2175
"I have," quod he, "had a despit this day,
God yelde yow, adoun in youre village,
That in this world is noon so povre a page
That he nolde have abhomynacioun
Of that I have receyved in youre toun. 2180
And yet ne greveth me nothyng so soore,
As that this olde cherl with lokkes hoore
Blasphemed hath oure hooly covent eke."
"Now, maister," quod this lord, "I yow biseke — "
"No maister, sire," quod he, "but servitour,
Thogh I have had in scole that honour. 2186
God liketh nat that 'Raby' men us calle,
Neither in market ne in youre large halle."
"No fors," quod he, "but tel me al youre grief."
"Sire," quod this frere, "an odious meschief
This day bityd is to myn ordre and me, 2191
And so, *per consequens,* to ech degree
Of hooly chirche — God amende it soone!"
"Sire," quod the lord, "ye woot what is to doone.
Distempre yow noght; ye be my confessour; 2195
Ye been the salt of the erthe and the savour.
For Goddes love, youre pacience ye holde!
Tel me youre grief." And he anon hym tolde,
As ye han herd biforn — ye woot wel what.
The lady of the hous ay stille sat 2200
Til she had herd what the frere sayde.
"Ey, Goddes mooder," quod she, "Blisful mayde!
Is ther oght elles? Telle me feithfully."

2168 Unnethes: hardly
2169 God yow see!: may God look after you
2171 what maner world: what sort of carrying on
2182 hoore: white
2185 servitour: servant
2186 that honour: Master of Arts degree
2187 Raby: rabbi
2189 No fors: no matter
2192 per consequens: consequently
2195 Distempre yow noght: do not be angry
2196 savour: delight

"Madame," quod he, "how thynke ye herby?"
"How that me thynketh?" quod she. "So God me speede, 2205
I seye a cherl hath doon a cherles dede.
What shold I seye? God lat hym nevere thee!
His sike heed is ful of vanytee;
I holde hym in a manere frenesye."
"Madame," quod he, "by God, I shal nat lye,
But I on oother wyse may be wreke, 2211
I shal disclaundre hym over al ther I speke,
This false blasphemour that charged me
To parte that wol nat departed be
To every man yliche, with meschaunce!" 2215
The lord sat stille as he were in a traunce,
And in his herte he rolled up and doun,
"How hadde this cherl ymaginacioun
To shewe swich a probleme to the frere? 2219
Nevere erst er now herde I of swich mateere.
I trowe the devel putte it in his mynde.
In ars-metrike shal ther no man fynde,
Biforn this day, of swich a question.
Who sholde make a demonstracion
That every man sholde have yliche his part
As of the soun or savour of a fart? 2226
O nyce, proude cherl, I shrewe his face!
Lo, sires," quod the lord, "with harde grace!
Who evere herde of swich a thyng er now?
To every man ylike? Tel me how. 2230
It is an inpossible; it may nat be.
Ey, nyce cherl, God lete him nevere thee!
The rumblynge of a fart, and every soun,
Nis but of eir reverberacioun,
And evere it wasteth litel and litel awey. 2235
Ther is no man kan deemen, by my fey,
If that it were departed equally.
What, lo, my cherl, lo, yet how shrewedly
Unto my confessour to-day he spak!
I holde hym certeyn a demonyak! 2240
Now ete youre mete, and lat the cherl go pleye;

2204 herby: about this
2207 lat hym nevere thee: never allow him to prosper
2209 frenesye: madness
2211 wreke: avenged
2212 disclaundre: defame
2214 parte: share, divide
2215 yliche: equally
2217 rolled up and doun: pondered
2218 ymaginacioun: the ingenuity
2219 probleme: logical problem
2222 ars-metrike: art of measurement (arithmetic)
2223 question: logical problem
2224 make a demonstracion: prove
2226 savour: odor
2228 with harde grace: bad luck to him
2231 inpossible: impossibilium, a logical exercise; see n.
2240 demonyak: possessed by a demon

Lat hym go honge hymself a devel weye!"

The wordes of the lordes squier and his kervere for departynge of the fart on twelve.

Now stood the lordes squier at the bord,
That karf his mete, and herde word by word
Of alle thynges whiche I have yow sayd. 2245
"My lord," quod he, "be ye nat yvele apayd,
I koude telle, for a gowne-clooth,
To yow, sire frere, so ye be nat wrooth,
How that this fart sholde evene deled be
Among youre covent, if it lyked me." 2250
"Tel," quod the lord, "and thou shalt have anon
A gowne-clooth, by God and by Seint John!"
"My lord," quod he, "whan that the weder is fair,
Withouten wynd or perturbynge of air, 2254
Lat brynge a cartwheel heere into this halle;
But looke that it have his spokes alle —
Twelve spokes hath a cartwheel comunly.
And bryng me thanne twelve freres. Woot ye why?
For thrittene is a covent, as I gesse. 2259
Youre confessour heere, for his worthynesse,
Shal parfourne up the nombre of his covent.
Thanne shal they knele doun, by oon assent,
And to every spokes ende, in this manere,
Ful sadly leye his nose shal a frere. 2264
Youre noble confessour — there God hym save! —
Shal holde his nose upright under the nave.
Thanne shal this cherl, with bely stif and toght
As any tabour, hyder been ybroght;
And sette hym on the wheel right of this cart,
Upon the nave, and make hym lete a fart. 2270
And ye shul seen, up peril of my lyf,
By preeve which that is demonstratif,
That equally the soun of it wol wende,
And eke the stynk, unto the spokes ende,
Save that this worthy man, youre confessour,
By cause he is a man of greet honour, 2276
Shal have the firste fruyt, as resoun is.
The noble usage of freres yet is this,
The worthy men of hem shul first be served;
And certeinly he hath it weel disserved. 2280
He hath to-day taught us so muche good
With prechyng in the pulpit ther he stood,
That I may vouche sauf, I sey for me,
He hadde the firste smel of fartes thre;
And so wolde al his covent hardily, 2285
He bereth hym so faire and hoolily."
The lord, the lady, and ech man, save the frere,
Seyde that Jankyn spak, in this matere,
As wel as Euclide [dide] or Ptholomee. 2289
Touchynge the cherl, they seyde, subtiltee
And heigh wit made hym speken as he spak;
He nys no fool, ne no demonyak.
And Jankyn hath ywonne a newe gowne —
My tale is doon; we been almoost at towne.

Heere endeth the Somonours Tale.

2242 a devel weye: in the name of the Devil
2246 yvele apayd: displeased
2249 evene deled: evenly divided out
2253 weder: weather
2254 perturbynge: disturbance
2255 Lat brynge: have brought
2261 parfourne up: complete
2264 sadly: firmly
2267 toght: taut
2268 tabour: drum
2270 nave: hub
2272 demonstratif: demonstrable, logical
2289 Euclide: Euclid, the Greek mathematician Ptholomee: Ptolemy, the astronomer
2291 wit: intelligence

Fragment IV (Group E)

THE CLERK'S PROLOGUE

Heere folweth the Prologe of the Clerkes Tale of Oxenford.

"Sire Clerk of Oxenford," oure Hooste sayde,
"Ye ryde as coy and stille as dooth a mayde
Were newe spoused, sittynge at the bord;
This day ne herde I of youre tonge a word.
I trowe ye studie aboute som sophyme; 5
But Salomon seith 'every thyng hath tyme.'
"For Goddes sake, as beth of bettre cheere!
It is no tyme for to studien heere.
Telle us som myrie tale, by youre fey!
For what man that is entred in a pley, 10
He nedes moot unto the pley assente.
But precheth nat, as freres doon in Lente,
To make us for oure olde synnes wepe,
Ne that thy tale make us nat to slepe.
"Telle us som murie thyng of aventures. 15
Youre termes, youre colours, and youre figures,
Keepe hem in stoor til so be ye endite
Heigh style, as whan that men to kynges write.
Speketh so pleyn at this tyme, we yow preye,
That we may understonde what ye seye." 20
This worthy clerk benignely answerde:
"Hooste," quod he, "I am under youre yerde;
Ye han of us as now the governance,
And therfore wol I do yow obeisance,
As fer as resoun axeth, hardily. 25
I wol yow telle a tale which that I
Lerned at Padowe of a worthy clerk,
As preved by his wordes and his werk.
He is now deed and nayled in his cheste;
I prey to God so yeve his soule reste! 30
"Fraunceys Petrak, the lauriat poete,
Highte this clerk, whos rethorike sweete
Enlumyned al Ytaille of poetrie,
As Lynyan dide of philosophie,
Or lawe, or oother art particuler; 35
But Deeth, that wol nat suffre us dwellen heer,
But as it were a twynklyng of an ye,
Hem bothe hath slayn, and alle shul we dye.
"But forth to tellen of this worthy man
That taughte me this tale, as I bigan, 40
I seye that first with heigh stile he enditeth,
Er he the body of his tale writeth,
A prohemye, in the which discryveth he
Pemond and of Saluces the contree,
And speketh of Apennyn, the hilles hye, 45
That been the boundes of West Lumbardye,
And of Mount Vesulus in special,
Where as the Poo out of a welle smal
Taketh his firste spryngyng and his sours,
That estward ay encresseth in his cours 50
To Emele-ward, to Ferrare, and Venyse,
The which a long thyng were to devyse.
And trewely, as to my juggement,
Me thynketh it a thyng impertinent,
Save that he wole conveyen his mateere; 55
But this his tale, which that ye may heere."

2 **coy:** quiet, demure
3 **bord:** dinner table
5 **sophyme:** sophism, plausible but fallacious argument
7 **as beth:** be (*as* is not translated)
11 **pley:** rules of the game
16 **termes:** technical terms **colours:** figures of speech **figures:** rhetorical devices
17 **in stoor:** in stock, in reserve
18 **Heigh style:** elaborate, ornamented style
22 **under youre yerde:** under your authority
24 **do obeisance:** obey
27 **Padowe:** Padua
29 **cheste:** coffin
31 **Fraunceys Petrak:** Petrarch, who was crowned with laurel in 1341
33 **Enlumyned:** made illustrious
34 **Lynyan:** Giovanni da Lignano, professor of canon law at Padua
35 **art particuler:** specialized area of study
43 **prohemye:** proem, introduction **discryveth:** describes
44 **Pemond:** Piedmont, an area in northern Italy west of Lombardy **Saluces:** Saluzzo, a region and town in Piedmont
45 **Apennyn:** the Apennines
46 **Lumbardye:** Lombardy, east of the Apennines
47 **Vesulus:** Monte Viso or Monviso, highest of the Italian Alps
48 **Poo:** the river Po **welle:** spring
49 **sours:** source
51 **To Emele-ward:** toward Emilia, the area of eastern Italy south of Lombardy **Ferrare:** Ferrara, a town and area in Emilia **Venyse:** Venice, where the Po empties into the Adriatic Sea
54 **impertinent:** irrelevant
55 **conveyen:** introduce

THE CLERK'S TALE

Heere bigynneth the Tale of the Clerk of Oxenford.

Ther is, at the west syde of Ytaille,
Doun at the roote of Vesulus the colde,
A lusty playn, habundant of vitaille, 59
Where many a tour and toun thou mayst biholde,
That founded were in tyme of fadres olde,
And many another delitable sighte,
And Saluces this noble contree highte.

A markys whilom lord was of that lond,
As were his worthy eldres hym bifore; 65
And obeisant, ay redy to his hond,
Were alle his liges, bothe lasse and moore.
Thus in delit he lyveth, and hath doon yoore,
Biloved and drad, thurgh favour of Fortune,
Bothe of his lordes and of his commune. 70

Therwith he was, to speke as of lynage,
The gentilleste yborn of Lumbardye,
A fair persone, and strong, and yong of age,
And ful of honour and of curteisye;
Discreet ynogh his contree for to gye, 75
Save in somme thynges that he was to blame;
And Walter was this yonge lordes name.

I blame hym thus: that he considered noght
In tyme comynge what myghte hym bityde,
But on his lust present was al his thoght, 80
As for to hauke and hunte on every syde.
Wel ny alle othere cures leet he slyde,
And eek he nolde — and that was worst of alle —
Wedde no wyf, for noght that may bifalle.

Oonly that point his peple bar so soore 85
That flokmeele on a day they to hym wente,
And oon of hem, that wisest was of loore —
Or elles that the lord best wolde assente
That he sholde telle hym what his peple mente,
Or elles koude he shewe wel swich mateere —
He to the markys seyde as ye shul heere: 91

"O noble markys, youre humanitee
Asseureth us and yeveth us hardinesse,
As ofte as tyme is of necessitee, 94
That we to yow mowe telle oure hevynesse.
Accepteth, lord, now of youre gentillesse
That we with pitous herte unto yow pleyne,
And lat youre eres nat my voys desdeyne.

"Al have I noght to doone in this mateere
Moore than another man hath in this place,
Yet for as muche as ye, my lord so deere, 101
Han alwey shewed me favour and grace
I dar the bettre aske of yow a space
Of audience to shewen oure requeste,
And ye, my lord, to doon right as yow leste.

"For certes, lord, so wel us liketh yow 106
And al youre werk, and evere han doon, that we
Ne koude nat us self devysen how
We myghte lyven in moore felicitee,
Save o thyng, lord, if it youre wille be, 110
That for to been a wedded man yow leste;
Thanne were youre peple in sovereyn hertes reste.

"Boweth youre nekke under that blisful yok
Of soveraynetee, noght of servyse, 114
Which that men clepe spousaille or wedlok;
And thenketh, lord, among youre thoghtes wyse
How that oure dayes passe in sondry wyse,
For thogh we slepe, or wake, or rome, or ryde,
Ay fleeth the tyme; it nyl no man abyde. 119

"And thogh youre grene youthe floure as yit,
In crepeth age alwey, as stille as stoon,

58 roote of Vesulus: foot of Monte Viso
59 habundant of vitaille: rich in agricultural produce
64 markys: marquis
69 drad: feared, respected
75 gye: govern
80 lust present: immediate pleasure
82 slyde: slip away
85 bar so soore: took so badly
86 flokmeele: in groups
88–90 Or elles that . . . Or elles: either because . . . or
92 humanitee: graciousness
93 Asseureth us: makes us confident hardinesse: boldness
104 audience: hearing
105 yow leste: it may please you
106–7 so wel us liketh yow . . . han doon: you and your work so well please us and ever have done so
108 us self: ourselves
115 spousaille: marriage

And deeth manaceth every age, and smyt
In ech estaat, for ther escapeth noon;
And al so certein as we knowe echoon
That we shul deye, as uncerteyn we alle 125
Been of that day whan deeth shal on us falle.

"Accepteth thanne of us the trewe entente,
That nevere yet refuseden youre heeste,
And we wol, lord, if that ye wole assente,
Chese yow a wyf, in short tyme atte leeste,
Born of the gentilleste and of the meeste 131
Of al this land, so that it oghte seme
Honour to God and yow, as we kan deeme.

"Delivere us out of al this bisy drede,
And taak a wyf, for hye Goddes sake! 135
For if it so bifelle, as God forbede,
That thurgh youre deeth youre lyne sholde slake,
And that a straunge successour sholde take
Youre heritage, O wo were us alyve!
Wherfore we pray you hastily to wyve." 140

Hir meeke preyere and hir pitous cheere
Made the markys herte han pitee.
"Ye wol," quod he, "myn owene peple deere,
To that I nevere erst thoughte streyne me.
I me rejoysed of my liberte, 145
That seelde tyme is founde in mariage;
Ther I was free, I moot been in servage.

"But nathelees I se youre trewe entente,
And truste upon youre wit, and have doon ay;
Wherfore of my free wyl I wole assente 150
To wedde me, as soone as evere I may.
But ther as ye han profred me to-day
To chese me a wyf, I yow relesse
That choys and prey yow of that profre cesse.

"For God it woot, that children ofte been
Unlyk hir worthy eldres hem bifore; 156
Bountee comth al of God, nat of the streen
Of which they been engendred and ybore.

122 smyt = *smyteth*, smites, strikes
131 meeste: greatest (in rank)
134 bisy drede: constant fear
137 slake: diminish, fail
140 wyve: take a wife
143 wol: want
144 To that: that to which streyne me: force, constrain myself
146 seelde tyme: seldom
152 profred: offered
153 yow relesse: set you free from
154 profre: petition, request cesse: cease
157 Bountee: goodness streen: strain, family

I truste in Goddes bountee, and therfore
My mariage and myn estaat and reste 160
I hym bitake; he may doon as hym leste.

"Lat me allone in chesynge of my wyf —
That charge upon my bak I wole endure.
But I yow preye, and charge upon youre lyf,
What wyf that I take, ye me assure 165
To worshipe hire, whil that hir lyf may dure,
In word and werk, bothe heere and everywheere,
As she an emperoures doghter weere.

"And forthermoore, this shal ye swere: that ye
Agayn my choys shul neither grucche ne stryve;
For sith I shal forgoon my libertee 171
At youre requeste, as evere moot I thryve,
Ther as myn herte is set, ther wol I wyve;
And but ye wole assente in swich manere, 174
I prey yow, speketh namoore of this matere."

With hertely wyl they sworen and assenten
To al this thyng — ther seyde no wight nay —
Bisekynge hym of grace, er that they wenten,
That he wolde graunten hem a certein day
Of his spousaille, as soone as evere he may;
For yet alwey the peple somwhat dredde, 181
Lest that the markys no wyf wolde wedde.

He graunted hem a day, swich as hym leste,
On which he wolde be wedded sikerly,
And seyde he dide al this at hir requeste. 185
And they, with humble entente, buxomly,
Knelynge upon hir knees ful reverently,
Hym thonken alle; and thus they han an ende
Of hire entente, and hoom agayn they wende.

And heerupon he to his officeres 190
Comaundeth for the feste to purveye,
And to his privee knyghtes and squieres
Swich charge yaf as hym liste on hem leye;
And they to his comandement obeye,
And ech of hem dooth al his diligence 195
To doon unto the feeste reverence.

Explicit prima pars.

161 hym bitake: entrust to him
163 charge: responsibility
173 wyve: take a wife
174 And but: unless
180 spousaille: wedding
186 buxomly: obediently
188–89 ende Of hire entente: conclusion in accord with their wishes
191 purveye: prepare
192 privee: personal, of his own household
Explicit, *etc.*: Here ends the first part.

Incipit secunda pars.

Noght fer fro thilke paleys honurable,
Wher as this markys shoop his mariage,
There stood a throop, of site delitable,
In which that povre folk of that village 200
Hadden hir beestes and hir herbergage,
And of hire labour tooke hir sustenance,
After that the erthe yaf hem habundance.

Amonges thise povre folk ther dwelte a man
Which that was holden povrest of hem alle;
But hye God somtyme senden kan 206
His grace into a litel oxes stalle;
Janicula men of that throop hym calle.
A doghter hadde he, fair ynogh to sighte,
And Grisildis this yonge mayden highte. 210

But for to speke of vertuous beautee,
Thanne was she oon the faireste under sonne;
For povreliche yfostred up was she,
No likerous lust was thurgh hire herte yronne.
Wel ofter of the welle than of the tonne 215
She drank, and for she wolde vertu plese,
She knew wel labour but noon ydel ese.

But thogh this mayde tendre were of age,
Yet in the brest of hire virginitee
Ther was enclosed rype and sad corage; 220
And in greet reverence and charitee
Hir olde povre fader fostred shee.
A fewe sheep, spynnynge, on feeld she kepte;
She wolde noght been ydel til she slepte.

And whan she homward cam, she wolde brynge 225
Wortes or othere herbes tymes ofte,
The whiche she shredde and seeth for hir lyvynge,
And made hir bed ful hard and nothyng softe;
And ay she kepte hir fadres lyf on-lofte
With everich obeisaunce and diligence 230
That child may doon to fadres reverence.

Upon Grisilde, this povre creature,
Ful ofte sithe this markys sette his ye
As he on huntyng rood paraventure;
And whan it fil that he myghte hire espye, 235
He noght with wantown lookyng of folye
His eyen caste on hire, but in sad wyse
Upon hir chiere he wolde hym ofte avyse,

Commendynge in his herte hir wommanhede,
And eek hir vertu, passynge any wight 240
Of so yong age, as wel in chiere as dede.
For thogh the peple have no greet insight
In vertu, he considered ful right
Hir bountee, and disposed that he wolde 244
Wedde hire oonly, if evere he wedde sholde.

The day of weddyng cam, but no wight kan
Telle what womman that it sholde be;
For which merveille wondred many a man,
And seyden, whan they were in privetee,
"Wol nat oure lord yet leve his vanytee? 250
Wol he nat wedde? Allas! Allas, the while!
Why wole he thus hymself and us bigile?"

But nathelees this markys hath doon make
Of gemmes, set in gold and in asure,
Brooches and rynges, for Grisildis sake; 255
And of hir clothyng took he the mesure
By a mayde lyk to hire stature,
And eek of othere aornementes alle
That unto swich a weddyng sholde falle.

The time of undren of the same day 260
Approcheth, that this weddyng sholde be,
And al the paleys put was in array,
Bothe halle and chambres, ech in his degree;
Houses of office stuffed with plentee
Ther maystow seen, of deyntevous vitaille
That may be founde as fer as last Ytaille. 266

This roial markys, richely arrayed,
Lordes and ladyes in his compaignye,
The whiche that to the feeste weren yprayed,
And of his retenue the bachelrye, 270

Incipit, *etc.*: Here begins the second part.
199 **throop:** village
201 **herbergage:** lodging
209 **to sighte:** in appearance
212 **oon the faireste:** the fairest of all
213 **povreliche:** in poverty
214 **likerous lust:** sensual desire
215 **tonne:** wine barrel
216 **vertu plese:** satisfy the demands of virtue
220 **rype and sad:** mature and steadfast
222 **fostred:** supported
223 **spynnynge:** while spinning
226 **Wortes:** cabbages
227 **shredde:** cut up **seeth:** boiled
229 **kepte . . . on-lofte:** sustained
234 **paraventure:** by chance
236 **wantown:** lecherous
237 **sad:** serious
239 **wommanhede:** femininity, womanly qualities
244 **disposed:** decided
258 **aornementes:** ornaments
260 **undren:** midmorning, about 9 A.M.
264 **Houses of office:** outbuildings
265 **deyntevous:** delicious
266 **last Ytaille:** farthest Italy, as far as Italy extends
269 **yprayed:** invited
270 And the knights in his service

With many a soun of sondry melodye,
Unto the village of the which I tolde
In this array the righte wey han holde.

Grisilde of this, God woot, ful innocent,
That for hire shapen was al this array, 275
To fecchen water at a welle is went,
And cometh hoom as soone as ever she may;
For wel she hadde herd seyd that thilke day
The markys sholde wedde, and if she myghte,
She wolde fayn han seyn som of that sighte. 280

She thoghte, "I wole with othere maydens stonde,
That been my felawes, in oure dore and se
The markysesse, and therfore wol I fonde
To doon at hoom, as soone as it may be,
The labour which that longeth unto me, 285
And thanne I may at leyser hire biholde,
If she this wey unto the castel holde."

And as she wolde over hir thresshfold gon,
The markys cam and gan hire for to calle;
And she set doun hir water pot anon, 290
Biside the thresshfold, in an oxes stalle,
And doun upon hir knes she gan to falle,
And with sad contenance kneleth stille,
Til she had herd what was the lordes wille.

This thoghtful markys spak unto this mayde
Ful sobrely, and seyde in this manere: 296
"Where is youre fader, O Grisildis?" he sayde.
And she with reverence, in humble cheere,
Answerde, "Lord, he is al redy heere."
And in she gooth withouten lenger lette, 300
And to the markys she hir fader fette.

He by the hand thanne took this olde man,
And seyde thus, whan he hym hadde asyde:
"Janicula, I neither may ne kan
Lenger the plesance of myn herte hyde. 305
If that thou vouche sauf, what so bityde,
Thy doghter wol I take, er that I wende,
As for my wyf, unto hir lyves ende.

"Thou lovest me, I woot it wel certeyn,
And art my feithful lige man ybore, 310
And al that liketh me, I dar wel seyn
It liketh thee, and specially therfore
Tel me that poynt that I have seyd bifore,
If that thou wolt unto that purpos drawe,
To take me as for thy sone-in-lawe." 315

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

"Yet wol I," quod this markys softely,
"That in thy chambre I and thou and she
Have a collacioun, and wostow why? 325
For I wol axe if it hire wille be
To be my wyf and reule hire after me.
And al this shal be doon in thy presence;
I wol noght speke out of thyn audience."

And in the chambre, whil they were aboute
Hir tretys, which as ye shal after heere, 331
The peple cam unto the hous withoute,
And wondred hem in how honest manere
And tentifly she kepte hir fader deere.
But outrely Grisildis wondre myghte, 335
For nevere erst ne saugh she swich a sighte.

No wonder is thogh that she were astoned
To seen so greet a gest come in that place;
She nevere was to swiche gestes woned,
For which she looked with ful pale face. 340
But shortly forth this matere for to chace,
Thise arn the wordes that the markys sayde
To this benigne, verray, feithful mayde:

"Grisilde," he seyde, "ye shal wel understonde
It liketh to youre fader and to me 345
That I yow wedde, and eek it may so stonde,
As I suppose, ye wol that it so be.
But thise demandes axe I first," quod he,

273 **righte:** direct
283 **markysesse:** marchioness **fonde:** try
288 **thresshfold:** threshold
299 **al redy:** right
300 **lette:** delay
306 **If that thou vouche sauf:** if you agree
310 **ybore:** born
314 **unto that purpos drawe:** agree with that proposal
317 **abayst:** embarrassed
319 **willynge:** desire
325 **collacioun:** discussion, colloquy
327 **reule hire after me:** conduct herself as I decide
329 **audience:** hearing
331 **tretys:** negotiation
333 **how honest:** what a virtuous
334 **tentifly:** attentively
339 **woned:** accustomed
341 **chace:** pursue
342 **arn:** are
348 **demandes:** questions

"That, sith it shal be doon in hastif wyse,
Wol ye assente, or elles yow avyse? 350

"I seye this: be ye redy with good herte
To al my lust, and that I frely may,
As me best thynketh, do yow laughe or smerte,
And nevere ye to grucche it, nyght ne day?
And eek whan I sey 'ye,' ne sey nat 'nay,' 355
Neither by word ne frownyng contenance?
Swere this, and heere I swere oure alliance."

Wondrynge upon this word, quakynge for drede,
She seyde, "Lord, undigne and unworthy
Am I to thilke honour that ye me beede, 360
But as ye wole youreself, right so wol I.
And heere I swere that nevere willyngly,
In werk ne thoght, I nyl yow disobeye,
For to be deed, though me were looth to deye."

"This is ynogh, Grisilde myn," quod he. 365
And forth he gooth with a ful sobre cheere
Out at the dore, and after that cam she,
And to the peple he seyde in this manere:
"This is my wyf," quod he, "that standeth heere.
Honoureth hire and loveth hire, I preye, 370
Whoso me loveth; ther is namoore to seye."

And for that no thyng of hir olde geere
She sholde brynge into his hous, he bad
That wommen sholde dispoillen hire right theere;
Of which thise ladyes were nat right glad 375
To handle hir clothes, wherinne she was clad.
But nathelees, this mayde bright of hewe
Fro foot to heed they clothed han al newe.

Hir heris han they kembd, that lay untressed
Ful rudely, and with hir fyngres smale 380
A corone on hire heed they han ydressed,
And sette hire ful of nowches grete and smale.
Of hire array what sholde I make a tale?
Unnethe the peple hir knew for hire fairnesse
Whan she translated was in swich richesse. 385

This markys hath hire spoused with a ryng
Broght for the same cause, and thanne hire sette
Upon an hors, snow-whit and wel amblyng,
And to his paleys, er he lenger lette, 389
With joyful peple that hire ladde and mette,
Conveyed hire; and thus the day they spende
In revel, til the sonne gan descende.

And shortly forth this tale for to chace,
I seye that to this newe markysesse
God hath swich favour sent hire of his grace
That it ne semed nat by liklynesse 396
That she was born and fed in rudenesse,
As in a cote or in an oxe-stalle,
But norissed in an emperoures halle.

To every wight she woxen is so deere 400
And worshipful that folk ther she was bore,
And from hire birthe knewe hire yeer by yeere,
Unnethe trowed they — but dorste han swore —
That to Janicle, of which I spak bifore,
She doghter were, for, as by conjecture, 405
Hem thoughte she was another creature.

For though that evere vertuous was she,
She was encressed in swich excellence
Of thewes goode, yset in heigh bountee,
And so discreet and fair of eloquence, 410
So benigne and so digne of reverence,
And koude so the peples herte embrace,
That ech hire lovede that looked on hir face.

Noght oonly of Saluces in the toun
Publiced was the bountee of hir name, 415
But eek biside in many a regioun,
If oon seide wel, another seyde the same;
So spradde of hire heighe bountee the fame
That men and wommen, as wel yonge as olde,
Goon to Saluce upon hire to biholde. 420

Thus Walter lowely — nay, but roially —
Wedded with fortunat honestetee,
In Goddes pees lyveth ful esily
At hoom, and outward grace ynogh had he;
And for he saugh that under low degree 425
Was ofte vertu hid, the peple hym heelde
A prudent man, and that is seyn ful seelde.

350 **yow avyse:** consider the matter further (with the implication of refusal)
359 **undigne:** unsuitable
360 **beede:** offer
374 **dispoillen:** undress
379 **untressed:** unkempt
380 **rudely:** roughly **hir fyngres smale:** their elegant fingers
381 **corone:** crown, nuptial garland
382 **nowches:** brooches, jewelled ornaments **grete and smale:** of every sort
385 **translated:** transformed

388 **wel amblyng:** with a gentle pace
394 **markysesse:** marchioness
397 **rudenesse:** humble, unsophisticated conditions
398 **cote:** peasant's hut
400 **woxen is:** has grown, has become
409 **thewes:** morals, personal qualities
422 **honestetee:** honor, virtue
427 **seelde:** seldom

Nat oonly this Grisildis thurgh hir wit
Koude al the feet of wyfly hoomlinesse,
But eek, whan that the cas required it, 430
The commune profit koude she redresse.
Ther nas discord, rancour, ne hevynesse
In al that land that she ne koude apese,
And wisely brynge hem alle in reste and ese.

Though that hire housbonde absent were anon, 435
If gentil men or othere of hire contree
Were wrothe, she wolde bryngen hem aton;
So wise and rype wordes hadde she,
And juggementz of so greet equitee,
That she from hevene sent was, as men wende,
Peple to save and every wrong t'amende. 441

Nat longe tyme after that this Grisild
Was wedded, she a doghter hath ybore,
Al had hire levere have born a knave child;
Glad was this markys and the folk therfore,
For though a mayde child coome al bifore, 446
She may unto a knave child atteyne
By liklihede, syn she nys nat bareyne.

Explicit secunda pars.

Incipit tercia pars.

Ther fil, as it bifalleth tymes mo,
Whan that this child had souked but a throwe,
This markys in his herte longeth so 451
To tempte his wyf, hir sadnesse for to knowe,
That he ne myghte out of his herte throwe
This merveillous desir his wyf t'assaye;
Nedelees, God woot, he thoghte hire for t'affraye. 455

He hadde assayed hire ynogh bifore,
And foond hire evere good; what neded it
Hire for to tempte, and alwey moore and moore,
Though som men preise it for a subtil wit?
But as for me, I seye that yvele it sit 460

429 **feet of wyfly hoomlinesse:** feats, skills of a housewife's duties
431 **commune profit:** common good, welfare of the state
redresse: amend, promote
433 **apese:** pacify
437 **aton:** to agreement
444 **levere:** rather **knave child:** baby boy
Explicit, *etc.*: Here ends the second part.
Incipit, *etc.*: Here begins the third part.
449 **tymes mo:** often
450 **souked:** sucked, fed on the breast **throwe:** short while
452 **tempte:** test **sadnesse:** constancy
454 **t'assaye:** to test
455 **t'affraye:** to frighten
460 **yvele it sit:** it ill befits one (sit = *sitteth*)

To assaye a wyf whan that it is no nede,
And putten hire in angwyssh and in drede.

For which this markys wroghte in this manere:
He cam allone a-nyght, ther as she lay, 464
With stierne face and with ful trouble cheere,
And seyde thus: "Grisilde," quod he, "that day
That I yow took out of youre povere array,
And putte yow in estaat of heigh noblesse —
Ye have nat that forgeten, as I gesse?

"I seye, Grisilde, this present dignitee, 470
In which that I have put yow, as I trowe,
Maketh yow nat foryetful for to be
That I yow took in povre estaat ful lowe,
For any wele ye moot youreselven knowe. 474
Taak heede of every word that y yow seye;
Ther is no wight that hereth it but we tweye.

"Ye woot youreself wel how that ye cam heere
Into this hous, it is nat longe ago;
And though to me that ye be lief and deere,
Unto my gentils ye be no thyng so. 480
They seyn, to hem it is greet shame and wo
For to be subgetz and been in servage
To thee, that born art of a smal village.

"And namely sith thy doghter was ybore
Thise wordes han they spoken, doutelees. 485
But I desire, as I have doon bifore,
To lyve my lyf with hem in reste and pees.
I may nat in this caas be recchelees;
I moot doon with thy doghter for the beste,
Nat as I wolde, but as my peple leste. 490

"And yet, God woot, this is ful looth to me;
But nathelees withoute youre wityng
I wol nat doon; but this wol I," quod he,
"That ye to me assente as in this thyng. 494
Shewe now youre pacience in youre werkyng,
That ye me highte and swore in youre village
That day that maked was oure mariage."

Whan she had herd al this, she noght ameved
Neither in word, or chiere, or contenaunce,
For, as it semed, she was nat agreved. 500
She seyde, "Lord, al lyth in youre plesaunce.

465 **trouble:** troubled
470 **dignitee:** high social position
480 **gentils:** nobles
483 **smal:** humble
488 **recchelees:** careless
492 **wityng:** knowledge
498 **ameved:** changed

My child and I, with hertely obeisaunce,
Been youres al, and ye mowe save or spille
Youre owene thyng; werketh after youre wille.

"Ther may no thyng, God so my soule save,
Liken to yow that may displese me; 506
Ne I desire no thyng for to have,
Ne drede for to leese, save oonly yee.
This wyl is in myn herte, and ay shal be;
No lengthe of tyme or deeth may this deface,
Ne chaunge my corage to another place." 511

Glad was this markys of hire answeryng,
But yet he feyned as he were nat so;
Al drery was his cheere and his lookyng,
Whan that he sholde out of the chambre go.
Soone after this, a furlong wey or two, 516
He prively hath toold al his entente
Unto a man, and to his wyf hym sente.

A maner sergeant was this privee man, 519
The which that feithful ofte he founden hadde
In thynges grete, and eek swich folk wel kan
Doon execucioun in thynges badde.
The lord knew wel that he hym loved and dradde;
And whan this sergeant wiste his lordes wille,
Into the chambre he stalked hym ful stille. 525

"Madame," he seyde, "ye moote foryeve it me,
Though I do thyng to which I am constreyned.
Ye been so wys that ful wel knowe ye
That lordes heestes mowe nat been yfeyned;
They mowe wel been biwailled or compleyned,
But men moote nede unto hire lust obeye, 531
And so wol I; ther is namoore to seye.

"This child I am comanded for to take" —
And spak namoore, but out the child he hente
Despitously, and gan a cheere make 535
As though he wolde han slayn it er he wente.
Grisildis moot al suffre and al consente,
And as a lamb she sitteth meke and stille,
And leet this crueel sergeant doon his wille.

Suspecious was the diffame of this man, 540
Suspect his face, suspect his word also;
Suspect the tyme in which he this bigan.
Allas! Hir doghter that she loved so,

519 **sergeant:** servant whose duty is to enforce the law **privee man:** confidential servant
529 **yfeyned:** evaded (by dissembling)
540 **diffame:** bad reputation

She wende he wolde han slawen it right tho.
But nathelees she neither weep ne syked, 545
Conformynge hire to that the markys lyked.

But atte laste to speken she bigan,
And mekely she to the sergeant preyde,
So as he was a worthy gentil man,
That she moste kisse hire child er that it deyde.
And in hir barm this litel child she leyde 551
With ful sad face, and gan the child to blisse,
And lulled it, and after gan it kisse.

And thus she seyde in hire benigne voys,
"Fareweel my child! I shal thee nevere see.
But sith I thee have marked with the croys 556
Of thilke Fader — blessed moote he be! —
That for us deyde upon a croys of tree,
Thy soule, litel child, I hym bitake,
For this nyght shaltow dyen for my sake." 560

I trowe that to a norice in this cas
It had been hard this reuthe for to se;
Wel myghte a mooder thanne han cryd "allas!"
But nathelees so sad stidefast was she
That she endured al adversitee, 565
And to the sergeant mekely she sayde,
"Have heer agayn youre litel yonge mayde.

"Gooth now," quod she, "and dooth my lordes heeste;
But o thyng wol I prey yow of youre grace,
That, but my lord forbad yow, atte leeste 570
Burieth this litel body in som place
That beestes ne no briddes it torace."
But he no word wol to that purpos seye,
But took the child and wente upon his weye.

This sergeant cam unto his lord ageyn, 575
And of Grisildis wordes and hire cheere
He tolde hym point for point, in short and pleyn,
And hym presenteth with his doghter deere.
Somwhat this lord hadde routhe in his manere,
But nathelees his purpos heeld he stille, 580
As lordes doon, whan they wol han hir wille;

And bad this sergeant that he pryvely
Sholde this child softe wynde and wrappe,

544 **slawen:** slain
551 **barm:** lap
552 **blisse:** bless
558 **tree:** wood
561 **norice:** nurse
562 **reuthe:** pitiful situation
564 **sad stidefast:** firmly steadfast
572 **briddes:** birds **torace:** tear to pieces

With alle circumstances tendrely,
And carie it in a cofre or in a lappe; 585
But, upon peyne his heed of for to swappe,
That no man sholde knowe of his entente,
Ne whenne he cam, ne whider that he wente;

But at Boloigne to his suster deere,
That thilke tyme of Panik was countesse, 590
He sholde it take and shewe hire this mateere,
Bisekynge hire to doon hire bisynesse
This child to fostre in alle gentillesse;
And whos child that it was he bad hire hyde
From every wight, for oght that may bityde.

The sergeant gooth, and hath fulfild this thyng; 596
But to this markys now retourne we.
For now gooth he ful faste ymaginyng
If by his wyves cheere he myghte se,
Or by hire word aperceyve, that she 600
Were chaunged; but he nevere hire koude fynde
But evere in oon ylike sad and kynde.

As glad, as humble, as bisy in servyse,
And eek in love, as she was wont to be,
Was she to hym in every maner wyse; 605
Ne of hir doghter noght a word spak she.
Noon accident, for noon adversitee,
Was seyn in hire, ne nevere hir doghter name
Ne nempned she, in ernest nor in game. 609

Explicit tercia pars.

Sequitur pars quarta.

In this estaat ther passed been foure yeer
Er she with childe was, but, as God wolde,
A knave child she bar by this Walter,
Ful gracious and fair for to biholde.
And whan that folk it to his fader tolde,
Nat oonly he but al his contree merye 615
Was for this child, and God they thanke and herye.

Whan it was two yeer old, and fro the brest
Departed of his norice, on a day

584 alle circumstances: every care
585 lappe: large pocket (made by a fold in the clothing)
586 swappe: strike
588 whenne: whence whider: whither
590 Panik: Panico, near Bologna
598 ymaginyng: considering
607 accident: accidental (external) sign (of change)
609 nempned: named
Explicit, *etc.*: Here ends the third part.
Sequitur, *etc.*: Here follows the fourth part.
616 herye: praise

This markys caughte yet another lest
To tempte his wyf yet ofter, if he may. 620
O nedelees was she tempted in assay!
But wedded men ne knowe no mesure,
Whan that they fynde a pacient creature.

"Wyf," quod this markys, "ye han herd er this
My peple sikly berth oure mariage; 625
And namely sith my sone yboren is,
Now is it worse than evere in al oure age.
The murmur sleeth myn herte and my corage,
For to myne eres comth the voys so smerte
That it wel ny destroyed hath myn herte. 630

"Now sey they thus: 'Whan Walter is agon,
Thanne shal the blood of Janicle succede
And been oure lord, for oother have we noon.'
Swiche wordes seith my peple, out of drede.
Wel oughte I of swich murmur taken heede,
For certeinly I drede swich sentence, 636
Though they nat pleyn speke in myn audience.

"I wolde lyve in pees, if that I myghte;
Wherfore I am disposed outrely,
As I his suster servede by nyghte, 640
Right so thenke I to serve hym pryvely.
This warne I yow, that ye nat sodeynly
Out of youreself for no wo sholde outreye;
Beth pacient, and therof I yow preye."

"I have," quod she, "seyd thus, and evere shal: 645
I wol no thyng, ne nyl no thyng, certayn,
But as yow list. Naught greveth me at al,
Though that my doughter and my sone be slayn —
At youre comandement, this is to sayn. 649
I have noght had no part of children tweyne
But first siknesse, and after, wo and peyne.

"Ye been oure lord; dooth with youre owene thyng
Right as yow list; axeth no reed at me.
For as I lefte at hoom al my clothyng,
Whan I first cam to yow, right so," quod she,
"Lefte I my wyl and al my libertee, 656

619 lest: desire
622 mesure: moderation
625 sikly berth: dislike, take ill
627 al oure age: present times
628 murmur: grumbling
629 smerte: sharply
636 sentence: opinion
639 disposed: decided
643 outreye: break out in a passion

And took youre clothyng; wherfore I yow preye,
Dooth youre plesaunce; I wol youre lust obeye.

"And certes, if I hadde prescience 659
Youre wyl to knowe, er ye youre lust me tolde,
I wolde it doon withouten necligence;
But now I woot youre lust, and what ye wolde,
Al youre plesance ferme and stable I holde;
For wiste I that my deeth wolde do yow ese,
Right gladly wolde I dyen, yow to plese. 665

"Deth may noght make no comparisoun
Unto youre love." And whan this markys say
The constance of his wyf, he caste adoun
His eyen two, and wondreth that she may
In pacience suffre al this array; 670
And forth he goth with drery contenance,
But to his herte it was ful greet plesance.

This ugly sergeant, in the same wyse
That he hire doghter caughte, right so he —
Or worse, if men worse kan devyse — 675
Hath hent hire sone, that ful was of beautee.
And evere in oon so pacient was she
That she no chiere maade of hevynesse,
But kiste hir sone, and after gan it blesse;

Save this, she preyede hym that, if he myghte, 680
Hir litel sone he wolde in erthe grave
His tendre lymes, delicaat to sighte,
Fro foweles and fro beestes for to save.
But she noon answere of hym myghte have.
He wente his wey, as hym no thyng ne roghte,
But to Boloigne he tendrely it broghte. 686

This markys wondred, evere lenger the moore,
Upon hir pacience, and if that he
Ne hadde soothly knowen therbifoore
That parfitly hir children loved she, 690
He wolde have wend that of som subtiltee,
And of malice, or for crueel corage,
That she hadde suffred this with sad visage.

But wel he knew that next hymself, certayn,
She loved hir children best in every wyse. 695
But now of wommen wolde I axen fayn
If thise assayes myghte nat suffise?
What koude a sturdy housbonde moore devyse
To preeve hir wyfhod and hir stedefastnesse,
And he continuynge evere in sturdinesse? 700

But ther been folk of swich condicion
That whan they have a certein purpos take,
They kan nat stynte of hire entencion,
But, right as they were bounden to that stake,
They wol nat of that firste purpos slake. 705
Right so this markys fulliche hath purposed
To tempte his wyf as he was first disposed.

He waiteth if by word or contenance
That she to hym was changed of corage,
But nevere koude he fynde variance. 710
She was ay oon in herte and in visage,
And ay the forther that she was in age,
The moore trewe, if that it were possible,
She was to hym in love, and moore penyble.

For which it semed thus: that of hem two
Ther nas but o wyl, for as Walter leste, 716
The same lust was hire plesance also.
And, God be thanked, al fil for the beste.
She shewed wel, for no worldly unreste
A wyf, as of hirself, nothing ne sholde 720
Wille in effect, but as hir housbonde wolde.

The sclaundre of Walter ofte and wyde spradde,
That of a crueel herte he wikkedly,
For he a povre womman wedded hadde,
Hath mordred bothe his children prively. 725
Swich murmur was among hem comunly.
No wonder is, for to the peples ere
Ther cam no word but that they mordred were.

For which, where as his peple therbifore
Hadde loved hym wel, the sclaundre of his diffame 730
Made hem that they hym hatede therfore.

659 prescience: foreknowledge
663 ferme and stable I holde: I obey unswervingly
667 say: saw
681 grave: bury
682 delicaat to sighte: pleasing in appearance
685 roghte: cared
690 parfitly: perfectly, completely
691 subtiltee: treachery

698 sturdy: harsh, cruel
700 sturdinesse: harshness, cruelty
705 slake: desist
706 purposed: decided
714 penyble: painstaking, attentive
719 for no worldly unreste: on account of no earthly discomfort
721 Wille in effect: desire in fact but: except
722 sclaundre: ill fame
730 diffame: bad reputation

To been a mordrere is an hateful name;
But nathelees, for ernest ne for game,
He of his crueel purpos nolde stente;
To tempte his wyf was set al his entente. 735

Whan that his doghter twelve yeer was of age,
He to the court of Rome, in subtil wyse
Enformed of his wyl, sente his message,
Comaundynge hem swiche bulles to devyse
As to his crueel purpos may suffyse — 740
How that the pope, as for his peples reste,
Bad hym to wedde another, if hym leste.

I seye, he bad they sholde countrefete
The popes bulles, makynge mencion
That he hath leve his firste wyf to lete, 745
As by the popes dispensacion,
To stynte rancour and dissencion
Bitwixe his peple and hym; thus seyde the bulle,
The which they han publiced atte fulle.

The rude peple, as it no wonder is, 750
Wenden ful wel that it hadde be right so;
But whan thise tidynges came to Grisildis,
I deeme that hire herte was ful wo.
But she, ylike sad for everemo,
Disposed was, this humble creature, 755
The adversitee of Fortune al t'endure,

Abidynge evere his lust and his plesance,
To whom that she was yeven herte and al,
As to hire verray worldly suffisance.
But shortly if this storie I tellen shal, 760
This markys writen hath in special
A lettre, in which he sheweth his entente,
And secreely he to Boloigne it sente.

To the Erl of Panyk, which that hadde tho
Wedded his suster, preyde he specially 765
To bryngen hoom agayn his children two
In honurable estaat al openly.
But o thyng he hym preyede outrely,
That he to no wight, though men wolde enquere, 769
Sholde nat telle whos children that they were,

738 message: messenger
739 bulles: papal edicts
745 lete: desert
750 rude: ignorant, unlearned
763 secreely: secretly

But seye the mayden sholde ywedded be
Unto the Markys of Saluce anon.
And as this erl was preyed, so dide he;
For at day set he on his wey is goon
Toward Saluce, and lordes many oon 775
In riche array, this mayden for to gyde,
Hir yonge brother ridynge hire bisyde.

Arrayed was toward hir mariage
This fresshe mayde, ful of gemmes cleere;
Hir brother, which that seven yeer was of age,
Arrayed eek ful fressh in his manere. 781
And thus in greet noblesse and with glad cheere,
Toward Saluces shapynge hir journey,
Fro day to day they ryden in hir wey.

Explicit quarta pars.

Sequitur pars quinta.

Among al this, after his wikke usage, 785
This markys, yet his wyf to tempte moore
To the outtreste preeve of hir corage,
Fully to han experience and loore
If that she were as stidefast as bifoore,
He on a day in open audience 790
Ful boistously hath seyd hire this sentence:

"Certes, Grisilde, I hadde ynogh plesance
To han yow to my wyf for youre goodnesse,
As for youre trouthe and for youre obeisance,
Noght for youre lynage, ne for youre richesse;
But now knowe I in verray soothfastnesse 796
That in greet lordshipe, if I wel avyse,
Ther is greet servitute in sondry wyse.

"I may nat doon as every plowman may.
My peple me constreyneth for to take 800
Another wyf, and crien day by day;
And eek the pope, rancour for to slake,
Consenteth it — that dar I undertake —
And trewely thus muche I wol yow seye:
My newe wyf is comynge by the weye. 805

"Be strong of herte, and voyde anon hir place;
And thilke dowere that ye broghten me,

Explicit, *etc.*: Here ends the fourth part.
Sequitur, *etc.*: Here follows the fifth part.
785 Among al this: meanwhile
788 loore: knowledge
792 ynogh: great
797 wel avyse: judge rightly
803 undertake: assert
806 voyde: vacate

Taak it agayn; I graunte it of my grace.
Retourneth to youre fadres hous," quod he;
"No man may alwey han prosperitee. 810
With evene herte I rede yow t'endure
The strook of Fortune or of aventure."

And she agayn answerde in pacience:
"My lord," quod she, "I woot, and wiste alway,
How that bitwixen youre magnificence 815
And my poverte no wight kan ne may
Maken comparison; it is no nay.
I ne heeld me nevere digne in no manere
To be youre wyf, no, ne youre chamberere.

"And in this hous, ther ye me lady maade —
The heighe God take I for my witnesse, 821
And also wysly he my soule glaade —
I nevere heeld me lady ne mistresse,
But humble servant to youre worthynesse,
And evere shal, whil that my lyf may dure, 825
Aboven every worldly creature.

"That ye so longe of youre benignitee
Han holden me in honour and nobleye,
Where as I was noght worthy for to bee,
That thonke I God and yow, to whom I preye
Foryelde it yow; ther is namoore to seye. 831
Unto my fader gladly wol I wende,
And with hym dwelle unto my lyves ende.

"Ther I was fostred of a child ful smal,
Til I be deed my lyf ther wol I lede, 835
A wydwe clene in body, herte, and al.
For sith I yaf to yow my maydenhede,
And am youre trewe wyf, it is no drede,
God shilde swich a lordes wyf to take
Another man to housbonde or to make! 840

"And of youre newe wyf God of his grace
So graunte yow wele and prosperitee!
For I wol gladly yelden hire my place,
In which that I was blisful wont to bee.
For sith it liketh yow, my lord," quod shee, 845
"That whilom weren al myn hertes reste,
That I shal goon, I wol goon whan yow leste.

"But ther as ye me profre swich dowaire
As I first broghte, it is wel in my mynde 849
It were my wrecched clothes, nothyng faire,
The whiche to me were hard now for to fynde.
O goode God! How gentil and how kynde
Ye semed by youre speche and youre visage
The day that maked was oure mariage!

"But sooth is seyd — algate I fynde it trewe,
For in effect it preeved is on me — 856
Love is noght oold as whan that it is newe.
But certes, lord, for noon adversitee,
To dyen in the cas, it shal nat bee
That evere in word or werk I shal repente 860
That I yow yaf myn herte in hool entente.

"My lord, ye woot that in my fadres place
Ye dide me streepe out of my povre weede,
And richely me cladden, of youre grace.
To yow broghte I noght elles, out of drede, 865
But feith, and nakednesse, and maydenhede;
And heere agayn your clothyng I restoore,
And eek your weddyng ryng, for everemore.

"The remenant of youre jueles redy be
Inwith youre chambre, dar I saufly sayn. 870
Naked out of my fadres hous," quod she,
"I cam, and naked moot I turne agayn.
Al youre plesance wol I folwen fayn;
But yet I hope it be nat youre entente 874
That I smoklees out of youre paleys wente.

"Ye koude nat doon so dishonest a thyng,
That thilke wombe in which youre children leye
Sholde biforn the peple, in my walkyng,
Be seyn al bare; wherfore I yow preye,
Lat me nat lyk a worm go by the weye. 880
Remembre yow, myn owene lord so deere,
I was youre wyf, though I unworthy weere.

"Wherfore, in gerdon of my maydenhede,
Which that I broghte, and noght agayn I bere,
As voucheth sauf to yeve me, to my meede,
But swich a smok as I was wont to were, 886

811 evene: tranquil rede: advise
817 is no nay: cannot be denied
818 in no manere: in no way
819 chamberere: chambermaid
822 also wysly: as surely as glaade: may gladden
828 nobleye: noble state
831 Foryelde: may he repay
839 shilde: forbid

848 dowaire: dowry
857 When love is old it is not the same as when it was new.
859 To dyen: even if I were to die
863 dide me streepe: had me stripped weede: clothing
870 Inwith: within saufly: confidently
875 smoklees: without a smock (i.e., naked)
876 dishonest: shameful
883 gerdon: requital
885 to my meede: as my reward
886 smok: simple garment

That I therwith may wrye the wombe of here
That was youre wyf. And heer take I my leeve
Of yow, myn owene lord, lest I yow greve."

"The smok," quod he, "that thou hast on thy bak, 890
Lat it be stille, and bere it forth with thee."
But wel unnethes thilke word he spak,
But wente his wey, for routhe and for pitee.
Biforn the folk hirselven strepeth she,
And in hir smok, with heed and foot al bare,
Toward hir fadre hous forth is she fare. 896

The folk hire folwe, wepynge in hir weye,
And Fortune ay they cursen as they goon;
But she fro wepyng kepte hire eyen dreye,
Ne in this tyme word ne spak she noon. 900
Hir fader, that this tidynge herde anoon,
Curseth the day and tyme that Nature
Shoop hym to been a lyves creature.

For out of doute this olde poure man
Was evere in suspect of hir mariage; 905
For evere he demed, sith that it bigan,
That whan the lord fulfild hadde his corage,
Hym wolde thynke it were a disparage
To his estaat so lowe for t'alighte,
And voyden hire as soone as ever he myghte.

Agayns his doghter hastily goth he, 911
For he by noyse of folk knew hire comynge,
And with hire olde coote, as it myghte be
He covered hire, ful sorwefully wepynge.
But on hire body myghte he it nat brynge, 915
For rude was the clooth, and moore of age
By dayes fele than at hire mariage.

Thus with hire fader for a certeyn space
Dwelleth this flour of wyfly pacience,
That neither by hire wordes ne hire face, 920
Biforn the folk, ne eek in hire absence,
Ne shewed she that hire was doon offence;
Ne of hire heighe estaat no remembraunce
Ne hadde she, as by hire contenaunce.

No wonder is, for in hire grete estaat 925
Hire goost was evere in pleyn humylitee;
No tendre mouth, noon herte delicaat,
No pompe, no semblant of roialtee,
But ful of pacient benyngnytee,
Discreet and pridelees, ay honurable, 930
And to hire housbonde evere meke and stable.

Men speke of Job, and moost for his humblesse,
As clerkes, whan hem list, konne wel endite,
Namely of men, but as in soothfastnesse,
Though clerkes preise wommen but a lite, 935
Ther kan no man in humblesse hym acquite
As womman kan, ne kan been half so trewe
As wommen been, but it be falle of newe.

[PART VI.]

Fro Boloigne is this Erl of Panyk come,
Of which the fame up sprang to moore and lesse, 940
And to the peples eres, alle and some,
Was kouth eek that a newe markysesse
He with hym broghte, in swich pompe and richesse
That nevere was ther seyn with mannes ye
So noble array in al West Lumbardye. 945

The markys, which that shoop and knew al this,
Er that this erl was come, sente his message
For thilke sely povre Grisildis;
And she with humble herte and glad visage,
Nat with no swollen thoght in hire corage, 950
Cam at his heste, and on hire knees hire sette,
And reverently and wisely she hym grette.

"Grisilde," quod he, "my wyl is outrely
This mayden, that shal wedded been to me,
Received be to-morwe as roially 955
As it possible is in myn hous to be,
And eek that every wight in his degree
Have his estaat, in sittyng and servyse
And heigh plesaunce, as I kan best devyse.

"I have no wommen suffisaunt, certayn, 960
The chambres for t'arraye in ordinaunce
After my lust, and therfore wolde I fayn
That thyn were al swich manere governaunce.
Thou knowest eek of old al my plesaunce;

887 wrye: cover
908 disparage: degradation
910 voyden: get rid of
917 fele: many
927 delicaat: self-indulgent

928 semblant: outward appearance
930 pridelees: humble, without pride
938 of newe: recently
940 moore and lesse: great and humble, everyone
941 alle and some: one and all
958 sittyng: seating arrangement at the table

Thogh thyn array be badde and yvel biseye,
Do thou thy devoir at the leeste weye." 966

"Nat oonly, lord, that I am glad," quod she,
"To doon youre lust, but I desire also
Yow for to serve and plese in my degree
Withouten feyntyng, and shal everemo; 970
Ne nevere, for no wele ne no wo,
Ne shal the goost withinne myn herte stente
To love yow best with al my trewe entente."

And with that word she gan the hous to dighte,
And tables for to sette, and beddes make; 975
And peyned hire to doon al that she myghte,
Preyynge the chambereres, for Goddes sake,
To hasten hem, and faste swepe and shake;
And she, the mooste servysable of alle,
Hath every chambre arrayed and his halle. 980

Abouten undren gan this erl alighte,
That with hym broghte thise noble children tweye,
For which the peple ran to seen the sighte
Of hire array, so richely biseye;
And thanne at erst amonges hem they seye 985
That Walter was no fool, thogh that hym leste
To chaunge his wyf, for it was for the beste.

For she is fairer, as they deemen alle,
Than is Grisilde, and moore tendre of age,
And fairer fruyt bitwene hem sholde falle, 990
And moore plesant, for hire heigh lynage.
Hir brother eek so fair was of visage
That hem to seen the peple hath caught plesaunce,
Commendynge now the markys governaunce.

"O stormy peple! Unsad and evere untrewe!
Ay undiscreet and chaungynge as a fane! 996
Delitynge evere in rumbul that is newe,
For lyk the moone ay wexe ye and wane!

965 **yvel biseye:** ill-looking
966 **devoir:** duty
970 **feyntyng:** flagging, weakening
974 **dighte:** prepare
976 **peyned hire:** took pains
977 **chambereres:** chambermaids
979 **servysable:** willing to serve, attentive
981 **undren:** the third hour, about 9 A.M.
984 **richely biseye:** rich in appearance, splendid
985 **at erst:** for the first time
995 **Unsad:** inconstant
996 **undiscreet:** undiscerning **fane:** weathervane
997 **rumbul:** rumor
998 **wexe:** wax

Ay ful of clappyng, deere ynogh a jane!
Youre doom is fals, youre constance yvele preeveth; 1000
A ful greet fool is he that on yow leeveth."

Thus seyden sadde folk in that citee,
Whan that the peple gazed up and doun,
For they were glad, right for the noveltee,
To han a newe lady of hir toun. 1005
Namoore of this make I now mencioun,
But to Grisilde agayn wol I me dresse,
And telle hir constance and hir bisynesse.

Ful bisy was Grisilde in every thyng
That to the feeste was apertinent. 1010
Right noght was she abayst of hire clothyng,
Thogh it were rude and somdeel eek torent;
But with glad cheere to the yate is went
With oother folk to greete the markysesse,
And after that dooth forth hire bisynesse. 1015

With so glad chiere his gestes she receyveth,
And so konnyngly, everich in his degree,
That no defaute no man aperceyveth,
But ay they wondren what she myghte bee
That in so povre array was for to see, 1020
And koude swich honour and reverence,
And worthily they preisen hire prudence.

In al this meene while she ne stente
This mayde and eek hir brother to commende
With al hir herte, in ful benyngne entente, 1025
So wel that no man koude hir pris amende.
But atte laste, whan that thise lordes wende
To sitten doun to mete, he gan to calle
Grisilde, as she was bisy in his halle. 1029

"Grisilde," quod he, as it were in his pley,
"How liketh thee my wyf and hire beautee?"
"Right wel," quod she, "my lord; for, in good fey,
A fairer saugh I nevere noon than she.
I prey to God yeve hire prosperitee;
And so hope I that he wol to yow sende 1035
Plesance ynogh unto youre lyves ende.

999 **clappyng:** chattering **deere ynogh a jane:** expensive enough at a halfpenny (i.e., worthless)
1000 **doom:** judgment **preeveth:** proves
1001 **leeveth:** believes, trusts
1010 **apertinent:** suitable
1012 **torent:** ragged
1017 **konnyngly:** skillfully
1018 **defaute:** fault
1026 **pris amende:** improve her praise, praise her more highly

"O thyng biseke I yow, and warne also,
That ye ne prikke with no tormentynge
This tendre mayden, as ye han doon mo;
For she is fostred in hire norissynge 1040
Moore tendrely, and, to my supposynge,
She koude nat adversitee endure
As koude a povre fostred creature."

And whan this Walter saugh hire pacience,
Hir glade chiere, and no malice at al, 1045
And he so ofte had doon to hire offence,
And she ay sad and constant as a wal,
Continuynge evere hire innocence overal,
This sturdy markys gan his herte dresse
To rewen upon hire wyfly stedfastnesse. 1050

"This is ynogh, Grisilde myn," quod he;
"Be now namoore agast ne yvele apayed.
I have thy feith and thy benyngnytee,
As wel as evere womman was, assayed,
In greet estaat and povreliche arrayed. 1055
Now knowe I, dere wyf, thy stedfastnesse" —
And hire in armes took and gan hire kesse.

And she for wonder took of it no keep;
She herde nat what thyng he to hire seyde;
She ferde as she had stert out of a sleep, 1060
Til she out of hire mazednesse abreyde.
"Grisilde," quod he, "by God, that for us deyde,
Thou art my wyf, ne noon oother I have,
Ne nevere hadde, as God my soule save!

"This is thy doghter, which thou hast supposed 1065
To be my wyf; that oother feithfully
Shal be myn heir, as I have ay disposed;
Thou bare hym in thy body trewely.
At Boloigne have I kept hem prively; 1069
Taak hem agayn, for now maystow nat seye
That thou hast lorn noon of thy children tweye.

"And folk that ootherweys han seyd of me,
I warne hem wel that I have doon this deede
For no malice, ne for no crueltee, 1074
But for t'assaye in thee thy wommanheede,
And nat to sleen my children — God forbeede! —
But for to kepe hem pryvely and stille,
Til I thy purpos knewe and al thy wille."

Whan she this herde, aswowne doun she falleth
For pitous joye, and after hire swownynge
She bothe hire yonge children to hire calleth,
And in hire armes, pitously wepynge, 1082
Embraceth hem, and tendrely kissynge
Ful lyk a mooder, with hire salte teeres
She bathed bothe hire visage and hire heeres.

O which a pitous thyng it was to se 1086
Hir swownyng, and hire humble voys to heere!
"Grauntmercy, lord, God thanke it yow," quod she,
"That ye han saved me my children deere! 1089
Now rekke I nevere to been deed right heere;
Sith I stonde in youre love and in youre grace,
No fors of deeth, ne whan my spirit pace!

"O tendre, o deere, o yonge children myne!
Youre woful mooder wende stedfastly
That crueel houndes or som foul vermyne 1095
Hadde eten yow; but God of his mercy
And youre benyngne fader tendrely
Hath doon yow kept" — and in that same stounde
Al sodeynly she swapte adoun to grounde.

And in hire swough so sadly holdeth she 1100
Hire children two, whan she gan hem t'embrace,
That with greet sleighte and greet difficultee
The children from hire arm they gonne arace.
O many a teere on many a pitous face 1104
Doun ran of hem that stooden hire bisyde;
Unnethe abouten hire myghte they abyde.

Walter hire gladeth and hire sorwe slaketh;
She riseth up, abaysed, from hire traunce,
And every wight hire joye and feeste maketh
Til she hath caught agayn hire contenaunce.
Walter hire dooth so feithfully plesaunce 1111

1040 norissynge: nurture
1041 to my supposynge: as I believe
1047 sad: firm, steadfast
1048 overal: in every way
1049 sturdy: harsh, cruel dresse: prepare
1052 yvele apayed: displeased
1055 povreliche: poorly
1057 kesse: kiss
1061 mazednesse: bewilderment abreyde: awakened quickly

1095 vermyne: animal pests
1098 Hath doon yow kept: has had you protected stounde: moment
1099 swapte: dropped suddenly
1100 swough: swoon sadly: tightly
1103 arace: tear away
1108 abaysed: disconcerted
1110 caught . . . hire contenaunce: composed herself

That it was deyntee for to seen the cheere
Bitwixe hem two, now they been met yfeere.

Thise ladyes, whan that they hir tyme say,
Han taken hire and into chambre gon, 1115
And strepen hire out of hire rude array,
And in a clooth of gold that brighte shoon,
With a coroune of many a riche stoon
Upon hire heed, they into halle hire broghte,
And ther she was honured as hire oghte. 1120

Thus hath this pitous day a blisful ende,
For every man and womman dooth his myght
This day in murthe and revel to dispende
Til on the welkne shoon the sterres lyght. 1124
For moore solempne in every mannes syght
This feste was, and gretter of costage,
Than was the revel of hire mariage.

Ful many a yeer in heigh prosperitee
Lyven thise two in concord and in reste,
And richely his doghter maryed he 1130
Unto a lord, oon of the worthieste
Of al Ytaille; and thanne in pees and reste
His wyves fader in his court he kepeth,
Til that the soule out of his body crepeth.

His sone succedeth in his heritage 1135
In reste and pees, after his fader day,
And fortunat was eek in mariage,
Al putte he nat his wyf in greet assay.
This world is nat so strong, it is no nay,
As it hath been in olde tymes yoore, 1140
And herkneth what this auctour seith therfoore.

This storie is seyd nat for that wyves sholde
Folwen Grisilde as in humylitee,
For it were inportable, though they wolde,
But for that every wight, in his degree, 1145
Sholde be constant in adversitee
As was Grisilde; therfore Petrak writeth
This storie, which with heigh stile he enditeth.

For sith a womman was so pacient
Unto a mortal man, wel moore us oghte 1150
Receyven al in gree that God us sent;
For greet skile is he preeve that he wroghte.

1113 **met yfeere:** met together
1124 **welkne:** sky
1126 **costage:** cost, expense
1136 **fader:** father's
1141 **therfoore:** concerning this (tale)
1144 **inportable:** intolerable
1151 **in gree:** graciously **sent** = *sendeth,* sends
1152 **For greet skile is:** it is very reasonable that

But he ne tempteth no man that he boghte,
As seith Seint Jame, if ye his pistel rede;
He preeveth folk al day, it is no drede, 1155

And suffreth us, as for oure excercise,
With sharpe scourges of adversitee
Ful ofte to be bete in sondry wise;
Nat for to knowe oure wyl, for certes he,
Er we were born, knew al oure freletee; 1160
And for oure beste is al his governaunce.
Lat us thanne lyve in vertuous suffraunce.

But o word, lordynges, herkneth er I go:
It were ful hard to fynde now-a-dayes
In al a toun Grisildis thre or two; 1165
For if that they were put to swiche assayes,
The gold of hem hath now so badde alayes
With bras, that thogh the coyne be fair at ye,
It wolde rather breste a-two than plye.

For which heere, for the Wyves love of
Bathe — 1170
Whos lyf and al hire secte God mayntene
In heigh maistrie, and elles were it scathe —
I wol with lusty herte, fressh and grene,
Seyn yow a song to glade yow, I wene;
And lat us stynte of ernestful matere. 1175
Herkneth my song that seith in this manere:

Lenvoy de Chaucer.

Grisilde is deed, and eek hire pacience,
And bothe atones buryed in Ytaille;
For which I crie in open audience
No wedded man so hardy be t'assaille 1180
His wyves pacience in trust to fynde
Grisildis, for in certein he shal faille.

O noble wyves, ful of heigh prudence,
Lat noon humylitee youre tonge naille,
Ne lat no clerk have cause or diligence 1185
To write of yow a storie of swich mervaille
As of Grisildis pacient and kynde,
Lest Chichevache yow swelwe in hire entraille!

1154 **pistel:** epistle
1157 **scourges:** whips
1160 **freletee:** weakness
1162 **suffraunce:** patience, forbearance
1167 **alayes:** alloys
1168 **at ye:** to look at
1169 **plye:** bend
1170 **the Wyves love of Bathe:** the love of the Wife of Bath
1171 **secte:** sex, or school, those of her persuasion (?)
1172 **scathe:** pity
1188 **Chichevache:** a legendary lean cow who feeds on patient wives, and so has little to eat **swelwe:** swallow

Folweth Ekko, that holdeth no silence,
But evere answereth at the countretaille. 1190
Beth nat bidaffed for youre innocence,
But sharply taak on yow the governaille.
Emprenteth wel this lessoun in youre mynde,
For commune profit sith it may availle.

Ye archewyves, stondeth at defense, 1195
Syn ye be strong as is a greet camaille;
Ne suffreth nat that men yow doon offense.
And sklendre wyves, fieble as in bataille,
Beth egre as is a tygre yond in Ynde;
Ay clappeth as a mille, I yow consaille. 1200

Ne dreed hem nat; doth hem no reverence,
For though thyn housbonde armed be in maille,
The arwes of thy crabbed eloquence
Shal perce his brest and eek his aventaille.
In jalousie I rede eek thou hym bynde, 1205
And thou shalt make hym couche as doth a quaille.

If thou be fair, ther folk been in presence,
Shewe thou thy visage and thyn apparaille;
If thou be foul, be fre of thy dispence;
To gete thee freendes ay do thy travaille;
Be ay of chiere as light as leef on lynde, 1211
And lat hym care, and wepe, and wrynge, and waille!

[The following stanza appears after the Envoy in most of the manuscripts that preserve it.

Bihoold the murye words of the Hoost.

This worthy Clerk, whan ended was his tale, 1212a
Oure Hooste seyde, and swoor, "By Goddes bones,
Me were levere than a barel ale
My wyf at hoom had herd this legende ones!
This is a gentil tale for the nones,
As to my purpos, wiste ye my wille;
But thyng that wol nat be, lat it be stille."] 1212g

Heere endeth the Tale of the Clerk of Oxenford.

THE MERCHANT'S PROLOGUE

The Prologe of the Marchantes Tale.

"Wepyng and waylyng, care and oother sorwe
I knowe ynogh, on even and a-morwe," 1214
Quod the Marchant, "and so doon other mo
That wedded been. I trowe that it be so,
For wel I woot it fareth so with me.
I have a wyf, the worste that may be;
For thogh the feend to hire ycoupled were,
She wolde hym overmacche, I dar wel swere.
What sholde I yow reherce in special 1221
Hir hye malice? She is a shrewe at al.
Ther is a long and large difference
Bitwix Grisildis grete pacience
And of my wyf the passyng crueltee. 1225
Were I unbounden, also moot I thee,
I wolde nevere eft comen in the snare.
We wedded men lyven in sorwe and care.
Assaye whoso wole, and he shal fynde
That I seye sooth, by Seint Thomas of Ynde,

1189 **Ekko:** Echo
1190 **at the countretaille:** in reply (countertally)
1191 **bidaffed:** fooled, cowed, deafened (?)
1192 **governaille:** control
1194 **commune profit:** common good, welfare of all
1195 **archewyves:** quintessential women **at defense:** ready for battle
1196 **camaille:** camel; see n.
1198 **sklendre:** slender
1199 **egre:** fierce
1200 **clappeth:** wag your tongue
1202 **maille:** mail, armor
1203 **crabbed:** spiteful, angry
1204 **perce:** pierce **aventaille:** a piece of chain mail forming the neck-guard of the helmet

1209 **be fre of thy dispence:** spend freely
1211 **leef on lynde:** leaf on a linden tree
1212 **care:** grieve **wrynge:** wring his hands
1212c **barel ale:** barrel of ale

1220 **overmacche:** outmatch, defeat
1222 **at al:** in every way
1226 **unbounden:** free (of marriage)
1230 **Seint Thomas of Ynde:** St. Thomas of India (the Apostle)

As for the moore part — I sey nat alle. 1231
God shilde that it sholde so bifalle!
"A, goode sire Hoost, I have ywedded bee
Thise monthes two, and moore nat, pardee;
And yet, I trowe, he that al his lyve 1235
Wyflees hath been, though that men wolde him ryve
Unto the herte, ne koude in no manere
Tellen so muchel sorwe as I now heere
Koude tellen of my wyves cursednesse!"
"Now," quod oure Hoost, "Marchaunt, so God yow blesse, 1240
Syn ye so muchel knowen of that art
Ful hertely I pray yow telle us part."
"Gladly," quod he, "but of myn owene soore,
For soory herte, I telle may namoore."

THE MERCHANT'S TALE

Heere bigynneth the Marchantes Tale.

Whilom ther was dwellynge in Lumbardye
A worthy knyght, that born was of Pavye, 1246
In which he lyved in greet prosperitee;
And sixty yeer a wyflees man was hee,
And folwed ay his bodily delyt
On wommen, ther as was his appetyt, 1250
As doon thise fooles that been seculeer.
And whan that he was passed sixty yeer,
Were it for hoolynesse or for dotage
I kan nat seye, but swich a greet corage 1254
Hadde this knyght to been a wedded man
That day and nyght he dooth al that he kan
T'espien where he myghte wedded be,
Preyinge oure Lord to graunten him that he
Mighte ones knowe of thilke blisful lyf
That is bitwixe an housbonde and his wyf,
And for to lyve under that hooly boond 1261
With which that first God man and womman bond.
"Noon oother lyf," seyde he, "is worth a bene,
For wedlok is so esy and so clene,
That in this world it is a paradys." 1265
Thus seyde this olde knyght, that was so wys.
And certeinly, as sooth as God is kyng,
To take a wyf it is a glorious thyng,
And namely whan a man is oold and hoor;
Thanne is a wyf the fruyt of his tresor. 1270
Thanne sholde he take a yong wyf and a feir,
On which he myghte engendren hym an heir,
And lede his lyf in joye and in solas,
Where as thise bacheleris synge "allas,"
Whan that they fynden any adversitee 1275
In love, which nys but childyssh vanytee.
And trewely it sit wel to be so,
That bacheleris have often peyne and wo;
On brotel ground they buylde, and brotelnesse
They fynde whan they wene sikernesse. 1280
They lyve but as a bryd or as a beest,
In libertee and under noon arreest,
Ther as a wedded man in his estaat
Lyveth a lyf blisful and ordinaat
Under this yok of mariage ybounde. 1285
Wel may his herte in joy and blisse habounde,
For who kan be so buxom as a wyf?
Who is so trewe, and eek so ententyf
To kepe hym, syk and hool, as is his make?
For wele or wo she wole hym nat forsake; 1290
She nys nat wery hym to love and serve,
Though that he lye bedrede til he sterve.
And yet somme clerkes seyn it nys nat so,
Of whiche he Theofraste is oon of tho.

1231 **moore part:** greater part, majority
1236 **ryve:** stab, pierce
1237 **in no manere:** in no way

1245 **Lumbardye:** Lombardy
1246 **Pavye:** Pavia
1249 **delyt:** pleasure, desire
1251 **seculeer:** of the laity (?)
1262 **bond:** bound
1269 **hoor:** white-haired

1270 **fruyt:** the best part
1277 **sit wel:** is fitting, well suits
1279 **brotel:** brittle, insecure
1280 **wene sikernesse:** expect safety, security
1282 **arreest:** restraint
1284 **ordinaat:** orderly
1287 **buxom:** obedient
1288 **ententyf:** eager, diligent
1289 **make:** mate
1292 **bedrede:** bedridden
1294 **Theofraste:** Theophrastus, author of the *Golden Book on Marriage,* a tract attacking marriage

What force though Theofraste liste lye? 1295
"Ne take no wyf," quod he, "for housbondrye,
As for to spare in houshold thy dispence.
A trewe servant dooth moore diligence
Thy good to kepe than thyn owene wyf,
For she wol clayme half part al hir lyf. 1300
And if thou be syk, so God me save,
Thy verray freendes, or a trewe knave,
Wol kepe thee bet than she that waiteth ay
After thy good and hath doon many a day.
And if thou take a wyf unto thyn hoold 1305
Ful lightly maystow been a cokewold."
This sentence, and an hundred thynges worse,
Writeth this man, ther God his bones corse!
But take no kep of al swich vanytee;
Deffie Theofraste, and herke me. 1310
A wyf is Goddes yifte verraily;
Alle othere manere yiftes hardily,
As londes, rentes, pasture, or commune,
Or moebles — alle been yiftes of Fortune
That passen as a shadwe upon a wal. 1315
But drede nat, if pleynly speke I shal:
A wyf wol laste, and in thyn hous endure,
Wel lenger than thee list, paraventure.
Mariage is a ful greet sacrement.
He which that hath no wyf, I holde hym shent;
He lyveth helplees and al desolat — 1321
I speke of folk in seculer estaat.
And herke why — I sey nat this for noght —
That womman is for mannes helpe ywroght.
The hye God, whan he hadde Adam maked,
And saugh him al allone, bely-naked, 1326
God of his grete goodnesse seyde than,
"Lat us now make an helpe unto this man
Lyk to hymself"; and thanne he made him Eve.
Heere may ye se, and heerby may ye preve,
That wyf is mannes helpe and his confort, 1331
His paradys terrestre, and his disport.
So buxom and so vertuous is she,
They moste nedes lyve in unitee. 1334
O flessh they been, and o fleesh, as I gesse,
Hath but oon herte, in wele and in distresse.

1295 **What force:** what does it matter
1296 **housbondrye:** domestic economy
1297 **spare:** be sparing **dispence:** expenditures
1302 **knave:** male servant
1306 **cokewold:** cuckold
1308 **ther:** i.e., may (*ther* is not translated; it is used to introduce the subjunctive)
1312 **hardily:** certainly
1313 **commune:** right to use land held in common
1314 **moebles:** personal property
1316 **drede:** doubt
1320 **shent:** ruined
1326 **bely-naked:** stark naked
1332 **paradys terrestre:** earthly paradise
1333 **buxom:** obedient

A wyf! a, Seinte Marie, benedicite!
How myghte a man han any adversitee
That hath a wyf? Certes, I kan nat seye.
The blisse which that is bitwixe hem tweye
Ther may no tonge telle, or herte thynke. 1341
If he be povre, she helpeth hym to swynke;
She kepeth his good, and wasteth never a deel;
Al that hire housbonde lust, hire liketh weel;
She seith nat ones "nay," whan he seith
"ye." 1345
"Do this," seith he; "Al redy, sire," seith she.
O blisful ordre of wedlok precious,
Thou art so murye, and eek so vertuous,
And so commended and appreved eek
That every man that halt hym worth a leek
Upon his bare knees oughte al his lyf 1351
Thanken his God that hym hath sent a wyf,
Or elles preye to God hym for to sende
A wyf to laste unto his lyves ende.
For thanne his lyf is set in sikernesse; 1355
He may nat be deceyved, as I gesse,
So that he werke after his wyves reed.
Thanne may he boldely beren up his heed,
They been so trewe and therwithal so wyse;
For which, if thou wolt werken as the wyse,
Do alwey so as wommen wol thee rede. 1361
Lo, how that Jacob, as thise clerkes rede,
By good conseil of his mooder Rebekke,
Boond the kydes skyn aboute his nekke,
For which his fadres benyson he wan. 1365
Lo Judith, as the storie eek telle kan,
By wys conseil she Goddes peple kepte,
And slow hym Olofernus, whil he slepte.
Lo Abigayl, by good conseil how she
Saved hir housbonde Nabal whan that he 1370
Sholde han be slayn; and looke, Ester also
By good conseil delyvered out of wo
The peple of God, and made hym Mardochee
Of Assuere enhaunced for to be.
Ther nys no thyng in gree superlatyf, 1375
As seith Senek, above an humble wyf.

1343 **never a deel:** not a bit, not at all
1349 **appreved:** tested, proven
1361 **rede:** advise
1362 **rede:** tell, advise
1363 **Rebekke:** Rebecca, who counselled Jacob to trick his father, Isaac, into blessing him
1365 **benyson:** blessing
1368 **Olofernus:** Holofernes, slain by Judith; for the story see MkT VII.2551–74.
1369 **Abigayl:** Abigail saved Nabal from the wrath of King David (cf. VII.1100).
1371 **Ester:** Esther, who saved her uncle Mordecai (*Mardochee*) and her people by an appeal to her husband Ahasuerus (*Assuere*)
1374 **enhaunced:** exalted, advanced
1375 **in gree superlatyf:** superior (in degree of virtue)
1376 **Senek:** Seneca

Suffre thy wyves tonge, as Catoun bit;
She shal comande, and thou shalt suffren it,
And yet she wole obeye of curteisye.
A wyf is kepere of thyn housbondrye; 1380
Wel may the sike man biwaille and wepe,
Ther as ther nys no wyf the hous to kepe.
I warne thee, if wisely thou wolt wirche,
Love wel thy wyf, as Crist loved his chirche.
If thou lovest thyself, thou lovest thy wyf;
No man hateth his flessh, but in his lyf 1386
He fostreth it, and therfore bidde I thee
Cherisse thy wyf, or thou shalt nevere thee.
Housbonde and wyf, what so men jape or pleye,
Of worldly folk holden the siker weye; 1390
They been so knyt ther may noon harm bityde,
And namely upon the wyves syde.
For which this Januarie, of whom I tolde,
Considered hath, inwith his dayes olde,
The lusty lyf, the vertuous quyete, 1395
That is in mariage hony-sweete,
And for his freendes on a day he sente,
To tellen hem th'effect of his entente.
With face sad his tale he hath hem toold.
He seyde, "Freendes, I am hoor and oold, 1400
And almoost, God woot, on my pittes brynke;
Upon my soule somwhat moste I thynke.
I have my body folily despended;
Blessed be God that it shal been amended!
For I wol be, certeyn, a wedded man, 1405
And that anoon in al the haste I kan.
Unto som mayde fair and tendre of age,
I prey yow, shapeth for my mariage
Al sodeynly, for I wol nat abyde;
And I wol fonde t'espien, on my syde, 1410
To whom I may be wedded hastily.
But forasmuche as ye been mo than I,
Ye shullen rather swich a thyng espyen
Than I, and where me best were to allyen.
"But o thyng warne I yow, my freendes deere,
I wol noon oold wyf han in no manere. 1416
She shal nat passe twenty yeer, certayn;
Oold fissh and yong flessh wolde I have fayn.
Bet is," quod he, "a pyk than a pykerel,
And bet than old boef is the tendre veel. 1420
I wol no womman thritty yeer of age;
It is but bene-straw and greet forage.
And eek thise olde wydwes, God it woot,
They konne so muchel craft on Wades boot,
So muchel broken harm, whan that hem leste, 1425
That with hem sholde I nevere lyve in reste.
For sondry scoles maken sotile clerkis;
Womman of manye scoles half a clerk is.
But certeynly, a yong thyng may men gye,
Right as men may warm wex with handes plye.
Wherfore I sey yow pleynly, in a clause, 1431
I wol noon oold wyf han right for this cause.
For if so were I hadde swich myschaunce
That I in hire ne koude han no plesaunce,
Thanne sholde I lede my lyf in avoutrye 1435
And go streight to the devel whan I dye.
Ne children sholde I none upon hire geten;
Yet were me levere houndes had me eten
Than that myn heritage sholde falle
In straunge hand, and this I telle yow alle.
I dote nat; I woot the cause why 1441
Men sholde wedde, and forthermoore woot I
Ther speketh many a man of mariage
That woot namoore of it than woot my page
For whiche causes man sholde take a wyf. 1445
If he ne may nat lyven chaast his lyf,
Take hym a wyf with greet devocioun,
By cause of leveful procreacioun
Of children to th'onour of God above,
And nat oonly for paramour or love; 1450
And for they sholde leccherye eschue,
And yelde hir dette whan that it is due;
Or for that ech of hem sholde helpen oother
In meschief, as a suster shal the brother,
And lyve in chastitee ful holily. 1455
But sires, by youre leve, that am nat I.
For — God be thanked! — I dar make avaunt
I feele my lymes stark and suffisaunt
To do al that a man bilongeth to;

1377 **Suffre:** endure, forbear **Catoun:** Cato **bit** = *biddeth*, commands
1389 **what so:** however much
1390 **worldly:** lay, secular **siker:** sure, safe
1391 **knyt:** united
1392 **syde:** behalf
1394 **inwith:** in
1398 **th'effect:** the substance
1401 **pittes brynke:** brink of the pit (of death)
1403 **folily despended:** foolishly wasted
1410 **fonde t'espien:** try to discover
1414 **allyen:** ally myself, marry
1419 **pykerel:** young pike
1420 **boef:** beef **veel:** veal
1422 **bene-straw:** dried beanstalks **greet forage:** coarse fodder
1424 **Wades boot:** boat of Wade, an obscure legendary figure, perhaps associated with deception
1425 **So muchel broken harm:** do so much harm, make such mischief
1427 **sotile:** subtle, clever
1429 **gye:** guide
1430 **wex:** wax **plye:** bend, mold
1435 **avoutrye:** adultery
1437 **geten:** beget
1448 **leveful:** lawful
1452 **dette:** the marital debt, obligation to engage in intercourse; see ParsT X.940.
1455 **in chastitee:** under a vow to abstain from sex
1458 **stark:** strong

I woot myselven best what I may do. 1460
Though I be hoor, I fare as dooth a tree
That blosmeth er that fruyt ywoxen bee;
And blosmy tree nys neither drye ne deed.
I feele me nowhere hoor but on myn heed;
Myn herte and alle my lymes been as grene
As laurer thurgh the yeer is for to sene. 1466
And syn that ye han herd al myn entente,
I prey yow to my wyl ye wole assente."
Diverse men diversely hym tolde
Of mariage manye ensamples olde. 1470
Somme blamed it, somme preysed it, certeyn,
But atte laste, shortly for to seyn,
As al day falleth altercacioun
Bitwixen freendes in disputisoun,
Ther fil a stryf bitwixe his bretheren two, 1475
Of whiche that oon was cleped Placebo;
Justinus soothly called was that oother.
Placebo seyde, "O Januarie, brother,
Ful litel nede hadde ye, my lord so deere,
Conseil to axe of any that is heere, 1480
But that ye been so ful of sapience
That yow ne liketh, for youre heighe prudence,
To weyven fro the word of Salomon.
This word seyde he unto us everychon:
'Wirk alle thyng by conseil,' thus seyde he,
'And thanne shaltow nat repente thee.' 1486
But though that Salomon spak swich a word,
Myn owene deere brother and my lord,
So wysly God my soule brynge at reste,
I holde youre owene conseil is the beste. 1490
For, brother myn, of me taak this motyf:
I have now been a court-man al my lyf,
And God it woot, though I unworthy be,
I have stonden in ful greet degree
Abouten lordes of ful heigh estaat; 1495
Yet hadde I nevere with noon of hem debaat.
I nevere hem contraried, trewely;
I woot wel that my lord kan moore than I.
With that he seith, I holde it ferme and stable;
I seye the same, or elles thyng semblable. 1500
A ful greet fool is any conseillour
That serveth any lord of heigh honour,
That dar presume, or elles thenken it,
That his conseil sholde passe his lordes wit.
Nay, lordes been no fooles, by my fay! 1505

1462 ywoxen: grown
1466 laurer: laurel, an evergreen for to sene: to be seen
1476 Placebo: "I shall please" (Psalm 114:9)
1477 Justinus: "the just one"
1483 weyven fro: depart from
1491 motyf: idea, advice
1492 court-man: courtier
1499 I holde it ferme and stable: I view it as unshakably true
1500 semblable: similar

Ye han youreselven shewed heer to-day
So heigh sentence, so holily and weel,
That I consente and conferme everydeel
Youre wordes alle and youre opinioun.
By God, ther nys no man in al this toun, 1510
Ne in Ytaille, that koude bet han sayd!
Crist halt hym of this conseil ful wel apayd.
And trewely, it is an heigh corage
Of any man that stapen is in age
To take a yong wyf; by my fader kyn, 1515
Youre herte hangeth on a joly pyn!
Dooth now in this matiere right as yow leste,
For finally I holde it for the beste."
Justinus, that ay stille sat and herde, 1519
Right in this wise he to Placebo answerde:
"Now, brother myn, be pacient, I preye,
Syn ye han seyd, and herkneth what I seye.
Senek, amonges othere wordes wyse,
Seith that a man oghte hym right wel avyse
To whom he yeveth his lond or his catel. 1525
And syn I oghte avyse me right wel
To whom I yeve my good awey fro me,
Wel muchel moore I oghte avysed be
To whom I yeve my body for alwey.
I warne yow wel, it is no childes pley 1530
To take a wyf withouten avysement.
Men moste enquere — this is myn assent —
Wher she be wys, or sobre, or dronkelewe,
Or proud, or elles ootherweys a shrewe,
A chidestere, or wastour of thy good, 1535
Or riche, or poore, or elles mannyssh wood.
Al be it so that no man fynden shal
Noon in this world that trotteth hool in al,
Ne man, ne beest, swich as men koude devyse;
But nathelees it oghte ynough suffise 1540
With any wyf, if so were that she hadde
Mo goode thewes than hire vices badde;
And al this axeth leyser for t'enquere.
For, God it woot, I have wept many a teere
Ful pryvely, syn I have had a wyf. 1545
Preyse whoso wole a wedded mannes lyf,
Certein I fynde in it but cost and care
And observances, of alle blisses bare.

1507 heigh sentence: good judgment
1512 halt hym = *holdeth hym*, considers himself ful wel apayd: very well satisfied
1513 an heigh corage: a bold act
1514 stapen is in age: is advanced (literally *stepped*) in years
1516 hangeth on a joly pyn: is lively, merry
1531 avysement: deliberation
1532 assent: opinion
1533 dronkelewe: addicted to drink, habitually drunk
1535 chidestere: scolding woman wastour: waster
1536 mannyssh wood: fierce as a man, man-crazy (?)
1538 trotteth hool in al: trots perfectly, is perfect in everything
1542 thewes: personal traits
1548 observances: duties

And yet, God woot, my neighebores aboute,
And namely of wommen many a route, 1550
Seyn that I have the mooste stedefast wyf,
And eek the mekeste oon that bereth lyf;
But I woot best where wryngeth me my sho.
Ye mowe, for me, right as yow liketh do;
Avyseth yow — ye been a man of age — 1555
How that ye entren into mariage,
And namely with a yong wyf and a fair.
By hym that made water, erthe, and air,
The yongeste man that is in al this route
Is bisy ynough to bryngen it aboute 1560
To han his wyf allone. Trusteth me,
Ye shul nat plesen hire fully yeres thre —
This is to seyn, to doon hire ful plesaunce.
A wyf axeth ful many an observaunce.
I prey yow that ye be nat yvele apayd." 1565
"Wel," quod this Januarie, "and hastow ysayd?
Straw for thy Senek, and for thy proverbes!
I counte nat a panyer ful of herbes
Of scole-termes. Wyser men than thow,
As thou hast herd, assenteden right now 1570
To my purpos. Placebo, what sey ye?"
"I seye it is a cursed man," quod he,
"That letteth matrimoigne, sikerly."
And with that word they rysen sodeynly,
And been assented fully that he sholde 1575
Be wedded whanne hym liste and where he wolde.
Heigh fantasye and curious bisynesse
Fro day to day gan in the soule impresse
Of Januarie aboute his mariage.
Many fair shap and many a fair visage 1580
Ther passeth thurgh his herte nyght by nyght,
As whoso tooke a mirour, polisshed bryght,
And sette it in a commune market-place,
Thanne sholde he se ful many a figure pace
By his mirour; and in the same wyse 1585
Gan Januarie inwith his thoght devyse
Of maydens whiche that dwelten hym bisyde.
He wiste nat wher that he myghte abyde.
For if that oon have beaute in hir face,
Another stant so in the peples grace 1590
For hire sadnesse and hire benyngnytee
That of the peple grettest voys hath she;
And somme were riche and hadden badde name.
But nathelees, bitwixe ernest and game,
He atte laste apoynted hym on oon, 1595
And leet alle othere from his herte goon,
And chees hire of his owene auctoritee;
For love is blynd alday, and may nat see.
And whan that he was in his bed ybroght,
He purtreyed in his herte and in his thoght
Hir fresshe beautee and hir age tendre, 1601
Hir myddel smal, hire armes longe and sklendre,
Hir wise governaunce, hir gentillesse,
Hir wommanly berynge, and hire sadnesse.
And whan that he on hire was condescended, 1605
Hym thoughte his choys myghte nat ben amended.
For whan that he hymself concluded hadde,
Hym thoughte ech oother mannes wit so badde
That inpossible it were to repplye
Agayn his choys; this was his fantasye. 1610
His freendes sente he to, at his instaunce,
And preyed hem to doon hym that plesaunce,
That hastily they wolden to hym come;
He wolde abregge hir labour, alle and some.
Nedeth namoore for hym to go ne ryde; 1615
He was apoynted ther he wolde abyde.
Placebo cam, and eek his freendes soone,
And alderfirst he bad hem alle a boone,
That noon of hem none argumentes make 1619
Agayn the purpos which that he hath take,
Which purpos was plesant to God, seyde he,
And verray ground of his prosperitee.
He seyde ther was a mayden in the toun,
Which that of beautee hadde greet renoun,
Al were it so she were of smal degree; 1625
Suffiseth hym hir yowthe and hir beautee.
Which mayde, he seyde, he wolde han to his wyf,
To lede in ese and hoolynesse his lyf;
And thanked God that he myghte han hire al,
That no wight his blisse parten shal. 1630

1553 wryngeth: pinches
1561 han his wyf allone: have his wife to himself
1565 yvele apayd: displeased
1568 panyer: bread basket
1569 scole-termes: scholastic (philosophical) terms
1573 letteth: hinders
1577 Heigh fantasye: exaggerated fancy, imagination curious bisynesse: painstaking attention, constant thought (of this)
1578 gan . . . impresse: made a mark, became fixed
1591 sadnesse: seriousness
1592 voys: praise
1595 apoynted hym on: decided on
1596 othere: others
1598 alday: always
1602 sklendre: slender
1605 was condescended: had decided, settled
1611 instaunce: request
1614 abregge: abridge, shorten
1616 was apoynted: had decided
1618 alderfirst: first of all bad . . . a boone: asked a favor
1621 plesant: pleasing
1625 Al were it so: although smal degree: low rank
1630 parten: share

And preyed hem to laboure in this nede,
And shapen that he faille nat to spede;
For thanne, he seyde, his spirit was at ese.
"Thanne is," quod he, "no thyng may me displese,
Save o thyng priketh in my conscience, 1635
The which I wol reherce in youre presence.
"I have," quod he, "herd seyd, ful yoore ago,
Ther may no man han parfite blisses two —
This is to seye, in erthe and eek in hevene.
For though he kepe hym fro the synnes sevene,
And eek from every branche of thilke tree, 1641
Yet is ther so parfit felicitee
And so greet ese and lust in mariage
That evere I am agast now in myn age
That I shal lede now so myrie a lyf, 1645
So delicat, withouten wo and stryf,
That I shal have myn hevene in erthe heere.
For sith that verray hevene is boght so deere
With tribulacion and greet penaunce,
How sholde I thanne, that lyve in swich plesaunce 1650
As alle wedded men doon with hire wyvys,
Come to the blisse ther Crist eterne on lyve ys?
This is my drede, and ye, my bretheren tweye,
Assoilleth me this question, I preye."
Justinus, which that hated his folye, 1655
Answerde anon right in his japerye;
And for he wolde his longe tale abregge,
He wolde noon auctoritee allegge,
But seyde, "Sire, so ther be noon obstacle
Oother than this, God of his hygh myracle
And of his mercy may so for yow wirche 1661
That, er ye have youre right of hooly chirche,
Ye may repente of wedded mannes lyf,
In which ye seyn ther is no wo ne stryf.
And elles, God forbede but he sente 1665
A wedded man hym grace to repente
Wel ofte rather than a sengle man!
And therfore, sire — the beste reed I kan —
Dispeire yow noght, but have in youre memorie,
Paraunter she may be youre purgatorie! 1670
She may be Goddes meene and Goddes whippe;
Thanne shal youre soule up to hevene skippe
Swifter than dooth an arwe out of a bowe.
I hope to God, herafter shul ye knowe
That ther nys no so greet felicitee 1675
In mariage, ne nevere mo shal bee,
That yow shal lette of youre savacion,
So that ye use, as skile is and reson,
The lustes of youre wyf attemprely,
And that ye plese hire nat to amorously, 1680
And that ye kepe yow eek from oother synne.
My tale is doon, for my wit is thynne.
Beth nat agast herof, my brother deere,
But lat us waden out of this mateere.
The Wyf of Bathe, if ye han understonde, 1685
Of mariage, which we have on honde,
Declared hath ful wel in litel space.
Fareth now wel. God have yow in his grace."
And with this word this Justyn and his brother 1689
Han take hir leve, and ech of hem of oother.
For whan they saughe that it moste nedes be,
They wroghten so, by sly and wys tretee,
That she, this mayden which that Mayus highte,
As hastily as evere that she myghte
Shal wedded be unto this Januarie. 1695
I trowe it were to longe yow to tarie,
If I yow tolde of every scrit and bond
By which that she was feffed in his lond,
Or for to herknen of hir riche array.
But finally ycomen is the day 1700
That to the chirche bothe be they went
For to receyve the hooly sacrement.
Forth comth the preest, with stole aboute his nekke,
And bad hire be lyk Sarra and Rebekke
In wysdom and in trouthe of mariage; 1705
And seyde his orisons, as is usage,
And croucheth hem, and bad God sholde hem blesse,
And made al siker ynogh with hoolynesse.
Thus been they wedded with solempnitee,
And at the feeste sitteth he and she 1710
With othere worthy folk upon the deys.

1632 **shapen:** arrange
1641 **thilke tree:** the tree of the seven deadly sins (see ParsT X.387–90).
1646 **delicat:** pleasing
1654 **Assoilleth me this question:** resolve this problem
1656 **japerye:** mockery
1657 **abregge:** abridge, shorten
1658 **allegge:** cite, adduce
1662 **right of hooly chirche:** service (rite) of the Church
1665 **God forbede but he sente:** God forbid that he should not send
1667 **sengle:** single
1671 **meene:** means, instrument
1677 **lette of:** keep from
1678 **skile:** reasonable, proper
1679 **attemprely:** moderately
1684 **waden:** wade, go
1692 **tretee:** negotiation
1697 **scrit:** writ, legal document
1698 **feffed in:** enfeoffed, endowed with
1702 **the hooly sacrement:** i.e., marriage
1704 **Sarra and Rebekke:** Sarah and Rebecca, biblical exemplars of faithfulness and wisdom
1707 **croucheth:** makes the sign of the cross over
1711 **deys:** dais

Al ful of joye and blisse is the paleys,
And ful of instrumentz and of vitaille,
The mooste deyntevous of al Ytaille.
Biforn hem stoode instrumentz of swich soun
That Orpheus, ne of Thebes Amphioun, 1716
Ne maden nevere swich a melodye.
At every cours thanne cam loud mynstralcye
That nevere tromped Joab for to heere,
Nor he Theodomas, yet half so cleere 1720
At Thebes whan the citee was in doute.
Bacus the wyn hem shynketh al aboute,
And Venus laugheth upon every wight,
For Januarie was bicome hir knyght
And wolde bothe assayen his corage 1725
In libertee, and eek in mariage;
And with hire fyrbrond in hire hand aboute
Daunceth biforn the bryde and al the route.
And certeinly, I dar right wel seyn this,
Ymeneus, that god of weddyng is, 1730
Saugh nevere his lyf so myrie a wedded man.
Hoold thou thy pees, thou poete Marcian,
That writest us that ilke weddyng murie
Of hire Philologie and hym Mercurie,
And of the songes that the Muses songe! 1735
To smal is bothe thy penne, and eek thy tonge,
For to descryven of this mariage.
Whan tendre youthe hath wedded stoupyng age,
Ther is swich myrthe that it may nat be writen.
Assayeth it youreself; thanne may ye witen
If that I lye or noon in this matiere. 1741
Mayus, that sit with so benyngne a chiere,
Hire to biholde it semed fayerye.
Queene Ester looked nevere with swich an ye
On Assuer, so meke a look hath she. 1745
I may yow nat devyse al hir beautee.
But thus muche of hire beautee telle I may,
That she was lyk the brighte morwe of May,
Fulfild of alle beautee and plesaunce.
This Januarie is ravysshed in a traunce 1750
At every tyme he looked on hir face;
But in his herte he gan hire to manace
That he that nyght in armes wolde hire streyne
Harder than evere Parys dide Eleyne.
But nathelees yet hadde he greet pitee 1755
That thilke nyght offenden hire moste he,
And thoughte, "Allas! O tendre creature,
Now wolde God ye myghte wel endure
Al my corage, it is so sharp and keene!
I am agast ye shul it nat susteene. 1760
But God forbede that I dide al my myght!
Now wolde God that it were woxen nyght,
And that the nyght wolde lasten everemo.
I wolde that al this peple were ago."
And finally he dooth al his labour, 1765
As he best myghte, savynge his honour,
To haste hem fro the mete in subtil wyse.
The tyme cam that resoun was to ryse;
And after that men daunce and drynken faste,
And spices al aboute the hous they caste, 1770
And ful of joye and blisse is every man —
Al but a squyer, highte Damyan,
Which carf biforn the knyght ful many a day.
He was so ravysshed on his lady May 1774
That for the verray peyne he was ny wood.
Almoost he swelte and swowned ther he stood,
So soore hath Venus hurt hym with hire brond,
As that she bar it daunsynge in hire hond;
And to his bed he wente hym hastily.
Namoore of hym at this tyme speke I, 1780
But there I lete hym wepe ynogh and pleyne
Til fresshe May wol rewen on his peyne.
O perilous fyr, that in the bedstraw bredeth!
O famulier foo, that his servyce bedeth!
O servant traytour, false hoomly hewe, 1785
Lyk to the naddre in bosom sly untrewe,
God shilde us alle from youre aqueyntaunce!
O Januarie, dronken in plesaunce
In mariage, se how thy Damyan,
Thyn owene squier and thy borne man, 1790
Entendeth for to do thee vileynye.
God graunte thee thyn hoomly fo t'espye!
For in this world nys worse pestilence
Than hoomly foo al day in thy presence. 1794

1714 **deyntevous:** delicious
1716 **Orpheus:** the legendary musician **Amphioun:** king of Thebes and a famous harper
1719 **tromped:** trumpeted **Joab:** one of David's generals, who sounded trumpets to direct his army
1720 **Theodomas:** the augur of the army at Thebes
1721 **doute:** danger
1722 **Bacus:** Bacchus, god of wine **shynketh:** pours out
1723 **Venus:** goddess of love
1727 **fyrbrond:** torch
1730 **Ymeneus:** Hymen
1731 **his lyf:** in his life
1732 **Marcian:** Martianus Capella, author of the *Marriage of Philology and Mercury*
1743 **fayerye:** something enchanting
1744 **Ester:** Esther, whose meekness and beauty won the love of King Ahasuerus (*Assuer*)
1752 **manace:** menace, threaten
1753 **streyne:** press
1754 **Eleyne:** Helen of Troy, whose ravishment by Paris (*Parys*) caused the Trojan War (see Tr I.57–63)
1759 **corage:** ardor, sexual desire **keene:** eager
1765 **dooth al his labour:** takes all possible pains
1776 **swelte:** fainted
1777 **brond:** torch
1784 **famulier foo:** enemy in one's own household **bedeth:** offers
1785 **hoomly hewe:** domestic servant
1786 **naddre:** adder, serpent
1792 **hoomly fo:** foe in the household

Parfourned hath the sonne his ark diurne;
No lenger may the body of hym sojurne
On th'orisonte, as in that latitude.
Night with his mantel, that is derk and rude,
Gan oversprede the hemysperie aboute;
For which departed is this lusty route 1800
Fro Januarie, with thank on every syde.
Hoom to hir houses lustily they ryde,
Where as they doon hir thynges as hem leste,
And whan they sye hir tyme, goon to reste.
Soone after that, this hastif Januarie 1805
Wolde go to bedde; he wolde no lenger tarye.
He drynketh ypocras, clarree, and vernage
Of spices hoote t'encreessen his corage;
And many a letuarie hath he ful fyn,
Swiche as the cursed monk, daun Constantyn,
Hath writen in his book *De Coitu;* 1811
To eten hem alle he nas no thyng eschu.
And to his privee freendes thus seyde he:
"For Goddes love, as soone as it may be,
Lat voyden al this hous in curteys wyse." 1815
And they han doon right as he wol devyse.
Men drynken and the travers drawe anon.
The bryde was broght abedde as stille as stoon;
And whan the bed was with the preest yblessed,
Out of the chambre hath every wight hym dressed, 1820
And Januarie hath faste in armes take
His fresshe May, his paradys, his make.
He lulleth hire; he kisseth hire ful ofte;
With thikke brustles of his berd unsofte,
Lyk to the skyn of houndfyssh, sharp as brere —
For he was shave al newe in his manere — 1826
He rubbeth hire aboute hir tendre face,
And seyde thus, "Allas! I moot trespace
To yow, my spouse, and yow greetly offende
Er tyme come that I wil doun descende. 1830
But nathelees, considereth this," quod he,
"Ther nys no werkman, whatsoevere he be,
That may bothe werke wel and hastily;
This wol be doon at leyser parfitly.

1795 **Parfourned:** completed **ark diurne:** daily transit from horizon to horizon
1796 **sojurne:** remain
1797 **th'orisonte:** the horizon
1799 **hemysperie:** hemisphere (the half of the heavens above the earth)
1801 **on every syde:** from all sides
1804 **sye:** saw
1807 **ypocras, clarree:** strong spiced and sweetened wines; **vernage:** sweet Italian white wine, Vernaccia
1809 **letuarie:** electuary, medical mixture
1810 **Constantyn:** Constantinus Africanus (Afer), author of a work on sexual intercourse containing recipes for aphrodisiacs
1812 **eschu:** averse
1815 **Lat voyden:** clear out
1817 **travers:** curtain (dividing the room)
1825 **houndfyssh:** dogfish, a small shark **brere:** briar

It is no fors how longe that we pleye; 1835
In trewe wedlok coupled be we tweye,
And blessed be the yok that we been inne,
For in oure actes we mowe do no synne.
A man may do no synne with his wyf,
Ne hurte hymselven with his owene knyf, 1840
For we han leve to pleye us by the lawe."
Thus laboureth he til that the day gan dawe;
And thanne he taketh a sop in fyn clarree,
And upright in his bed thanne sitteth he, 1844
And after that he sang ful loude and cleere,
And kiste his wyf, and made wantown cheere.
He was al coltissh, ful of ragerye,
And ful of jargon as a flekked pye.
The slakke skyn aboute his nekke shaketh 1849
Whil that he sang, so chaunteth he and craketh.
But God woot what that May thoughte in hir herte,
Whan she hym saugh up sittynge in his sherte,
In his nyght-cappe, and with his nekke lene;
She preyseth nat his pleyyng worth a bene.
Thanne seide he thus, "My reste wol I take;
Now day is come, I may no lenger wake." 1856
And doun he leyde his heed and sleep til pryme.
And afterward, whan that he saugh his tyme,
Up ryseth Januarie; but fresshe May 1859
Heeld hire chambre unto the fourthe day,
As usage is of wyves for the beste.
For every labour somtyme moot han reste,
Or elles longe may he nat endure;
This is to seyn, no lyves creature,
Be it of fyssh, or bryd, or beest, or man. 1865
Now wol I speke of woful Damyan,
That langwissheth for love, as ye shul heere;
Therfore I speke to hym in this manere:
I seye, "O sely Damyan, allas!
Andswere to my demaunde, as in this cas. 1870
How shaltow to thy lady, fresshe May,
Telle thy wo? She wole alwey seye nay.
Eek if thou speke, she wol thy wo biwreye.
God be thyn helpe! I kan no bettre seye."
This sike Damyan in Venus fyr 1875
So brenneth that he dyeth for desyr,
For which he putte his lyf in aventure.

1835 **It is no fors:** it doesn't matter
1843 **sop in fyn clarree:** a bit of bread soaked in wine
1846 **wantown:** lecherous
1847 **coltissh:** frisky as a colt **ragerye:** wantonness
1848 **jargon:** chatter **flekked pye:** spotted magpie
1849 **slakke:** slack, loose
1850 **chaunteth:** sings **craketh:** croaks
1857 **pryme:** the first canonical hour (part) of the day (from about 6 to 9 A.M.)
1870 **demaunde:** question
1873 **biwreye:** reveal
1877 **in aventure:** at risk

No lenger myghte he in this wise endure,
But prively a penner gan he borwe,
And in a lettre wroot he al his sorwe, 1880
In manere of a compleynt or a lay,
Unto his faire, fresshe lady May;
And in a purs of sylk heng on his sherte
He hath it put, and leyde it at his herte. 1884
The moone, that at noon was thilke day
That Januarie hath wedded fresshe May
In two of Tawr, was into Cancre glyden;
So longe hath Mayus in hir chambre abyden,
As custume is unto thise nobles alle.
A bryde shal nat eten in the halle 1890
Til dayes foure, or thre dayes atte leeste,
Ypassed been; thanne lat hire go to feeste.
The fourthe day compleet fro noon to noon,
Whan that the heighe masse was ydoon,
In halle sit this Januarie and May, 1895
As fressh as is the brighte someres day.
And so bifel how that this goode man
Remembred hym upon this Damyan,
And seyde, "Seynte Marie! how may this be,
That Damyan entendeth nat to me? 1900
Is he ay syk, or how may this bityde?"
His squieres, whiche that stooden ther bisyde,
Excused hym by cause of his siknesse,
Which letted hym to doon his bisynesse; 1904
Noon oother cause myghte make hym tarye.
"That me forthynketh," quod this Januarie,
"He is a gentil squier, by my trouthe!
If that he deyde, it were harm and routhe.
He is as wys, discreet, and as secree
As any man I woot of his degree, 1910
And therto manly, and eek servysable,
And for to been a thrifty man right able.
But after mete, as soone as evere I may,
I wol myself visite hym, and eek May,
To doon hym al the confort that I kan." 1915
And for that word hym blessed every man,
That of his bountee and his gentillesse
He wolde so conforten in siknesse
His squier, for it was a gentil dede. 1919
"Dame," quod this Januarie, "taak good hede,
At after-mete ye with youre wommen alle,
Whan ye han been in chambre out of this halle,
That alle ye go se this Damyan.
Dooth hym disport — he is a gentil man;
And telleth hym that I wol hym visite, 1925
Have I no thyng but rested me a lite;
And spede yow faste, for I wole abyde
Til that ye slepe faste by my syde."
And with that word he gan to hym to calle
A squier, that was marchal of his halle, 1930
And tolde hym certeyn thynges, what he wolde.
This fresshe May hath streight hir wey yholde
With alle hir wommen unto Damyan.
Doun by his beddes syde sit she than,
Confortynge hym as goodly as she may. 1935
This Damyan, whan that his tyme he say,
In secree wise his purs and eek his bille,
In which that he ywriten hadde his wille,
Hath put into hire hand, withouten moore,
Save that he siketh wonder depe and soore,
And softely to hire right thus seyde he: 1941
"Mercy! And that ye nat discovere me,
For I am deed if that this thyng be kyd."
This purs hath she inwith hir bosom hyd
And wente hire wey; ye gete namoore of me.
But unto Januarie ycomen is she, 1946
That on his beddes syde sit ful softe.
He taketh hire, and kisseth hire ful ofte,
And leyde hym doun to slepe, and that anon.
She feyned hire as that she moste gon 1950
Ther as ye woot that every wight moot neede;
And whan she of this bille hath taken heede,
She rente it al to cloutes atte laste,
And in the pryvee softely it caste.
Who studieth now but faire fresshe May?
Adoun by olde Januarie she lay, 1956
That sleep til that the coughe hath hym awaked.
Anon he preyde hire strepen hire al naked;
He wolde of hire, he seyde, han som plesaunce;
He seyde hir clothes dide hym encombraunce,
And she obeyeth, be hire lief or looth. 1961
But lest that precious folk be with me wrooth,
How that he wroghte, I dar nat to yow telle,

1879 penner: writing case, with pen and ink
1881 compleynt: poetic lament (for examples see the Short Poems) lay: song
1883 heng: which hung
1885–87 The moon was in the second degree of the zodiacal sign of Taurus and has now moved into the sign of Cancer.
1893 compleet: completed
1900 entendeth nat to: does not attend, wait on
1906 That me forthynketh: that grieves me, I am sorry
1909 secree: discreet
1911 servysable: willing to serve, attentive
1912 thrifty: proper, successful
1917 bountee: goodness

1921 after-mete: the time after dinner
1926 Have I no thyng but: when I have merely
1930 marchal: master of ceremonies (cf. I.751–52)
1936 say: saw
1937 bille: letter
1943 kyd: known
1953 cloutes: tatters
1960 dide hym encombraunce: got in his way
1962 precious: fastidious, prudish

Or wheither hire thoughte it paradys or helle.
But heere I lete hem werken in hir wyse 1965
Til evensong rong and that they moste aryse.
Were it by destynee or by aventure,
Were it by influence or by nature,
Or constellacion, that in swich estaat
The hevene stood that tyme fortunaat 1970
Was for to putte a bille of Venus werkes —
For alle thyng hath tyme, as seyn thise clerkes —
To any womman for to gete hire love,
I kan nat seye; but grete God above,
That knoweth that noon act is causelees, 1975
He deme of al, for I wole holde my pees.
But sooth is this, how that this fresshe May
Hath take swich impression that day
Of pitee of this sike Damyan
That from hire herte she ne dryve kan 1980
The remembrance for to doon hym ese.
"Certeyn," thoghte she, "whom that this thyng displese
I rekke noght, for heere I hym assure
To love hym best of any creature, 1984
Though he namoore hadde than his sherte."
Lo, pitee renneth soone in gentil herte!
Heere may ye se how excellent franchise
In wommen is, whan they hem narwe avyse.
Som tyrant is, as ther be many oon
That hath an herte as hard as any stoon, 1990
Which wolde han lat hym sterven in the place
Wel rather than han graunted hym hire grace,
And hem rejoysen in hire crueel pryde,
And rekke nat to been an homycide.
This gentil May, fulfilled of pitee, 1995
Right of hire hand a lettre made she,
In which she graunteth hym hire verray grace.
Ther lakketh noght oonly but day and place
Wher that she myghte unto his lust suffise,
For it shal be right as he wole devyse. 2000
And whan she saugh hir tyme, upon a day
To visite this Damyan gooth May,
And sotilly this lettre doun she threste
Under his pilwe; rede it if hym leste.
She taketh hym by the hand and harde hym twiste 2005

1968 influence: power (transmitted by rays from heavenly bodies)
1969 constellacion: configuration of the heavenly bodies
1971 putte a bille: present a petition
1976 He deme: may he judge
1987 franchise: generosity of spirit
1988 hem narwe avyse: consider carefully
1999 unto his lust suffise: satisfy his desires
2003 sotilly: craftily threste: thrust
2004 pilwe: pillow

So secrely that no wight of it wiste,
And bad hym been al hool, and forth she wente
To Januarie, whan that he for hire sente.
Up riseth Damyan the nexte morwe;
Al passed was his siknesse and his sorwe. 2010
He kembeth hym, he preyneth hym and pyketh,
He dooth al that his lady lust and lyketh,
And eek to Januarie he gooth as lowe
As evere dide a dogge for the bowe.
He is so plesant unto every man 2015
(For craft is al, whoso that do it kan)
That every wight is fayn to speke hym good,
And fully in his lady grace he stood.
Thus lete I Damyan aboute his nede,
And in my tale forth I wol procede. 2020
Somme clerkes holden that felicitee
Stant in delit, and therfore certeyn he,
This noble Januarie, with al his myght,
In honest wyse, as longeth to a knyght,
Shoop hym to lyve ful deliciously. 2025
His housynge, his array, as honestly
To his degree was maked as a kynges.
Amonges othere of his honeste thynges,
He made a gardyn, walled al with stoon;
So fair a gardyn woot I nowher noon. 2030
For, out of doute, I verraily suppose
That he that wroot the Romance of the Rose
Ne koude of it the beautee wel devyse;
Ne Priapus ne myghte nat suffise,
Though he be god of gardyns, for to telle 2035
The beautee of the gardyn and the welle
That stood under a laurer alwey grene.
Ful ofte tyme he Pluto and his queene,
Proserpina, and al hire fayerye,
Disporten hem and maken melodye 2040
Aboute that welle, and daunced, as men tolde.
This noble knyght, this Januarie the olde,
Swich deyntee hath in it to walke and pleye,
That he wol no wight suffren bere the keye
Save he hymself; for of the smale wyket 2045
He baar alwey of silver a clyket,
With which, whan that hym leste, he it unshette.

2011 kembeth: combs preyneth hym: preens himself, makes himself neat pyketh: cleans, adorns
2013 lowe: humbly
2014 dogge for the bowe: dog trained to hunt with an archer
2024 honest: honorable, respectable
2025 deliciously: voluptuously
2032 he: Guillaume de Lorris (cf. Rom 49–728)
2034 Priapus: a phallic god (cf. PF 253–59)
2038–39 Pluto, Proserpina: king and queen of the underworld
2043 deyntee hath: takes pleasure
2045 wyket: wicket gate
2046 clyket: latchkey
2047 unshette: unlocked

And whan he wolde paye his wyf hir dette
In somer seson, thider wolde he go, 2049
And May his wyf, and no wight but they two;
And thynges whiche that were nat doon abedde,
He in the gardyn parfourned hem and spedde.
And in this wyse, many a murye day,
Lyved this Januarie and fresshe May.
But worldly joye may nat alwey dure 2055
To Januarie, ne to no creature.
O sodeyn hap! O thou Fortune unstable!
Lyk to the scorpion so deceyvable,
That flaterest with thyn heed whan thou wolt stynge;
Thy tayl is deeth, thurgh thyn envenymynge.
O brotil joye! O sweete venym queynte! 2061
O monstre, that so subtilly kanst peynte
Thy yiftes under hewe of stidefastnesse,
That thou deceyvest bothe moore and lesse!
Why hastow Januarie thus deceyved, 2065
That haddest hym for thy fulle freend receyved?
And now thou hast biraft hym bothe his yen,
For sorwe of which desireth he to dyen.
Allas, this noble Januarie free,
Amydde his lust and his prosperitee, 2070
Is woxen blynd, and that al sodeynly.
He wepeth and he wayleth pitously;
And therwithal the fyr of jalousie,
Lest that his wyf sholde falle in som folye,
So brente his herte that he wolde fayn 2075
That som man bothe hire and hym had slayn.
For neither after his deeth nor in his lyf
Ne wolde he that she were love ne wyf,
But evere lyve as wydwe in clothes blake,
Soul as the turtle that lost hath hire make. 2080
But atte laste, after a month or tweye,
His sorwe gan aswage, sooth to seye;
For whan he wiste it may noon oother be,
He paciently took his adversitee,
Save, out of doute, he may nat forgoon 2085
That he nas jalous everemoore in oon;
Which jalousye it was so outrageous
That neither in halle, n'yn noon oother hous,
Ne in noon oother place, neverthemo,
He nolde suffre hire for to ryde or go, 2090
But if that he had hond on hire alway;
For which ful ofte wepeth fresshe May,
That loveth Damyan so benyngnely
That she moot outher dyen sodeynly
Or elles she moot han hym as hir leste. 2095
She wayteth whan hir herte wolde breste.
Upon that oother syde Damyan
Bicomen is the sorwefulleste man
That evere was, for neither nyght ne day
Ne myghte he speke a word to fresshe May,
As to his purpos, of no swich mateere, 2101
But if that Januarie moste it heere,
That hadde an hand upon hire everemo.
But nathelees, by writyng to and fro
And privee signes wiste he what she mente,
And she knew eek the fyn of his entente. 2106
O Januarie, what myghte it thee availle,
Thogh thou myghtest se as fer as shippes saille?
For as good is blynd deceyved be
As to be deceyved whan a man may se. 2110
Lo, Argus, which that hadde an hondred yen,
For al that evere he koude poure or pryen,
Yet was he blent, and, God woot, so been mo
That wenen wisly that it be nat so.
Passe over is an ese, I sey namoore. 2115
This fresshe May, that I spak of so yoore,
In warm wex hath emprented the clyket
That Januarie bar of the smale wyket,
By which into his gardyn ofte he wente;
And Damyan, that knew al hire entente, 2120
The cliket countrefeted pryvely.
Ther nys namoore to seye, but hastily
Som wonder by this clyket shal bityde,
Which ye shul heeren, if ye wole abyde. 2124
O noble Ovyde, ful sooth seystou, God woot,
What sleighte is it, thogh it be long and hoot,
That Love nyl fynde it out in som manere?
By Piramus and Tesbee may men leere;
Thogh they were kept ful longe streite overal,
They been accorded, rownynge thurgh a wal,
Ther no wight koude han founde out swich a sleighte. 2131

2048 **dette:** marital debt (obligation to engage in intercourse)
2057 **hap:** chance
2061 **brotil:** uncertain
2062 **peynte:** disguise
2063 **hewe:** pretense
2080 **Soul:** solitary **turtle:** turtledove
2085 **Save:** except that
2085–86 **forgoon That he nas:** i.e., refrain from being
2087 **outrageous:** excessive
2089 **neverthemo:** no longer

2096 **wayteth:** expects (the time)
2111 **Argus:** mythical guardian of Io
2112 **poure:** look intently, pore **pryen:** gaze, see
2113 **blent:** blinded, deceived
2114 **wenen wisly:** confidently suppose, believe
2115 **Passe over is an ese:** to overlook is an advantage (what you don't know won't hurt you)
2117 **emprented the clyket:** made an impression of the key
2118 **wyket:** wicket gate
2125 **Ovyde:** Ovid
2126 **sleighte:** trick
2128 **Piramus and Tesbee:** Pyramus and Thisbe; see LGW 706–923.
2129 **streite:** strictly
2130 **rownynge:** whispering

But now to purpos: er that dayes eighte
Were passed [of] the month of [Juyn], bifil
That Januarie hath caught so greet a wil, 2134
Thurgh eggyng of his wyf, hym for to pleye
In his gardyn, and no wight but they tweye,
That in a morwe unto his May seith he:
"Rys up, my wyf, my love, my lady free!
The turtles voys is herd, my dowve sweete;
The wynter is goon with alle his reynes weete. 2140
Com forth now, with thyne eyen columbyn!
How fairer been thy brestes than is wyn!
The gardyn is enclosed al aboute;
Com forth, my white spouse! Out of doute
Thou hast me wounded in myn herte, O wyf!
No spot of thee ne knew I al my lyf. 2146
Com forth, and lat us taken oure disport;
I chees thee for my wyf and my confort."
Swiche olde lewed wordes used he.
On Damyan a signe made she, 2150
That he sholde go biforn with his cliket.
This Damyan thanne hath opened the wyket,
And in he stirte, and that in swich manere
That no wight myghte it se neither yheere,
And stille he sit under a bussh anon. 2155
This Januarie, as blynd as is a stoon,
With Mayus in his hand, and no wight mo,
Into his fresshe gardyn is ago,
And clapte to the wyket sodeynly.
"Now wyf," quod he, "heere nys but thou and I, 2160
That art the creature that I best love.
For by that Lord that sit in hevene above,
Levere ich hadde to dyen on a knyf
Than thee offende, trewe deere wyf!
For Goddes sake, thenk how I thee chees, 2165
Noght for no coveitise, doutelees,
But oonly for the love I had to thee.
And though that I be oold and may nat see,
Beth to me trewe, and I wol telle yow why.
Thre thynges, certes, shal ye wynne therby:
First, love of Crist, and to youreself honour,
And al myn heritage, toun and tour; 2172
I yeve it yow, maketh chartres as yow leste;
This shal be doon to-morwe er sonne reste,
So wisly God my soule brynge in blisse. 2175
I prey yow first, in covenant ye me kisse;

2132–33 On or shortly before June 8
2135 eggyng: incitement
2141 columbyn: dovelike
2150 On: to
2166 coveitise: greed
2173 chartres: contracts, deeds
2176 in covenant: to seal the contract

And though that I be jalous, wyte me noght.
Ye been so depe enprented in my thoght
That, whan that I considere youre beautee
And therwithal the unlikly elde of me, 2180
I may nat, certes, though I sholde dye,
Forbere to been out of youre compaignye
For verray love; this is withouten doute.
Now kys me, wyf, and lat us rome aboute."
This fresshe May, whan she thise wordes herde, 2185
Benyngnely to Januarie answerde,
But first and forward she bigan to wepe.
"I have," quod she, "a soule for to kepe
As wel as ye, and also myn honour,
And of my wyfhod thilke tendre flour, 2190
Which that I have assured in youre hond,
Whan that the preest to yow my body bond;
Wherfore I wole answere in this manere,
By the leve of yow, my lord so deere:
I prey to God that nevere dawe the day 2195
That I ne sterve, as foule as womman may,
If evere I do unto my kyn that shame,
Or elles I empeyre so my name,
That I be fals; and if I do that lak,
Do strepe me and put me in a sak, 2200
And in the nexte ryver do me drenche.
I am a gentil womman and no wenche.
Why speke ye thus? But men been evere untrewe,
And wommen have repreve of yow ay newe.
Ye han noon oother contenance, I leeve, 2205
But speke to us of untrust and repreeve."
And with that word she saugh wher Damyan
Sat in the bussh, and coughen she bigan,
And with hir fynger signes made she
That Damyan sholde clymbe upon a tree 2210
That charged was with fruyt, and up he wente.
For verraily he knew al hire entente,
And every signe that she koude make,
Wel bet than Januarie, hir owene make,
For in a lettre she hadde toold hym al 2215
Of this matere, how he werchen shal.
And thus I lete hym sitte upon the pyrie,
And Januarie and May romynge myrie.
Bright was the day, and blew the firmament;
Phebus hath of gold his stremes doun ysent

2177 wyte: blame
2180 unlikly: unsuitable
2187 first and forward: first of all
2191 assured: entrusted
2198 empeyre: damage
2199 do that lak: commit that offence
2201 do me drenche: have me drowned
2204 ay newe: always
2205 contenance: manner of behavior
2206 But: except untrust: distrust repreeve: reproof
2217 pyrie: pear tree

To gladen every flour with his warmnesse. 2221
He was that tyme in Geminis, as I gesse,
But litel fro his declynacion
Of Cancer, Jovis exaltacion.
And so bifel, that brighte morwe-tyde 2225
That in that gardyn, in the ferther syde,
Pluto, that is kyng of Fayerye,
And many a lady in his compaignye,
Folwynge his wyf, the queene Proserpyna,
Which that he ravysshed out of [Ethna] 2230
Whil that she gadered floures in the mede —
In Claudyan ye may the stories rede,
How in his grisely carte he hire fette —
This kyng of Fairye thanne adoun hym sette
Upon a bench of turves, fressh and grene, 2235
And right anon thus seyde he to his queene:
"My wyf," quod he, "ther may no wight seye nay;
Th'experience so preveth every day
The tresons whiche that wommen doon to man.
Ten hondred thousand [tales] tellen I kan
Notable of youre untrouthe and brotilnesse.
O Salomon, wys, and richest of richesse, 2242
Fulfild of sapience and of worldly glorie,
Ful worthy been thy wordes to memorie
To every wight that wit and reson kan. 2245
Thus preiseth he yet the bountee of man:
'Amonges a thousand men yet foond I oon,
But of wommen alle foond I noon.'
"Thus seith the kyng that knoweth youre wikkednesse.
And Jhesus, *filius Syrak,* as I gesse, 2250
Ne speketh of yow but seelde reverence.
A wylde fyr and corrupt pestilence
So falle upon youre bodyes yet to-nyght!
Ne se ye nat this honurable knyght, 2254
By cause, allas, that he is blynd and old,
His owene man shal make hym cokewold.
Lo, where he sit, the lechour, in the tree!
Now wol I graunten, of my magestee,
Unto this olde, blynde, worthy knyght
That he shal have ayen his eyen syght, 2260
Whan that his wyf wold doon hym vileynye.

2222–24 The sun was in the sign of Gemini (*Geminis*), not far from the summer solstice, after which the sun begins to decline in its apparent altitude (*his declynacion*); this is at the beginning of Cancer, the sign in which Jupiter exerts its greatest influence (*Jovis exaltacion*).
2230 Ethna: Mt. Etna
2232 Claudyan: Claudian, author of the *Rape of Proserpina*
2235 turves: pieces of turf
2241 brotilnesse: frailty, fickleness
2242 Salomon: Solomon
2250 Jhesus, filius Syrak: author of *Ecclesiasticus*
2251 seelde: seldom
2252 wylde fyr: erysipelas, an acute inflammation of the skin corrupt: infectious

Thanne shal he knowen al hire harlotrye,
Bothe in repreve of hire and othere mo."
"Ye shal?" quod Proserpyne, "wol ye so?
Now by my moodres sires soule I swere 2265
That I shal yeven hire suffisant answere,
And alle wommen after, for hir sake,
That, though they be in any gilt ytake,
With face boold they shulle hemself excuse,
And bere hem doun that wolden hem accuse.
For lak of answere noon of hem shal dyen. 2271
Al hadde man seyn a thyng with bothe his yen,
Yit shul we wommen visage it hardily,
And wepe, and swere, and chyde subtilly,
So that ye men shul been as lewed as gees. 2275
"What rekketh me of youre auctoritees?
I woot wel that this Jew, this Salomon,
Foond of us wommen fooles many oon.
But though that he ne foond no good womman,
Yet hath ther founde many another man 2280
Wommen ful trewe, ful goode, and vertuous.
Witnesse on hem that dwelle in Cristes hous;
With martirdom they preved hire constance.
The Romayn geestes eek make remembrance
Of many a verray, trewe wyf also. 2285
But, sire, ne be nat wrooth, al be it so,
Though that he seyde he foond no good womman,
I prey yow take the sentence of the man;
He mente thus, that in sovereyn bontee
Nis noon but God, but neither he ne she. 2290
"Ey! for verray God that nys but oon,
What make ye so muche of Salomon?
What though he made a temple, Goddes hous?
What though he were riche and glorious?
So made he eek a temple of false goddis. 2295
How myghte he do a thyng that moore forbode is?
Pardee, as faire as ye his name emplastre,
He was a lecchour and an ydolastre,
And in his elde he verray God forsook;
And if God ne hadde, as seith the book, 2300
Yspared him for his fadres sake, he sholde
Have lost his regne rather than he wolde.
I sette right noght, of al the vileynye
That ye of wommen write, a boterflye!

2262 harlotrye: wickedness
2265 my moodres sires soule: the soul of Saturn, father of Ceres
2273 visage it hardily: face it out boldly
2284 Romayn geestes: Roman history make remembrance: remind
2289 sovereyn bontee: perfect goodness
2290 he ne she: man nor woman
2297 emplastre: apply a medicinal plaster (i.e., gloss over)
2298 ydolastre: idolater
2302 rather: sooner

I am a womman, nedes moot I speke, 2305
Or elles swelle til myn herte breke.
For sithen he seyde that we been jangleresses,
As evere hool I moote brouke my tresses,
I shal nat spare, for no curteisye, 2309
To speke hym harm that wolde us vileynye."
"Dame," quod this Pluto, "be no lenger wrooth;
I yeve it up! But sith I swoor myn ooth
That I wolde graunten hym his sighte ageyn,
My word shal stonde, I warne yow certeyn.
I am a kyng; it sit me noght to lye." 2315
"And I," quod she, "a queene of Fayerye!
Hir answere shal she have, I undertake.
Lat us namoore wordes heerof make;
For sothe, I wol no lenger yow contrarie."
Now lat us turne agayn to Januarie, 2320
That in the gardyn with his faire May
Syngeth ful murier than the papejay,
"Yow love I best, and shal, and oother noon."
So longe aboute the aleyes is he goon,
Til he was come agaynes thilke pyrie 2325
Where as this Damyan sitteth ful myrie
An heigh among the fresshe leves grene.
This fresshe May, that is so bright and sheene,
Gan for to syke, and seyde, "Allas, my syde!
Now sire," quod she, "for aught that may bityde, 2330
I moste han of the peres that I see,
Or I moot dye, so soore longeth me
To eten of the smale peres grene.
Help, for hir love that is of hevene queene!
I telle yow wel, a womman in my plit 2335
May han to fruyt so greet an appetit
That she may dyen but she of it have."
"Allas," quod he, "that I ne had heer a knave
That koude clymbe! Allas, allas," quod he,
"For I am blynd!" "Ye, sire, no fors," quod she; 2340
"But wolde ye vouche sauf, for Goddes sake,
The pyrie inwith youre armes for to take,
For wel I woot that ye mystruste me,
Thanne sholde I clymbe wel ynogh," quod she,
"So I my foot myghte sette upon youre bak." 2345

2307 jangleresses: chattering women
2308 brouke my tresses: remain alive (literally, *enjoy my hair*)
2315 sit = *sitteth*, suits, befits
2319 contrarie: contradict
2322 papejay: parrot
2324 aleyes: alleys, garden paths
2325 agaynes: in front of pyrie: pear tree
2331 peres: pears
2335 plit: condition

"Certes," quod he, "theron shal be no lak,
Mighte I yow helpen with myn herte blood."
He stoupeth doun, and on his bak she stood,
And caughte hire by a twiste, and up she gooth —
Ladyes, I prey yow that ye be nat wrooth;
I kan nat glose, I am a rude man — 2351
And sodeynly anon this Damyan
Gan pullen up the smok, and in he throng.
And whan that Pluto saugh this grete wrong,
To Januarie he gaf agayn his sighte, 2355
And made hym se as wel as evere he myghte.
And whan that he hadde caught his sighte agayn,
Ne was ther nevere man of thyng so fayn,
But on his wyf his thoght was everemo.
Up to the tree he caste his eyen two, 2360
And saugh that Damyan his wyf had dressed
In swich manere it may nat been expressed,
But if I wolde speke uncurteisly;
And up he yaf a roryng and a cry, 2364
As dooth the mooder whan the child shal dye:
"Out! Help! Allas! Harrow!" he gan to crye,
"O stronge lady stoore, what dostow?"
And she answerde, "Sire, what eyleth yow?
Have pacience and resoun in youre mynde.
I have yow holpe on bothe youre eyen blynde.
Up peril of my soule, I shal nat lyen, 2371
As me was taught, to heele with youre eyen,
Was no thyng bet, to make yow to see,
Than strugle with a man upon a tree.
God woot, I dide it in ful good entente." 2375
"Strugle?" quod he, "Ye, algate in it wente!
God yeve yow bothe on shames deth to dyen!
He swyved thee; I saugh it with myne yen,
And elles be I hanged by the hals!"
"Thanne is," quod she, "my medicyne fals;
For certeinly, if that ye myghte se, 2381
Ye wolde nat seyn thise wordes unto me.
Ye han som glymsyng, and no parfit sighte."
"I se," quod he, "as wel as evere I myghte,
Thonked be God! With bothe myne eyen two,
And by my trouthe, me thoughte he dide thee so." 2386
"Ye maze, maze, goode sire," quod she;
"This thank have I for I have maad yow see.

2349 twiste: branch
2351 glose: use circumlocutions
2353 throng: thrust
2361 dressed: treated
2363 uncurteisly: crudely
2366 Harrow!: help!
2367 stronge lady stoore: bold, crude woman
2370 holpe: helped
2378 swyved: copulated with
2379 hals: neck
2383 glymsyng: glimpse
2387 maze: are bewildered, dazed

Allas," quod she, "that evere I was so kynde!"
"Now, dame," quod he, "lat al passe out of mynde. 2390
Com doun, my lief, and if I have myssayd,
God helpe me so, as I am yvele apayd.
But, by my fader soule, I wende han seyn
How that this Damyan hadde by thee leyn,
And that thy smok hadde leyn upon his brest." 2395
"Ye, sire," quod she, "ye may wene as yow lest.
But, sire, a man that waketh out of his sleep,
He may nat sodeynly wel taken keep
Upon a thyng, ne seen it parfitly,
Til that he be adawed verraily. 2400
Right so a man that longe hath blynd ybe,
Ne may nat sodeynly so wel yse,
First whan his sighte is newe come ageyn,
As he that hath a day or two yseyn.
Til that youre sighte ysatled be a while 2405
Ther may ful many a sighte yow bigile.
Beth war, I prey yow, for by hevene kyng,
Ful many a man weneth to seen a thyng,
And it is al another than it semeth.
He that mysconceyveth, he mysdemeth." 2410
And with that word she leep doun fro the tree.
This Januarie, who is glad but he?
He kisseth hire and clippeth hire ful ofte,
And on hire wombe he stroketh hire ful softe,
And to his palays hoom he hath hire lad. 2415
Now, goode men, I pray yow to be glad.
Thus endeth heere my tale of Januarie;
God blesse us, and his mooder Seinte Marie!

Heere is ended the Marchantes Tale of Januarie.

EPILOGUE TO THE MERCHANT'S TALE

"Ey! Goddes mercy!" seyde oure Hooste tho,
"Now swich a wyf I pray God kepe me fro!
Lo, whiche sleightes and subtilitees 2421
In wommen been! For ay as bisy as bees
Been they, us sely men for to deceyve,
And from the soothe evere wol they weyve;
By this Marchauntes tale it preveth weel. 2425
But doutelees, as trewe as any steel
I have a wyf, though that she povre be,
But of hir tonge, a labbyng shrewe is she,
And yet she hath an heep of vices mo;
Therof no fors! Lat alle swiche thynges go. 2430
But wyte ye what? In conseil be it seyd,
Me reweth soore I am unto hire teyd.
For and I sholde rekenen every vice
Which that she hath, ywis I were to nyce.
And cause why? It sholde reported be 2435
And toold to hire of somme of this meynee—
Of whom, it nedeth nat for to declare,
Syn wommen konnen outen swich chaffare;
And eek my wit suffiseth nat therto
To tellen al; wherfore my tale is do." 2440

2393 wende han seyn: thought to have seen, thought I saw
2400 adawed verraily: fully awakened
2402 yse: see

2424 weyve: deviate
2428 labbyng: blabbing

2405 ysatled: settled
2409 al another: completely otherwise
2410 mysconceyveth: misapprehends, misunderstands
mysdemeth: misjudges
2413 clippeth: embraces

2431 In conseil: confidentially
2432 Me reweth: I repent teyd: tied
2433 and: if
2436 meynee: company
2438 outen: display chaffare: wares

Fragment V (Group F)

INTRODUCTION TO THE SQUIRE'S TALE

"Squier, com neer, if it youre wille be,
And sey somwhat of love, for certes ye
Konnen theron as muche as any man."
"Nay, sire," quod he, "but I wol seye as I kan
With hertly wyl, for I wol nat rebelle 5
Agayn youre lust; a tale wol I telle.
Have me excused if I speke amys;
My wyl is good, and lo, my tale is this."

THE SQUIRE'S TALE

Heere bigynneth the Squieres Tale.

At Sarray, in the land of Tartarye,
Ther dwelte a kyng that werreyed Russye, 10
Thurgh which ther dyde many a doughty man.
This noble kyng was cleped Cambyuskan,
Which in his tyme was of so greet renoun
That ther was nowher in no regioun
So excellent a lord in alle thyng: 15
Hym lakked noght that longeth to a kyng.
As of the secte of which that he was born
He kepte his lay, to which that he was sworn;
And therto he was hardy, wys, and riche,
And pitous and just, alwey yliche; 20
Sooth of his word, benigne, and honurable;
Of his corage as any centre stable;
Yong, fressh, and strong, in armes desirous
As any bacheler of al his hous.
A fair persone he was and fortunat, 25
And kept alwey so wel roial estat
That ther was nowher swich another man.
This noble kyng, this Tartre Cambyuskan,
Hadde two sones on Elpheta his wyf,
Of whiche the eldeste highte Algarsyf; 30
That oother sone was cleped Cambalo.
A doghter hadde this worthy kyng also,
That yongest was, and highte Canacee.
But for to telle yow al hir beautee,
It lyth nat in my tonge, n'yn my konnyng;
I dar nat undertake so heigh a thyng. 36
Myn Englissh eek is insufficient.
It moste been a rethor excellent
That koude his colours longynge for that art,
If he sholde hire discryven every part. 40
I am noon swich, I moot speke as I kan.
And so bifel that whan this Cambyuskan
Hath twenty wynter born his diademe,
As he was wont fro yeer to yeer, I deme,
He leet the feeste of his nativitee 45
Doon cryen thurghout Sarray his citee,
The laste Idus of March, after the yeer.
Phebus the sonne ful joly was and cleer,
For he was neigh his exaltacioun
In Martes face and in his mansioun 50
In Aries, the colerik hoote signe.
Ful lusty was the weder and benigne,
For which the foweles, agayn the sonne sheene,
What for the sesoun and the yonge grene,
Ful loude songen hire affeccioun. 55
Hem semed han geten hem proteccioun
Agayn the swerd of wynter, keene and coold.

9 **Sarray:** Tsarev **Tartarye:** the Mongol Empire
10 **werreyed:** waged war on
12 **Cambyuskan:** Genghis (Chengiz) Khan
17 **As of the secte:** in accord with the religion
18 **lay:** religious laws
24 **bacheler:** young knight

38 **rethor:** rhetorician, master of eloquence
39 **colours longynge for:** rhetorical devices belonging to
45–46 **leet . . . Doon cryen:** had proclaimed
47 Exactly 15 March, in the ordinary course of the year
48–51 The sun is near the position where it has its strongest influence (*his exaltacioun*), in the first ten degrees of Aries (*Martes face*); Aries is a hot and dry sign, like the *colerik* humor.
53 **agayn:** facing toward, in response to
54 **What for:** what with

This Cambyuskan, of which I have yow
tool d,
In roial vestiment sit on his deys,
With diademe, ful heighe in his paleys, 60
And halt his feeste so solempne and so ryche
That in this world ne was ther noon it lyche;
Of which if I shal tellen al th'array,
Thanne wolde it occupie a someres day,
And eek it nedeth nat for to devyse 65
At every cours the ordre of hire servyse.
I wol nat tellen of hir strange sewes,
Ne of hir swannes, ne of hire heronsewes.
Eek in that lond, as tellen knyghtes olde,
Ther is som mete that is ful deynte holde 70
That in this lond men recche of it but smal;
Ther nys no man that may reporten al.
I wol nat taryen yow, for it is pryme
And for it is no fruyt but los of tyme;
Unto my firste I wole have my recours. 75
And so bifel that after the thridde cours,
Whil that this kyng sit thus in his nobleye,
Herknynge his mynstralles hir thynges pleye
Biforn hym at the bord deliciously,
In at the halle dore al sodeynly 80
Ther cam a knyght upon a steede of bras,
And in his hand a brood mirour of glas.
Upon his thombe he hadde of gold a ryng,
And by his syde a naked swerd hangyng;
And up he rideth to the heighe bord. 85
In al the halle ne was ther spoken a word
For merveille of this knyght; hym to biholde
Ful bisily they wayten, yonge and olde.
This strange knyght, that cam thus sodeynly,
Al armed, save his heed, ful richely, 90
Saleweth kyng and queene and lordes alle,
By ordre, as they seten in the halle,
With so heigh reverence and obeisaunce,
As wel in speche as in contenaunce,
That Gawayn, with his olde curteisye, 95
Though he were comen ayeyn out of Fairye,
Ne koude hym nat amende with a word.
And after this, biforn the heighe bord,
He with a manly voys seide his message,
After the forme used in his langage, 100
Withouten vice of silable or of lettre;
And for his tale sholde seme the bettre,
Accordant to his wordes was his cheere,
As techeth art of speche hem that it leere.
Al be that I kan nat sowne his stile, 105
Ne kan nat clymben over so heigh a style,
Yet seye I this, as to commune entente:
Thus muche amounteth al that evere he mente,
If it so be that I have it in mynde.
He seyde, "The kyng of Arabe and of Inde,
My lige lord, on this solempne day 111
Saleweth yow, as he best kan and may,
And sendeth yow, in honour of youre feeste,
By me, that am al redy at youre heeste,
This steede of bras, that esily and weel 115
Kan in the space of o day natureel —
This is to seyn, in foure and twenty houres —
Wher-so yow lyst, in droghte or elles shoures,
Beren youre body into every place
To which youre herte wilneth for to pace,
Withouten wem of yow, thurgh foul or fair;
Or, if yow lyst to fleen as hye in the air 122
As dooth an egle whan hym list to soore,
This same steede shal bere yow evere moore,
Withouten harm, til ye be ther yow leste, 125
Though that ye slepen on his bak or reste,
And turne ayeyn with writhyng of a pyn.
He that it wroghte koude ful many a gyn.
He wayted many a constellacion
Er he had doon this operacion, 130
And knew ful many a seel and many a bond.
"This mirour eek, that I have in myn hond,
Hath swich a myght that men may in it see
Whan ther shal fallen any adversitee
Unto youre regne or to youreself also, 135
And openly who is youre freend or foo.
"And over al this, if any lady bright
Hath set hire herte on any maner wight,
If he be fals, she shal his tresoun see,
His newe love, and al his subtiltee, 140
So openly that ther shal no thyng hyde.
Wherfore, ageyn this lusty someres tyde,
This mirour and this ryng, that ye may see,
He hath sent to my lady Canacee,
Youre excellente doghter that is heere. 145
"The vertu of the ryng, if ye wol heere,
Is this: that if hire lust it for to were

68 heronsewes: young herons
71 smal: little
73 pryme: the first hour of the day, from about 6 to 9 A.M.
74 no fruyt: not an essential part of the tale
75 have my recours: return
77 nobleye: noble state
79 deliciously: delightfully
85 heighe bord: high table
91 Saleweth: greets
92 By ordre: sequentially seten: sat
105 sowne: repeat, imitate
110 of Arabe and of Inde: of Arabia and India
112 kan and may: knows how and can
116 day natureel: twenty-four hours; see Astr 2.7.
121 wem: harm
123 soore: soar
127 writhyng: turning
128 gyn: ingenious contrivance
129 constellacion: configuration of the heavenly bodies
131 seel: seal bond: knowledge of the practitioner
142 ageyn: in anticipation of

Upon hir thombe or in hir purs it bere,
Ther is no fowel that fleeth under the hevene
That she ne shal wel understonde his stevene,
And knowe his menyng openly and pleyn, 151
And answere hym in his langage ageyn;
And every gras that groweth upon roote
She shal eek knowe, and whom it wol do boote,
Al be his woundes never so depe and wyde. 155
"This naked swerd, that hangeth by my syde,
Swich vertu hath that what man so ye smyte
Thurghout his armure it wole kerve and byte,
Were it as thikke as is a branched ook; 159
And what man that is wounded with the strook
Shal never be hool til that yow list, of grace,
To stroke hym with the plat in thilke place
Ther he is hurt; this is as muche to seyn,
Ye moote with the platte swerd ageyn 164
Stroke hym in the wounde, and it wol close.
This is a verray sooth, withouten glose;
It failleth nat whils it is in youre hoold."
And whan this knyght hath thus his tale toold,
He rideth out of halle and doun he lighte.
His steede, which that shoon as sonne brighte,
Stant in the court, stille as any stoon. 171
This knyght is to his chambre lad anoon,
And is unarmed, and to mete yset.
The presentes been ful roially yfet —
This is to seyn, the swerd and the mirour — 175
And born anon into the heighe tour
With certeine officers ordeyned therfore;
And unto Canacee this ryng is bore
Solempnely, ther she sit at the table.
But sikerly, withouten any fable, 180
The hors of bras, that may nat be remewed,
It stant as it were to the ground yglewed.
Ther may no man out of the place it dryve
For noon engyn of wyndas or polyve;
And cause why? For they kan nat the craft. 185
And therfore in the place they han it laft
Til that the knyght hath taught hem the manere
To voyden hym, as ye shal after heere.
Greet was the prees that swarmeth to and fro

150 stevene: voice, speech
154 do boote: cure
162 plat: blunt side
166 withouten glose: without deception
171 court: courtyard
173 mete: meal
180 fable: falsehood
181 remewed: moved
182 yglewed: glued
184 wyndas: windlass polyve: pulley
188 voyden: move

To gauren on this hors that stondeth so, 190
For it so heigh was, and so brood and long,
So wel proporcioned for to been strong,
Right as it were a steede of Lumbardye;
Therwith so horsly, and so quyk of ye,
As it a gentil Poilleys courser were. 195
For certes, fro his tayl unto his ere
Nature ne art ne koude hym nat amende
In no degree, as al the people wende.
But everemoore hir mooste wonder was
How that it koude gon, and was of bras; 200
It was a fairye, as the peple semed.
Diverse folk diversely they demed;
As many heddes, as manye wittes ther been.
They murmureden as dooth a swarm of been,
And maden skiles after hir fantasies, 205
Rehersynge of thise olde poetries,
And seyden it was lyk the Pegasee,
The hors that hadde wynges for to flee;
Or elles it was the Grekes hors Synon,
That broghte Troie to destruccion, 210
As men in thise olde geestes rede.
"Myn herte," quod oon, "is everemoore in drede;
I trowe som men of armes been therinne,
That shapen hem this citee for to wynne.
It were right good that al swich thyng were knowe."
Another rowned to his felawe lowe, 216
And seyde, "He lyeth, for it is rather lyk
An apparence ymaad by som magyk,
As jogelours pleyen at thise feestes grete."
Of sondry doutes thus they jangle and trete,
As lewed peple demeth comunly 221
Of thynges that been maad moore subtilly
Than they kan in hir lewednesse comprehende;
They demen gladly to the badder ende.
And somme of hem wondred on the mirour,
That born was up into the maister-tour, 226
Hou men myghte in it swiche thynges se.
Another answerde and seyde it myghte wel be

190 gauren: stare
194 horsly: with the best qualities of a horse quyk: lively
195 Poilleys: Apulian
201 a fairye: a marvel
204 been: bees
205 skiles: reasons, arguments
206 poetries: poems
207 Pegasee: Pegasus
209 the Grekes hors Synon: the horse of Synon the Greek; i.e., the Trojan horse
218 apparence: illusion
219 jogelours: conjurers
220 doutes: doubts (conjectures) jangle: chatter trete: discuss, debate
224 gladly: habitually
226 maister-tour: chief, principal tower

Naturelly, by composiciouns
Of anglis and of slye reflexiouns, 230
And seyde that in Rome was swich oon.
They speken of Alocen, and Vitulon,
And Aristotle, that writen in hir lyves
Of queynte mirours and of perspectives,
As knowen they that han hir bookes herd. 235
And oother folk han wondred on the swerd
That wolde percen thurghout every thyng,
And fille in speche of Thelophus the kyng,
And of Achilles with his queynte spere,
For he koude with it bothe heele and dere, 240
Right in swich wise as men may with the swerd
Of which right now ye han youreselven herd.
They speken of sondry hardyng of metal,
And speke of medicynes therwithal,
And how and whanne it sholde yharded be,
Which is unknowe, algates unto me. 246
Tho speeke they of Canacees ryng,
And seyden alle that swich a wonder thyng
Of craft of rynges herde they nevere noon,
Save that he Moyses and kyng Salomon 250
Hadde a name of konnyng in swich art.
Thus seyn the peple and drawen hem apart.
But nathelees somme seiden that it was
Wonder to maken of fern-asshen glas,
And yet nys glas nat lyk asshen of fern; 255
But, for they han yknowen it so fern,
Therfore cesseth hir janglyng and hir wonder.
As soore wondren somme on cause of thonder,
On ebbe, on flood, on gossomer, and on myst,
And alle thyng, til that the cause is wyst. 260
Thus jangle they, and demen, and devyse
Til that the kyng gan fro the bord aryse.
Phebus hath laft the angle meridional,
And yet ascendynge was the beest roial,
The gentil Leon, with his Aldiran, 265
Whan that this Tartre kyng, Cambyuskan,
Roos fro his bord, ther as he sat ful hye.

229 **composiciouns:** arrangements
231 **swich oon:** such a one (magic mirror)
232 **Alocen:** Alhazen, an authority on optics **Vitulon:** Vitello, an authority on perspective
233 **Aristotle:** probably mentioned because of his explanation of rainbows **writen in hir lyves:** wrote during their lifetimes
234 **perspectives:** optical lenses
237 **percen:** pierce
238 **Thelophus:** Telephus, wounded by Achilles's spear
240 **dere:** harm
243 **hardyng:** hardening, tempering
244 **medicynes:** chemicals
250 **he Moyses:** that (famous) Moses, noted, like Solomon, for his skill in magic
254 **fern-asshen:** ashes of fern
256 **fern:** long ago
257 **cesseth:** stops
259 **gossomer:** spider web
263–65 The sun (*Phebus*) has left the *angle meridional*, through which it passes from 10 to 12 A.M., and the *beest roial* (the constellation Leo, *Leon*) and the star *Aldiran* are rising above the horizon (*ascendynge*); see n.

Toforn hym gooth the loude mynstralcye
Til he cam to his chambre of parementz,
Ther as they sownen diverse instrumentz 270
That it is lyk an hevene for to heere.
Now dauncen lusty Venus children deere,
For in the Fyssh hir lady sat ful hye,
And looketh on hem with a freendly ye.
This noble kyng is set upon his trone. 275
This strange knyght is fet to hym ful soone,
And on the daunce he gooth with Canacee.
Heere is the revel and the jolitee
That is nat able a dul man to devyse. 279
He moste han knowen love and his servyse
And been a feestlych man as fressh as May,
That sholde yow devysen swich array.
Who koude telle yow the forme of daunces
So unkouthe, and swiche fresshe contenaunces,
Swich subtil lookyng and dissymulynges 285
For drede of jalouse mennes aperceyvynges?
No man but Launcelot, and he is deed.
Therfore I passe of al this lustiheed;
I sey namoore, but in this jolynesse
I lete hem til men to the soper dresse. 290
The styward bit the spices for to hye,
And eek the wyn, in al this melodye.
The usshers and the squiers been ygoon,
The spices and the wyn is come anoon. 294
They ete and drynke, and whan this hadde an ende,
Unto the temple, as reson was, they wende.
The service doon, they soupen al by day.
What nedeth yow rehercen hire array?
Ech man woot wel that a kynges feeste 299
Hath plentee to the meeste and to the leeste,
And deyntees mo than been in my knowyng.
At after-soper gooth this noble kyng
To seen this hors of bras, with al a route
Of lordes and of ladyes hym aboute. 304
Swich wondryng was ther on this hors of bras
That syn the grete sege of Troie was,
Theras men wondreden on an hors also,

269 **chambre of parementz:** the Presence Chamber, hung with tapestries (*parementz*), where a sovereign receives official visitors
272 **Venus children:** those under the influence of the planet Venus; i.e., lovers
273 **Fyssh:** the zodiacal sign Pisces, in which Venus (*hir lady*) has her exaltation and is especially powerful
281 **feestlych:** convivial
284 **contenaunces:** expressions
285 **dissymulynges:** dissimulations
287 **Launcelot:** Lancelot, lover of Guinevere in the Arthurian romances
288 **lustiheed:** pleasure
290 **dresse:** go
291 **styward:** steward **spices:** spiced cakes **hye:** hurry, be quickly brought
297 **by day:** in daylight
300 **Hath plentee to:** there is plenty for
306 **sege:** siege

Ne was ther swich a wondryng as was tho.
But fynally the kyng axeth this knyght
The vertu of this courser and the myght, 310
And preyde hym to telle his governaunce.
This hors anoon bigan to trippe and daunce,
Whan that this knyght leyde hand upon his reyne,
And seyde, "Sire, ther is namoore to seyne,
But, whan yow list to ryden anywhere, 315
Ye mooten trille a pyn, stant in his ere,
Which I shal yow telle bitwix us two.
Ye moote nempne hym to what place also,
Or to what contree, that yow list to ryde.
And whan ye come ther as yow list abyde, 320
Bidde hym descende, and trille another pyn,
For therin lith th'effect of al the gyn,
And he wol doun descende and doon youre wille,
And in that place he wol abyde stille.
Though al the world the contrarie hadde yswore, 325
He shal nat thennes been ydrawe ne ybore.
Or, if yow liste bidde hym thennes goon,
Trille this pyn, and he wol vanysshe anoon
Out of the sighte of every maner wight,
And come agayn, be it by day or nyght, 330
Whan that yow list to clepen hym ageyn
In swich a gyse as I shal to yow seyn
Bitwixe yow and me, and that ful soone.
Ride whan yow list; ther is namoore to doone."
Enformed whan the kyng was of that knyght,
And hath conceyved in his wit aright 336
The manere and the forme of al this thyng,
Ful glad and blithe, this noble doughty kyng
Repeireth to his revel as biforn.
The brydel is unto the tour yborn 340
And kept among his jueles leeve and deere.
The hors vanysshed, I noot in what manere,
Out of hir sighte; ye gete namoore of me.
But thus I lete in lust and jolitee
This Cambyuskan his lordes festeiynge 345
Til wel ny the day bigan to sprynge.

Explicit prima pars.

Sequitur pars secunda.

The norice of digestioun, the sleep,
Gan on hem wynke and bad hem taken keep
That muchel drynke and labour wolde han reste;
And with a galpyng mouth hem alle he keste, 350
And seyde that it was tyme to lye adoun,
For blood was in his domynacioun.
"Cherisseth blood, natures freend," quod he.
They thanken hym galpynge, by two, by thre,
And every wight gan drawe hym to his reste, 355
As sleep hem bad; they tooke it for the beste.
Hire dremes shul nat now been toold for me;
Ful were hire heddes of fumositee,
That causeth dreem of which ther nys no charge.
They slepen til that it was pryme large, 360
The mooste part, but it were Canacee.
She was ful mesurable, as wommen be;
For of hir fader hadde she take leve
To goon to reste soone after it was eve.
Hir liste nat appalled for to be, 365
Ne on the morwe unfeestlich for to se,
And slepte hire firste sleep, and thanne awook.
For swich a joye she in hir herte took
Bothe of hir queynte ryng and hire mirour,
That twenty tyme she changed hir colour; 370
And in hire sleep, right for impressioun
Of hire mirour, she hadde a visioun.
Wherfore, er that the sonne gan up glyde,
She cleped on hir maistresse hire bisyde,
And seyde that hire liste for to ryse. 375
Thise olde wommen that been gladly wyse,
As is hire maistresse, answerde hire anon,
And seyde, "Madame, whider wil ye goon
Thus erly, for the folk been alle on reste?"
"I wol," quod she, "arise, for me leste 380
Ne lenger for to slepe, and walke aboute."
Hire maistresse clepeth wommen a greet route,
And up they rysen, wel a ten or twelve;
Up riseth fresshe Canacee hireselve, 384
As rody and bright as dooth the yonge sonne,
That in the Ram is foure degrees up ronne —
Noon hyer was he whan she redy was —
And forth she walketh esily a pas,

311 **his governaunce:** how to make it work
316 **trille:** turn
318 **nempne:** name, tell
322 **gyn:** device
331 **clepen hym ageyn:** call him back
332 **gyse:** manner
Explicit, *etc.*: Here ends the first part.
Sequitur, *etc.*: Here follows the second part.

350 **galpyng:** yawning **keste:** kissed
352 **blood:** the humor blood; see n.
358 **fumositee:** fumes deriving from wine drinking
359 **charge:** weight, significance
360 **pryme large:** fully prime, 9 A.M.
362 **mesurable:** moderate
365 **appalled:** faded, pale-looking
366 **unfeestlich:** unfestive **for to se:** to be seen, in appearance
377 **maistresse:** governess
378 **whider:** whither
385 **rody:** ruddy, fresh-looking **yonge:** young because the solar year has just begun; cf. 49–51 above and l.7–8.
386 **Ram:** the zodiacal sign Aries

Arrayed after the lusty seson soote
Lightly, for to pleye and walke on foote, 390
Nat but with fyve or sixe of hir meynee;
And in a trench forth in the park gooth she.
The vapour which that fro the erthe glood
Made the sonne to seme rody and brood;
But nathelees it was so fair a sighte 395
That it made alle hire hertes for to lighte,
What for the seson and the morwenynge,
And for the foweles that she herde synge.
For right anon she wiste what they mente
Right by hir song, and knew al hire entente.
The knotte why that every tale is toold, 401
If it be taried til that lust be coold
Of hem that han it after herkned yoore,
The savour passeth ever lenger the moore,
For fulsomnesse of his prolixitee; 405
And by the same resoun, thynketh me,
I sholde to the knotte condescende,
And maken of hir walkyng soone an ende.
Amydde a tree, for drye as whit as chalk,
As Canacee was pleyyng in hir walk, 410
Ther sat a faucon over hire heed ful hye,
That with a pitous voys so gan to crye
That all the wode resouned of hire cry.
Ybeten hadde she hirself so pitously
With bothe hir wynges til the rede blood 415
Ran endelong the tree ther-as she stood.
And evere in oon she cryde alwey and shrighte,
And with hir beek hirselven so she prighte
That ther nys tygre, ne noon so crueel beest
That dwelleth outher in wode or in forest, 420
That nolde han wept, if that he wepe koude,
For sorwe of hire, she shrighte alwey so loude.
For ther nas nevere yet no man on lyve,
If that I koude a faucon wel discryve,
That herde of swich another of fairnesse, 425
As wel of plumage as of gentillesse
Of shap, of al that myghte yrekened be.
A faucon peregryn thanne semed she
Of fremde land; and everemoore, as she stood,
She swowneth now and now for lak of blood,
Til wel neigh is she fallen fro the tree. 431

389 soote: sweet-smelling, fragrant
392 trench: path
393 glood: rose
394 rody: red
401 knotte: gist, main point
404 savour: taste
409 for drye: very dry (or because of dryness)
413 resouned of: resounded with
416 endelong: down the length of
417 shrighte: shrieked
418 prighte: stabbed
428 faucon peregryn: peregrine falcon
429 fremde: foreign
430 now and now: every now and then

This faire kynges doghter, Canacee,
That on hir fynger baar the queynte ryng,
Thurgh which she understood wel every thyng
That any fowel may in his leden seyn, 435
And koude answeren hym in his ledene ageyn,
Hath understonde what this faucon seyde,
And wel neigh for the routhe almoost she deyde.
And to the tree she gooth ful hastily,
And on this faukon looketh pitously, 440
And heeld hir lappe abrood, for wel she wiste
The faukon moste fallen fro the twiste,
Whan that it swowned next, for lak of blood.
A longe whil to wayten hire she stood
Til atte laste she spak in this manere 445
Unto the hauk, as ye shal after heere:
"What is the cause, if it be for to telle,
That ye be in this furial pyne of helle?"
Quod Canacee unto this hauk above.
"Is this for sorwe of deeth or los of love? 450
For, as I trowe, thise been causes two
That causen moost a gentil herte wo;
Of oother harm it nedeth nat to speke.
For ye youreself upon yourself yow wreke,
Which proveth wel that outher ire or drede 455
Moot been enchesoun of youre cruel dede,
Syn that I see noon oother wight yow chace.
For love of God, as dooth youreselven grace,
Or what may been youre help? For west nor est
Ne saugh I nevere er now no bryd ne beest
That ferde with hymself so pitously. 461
Ye sle me with youre sorwe verraily,
I have of yow so greet compassioun.
For Goddes love, com fro the tree adoun;
And as I am a kynges doghter trewe, 465
If that I verraily the cause knewe
Of youre disese, if it lay in my myght,
I wolde amenden it er that it were nyght,
As wisly helpe me grete God of kynde!
And herbes shal I right ynowe yfynde 470
To heel with youre hurtes hastily."
Tho shrighte this faucon yet moore pitously
Than ever she dide, and fil to grounde anon,
And lith aswowne, deed and lyk a stoon,
Til Canacee hath in hire lappe hire take 475
Unto the tyme she gan of swough awake.

435 leden: language
441 heeld hir lappe abrood: spread wide the skirt of her dress
442 twiste: branch
448 furial pyne: pain such as the Furies suffer
454 wreke: avenge
456 enchesoun: reason
458 dooth youreselven grace: spare yourself
467 disese: distress

And after that she of hir swough gan breyde,
Right in hir haukes ledene thus she seyde:
"That pitee renneth soone in gentil herte,
Feelynge his similitude in peynes smerte, 480
Is preved alday, as men may it see,
As wel by werk as by auctoritee;
For gentil herte kitheth gentillesse.
I se wel that ye han of my distresse
Compassion, my faire Canacee, 485
Of verray wommanly benignytee
That Nature in youre principles hath set.
But for noon hope for to fare the bet,
But for to obeye unto youre herte free,
And for to maken othere be war by me, 490
As by the whelp chasted is the leon,
Right for that cause and that conclusion,
Whil that I have a leyser and a space,
Myn harm I wol confessen er I pace."
And evere, whil that oon hir sorwe tolde, 495
That oother weep as she to water wolde
Til that the faucon bad hire to be stille,
And, with a syk, right thus she seyde hir wille:
"Ther I was bred — allas, that ilke day! —
And fostred in a roche of marbul gray 500
So tendrely that no thyng eyled me,
I nyste nat what was adversitee
Til I koude flee ful hye under the sky.
Tho dwelte a tercelet me faste by,
That semed welle of alle gentillesse; 505
Al were he ful of treson and falsnesse,
It was so wrapped under humble cheere,
And under hewe of trouthe in swich manere,
Under plesance, and under bisy peyne,
That no wight koude han wend he koude feyne,
So depe in greyn he dyed his coloures. 511
Right as a serpent hit hym under floures
Til he may seen his tyme for to byte,
Right so this god of loves ypocryte
Dooth so his cerymonyes and obeisaunces, 515
And kepeth in semblaunt alle his observaunces
That sownen into gentillesse of love.

As in a toumbe is al the faire above,
And under is the corps, swich as ye woot,
Swich was this ypocrite, bothe coold and hoot.
And in this wise he served his entente 521
That, save the feend, noon wiste what he mente,
Til he so longe hadde wopen and compleyned,
And many a yeer his service to me feyned,
Til that myn herte, to pitous and to nyce, 525
Al innocent of his crouned malice,
Forfered of his deeth, as thoughte me,
Upon his othes and his seuretee,
Graunted hym love, upon this condicioun,
That everemoore myn honour and renoun 530
Were saved, bothe privee and apert;
This is to seyn, that after his desert,
I yaf hym al myn herte and al my thoght —
God woot and he, that ootherwise noght — 534
And took his herte in chaunge of myn for ay.
But sooth is seyd, goon sithen many a day,
'A trewe wight and a theef thenken nat oon.'
And whan he saugh the thyng so fer ygoon
That I hadde graunted hym fully my love
In swich a gyse as I have seyd above, 540
And yeven hym my trewe herte as free
As he swoor he yaf his herte to me,
Anon this tigre, ful of doublenesse,
Fil on his knees with so devout humblesse,
With so heigh reverence, and, as by his cheere,
So lyk a gentil lovere of manere, 546
So ravysshed, as it semed, for the joye
That nevere Jason ne Parys of Troye —
Jason? certes, ne noon oother man
Syn Lameth was, that alderfirst bigan 550
To loven two, as writen folk biforn —
Ne nevere, syn the firste man was born,
Ne koude man, by twenty thousand part,
Countrefete the sophymes of his art,
Ne were worthy unbokelen his galoche, 555
Ther doublenesse or feynyng sholde approche,

477 **gan breyde:** started up
480 **similitude:** counterpart
482 **werk:** experience
483 **kitheth:** makes known
487 **principles:** natural disposition
491 **chasted:** chastised
493 **leyser:** leisure, time **space:** opportunity
500 **roche:** rock
501 **eyled:** troubled
503 **flee:** fly
504 **tercelet:** male falcon
511 So deeply in a fast dye (*in greyn*) he disguised (*dyed his coloures*) his true feelings
512 **hit hym** = *hideth hym,* hides himself
514 **ypocryte:** hypocrite
516 **semblaunt:** outward appearance
523 **wopen:** wept
525 **nyce:** foolish
526 **crouned:** sovereign, consummate
527 **Forfered of his deeth:** very frightened that he might die (for love)
531 **privee and apert:** in private and in public, in all circumstances
534 **ootherwise noght:** on any other terms (I would) not at all (have agreed)
543 **doublenesse:** duplicity
548 **Jason:** Jason deserted Medea (see LGW 1580–1679) **Parys:** Paris deserted the nymph Oënone for Helen (see Tr I.652–56)
550 **Lameth:** the biblical Lamech, the first bigamist **alderfirst:** first of all
554 **sophymes:** sophisms, deceitful arguments
555 **unbokelen his galoche:** unbuckle his sandal
556 **approche:** be concerned

Ne so koude thonke a wight as he dide me!
His manere was an hevene for to see
Til any womman, were she never so wys,
So peynted he and kembde at point-devys 560
As wel his wordes as his contenaunce.
And I so loved hym for his obeisaunce,
And for the trouthe I demed in his herte,
That if so were that any thyng hym smerte,
Al were it never so lite, and I it wiste, 565
Me thoughte I felte deeth myn herte twiste.
And shortly, so ferforth this thyng is went
That my wyl was his willes instrument;
This is to seyn, my wyl obeyed his wyl
In alle thyng, as fer as reson fil, 570
Kepynge the boundes of my worshipe evere.
Ne nevere hadde I thyng so lief, ne levere,
As hym, God woot, ne nevere shal namo.
"This laste lenger than a yeer or two,
That I supposed of hym noght but good. 575
But finally, thus atte laste it stood,
That Fortune wolde that he moste twynne
Out of that place which that I was inne.
Wher me was wo, that is no questioun;
I kan nat make of it discripsioun. 580
For o thyng dar I tellen boldely:
I knowe what is the peyne of deeth therby;
Swich harm I felte for he ne myghte bileve.
So on a day of me he took his leve,
So sorwefully eek that I wende verraily 585
That he had felt as muche harm as I,
Whan that I herde hym speke and saugh his hewe.
But nathelees, I thoughte he was so trewe,
And eek that he repaire sholde ageyn
Withinne a litel while, sooth to seyn; 590
And resoun wolde eek that he moste go
For his honour, as ofte it happeth so,
That I made vertu of necessitee,
And took it wel, syn that it moste be. 594
As I best myghte, I hidde fro hym my sorwe,
And took hym by the hond, Seint John to borwe,
And seyde hym thus: 'Lo, I am youres al;
Beth swich as I to yow have been and shal.'
What he answerde, it nedeth noght reherce;
Who kan sey bet than he, who kan do werse? 600
Whan he hath al wel seyd, thanne hath he doon.
'Therfore bihoveth hire a ful long spoon
That shal ete with a feend,' thus herde I seye.
So atte laste he moste forth his weye, 604
And forth he fleeth til he cam ther hym leste.
Whan it cam hym to purpos for to reste,
I trowe he hadde thilke text in mynde,
That 'alle thyng, repeirynge to his kynde,
Gladeth hymself;' thus seyn men, as I gesse.
Men loven of propre kynde newefangelnesse,
As briddes doon that men in cages fede. 611
For though thou nyght and day take of hem hede,
And strawe hir cage faire and softe as silk,
And yeve hem sugre, hony, breed and milk,
Yet right anon as that his dore is uppe 615
He with his feet wol spurne adoun his cuppe,
And to the wode he wole and wormes ete;
So newefangel been they of hire mete,
And loven novelries of propre kynde,
No gentillesse of blood ne may hem bynde.
"So ferde this tercelet, allas the day! 621
Though he were gentil born, and fressh and gay,
And goodlich for to seen, and humble and free,
He saugh upon a tyme a kyte flee,
And sodeynly he loved this kyte so 625
That al his love is clene fro me ago,
And hath his trouthe falsed in this wyse.
Thus hath the kyte my love in hire servyse,
And I am lorn withouten remedie!"
And with that word this faucon gan to crie
And swowned eft in Canacees barm. 631
Greet was the sorwe for the haukes harm
That Canacee and alle hir wommen made;
They nyste hou they myghte the faucon glade.
But Canacee hom bereth hire in hir lappe, 635
And softely in plastres gan hire wrappe,
Ther as she with hire beek hadde hurt hirselve.
Now kan nat Canacee but herbes delve
Out of the ground, and make salves newe
Of herbes preciouse and fyne of hewe 640
To heelen with this hauk. Fro day to nyght

560 **peynted**: painted, disguised **kembde**: arranged (literally *combed*) **at point-devys**: in every detail, perfectly
566 **twiste**: twist, wring
571 **worshipe**: honor
572 I never loved anything more, or even as much
573 **namo**: no more, never again
574 **laste**: lasted
577 **twynne**: depart
579 **Wher**: whether
583 **bileve**: remain
589 **repaire**: return
596 **Seint John to borwe**: with St. John as my guarantor
602 **bihoveth hire**: it behooves her, she needs
605 **fleeth**: flies
607 **thilke text**: Boece 3 m2.39–42.
610 **of propre kynde**: by nature **newefangelnesse**: novelty
615 **right anon as**: as soon as **uppe**: up, open
616 **spurne**: kick
618 **newefangel**: fond of novelty
619 **novelries**: novelties
624 **kyte**: kite, a scavenger bird
631 **eft**: immediately **barm**: lap
636 **plastres**: bandages

She dooth hire bisynesse and al hire myght,
And by hire beddes heed she made a mewe
And covered it with veluettes blewe, 644
In signe of trouthe that is in wommen sene.
And al withoute, the mewe is peynted grene,
In which were peynted alle thise false fowles,
As ben thise tidyves, tercelettes, and owles;
Right for despit were peynted hem bisyde,
Pyes, on hem for to crie and chyde. 650
Thus lete I Canacee hir hauk kepyng;
I wol namoore as now speke of hir ryng
Til it come eft to purpos for to seyn
How that this faucon gat hire love ageyn
Repentant, as the storie telleth us, 655
By mediacion of Cambalus,
The kynges sone, of which I yow tolde.
But hennesforth I wol my proces holde
To speken of aventures and of batailles
That nevere yet was herd so grete mervailles.
First wol I telle yow of Cambyuskan, 661
That in his tyme many a citee wan;
And after wol I speke of Algarsif,
How that he wan Theodora to his wif,
For whom ful ofte in greet peril he was, 665
Ne hadde he ben holpen by the steede of bras;
And after wol I speke of Cambalo,
That faught in lystes with the bretheren two
For Canacee er that he myghte hire wynne.
And ther I lefte I wol ayeyn bigynne. 670

Explicit secunda pars.

Incipit pars tercia.

Appollo whirleth up his chaar so hye
Til that the god Mercurius hous, the slye —

* * *

Heere folwen the wordes of the Frankeleyn to the Squier, and the wordes of the Hoost to the Frankeleyn.

"In feith, Squier, thow hast thee wel yquit
And gentilly. I preise wel thy wit," 674
Quod the Frankeleyn, "considerynge thy yowthe,
So feelyngly thou spekest, sire, I allow the!
As to my doom, ther is noon that is heere
Of eloquence that shal be thy peere,
If that thou lyve; God yeve thee good chaunce,
And in vertu sende thee continuaunce, 680
For of thy speche I have greet deyntee.
I have a sone, and by the Trinitee,
I hadde levere than twenty pound worth lond,
Though it right now were fallen in myn hond,
He were a man of swich discrecioun 685
As that ye been! Fy on possessioun,
But if a man be vertuous withal!
I have my sone snybbed, and yet shal,
For he to vertu listeth nat entende;
But for to pleye at dees, and to despende 690
And lese al that he hath is his usage.
And he hath levere talken with a page
Than to comune with any gentil wight
Where he myghte lerne gentillesse aright."
"Straw for youre gentillesse!" quod oure Hoost. 695
"What, Frankeleyn! Pardee, sire, wel thou woost
That ech of yow moot tellen atte leste
A tale or two, or breken his biheste."
"That knowe I wel, sire," quod the Frankeleyn.
"I prey yow, haveth me nat in desdeyn, 700
Though to this man I speke a word or two."
"Telle on thy tale withouten wordes mo."
"Gladly, sire Hoost," quod he, "I wole obeye
Unto your wyl; now herkneth what I seye.
I wol yow nat contrarien in no wyse 705
As fer as that my wittes wol suffyse.
I prey to God that it may plesen yow;
Thanne woot I wel that it is good ynow."

643 **mewe:** pen
644 **veluettes:** velvet cloths
648 **tidyves:** small birds (cf. LGW 154) **tercelettes:** male falcons
650 **Pyes:** magpies, chatterers
Explicit, *etc.*: Here ends the second part.
Incipit, *etc.*: Here begins the third part.
671 **chaar:** chariot

673 **thee wel yquit:** conducted yourself well
676 **So feelyngly:** with such delicate understanding **allow:** praise
677 **As to my doom:** in my judgment
680 **continuaunce:** perseverance
681 **have greet deyntee:** take great pleasure
683 **twenty pound worth lond:** land yielding an annual income of twenty pounds
687 **vertuous:** accomplished, able **withal:** also
688 **snybbed:** rebuked
692 **page:** servant boy
693 **comune:** have conversation with
698 **breken his biheste:** break his promise

THE FRANKLIN'S PROLOGUE

The Prologe of the Frankeleyns Tale.

Thise olde gentil Britouns in hir dayes
Of diverse aventures maden layes, 710
Rymeyed in hir firste Briton tonge,
Whiche layes with hir instrumentz they songe
Or elles redden hem for hir plesaunce;
And oon of hem have I in remembraunce,
Which I shal seyn with good wyl as I kan. 715
But, sires, by cause I am a burel man,
At my bigynnyng first I yow biseche,
Have me excused of my rude speche.
I lerned nevere rethorik, certeyn;
Thyng that I speke, it moot be bare and pleyn. 720
I sleep nevere on the Mount of Pernaso,
Ne lerned Marcus Tullius Scithero.
Colours ne knowe I none, withouten drede,
But swiche colours as growen in the mede,
Or elles swiche as men dye or peynte. 725
Colours of rethoryk been to me queynte;
My spirit feeleth noght of swich mateere.
But if yow list, my tale shul ye heere.

THE FRANKLIN'S TALE

Here bigynneth the Frankeleyns Tale.

In Armorik, that called is Britayne,
Ther was a knyght that loved and dide his payne 730
To serve a lady in his beste wise;
And many a labour, many a greet emprise,
He for his lady wroghte er she were wonne.
For she was oon the faireste under sonne,
And eek therto comen of so heigh kynrede 735
That wel unnethes dorste this knyght, for drede,
Telle hire his wo, his peyne, and his distresse.
But atte laste she, for his worthynesse,
And namely for his meke obeysaunce,
Hath swich a pitee caught of his penaunce
That pryvely she fil of his accord 741
To take hym for hir housbonde and hir lord,
Of swich lordshipe as men han over hir wyves.
And for to lede the moore in blisse hir lyves,
Of his free wyl he swoor hire as a knyght 745
That nevere in al his lyf he, day ne nyght,
Ne sholde upon hym take no maistrie
Agayn hir wyl, ne kithe hire jalousie,
But hire obeye, and folwe hir wyl in al,
As any lovere to his lady shal, 750
Save that the name of soveraynetee,
That wolde he have for shame of his degree.
She thanked hym, and with ful greet humblesse
She seyde, "Sire, sith of youre gentillesse
Ye profre me to have so large a reyne, 755
Ne wolde nevere God bitwixe us tweyne,

709 **Britouns:** Bretons
710 **layes:** Breton lays, brief romances; see n.
711 **Rymeyed:** rhymed, versified
716 **burel man:** unlearned man, layman

721 **Pernaso:** Mt. Parnassus, sacred to the muses
722 **Marcus Tullius Scithero:** Cicero, author of authoritative works on rhetoric
723 **Colours:** rhetorical ornaments

729 **Armorik:** Armorica, ancient name of coastal Brittany
732 **emprise:** chivalric exploit
734 **oon the faireste:** the fairest of all
740 **penaunce:** distress, suffering

748 **kithe:** show
752 **for shame of his degree:** in order not to bring shame on his status
755 **so large a reyne:** so loose a rein, such freedom from restraint

As in my gilt, were outher werre or stryf.
Sire, I wol be youre humble trewe wyf —
Have heer my trouthe — til that myn herte breste."
Thus been they bothe in quiete and in reste.
For o thyng, sires, saufly dar I seye, 761
That freendes everych oother moot obeye,
If they wol longe holden compaignye.
Love wol nat been constreyned by maistrye.
Whan maistrie comth, the God of Love anon
Beteth his wynges, and farewel, he is gon! 766
Love is a thyng as any spirit free.
Wommen, of kynde, desiren libertee,
And nat to been constreyned as a thral;
And so doon men, if I sooth seyen shal. 770
Looke who that is moost pacient in love,
He is at his avantage al above.
Pacience is an heigh vertu, certeyn,
For it venquysseth, as thise clerkes seyn,
Thynges that rigour sholde nevere atteyne. 775
For every word men may nat chide or pleyne.
Lerneth to suffre, or elles, so moot I goon,
Ye shul it lerne, wher so ye wole or noon;
For in this world, certein, ther no wight is
That he ne dooth or seith somtyme amys. 780
Ire, siknesse, or constellacioun,
Wyn, wo, or chaungynge of complexioun
Causeth ful ofte to doon amys or speken.
On every wrong a man may nat be wreken.
After the tyme moste be temperaunce 785
To every wight that kan on governaunce.
And therfore hath this wise, worthy knyght,
To lyve in ese, suffrance hire bihight,
And she to hym ful wisly gan to swere 789
That nevere sholde ther be defaute in here.
Heere may men seen an humble, wys accord;
Thus hath she take hir servant and hir lord —
Servant in love, and lord in mariage.
Thanne was he bothe in lordshipe and servage.
Servage? Nay, but in lordshipe above, 795
Sith he hath bothe his lady and his love;
His lady, certes, and his wyf also,
The which that lawe of love acordeth to.
And whan he was in this prosperitee, 799
Hoom with his wyf he gooth to his contree,
Nat fer fro Pedmark, ther his dwellyng was,
Where as he lyveth in blisse and in solas.
Who koude telle, but he hadde wedded be,
The joye, the ese, and the prosperitee
That is bitwixe an housbonde and his wyf?
A yeer and moore lasted this blisful lyf, 806
Til that the knyght of which I speke of thus,
That of Kayrrud was cleped Arveragus,
Shoop hym to goon and dwelle a yeer or tweyne
In Engelond, that cleped was eek Briteyne,
To seke in armes worshipe and honour — 811
For al his lust he sette in swich labour —
And dwelled there two yeer; the book seith thus.
Now wol I stynten of this Arveragus,
And speken I wole of Dorigen his wyf, 815
That loveth hire housbonde as hire hertes lyf.
For his absence wepeth she and siketh,
As doon thise noble wyves whan hem liketh.
She moorneth, waketh, wayleth, fasteth, pleyneth;
Desir of his presence hire so destreyneth 820
That al this wyde world she sette at noght.
Hire freendes, whiche that knewe hir hevy thoght,
Conforten hire in al that ever they may.
They prechen hire, they telle hire nyght and day
That causelees she sleeth hirself, allas! 825
And every confort possible in this cas
They doon to hire with al hire bisynesse,
Al for to make hire leve hire hevynesse.
By proces, as ye knowen everichoon,
Men may so longe graven in a stoon 830
Til som figure therinne emprented be.
So longe han they conforted hire til she
Receyved hath, by hope and by resoun,
The emprentyng of hire consolacioun,
Thurgh which hir grete sorwe gan aswage; 835
She may nat alwey duren in swich rage.
And eek Arveragus, in al this care,
Hath sent hire lettres hoom of his welfare,
And that he wol come hastily agayn;
Or elles hadde this sorwe hir herte slayn. 840
Hire freendes sawe hir sorwe gan to slake
And preyde hire on knees, for Goddes sake,
To come and romen hire in compaignye,

757 As in my gilt: through my fault
761 saufly: confidently
769 thral: servant, slave
772 at his avantage: in the best position above: superior
782 complexioun: temperament, balance of the humors in one's body
785 After the tyme: according to the time, occasion
786 kan on: knows about
788 suffrance: patience, forbearance bihight: promised
790 defaute: flaw
795 above: superior

811 worshipe: good reputation
820 destreyneth: afflicts, presses upon
821 sette at noght: reckoned as worth nothing
822 hevy: gloomy
834 emprentyng: impression
836 duren: continue rage: passionate grief

Awey to dryve hire derke fantasye.
And finally she graunted that requeste, 845
For wel she saugh that it was for the beste.
Now stood hire castel faste by the see,
And often with hire freendes walketh shee
Hire to disporte upon the bank an heigh,
Where as she many a ship and barge seigh
Seillynge hir cours, where as hem liste go. 851
But thanne was that a parcel of hire wo,
For to hirself ful ofte, "Allas!" seith she,
"Is ther no ship, of so manye as I se,
Wol bryngen hom my lord? Thanne were myn herte 855
Al warisshed of his bittre peynes smerte."
Another tyme ther wolde she sitte and thynke,
And caste hir eyen dounward fro the brynke.
But whan she saugh the grisly rokkes blake,
For verray feere so wolde hir herte quake 860
That on hire feet she myghte hire noght sustene.
Thanne wolde she sitte adoun upon the grene,
And pitously into the see biholde,
And seyn right thus, with sorweful sikes colde:
"Eterne God, that thurgh thy purveiaunce
Ledest the world by certein governaunce, 866
In ydel, as men seyn, ye no thyng make.
But, Lord, thise grisly feendly rokkes blake,
That semen rather a foul confusion
Of werk than any fair creacion 870
Of swich a parfit wys God and a stable,
Why han ye wroght this werk unresonable?
For by this werk, south, north, ne west, ne eest,
Ther nys yfostred man, ne bryd, ne beest;
It dooth no good, to my wit, but anoyeth. 875
Se ye nat, Lord, how mankynde it destroyeth?
An hundred thousand bodyes of mankynde
Han rokkes slayn, al be they nat in mynde,
Which mankynde is so fair part of thy werk
That thou it madest lyk to thyn owene merk.
Thanne semed it ye hadde a greet chiertee 881
Toward mankynde; but how thanne may it bee
That ye swiche meenes make it to destroyen,
Whiche meenes do no good, but evere anoyen?
I woot wel clerkes wol seyn as hem leste, 885
By argumentz, that al is for the beste,
Though I ne kan the causes nat yknowe.
But thilke God that made wynd to blowe
As kepe my lord! This my conclusion.
To clerkes lete I al disputison. 890
But wolde God that alle thise rokkes blake
Were sonken into helle for his sake!
Thise rokkes sleen myn herte for the feere."
Thus wolde she seyn, with many a pitous teere.
Hire freendes sawe that it was no disport
To romen by the see, but disconfort, 896
And shopen for to pleyen somwher elles.
They leden hire by ryveres and by welles,
And eek in othere places delitables;
They dauncen and they pleyen at ches and tables. 900
So on a day, right in the morwe-tyde,
Unto a gardyn that was ther bisyde,
In which that they hadde maad hir ordinaunce
Of vitaille and of oother purveiaunce,
They goon and pleye hem al the longe day.
And this was on the sixte morwe of May, 906
Which May hadde peynted with his softe shoures
This gardyn ful of leves and of floures;
And craft of mannes hand so curiously
Arrayed hadde this gardyn, trewely, 910
That nevere was ther gardyn of swich prys
But if it were the verray paradys.
The odour of floures and the fresshe sighte
Wolde han maked any herte lighte
That evere was born, but if to greet siknesse
Or to greet sorwe helde it in distresse, 916
So ful it was of beautee with plesaunce.
At after-dyner gonne they to daunce,
And synge also, save Dorigen allone,
Which made alwey hir compleint and hir moone, 920
For she ne saugh hym on the daunce go
That was hir housbonde and hir love also.
But nathelees she moste a tyme abyde
And with good hope lete hir sorwe slyde.
Upon this daunce, amonges othere men, 925
Daunced a squier biforn Dorigen,

844 fantasye: imaginings
850 barge: sailing vessel
852 parcel: portion
856 warisshed: cured
865 purveiaunce: providence
867 In ydel: in vain
869 confusion: chaos
874 nys yfostred: is not supported (i.e., benefited)
880 merk: image
881 chiertee: love
884 anoyen: cause trouble
886 argumentz: logical reasoning
889 conclusion: conclusion, inference derived from logical argumentation
890 disputison: logical disputation
892 sonken: sunk
899 delitables: delightful
900 tables: backgammon
909 curiously: skillfully
924 slyde: slip away
926 squier: young knight

That fressher was and jolyer of array,
As to my doom, than is the month of May.
He syngeth, daunceth, passynge any man
That is, or was, sith that the world bigan. 930
Therwith he was, if men sholde hym discryve,
Oon of the beste farynge man on lyve;
Yong, strong, right vertuous, and riche, and wys,
And wel biloved, and holden in greet prys.
And shortly, if the sothe I tellen shal, 935
Unwityng of this Dorigen at al,
This lusty squier, servant to Venus,
Which that ycleped was Aurelius,
Hadde loved hire best of any creature
Two yeer and moore, as was his aventure, 940
But nevere dorste he tellen hire his grevaunce.
Withouten coppe he drank al his penaunce.
He was despeyred; no thyng dorste he seye,
Save in his songes somwhat wolde he wreye
His wo, as in a general compleynyng; 945
He seyde he lovede and was biloved no thyng.
Of swich matere made he manye layes,
Songes, compleintes, roundels, virelayes,
How that he dorste nat his sorwe telle, 949
But langwissheth as a furye dooth in helle;
And dye he moste, he seyde, as dide Ekko
For Narcisus, that dorste nat telle hir wo.
In oother manere than ye heere me seye,
Ne dorste he nat to hire his wo biwreye, 954
Save that, paraventure, somtyme at daunces,
Ther yonge folk kepen hir observaunces,
It may wel be he looked on hir face
In swich a wise as man that asketh grace;
But nothyng wiste she of his entente.
Nathelees it happed, er they thennes wente,
By cause that he was hire neighebour, 961
And was a man of worshipe and honour,
And hadde yknowen hym of tyme yoore,
They fille in speche; and forth, moore and moore,
Unto his purpos drough Aurelius, 965
And whan he saugh his tyme, he seyde thus:
"Madame," quod he, "by God that this world made,

932 beste farynge: most handsome
936 Unwityng of: unknown to
942 He suffered intensely; see n.
944 wreye: reveal
947 layes: songs, brief poems
948 compleintes: poems lamenting misfortune in love; see the Short Poems for examples. roundels: brief poems or songs with refrains; see PF 680–92 for an example virelayes: a form of the roundel
951 Ekko: Echo, the nymph who loved Narcissus (*Narcisus*); see Rom 1469–1538.
956 observaunces: customs (of courtship)
962 worshipe: good reputation

So that I wiste it myghte youre herte glade,
I wolde that day that youre Arveragus
Wente over the see, that I, Aurelius, 970
Hadde went ther nevere I sholde have come agayn.
For wel I woot my servyce is in vayn;
My gerdon is but brestyng of myn herte.
Madame, reweth upon my peynes smerte;
For with a word ye may me sleen or save. 975
Heere at youre feet God wolde that I were grave!
I ne have as now no leyser moore to seye;
Have mercy, sweete, or ye wol do me deye!"
She gan to looke upon Aurelius; 979
"Is this youre wyl," quod she, "and sey ye thus?
Nevere erst," quod she, "ne wiste I what ye mente.
But now, Aurelie, I knowe youre entente,
By thilke God that yaf me soule and lyf,
Ne shal I nevere been untrewe wyf
In word ne werk, as fer as I have wit; 985
I wol been his to whom that I am knyt.
Taak this for fynal answere as of me."
But after that in pley thus seyde she:
"Aurelie," quod she, "by heighe God above,
Yet wolde I graunte yow to been youre love,
Syn I yow se so pitously complayne. 991
Looke what day that endelong Britayne
Ye remoeve alle the rokkes, stoon by stoon,
That they ne lette ship ne boot to goon —
I seye, whan ye han maad the coost so clene
Of rokkes that ther nys no stoon ysene, 996
Thanne wol I love yow best of any man;
Have heer my trouthe, in al that evere I kan."
"Is ther noon oother grace in yow?" quod he.
"No, by that Lord," quod she, "that maked me! 1000
For wel I woot that it shal never bityde.
Lat swiche folies out of youre herte slyde.
What deyntee sholde a man han in his lyf
For to go love another mannes wyf,
That hath hir body whan so that hym liketh?"
Aurelius ful ofte soore siketh; 1006
Wo was Aurelie whan that he this herde,
And with a sorweful herte he thus answerde:
"Madame," quod he, "this were an inpossible!
Thanne moot I dye of sodeyn deth horrible."
And with that word he turned hym anon. 1011

973 gerdon: reward, requital
991 complayne: lament
994 lette: prevent
1009 an inpossible: an impossibility

Tho coome hir othere freendes many oon,
And in the aleyes romeden up and doun,
And nothyng wiste of this conclusioun,
But sodeynly bigonne revel newe 1015
Til that the brighte sonne loste his hewe;
For th'orisonte hath reft the sonne his lyght —
This is as muche to seye as it was nyght —
And hoom they goon in joye and in solas,
Save oonly wrecche Aurelius, allas! 1020
He to his hous is goon with sorweful herte.
He seeth he may nat fro his deeth asterte;
Hym semed that he felte his herte colde.
Up to the hevene his handes he gan holde,
And on his knowes bare he sette hym doun,
And in his ravyng seyde his orisoun. 1026
For verray wo out of his wit he breyde.
He nyste what he spak, but thus he seyde;
With pitous herte his pleynt hath he bigonne
Unto the goddes, and first unto the sonne: 1030
He seyde, "Appollo, god and governour
Of every plaunte, herbe, tree, and flour,
That yevest, after thy declinacion,
To ech of hem his tyme and his seson,
As thyn herberwe chaungeth lowe or heighe,
Lord Phebus, cast thy merciable eighe 1036
On wrecche Aurelie, which that am but lorn.
Lo, lord! My lady hath my deeth ysworn
Withoute gilt, but thy benignytee
Upon my dedly herte have som pitee. 1040
For wel I woot, lord Phebus, if yow lest,
Ye may me helpen, save my lady, best.
Now voucheth sauf that I may yow devyse
How that I may been holpen and in what wyse.
"Youre blisful suster, Lucina the sheene, 1045
That of the see is chief goddesse and queene
(Though Neptunus have deitee in the see,
Yet emperisse aboven hym is she),
Ye knowen wel, lord, that right as hir desir
Is to be quyked and lighted of youre fir, 1050
For which she folweth yow ful bisily,
Right so the see desireth naturelly
To folwen hire, as she that is goddesse
Bothe in the see and ryveres moore and lesse.
Wherfore, lord Phebus, this is my requeste —
Do this miracle, or do myn herte breste — 1056
That now next at this opposicion
Which in the signe shal be of the Leon,
As preieth hire so greet a flood to brynge 1059
That fyve fadme at the leeste it oversprynge
The hyeste rokke in Armorik Briteyne;
And lat this flood endure yeres tweyne.
Thanne certes to my lady may I seye,
'Holdeth youre heste, the rokkes been aweye.'
"Lord Phebus, dooth this miracle for me. 1065
Preye hire she go no faster cours than ye;
I seye, preyeth your suster that she go
No faster cours than ye thise yeres two.
Thanne shal she been evene atte fulle alway,
And spryng flood laste bothe nyght and day.
And but she vouche sauf in swich manere 1071
To graunte me my sovereyn lady deere,
Prey hire to synken every rok adoun
Into hir owene dirke regioun
Under the ground, ther Pluto dwelleth inne,
Or nevere mo shal I my lady wynne. 1076
Thy temple in Delphos wol I barefoot seke.
Lord Phebus, se the teeris on my cheke,
And of my peyne have som compassioun."
And with that word in swowne he fil adoun,
And longe tyme he lay forth in a traunce. 1081
His brother, which that knew of his penaunce,
Up caughte hym and to bedde he hath hym broght.
Dispeyred in this torment and this thoght
Lete I this woful creature lye; 1085
Chese he, for me, wheither he wol lyve or dye.
Arveragus, with heele and greet honour,
As he that was of chivalrie the flour,
Is comen hoom, and othere worthy men.
O blisful artow now, thou Dorigen, 1090
That hast thy lusty housbonde in thyne armes,
The fresshe knyght, the worthy man of armes,
That loveth thee as his owene hertes lyf.
No thyng list hym to been ymaginatyf,
If any wight hadde spoke, whil he was oute,
To hire of love; he hadde of it no doute. 1096
He noght entendeth to no swich mateere,

1013 aleyes: garden paths
1017 reft: taken away
1025 knowes: knees
1033 after thy declinacion: according to your angular distance from the celestial equator (i.e., the height of the sun in each season); see n.
1035 herberwe: (astrological) house, position in the zodiac
1036 Phebus: Phoebus Apollo, the sun
1040 dedly: dying
1045 Lucina: goddess of the moon
1047 Neptunus: Neptune deitee: divine power
1050 quyked: kindled
1057 opposicion: the position of the sun and moon when they are directly opposite one another, a time of the highest tides; see n.
1058 Leon: the zodiacal sign Leo
1060 fadme: fathoms oversprynge: rise above
1064 Holdeth youre heste: keep your promise
1066 go no faster cours: go at the same speed
1069 evene atte fulle: fully even (with you), in exact opposition
1075 Pluto: god of the underworld
1077 Delphos: Delphi, in Greece
1080 swowne: faint
1087 heele: well-being
1094 ymaginatyf: suspicious

But daunceth, justeth, maketh hire good cheere;
And thus in joye and blisse I lete hem dwelle,
And of the sike Aurelius wol I telle. 1100
In langour and in torment furyus
Two yeer and moore lay wrecche Aurelyus,
Er any foot he myghte on erthe gon;
Ne confort in this tyme hadde he noon,
Save of his brother, which that was a clerk.
He knew of al this wo and al this werk, 1106
For to noon oother creature, certeyn,
Of this matere he dorste no word seyn.
Under his brest he baar it moore secree
Than evere dide Pamphilus for Galathee. 1110
His brest was hool, withoute for to sene,
But in his herte ay was the arwe kene.
And wel ye knowe that of a sursanure
In surgerye is perilous the cure,
But men myghte touche the arwe or come therby. 1115
His brother weep and wayled pryvely,
Til atte laste hym fil in remembraunce,
That whiles he was at Orliens in Fraunce —
As yonge clerkes that been lykerous
To reden artes that been curious 1120
Seken in every halke and every herne
Particuler sciences for to lerne —
He hym remembred that, upon a day,
At Orliens in studie a book he say
Of magyk natureel, which his felawe, 1125
That was that tyme a bacheler of lawe,
Al were he ther to lerne another craft,
Hadde prively upon his desk ylaft;
Which book spak muchel of the operaciouns
Touchynge the eighte and twenty mansiouns
That longen to the moone, and swich folye
As in oure dayes is nat worth a flye — 1132
For hooly chirches feith in oure bileve
Ne suffreth noon illusioun us to greve.
And whan this book was in his remembraunce,
Anon for joye his herte gan to daunce, 1136
And to hymself he seyde pryvely:
"My brother shal be warisshed hastily;
For I am siker that ther be sciences 1139

1101 langour: suffering furyus: like that of the furies in Hell
1110 Pamphilus, Galathee: lovers in the thirteenth-century poem *Pamphilus de Amore*
1113 sursanure: wound healed only on the surface
1118 Orliens: Orleans
1119 lykerous: eager
1120 curious: arcane
1121 every halke and every herne: every nook and cranny
1122 Particuler sciences: specialized branches of learning
1124 in studie: in a study hall say: saw
1125 magyk natureel: natural science.
1130 mansiouns: stations of the moon; see n.

By whiche men make diverse apparences,
Swiche as thise subtile tregetoures pleye.
For ofte at feestes have I wel herd seye
That tregetours withinne an halle large
Have maad come in a water and a barge,
And in the halle rowen up and doun. 1145
Somtyme hath semed come a grym leoun;
And somtyme floures sprynge as in a mede;
Somtyme a vyne, and grapes white and rede;
Somtyme a castel, al of lym and stoon;
And whan hem lyked, voyded it anon. 1150
Thus semed it to every mannes sighte.
"Now thanne conclude I thus: that if I myghte
At Orliens som oold felawe yfynde
That hadde thise moones mansions in mynde,
Or oother magyk natureel above, 1155
He sholde wel make my brother han his love.
For with an apparence a clerk may make,
To mannes sighte, that alle the rokkes blake
Of Britaigne weren yvoyded everichon, 1159
And shippes by the brynke comen and gon,
And in swich forme enduren a wowke or two.
Thanne were my brother warisshed of his wo;
Thanne moste she nedes holden hire biheste,
Or elles he shal shame hire atte leeste."
What sholde I make a lenger tale of this?
Unto his brotheres bed he comen is, 1166
And swich confort he yaf hym for to gon
To Orliens that he up stirte anon,
And on his wey forthward thanne is he fare
In hope for to been lissed of his care. 1170
Whan they were come almoost to that citee,
But if it were a two furlong or thre,
A yong clerk romynge by hymself they mette,
Which that in Latyn thriftily hem grette,
And after that he seyde a wonder thyng: 1175
"I knowe," quod he, "the cause of youre comyng."
And er they ferther any foote wente,
He tolde hem al that was in hire entente.
This Briton clerk hym asked of felawes 1179
The whiche that he had knowe in olde dawes,
And he answerde hym that they dede were,
For which he weep ful ofte many a teere.
Doun of his hors Aurelius lighte anon,
And with this magicien forth is he gon 1184

1140 apparences: illusions
1141 tregetoures: illusionists, magicians
1149 lym: lime (mortar)
1150 voyded: caused it to disappear
1155 above: in addition to
1161 wowke: week
1162 warisshed: cured
1170 lissed: relieved
1174 thriftily: suitably, politely

Hoom to his hous, and maden hem wel at ese.
Hem lakked no vitaille that myghte hem plese.
So wel arrayed hous as ther was oon
Aurelius in his lyf saugh nevere noon.
He shewed hym, er he wente to sopeer,
Forestes, parkes ful of wilde deer; 1190
Ther saugh he hertes with hir hornes hye,
The gretteste that evere were seyn with ye.
He saugh of hem an hondred slayn with houndes,
And somme with arwes blede of bittre woundes.
He saugh, whan voyded were thise wilde deer,
Thise fauconers upon a fair ryver, 1196
That with hir haukes han the heron slayn.
Tho saugh he knyghtes justyng in a playn;
And after this he dide hym swich plesaunce
That he hym shewed his lady on a daunce,
On which hymself he daunced, as hym thoughte. 1201
And whan this maister that this magyk wroughte
Saugh it was tyme, he clapte his handes two,
And farewel! Al oure revel was ago. 1204
And yet remoeved they nevere out of the hous,
Whil they saugh al this sighte merveillous,
But in his studie, ther as his bookes be,
They seten stille, and no wight but they thre.
To hym this maister called his squier,
And seyde hym thus: "Is redy oure soper?
Almoost an houre it is, I undertake, 1211
Sith I yow bad oure soper for to make,
Whan that thise worthy men wenten with me
Into my studie, ther as my bookes be."
"Sire," quod this squier, "whan it liketh yow,
It is al redy, though ye wol right now." 1216
"Go we thanne soupe," quod he, "as for the beste.
Thise amorous folk somtyme moote han hir reste."
At after-soper fille they in tretee
What somme sholde this maistres gerdon be
To remoeven alle the rokkes of Britayne, 1221
And eek from Gerounde to the mouth of Sayne.
He made it straunge, and swoor, so God hym save,
Lasse than a thousand pound he wolde nat have,
Ne gladly for that somme he wolde nat goon.

1196 **fauconers:** hunters with falcons **ryver:** hawking ground
1219 **tretee:** negotiation
1222 **Gerounde, Sayne:** the rivers Gironde and Seine
1223 **made it straunge:** raised difficulties

Aurelius, with blisful herte anoon, 1226
Answerde thus: "Fy on a thousand pound!
This wyde world, which that men seye is round,
I wolde it yeve, if I were lord of it.
This bargayn is ful dryve, for we been knyt.
Ye shal be payed trewely, by my trouthe! 1231
But looketh now, for no necligence or slouthe
Ye tarie us heere no lenger than to-morwe."
"Nay," quod this clerk, "have heer my feith to borwe." 1234
To bedde is goon Aurelius whan hym leste,
And wel ny al that nyght he hadde his reste.
What for his labour and his hope of blisse,
His woful herte of penaunce hadde a lisse.
Upon the morwe, whan that it was day,
To Britaigne tooke they the righte way, 1240
Aurelius and this magicien bisyde,
And been descended ther they wolde abyde.
And this was, as thise bookes me remembre,
The colde, frosty seson of Decembre.
Phebus wax old, and hewed lyk laton, 1245
That in his hoote declynacion
Shoon as the burned gold with stremes brighte;
But now in Capricorn adoun he lighte,
Where as he shoon ful pale, I dar wel seyn.
The bittre frostes, with the sleet and reyn, 1250
Destroyed hath the grene in every yerd.
Janus sit by the fyr, with double berd,
And drynketh of his bugle horn the wyn;
Biforn hym stant brawen of the tusked swyn,
And "Nowel" crieth every lusty man. 1255
Aurelius in al that evere he kan
Dooth to this maister chiere and reverence,
And preyeth hym to doon his diligence
To bryngen hym out of his peynes smerte,
Or with a swerd that he wolde slitte his herte. 1260
This subtil clerk swich routhe had of this man
That nyght and day he spedde hym that he kan

1232 **slouthe:** sloth, laziness
1234 **to borwe:** as a pledge
1238 **lisse:** respite
1240 **righte:** direct
1245 **Phebus wax old:** the sun grew old (reached the end of the solar year) **laton:** a brass-like alloy grayish-silver in color
1246 **hoote declynacion:** the sign of Cancer, when the sun's northern declination is greatest (in summer)
1248 **Capricorn:** the sign of the winter solstice (December 13; see Astr 2.1.18–19, 23), the lowest altitude of the sun
1251 **yerd:** enclosed garden
1252 **Janus:** god of entries and of the month of January **double berd:** i.e., two faces (one looking forward, the other backward)
1253 **bugle horn:** drinking vessel made from the horn of the bugle, buffalo
1254 **brawen:** meat **tusked swyn:** boar
1255 **Nowel:** Noel

To wayten a tyme of his conclusioun;
This is to seye, to maken illusioun,
By swich an apparence or jogelrye — 1265
I ne kan no termes of astrologye —
That she and every wight sholde wene and seye
That of Britaigne the rokkes were aweye,
Or ellis they were sonken under grounde.
So atte laste he hath his tyme yfounde 1270
To maken his japes and his wrecchednesse
Of swich a supersticious cursednesse.
His tables Tolletanes forth he brought,
Ful wel corrected, ne ther lakked nought,
Neither his collect ne his expans yeeris, 1275
Ne his rootes, ne his othere geeris,
As been his centris and his argumentz
And his proporcioneles convenientz
For his equacions in every thyng.
And by his eighte speere in his wirkyng 1280
He knew ful wel how fer Alnath was shove
Fro the heed of thilke fixe Aries above,
That in the ninthe speere considered is;
Ful subtilly he kalkuled al this. 1284
Whan he hadde founde his firste mansioun,
He knew the remenaunt by proporcioun,
And knew the arisyng of his moone weel,
And in whos face, and terme, and everydeel;
And knew ful weel the moones mansioun
Acordaunt to his operacioun, 1290
And knew also his othere observaunces
For swiche illusiouns and swiche meschaunces
As hethen folk useden in thilke dayes.
For which no lenger maked he delayes, 1294
But thurgh his magik, for a wyke or tweye,
It semed that alle the rokkes were aweye.
Aurelius, which that yet despeired is
Wher he shal han his love or fare amys,

1263 **conclusioun:** astronomical operation
1265 **jogelrye:** conjurer's trick
1273 **tables Tolletanes:** astrological tables corrected for a given latitude, with tables of a planet's positions in single years (*expans yeeris*) and in twenty-year periods (*collect*); see the Expl. Notes for the technical vocabulary in lines 1263–84.
1276 **rootes:** dates from which astronomical calculations are made **geeris:** apparatus
1277 **centris:** table of distances between certain parts of an equator **argumentz:** angles used in calulating astronomical positions
1278 **proporcioneles convenientz:** tables for computing planetary motions
1279 **equacions:** divisions of the sphere into astronomical houses
1280 **eighte speere:** sphere of the fixed stars
1281 **Alnath:** a star in the constellation Aries (*fixed Aries*); see 1280n.
1283 **considered:** observed
1285 **mansioun:** position of the moon
1286 He could calculate the positions of the other mansions by astronomical tables (*by proporcioun;* cf. 1278 above).
1288 **face, terme:** divisions of the zodiacal signs, each of which was assigned to a planet; see n.
1290 **Acordaunt to:** consonant with
1292 **meschaunces:** evil practices
1295 **wyke:** week
1298 **amys:** badly

Awaiteth nyght and day on this myracle; 1299
And whan he knew that ther was noon obstacle,
That voyded were thise rokkes everychon,
Doun to his maistres feet he fil anon,
And seyde, "I woful wrecche, Aurelius,
Thanke yow, lord, and lady myn Venus,
That me han holpen fro my cares colde." 1305
And to the temple his wey forth hath he holde,
Where as he knew he sholde his lady see.
And whan he saugh his tyme, anon-right hee,
With dredful herte and with ful humble cheere,
Salewed hath his sovereyn lady deere: 1310
"My righte lady," quod this woful man,
"Whom I moost drede and love as I best kan,
And lothest were of al this world displese,
Nere it that I for yow have swich disese 1314
That I moste dyen heere at youre foot anon,
Noght wolde I telle how me is wo bigon.
But certes outher moste I dye or pleyne;
Ye sle me giltelees for verray peyne.
But of my deeth thogh that ye have no routhe,
Avyseth yow er that ye breke youre trouthe.
Repenteth yow, for thilke God above, 1321
Er ye me sleen by cause that I yow love.
For, madame, wel ye woot what ye han hight —
Nat that I chalange any thyng of right
Of yow, my sovereyn lady, but youre grace —
But in a gardyn yond, at swich a place, 1326
Ye woot right wel what ye bihighten me;
And in myn hand youre trouthe plighten ye
To love me best — God woot, ye seyde so,
Al be that I unworthy am therto. 1330
Madame, I speke it for the honour of yow
Moore than to save myn hertes lyf right now —
I have do so as ye comanded me;
And if ye vouche sauf, ye may go see. 1334
Dooth as yow list; have youre biheste in mynde,
For, quyk or deed, right there ye shal me fynde.
In yow lith al to do me lyve or deye —
But wel I woot the rokkes been aweye."
He taketh his leve, and she astoned stood;
In al hir face nas a drope of blood. 1340
She wende nevere han come in swich a trappe.
"Allas," quod she, "that evere this sholde happe!
For wende I nevere by possibilitee
That swich a monstre or merveille myghte be!
It is agayns the proces of nature." 1345

1309 **dredful:** fearful
1314 **disese:** distress
1323 **hight:** promised
1324 **chalange:** claim **of right:** as a legal right
1325 **but youre grace:** (I ask) only your favor
1327 **bihighten:** promised
1336 **quyk:** living

And hoom she goth a sorweful creature;
For verray feere unnethe may she go.
She wepeth, wailleth, al a day or two,
And swowneth, that it routhe was to see.
But why it was to no wight tolde shee, 1350
For out of towne was goon Arveragus.
But to hirself she spak, and seyde thus,
With face pale and with ful sorweful cheere,
In hire compleynt, as ye shal after heere:
"Allas," quod she, "on thee, Fortune, I pleyne, 1355
That unwar wrapped hast me in thy cheyne,
Fro which t'escape woot I no socour,
Save oonly deeth or elles dishonour;
Oon of thise two bihoveth me to chese.
But nathelees, yet have I levere to lese 1360
My lif than of my body to have a shame,
Or knowe myselven fals, or lese my name;
And with my deth I may be quyt, ywis.
Hath ther nat many a noble wyf er this,
And many a mayde, yslayn hirself, allas, 1365
Rather than with hir body doon trespas?
"Yis, certes, lo, thise stories beren witnesse:
Whan thritty tirauntz, ful of cursednesse,
Hadde slayn Phidon in Atthenes atte feste,
They comanded his doghtres for t'areste 1370
And bryngen hem biforn hem in despit,
Al naked, to fulfille hir foul delit,
And in hir fadres blood they made hem daunce
Upon the pavement, God yeve hem meschaunce!
For which thise woful maydens, ful of drede,
Rather than they wolde lese hir maydenhede,
They prively been stirt into a welle 1377
And dreynte hemselven, as the bookes telle.
"They of Mecene leete enquere and seke
Of Lacedomye fifty maydens eke, 1380
On whiche they wolden doon hir lecherye.
But was ther noon of al that compaignye
That she nas slayn, and with a good entente
Chees rather for to dye than assente
To been oppressed of hir maydenhede. 1385
Why sholde I thanne to dye been in drede?
Lo, eek, the tiraunt Aristoclides,
That loved a mayden, heet Stymphalides,
Whan that hir fader slayn was on a nyght,
Unto Dianes temple goth she right, 1390
And hente the ymage in hir handes two,
Fro which ymage wolde she nevere go.
No wight ne myghte hir handes of it arace
Til she was slayn, right in the selve place.
"Now sith that maydens hadden swich despit
To been defouled with mannes foul delit, 1396
Wel oghte a wyf rather hirselven slee
Than be defouled, as it thynketh me.
What shal I seyn of Hasdrubales wyf,
That at Cartage birafte hirself hir lyf? 1400
For whan she saugh that Romayns wan the toun,
She took hir children alle, and skipte adoun
Into the fyr, and chees rather to dye
Than any Romayn dide hire vileynye.
Hath nat Lucresse yslayn hirself, allas, 1405
At Rome, whan that she oppressed was
Of Tarquyn, for hire thoughte it was a shame
To lyven whan she hadde lost hir name?
The sevene maydens of Milesie also 1409
Han slayn hemself, for verrey drede and wo,
Rather than folk of Gawle hem sholde oppresse.
Mo than a thousand stories, as I gesse,
Koude I now telle as touchynge this mateere.
Whan Habradate was slayn, his wyf so deere
Hirselven slow, and leet hir blood to glyde
In Habradates woundes depe and wyde, 1416
And seyde, 'My body, at the leeste way,
Ther shal no wight defoulen, if I may.'
"What sholde I mo ensamples heerof sayn,
Sith that so manye han hemselven slayn 1420
Wel rather than they wolde defouled be?
I wol conclude that it is bet for me
To sleen myself than been defouled thus.
I wol be trewe unto Arveragus,
Or rather sleen myself in som manere, 1425
As dide Demociones doghter deere
By cause that she wolde nat defouled be.
O Cedasus, it is ful greet pitee
To reden how thy doghtren deyde, allas,
That slowe hemself for swich manere cas.
As greet a pitee was it, or wel moore, 1431
The Theban mayden that for Nichanore
Hirselven slow, right for swich manere wo.
Another Theban mayden dide right so; 1434
For oon of Macidonye hadde hire oppressed,
She with hire deeth hir maydenhede redressed.
What shal I seye of Nicerates wyf,
That for swich cas birafte hirself hir lyf?
How trewe eek was to Alcebiades

1356 unwar: unexpectedly
1379 Mecene: Messene
1380 Lacedomye: Lacedaemon (Sparta)
1405 Lucresse: Lucretia; see LGW 1680–1885
1409 Milesie: Miletus
1411 Gawle: Galatia
1428 Cedasus: Scedasus
1430 cas: cause
1435 Macidonye: Macedonia

His love, that rather for to dyen chees 1440
Than for to suffre his body unburyed be.
Lo, which a wyf was Alceste," quod she.
"What seith Omer of goode Penalopee?
Al Grece knoweth of hire chastitee.
Pardee, of Laodomya is writen thus, 1445
That whan at Troie was slayn Protheselaus,
Ne lenger wolde she lyve after his day.
The same of noble Porcia telle I may;
Withoute Brutus koude she nat lyve,
To whom she hadde al hool hir herte yive. 1450
The parfit wyfhod of Arthemesie
Honured is thurgh al the Barbarie.
O Teuta, queene, thy wyfly chastitee
To alle wyves may a mirour bee.
The same thyng I seye of Bilyea, 1455
Of Rodogone, and eek Valeria."
Thus pleyned Dorigen a day or tweye,
Purposynge evere that she wolde deye.
But nathelees, upon the thridde nyght, 1459
Hoom cam Arveragus, this worthy knyght,
And asked hire why that she weep so soore;
And she gan wepen ever lenger the moore.
"Allas," quod she, "that evere was I born!
Thus have I seyd," quod she, "thus have I sworn" —
And toold hym al as ye han herd bifore; 1465
It nedeth nat reherce it yow namoore.
This housbonde, with glad chiere, in freendly wyse
Answerde and seyde as I shal yow devyse:
"Is ther oght elles, Dorigen, but this?"
"Nay, nay," quod she, "God helpe me so as wys! 1470
This is to muche, and it were Goddes wille."
"Ye, wyf," quod he, "lat slepen that is stille.
It may be wel, paraventure, yet to day.
Ye shul youre trouthe holden, by my fay!
For God so wisly have mercy upon me, 1475
I hadde wel levere ystiked for to be
For verray love which that I to yow have,
But if ye sholde youre trouthe kepe and save.
Trouthe is the hyeste thyng that man may kepe" — 1479

But with that word he brast anon to wepe,
And seyde, "I yow forbede, up peyne of deeth,
That nevere, whil thee lasteth lyf ne breeth,
To no wight telle thou of this aventure —
As I may best, I wol my wo endure —
Ne make no contenance of hevynesse, 1485
That folk of yow may demen harm or gesse."
And forth he cleped a squier and a mayde:
"Gooth forth anon with Dorigen," he sayde,
"And bryngeth hire to swich a place anon."
They take hir leve, and on hir wey they gon,
But they ne wiste why she thider wente. 1491
He nolde no wight tellen his entente.
Paraventure an heep of yow, ywis,
Wol holden hym a lewed man in this
That he wol putte his wyf in jupartie. 1495
Herkneth the tale er ye upon hire crie.
She may have bettre fortune than yow semeth;
And whan that ye han herd the tale, demeth.
This squier, which that highte Aurelius,
On Dorigen that was so amorus, 1500
Of aventure happed hire to meete
Amydde the toun, right in the quykkest strete,
As she was bown to goon the wey forth right
Toward the gardyn ther as she had hight.
And he was to the gardyn-ward also; 1505
For wel he spyed whan she wolde go
Out of hir hous to any maner place.
But thus they mette, of aventure or grace,
And he saleweth hire with glad entente,
And asked of hire whiderward she wente; 1510
And she answerde, half as she were mad,
"Unto the gardyn, as myn housbonde bad,
My trouthe for to holde — allas, allas!"
Aurelius gan wondren on this cas,
And in his herte hadde greet compassioun 1515
Of hire and of hire lamentacioun,
And of Arveragus, the worthy knyght,
That bad hire holden al that she had hight,
So looth hym was his wyf sholde breke hir trouthe;
And in his herte he caughte of this greet routhe,
Considerynge the beste on every syde, 1521
That fro his lust yet were hym levere abyde

1442 which a: what a Alceste: Alcestis, heroine of the Prologue of LGW, where the story is told briefly (LGW F 511–16)
1443 Omer: Homer Penalopee: faithful wife of Ulysses
1448 Porcia: Portia committed suicide rather than survive her husband, Brutus.
1451 Arthemesie: Famed for her chastity, she built a magnificent tomb for her husband.
1452 Barbarie: heathendom
1453 Teuta: queen of Ilyrica and famous for chastity
1455 Bilyea: Bilia, famed for innocent chastity
1456 Rodogone, Valeria: Rhodogune and Valeria refused to remarry after the deaths of their husbands.
1458 Purposynge: intending

1480 brast . . . to wepe: burst into tears
1486 of yow: concerning you
1495 jupartie: jeopardy
1502 quykkest strete: busiest street
1503 bown: ready, prepared
1505 to the gardyn-ward: (going) toward the garden
1510 whiderward: whither
1522 He would prefer to desist from attaining his desire

Than doon so heigh a cherlyssh wrecchednesse
Agayns franchise and alle gentillesse;
For which in fewe wordes seyde he thus: 1525
"Madame, seyth to youre lord Arveragus
That sith I se his grete gentillesse
To yow, and eek I se wel youre distresse,
That him were levere han shame (and that were routhe)
Than ye to me sholde breke thus youre trouthe,
I have wel levere evere to suffre wo 1531
Than I departe the love bitwix yow two.
I yow relesse, madame, into youre hond
Quyt every serement and every bond
That ye han maad to me as heerbiforn, 1535
Sith thilke tyme which that ye were born.
My trouthe I plighte, I shal yow never repreve
Of no biheste, and heere I take my leve,
As of the treweste and the beste wyf
That evere yet I knew in al my lyf. 1540
But every wyf be war of hire biheeste!
On Dorigen remembreth, atte leeste.
Thus kan a squier doon a gentil dede
As wel as kan a knyght, withouten drede." 1544
She thonketh hym upon hir knees al bare,
And hoom unto hir housbonde is she fare,
And tolde hym al, as ye han herd me sayd;
And be ye siker, he was so weel apayd
That it were impossible me to wryte.
What sholde I lenger of this cas endyte? 1550
Arveragus and Dorigen his wyf
In sovereyn blisse leden forth hir lyf.
Nevere eft ne was ther angre hem bitwene.
He cherisseth hire as though she were a queene,
And she was to hym trewe for everemoore.
Of thise two folk ye gete of me namoore. 1556
Aurelius, that his cost hath al forlorn,
Curseth the tyme that evere he was born:
"Allas!" quod he. "Allas, that I bihighte
Of pured gold a thousand pound of wighte
Unto this philosophre! How shal I do? 1561
I se namoore but that I am fordo.
Myn heritage moot I nedes selle,
And been a beggere; heere may I nat dwelle
And shamen al my kynrede in this place, 1565
But I of hym may gete bettre grace.

1524 franchise: nobility of character
1529 him were levere: he would rather
1533 relesse: release, set free
1534 serement: oath, pledge
1537 plighte: pledge
1544 withouten drede: doubtless
1547 sayd: say
1548 apayd: satisfied
1557 forlorn: forfeited
1560 pured: refined wighte: weight

But nathelees, I wole of hym assaye,
At certeyn dayes, yeer by yeer, to paye,
And thanke hym of his grete curteisye.
My trouthe wol I kepe, I wol nat lye." 1570
With herte soor he gooth unto his cofre,
And broghte gold unto this philosophre,
The value of fyve hundred pound, I gesse,
And hym bisecheth, of his gentillesse,
To graunte hym dayes of the remenaunt; 1575
And seyde, "Maister, I dar wel make avaunt,
I failled nevere of my trouthe as yit.
For sikerly my dette shal be quyt
Towardes yow, howevere that I fare
To goon a-begged in my kirtle bare. 1580
But wolde ye vouche sauf, upon seuretee,
Two yeer or thre for to respiten me,
Thanne were I wel; for elles moot I selle
Myn heritage; ther is namoore to telle."
This philosophre sobrely answerde, 1585
And seyde thus, whan he thise wordes herde:
"Have I nat holden covenant unto thee?"
"Yes, certes, wel and trewely," quod he.
"Hastow nat had thy lady as thee liketh?"
"No, no," quod he, and sorwefully he siketh.
"What was the cause? Tel me if thou kan."
Aurelius his tale anon bigan, 1592
And tolde hym al, as ye han herd bifoore;
It nedeth nat to yow reherce it moore.
He seide, "Arveragus, of gentillesse, 1595
Hadde levere dye in sorwe and in distresse
Than that his wyf were of hir trouthe fals."
The sorwe of Dorigen he tolde hym als;
How looth hire was to been a wikked wyf, 1599
And that she levere had lost that day hir lyf,
And that hir trouthe she swoor thurgh innocence,
She nevere erst hadde herde speke of apparence.
"That made me han of hire so greet pitee;
And right as frely as he sente hire me,
As frely sente I hire to hym ageyn. 1605
This al and som; ther is namoore to seyn."
This philosophre answerde, "Leeve brother,
Everich of yow dide gentilly til oother.
Thou art a squier, and he is a knyght;
But God forbede, for his blisful myght, 1610
But if a clerk koude doon a gentil dede
As wel as any of yow, it is no drede!

1575 dayes of the remenaunt: additional time to pay the balance
1580 a-begged: a-begging kirtle: tunic
1582 respiten me: grant me a respite, additional time
1602 apparence: illusion
1606 al and som: the entire matter

Sire, I releesse thee thy thousand pound,
As thou right now were cropen out of the ground,
Ne nevere er now ne haddest knowen me. 1615
For, sire, I wol nat taken a peny of thee
For al my craft, ne noght for my travaille.
Thou hast ypayed wel for my vitaille.
It is ynogh, and farewel, have good day!" 1619
And took his hors, and forth he goth his way.
Lordynges, this question, thanne, wol I aske now,
Which was the mooste fre, as thynketh yow?
Now telleth me, er that ye ferther wende.
I kan namoore; my tale is at an ende.

Heere is ended the Frankeleyns Tale.

1613 **releesse thee:** set you free from
1614 **cropen:** crept

Fragment VI (Group C)

THE PHYSICIAN'S TALE

Heere folweth the Phisiciens Tale.

Ther was, as telleth Titus Livius,
A knyght that called was Virginius,
Fulfild of honour and of worthynesse,
And strong of freendes, and of greet richesse.
This knyght a doghter hadde by his wyf; 5
No children hadde he mo in al his lyf.
Fair was this mayde in excellent beautee
Aboven every wight that man may see;
For Nature hath with sovereyn diligence
Yformed hire in so greet excellence, 10
As though she wolde seyn, "Lo! I, Nature,
Thus kan I forme and peynte a creature,
Whan that me list; who kan me countrefete?
Pigmalion noght, though he ay forge and bete,
Or grave, or peynte; for I dar wel seyn 15
Apelles, Zanzis, sholde werche in veyn
Outher to grave, or peynte, or forge, or bete,
If they presumed me to countrefete.
For He that is the formere principal
Hath maked me his vicaire general, 20
To forme and peynten erthely creaturis
Right as me list, and ech thyng in my cure is
Under the moone, that may wane and waxe,
And for my werk right no thyng wol I axe;
My lord and I been ful of oon accord. 25
I made hire to the worshipe of my lord;
So do I alle myne othere creatures,
What colour that they han or what figures."
Thus semeth me that Nature wolde seye.
This mayde of age twelve yeer was and tweye,
In which that Nature hadde swich delit. 31
For right as she kan peynte a lilie whit,
And reed a rose, right with swich peynture
She peynted hath this noble creature,
Er she were born, upon hir lymes fre, 35
Where as by right swiche colours sholde be;

1 Titus Livius: Livy, the Roman historian
14 Pigmalion: the famous Greek sculptor
15 grave: carve
16 Apelles: legendary sculptor of the tomb of Darius the Great
Zanzis: Zeuxis, an Athenian artist
20 vicaire general: chief deputy
25 ful of oon accord: completely in accord
33 peynture: painting, coloration

And Phebus dyed hath hire tresses grete
Lyk to the stremes of his burned heete.
And if that excellent was hire beautee,
A thousand foold moore vertuous was she. 40
In hire ne lakked no condicioun
That is to preyse, as by discrecioun.
As wel in goost as body chast was she,
For which she floured in virginitee
With alle humylitee and abstinence, 45
With alle attemperaunce and pacience,
With mesure eek of beryng and array.
Discreet she was in answeryng alway;
Though she were wis as Pallas, dar I seyn,
Hir facound eek ful wommanly and pleyn, 50
No countrefeted termes hadde she
To seme wys, but after hir degree
She spak, and alle hire wordes, moore and lesse,
Sownynge in vertu and in gentillesse. 54
Shamefast she was in maydens shamefastnesse,
Constant in herte, and evere in bisynesse
To dryve hire out of ydel slogardye.
Bacus hadde of hir mouth right no maistrie;
For wyn and youthe dooth Venus encresse,
As men in fyr wol casten oille or greesse. 60
And of hir owene vertu, unconstreyned,
She hath ful ofte tyme syk hire feyned,
For that she wolde fleen the compaignye
Where likly was to treten of folye,
As is at feestes, revels, and at daunces, 65
That been occasions of daliaunces.
Swich thynges maken children for to be
To soone rype and boold, as men may se,

37 Phebus: Phoebus Apollo, the sun
38 burned heete: burnished heat (rays of the sun)
42 as by discrecioun: concerning moral discernment
43 goost: spirit
46 attemperaunce: temperance, moderation
47 mesure: moderation beryng: bearing, demeanor
49 Pallas: Pallas Athena, goddess of wisdom
50 facound: way of speaking
54 Sownynge in: conducing to
55 Shamefast: modest
57 slogardye: sluggishness, laziness
58 Bacus: Bacchus, god of wine
59 Venus: i.e., sexual desire
64 treten of: speak about

Which is ful perilous and hath been yoore.
For al to soone may she lerne loore 70
Of booldnesse, whan she woxen is a wyf.
And ye maistresses, in youre olde lyf,
That lordes doghtres han in governaunce,
Ne taketh of my wordes no displesaunce.
Thenketh that ye been set in governynges 75
Of lordes doghtres oonly for two thynges:
Outher for ye han kept youre honestee,
Or elles ye han falle in freletee,
And knowen wel ynough the olde daunce,
And han forsaken fully swich meschaunce 80
For everemo; therfore, for Cristes sake,
To teche hem vertu looke that ye ne slake.
A theef of venysoun, that hath forlaft
His likerousnesse and al his olde craft,
Kan kepe a forest best of any man. 85
Now kepeth wel, for if ye wole, ye kan.
Looke wel that ye unto no vice assente,
Lest ye be dampned for youre wikke entente;
For whoso dooth, a traitour is, certeyn.
And taketh kep of that that I shál seyn: 90
Of alle tresons sovereyn pestilence
Is whan a wight bitrayseth innocence.
Ye fadres and ye moodres eek also,
Though ye han children, be it oon or mo,
Youre is the charge of al hir surveiaunce, 95
Whil that they been under youre governaunce.
Beth war, if by ensample of youre lyvynge,
Or by youre necligence in chastisynge,
That they ne perisse; for I dar wel seye
If that they doon, ye shul it deere abeye. 100
Under a shepherde softe and necligent
The wolf hath many a sheep and lamb torent.
Suffiseth oon ensample now as heere,
For I moot turne agayn to my matere.
This mayde, of which I wol this tale expresse,
So kepte hirself hir neded no maistresse, 106
For in hir lyvyng maydens myghten rede,
As in a book, every good word or dede
That longeth to a mayden vertuous,
She was so prudent and so bountevous. 110
For which the fame out sprong on every syde,
Bothe of hir beautee and hir bountee wyde,
That thurgh that land they preised hire echone
That loved vertu, save Envye allone,
That sory is of oother mennes wele 115
And glad is of his sorwe and his unheele.
(The Doctour maketh this descripcioun.)
This mayde upon a day wente in the toun
Toward a temple, with hire mooder deere,
As is of yonge maydens the manere. 120
Now was ther thanne a justice in that toun,
That governour was of that regioun.
And so bifel this juge his eyen caste
Upon this mayde, avysynge hym ful faste,
As she cam forby ther as this juge stood. 125
Anon his herte chaunged and his mood,
So was he caught with beautee of this mayde,
And to hymself ful pryvely he sayde,
"This mayde shal be myn, for any man!"
Anon the feend into his herte ran, 130
And taughte hym sodeynly that he by slyghte
The mayden to his purpos wynne myghte.
For certes, by no force ne by no meede, 133
Hym thoughte, he was nat able for to speede;
For she was strong of freendes, and eek she
Confermed was in swich soverayn bountee
That wel he wiste he myghte hire nevere wynne
As for to make hire with hir body synne.
For which, by greet deliberacioun,
He sente after a cherl, was in the toun, 140
Which that he knew for subtil and for boold.
This juge unto this cherl his tale hath toold
In secree wise, and made hym to ensure
He sholde telle it to no creature,
And if he dide, he sholde lese his heed. 145
Whan that assented was this cursed reed,
Glad was this juge, and maked him greet cheere,
And yaf hym yiftes preciouse and deere.
Whan shapen was al hire conspiracie
Fro point to point, how that his lecherie 150
Parfourned sholde been ful subtilly,

71 woxen: became
72 maistresses: governesses
77 honestee: chastity
78 freletee: frailty
79 olde daunce: tricks of the trade, game of love
80 meschaunce: misconduct
82 slake: be slack, desist
83 venysoun: game, venison forlaft: abandoned
84 likerousnesse: greedy appetite
86 kepeth wel: take good care
91 sovereyn pestilence: the supreme wickedness
92 bitrayseth: betrays
95 surveiaunce: surveillance (protection)
99 perisse: perish
100 it deere abeye: pay dearly for it
102 torent: torn to pieces

110 bountevous: full of goodness
116 unheele: misery
117 The Doctour: St. Augustine
125 forby ther as: past where
129 for: despite
131 slyghte: trickery
143 ensure: assure, give assurance
147 maked him greet cheere: was very friendly to him
151 Parfourned: performed, accomplished

As ye shul heere it after openly,
Hoom gooth the cherl, that highte Claudius.
This false juge, that highte Apius,
(So was his name, for this is no fable, 155
But knowen for historial thyng notable;
The sentence of it sooth is, out of doute),
This false juge gooth now faste aboute
To hasten his delit al that he may.
And so bifel soone after, on a day, 160
This false juge, as telleth us the storie,
As he was wont, sat in his consistorie,
And yaf his doomes upon sondry cas.
This false cherl cam forth a ful greet pas,
And seyde, "Lord, if that it be youre wille, 165
As dooth me right upon this pitous bille,
In which I pleyne upon Virginius;
And if that he wol seyn it is nat thus,
I wol it preeve, and fynde good witnesse,
That sooth is that my bille wol expresse." 170
The juge answerde, "Of this, in his absence,
I may nat yeve diffynytyf sentence.
Lat do hym calle, and I wol gladly heere;
Thou shalt have al right, and no wrong heere."
Virginius cam to wite the juges wille, 175
And right anon was rad this cursed bille;
The sentence of it was as ye shul heere:
"To yow, my lord, sire Apius so deere,
Sheweth youre povre servant Claudius
How that a knyght, called Virginius, 180
Agayns the lawe, agayn al equitee,
Holdeth, expres agayn the wyl of me,
My servant, which that is my thral by right,
Which fro myn hous was stole upon a nyght,
Whil that she was ful yong; this wol I preeve 185
By witnesse, lord, so that it nat yow greeve.
She nys his doghter nat, what so he seye.
Wherfore to yow, my lord the juge, I preye,
Yeld me my thral, if that it be youre wille."
Lo, this was al the sentence of his bille. 190
Virginius gan upon the cherl biholde,
But hastily, er he his tale tolde,
And wolde have preeved it as sholde a knyght,
And eek by witnessyng of many a wight,

155 fable: fiction
156 historial: historical
162 consistorie: court
163 doomes: judgments, decisions
164 ful greet pas: at a rapid pace, hurriedly
166 As dooth me right: do justice for me bille: formal charge
167 pleyne upon: make complaint against
173 Lat do hym calle: have him called
176 rad: read
182 expres agayn: clearly against
183 thral: servant, slave
189 Yeld: give back
193 as sholde a knyght: i.e., in a trial by battle
194 witnessyng: testimony

That al was fals that seyde his adversarie, 195
This cursed juge wolde no thyng tarie,
Ne heere a word moore of Virginius,
But yaf his juggement, and seyde thus:
"I deeme anon this cherl his servant have;
Thou shalt no lenger in thyn hous hir save. 200
Go bryng hire forth, and put hire in oure warde.
The cherl shal have his thral, this I awarde."
And whan this worthy knyght Virginius
Thurgh sentence of this justice Apius
Moste by force his deere doghter yiven 205
Unto the juge, in lecherie to lyven,
He gooth hym hoom, and sette him in his halle,
And leet anon his deere doghter calle,
And with a face deed as asshen colde
Upon hir humble face he gan biholde, 210
With fadres pitee stikynge thurgh his herte,
Al wolde he from his purpos nat converte.
"Doghter," quod he, "Virginia, by thy name,
Ther been two weyes, outher deeth or shame,
That thou most suffre; allas, that I was bore!
For nevere thou deservedest wherfore 216
To dyen with a swerd or with a knyf.
O deere doghter, endere of my lyf,
Which I have fostred up with swich plesaunce
That thou were nevere out of my remembraunce! 220
O doghter, which that art my laste wo,
And in my lyf my laste joye also,
O gemme of chastitee, in pacience
Take thou thy deeth, for this is my sentence.
For love, and nat for hate, thou most be deed; 225
My pitous hand moot smyten of thyn heed.
Allas, that evere Apius the say!
Thus hath he falsly jugged the to-day" —
And tolde hire al the cas, as ye bifore
Han herd; nat nedeth for to telle it moore. 230
"O mercy, deere fader!" quod this mayde,
And with that word she bothe hir armes layde
Aboute his nekke, as she was wont to do.
The teeris bruste out of hir eyen two,
And seyde, "Goode fader, shal I dye? 235
Is ther no grace, is ther no remedye?"
"No, certes, deere doghter myn," quod he.
"Thanne yif me leyser, fader myn," quod she,
"My deeth for to compleyne a litel space;

200 save: keep
201 warde: custody
208 leet . . . calle: had . . . called
221 laste: greatest
227 the say: saw you

For, pardee, Jepte yaf his doghter grace 240
For to compleyne, er he hir slow, allas!
And, God it woot, no thyng was hir trespas,
But for she ran hir fader first to see,
To welcome hym with greet solempnitee."
And with that word she fil aswowne anon, 245
And after, whan hir swownyng is agon,
She riseth up, and to hir fader sayde,
"Blissed be God that I shal dye a mayde!
Yif me my deeth, er that I have a shame;
Dooth with youre child youre wyl, a Goddes name!" 250

And with that word she preyed hym ful ofte
That with his swerd he wolde smyte softe;
And with that word aswowne doun she fil.
Hir fader, with ful sorweful herte and wil,
Hir heed of smoot, and by the top it hente, 255
And to the juge he gan it to presente,
As he sat yet in doom in consistorie.
And whan the juge it saugh, as seith the storie,
He bad to take hym and anhange hym faste;
But right anon a thousand peple in thraste, 260
To save the knyght, for routhe and for pitee,
For knowen was the false iniquitee.
The peple anon had suspect in this thyng,
By manere of the cherles chalangyng,
That it was by the assent of Apius; 265
They wisten wel that he was lecherus.
For which unto this Apius they gon
And caste hym in a prisoun right anon,
Ther as he slow hymself; and Claudius,
That servant was unto this Apius, 270
Was demed for to hange upon a tree,
But that Virginius, of his pitee,
So preyde for hym that he was exiled;
And elles, certes, he had been bigyled. 274
The remenant were anhanged, moore and lesse,
That were consentant of this cursednesse.

Heere may men seen how synne hath his merite.
Beth war, for no man woot whom God wol smyte
In no degree, ne in which manere wyse;
The worm of conscience may agryse 280
Of wikked lyf, though it so pryvee be
That no man woot therof but God and he.
For be he lewed man, or ellis lered,
He noot how soone that he shal been afered.
Therfore I rede yow this conseil take: 285
Forsaketh synne, er synne yow forsake.

Heere endeth the Phisiciens Tale.

THE INTRODUCTION TO THE PARDONER'S TALE

The wordes of the Hoost to the Phisicien and the Pardoner.

Oure Hooste gan to swere as he were wood;
"Harrow!" quod he, "by nayles and by blood!
This was a fals cherl and a fals justise.
As shameful deeth as herte may devyse 290
Come to thise juges and hire advocatz!
Algate this sely mayde is slayn, allas!
Allas, to deere boughte she beautee!
Wherfore I seye al day that men may see
That yiftes of Fortune and of Nature 295
Been cause of deeth to many a creature.
Hire beautee was hire deth, I dar wel sayn.
Allas, so pitously as she was slayn!
Of bothe yiftes that I speke of now
Men han ful ofte moore for harm than prow.
But trewely, myn owene maister deere, 301

240 **Jepte:** the biblical Jeptha; see n.
257 **in doom in consistorie:** giving judgment in court
259 **anhange:** hang
260 **in thraste:** thrust, pushed in
263 **suspect:** suspicions
264 **By manere of:** by reason of **chalangyng:** claim
274 **bigyled:** betrayed (i.e., killed)
277 **merite:** reward
280 **agryse:** tremble for fear
285 **rede:** advise

287 **wood:** mad
288 "Alas," said he, "by the nails and blood of Christ!"
292 **Algate:** at any rate
300 **prow:** profit, benefit

This is a pitous tale for to heere.
But nathelees, passe over; is no fors.
I pray to God so save thy gentil cors,
And eek thyne urynals and thy jurdones, 305
Thyn ypocras, and eek thy galiones,
And every boyste ful of thy letuarie;
God blesse hem, and oure lady Seinte Marie!
So moot I theen, thou art a propre man,
And lyk a prelat, by Seint Ronyan! 310
Seyde I nat wel? I kan nat speke in terme;
But wel I woot thou doost myn herte to erme,
That I almoost have caught a cardynacle.
By corpus bones! but I have triacle,
Or elles a draughte of moyste and corny ale,
Or but I heere anon a myrie tale, 316
Myn herte is lost for pitee of this mayde.
Thou beel amy, thou Pardoner," he sayde,
"Telle us som myrthe or japes right anon."
"It shal be doon," quod he, "by Seint Ronyon! 320
But first," quod he, "heere at this alestake
I wol bothe drynke and eten of a cake."
But right anon thise gentils gonne to crye,
"Nay, lat hym telle us of no ribaudye! 324
Telle us som moral thyng, that we may leere
Som wit, and thanne wol we gladly heere."
"I graunte, ywis," quod he, "but I moot thynke
Upon som honest thyng while that I drynke."

THE PARDONER'S PROLOGUE

Heere folweth the Prologe of the Pardoners Tale.

Radix malorum est Cupiditas. Ad Thimotheum, 6°.

"Lordynges," quod he, "in chirches whan I preche,
I peyne me to han an hauteyn speche, 330
And rynge it out as round as gooth a belle,
For I kan al by rote that I telle.
My theme is alwey oon, and evere was —
Radix malorum est Cupiditas.
"First I pronounce whennes that I come, 335
And thanne my bulles shewe I, alle and some.
Oure lige lordes seel on my patente,
That shewe I first, my body to warente,
That no man be so boold, ne preest ne clerk,
Me to destourbe of Cristes hooly werk. 340
And after that thanne telle I forth my tales;
Bulles of popes and of cardynales,
Of patriarkes and bishopes I shewe,
And in Latyn I speke a wordes fewe,
To saffron with my predicacioun, 345
And for to stire hem to devocioun.
Thanne shewe I forth my longe cristal stones,
Ycrammed ful of cloutes and of bones —
Relikes been they, as wenen they echoon.
Thanne have I in latoun a sholder-boon 350
Which that was of an hooly Jewes sheep.
'Goode men,' I seye, 'taak of my wordes keep;
If that this boon be wasshe in any welle,
If cow, or calf, or sheep, or oxe swelle
That any worm hath ete, or worm ystonge, 355

303 **passe over:** let it be **is no fors:** it does not matter
305 **urynals:** vessels for analyzing urine **jurdones:** glass vessels used by physicians
306 **ypocras, galiones:** medicinal drinks named after Hippocrates and Galen, ancient medical authorities
307 **boyste:** container **letuarie:** medicine
309 **theen:** prosper
310 **Seint Ronyan:** probably St. Ronan, a Scottish saint
311 **in terme:** in technical language
312 **erme:** grieve
313 **cardynacle:** probably the Host's error for *cardiacle,* heart attack
314 **By corpus bones!:** by God's bones! **triacle:** medicine
315 **moyste:** fresh, new **corny:** malty, strong

Radix malorum, *etc.*: Greed is the root of [all] evils, 1 Timothy 6.10
330 **hauteyn:** impressive, loud
332 **by rote:** by heart
333 **theme:** biblical text for a sermon
336 **bulles:** papal bulls (here indulgences)
337 **lige lordes seel:** seal of our liege lord (the bishop) **patente:** letter patent (authorizing his sale of pardons)

318 **beel amy:** fair friend (perhaps used derisively)
321 **alestake:** pole hung with a garland, the sign of an alehouse
322 **cake:** loaf of bread
324 **ribaudye:** ribaldry, coarse jesting

338 **warente:** protect
345 **saffron:** flavor with saffron, season **predicacioun:** sermon
347 **cristal stones:** glass cases; cf. GP I.700.
348 **cloutes:** rags
350 **in latoun:** mounted in latten, a brass-like alloy
355 **worm:** snake

Taak water of that welle and wassh his tonge,
And it is hool anon; and forthermoore,
Of pokkes and of scabbe, and every soore
Shal every sheep be hool that of this welle 359
Drynketh a draughte. Taak kep eek what I telle:
If that the good-man that the beestes oweth
Wol every wyke, er that the cok hym croweth,
Fastynge, drynken of this welle a draughte,
As thilke hooly Jew oure eldres taughte,
His beestes and his stoor shal multiplie. 365
'And, sires, also it heeleth jalousie;
For though a man be falle in jalous rage,
Lat maken with this water his potage,
And nevere shal he moore his wyf mystriste,
Though he the soothe of hir defaute wiste, 370
Al had she taken prestes two or thre.
'Heere is a miteyn eek, that ye may se.
He that his hand wol putte in this mitayn,
He shal have multipliyng of his grayn,
Whan he hath sowen, be it whete or otes, 375
So that he offre pens, or elles grotes.
'Goode men and wommen, o thyng warne I yow:
If any wight be in this chirche now
That hath doon synne horrible, that he
Dar nat, for shame, of it yshryven be, 380
Or any womman, be she yong or old,
That hath ymaked hir housbonde cokewold,
Swich folk shal have no power ne no grace
To offren to my relikes in this place. 384
And whoso fyndeth hym out of swich blame,
He wol come up and offre a Goddes name,
And I assoille him by the auctoritee
Which that by bulle ygraunted was to me.'
"By this gaude have I wonne, yeer by yeer,
An hundred mark sith I was pardoner. 390
I stonde lyk a clerk in my pulpet,
And whan the lewed peple is doun yset,
I preche so as ye han herd bifoore
And telle an hundred false japes moore. 394
Thanne peyne I me to strecche forth the nekke,
And est and west upon the peple I bekke,
As dooth a dowve sittynge on a berne.

358 pokkes: pocks, pustules
361 good-man: goodman, head of the household oweth: owns
365 stoor: stock, possessions
368 potage: soup
370 defaute: misdeed
372 miteyn: mitten
375 otes: oats
376 pens: pence, pennies grotes: groats, silver coins worth four pence
380 yshryven: confessed and forgiven
387 assoille: absolve
389 gaude: trick
390 hundred mark: about sixty-six pounds
396 bekke: nod
397 berne: barn

Myne handes and my tonge goon so yerne
That it is joye to se my bisynesse.
Of avarice and of swich cursednesse 400
Is al my prechyng, for to make hem free
To yeven hir pens, and namely unto me.
For myn entente is nat but for to wynne,
And nothyng for correccioun of synne. 404
I rekke nevere, whan that they been beryed,
Though that hir soules goon a-blakeberyed!
For certes, many a predicacioun
Comth ofte tyme of yvel entencioun;
Som for plesance of folk and flaterye,
To been avaunced by ypocrisye, 410
And som for veyne glorie, and som for hate.
For whan I dar noon oother weyes debate,
Thanne wol I stynge hym with my tonge smerte
In prechyng, so that he shal nat asterte
To been defamed falsly, if that he 415
Hath trespased to my bretheren or to me.
For though I telle noght his propre name,
Men shal wel knowe that it is the same,
By signes, and by othere circumstances. 419
Thus quyte I folk that doon us displesances;
Thus spitte I out my venym under hewe
Of hoolynesse, to semen hooly and trewe.
"But shortly myn entente I wol devyse:
I preche of no thyng but for coveityse.
Therfore my theme is yet, and evere was, 425
Radix malorum est Cupiditas.
Thus kan I preche agayn that same vice
Which that I use, and that is avarice.
But though myself be gilty in that synne,
Yet kan I maken oother folk to twynne 430
From avarice and soore to repente.
But that is nat my principal entente;
I preche nothyng but for coveitise.
Of this mateere it oghte ynogh suffise.
"Thanne telle I hem ensamples many oon 435
Of olde stories longe tyme agoon.
For lewed peple loven tales olde;
Swiche thynges kan they wel reporte and holde.
What, trowe ye, that whiles I may preche,
And wynne gold and silver for I teche, 440
That I wol lyve in poverte wilfully?

398 yerne: quickly
405 beryed: buried
406 goon a-blakeberyed: go blackberry picking
414 asterte: escape
420 quyte: pay back (revenge) doon us displesances: make trouble for us (pardoners)
421 hewe: pretense
424 coveityse: greed
427 agayn: against
430 twynne: depart, turn away from
435 ensamples: exempla, illustrative anecdotes
437 lewed: ignorant, unlearned
441 in poverte wilfully: in voluntary poverty (like a monk)

Nay, nay, I thoghte it nevere, trewely!
For I wol preche and begge in sondry landes;
I wol nat do no labour with myne handes,
Ne make baskettes and lyve therby, 445
By cause I wol nat beggen ydelly.
I wol noon of the apostles countrefete;
I wol have moneie, wolle, chese, and whete,
Al were it yeven of the povereste page,
Or of the povereste wydwe in a village, 450
Al sholde hir children sterve for famyne.
Nay, I wol drynke licour of the vyne
And have a joly wenche in every toun.
But herkneth, lordynges, in conclusioun:
Youre likyng is that I shal telle a tale. 455
Now have I dronke a draughte of corny ale,
By God, I hope I shal yow telle a thyng
That shal by reson been at youre likyng.
For though myself be a ful vicious man,
A moral tale yet I yow telle kan, 460
Which I am wont to preche for to wynne.
Now hoold youre pees! My tale I wol bigynne."

THE PARDONER'S TALE

Heere bigynneth the Pardoners Tale.

In Flaundres whilom was a compaignye
Of yonge folk that haunteden folye,
As riot, hasard, stywes, and tavernes, 465
Where as with harpes, lutes, and gyternes,
They daunce and pleyen at dees bothe day and nyght,
And eten also and drynken over hir myght,
Thurgh which they doon the devel sacrifise
Withinne that develes temple in cursed wise
By superfluytee abhomynable. 471
Hir othes been so grete and so dampnable
That it is grisly for to heere hem swere.
Oure blissed Lordes body they totere —
Hem thoughte that Jewes rente hym noght ynough — 475
And ech of hem at otheres synne lough.
And right anon thanne comen tombesteres
Fetys and smale, and yonge frutesteres,
Syngeres with harpes, baudes, wafereres,
Whiche been the verray develes officeres 480
To kyndle and blowe the fyr of lecherye,
That is annexed unto glotonye.
The hooly writ take I to my witnesse
That luxurie is in wyn and dronkenesse.
Lo, how that dronken Looth, unkyndely, 485
Lay by his doghtres two, unwityngly;
So dronke he was, he nyste what he wroghte.
Herodes, whoso wel the stories soghte,
Whan he of wyn was repleet at his feeste,
Right at his owene table he yaf his heeste 490
To sleen the Baptist John, ful giltelees.
Senec seith a good word doutelees;
He seith he kan no difference fynde
Bitwix a man that is out of his mynde
And a man which that is dronkelewe, 495
But that woodnesse, yfallen in a shrewe,
Persevereth lenger than doth dronkenesse.
O glotonye, ful of cursednesse!
O cause first of oure confusioun!
O original of oure dampnacioun, 500
Til Crist hadde boght us with his blood agayn!
Lo, how deere, shortly for to sayn,
Aboght was thilke cursed vileynye!
Corrupt was al this world for glotonye.

446 **ydelly:** in vain
448 **wolle:** wool
449 **povereste:** poorest

456 **corny:** malty, strong

464 **haunteden:** made a habit of
465 **riot:** debauchery **hasard:** dicing **stywes:** brothels
466 **gyternes:** citterns (guitar-like instruments)
467 **dees:** dice
474 **totere:** tear in pieces
476 **lough:** laughed
477 **tombesteres:** dancing girls
478 **Fetys:** elegantly shaped **smale:** slim **frutesteres:** girls who sell fruit
479 **wafereres:** sellers of wafers

483 **hooly writ:** the Bible
484 **luxurie:** lechery
485 **Looth:** Lot **unkyndely:** unnaturally
486 **unwityngly:** unknowingly
487 **nyste** = *ne wiste,* did not know
488 **Herodes:** Herod **stories:** histories (or possibly the gospel narratives in Matthew 14 and Mark 6)
489 **repleet:** filled
492 **Senec:** Seneca
495 **dronkelewe:** addicted to drink
497 **Persevereth:** lasts
499 **confusioun:** ruin

Adam oure fader, and his wyf also, 505
Fro Paradys to labour and to wo
Were dryven for that vice, it is no drede.
For whil that Adam fasted, as I rede,
He was in Paradys; and whan that he
Eet of the fruyt deffended on the tree, 510
Anon he was out cast to wo and peyne.
O glotonye, on thee wel oghte us pleyne!
O, wiste a man how manye maladyes
Folwen of excesse and of glotonyes,
He wolde been the moore mesurable 515
Of his diete, sittynge at his table.
Allas, the shorte throte, the tendre mouth,
Maketh that est and west and north and south,
In erthe, in eir, in water, men to swynke 519
To gete a glotoun deyntee mete and drynke!
Of this matiere, O Paul, wel kanstow trete:
"Mete unto wombe, and wombe eek unto mete,
Shal God destroyen bothe," as Paulus seith.
Allas, a foul thyng is it, by my feith,
To seye this word, and fouler is the dede, 525
Whan man so drynketh of the white and rede
That of his throte he maketh his pryvee
Thurgh thilke cursed superfluitee.
The apostel wepyng seith ful pitously,
"Ther walken manye of whiche yow toold have I — 530
I seye it now wepyng, with pitous voys —
They been enemys of Cristes croys,
Of whiche the ende is deeth; wombe is hir god!"
O wombe! O bely! O stynkyng cod,
Fulfilled of dong and of corrupcioun! 535
At either ende of thee foul is the soun.
How greet labour and cost is thee to fynde!
Thise cookes, how they stampe, and streyne, and grynde,
And turnen substaunce into accident
To fulfille al thy likerous talent! 540
Out of the harde bones knokke they
The mary, for they caste noght awey
That may go thurgh the golet softe and swoote.

510 **deffended:** forbidden
515 **mesurable:** temperate
519 **swynke:** labor
521 **Paul:** St. Paul the apostle **trete:** treat, discuss
522 **wombe:** belly
526 **white and rede:** wines
529 **The apostel:** St. Paul
534 **cod:** bag, belly
535 **corrupcioun:** decayed matter
537 **thee to fynde:** to provide food for you
538 **stampe:** pound
539 **substaunce into accident:** the inner reality into the outward appearance
540 **likerous:** greedy **talent:** desire, inclination
542 **mary:** marrow
543 **golet:** gullet **swoote:** sweet

Of spicerie of leef, and bark, and roote
Shal been his sauce ymaked by delit, 545
To make hym yet a newer appetit.
But, certes, he that haunteth swiche delices
Is deed, whil that he lyveth in tho vices.
A lecherous thyng is wyn, and dronkenesse
Is ful of stryvyng and of wrecchednesse. 550
O dronke man, disfigured is thy face,
Sour is thy breeth, foul artow to embrace,
And thurgh thy dronke nose semeth the soun
As though thou seydest ay "Sampsoun, Sampsoun!"
And yet, God woot, Sampsoun drank nevere no wyn. 555
Thou fallest as it were a styked swyn;
Thy tonge is lost, and al thyn honeste cure,
For dronkenesse is verray sepulture
Of mannes wit and his discrecioun.
In whom that drynke hath dominacioun 560
He kan no conseil kepe; it is no drede.
Now kepe yow fro the white and fro the rede,
And namely fro the white wyn of Lepe
That is to selle in Fysshstrete or in Chepe.
This wyn of Spaigne crepeth subtilly 565
In othere wynes, growynge faste by,
Of which ther ryseth swich fumositee
That whan a man hath dronken draughtes thre,
And weneth that he be at hoom in Chepe,
He is in Spaigne, right at the toune of Lepe —
Nat at the Rochele, ne at Burdeux toun — 571
And thanne wol he seye "Sampsoun, Sampsoun!"
But herkneth, lordynges, o word, I yow preye,
That alle the sovereyn actes, dar I seye,
Of victories in the Olde Testament, 575
Thurgh verray God, that is omnipotent,
Were doon in abstinence and in preyere.
Looketh the Bible, and ther ye may it leere.
Looke, Attilla, the grete conquerour, 579
Deyde in his sleep, with shame and dishonour,
Bledynge ay at his nose in dronkenesse.
A capitayn sholde lyve in sobrenesse.
And over al this, avyseth yow right wel

545 **by:** for
547 **delices:** delicacies
550 **stryvyng:** strife, quarrelling
554 **Sampsoun:** Samson (cf. VII.2055)
556 **styked swyn:** stuck pig
557 **honeste cure:** care for decency, self-respect
563 **Lepe:** wine-growing district in Spain
564 **Fysshstrete, Chepe:** streets in London
567 **fumositee:** vapors (rising from the stomach to the head)
571 **Rochele, Burdeux toun:** La Rochelle, Bordeaux, wine-growing districts in France
579 **Attilla:** king of the Huns
582 **sobrenesse:** sobriety

What was comaunded unto Lamuel —
Nat Samuel, but Lamuel, seye I; 585
Redeth the Bible, and fynde it expresly
Of wyn-yevyng to hem that han justise.
Namoore of this, for it may wel suffise.
And now that I have spoken of glotonye,
Now wol I yow deffenden hasardrye. 590
Hasard is verray mooder of lesynges,
And of deceite, and cursed forswerynges,
Blaspheme of Crist, manslaughtre, and wast also
Of catel and of tyme; and forthermo,
It is repreeve and contrarie of honour 595
For to ben holde a commune hasardour.
And ever the hyer he is of estaat,
The moore is he yholden desolaat.
If that a prynce useth hasardrye,
In alle governaunce and policye 600
He is, as by commune opinioun,
Yholde the lasse in reputacioun.
Stilboun, that was a wys embassadour,
Was sent to Corynthe in ful greet honour
Fro Lacidomye to make hire alliaunce. 605
And whan he cam, hym happede, par chaunce,
That alle the gretteste that were of that lond,
Pleyynge atte hasard he hem fond.
For which, as soone as it myghte be,
He stal hym hoom agayn to his contree, 610
And seyde, "Ther wol I nat lese my name,
Ne I wol nat take on me so greet defame,
Yow for to allie unto none hasardours.
Sendeth othere wise embassadours;
For, by my trouthe, me were levere dye 615
Than I yow sholde to hasardours allye.
For ye, that been so glorious in honours,
Shul nat allyen yow with hasardours
As by my wyl, ne as by my tretee."
This wise philosophre, thus seyde hee. 620
Looke eek that to the kyng Demetrius
The kyng of Parthes, as the book seith us,
Sente him a paire of dees of gold in scorn,
For he hadde used hasard ther-biforn;
For which he heeld his glorie or his renoun 625
At no value or reputacioun.

584 Lamuel: Lemuel, biblical king of Massa
587 wyn-yevyng: giving wine justise: the duty of rendering justice
590 deffenden: forbid hasardrye: gambling
591 Hasard: dicing lesynges: lies
592 forswerynges: perjuries
594 catel: property
603 Stilboun: possibly the Greek philosopher Stilbo
604 Corynthe: Corinth, a Peloponnesian city noted for luxury
605 Lacidomye: Lacedaemon, Sparta
622 Parthes: Parthia, northern Persia

Lordes may fynden oother maner pley
Honest ynough to dryve the day awey.
Now wol I speke of othes false and grete
A word or two, as olde bookes trete. 630
Gret sweryng is a thyng abhominable,
And fals sweryng is yet moore reprevable.
The heighe God forbad sweryng at al,
Witnesse on Mathew; but in special
Of sweryng seith the hooly Jeremye, 635
"Thou shalt swere sooth thyne othes, and nat lye,
And swere in doom and eek in rightwisnesse";
But ydel sweryng is a cursednesse.
Bihoold and se that in the firste table
Of heighe Goddes heestes honurable, 640
Hou that the seconde heeste of hym is this:
"Take nat my name in ydel or amys."
Lo, rather he forbedeth swich sweryng
Than homycide or many a cursed thyng;
I seye that, as by ordre, thus it stondeth; 645
This knoweth, that his heestes understondeth,
How that the seconde heeste of God is that.
And forther over, I wol thee telle al plat
That vengeance shal nat parten from his hous
That of his othes is to outrageous. 650
"By Goddes precious herte," and "By his nayles,"
And "By the blood of Crist that is in Hayles,
Sevene is my chaunce, and thyn is cynk and treye!"
"By Goddes armes, if thou falsly pleye, 654
This daggere shal thurghout thyn herte go!" —
This fruyt cometh of the bicched bones two,
Forsweryng, ire, falsnesse, homycide.
Now, for the love of Crist, that for us dyde,
Lete youre othes, bothe grete and smale.
But, sires, now wol I telle forth my tale. 660
Thise riotoures thre of whiche I telle,
Longe erst er prime rong of any belle,

631 Gret sweryng: frequent swearing
632 reprevable: blameworthy
634 Mathew: St. Matthew
635 Jeremye: Jeremiah the prophet
637 rightwisnesse: justice
638 ydel sweryng: profanity
639 firste table: the first three commandments
641 seconde heeste: second commandment
643 rather: earlier (in the ten commandments)
646 that: he who
648 forther over: furthermore al plat: flatly
650 outrageous: excessive
651 nayles: nails
652 Hayles: Hales Abbey in Gloucestershire
653 chaunce: a call in dicing (the number the shooter is trying to roll) cynk: five treye: three
656 bicched bones: cursed dice
661 riotoures: debauchers, profligates
662 erst er: before prime: first hour of the day, beginning about 6 A.M.

Were set hem in a taverne to drynke,
And as they sat, they herde a belle clynke
Biforn a cors, was caried to his grave. 665
That oon of hem gan callen to his knave:
"Go bet," quod he, "and axe redily
What cors is this that passeth heer forby;
And looke that thou reporte his name weel."
"Sire," quod this boy, "it nedeth never-a-deel; 670
It was me toold er ye cam heer two houres.
He was, pardee, an old felawe of youres,
And sodeynly he was yslayn to-nyght,
Fordronke, as he sat on his bench upright.
Ther cam a privee theef men clepeth Deeth,
That in this contree al the peple sleeth, 676
And with his spere he smoot his herte atwo,
And wente his wey withouten wordes mo.
He hath a thousand slayn this pestilence.
And, maister, er ye come in his presence, 680
Me thynketh that it were necessarie
For to be war of swich an adversarie.
Beth redy for to meete hym everemoore;
Thus taughte me my dame; I sey namoore."
"By Seinte Marie!" seyde this taverner, 685
"The child seith sooth, for he hath slayn this yeer,
Henne over a mile, withinne a greet village,
Bothe man and womman, child, and hyne, and page;
I trowe his habitacioun be there.
To been avysed greet wysdom it were, 690
Er that he dide a man a dishonour."
"Ye, Goddes armes!" quod this riotour,
"Is it swich peril with hym for to meete?
I shal hym seke by wey and eek by strete,
I make avow to Goddes digne bones! 695
Herkneth, felawes, we thre been al ones;
Lat ech of us holde up his hand til oother,
And ech of us bicomen otheres brother,
And we wol sleen this false traytour Deeth.
He shal be slayn, he that so manye sleeth, 700
By Goddes dignitee, er it be nyght!"
Togidres han thise thre hir trouthes plight
To lyve and dyen ech of hem for oother,
As though he were his owene ybore brother.
And up they stirte, al dronken in this rage, 705
And forth they goon towardes that village
Of which the taverner hadde spoke biforn.
And many a grisly ooth thanne han they sworn,
And Cristes blessed body they torente — 709
Deeth shal be deed, if that they may hym hente!
Whan they han goon nat fully half a mile,
Right as they wolde han troden over a stile,
An oold man and a povre with hem mette.
This olde man ful mekely hem grette,
And seyde thus, "Now, lordes, God yow see!"
The proudeste of thise riotoures three 716
Answerde agayn, "What, carl, with sory grace!
Why artow al forwrapped save thy face?
Why lyvestow so longe in so greet age?"
This olde man gan looke in his visage, 720
And seyde thus: "For I ne kan nat fynde
A man, though that I walked into Ynde,
Neither in citee ne in no village,
That wolde chaunge his youthe for myn age;
And therfore moot I han myn age stille, 725
As longe tyme as it is Goddes wille.
Ne Deeth, allas, ne wol nat han my lyf.
Thus walke I, lyk a restelees kaityf,
And on the ground, which is my moodres gate,
I knokke with my staf, bothe erly and late, 730
And seye 'Leeve mooder, leet me in!
Lo how I vanysshe, flessh, and blood, and skyn!
Allas, whan shul my bones been at reste?
Mooder, with yow wolde I chaunge my cheste
That in my chambre longe tyme hath be, 735
Ye, for an heyre clowt to wrappe me!'
But yet to me she wol nat do that grace,
For which ful pale and welked is my face.
"But, sires, to yow it is no curteisye
To speken to an old man vileynye, 740
But he trespasse in word or elles in dede.
In Hooly Writ ye may yourself wel rede:
'Agayns an oold man, hoor upon his heed,
Ye sholde arise;' wherfore I yeve yow reed,
Ne dooth unto an oold man noon harm now, 745
Namoore than that ye wolde men did to yow

665 cors: corpse
667 Go bet: go quickly
670 boy: servant it nedeth never-a-deel: it is not at all necessary
674 Fordronke: very drunk
675 men clepeth: one calls, is called
679 this pestilence: during this plague
684 dame: mother
687 Henne: hence, from here
688 hyne: hind, farm worker page: serving boy
690 avysed: forewarned
698 brother: sworn brother
702 plight: pledged
709 torente: tore to pieces
715 God yow see: may God look after you
717 carl: fellow with sory grace: bad luck to you
718 forwrapped: completely wrapped up
722 Ynde: India; i.e., the most remote place on earth
728 kaityf: wretch
731 Leeve: dear
732 vanysshe: waste away
734 cheste: strongbox for valuables
736 heyre clowt: haircloth
738 welked: withered

In age, if that ye so longe abyde.
And God be with yow, where ye go or ryde!
I moot go thider as I have to go."
"Nay, olde cherl, by God, thou shalt nat so,"
Seyde this oother hasardour anon; 751
"Thou partest nat so lightly, by Seint John!
Thou spak right now of thilke traytour Deeth.
That in this contree alle oure freendes sleeth.
Have heer my trouthe, as thou art his espye,
Telle where he is or thou shalt it abye, 756
By God and by the hooly sacrement!
For soothly thou art oon of his assent
To sleen us yonge folk, thou false theef!" 759
"Now, sires," quod he, "if that yow be so leef
To fynde Deeth, turne up this croked wey,
For in that grove I lafte hym, by my fey,
Under a tree, and there he wole abyde;
Noght for youre boost he wole him no thyng hyde.
Se ye that ook? Right there ye shal hym fynde. 765
God save yow, that boghte agayn mankynde,
And yow amende!" Thus seyde this olde man;
And everich of thise riotoures ran
Til he cam to that tree, and ther they founde
Of floryns fyne of gold ycoyned rounde 770
Wel ny an eighte busshels, as hem thoughte.
No lenger thanne after Deeth they soughte,
But ech of hem so glad was of that sighte,
For that the floryns been so faire and brighte,
That doun they sette hem by this precious hoord. 775
The worste of hem, he spak the firste word.
"Bretheren," quod he, "taak kep what that I seye;
My wit is greet, though that I bourde and pleye.
This tresor hath Fortune unto us yiven
In myrthe and joliftee oure lyf to lyven, 780
And lightly as it comth, so wol we spende.
Ey, Goddes precious dignitee! Who wende
To-day that we sholde han so fair a grace?
But myghte this gold be caried fro this place
Hoom to myn hous, or elles unto youres — 785
For wel ye woot that al this gold is oures —
Thanne were we in heigh felicitee.
But trewely, by daye it may nat bee.
Men wolde seyn that we were theves stronge,
And for oure owene tresor doon us honge. 790
This tresor moste ycaried be by nyghte
As wisely and as slyly as it myghte.
Wherfore I rede that cut among us alle
Be drawe, and lat se wher the cut wol falle;
And he that hath the cut with herte blithe 795
Shal renne to the town, and that ful swithe,
And brynge us breed and wyn ful prively.
And two of us shul kepen subtilly
This tresor wel; and if he wol nat tarie,
Whan it is nyght, we wol this tresor carie, 800
By oon assent, where as us thynketh best."
That oon of hem the cut broghte in his fest,
And bad hem drawe and looke where it wol falle;
And it fil on the yongeste of hem alle,
And forth toward the toun he wente anon. 805
And also soone as that he was gon,
That oon of hem spak thus unto that oother:
"Thow knowest wel thou art my sworen brother;
Thy profit wol I telle thee anon.
Thou woost wel that oure felawe is agon. 810
And heere is gold, and that ful greet plentee,
That shal departed been among us thre.
But nathelees, if I kan shape it so
That it departed were among us two,
Hadde I nat doon a freendes torn to thee?" 815
That oother answerde, "I noot hou that may be.
He woot that the gold is with us tweye;
What shal we doon? What shal we to hym seye?"
"Shal it be conseil?" seyde the firste shrewe,
"And I shal tellen in a wordes fewe 820
What we shal doon, and brynge it wel aboute."
"I graunte," quod that oother, "out of doute,
That, by my trouthe, I wol thee nat biwreye."
"Now," quod the firste, "thou woost wel we be tweye,
And two of us shul strenger be than oon. 825
Looke whan that he is set, that right anoon
Arys as though thou woldest with hym pleye,
And I shal ryve hym thurgh the sydes tweye
Whil that thou strogelest with hym as in game,
And with thy daggere looke thou do the same;

747 abyde: remain (alive)
758 oon of his assent: in league with him
765 ook: oak
766 boghte agayn: redeemed
770 floryns: gold coins
778 bourde: jest
779 tresor: treasure
789 theves stronge: arrant thieves
790 doon us honge: have us hanged
793–94 cut . . . Be drawe: lots be drawn
796 ful swithe: very quickly
815 freendes torn: friend's turn, friendly act
823 biwreye: betray
828 ryve: stab

And thanne shal al this gold departed be, 831
My deere freend, bitwixen me and thee.
Thanne may we bothe oure lustes all fulfille,
And pleye at dees right at oure owene wille."
And thus acorded been thise shrewes tweye
To sleen the thridde, as ye han herd me seye. 836
This yongeste, which that wente to the toun,
Ful ofte in herte he rolleth up and doun
The beautee of thise floryns newe and brighte.
"O Lord!" quod he, "if so were that I myghte
Have al this tresor to myself allone, 841
Ther is no man that lyveth under the trone
Of God that sholde lyve so murye as I!"
And atte laste the feend, oure enemy, 844
Putte in his thought that he sholde poyson beye,
With which he myghte sleen his felawes tweye;
For-why the feend foond hym in swich lyvynge
That he hadde leve him to sorwe brynge.
For this was outrely his fulle entente,
To sleen hem bothe and nevere to repente. 850
And forth he gooth, no lenger wolde he tarie,
Into the toun, unto a pothecarie,
And preyde hym that he hym wolde selle
Som poyson, that he myghte his rattes quelle;
And eek ther was a polcat in his hawe, 855
That, as he seyde, his capouns hadde yslawe,
And fayn he wolde wreke hym, if he myghte,
On vermyn that destroyed hym by nyghte.
The pothecarie answerde, "And thou shalt have
A thyng that, also God my soule save, 860
In al this world ther is no creature
That eten or dronken hath of this confiture
Noght but the montance of a corn of whete,
That he ne shal his lif anon forlete;
Ye, sterve he shal, and that in lasse while 865
Than thou wolt goon a paas nat but a mile,
This poysoun is so strong and violent."
This cursed man hath in his hond yhent
This poysoun in a box, and sith he ran
Into the nexte strete unto a man, 870
And borwed [of] hym large botelles thre,
And in the two his poyson poured he;
The thridde he kepte clene for his drynke.
For al the nyght he shoop hym for to swynke
In cariynge of the gold out of that place. 875
And whan this riotour, with sory grace,
Hadde filled with wyn his grete botels thre,
To his felawes agayn repaireth he.
What nedeth it to sermone of it moore? 879
For right as they hadde cast his deeth bifoore,
Right so they han hym slayn, and that anon.
And whan that this was doon, thus spak that oon:
"Now lat us sitte and drynke, and make us merie,
And afterward we wol his body berie." 884
And with that word it happed hym, par cas,
To take the botel ther the poyson was,
And drank, and yaf his felawe drynke also,
For which anon they storven bothe two.
But certes, I suppose that Avycen
Wroot nevere in no canon, ne in no fen, 890
Mo wonder signes of empoisonyng
Than hadde thise wrecches two, er hir endyng.
Thus ended been thise homycides two,
And eek the false empoysonere also.
O cursed synne of alle cursednesse! 895
O traytours homycide, O wikkednesse!
O glotonye, luxurie, and hasardrye!
Thou blasphemour of Crist with vileynye
And othes grete, of usage and of pride!
Allas, mankynde, how may it bitide 900
That to thy creatour, which that the wroghte
And with his precious herte-blood thee boghte,
Thou art so fals and so unkynde, allas?
Now, goode men, God foryeve yow youre trespas,
And ware yow fro the synne of avarice! 905
Myn hooly pardoun may yow alle warice,
So that ye offre nobles or sterlynges,
Or elles silver broches, spoones, rynges.
Boweth youre heed under this hooly bulle! 909
Cometh up, ye wyves, offreth of youre wolle!
Youre names I entre heer in my rolle anon;
Into the blisse of hevene shul ye gon.

838 **rolleth up and doun:** meditates on
842 **trone:** throne
848 **leve:** permission
852 **pothecarie:** apothecary
854 **quelle:** kill
855 **polcat:** weasel **hawe:** yard
857 **wreke hym:** revenge himself
858 **vermyn:** animal pests **destroyed:** were ruining
862 **confiture:** concoction
863 **montance:** amount, size **corn:** grain
864 **forlete:** lose
865 **sterve:** die **while:** time
866 **a paas:** at a walk
874 **shoop hym:** intended
885 **par cas:** by chance
889 **Avycen:** Avicenna, Arabic author of a medical treatise
890 **canon:** set of rules **fen:** a division of Avicenna's book
891 **empoisonyng:** poisoning
894 **empoysonere:** poisoner
897 **luxurie:** lechery
899 **usage:** habit
903 **unkynde:** unnatural
906 **warice:** cure, save
907 **nobles:** gold coins **sterlynges:** silver pennies
910 **wolle:** wool

I yow assoille, by myn heigh power,
Yow that wol offre, as clene and eek as cleer
As ye were born. — And lo, sires, thus I preche.
And Jhesu Crist, that is oure soules leche, 916
So graunte yow his pardoun to receyve,
For that is best; I wol yow nat deceyve.
But, sires, o word forgat I in my tale:
I have relikes and pardoun in my male, 920
As faire as any man in Engelond,
Whiche were me yeven by the popes hond.
If any of yow wole, of devocion,
Offren and han myn absolucion,
Com forth anon, and kneleth heere adoun, 925
And mekely receyveth my pardoun;
Or elles taketh pardoun as ye wende,
Al newe and fressh at every miles ende,
So that ye offren, alwey newe and newe,
Nobles or pens, whiche that be goode and trewe. 930
It is an honour to everich that is heer
That ye mowe have a suffisant pardoneer
T'assoille yow in contree as ye ryde,
For aventures whiche that may bityde.
Paraventure ther may fallen oon or two 935
Doun of his hors and breke his nekke atwo.
Looke which a seuretee is it to yow alle
That I am in youre felaweshipe yfalle,
That may assoille yow, bothe moore and lasse,
Whan that the soule shal fro the body passe.
I rede that oure Hoost heere shal bigynne, 941
For he is moost envoluped in synne.
Com forth, sire Hoost, and offre first anon,
And thou shalt kisse the relikes everychon,
Ye, for a grote! Unbokele anon thy purs." 945
"Nay, nay!" quod he, "thanne have I Cristes curs!
Lat be," quod he, "it shal nat be, so theech!
Thou woldest make me kisse thyn olde breech,
And swere it were a relyk of a seint, 949
Though it were with thy fundement depeint!
But, by the croys which that Seint Eleyne fond,
I wolde I hadde thy coillons in myn hond
In stide of relikes or of seintuarie.
Lat kutte hem of, I wol thee helpe hem carie;
They shul be shryned in an hogges toord!" 955
This Pardoner answerde nat a word;
So wrooth he was, no word ne wolde he seye.
"Now," quod oure Hoost, "I wol no lenger pleye
With thee, ne with noon oother angry man."
But right anon the worthy Knyght bigan, 960
Whan that he saugh that al the peple lough,
"Namoore of this, for it is right ynough!
Sire Pardoner, be glad and myrie of cheere;
And ye, sire Hoost, that been to me so deere,
I prey yow that ye kisse the Pardoner. 965
And Pardoner, I prey thee, drawe thee neer,
And, as we diden, lat us laughe and pleye."
Anon they kiste, and ryden forth hir weye.

Heere is ended the Pardoners Tale.

913 assoille: absolve
916 leche: physician
917 graunte: allow
920 pardoun: pardons, papal indulgences male: pouch, bag
937 which a: what a seuretee: safeguard
942 envoluped: enveloped
945 grote: groat, a silver coin worth four pence
946 Cristes curs: damnation
947 so theech = *so thee ich*, as I may prosper (I swear)
948 breech: underpants
950 fundement: anus depeint: stained
951 croys: cross Seint Eleyne: St. Helen, discoverer of the true cross
952 coillons: testicles
953 seintuarie: sanctuary, box for relics
955 shryned: enshrined toord: turd
968 ryden: rode

Fragment VII (Group B²)

THE SHIPMAN'S TALE

Heere bigynneth the Shipmannes Tale.

A marchant whilom dwelled at Seint-Denys,
That riche was, for which men helde hym wys.
A wyf he hadde of excellent beautee;
And compaignable and revelous was she, 4
Which is a thyng that causeth more dispence
Than worth is al the chiere and reverence
That men hem doon at festes and at daunces.
Swiche salutaciouns and contenaunces
Passen as dooth a shadwe upon the wal;
But wo is hym that payen moot for al! *1200
The sely housbonde, algate he moot paye,
He moot us clothe, and he moot us arraye,
Al for his owene worshipe richely,
In which array we daunce jolily.
And if that he noght may, par aventure, 15
Or ellis list no swich dispence endure,
But thynketh it is wasted and ylost,
Thanne moot another payen for oure cost,
Or lene us gold, and that is perilous.
This noble marchaunt heeld a worthy hous, *1210
For which he hadde alday so greet repair
For his largesse, and for his wyf was fair,
That wonder is; but herkneth to my tale.
Amonges alle his gestes, grete and smale,
Ther was a monk, a fair man and a boold — 25
I trowe a thritty wynter he was oold —
That evere in oon was drawynge to that place.
This yonge monk, that was so fair of face,
Aqueynted was so with the goode man,
Sith that hir firste knoweliche bigan, *1220
That in his hous as famulier was he
As it is possible any freend to be.
And for as muchel as this goode man,
And eek this monk of which that I bigan,
Were bothe two yborn in o village, 35
The monk hym claymeth as for cosynage,
And he agayn; he seith nat ones nay,
But was as glad therof as fowel of day,
For to his herte it was a greet plesaunce.
Thus been they knyt with eterne alliaunce,
And ech of hem gan oother for t'assure *1231
Of bretherhede whil that hir lyf may dure.
Free was daun John, and manly of dispence,
As in that hous, and ful of diligence
To doon plesaunce, and also greet costage. 45
He noght forgat to yeve the leeste page
In al that hous; but after hir degree,
He yaf the lord, and sitthe al his meynee, *1238
Whan that he cam, som manere honest thyng,
For which they were as glad of his comyng
As fowel is fayn whan that the sonne up riseth.
Na moore of this as now, for it suffiseth.
But so bifel, this marchant on a day
Shoop hym to make redy his array
Toward the toun of Brugges for to fare, 55
To byen there a porcioun of ware;
For which he hath to Parys sent anon
A messager, and preyed hath daun John
That he sholde come to Seint-Denys to pleye
With hym and with his wyf a day or tweye,
Er he to Brugges wente, in alle wise. *1251
This noble monk, of which I yow devyse,
Hath of his abbot, as hym list, licence,
By cause he was a man of heigh prudence

*For the convenience of the reader in finding references, the traditional numbering of Group B², marked with asterisks, is carried alternately with that of Fragment VII.

1 **Seint-Denys:** a town north of Paris
4 **compaignable:** sociable **revelous:** convivial, fond of revelry
5 **dispence:** expense
6 **chiere:** attention
8 **contenaunces:** courtesies
11 **sely:** poor
13 **worshipe:** honor
20 **heeld a worthy hous:** maintained his household generously
21 **alday:** daily **so greet repair:** so many visitors
22 **largesse:** generosity
26 **a thritty wynter:** about thirty years
27 **evere in oon:** always
29 **goode man:** the goodman, or head of the household
30 **knoweliche:** acquaintance
36 **cosynage:** kinship
42 **bretherhede:** sworn brotherhood
43 **manly:** generous
45 **doon . . . greet costage:** spend much money
54 **Shoop hym:** prepared
55 **Brugges:** Bruges, now in Belgium
56 **porcioun:** quantity **ware:** goods

And eek an officer, out for to ryde, 65
To seen hir graunges and hire bernes wyde,
And unto Seint-Denys he comth anon.
Who was so welcome as my lord daun John,
Oure deere cosyn, ful of curteisye?
With hym broghte he a jubbe of malvesye,
And eek another ful of fyn vernage, *1261
And volatyl, as ay was his usage.
And thus I lete hem ete and drynke and pleye,
This marchant and this monk, a day or tweye.
The thridde day, this marchant up ariseth,
And on his nedes sadly hym avyseth, 76
And up into his countour-hous gooth he
To rekene with hymself, wel may be,
Of thilke yeer how that it with hym stood,
And how that he despended hadde his good,
And if that he encressed were or noon. *1271
His bookes and his bagges many oon
He leith biforn hym on his countyng-bord.
Ful riche was his tresor and his hord, 84
For which ful faste his countour-dore he shette;
And eek he nolde that no man sholde hym lette
Of his acountes, for the meene tyme;
And thus he sit til it was passed pryme.
Daun John was rysen in the morwe also,
And in the gardyn walketh to and fro, *1280
And hath his thynges seyd ful curteisly.
This goode wyf cam walkynge pryvely
Into the gardyn, there he walketh softe,
And hym saleweth, as she hath doon ofte.
A mayde child cam in hire compaignye, 95
Which as hir list she may governe and gye,
For yet under the yerde was the mayde.
"O deere cosyn myn, daun John," she sayde,
"What eyleth yow so rathe for to ryse?"
"Nece," quod he, "it oghte ynough suffise
Fyve houres for to slepe upon a nyght, *1291
But it were for an old appalled wight,
As been thise wedded men, that lye and dare
As in a fourme sit a wery hare,
Were al forstraught with houndes grete and smale.
But deere nece, why be ye so pale? 106
I trowe, certes, that oure goode man
Hath yow laboured sith the nyght bigan
That yow were nede to resten hastily."
And with that word he lough ful murily, *1300
And of his owene thought he wax al reed.
This faire wyf gan for to shake hir heed
And seyde thus, "Ye, God woot al," quod she.
"Nay, cosyn myn, it stant nat so with me;
For, by that God that yaf me soule and lyf,
In al the reawme of France is ther no wyf 116
That lasse lust hath to that sory pley.
For I may synge 'allas and weylawey
That I was born,' but to no wight," quod she,
"Dar I nat telle how that it stant with me.
Wherfore I thynke out of this land to wende,
Or elles of myself to make an ende, *1312
So ful am I of drede and eek of care."
This monk bigan upon this wyf to stare,
And seyde, "Allas, my nece, God forbede 125
That ye, for any sorwe or any drede,
Fordo youreself; but telleth me youre grief.
Paraventure I may, in youre meschief,
Conseille or helpe; and therfore telleth me
Al youre anoy, for it shal been secree. *1320
For on my portehors I make an ooth
That nevere in my lyf, for lief ne looth,
Ne shal I of no conseil yow biwreye."
"The same agayn to yow," quod she, "I seye.
By God and by this portehors I swere, 135
Though men me wolde al into pieces tere,
Ne shal I nevere, for to goon to helle,
Biwreye a word of thyng that ye me telle,
Nat for no cosynage ne alliance,
But verraily for love and affiance." *1330
Thus been they sworn, and heerupon they kiste,
And ech of hem tolde oother what hem liste.
"Cosyn," quod she, "if that I hadde a space,
As I have noon, and namely in this place,
Thanne wolde I telle a legende of my lyf, 145

65 officer: probably cellarer
66 graunges: outlying farms
69 cosyn: kinsman
70 jubbe: a large container, jug malvesye: malmsey
71 vernage: white Italian wine (vernaccia)
72 volatyl: game fowl
76 nedes: business duties
86 lette: disturb
88 pryme: 9 A.M.
91 thynges: devotions
97 under the yerde: subject to (adult) authority
99 rathe: early
100 Nece: kinswoman
102 appalled: pallid, feeble
103 dare: lie motionless or dozing
104 fourme: form (a grassy, often sheltered, hollow)
105 forstraught: distraught
108 laboured: put to work
116 reawme: realm
117 lust: pleasure
130 anoy: trouble
131 portehors: breviary
133 biwreye: expose, betray
140 affiance: trust
143 space: time, space of time
145 legende: saint's life

What I have suffred sith I was a wyf
With myn housbonde, al be he youre cosyn."
"Nay," quod this monk, "by God and Seint Martyn,
He is na moore cosyn unto me *1339
Than is this leef that hangeth on the tree!
I clepe hym so, by Seint Denys of Fraunce,
To have the moore cause of aqueyntaunce
Of yow, which I have loved specially
Aboven alle wommen, sikerly.
This swere I yow on my professioun. 155
Telleth youre grief, lest that he come adoun;
And hasteth yow, and gooth youre wey anon."
"My deere love," quod she, "O my daun John,
Ful lief were me this conseil for to hyde,
But out it moot; I may namoore abyde.
Myn housbonde is to me the worste man *1351
That evere was sith that the world bigan.
But sith I am a wyf, it sit nat me
To tellen no wight of oure privetee,
Neither abedde ne in noon oother place; 165
God shilde I sholde it tellen, for his grace!
A wyf ne shal nat seyn of hir housbonde
But al honour, as I kan understonde;
Save unto yow thus muche I tellen shal:
As helpe me God, he is noght worth at al *1360
In no degree the value of a flye.
But yet me greveth moost his nygardye.
And wel ye woot that wommen naturelly
Desiren thynges sixe as wel as I:
They wolde that hir housbondes sholde be 175
Hardy and wise, and riche, and therto free,
And buxom unto his wyf and fressh abedde.
But by that ilke Lord that for us bledde,
For his honour, myself for to arraye,
A Sonday next I moste nedes paye *1370
An hundred frankes, or ellis I am lorn.
Yet were me levere that I were unborn
Than me were doon a sclaundre or vileynye;
And if myn housbonde eek it myghte espye,
I nere but lost; and therfore I yow preye, 185
Lene me this somme, or ellis moot I deye.

148 Seint Martyn: St. Martin of Tours
151 Seint Denys: St. Denis, patron saint of France
155 professioun: monastic vows
159 Ful lief were me: I would very much like
163 sit nat me: is not suitable for me
166 shilde: forbid
172 nygardye: miserliness
176 Hardy: vigorous free: generous
177 buxom: obedient
181 An hundred frankes: about fifteen pounds sterling
183 sclaundre: disgrace
185 nere but: would be (nothing else) but, would surely be

Daun John, I seye, lene me thise hundred frankes.
Pardee, I wol nat faille yow my thankes,
If that yow list to doon that I yow praye.
For at a certeyn day I wol yow paye, *1380
And doon to yow what plesance and service
That I may doon, right as yow list devise.
And but I do, God take on me vengeance
As foul as evere hadde Genylon of France."
This gentil monk answerde in this manere:
"Now trewely, myn owene lady deere, 196
I have," quod he, "on yow so greet a routhe
That I yow swere, and plighte yow my trouthe,
That whan youre housbonde is to Flaundres fare,
I wol delyvere yow out of this care; *1390
For I wol brynge yow an hundred frankes."
And with that word he caughte hire by the flankes,
And hire embraceth harde, and kiste hire ofte.
"Gooth now youre wey," quod he, "al stille and softe,
And lat us dyne as soone as that ye may; 205
For by my chilyndre it is pryme of day.
Gooth now, and beeth as trewe as I shal be."
"Now elles God forbede, sire," quod she;
And forth she gooth as jolif as a pye,
And bad the cookes that they sholde hem hye, *1400
So that men myghte dyne, and that anon.
Up to hir housbonde is this wyf ygon,
And knokketh at his countour boldely.
"Quy la?" quod he. "Peter! it am I,"
Quod she; "What, sire, how longe wol ye faste?
How longe tyme wol ye rekene and caste 216
Youre sommes, and youre bookes, and youre thynges?
The devel have part on alle swiche rekenynges!
Ye have ynough, pardee, of Goddes sonde;
Com doun to-day, and lat youre bagges stonde. *1410
Ne be ye nat ashamed that daun John
Shal fasting al this day alenge goon?
What, lat us heere a messe, and go we dyne."
"Wyf," quod this man, "litel kanstow devyne
The curious bisynesse that we have. 225

194 Genylon: Ganelon, who betrayed Roland; see n.
206 chilyndre: portable sundial
209 pye: magpie
213 countour: counting house
214 *Quy la?*: Who's there? Peter!: by St. Peter!
216 caste: calculate
219 Goddes sonde: what God has sent
222 alenge: miserable
225 curious bisynesse: worrisome preoccupations

For of us chapmen, also God me save,
And by that lord that clepid is Seint Yve,
Scarsly amonges twelve tweye shul thryve
Continuelly, lastynge unto oure age.
We may wel make chiere and good visage, *1420
And dryve forth the world as it may be,
And kepen oure estaat in pryvetee,
Til we be deed, or elles that we pleye
A pilgrymage, or goon out of the weye.
And therfore have I greet necessitee 235
Upon this queynte world t'avyse me,
For everemoore we moote stonde in drede
Of hap and fortune in oure chapmanhede.
"To Flaundres wol I go to-morwe at day,
And come agayn, as soone as evere I may. *1430
For which, my deere wyf, I thee biseke,
As be to every wight buxom and meke,
And for to kepe oure good be curious,
And honestly governe wel oure hous.
Thou hast ynough, in every maner wise, 245
That to a thrifty houshold may suffise.
Thee lakketh noon array ne no vitaille;
Of silver in thy purs shaltow nat faille."
And with that word his countour-dore he shette,
And doun he gooth, no lenger wolde he lette. *1440
But hastily a messe was ther seyd,
And spedily the tables were yleyd,
And to the dyner faste they hem spedde,
And richely this monk the chapman fedde.
At after-dyner daun John sobrely 255
This chapman took apart, and prively
He seyde hym thus: "Cosyn, it standeth so,
That wel I se to Brugges wol ye go.
God and Seint Austyn spede yow and gyde!
I prey yow, cosyn, wisely that ye ryde. *1450
Governeth yow also of youre diete
Atemprely, and namely in this hete.
Bitwix us two nedeth no strange fare;
Farewel, cosyn; God shilde yow fro care!

And if that any thyng by day or nyght, 265
If it lye in my power and my myght,
That ye me wol comande in any wyse,
It shal be doon right as ye wol devyse.
"O thyng, er that ye goon, if it may be,
I wolde prey yow: for to lene me *1460
An hundred frankes, for a wyke or tweye,
For certein beestes that I moste beye,
To stoore with a place that is oures.
God helpe me so, I wolde it were youres!
I shal nat faille surely of my day, 275
Nat for a thousand frankes, a mile way.
But lat this thyng be secree, I yow preye,
For yet to-nyght thise beestes moot I beye.
And fare now wel, myn owene cosyn deere;
Graunt mercy of youre cost and of youre cheere." *1470
This noble marchant gentilly anon
Answerde and seyde, "O cosyn myn, daun John,
Now sikerly this is a smal requeste.
My gold is youres, whan that it yow leste,
And nat oonly my gold, but my chaffare. 285
Take what yow list; God shilde that ye spare.
"But o thyng is, ye knowe it wel ynogh
Of chapmen, that hir moneie is hir plogh.
We may creaunce whil we have a name,
But goldlees for to be, it is no game. *1480
Paye it agayn whan it lith in youre ese;
After my myght ful fayn wolde I yow plese."
Thise hundred frankes he fette forth anon,
And prively he took hem to daun John. 294
No wight in al this world wiste of this loone
Savynge this marchant and daun John allone.
They drynke, and speke, and rome a while and pleye,
Til that daun John rideth to his abbeye.
The morwe cam, and forth this marchant rideth
To Flaundres-ward; his prentys wel hym gydeth *1490
Til he came into Brugges murily.
Now gooth this marchant faste and bisily
Aboute his nede, and byeth and creaunceth.
He neither pleyeth at the dees ne daunceth,

227 Seint Yve: St. Ivo (?); see n.
231 dryve forth: endure
233 pleye: play or go; see n.
234 goon out of the weye: disappear
236 queynte: tricky
238 hap: risk (chance happening) chapmanhede: business dealings
243 curious: diligent
246 thrifty: prosperous, thriving
248 faille: lack
259 Seint Austyn: St. Augustine of Hippo
262 Atemprely: moderately
263 strange fare: elaborate courtesies
264 shilde: protect

273 To stoore with: with which to stock
276 a mile way: by (so much as) twenty minutes
280 Graunt mercy: thank you
284 whan that it yow leste: when ever you please
285 chaffare: goods, merchandise
289 creaunce: borrow money, obtain credit
290 no game: no laughing matter
294 took: gave
295 loone: loan
303 creaunceth: obtains credit

But as a marchaunt, shortly for to telle, 305
He let his lyf, and there I lete hym dwelle.
The Sonday next the marchant was agon,
To Seint-Denys ycomen is daun John,
With crowne and berd al fressh and newe yshave. *1499
In al the hous ther nas so litel a knave,
Ne no wight elles, that he nas ful fayn
That my lord daun John was come agayn.
And shortly to the point right for to gon,
This faire wyf acorded with daun John
That for thise hundred frankes he sholde al nyght 315
Have hire in his armes bolt upright;
And this acord parfourned was in dede.
In myrthe al nyght a bisy lyf they lede
Til it was day, that daun John wente his way,
And bad the meynee "Farewel, have good day!" *1510
For noon of hem, ne no wight in the toun,
Hath of daun John right no suspecioun.
And forth he rydeth hoom to his abbeye,
Or where hym list; namoore of hym I seye.
This marchant, whan that ended was the faire,
To Seint-Denys he gan for to repaire, 326
And with his wyf he maketh feeste and cheere,
And telleth hire that chaffare is so deere
That nedes moste he make a chevyssaunce,
For he was bounden in a reconyssaunce *1520
To paye twenty thousand sheeld anon.
For which this marchant is to Parys gon
To borwe of certeine freendes that he hadde
A certeyn frankes; and somme with him he ladde.
And whan that he was come into the toun, 335
For greet chiertee and greet affeccioun,
Unto daun John he first gooth hym to pleye;
Nat for to axe or borwe of hym moneye,
But for to wite and seen of his welfare,
And for to tellen hym of his chaffare,
As freendes doon whan they been met yfeere. *1531

Daun John hym maketh feeste and murye cheere,
And he hym tolde agayn, ful specially,
How he hadde wel yboght and graciously,
Thanked be God, al hool his marchandise, 345
Save that he moste, in alle maner wise,
Maken a chevyssaunce, as for his beste,
And thanne he sholde been in joye and reste.
Daun John answerde, "Certes, I am fayn
That ye in heele ar comen hom agayn. *1540
And if that I were riche, as have I blisse,
Of twenty thousand sheeld sholde ye nat mysse,
For ye so kyndely this oother day
Lente me gold; and as I kan and may,
I thanke yow, by God and by Seint Jame! 355
But nathelees, I took unto oure dame,
Youre wyf, at hom, the same gold ageyn
Upon youre bench; she woot it wel, certeyn,
By certeyn tokenes that I kan hire telle.
Now, by youre leve, I may no lenger dwelle; *1550
Oure abbot wole out of this toun anon,
And in his compaignye moot I goon.
Grete wel oure dame, myn owene nece sweete,
And fare wel, deere cosyn, til we meete!"
This marchant, which that was ful war and wys,
Creanced hath, and payd eek in Parys 366
To certeyn Lumbardes, redy in hir hond,
The somme of gold, and gat of hem his bond;
And hoom he gooth, murie as a papejay,
For wel he knew he stood in swich array *1560
That nedes moste he wynne in that viage
A thousand frankes aboven al his costage.
His wyf ful redy mette hym atte gate,
As she was wont of oold usage algate,
And al that nyght in myrthe they bisette; 375
For he was riche and cleerly out of dette.
Whan it was day, this marchant gan embrace
His wyf al newe, and kiste hire on hir face,
And up he gooth and maketh it ful tough.

306 **let his lyf:** leads (*let* = *ledeth*) his life, conducts himself
309 **crowne:** head
316 **bolt upright:** flat on her back
326 **repaire:** return
328 **chaffare:** merchandise
329 **chevyssaunce:** loan; see Expl. Notes on the business transaction described in lines 328–34.
330 **reconyssaunce:** formal pledge
331 **sheeld:** units of exchange
334 **A certeyn:** a certain number of
336 **chiertee:** fondness
341 **yfeere:** together
343 **ful specially:** in great detail
344 **graciously:** successfully
350 **heele:** good health
354 **kan and may:** know how and can
355 **Seint Jame:** St. James of Compostella
356 **took:** gave
359 **tokenes:** confirmatory details, proofs
367 **Lumbardes:** Lombard bankers **redy in hir hond:** promptly and in cash
369 **papejay:** parrot
371 **viage:** undertaking
372 **aboven:** in addition to **costage:** expense
379 **maketh it ful tough:** is unrelenting in his demands

"Namoore," quod she, "by God, ye have ynough!" *1570
And wantownly agayn with hym she pleyde
Til atte laste thus this marchant seyde:
"By God," quod he, "I am a litel wrooth
With yow, my wyf, although it be me looth.
And woot ye why? By God, as that I gesse 385
That ye han maad a manere straungenesse
Bitwixen me and my cosyn daun John.
Ye sholde han warned me, er I had gon,
That he yow hadde an hundred frankes payed
By redy token; and heeld hym yvele apayed,
For that I to hym spak of chevyssaunce; *1581
Me semed so, as by his contenaunce.
But nathelees, by God, oure hevene kyng,
I thoughte nat to axen hym no thyng.
I prey thee, wyf, ne do namoore so; 395
Telle me alwey, er that I fro thee go,
If any dettour hath in myn absence
Ypayed thee, lest thurgh thy necligence
I myghte hym axe a thing that he hath payed."
This wyf was nat afered nor affrayed,
But boldely she seyde, and that anon, *1591
"Marie, I deffie the false monk, daun John!
I kepe nat of his tokenes never a deel;
He took me certeyn gold, that woot I weel —
What! Yvel thedam on his monkes snowte! 405
For, God it woot, I wende, withouten doute,
That he hadde yeve it me bycause of yow
To doon therwith myn honour and my prow,
For cosynage, and eek for beele cheere
That he hath had ful ofte tymes heere. *1600
But sith I se I stonde in this disjoynt,
I wol answere yow shortly to the poynt.
Ye han mo slakkere dettours than am I!
For I wol paye yow wel and redily
Fro day to day, and if so be I faille, 415
I am youre wyf; score it upon my taille,
And I shal paye as soone as ever I may.
For by my trouthe, I have on myn array,
And nat on wast, bistowed every deel;
And for I have bistowed it so weel *1610
For youre honour, for Goddes sake, I seye,
As be nat wrooth, but lat us laughe and pleye.
Ye shal my joly body have to wedde;
By God, I wol nat paye yow but abedde!
Forgyve it me, myn owene spouse deere; 425
Turne hiderward, and maketh bettre cheere."
This marchant saugh ther was no remedie,
And for to chide it nere but folie,
Sith that the thyng may nat amended be.
"Now wyf," he seyde, "and I foryeve it thee;
But, by thy lyf, ne be namoore so large. *1621
Keep bet thy good, this yeve I thee in charge."
Thus endeth my tale, and God us sende
Taillynge ynough unto oure lyves ende. Amen

Heere endeth the Shipmannes Tale.

Bihoold the murie wordes of the Hoost to the Shipman and to the lady Prioresse.

"Wel seyd, by *corpus dominus,*" quod oure Hoost,
"Now longe moote thou saille by the cost, 436
Sire gentil maister, gentil maryneer!
God yeve the monk a thousand last quade yeer!
A ha! Felawes, beth ware of swich a jape!
The monk putte in the mannes hood an ape,
And in his wyves eek, by Seint Austyn! *1631
Draweth no monkes moore unto youre in.
"But now passe over, and lat us seke aboute,
Who shal now telle first of al this route
Another tale;" and with that word he sayde,
As curteisly as it had been a mayde, 446
"My lady Prioresse, by youre leve,
So that I wiste I sholde yow nat greve,
I wolde demen that ye tellen sholde
A tale next, if so were that ye wolde. *1640
Now wol ye vouche sauf, my lady deere?"
"Gladly," quod she, and seyde as ye shal heere.

381 **wantownly agayn:** wantonly in return
386 **straungenesse:** estrangement
390 **By redy token:** in cash (by clear evidence) **heeld hym yvele apayed:** he considered himself ill-used
404 **took:** gave
405 **Yvel thedam:** bad luck

435 *corpus dominus:* corpus Domini, the body of the Lord
438 **last quade yeer:** cartloads of bad years
440 The monk made a monkey of the man

408 **prow:** profit, benefit
409 **cosynage:** kinship **beele cheere:** good cheer, hospitality
411 **disjoynt:** difficulty
413 **slakkere:** slower (to repay) **dettours:** debtors
416 **score it upon my taille:** mark it on my tally, charge it to my account; see n.
423 **to wedde:** as a pledge
431 **large:** free-spending
434 **Taillynge:** credit

PROLOGUE OF THE PRIORESS'S TALE

The Prologe of the Prioresses Tale.

Domine dominus noster.

O Lord, oure Lord, thy name how merveillous
Is in this large world ysprad — quod she —
For noght oonly thy laude precious 455
Parfourned is by men of dignitee,
But by the mouth of children thy bountee
Parfourned is, for on the brest soukynge
Somtyme shewen they thyn heriynge.

Wherfore in laude, as I best kan or may, *1650
Of thee and of the white lylye flour
Which that the bar, and is a mayde alway,
To telle a storie I wol do my labour;
Nat that I may encressen hir honour,
For she hirself is honour and the roote 465
Of bountee, next hir Sone, and soules boote.

O mooder Mayde, O mayde Mooder free!
O bussh unbrent, brennynge in Moyses sighte,
That ravyshedest doun fro the Deitee,
Thurgh thyn humblesse, the Goost that in th'alighte, *1660
Of whos vertu, whan he thyn herte lighte,
Conceyved was the Fadres sapience,
Help me to telle it in thy reverence!

Lady, thy bountee, thy magnificence,
Thy vertu and thy grete humylitee 475
Ther may no tonge expresse in no science;
For somtyme, Lady, er men praye to thee,
Thou goost biforn of thy benyngnytee,
And getest us the lyght, of thy preyere,
To gyden us unto thy Sone so deere. *1670

My konnyng is so wayk, O blisful Queene,
For to declare thy grete worthynesse
That I ne may the weighte nat susteene;
But as a child of twelf month oold, or lesse,
That kan unnethes any word expresse, 485
Right so fare I, and therfore I yow preye,
Gydeth my song that I shal of yow seye.

Explicit.

THE PRIORESS'S TALE

Heere bigynneth the Prioresses Tale.

Ther was in Asye, in a greet citee,
Amonges Cristene folk a Jewerye,
Sustened by a lord of that contree *1680
For foule usure and lucre of vileynye,
Hateful to Crist and to his compaignye;
And thurgh the strete men myghte ride or wende,
For it was free and open at eyther ende.

A litel scole of Cristen folk ther stood 495
Doun at the ferther ende, in which ther were

455 laude: praise
458 soukynge: suckling
459 heriynge: praise
466 soules boote: remedy for the soul
468 unbrent: unburned Moyses: Moses'

489 Jewerye: ghetto
491 usure: usury lucre of vileynye: shameful (excessive) profits

470 Goost: Holy Spirit
476 in no science: not by the means of, or in the language of, any human learning

495 scole: school

Children an heep, ycomen of Cristen blood,
That lerned in that scole yeer by yere
Swich manere doctrine as men used there,
This is to seyn, to syngen and to rede, *1690
As smale children doon in hire childhede.

Among thise children was a wydwes sone,
A litel clergeon, seven yeer of age,
That day by day to scole was his wone,
And eek also, where as he saugh th'ymage
Of Cristes mooder, hadde he in usage, 506
As hym was taught, to knele adoun and seye
His *Ave Marie,* as he goth by the weye.

Thus hath this wydwe hir litel sone ytaught *1699
Oure blisful Lady, Cristes mooder deere,
To worshipe ay, and he forgat it naught,
For sely child wol alday soone leere.
But ay, whan I remembre on this mateere,
Seint Nicholas stant evere in my presence,
For he so yong to Crist dide reverence. 515

This litel child, his litel book lernynge,
As he sat in the scole at his prymer,
He *Alma redemptoris* herde synge,
As children lerned hire antiphoner;
And as he dorste, he drough hym ner and ner, *1710
And herkned ay the wordes and the noote,
Til he the firste vers koude al by rote.

Noght wiste he what this Latyn was to seye,
For he so yong and tendre was of age.
But on a day his felawe gan he preye 525
T'expounden hym this song in his langage,
Or telle hym why this song was in usage;
This preyde he hym to construe and declare
Ful often tyme upon his knowes bare.

His felawe, which that elder was than he, *1720
Answerde hym thus: "This song, I have herd seye,
Was maked of our blisful Lady free,
Hire to salue, and eek hire for to preye 533
To been oure help and socour whan we deye.
I kan namoore expounde in this mateere.
I lerne song; I kan but smal grammeere."

"And is this song maked in reverence
Of Cristes mooder?" seyde this innocent.
"Now, certes, I wol do my diligence
To konne it al er Cristemasse be went. *1730
Though that I for my prymer shal be shent
And shal be beten thries in an houre,
I wol it konne Oure Lady for to honoure!"

His felawe taughte hym homward prively,
Fro day to day, til he koude it by rote, 545
And thanne he song it wel and boldely,
Fro word to word, acordynge with the note.
Twies a day it passed thurgh his throte,
To scoleward and homward whan he wente;
On Cristes mooder set was his entente. *1740

As I have seyd, thurghout the Juerie
This litel child, as he cam to and fro,
Ful murily than wolde he synge and crie
O Alma redemptoris everemo.
The swetnesse his herte perced so 555
Of Cristes mooder that, to hire to preye,
He kan nat stynte of syngyng by the weye.

Oure firste foo, the serpent Sathanas,
That hath in Jues herte his waspes nest,
Up swal, and seide, "O Hebrayk peple, allas!
Is this to yow a thyng that is honest, *1751
That swich a boy shal walken as hym lest
In youre despit, and synge of swich sentence,
Which is agayn youre lawes reverence?"

Fro thennes forth the Jues han conspired 565
This innocent out of this world to chace.
An homycide therto han they hyred,
That in an aleye hadde a privee place;
And as the child gan forby for to pace,
This cursed Jew hym hente, and heeld hym faste, *1760
And kitte his throte, and in a pit hym caste.

503 **clergeon:** schoolboy
504 **wone:** custom
508 *Ave Marie:* Hail Mary
514 **Seint Nicholas:** patron of clerks
517 **prymer:** elementary school book
518 *Alma redemptoris:* "Gracious [mother] of the Redeemer"
519 **antiphoner:** book of antiphonal hymns
523 **seye:** mean
526 **T' expounden:** to interpret
529 **knowes:** knees
533 **salue:** greet
536 **kan:** know **smal grammeere:** little grammar
540 **konne:** learn
541 **for my prymer:** for not learning my lessons **shent:** scolded
544 **homward:** (as they went) towards home
560 **swal:** swelled
562 **boy:** brat **hym lest:** he pleases
563 **sentence:** subject, meaning
567 **homycide:** murderer
570 **hym hente:** siezed him

I seye that in a wardrobe they hym threwe
Where as thise Jewes purgen hire entraille.
O cursed folk of Herodes al newe,
What may youre yvel entente yow availle? 575
Mordre wol out, certeyn, it wol nat faille,
And namely ther th'onour of God shal sprede;
The blood out crieth on youre cursed dede.

O martir, sowded to virginitee,
Now maystow syngen, folwynge evere in oon
The white Lamb celestial — quod she — *1771
Of which the grete evaungelist, Seint John,
In Pathmos wroot, which seith that they that goon 583
Biforn this Lamb and synge a song al newe,
That nevere, flesshly, wommen they ne knewe.

This poure wydwe awaiteth al that nyght
After hir litel child, but he cam noght;
For which, as soone as it was dayes lyght,
With face pale of drede and bisy thoght,
She hath at scole and elleswhere hym soght,
Til finally she gan so fer espie *1781
That he last seyn was in the Juerie.

With moodres pitee in hir brest enclosed,
She gooth, as she were half out of hir mynde,
To every place where she hath supposed 595
By liklihede hir litel child to fynde;
And evere on Cristes mooder meeke and kynde
She cride, and atte laste thus she wroghte:
Among the cursed Jues she hym soghte.

She frayneth and she preyeth pitously *1790
To every Jew that dwelte in thilke place,
To telle hire if hir child wente oght forby.
They seyde "nay"; but Jhesu of his grace
Yaf in hir thoght inwith a litel space
That in that place after hir sone she cryde, 605
Where he was casten in a pit bisyde.

O grete God, that parfournest thy laude
By mouth of innocentz, lo, heere thy myght!
This gemme of chastite, this emeraude,

572 wardrobe: privy
574 Herodes al newe: new Herods
579 sowded: firmly united
580 evere in oon: always, continually
583 Pathmos: Patmos
585 flesshly: carnally
600 frayneth: asks
602 oght: at all
609 emeraude: emerald

And eek of martirdom the ruby bright,
Ther he with throte ykorven lay upright, *1801
He *Alma redemptoris* gan to synge
So loude that al the place gan to rynge.

The Cristene folk that thurgh the strete wente
In coomen for to wondre upon this thyng, 615
And hastily they for the provost sente;
He cam anon withouten tariyng,
And herieth Crist that is of hevene kyng,
And eek his mooder, honour of mankynde,
And after that the Jewes leet he bynde. *1810

This child with pitous lamentacioun
Up taken was, syngynge his song alway,
And with honour of greet processioun
They carien hym unto the nexte abbay.
His mooder swownynge by his beere lay; 625
Unnethe myghte the peple that was theere
This newe Rachel brynge fro his beere.

With torment and with shameful deeth echon,
This provost dooth thise Jewes for to sterve
That of this mordre wiste, and that anon. *1820
He nolde no swich cursednesse observe.
"Yvele shal have that yvele wol deserve";
Therfore with wilde hors he dide hem drawe,
And after that he heng hem by the lawe.

Upon this beere ay lith this innocent 635
Biforn the chief auter, whil the masse laste;
And after that, the abbot with his covent
Han sped hem for to burien hym ful faste;
And whan they hooly water on hym caste,
Yet spak this child, whan spreynd was hooly water, *1830
And song *O Alma redemptoris mater!*

This abbot, which that was an hooly man,
As monkes been — or elles oghte be —
This yonge child to conjure he bigan,

611 ykorven: cut through
616 provost: magistrate
618 herieth: praises
620 leet he bynde: he had bound
626 Unnethe: hardly
627 Rachel: the biblical mother, who was inconsolable over the loss of her child
628 torment: torture echon: each one (i.e., both)
629 sterve: die
631 observe: respect, observe (a practice)
634 by: in accordance with
636 auter: altar
637 covent: convent, the monks in the abbey
640 spreynd: sprinkled
644 conjure: ask, entreat

And seyde, "O deere child, I halse thee, 645
In vertu of the hooly Trinitee,
Tel me what is thy cause for to synge,
Sith that thy throte is kut to my semynge?"

"My throte is kut unto my nekke boon,"
Seyde this child, "and as by wey of kynde
I sholde have dyed, ye, longe tyme agon.
But Jesu Crist, as ye in bookes fynde, 1842
Wil that his glorie laste and be in mynde,
And for the worship of his Mooder deere
Yet may I synge *O Alma* loude and cleere. 655

"This welle of mercy, Cristes mooder sweete,
I loved alwey, as after my konnynge;
And whan that I my lyf sholde forlete,
To me she cam, and bad me for to synge
This anthem verraily in my deyynge, *1850
As ye han herd, and whan that I hadde songe,
Me thoughte she leyde a greyn upon my tonge.

"Wherfore I synge, and synge moot certeyn,
In honour of that blisful Mayden free
Til fro my tonge of taken is the greyn; 665
And after that thus seyde she to me:
'My litel child, now wol I fecche thee,
Whan that the greyn is fro thy tonge ytake.
Be nat agast; I wol thee nat forsake.' "

This hooly monk, this abbot, hym meene I,
His tonge out caughte, and took awey the greyn,
And he yaf up the goost ful softely. *1862
And whan this abbot hadde this wonder seyn,
His salte teeris trikled doun as reyn,
And gruf he fil al plat upon the grounde, 675
And stille he lay as he had ben ybounde.

The covent eek lay on the pavement
Wepynge, and herying Cristes mooder deere,
And after that they ryse, and forth been went,
And tooken awey this martir from his beere;
And in a tombe of marbul stones cleere *1871
Enclosen they his litel body sweete.
Ther he is now, God leve us for to meete!

O yonge Hugh of Lyncoln, slayn also
With cursed Jewes, as it is notable, 685
For it is but a litel while ago,
Preye eek for us, we synful folk unstable,
That of his mercy God so merciable
On us his grete mercy multiplie, *1879
For reverence of his mooder Marie. Amen

Heere is ended the Prioresses Tale.

PROLOGUE TO SIR THOPAS

Bihoold the murye wordes of the Hoost to Chaucer.

Whan seyd was al this miracle, every man
As sobre was that wonder was to se,
Til that oure Hooste japen tho bigan,
And thanne at erst he looked upon me, 694
And seyde thus: "What man artow?" quod he;
"Thou lookest as thou woldest fynde an hare,
For evere upon the ground I se thee stare.

"Approche neer, and looke up murily.
Now war yow, sires, and lat this man have place!
He in the waast is shape as wel as I; *1890

645 **halse:** beseech
648 **to my semynge:** as it seems to me
650 **by wey of kynde:** in the natural course of things
656 **welle:** source
658 **forlete:** lose
662 **greyn:** seed

691 **miracle:** tale of a miracle
694 **at erst:** for the first time

675 **gruf:** face down **plat:** flat
683 **leve:** allow
684 **Hugh of Lyncoln:** a child martyr; see n.
685 **With:** by

700 **waast:** waist

This were a popet in an arm t'enbrace
For any womman, smal and fair of face.
He semeth elvyssh by his contenaunce,
For unto no wight dooth he daliaunce.

"Sey now somwhat, syn oother folk han sayd;
Telle us a tale of myrthe, and that anon." 706

"Hooste," quod I, "ne beth nat yvele apayd,
For oother tale certes kan I noon,
But of a rym I lerned longe agoon."
"Ye, that is good," quod he; "now shul we heere *1900
Som deyntee thyng, me thynketh by his cheere."

SIR THOPAS

Heere bigynneth Chaucers Tale of Thopas.

The First Fit

Listeth, lordes, in good entent,
And I wol telle verrayment
Of myrthe and of solas,
Al of a knyght was fair and gent 715
In bataille and in tourneyment;
His name was sire Thopas.

Yborn he was in fer contree,
In Flaundres, al biyonde the see,
At Poperyng, in the place. *1910
His fader was a man ful free,
And lord he was of that contree,
As it was Goddes grace.

Sire Thopas wax a doghty swayn;
Whit was his face as payndemayn, 725
His lippes rede as rose;
His rode is lyk scarlet in grayn,
And I yow telle in good certayn
He hadde a semely nose.

His heer, his berd was lyk saffroun, *1920
That to his girdel raughte adoun;
His shoon of cordewane.
Of Brugges were his hosen broun,
His robe was of syklatoun,
That coste many a jane. 735

He koude hunte at wilde deer,
And ride an haukyng for river
With grey goshauk on honde;
Therto he was a good archeer;
Of wrastlyng was ther noon his peer, *1930
Ther any ram shal stonde.

Ful many a mayde, bright in bour,
They moorne for hym paramour,
Whan hem were bet to slepe;
But he was chaast and no lechour, 745
And sweete as is the brembul flour
That bereth the rede hepe.

And so bifel upon a day,
For sothe, as I yow telle may,
Sire Thopas wolde out ride. *1940
He worth upon his steede gray,

701 popet: little doll
702 smal: slender
703 elvyssh: abstracted (literally, mysterious, not of this world)
704 dooth he daliaunce: is he sociable

712 Listeth: listen
713 verrayment: truly
715 gent: elegant (?); see n.
719 Flaundres: Flanders
720 Poperyng: a town in Flanders in the place: right there(?); see n.
724 swayn: young gentleman; see n.
725 payndemayn: fine white bread
727 rode: complexion scarlet in grayn: deep-dyed scarlet cloth
730 saffroun: saffron (deep yellow in color)
731 raughte: reached

707 yvele apayd: displeased
711 deyntee: excellent

732 shoon: shoes cordewane: Cordovan leather
733 Brugges: Bruges hosen: stockings
734 syklatoun: costly silken material
735 jane: a Genoese coin worth about half a penny
736 deer: either deer or animals
737 for river: to hawk for waterfowl
738 goshauk: a kind of hawk; see n.
741 stonde: stand as a prize
742 bright in bour: beautiful in (the ladies') chamber
743 moorne: yearn
746 brembul flour: dog-rose
747 hepe: (rose-)hip
751 worth upon: climbs on

And in his hand a launcegay,
  A long swerd by his side.

  He priketh thurgh a fair forest,
Therinne is many a wilde best, 755
  Ye, bothe bukke and hare;
And as he priketh north and est,
I telle it yow, hym hadde almest
  Bitid a sory care.

  Ther spryngen herbes grete and smale,
The lycorys and the cetewale, *1951
  And many a clowe-gylofre;
And notemuge to putte in ale,
Wheither it be moyste or stale,
  Or for to leye in cofre. 765

  The briddes synge, it is no nay,
The sparhauk and the papejay,
  That joye it was to heere;
The thrustelcok made eek hir lay,
The wodedowve upon the spray *1960
  She sang ful loude and cleere.

  Sire Thopas fil in love-longynge,
Al whan he herde the thrustel synge,
  And pryked as he were wood.
His faire steede in his prikynge 775
So swatte that men myghte him wrynge;
  His sydes were al blood.

  Sire Thopas eek so wery was
For prikyng on the softe gras,
  So fiers was his corage, *1970
That doun he leyde him in that plas
To make his steede som solas,
  And yaf hym good forage.

  "O Seinte Marie, benedicite!
What eyleth this love at me 785
  To bynde me so soore?

752 launcegay: a light lance
761 lycorys: licorice cetewale: zedoary (a ginger-like spice used as a condiment and stimulant)
762 clowe-gylofre: clove
763 notemuge: nutmeg
764 moyste: fresh, new stale: old
765 cofre: chest (to scent clothes?)
766 it is no nay: it cannot be denied
767 sparhauk: sparrow hawk papejay: parrot
769 thrustelcok: male thrush
770 wodedowve: wood pigeon spray: branch
773 thrustel: thrush
776 swatte: sweated
781 plas: place
783 forage: grazing (?); see n.
785 What does this passion of love have against me

Me dremed al this nyght, pardee,
An elf-queene shal my lemman be
  And slepe under my goore.

  "An elf-queene wol I love, ywis, *1980
For in this world no womman is
  Worthy to be my make
  In towne;
Alle othere wommen I forsake,
And to an elf-queene I me take 795
  By dale and eek by downe!"

  Into his sadel he clamb anon,
And priketh over stile and stoon
  An elf-queene for t'espye,
Til he so longe hath riden and goon *1990
That he foond, in a pryve woon,
  The contree of Fairye
  So wilde;
For in that contree was ther noon
That to him durste ride or goon, 805
  Neither wyf ne childe;

  Til that ther cam a greet geaunt,
His name was sire Olifaunt,
  A perilous man of dede.
He seyde, "Child, by Termagaunt, *2000
But if thou prike out of myn haunt,
  Anon I sle thy steede
  With mace.
Heere is the queene of Fayerye,
With harpe and pipe and symphonye, 815
  Dwellynge in this place."

  The child seyde, "Also moote I thee,
Tomorwe wol I meete with thee,
  Whan I have myn armoure;
And yet I hope, *par ma fay,* *2010
That thou shalt with this launcegay
  Abyen it ful sowre.
  Thy mawe
Shal I percen, if I may,
Er it be fully pryme of day, 825
  For heere thow shalt be slawe."

788 elf-queene: fairy queen lemman: mistress
789 goore: cloak
796 downe: hill
797 clamb: climbed
801 woon: place
808 sire Olifaunt: Sir Elephant
810 Child: noble youth Termagaunt: a supposed Saracen god
811 haunt: territory
815 symphonye: hurdy-gurdy; see n.
817 Also moote I thee: as I may prosper (I swear)
820 *par ma fay:* by my faith
822 Bitterly pay for it

Sire Thopas drow abak ful faste;
This geant at hym stones caste
  Out of a fel staf-slynge.
But faire escapeth child Thopas, *2020
And al it was thurgh Goddes gras,
  And thurgh his fair berynge.

[*The Second Fit*]

Yet listeth, lordes, to my tale
Murier than the nightyngale,
  For now I wol yow rowne 835
How sir Thopas, with sydes smale,
Prikyng over hill and dale,
  Is comen agayn to towne.

His myrie men comanded he
To make hym bothe game and glee, *2030
  For nedes moste he fighte
With a geaunt with hevedes three,
For paramour and jolitee
  Of oon that shoon ful brighte.

"Do come," he seyde, "my mynstrales, 845
And geestours for to tellen tales,
  Anon in myn armynge,
Of romances that been roiales,
Of popes and of cardinales,
  And eek of love-likynge." *2040

They fette hym first the sweete wyn,
And mede eek in a mazelyn,
  And roial spicerye
Of gyngebreed that was ful fyn,
And lycorys, and eek comyn, 855
  With sugre that is trye.

He dide next his white leere
Of cloth of lake fyn and cleere,
  A breech and eek a sherte;
And next his sherte an aketoun, *2050
And over that an haubergeoun
  For percynge of his herte;

And over that a fyn hawberk,
Was al ywroght of Jewes werk,
  Ful strong it was of plate; 865
And over that his cote-armour
As whit as is a lilye flour,
  In which he wol debate.

His sheeld was al of gold so reed,
And therinne was a bores heed, *2060
  A charbocle bisyde;
And there he swoor on ale and breed
How that the geaunt shal be deed,
  Bityde what bityde!

His jambeux were of quyrboilly, 875
His swerdes shethe of yvory,
  His helm of latoun bright;
His sadel was of rewel boon,
His brydel as the sonne shoon,
  Or as the moone light. *2070

His spere was of fyn ciprees,
That bodeth werre, and nothyng pees,
  The heed ful sharpe ygrounde;
His steede was al dappull gray,
It gooth an ambil in the way 885
  Ful softely and rounde
In londe.
Loo, lordes myne, heere is a fit!
If ye wol any moore of it,
  To telle it wol I fonde. *2080

The [*Third*] *Fit*

Now holde youre mouth, *par charitee,*
Bothe knyght and lady free,

829 fel: terrible staf-slynge: sling on the end of a stick
831 gras: grace
835 rowne: tell
836 sydes smale: slender waist
839 myrie men: companions in arms
840 game and glee: entertainment
843 jolitee: pleasure
845 Do come: cause to come, summon mynstrales: musicians
846 geestours: tellers of *gestes,* tales
848 roiales: royal
850 love-likynge: the joys of love
852 mede: mead mazelyn: mazer, wooden bowl
853 spicerye: delicacies, titbits
854 gyngebreed: preserved ginger
855 lycorys: licorice comyn: cumin
856 sugre: sugar trye: excellent
857 leere: flesh
858 cloth of lake: fine linen
859 breech: pair of trousers; see Expl. Notes for the technical vocabulary in lines 859–66.
860 aketoun: quilted jacket worn under the armor
861 haubergeoun: chain-mail shirt
862 For: to prevent
863 hawberk: plate armor
866 cote-armour: coat of arms, worn over the armor
868 debate: fight, dispute
870 bores: boar's
871 charbocle: carbuncle, red gemstone; see n.
874 Come what may!
875 jambeux: greaves, leg-armor quyrboilly: hardened leather
877 latoun: latten, a brass-like alloy
878 rewel boon: ivory
881 ciprees: cypress
882 bodeth: forebodes
885 ambil: slow walk
886 rounde: easily
888 fit: canto
890 fonde: try, attempt
891 *par charitee:* for charity's sake, please

And herkneth to my spelle;
Of bataille and of chivalry,
And of ladyes love-drury 895
Anon I wol yow telle.

Men speken of romances of prys,
Of Horn child and of Ypotys,
Of Beves and sir Gy,
Of sir Lybeux and Pleyndamour — *2090
But sir Thopas, he bereth the flour
Of roial chivalry!

His goode steede al he bistrood,
And forth upon his wey he glood
As sparcle out of the bronde; 905
Upon his creest he bar a tour,
And therinne stiked a lilie flour —
God shilde his cors fro shonde!

And for he was a knyght auntrous,
He nolde slepen in noon hous, *2100
But liggen in his hoode;
His brighte helm was his wonger,
And by hym baiteth his dextrer
Of herbes fyne and goode.

Hymself drank water of the well, 915
As dide the knyght sire Percyvell
So worly under wede,
Til on a day —

Heere the Hoost stynteth Chaucer of his Tale of Thopas.

"Namoore of this, for Goddes dignitee,"
Quod oure Hooste, "for thou makest me *2110
So wery of thy verray lewednesse
That, also wisly God my soule blesse,
Myne eres aken of thy drasty speche.
Now swich a rym the devel I biteche!
This may wel be rym dogerel," quod he. 925
"Why so?" quod I, "why wiltow lette me
Moore of my tale than another man,
Syn that it is the beste rym I kan?"
"By God," quod he, "for pleynly, at a word,
Thy drasty rymyng is nat worth a toord! *2120
Thou doost noght elles but despendest tyme.
Sire, at o word, thou shalt no lenger ryme.
Lat se wher thou kanst tellen aught in geeste,
Or telle in prose somwhat, at the leeste,
In which ther be som murthe or som doctryne." 935
"Gladly," quod I, "by Goddes sweete pyne!
I wol yow telle a litel thyng in prose
That oghte liken yow, as I suppose,
Or elles, certes, ye been to daungerous.
It is a moral tale vertuous, *2130
Al be it told somtyme in sondry wyse
Of sondry folk, as I shal yow devyse.
"As thus: ye woot that every Evaungelist
That telleth us the peyne of Jhesu Crist
Ne seith nat alle thyng as his felawe dooth;
But nathelees hir sentence is al sooth, 946
And alle acorden as in hire sentence,
Al be ther in hir tellyng difference.
For somme of hem seyn moore, and somme seyn lesse,
Whan they his pitous passioun expresse —
I meene of Mark, Mathew, Luc, and John —
But doutelees hir sentence is al oon. *2142
Therfore, lordynges alle, I yow biseche,
If that yow thynke I varie as in my speche,
As thus, though that I telle somwhat moore
Of proverbes than ye han herd bifoore 956
Comprehended in this litel tretys heere,
To enforce with th'effect of my mateere;
And though I nat the same wordes seye
As ye han herd, yet to yow alle I preye *2150
Blameth me nat; for, as in my sentence,

893 **spelle:** tale
895 **love-drury:** passionate love
897 **prys:** excellence
898 **Horn child:** a hero of English romance **Ypotys:** child hero of a pious legend
899 **Beves:** Bevis of Hampton **Gy:** Guy of Warwick
900 **Lybeux:** Lybeaus Desconus ("The Fair Unknown") **Pleyndamour:** "Full-of-Love," not identified; see n.
903 **bistrood:** bestrode
904 **glood:** glided
905 **bronde:** burning log

906 **creest:** top of the helmet **tour:** tower
908 **shonde:** harm, shame
909 **knyght auntrous:** knight errant
911 **liggen:** lie
912 **wonger:** pillow
913 **baiteth:** feeds **dextrer:** war-horse
915 **well:** spring
916 **Percyvell:** the chaste hero of the romance of the Holy Grail
917 So worthy in his armor

923 **drasty:** crappy, worthless
924 **biteche:** commit
930 **toord:** turd
931 **despendest:** waste
933 **geeste:** alliterating verse (?)

939 **daungerous:** difficult, hard to please
947 **sentence:** substance, essential meaning

Shul ye nowher fynden difference
Fro the sentence of this tretys lyte
After the which this murye tale I write.
And therfore herkneth what that I shal seye,
And lat me tellen al my tale, I preye." 966

Explicit

THE TALE OF MELIBEE

Heere bigynneth Chaucers Tale of Melibee.

A yong man called Melibeus, myghty and riche, bigat upon his wyf, that called was Prudence, a doghter which that called was Sophie./

Upon a day bifel that he for his desport is went into the feeldes hym to pleye./ His wyf and eek his doghter hath he left inwith his hous, of which the dores weren faste yshette./ Thre of his olde foes han it espyed, and setten laddres to the walles of his hous, and by wyndowes been entred,/ and betten his wyf, *2160 and wounded his doghter with fyve mortal woundes in fyve sondry places — / this is to seyn, in hir feet, in hire handes, in hir erys, in hir nose, and in hire mouth — and leften hire for deed, and wenten awey./

Whan Melibeus retourned was into his hous, and saugh al this meschief, he, lyk a mad man rentynge his clothes, gan to wepe and crie./

Prudence, his wyf, as ferforth as she dorste, bisoghte hym of his wepyng for to stynte,/ but nat forthy he gan to crie and wepen evere lenger the moore./ 975

This noble wyf Prudence remembred hire upon the sentence of Ovide, in his book that cleped is the Remedie of Love, where as he seith,/ "He is a fool that destourbeth the mooder to wepen in the deeth of hire child til she have wept hir fille as for a certein tyme,/ and thanne shal man doon his diligence with amyable wordes hire to reconforte, and preyen hire of hir wepyng for to stynte."/ For which resoun this noble wyf Prudence suffred hir housbonde for to wepe and crie as for a certein space,/ and whan she saugh hir tyme, she seyde hym in this wise: "Allas, my lord," quod she, "why make ye youreself for to be lyk a fool?/ For sothe it aperteneth nat *2170 to a wys man to maken swich a sorwe./ Youre doghter, with the grace of God, shal warisshe and escape./ And, al were it so that she right now were deed, ye ne oughte nat, as for hir deeth, youreself to destroye./ Senek seith: 'The wise man shal nat take to greet disconfort for the deeth of his children,/ but, certes, he sholde suffren it in pacience as wel as he abideth the deeth of his owene propre persone.' "/ 985

This Melibeus answerde anon and seyde, "What man," quod he, "sholde of his wepyng stente that hath so greet a cause for to wepe?/ Jhesu Crist, oure Lord, hymself wepte for the deeth of Lazarus hys freend."/

Prudence answerde: "Certes, wel I woot attempree wepyng is no thyng deffended to hym that sorweful is, amonges folk in sorwe, but it is rather graunted hym to wepe./ The Apostle Paul unto the Romayns writeth, 'Man shal rejoyse with hem that maken joye and wepen with swich folk as wepen.'/ But though attempree wepyng be ygraunted, outrageous wepyng certes is deffended./ *2180 Mesure of wepyng sholde be considered after the loore that techeth us Senek:/ 'Whan that thy frend is deed,' quod he, 'lat nat thyne eyen to moyste been of teeris, ne to muche drye; although the teeris come to thyne eyen, lat hem nat falle;/ and whan thou hast forgoon thy freend, do diligence to gete

978 reconforte: comfort

982 warisshe: recover
985 propre persone: own self
987 Lazarus: see John 11.35.
988 attempree: moderate

another freend; and this is moore wysdom than for to wepe for thy freend which that thou hast lorn, for therinne is no boote.'/ And therfore, if ye governe yow by sapience, put awey sorwe out of youre herte./ Remembre yow that Jhesus Syrak seith, 'A man that is joyous and glad in herte, it hym conserveth florissynge in his age; but soothly sorweful herte maketh his bones drye.'/ He seith eek 995 thus, that sorwe in herte sleeth ful many a man./ Salomon seith that right as motthes in the shepes flees anoyeth to the clothes, and the smale wormes to the tree, right so anoyeth sorwe to the herte./ Wherfore us oghte, as wel in the deeth of oure children as in the los of oure othere goodes temporels, have pacience./ Remembre yow upon the pacient Job. Whan he hadde lost his children and his temporeel substance, and in his body endured and receyved ful many a grevous tribulacion, yet seyde he thus:/ 'Oure Lord hath yeve it me; oure Lord hath biraft it me; right as oure Lord hath wold, right so it is doon; blessed be the name of oure Lord!' "/ *2190

To thise forseide thynges answerde Melibeus unto his wyf Prudence: "Alle thy wordes," quod he, "been sothe and therto profitable, but trewely myn herte is troubled with this sorwe so grevously that I noot what to doone."/

"Lat calle," quod Prudence, "thy trewe freendes alle and thy lynage whiche that been wise. Telleth youre cas, and herkneth what they seye in conseillyng, and yow governe after hire sentence./ Salomon seith, 'Werk alle thy thynges by conseil, and thou shalt never repente.' "/

Thanne, by the conseil of his wyf Prudence, this Melibeus leet callen a greet congregacion of folk,/ as surgiens, phisiciens, olde folk and yonge, and somme of his olde enemys reconsiled as by hir semblaunt to his love and into his grace;/ and therwithal ther 1005 coomen somme of his neighebores that diden hym reverence moore for drede than for love, as it happeth ofte./ Ther coomen also ful many subtille flatereres and wise advocatz lerned in the lawe./

And whan this folk togidre assembled weren, this Melibeus in sorweful wise shewed hem his cas./ And by the manere of his speche it semed that in herte he baar a crueel ire, redy to doon vengeaunce upon his foes, and sodeynly desired that the werre sholde bigynne;/ but nathelees, yet axed he hire conseil upon this matiere./ A surgien, by li- *2200 cence and assent of swiche as weren wise, up roos and to Melibeus seyde as ye may heere:/

"Sire," quod he, "as to us surgiens aperteneth that we do to every wight the beste that we kan, where as we been withholde, and to oure pacientz that we do no damage,/ wherfore it happeth many tyme and ofte that whan twey men han everich wounded oother, oon same surgien heeleth hem bothe;/ wherfore unto oure art it is nat pertinent to norice werre ne parties to supporte./ But certes, as to the warisshynge of youre doghter, al be it so that she perilously be wounded, we shullen do so ententif bisynesse fro day to nyght that with the grace of God she shal be hool and sound as soone as is possible."/ 1015

Almoost right in the same wise the phisiciens answerden, save that they seyden a fewe woordes moore:/ that right as maladies been cured by hir contraries, right so shul men warisshe werre by vengeaunce./

His neighebores ful of envye, his feyned freendes that semeden reconsiled, and his flatereres/ maden semblant of wepyng, and empeireden and agreggeden muchel of this matiere in preisynge greetly Melibee of myght, of power, of richesse, and of freendes, despisynge the power of his adversaries,/ and seiden outrely that he anon sholde wreken hym on his foes and bigynne werre./ *2210

Up roos thanne an advocat that was wys, by leve and by conseil of othere that were wise, and seide:/ "Lordynges, the nede for which we been assembled in this place is a ful hevy thyng and an heigh matiere,/ by cause of the wrong and of the wikkednesse that hath be doon, and eek by resoun of the grete damages that in tyme comynge been possible to fallen for this same cause,/ and eek by resoun of the grete richesse and power of the parties bothe,/ for the whiche resouns it were a

995 Jhesus Syrak: the author of Ecclesiasticus
997 motthes: moths anoyeth: do injury

1014 norice: nourish
1015 warisshynge: cure
1019 maden semblant: feigned, pretended empeireden: made (matters) worse agreggeden: aggravated
1023 by resoun of: because of

ful greet peril to erren in this matiere./ 1025
Wherfore, Melibeus, this is oure sentence: we conseille yow aboven alle thyng that right anon thou do thy diligence in kepynge of thy propre persone in swich a wise that thou ne wante noon espie ne wacche thy persone for to save./ And after that, we conseille that in thyn hous thou sette sufficeant garnisoun so that they may as wel thy body as thyn hous defende./ But certes, for to moeve werre, ne sodeynly for to doon vengeaunce, we may nat demen in so litel tyme that it were profitable./ Wherfore we axen leyser and espace to have deliberacion in this cas to deme./ For the commune proverbe seith thus: 'He that soone deemeth, soone shal repente.'/ And eek men seyn *2220
that thilke juge is wys that soone understondeth a matiere and juggeth by leyser;/ for al be it so that alle tariyng be anoyful, algates it is nat to repreve in yevynge of juggement ne in vengeance takyng, whan it is sufficeant and resonable./ And that shewed oure Lord Jhesu Crist by ensample, for whan that the womman that was taken in avowtrie was broght in his presence to knowen what sholde be doon with hire persone, al be it so that he wiste wel hymself what that he wolde answere, yet ne wolde he nat answere sodeynly, but he wolde have deliberacion, and in the ground he wroot twies./ And by thise causes we axen deliberacioun, and we shal thanne, by the grace of God, conseille thee thyng that shal be profitable."/

Up stirten thanne the yonge folk atones, and the mooste partie of that compaignye han scorned this olde wise man, and bigonnen to make noyse, and seyden that/ 1035
right so as whil that iren is hoot men sholden smyte, right so men sholde wreken hir wronges whil that they been fresshe and newe; and with loud voys they criden "Werre! Werre!"/

Up roos tho oon of thise olde wise, and with his hand made contenaunce that men sholde holden hem stille and yeven hym audience./ "Lordynges," quod he, "ther is ful many a man that crieth 'Werre, werre!' that woot ful litel what werre amounteth./ Werre at his bigynnyng hath so greet an entryng and so large that every wight may entre whan hym liketh and lightly fynde werre;/ but certes what ende that shal therof bifalle, it is nat light to knowe./ For soothly, whan that werre is *2230
ones bigonne, ther is ful many a child unborn of his mooder that shal sterve yong by cause of thilke werre, or elles lyve in sorwe and dye in wrecchednesse./ And therfore, er that any werre bigynne, men moste have greet conseil and greet deliberacion."/ And whan this olde man wende to enforcen his tale by resons, wel ny alle atones bigonne they to rise for to breken his tale, and beden hym ful ofte his wordes for to abregge./ For soothly, he that precheth to hem that listen nat heeren his wordes, his sermon hem anoieth./ For Jhesus Syrak seith that "musik in wepynge is a noyous thyng"; this is to seyn: as muche availleth to speken bifore folk to which his speche anoyeth as it is to synge bifom hym that wepeth./ And whan this wise man 1045
saugh that hym wanted audience, al shamefast he sette hym doun agayn./ For Salomon seith: "Ther as thou ne mayst have noon audience, enforce thee nat to speke."/ "I see wel," quod this wise man, "that the commune proverbe is sooth, that 'good conseil wanteth whan it is moost nede.' "/

Yet hadde this Melibeus in his conseil many folk that prively in his eere conseilled hym certeyn thyng, and conseilled hym the contrarie in general audience./

Whan Melibeus hadde herd that the gretteste partie of his conseil weren accorded that he sholde maken werre, anoon he consented to hir conseillyng and fully affermed hire sentence./ Thanne dame Prudence, *2240
whan that she saugh how that hir housbonde shoop hym for to wreken hym on his foes and to bigynne werre, she in ful humble wise, whan she saugh hir tyme, seide to hym thise wordes:/ "My lord," quod she, "I yow biseche, as hertely as I dar and kan, ne haste yow nat to faste and, for alle gerdons, as yeveth me audience./ For Piers Alfonce seith,

1026 propre persone: own self wacche: watchman
1027 garnisoun: body of armed men
1028 moeve werre: begin or provoke war
1029 espace: space, opportunity
1033 avowtrie: adultery
1037 made contenaunce: signaled

1043 breken his tale: interrupt his speech beden: prayed
1045 noyous: annoying, bothersome
1046 hym wanted: he lacked
1053 Piers Alfonce: Petrus Alphonsus, author of the popular *Disciplina clericalis*

'Whoso that dooth to thee oother good or harm, haste thee nat to quiten it, for in this wise thy freend wole abyde and thyn enemy shal the lenger lyve in drede.'/ The proverbe seith, 'He hasteth wel that wisely kan abyde,' and 'in wikked haste is no profit.' "/

This Melibee answerde unto his wyf Prudence: "I purpose nat," quod he, "to werke by thy conseil, for many causes and resouns. For certes, every wight wolde holde me thanne a fool;/ this is to seyn, if I, for thy conseillyng, wolde chaungen thynges that been ordeyned and affermed by so manye wyse./ Secoundely, I seye that alle wommen been wikke, and noon good of hem alle. For 'of a thousand men,' seith Salomon, 'I foond o good man, but certes, of alle wommen, good womman foond I nevere.'/ And also, certes, if I governed me by thy conseil, it sholde seme that I hadde yeve to thee over me the maistrie, and God forbede that it so weere!/ For Jhesus Syrak seith that 'if the wyf have maistrie, she is contrarious to hir housbonde.'/ And Salomon seith: 'Nevere in thy lyf to thy wyf, ne to thy child, ne to thy freend ne yeve no power over thyself, for bettre it were that thy children aske of thy persone thynges that hem nedeth than thou see thyself in the handes of thy children.'/ And also if I wolde werke by thy conseillyng, certes, my conseil moste som tyme be secree, til it were tyme that it moste be knowe, and this ne may noght be./ [*Car il est escript, la genglerie des femmes ne puet riens celler fors ce qu'elle ne scet./ Apres, le philosophre dit, en mauvais conseil les femmes vainquent les hommes; et par ces raisons je ne dois point user de ton conseil.*]"/

Whanne dame Prudence, ful debonairly and with greet pacience, hadde herd al that hir housbonde liked for to seye, thanne axed she of hym licence for to speke, and seyde in this wise:/ "My lord," quod she, "as to youre firste resoun, certes it may lightly been answered. For I seye that it is no folie to chaunge conseil whan the thyng is chaunged, or elles whan the thyng semeth ootherweyes than it was biforn./ And mooreover, I seye that though ye han sworn and bihight to perfourne youre emprise, and nathelees ye weyve to perfourne thilke same emprise by juste cause, men sholde nat seyn therfore that ye were a liere ne forsworn./ For the book seith that 'the wise man maketh no lesyng whan he turneth his corage to the bettre.'/ And al be it so that youre emprise be establissed and ordeyned by greet multitude of folk, yet thar ye nat accomplice thilke ordinaunce but yow like./ For the trouthe of thynges and the profit been rather founden in fewe folk that been wise and ful of resoun than by greet multitude of folk ther every man crieth and clatereth what that hym liketh. Soothly swich multitude is nat honest./ And as to the seconde resoun, where as ye seyn that alle wommen been wikke; save youre grace, certes ye despisen alle wommen in this wyse, and 'he that al despiseth, al displeseth,' as seith the book./ And Senec seith that 'whoso wole have sapience shal no man dispreyse, but he shal gladly techen the science that he kan withouten presumpcion or pride;/ and swiche thynges as he noght ne kan, he shal nat been ashamed to lerne hem, and enquere of lasse folk than hymself.'/ And, sire, that ther hath been many a good womman may lightly be preved./ For certes, sire, oure Lord Jhesu Crist wolde nevere have descended to be born of a womman, if alle wommen hadden been wikke./ And after that, for the grete bountee that is in wommen, oure Lord Jhesu Crist, whan he was risen fro deeth to lyve, appeered rather to a womman than to his Apostles./ And though that Salomon seith that he ne foond nevere womman good, it folweth nat therfore that alle wommen ben wikke./ For though that he ne foond no good womman, certes, many another man hath founden many a womman ful good and trewe./ Or elles, per aventure, the entente of Salomon was this: that, as in sovereyn bounte, he foond no womman — /this is to seyn, that ther is no wight that hath sovereyn bountee save God allone, as he hymself recordeth in hys Evaungelie./ For ther nys no creature so good

1062–63 Car il est, *etc.*: For it is written that the chattering of women can hide nothing except what she does not know. Moreover, the philosopher (i.e., Aristotle) says, in evil counsel women conquer men; and for these reasons I must not use any of your counsel.

1066 perfourne: perform, carry out emprise: enterprise
weyve: abandon, leave off
1069 clatereth: babbles foolishly
1078 per aventure: by chance

that hym ne wanteth somwhat of the
perfeccioun of God, that is his makere./ *2270
Youre thridde reson is this: ye seyn that
if ye governe yow by my conseil, it sholde seme that ye hadde yeve me the maistrie and the lordshipe over youre persone./ Sire, save youre grace, it is nat so. For if it so were that no man sholde be conseilled but oonly of hem that hadden lordshipe and maistrie of his persone, men wolden nat be conseilled so ofte./ For soothly thilke man that asketh conseil of a purpos, yet hath he free choys wheither he wole werke by that conseil or noon./ And as to youre fourthe resoun, ther ye seyn that the janglerie of wommen kan hyde thynges that they wot noght, as who seith that a womman kan nat hyde that she woot;/ sire, thise wordes been understonde of wommen that been
jangleresses and wikked;/ of whiche 1085
wommen men seyn that thre thynges
dryven a man out of his hous — that is to seyn, smoke, droppyng of reyn, and wikked wyves;/ and of swiche wommen seith Salomon that 'it were bettre dwelle in desert than with a womman that is riotous.'/ And sire, by youre leve, that am nat I,/ for ye han ful ofte assayed my grete silence and my grete pacience, and eek how wel that I kan hyde and hele thynges that men oghte secreely to hyde./ And soothly, as to youre fifthe resoun, where as ye seyn that in wikked conseil wommen venquisshe men, God woot, thilke resoun stant heere in
no stede./ For understoond now, ye *2280
asken conseil to do wikkednesse;/ and if
ye wole werken wikkednesse, and youre wif restreyneth thilke wikked purpos, and overcometh yow by reson and by good conseil,/ certes youre wyf oghte rather to be preised than yblamed./ Thus sholde ye understonde the philosophre that seith, 'In wikked conseil wommen venquisshen hir housbondes.'/ And ther as ye blamen alle wommen and hir resouns, I shal shewe yow by manye ensamples that many a womman hath ben ful good, and yet been, and hir conseils ful hoolsome
and profitable./ Eek som men han seyd 1095
that the conseillynge of wommen is
outher to deere or elles to litel of pris./ But al be it so that ful many a womman is badde and hir conseil vile and noght worth, yet han men founde ful many a good womman, and ful discret and wis in conseillynge./ Loo, Jacob by good conseil of his mooder Rebekka wan the benysoun of Ysaak his fader and the lordshipe over alle his bretheren./ Judith by hire good conseil delivered the citee of Bethulie, in which she dwelled, out of the handes of Olofernus, that hadde it biseged and wolde have al destroyed it./ Abygail delivered Nabal hir housbonde fro David the kyng, that wolde have slayn hym, and apaysed the ire of the kyng by hir wit and by hir good con-
seillyng./ Hester by hir good conseil *2290
enhaunced greetly the peple of God in
the regne of Assuerus the kyng./ And the same bountee in good conseillyng of many a good womman may men telle./ And moreover, whan oure Lord hadde creat Adam, oure forme fader, he seyde in this wise:/ 'It is nat good to been a man alloone; make we to hym an helpe semblable to hymself.'/ Heere may ye se that if that wommen were nat goode, and hir conseils goode and profit-
able,/ oure Lord God of hevene wolde 1105
nevere han wroght hem, ne called hem
help of man, but rather confusioun of man./ And ther seyde oones a clerk in two vers, 'What is bettre than gold? Jaspre. What is bettre than jaspre? Wisedoom./ And what is better than wisedoom? Womman. And what is bettre than a good womman? Nothyng.'/ And, sire, by manye of othre resons may ye seen that manye wommen been goode, and hir conseils goode and profitable./ And therfore, sire, if ye wol triste to my conseil, I shal restoore yow youre doghter hool and
sound./ And eek I wol do to yow so *2300
muche that ye shul have honour in this
cause."/

Whan Melibee hadde herd the wordes of his wyf Prudence, he seyde thus:/ "I se wel that the word of Salomon is sooth. He seith that 'wordes that been spoken discreetly by ordinaunce been honycombes, for they yeven swetnesse to the soule and hoolsomnesse to the body.'/ And, wyf, by cause of thy sweete wordes, and eek for I have assayed and preved

1080 **wanteth:** lacks
1084 **janglerie:** chatter
1087 **riotous:** dissolute
1089 **hele:** conceal
1090 **stant . . . in no stede:** has no value, is useless

1098 **benysoun:** blessing
1103 **forme fader:** forefather
1104 **semblable:** similar
1113 **hoolsomnesse:** healthfulness

thy grete sapience and thy grete trouthe, I wol
governe me by thy conseil in alle thyng."/
"Now, sire," quod dame Prudence, "and syn
ye vouche sauf to been governed by my con-
seil, I wol enforme yow how ye shul governe
yourself in chesynge of youre conseil-
lours./ Ye shul first in alle youre werkes 1115
mekely biseken to the heighe God that
he wol be youre conseillour;/ and shapeth yow
to swich entente that he yeve yow conseil and
confort, as taughte Thobie his sone:/ 'At alle
tymes thou shalt blesse God, and praye hym
to dresse thy weyes, and looke that alle thy
conseils been in hym for everemoore.'/ Seint
Jame eek seith: 'If any of yow have nede of
sapience, axe it of God.'/ And afterward
thanne shul ye taken conseil in youreself, and
examyne wel youre thoghtes of swich thyng
as yow thynketh that is best for youre
profit./ And thanne shul ye dryve fro *2310
youre herte thre thynges that been con-
trariouse to good conseil;/ that is to seyn, ire,
coveitise, and hastifnesse./
"First, he that axeth conseil of hymself, certes
he moste been withouten ire, for manye
causes./ The firste is this: he that hath greet
ire and wratthe in hymself, he weneth alwey
that he may do thyng that he may nat do./
And secoundely, he that is irous and
wrooth, he ne may nat wel deme;/ and 1125
he that may nat wel deme, may nat wel
conseille./ The thridde is this, that he that is
irous and wrooth, as seith Senec, ne may nat
speke but blameful thynges,/ and with his
viciouse wordes he stireth oother folk to angre
and to ire./ And eek, sire, ye moste dryve
coveitise out of youre herte./ For the Apos-
tle seith that coveitise is roote of alle
harmes./ And trust wel that a coveitous *2320
man ne kan noght deme ne thynke, but
oonly to fulfille the ende of his coveitise;/ and
certes, that ne may nevere been accompliced,
for evere the moore habundaunce that he hath
of richesse, the moore he desireth./ And, sire,
ye moste also dryve out of youre herte hastif-
nesse; for certes,/ ye ne may nat deeme for
the beste by a sodeyn thought that falleth in
youre herte, but ye moste avyse yow on it
ful ofte./ For, as ye herde her biforn, the
commune proverbe is this, that 'he that
soone deemeth, soone repenteth.'/ Sire, 1135
ye ne be nat alwey in lyk disposicioun;/
for certes, somthyng that somtyme semeth to
yow that it is good for to do, another tyme it
semeth to yow the contrarie./
"Whan ye han taken conseil in youreself and
han deemed by good deliberacion swich thyng
as you semeth best,/ thanne rede I yow that
ye kepe it secree./ Biwrey nat youre conseil
to no persone, but if so be that ye wenen
sikerly that thurgh youre biwreyyng youre
condicioun shal be to yow the moore
profitable./ For Jhesus Syrak seith, 'Nei- *2330
ther to thy foo ne to thy frend discovere
nat thy secree ne thy folie,/ for they wol yeve
yow audience and lookynge and supportacioun in
thy presence and scorne thee in thyn ab-
sence.'/ Another clerk seith that 'scarsly
shaltou fynden any persone that may kepe con-
seil secrely.'/ The book seith, 'Whil that thou
kepest thy conseil in thyn herte, thou kepest
it in thy prisoun,/ and whan thou biwreyest
thy conseil to any wight, he holdeth
thee in his snare.'/ And therfore yow 1145
is bettre to hyde youre conseil in youre
herte than praye him to whom ye han biwreyed
youre conseil that he wole kepen it cloos and
stille./ For Seneca seith: 'If so be that thou
ne mayst nat thyn owene conseil hyde, how
darstou prayen any oother wight thy conseil
secrely to kepe?'/ But nathelees, if thou wene
sikerly that the biwreiyng of thy conseil to a
persone wol make thy condicion to stonden in
the bettre plyt, thanne shaltou tellen hym thy
conseil in this wise./ First thou shalt make no
semblant wheither thee were levere pees or
werre, or this or that, ne shewe hym nat thy
wille and thyn entente./ For trust wel that
comunli thise conseillours been flat-
ereres,/ namely the conseillours of grete *2340
lordes,/ for they enforcen hem alwey
rather to speken plesante wordes, enclynynge
to the lordes lust, than wordes that been trewe
or profitable./ And therfore men seyn that the
riche man hath seeld good conseil, but if he
have it of hymself./
And after that thou shalt considere thy
freendes and thyne enemys./ And as touch-
ynge thy freendes, thou shalt considere which
of hem been moost feithful and moost wise

1117 Thobie: Tobias (Tobias 4.10)
1118 dresse: direct
1119 Seint Jame: James 1.5
1127 blameful: blameworthy

1142 supportacioun: support

and eldest and most approved in conseillyng;/ and of hem shalt thou aske 1155
thy conseil, as the caas requireth./ I
seye that first ye shul clepe to youre conseil youre freendes that been trewe./ For Salomon seith that 'right as the herte of a man deliteth in savour that is soote, right so the conseil of trewe freendes yeveth swetnesse to the soule.'/ He seith also, 'Ther may no thyng be likned to the trewe freend,/ for certes gold ne silver ben nat so muche worth as the goode wyl of a
trewe freend.'/ And eek he seith that *2350
'a trewe freend is a strong deffense;
who so that it fyndeth, certes he fyndeth a greet tresour.'/ Thanne shul ye eek considere if that youre trewe freendes been discrete and wise. For the book seith, 'Axe alwey thy conseil of hem that been wise.'/ And by this same resoun shul ye clepen to youre conseil of youre freendes that been of age, swiche as han seyn and been expert in manye thynges and been approved in conseillynges./ For the book seith that 'in olde men is the sapience, and in longe tyme the prudence.'/ And Tullius seith that 'grete thynges ne been nat ay accompliced by strengthe, ne by delivernesse of body, but by good conseil, by auctoritee of persones, and by science; the whiche thre thynges ne been nat fieble by age, but certes they enforcen
and encreescen day by day.'/And 1165
thanne shul ye kepe this for a general
reule: First shul ye clepen to youre conseil a fewe of youre freendes that been especiale;/ for Salomon seith, 'Manye freendes have thou, but among a thousand chese thee oon to be thy conseillour.'/ For al be it so that thou first ne telle thy conseil but to a fewe, thou mayst afterward telle it to mo folk if it be nede./ But looke alwey that thy conseillours have thilke thre condiciouns that I have seyd bifore — that is to seyn, that they be trewe, wise, and of oold experience./ And werke nat alwey in every nede by oon counseillour allone; for somtyme bihooveth it to been conseilled by
manye./ For Salomon seith, 'Salvacion *2360
of thynges is where as ther been manye
conseillours.'/

"Now, sith that I have toold yow of which folk ye sholde been counseilled, now wol I teche yow which conseil ye oghte to eschewe./ First, ye shul eschue the conseillyng of fooles; for Salomon seith, 'Taak no conseil of a fool, for he ne kan noght conseille but after his owene lust and his affeccioun.'/ The book seith that 'the propretee of a fool is this: he troweth lightly harm of every wight, and lightly troweth alle bountee in hymself.'/ Thou shalt eek eschue the conseillyng of alle flatereres, swiche as enforcen hem rather to preise youre persone by flaterye than for to telle yow
the soothfastnesse of thynges./ Wher- 1175
fore Tullius seith, 'Amonges alle the
pestilences that been in freendshipe the grettest is flaterie.' And therfore is it moore nede that thou eschue and drede flatereres than any oother peple./ The book seith, 'Thou shalt rather drede and flee fro the sweete wordes of flaterynge preiseres than fro the egre wordes of thy freend that seith thee thy sothes.'/ Salomon seith that 'the wordes of a flaterere is a snare to cacche with innocentz.'/ He seith also that 'he that speketh to his freend wordes of swetnesse and of plesaunce setteth a net biforn his feet to cacche hym.'/ And therfore seith Tullius, 'Enclyne nat thyne eres to flatereres, ne taak no conseil of the wordes
of flaterye.'/ And Caton seith, 'Avyse *2370
thee wel, and eschue the wordes of swet-
nesse and of plesaunce.'/ And eek thou shalt eschue the conseillyng of thyne olde enemys that been reconsiled./ The book seith that 'no wight retourneth saufly into the grace of his olde enemy.'/ And Isope seith, 'Ne trust nat to hem to whiche thou hast had som tyme werre or enemytee, ne telle hem nat thy conseil.'/ And Seneca telleth the cause why: 'It may nat be,' seith he, 'that where greet fyr hath longe tyme endured, that ther ne dwelleth som vapour of warm-
nesse.'/ And therfore seith Salomon, 'In 1185
thyn olde foo trust nevere.'/ For sikerly,
though thyn enemy be reconsiled, and maketh thee chiere of humylitee, and lowteth to thee with his heed, ne trust hym nevere./ For certes he maketh thilke feyned humilitee moore for his profit than for any love of thy persone, by cause that he deemeth to have victorie over thy persone by swich feyned contenance, the which victorie he myghte nat have by strif or werre./ And Peter Alfonce seith, 'Make no felawshipe with thyne olde enemys, for if thou

1165 Tullius: Cicero delivernesse: agility

1177 egre: sharp
1184 Isope: Ysopus, the Latin version of Aesop's *Fables*
1189 Peter Alfonce: Petrus Alphonsus

do hem bountee, they wol perverten it into wikkednesse.'/ And eek thou most eschue the conseillyng of hem that been thy servantz and beren thee greet reverence, for peraventure they seyn it moore for drede than for love./ And therfore seith a philosophre in this wise: 'Ther is no wight parfitly trewe to hym that he to soore dredeth.'/ And Tullius seith, 'Ther nys no myght so greet of any emperour that longe may endure, but if he have moore love of the peple than drede.'/ Thou shalt also eschue the conseiling of folk that been dronkelewe, for they ne kan no conseil hyde./ For Salomon seith, 'Ther is no privetee ther as regneth dronkenesse.'/ Ye shul also han in suspect the conseillyng of swich folk as conseille yow o thyng prively and conseille yow the contrarie openly./ For Cassidorie seith that 'it is a manere sleighte to hyndre, whan he sheweth to doon o thyng openly and werketh prively the contrarie.'/ Thou shalt also have in suspect the conseillyng of wikked folk. For the book seith, 'The conseillyng of wikked folk is alwey ful of fraude.'/ And David seith, 'Blisful is that man that hath nat folwed the conseilyng of shrewes.'/ Thou shalt also eschue the conseillyng of yong folk, for hir conseil is nat rype./ *2380 1195

"Now, sire, sith I have shewed yow of which folk ye shul take youre conseil and of which folk ye shul folwe the conseil,/ now wol I teche yow how ye shal examyne youre conseil, after the doctrine of Tullius./ In the examynynge thanne of youre conseillour ye shul considere manye thynges./ Alderfirst thou shalt considere that in thilke thyng that thou purposest, and upon what thyng thou wolt have conseil, that verray trouthe be seyd and conserved; this is to seyn, telle trewely thy tale./ For he that seith fals may nat wel be conseilled in that cas of which he lieth./ And after this thou shalt considere the thynges that acorden to that thou purposest for to do by thy conseillours, if resoun accorde therto,/ and eek if thy myght may atteine therto, and if the moore part and the bettre part of thy conseillours acorde therto, or noon./ Thanne shaltou considere what thyng shal folwe of that conseillyng, as hate, *2390 1205

pees, werre, grace, profit, or damage, and manye othere thynges./ And in alle thise thynges thou shalt chese the beste and weyve alle othere thynges./ Thanne shaltow considere of what roote is engendred the matiere of thy conseil and what fruyt it may conceyve and engendre./ Thou shalt eek considere alle thise causes, fro whennes they been sprongen./ And whan ye han examyned youre conseil, as I have seyd, and which partie is the bettre and moore profitable, and han approved it by manye wise folk and olde,/ thanne shaltou considere if thou mayst parfourne it and maken of it a good ende./ For certes resoun wol nat that any man sholde bigynne a thyng but if he myghte parfourne it as hym oghte;/ ne no wight sholde take upon hym so hevy a charge that he myghte nat bere it./ For the proverbe seith, 'He that to muche embraceth, distreyneth litel.'/ And Catoun seith, 'Assay to do swich thyng as thou hast power to doon, lest that the charge oppresse thee so soore that thee bihoveth to weyve thyng that thou hast bigonne.'/ And if so be that thou be in doute wheither thou mayst parfourne a thing or noon, chese rather to suffre than bigynne./ And Piers Alphonce seith, 'If thou hast myght to doon a thyng of which thou most repente, it is bettre "nay" than "ye." '/ This is to seyn, that thee is bettre holde thy tonge stille than for to speke./ Thanne may ye understonde by strenger resons that if thou hast power to parfourne a werk of which thou shalt repente, thanne is it bettre that thou suffre than bigynne./ Wel seyn they that defenden every wight to assaye a thyng of which he is in doute wheither he may parfourne it or noon./ And after, whan ye han examyned youre conseil, as I have seyd biforn, and knowen wel that ye may parfourne youre emprise, conferme it thanne sadly til it be at an ende./ *2400 1215 *2410

"Now is it resoun and tyme that I shewe yow whanne and wherfore that ye may chaunge youre counseil withouten youre repreve./ Soothly, a man may chaungen his purpos and his conseil if the cause cesseth, or whan a newe caas bitydeth./ For the lawe seith that 'upon

1196 Cassidorie: Cassiodorus
1198 David: Psalms 1.1

1208 weyve: abandon, waive
1212 parfourne: perform, carry out
1215 distreyneth: holds, keeps
1222 conferme: prosecute, pursue

thynges that newely bityden bihoveth
newe conseil.'/ And Senec seith, 'If thy 1225
conseil is comen to the eeris of thyn en-
emy, chaunge thy conseil.'/ Thou mayst also chaunge thy conseil if so be that thou fynde that by errour, or by oother cause, harm or damage may bityde./ Also if thy conseil be dishonest, or ellis cometh of dishonest cause, chaunge thy conseil./ For the lawes seyn that 'alle bihestes that been dishoneste been of no value';/ and eek if so be that it be inpossible, or may nat goodly be parfourned
or kept./ *2420

"And take this for a general reule, that
every conseil that is affermed so strongly that it may nat be chaunged for no condicioun that may bityde, I seye that thilke conseil is wikked."/

This Melibeus, whanne he hadde herd the doctrine of his wyf dame Prudence, answerde in this wyse:/ "Dame," quod he, "as yet into this tyme ye han wel and covenably taught me as in general how I shal governe me in the chesynge and in the withholdynge of my conseillours./ But now wolde I fayn that ye wolde condescende in especial/ and telle me how liketh yow, or what semeth yow, by oure conseillours that we han chosen in oure pres-
ent nede."/ 1235

"My lord," quod she, "I biseke yow in al
humblesse that ye wol nat wilfully replie agayn my resouns, ne distempre youre herte, thogh I speke thyng that yow displese./ For God woot that, as in myn entente, I speke it for youre beste, for youre honour, and for youre profite eke./ And soothly, I hope that youre benyngnytee wol taken it in pacience./ Trusteth me wel," quod she, "that youre conseil as in this caas ne sholde nat, as to speke properly, be called a conseillyng, but a mocioun or a moevyng of folye,/ in which conseil ye han
erred in many a sondry wise./ *2430

"First and forward, ye han erred in
th'assemblynge of youre conseillours./ For ye sholde first have cleped a fewe folk to youre conseil, and after ye myghte han shewed it to mo folk, if it hadde been nede./ But certes, ye han sodeynly cleped to youre conseil a greet multitude of peple, ful chargeant and ful anoyous for to heere./ Also ye han erred, for theras ye sholden oonly have cleped to youre conseil youre trewe frendes olde and wise,/ ye han ycleped straunge folk, yonge folk, false flatereres, and enemys reconsiled, and folk that
doon yow reverence withouten love./ 1245
And eek also ye have erred, for ye han
broght with yow to youre conseil ire, coveitise, and hastifnesse,/ the whiche thre thinges been contrariouse to every conseil honest and profitable;/ the whiche thre thinges ye han nat anientissed or destroyed hem, neither in youreself, ne in youre conseillours, as yow oghte./ Ye han erred also, for ye han shewed to youre conseillours youre talent and youre affeccioun to make werre anon and for to do vengeance./ They han espied by youre wordes to
what thyng ye been enclyned;/ and *2440
therfore han they rather conseilled
yow to youre talent than to youre profit./ Ye han erred also, for it semeth that yow suffiseth to han been conseilled by thise conseillours oonly, and with litel avys,/ whereas in so greet and so heigh a nede it hadde been necessarie mo conseillours and moore deliberacion to parfourne youre emprise./ Ye han erred also, for ye ne han nat examyned youre conseil in the forseyde manere, ne in due manere, as the caas requireth./ Ye han erred also, for ye han maked no division bitwixe youre conseillours — this is to seyn, bitwixen youre trewe freendes and
youre feyned conseillours — / ne ye han 1255
nat knowe the wil of youre trewe
freendes olde and wise,/ but ye han cast alle hire wordes in an hochepot, and enclyned youre herte to the moore part and to the gretter nombre, and there been ye condescended./ And sith ye woot wel that men shal alwey fynde a gretter nombre of fooles than of wise men,/ and therfore the conseils that been at congregaciouns and multitudes of folk, there as men take moore reward to the nombre than to the sapience of persones,/ ye se wel that in swiche conseillynges fooles han the mais-
trie."/ *2450

Melibeus answerde agayn, and seyde,
"I graunte wel that I have erred;/ but there

1228 **dishonest:** unjust
1233 **covenably:** fittingly **withholdynge:** retention
1234 **condescende in especial:** get down to particulars
1236 **distempre:** upset
1241 **First and forward:** first of all
1243 **chargeant:** burdensome
1248 **anientissed:** annihilated
1249 **talent:** desire, inclination
1257 **hochepot:** mixture **there been ye condescended:** to that you have yielded (R.)

as thou hast toold me heerbiforn that he nys nat to blame that chaungeth his conseillours in certein caas and for certeine juste causes,/ I am al redy to chaunge my conseillours right as thow wolt devyse./ The proverbe seith that 'for to do synne is mannyssh, but certes for to persevere longe in synne is werk of the devel.' "/

To this sentence answered anon dame Prudence, and seyde,/ "Examineth," quod she, "youre conseil, and lat us see the whiche of hem han spoken most resonably and taught yow best conseil./ And for as muche as that the examynacion is necessarie, lat us bigynne at the surgiens and at the phisiciens, that first speeken in this matiere./ I sey yow that the surgiens and phisiciens han seyd yow in youre conseil discreetly, as hem oughte,/ and in hir speche seyden ful wisely that to the office of hem aperteneth to doon to every wight honour and profit, and no wight for to anoye,/ and after hir craft to doon greet diligence unto the cure of hem which that they han in hir governaunce./ And, sire, right as they han answered wisely and discreetly,/ right so rede I that they been heighly and sovereynly gerdoned for hir noble speche,/ and eek for they sholde do the moore ententif bisynesse in the curacion of youre doghter deere./ For al be it so that they been youre freendes, therfore shal ye nat suffren that they serve yow for noght,/ but ye oghte the rather gerdone hem and shewe hem youre largesse./ And as touchynge the proposicioun which that the phisiciens encreesceden in this caas — this is to seyn,/ that in maladies that oon contrarie is warisshed by another contrarie — / I wolde fayn knowe hou ye understonde thilke text, and what is youre sentence."/

"Certes," quod Melibeus, "I understonde it in this wise:/ that right as they han doon me a contrarie, right so sholde I doon hem another./ For right as they han venged hem on me and doon me wrong, right so shal I venge me upon hem and doon hem wrong;/ and thanne have I cured oon contrarie by another."/

"Lo, lo," quod dame Prudence, "how lightly is every man enclined to his owene desir and to his owene plesaunce!/ Certes," quod she, "the wordes of the phisiciens ne sholde nat han been understonden in thys wise./ For certes, wikkednesse is nat contrarie to wikkednesse, ne vengeance to vengeaunce, ne wrong to wrong, but they been semblable./ And therfore o vengeaunce is nat warisshed by another vengeaunce, ne o wroong by another wroong,/ but everich of hem encreesceth and aggreggeth oother./ But certes, the wordes of the phisiciens sholde been understonden in this wise:/ for good and wikkednesse been two contraries, and pees and werre, vengeaunce and suffraunce, discord and accord, and manye othere thynges;/ but certes, wikkednesse shal be warisshed by goodnesse, discord by accord, werre by pees, and so forth of othere thynges./ And heerto accordeth Seint Paul the Apostle in manye places./ He seith, 'Ne yeldeth nat harm for harm, ne wikked speche for wikked speche,/ but do wel to hym that dooth thee harm and blesse hym that seith to thee harm.'/ And in manye othere places he amonesteth pees and accord./ But now wol I speke to yow of the conseil which that was yeven to yow by the men of lawe and the wise folk,/ that seyden alle by oon accord, as ye han herd bifore,/ that over alle thynges ye shal doon youre diligence to kepen youre persone and to warnestoore youre hous;/ and seyden also that in this caas yow oghten for to werken ful avysely and with greet deliberacioun./ And, sire, as to the firste point, that toucheth to the kepyng of youre persone,/ ye shul understonde that he that hath werre shal everemoore mekely and devoutly preyen, biforn alle thynges,/ that Jhesus Crist of his mercy wol han hym in his proteccion and been his sovereyn helpyng at his nede./ For certes, in this world ther is no wight that may be conseilled ne kept sufficeantly withouten the kepyng of oure Lord Jhesu Crist./ To this sentence accordeth the prophete David, that seith,/ 'If God ne kepe the citee, in ydel waketh he that it kepeth.'/ Now, sire, thanne shul ye committe the kepyng of youre persone to youre trewe freendes that been approved and yknowe,/

1269 anoye: cause trouble
1272 sovereynly: chiefly
1273 curacion: cure
1275 gerdone: to reward
1287 aggreggeth: aggravates
1294 amonesteth: recommends
1297 warnestoore: garrison
1304 waketh: keeps watch

and of hem shul ye axen help youre persone for to kepe. For Catoun seith, 'If thou hast nede of help, axe it of thy freendes,/ for ther nys noon so good a phisicien as thy trewe freend.'/ And after this thanne shul ye kepe yow fro alle straunge folk, and fro lyeres, and have alwey in suspect hire compaignye./ For Piers Alfonce seith, 'Ne taak no compaignye by the weye of a straunge man, but if so be that thou have knowe hym of a lenger tyme./ And if so be that he falle into thy compaignye paraventure, withouten thyn assent,/ en- *2500 quere thanne as subtilly as thou mayst of his conversacion, and of his lyf bifore, and feyne thy wey; seye that thou [wolt] thider as thou wolt nat go;/ and if he bereth a spere, hoold thee on the right syde, and if he bere a swerd, hoold thee on the lift syde.'/ And after this thanne shul ye kepe yow wisely from all swich manere peple as I have seyd bifore, and hem and hir conseil eschewe./ And after this thanne shul ye kepe yow in swich manere/ that, for any presumpcion of youre strengthe, that ye ne dispise nat, ne accompte nat the myght of youre adversarie so litel that ye lete the kepyng of youre persone for youre presumpcioun,/ for every wys man 1315 dredeth his enemy./ And Salomon seith, 'Weleful is he that of alle hath drede,/ for certes, he that thurgh the hardynesse of his herte and thurgh the hardynesse of hymself hath to greet presumpcioun, hym shal yvel bityde.'/ Thanne shul ye everemoore contrewayte embusshementz and alle espiaille./ For Senec seith that 'the wise man that dredeth harmes, eschueth harmes,/ ne *2510 he ne falleth into perils that perils eschueth.'/ And al be it so that it seme that thou art in siker place, yet shaltow alwey do thy diligence in kepynge of thy persone;/ this is to seyn, ne be nat necligent to kepe thy persone nat oonly fro thy gretteste enemys but fro thy leeste enemy./ Senek seith, 'A man that is well avysed, he dredeth his leste enemy.'/ Ovyde seith that 'the litel wesele wol slee the grete bole and the wilde hert.'/ And the book seith, 'A litel 1325 thorn may prikke a kyng ful soore, and an hound wol holde the wilde boor.'/ But nathelees, I sey nat thou shalt be so coward that thou doute ther wher as is no drede./ The book seith that 'somme folk han greet lust to deceyve, but yet they dreden hem to be deceyved.'/ Yet shaltou drede to been empoisoned and kepe the from the compaignye of scorneres./ For the book seith, 'With scorneres make no compaignye, but flee hire wordes as venym.'/ *2520

"Now, as to the seconde point, where as youre wise conseillours conseilled yow to warnestoore youre hous with gret diligence,/ I wolde fayn knowe how that ye understonde thilke wordes and what is youre sentence."/

Melibeus answerde and seyde, "Certes, I understande it in this wise: That I shal warnestoore myn hous with toures, swiche as han castelles and othere manere edifices, and armure, and artelries,/ by whiche thynges I may my persone and myn hous so kepen and deffenden that myne enemys shul been in drede myn hous for to approche."/

To this sentence answerde anon Prudence: "Warnestooryng," quod she, "of heighe toures and of grete edifices apperteyneth somtyme to pryde./ And eek men make 1335 heighe toures, [and grete edifices] with grete costages and with greet travaille, and whan that they been accompliced, yet be they nat worth a stree, but if they be defended by trewe freendes that been olde and wise./ And understoond wel that the gretteste and strongeste garnysoun that a riche man may have, as wel to kepen his persone as his goodes, is/ that he be biloved with hys subgetz and with his neighebores./ For thus seith Tullius, that 'ther is a manere garnysoun that no man may venquysse ne disconfite, and that is/ a lord to be biloved of his citezeins and of his peple.'/ *2530

Now, sire, as to the thridde point, where as youre olde and wise conseillours seyden that yow ne oghte nat sodeynly ne hastily proceden in this nede,/ but that yow oghte purveyen and apparaillen yow in this caas with greet diligence and greet deliberacioun;/ trewely, I trowe that they seyden right wisely and right sooth./ For Tullius seith, 'In every

1311 conversacion: way of life
1315 lete the kepyng: neglect the protection (R.)
1317 Weleful: happy, prosperous
1319 contrewayte: watch out for embusshementz: ambushes
espiaille: spies
1325 wesele: weasel

1327 doute: fear
1333 artelries: artillery (catapults and cannons)
1336 costages: expenditures
1337 garnysoun: protection

nede, er thou bigynne it, apparaille thee with greet diligence.'/ Thanne seye I that in vengeance-takyng, in werre, in bataille, and in warnestooryng,/ er thow bigynne, I 1345 rede that thou apparaille thee therto, and do it with greet deliberacion./ For Tullius seith that 'longe apparaillyng biforn the bataille maketh short victorie.'/ And Cassidorus seith, 'The garnysoun is stronger whan it is longe tyme avysed.'/

But now lat us speken of the conseil that was accorded by youre neighebores, swiche as doon yow reverence withouten love,/ youre olde enemys reconsiled, youre flatereres,/ that conseilled yow certeyne *2540 thynges prively, and openly conseilleden yow the contrarie;/ the yonge folk also, that conseilleden yow to venge yow and make werre anon./ And certes, sire, as I have seyd biforn, ye han greetly erred to han cleped swich manere folk to youre conseil,/ which conseillours been ynogh repreved by the resouns aforeseyd./ But nathelees, lat us now descende to the special. Ye shuln first procede after the doctrine of Tullius./ 1355 Certes, the trouthe of this matiere, or of this conseil, nedeth nat diligently enquere,/ for it is wel wist whiche they been that han doon to yow this trespas and vileynye,/ and how manye trespassours, and in what manere they han to yow doon al this wrong and al this vileynye./ And after this, thanne shul ye examyne the seconde condicion which that the same Tullius addeth in this matiere./ For Tullius put a thyng which that he clepeth 'consentynge'; this is to seyn,/ who been *2550 they, and whiche been they and how manye that consenten to thy conseil in thy wilfulnesse to doon hastif vengeance./ And lat us considere also who been they, and how manye been they, and whiche been they that consenteden to youre adversaries./ And certes, as to the firste poynt, it is wel knowen whiche folk been they that consenteden to youre hastif wilfulnesse,/ for trewely, alle tho that conseilleden yow to maken sodeyn werre ne been nat youre freendes./ Lat us now considere whiche been they that ye holde so greetly youre freendes as to youre persone./ For al 1365 be it so that ye be myghty and riche, certes ye ne been but allone,/ for certes ye ne han no child but a doghter,/ ne ye ne han bretheren, ne cosyns germayns, ne noon oother neigh kynrede,/ wherfore that youre enemys for drede sholde stinte to plede with yow or to destroye youre persone./ Ye knowen also that youre richesses mooten been dispended in diverse parties,/ and whan *2560 that every wight hath his part, they ne wollen taken but litel reward to venge thy deeth./ But thyne enemys been thre, and they han manie children, bretheren, cosyns, and oother ny kynrede./ And though so were that thou haddest slayn of hem two or three, yet dwellen ther ynowe to wreken hir deeth and to sle thy persone./ And though so be that youre kynrede be moore siker and stedefast than the kyn of youre adversarie,/ yet nathelees youre kynrede nys but a fer kynrede; they been but litel syb to yow,/ 1375 and the kyn of youre enemys been ny syb to hem. And certes, as in that, hir condicioun is bet than youres./ Thanne lat us considere also if the conseillyng of hem that conseilleden yow to taken sodeyn vengeaunce, wheither it accorde to resoun./ And certes, ye knowe wel 'nay.'/ For, as by right and resoun, ther may no man taken vengeance on no wight but the juge that hath the jurisdiccioun of it,/ whan it is graunted hym to take thilke vengeance hastily or attemprely, as the lawe requireth./ And yet mooreover of thilke *2570 word that Tullius clepeth 'consentynge,'/ thou shalt considere if thy myght and thy power may consenten and suffise to thy wilfulnesse and to thy conseillours./ And certes thou mayst wel seyn that 'nay.'/ For sikerly, as for to speke proprely, we may do no thyng but oonly swich thyng as we may doon rightfully./ And certes rightfully ne mowe ye take no vengeance, as of youre propre auctoritee./ Thanne mowe ye 1385 seen that youre power ne consenteth nat, ne accordeth nat, with youre wilfulnesse./

"Lat us now examyne the thridde point, that Tullius clepeth 'consequent.'/ Thou shalt understonde that the vengeance that thou purposest for to take is the consequent;/ and therof folweth another vengeaunce, peril, and werre, and othere damages withoute nombre, of whiche we be nat war, as at this tyme./

1355 special: particular

1368 cosyns germayns: first cousins
1375 syb: related, kin
1386 ne consenteth: is not consistent with

And as touchynge the fourthe point,
that Tullius clepeth 'engendrynge,'/ *2580
thou shalt considere that this wrong
which that is doon to thee is engendred of the hate of thyne enemys,/ and of the vengeance-takynge upon that wolde engendre another vengeance, and muchel sorwe and wastynge of richesses, as I seyde./

"Now, sire, as to the point that Tullius clepeth 'causes,' which that is the laste point,/ thou shalt understonde that the wrong that thou hast receyved hath certeine causes,/ whiche that clerkes clepen *Oriens* and *Efficiens,* and *Causa longinqua* and *Causa propinqua;* this is
to seyn, the fer cause and the ny cause./ 1395
The fer cause is almyghty God, that is
cause of alle thynges./ The neer cause is thy thre enemys./ The cause accidental was hate./ The cause material been the fyve woundes of thy doghter./ The cause formal is the manere of hir werkynge that broghten laddres
and cloumben in at thy wyndowes./ *2590
The cause final was for to sle thy doghter. It letted nat in as muche as in hem was./ But for to speken of the fer cause, as to what ende they shul come, or what shal finally bityde of hem in this caas, ne kan I nat deeme but by conjectynge and by supposynge./ For we shul suppose that they shul come to a wikked ende,/ by cause that the Book of Decrees seith, 'Seelden, or with greet peyne, been causes ybroght to good ende whanne they been baddely bigonne.'/

"Now, sire, if men wolde axe me why that God suffred men to do yow this vileynye, certes, I kan nat wel answere, as for no sooth-
fastnesse./ For th'apostle seith that 'the 1405
sciences and the juggementz of oure
Lord God almyghty been ful depe;/ ther may no man comprehende ne serchen hem suffisantly.'/ Nathelees, by certeyne presumpciouns and conjectynges, I holde and bileeve/ that God, which that is ful of justice and of rightwisnesse, hath suffred this bityde by juste cause resonable./

"Thy name is Melibee; this is to seyn,
'a man that drynketh hony.'/ Thou hast *2600
ydronke so muchel hony of sweete temporeel richesses, and delices and honours of this world/ that thou art dronken and hast forgeten Jhesu Crist thy creatour./ Thou ne hast nat doon to hym swich honour and reverence as thee oughte,/ ne thou ne hast nat wel ytaken kep to the wordes of Ovide, that seith,/ 'Under the hony of the goodes of the body is hyd the venym that sleeth
the soule.'/ And Salomon seith, 'If thou 1415
hast founden hony, ete of it that suffiseth,/ for if thou ete of it out of mesure, thou shalt spewe' and be nedy and povre./ And peraventure Crist hath thee in despit, and hath turned awey fro thee his face and his eeris of misericorde,/ and also he hath suffred that thou hast been punysshed in the manere that thow hast ytrespassed./ Thou hast doon synne
agayn oure Lord Crist,/ for certes, the *2610
three enemys of mankynde — that is to
seyn, the flessh, the feend, and the world — / thou hast suffred hem entre in to thyn herte wilfully by the wyndowes of thy body,/ and hast nat defended thyself suffisantly agayns hire assautes and hire temptaciouns, so that they han wounded thy soule in fyve places;/ this is to seyn, the deedly synnes that been entred into thyn herte by thy fyve wittes./ And in the same manere oure Lord Crist hath woold and suffred that thy three enemys been en-
tred into thyn house by the wyndowes/ 1425
and han ywounded thy doghter in the forseyde manere."/

"Certes," quod Melibee, "I se wel that ye enforce yow muchel by wordes to overcome me in swich manere that I shal nat venge me of myne enemys,/ shewynge me the perils and the yveles that myghten falle of this vengeance./ But whoso wolde considere in alle vengeances the perils and yveles that myghte sewe of vengeance-takynge,/ a man wolde nevere take vengeance, and that were
harm;/ for by the vengeance-takynge *2620
been the wikked men dissevered fro the
goode men,/ and they that han wyl to do wikkednesse restreyne hir wikked purpos, whan they seen the punyssynge and chastisynge of the trespassours."/

1401 **letted nat:** did not delay
1402 **conjectynge:** conjecture
1404 **Book of Decrees:** the decrees of Gratian (*Decretum Gratiani*)
1408 **presumpciouns:** assumptions
1411 **delices:** pleasures
1417 **spewe:** vomit
1418 **misericorde:** mercy
1424 **fyve wittes:** five senses
1425 **woold:** willed

[*Et a ce respont dame Prudence, "Certes," dist elle, "je t'ottroye que de vengence vient molt de maulx et de biens;/ Mais vengence n'appartient pas a un chascun fors seulement aux juges et a ceulx qui ont la juridicion sur les malfaitteurs.*]/ And yet seye I moore, that right as a singuler persone synneth in takynge vengeance of another man,/ 1435 right so synneth the juge if he do no vengeance of hem that it han disserved./ For Senec seith thus: 'That maister,' he seith, 'is good that proveth shrewes.'/ And as Cassidore seith, 'A man dredeth to do outrages whan he woot and knoweth that it displeseth to the juges and the sovereyns.'/ And another seith, 'The juge that dredeth to do right maketh men shrewes.'/ And Seint Paul the Apostle seith in his Epistle, whan he writeth unto the Romayns, that 'the juges beren nat the spere withouten cause,/ but they *2630 beren it to punysse the shrewes and mysdoers and for to defende the goode men.'/ If ye wol thanne take vengeance of youre enemys, ye shul retourne or have youre recours to the juge that hath the jurisdiccion upon hem,/ and he shal punysse hem as the lawe axeth and requireth."/

"A," quod Melibee, "this vengeance liketh me no thyng./ I bithenke me now and take heede how Fortune hath norissed me fro my childhede and hath holpen me to passe many a stroong paas./ Now wol I as- 1445 sayen hire, trowynge, with Goddes help, that she shal helpe me my shame for to venge."/

"Certes," quod Prudence, "if ye wol werke by my conseil, ye shul nat assaye Fortune by no wey,/ ne ye shul nat lene or bowe unto hire, after the word of Senec,/ for 'thynges that been folily doon, and that been in hope of Fortune, shullen nevere come to good ende.'/ And, as the same Senec seith, 'The moore cleer and the moore shynyng that Fortune is, the moore brotil and the sonner broken she is.'/ Trusteth nat in hire, for she nys *2640 nat stidefast ne stable,/ for whan thow trowest to be moost seur or siker of hire help, she wol faille thee and deceyve thee./ And where as ye seyn that Fortune hath norissed yow fro youre childhede,/ I seye that in so muchel shul ye the lasse truste in hire and in hir wit./ For Senec seith, 'What man that is norissed by Fortune, she maketh hym a greet fool.'/ Now thanne, syn ye de- 1455 sire and axe vengeance, and the vengeance that is doon after the lawe and bifore the juge ne liketh yow nat,/ and the vengeance that is doon in hope of Fortune is perilous and uncertein,/ thanne have ye noon oother remedie but for to have youre recours unto the sovereyn Juge that vengeth alle vileynyes and wronges./ And he shal venge yow after that hymself witnesseth, where as he seith,/ 'Leveth the vengeance to me, and I shal do it.' "/ *2650

Melibee answerde, "If I ne venge me nat of the vileynye that men han doon to me,/ I sompne or warne hem that han doon to me that vileynye, and alle othere, to do me another vileynye./ For it is writen, 'If thou take no vengeance of an oold vileynye, thou sompnest thyne adversaries to do thee a newe vileynye.'/ And also for my suffrance men wolden do me so muchel vileynye that I myghte neither bere it ne susteene,/ and so sholde I been put and holden overlowe./ For 1465 men seyn, 'In muchel suffrynge shul manye thynges falle unto thee whiche thou shalt nat mowe suffre.' "/

"Certes," quod Prudence, "I graunte yow that over-muchel suffraunce is nat good./ But yet ne folweth it nat therof that every persone to whom men doon vileynye take of it vengeance,/ for that aperteneth and longeth al oonly to the juges, for they shul venge the vileynyes and injuries./ And therfore tho two auctoritees that ye han seyd above been oonly understonden in the juges,/ for *2660 whan they suffren over-muchel the wronges and the vileynyes to be doon withouten punysshynge,/ they sompne nat a man al oonly for to do newe wronges, but they comanden it./ Also a wys man seith that 'the juge that correcteth nat the synnere comandeth and biddeth hym do synne.'/ And the juges and sovereyns myghten in hir land so muchel suffre of the shrewes and mysdoeres/ that they

1433–34 *Et a ce, etc.:* And to this dame Prudence answered, "Certainly," she said, "I grant you that from vengeance come many evils and many goods; but (taking) vengeance does not appertain to an individual person but solely to judges and to those who have jurisdiction over evil-doers."
1435 singuler: private
1437 proveth: reproves
1445 bithenke me: consider paas: passage, difficult situation

1462 sompne: invite, summon warne: announce

sholden, by swich suffrance, by proces of tyme wexen of swich power and myght that they sholden putte out the juges and the sovereyns from hir places,/ and atte laste 1475 maken hem lesen hire lordshipes./

"But lat us now putte that ye have leve to venge yow./ I seye ye been nat of myght and power as now to venge yow,/ for if ye wole maken comparisoun unto the myght of youre adversaries, ye shul fynde in manye thynges that I have shewed yow er this that hire condicion is bettre than youres./ And therfore seye I that it is good as now that ye suffre and be pacient./ *2670

"Forthermoore, ye knowen wel that after the comune sawe, 'it is a woodnesse a man to stryve with a strenger or a moore myghty man than he is hymself,/ and for to stryve with a man of evene strengthe — that is to seyn, with as strong a man as he is — it is peril,/ and for to stryve with a weyker man, it is folie.'/ And therfore sholde a man flee stryvynge as muchel as he myghte./ For Salomon seith, 'It is a greet worshipe to a man to kepen hym fro noyse and stryf.'/ And 1485 if it so bifalle or happe that a man of gretter myght and strengthe than thou art do thee grevaunce,/ studie and bisye thee rather to stille the same grevaunce than for to venge thee./ For Senec seith that 'he putteth hym in greet peril that stryveth with a gretter man than he is hymself.'/ And Catoun seith, 'If a man of hyer estaat or degree, or moore myghty than thou, do thee anoy or grevaunce, suffre hym,/ for he that oones hath greved thee, may another tyme releeve thee and helpe.'/ Yet sette I caas ye have bothe *2680 myght and licence for to venge yow,/ I seye that ther be ful manye thynges that shul restreyne yow of vengeance-takynge/ and make yow for to enclyne to suffre, and for to han pacience in the wronges that han been doon to yow./ First and foreward, if ye wole considere the defautes that been in youre owene persone,/ for whiche defautes God hath suffred yow have this tribulacioun, as I have seyd yow heer-biforn./ For the 1495 poete seith that 'we oghte paciently taken the tribulacions that comen to us, whan we thynken and consideren that we han disserved to have hem.'/ And Seint Gregorie seith that 'whan a man considereth wel the nombre of his defautes and of his synnes,/ the peynes and the tribulaciouns that he suffreth semen the lesse unto hym;/ and in as muche as hym thynketh his synnes moore hevy and grevous,/ in so muche semeth his peyne the lighter and the esier unto hym.'/ *2690 Also ye owen to enclyne and bowe youre herte to take the pacience of oure Lord Jhesu Crist, as seith Seint Peter in his Epistles./ 'Jhesu Crist,' he seith, 'hath suffred for us and yeven ensample to every man to folwe and sewe hym,/ for he dide nevere synne, ne nevere cam ther a vileyns word out of his mouth./ Whan men cursed hym, he cursed hem noght, and whan men betten hym, he manaced hem noght.'/ Also the grete pacience which the seintes that been in Paradys han had in tribulaciouns that they han ysuffred, withouten hir desert or gilt,/ oghte muchel stiren 1505 yow to pacience./ Forthermoore ye sholde enforce yow to have pacience,/ considerynge that the tribulaciouns of this world but litel while endure and soone passed been and goon,/ and the joye that a man seketh to have by pacience in tribulaciouns is perdurable, after that the Apostle seith in his epistle./ 'The joye of God,' he seith, 'is perdurable' — that is to seyn, everelastynge./ Also *2700 troweth and bileveth stedefastly that he nys nat wel ynorissed, ne wel ytaught, that kan nat have pacience or wol nat receyve pacience./ For Salomon seith that 'the doctrine and the wit of a man is knowen by pacience.'/ And in another place he seith that 'he that is pacient governeth hym by greet prudence.'/ And the same Salomon seith, 'The angry and wrathful man maketh noyses, and the pacient man atempreth hem and stilleth.'/ He seith also, 'It is moore worth to be pacient than for to be right strong;/ and he 1515 that may have the lordshipe of his owene herte is moore to preyse than he that by his force or strengthe taketh grete citees.'/ And therfore seith Seint Jame in his Epistle that 'pacience is a greet vertu of perfeccioun.' "/

"Certes," quod Melibee, "I graunte yow, dame Prudence, that pacience is a greet vertu of perfeccioun;/ but every man may nat have the perfeccioun that ye seken;/ ne I nam

1477 **putte:** suppose

1510 **perdurable:** eternal
1514 **atempreth:** moderates
1515 **worth:** worthy

nat of the nombre of right parfite men,/ *2710
for myn herte may nevere been in pees
unto the tyme it be venged./ And al be it so
that it was greet peril to myne enemys to do
me a vileynye in takynge vengeance upon me,/
yet tooken they noon heede of the peril, but
fulfilleden hir wikked wyl and hir corage./
And therfore me thynketh men oghten nat
repreve me, though I putte me in a litel peril
for to venge me,/ and though I do a greet
excesse; that is to seyn, that I venge
oon outrage by another."/ 1525

"A," quod dame Prudence, "ye seyn
youre wyl and as yow liketh,/ but in no caas
of the world a man sholde nat doon outrage
ne excesse for to vengen hym./ For Cassidore
seith that 'as yvele dooth he that vengeth hym
by outrage as he that dooth the outrage.'/ And
therfore ye shul venge yow after the ordre of
right; that is to seyn, by the lawe and noght
by excesse ne by outrage./ And also, if ye
wol venge yow of the outrage of youre adversa-
ries in oother manere than right comand-
eth, ye synnen./ And therfore seith Senec *2720
that 'a man shal nevere vengen shrewed-
nesse by shrewednesse.'/ And if ye seye that
right axeth a man to defenden violence by vio-
lence and fightyng by fightyng,/ certes ye seye
sooth, whan the defense is doon anon with-
outen intervalle or withouten tariyng or de-
lay,/ for to deffenden hym and nat for to
vengen hym./ And it bihoveth that a man
putte swich attemperance in his def-
fense/ that men have no cause ne mat- 1535
iere to repreven hym that deffendeth
hym of excesse and outrage, for ellis were it
agayn resoun./ Pardee, ye knowen wel that
ye maken no deffense as now for to deffende
yow, but for to venge yow;/ and so seweth
it that ye han no wyl to do youre dede at-
temprely./ And therfore me thynketh that pa-
cience is good. For Salomon seith that 'he that
is nat pacient shal have greet harm.' "/

"Certes," quod Melibee, "I graunte yow that
whan a man is inpacient and wrooth of that
that toucheth hym noght and that aperteneth
nat unto hym, though it harme hym, it
is no wonder./ For the lawe seith that *2730
'he is coupable that entremetteth hym or
medleth with swych thyng as aperteneth nat
unto hym.'/ And Salomon seith that 'he that
entremetteth hym of the noyse or strif of an-
other man is lyk to hym that taketh an hound
by the eris.'/ For right as he that taketh a
straunge hound by the eris is outherwhile biten
with the hound,/ right in the same wise is it
resoun that he have harm that by his inpa-
cience medleth hym of the noyse of another
man, wheras it aperteneth nat unto hym./ But
ye knowen wel that this dede — that is to seyn,
my grief and my disese — toucheth me
right ny./ And therfore, though I be 1545
wrooth and inpacient, it is no merveille./
And, savynge youre grace, I kan nat seen that it
myghte greetly harme me though I tooke ven-
geaunce./ For I am richer and moore myghty
than myne enemys been;/ and wel knowen ye
that by moneye and by havynge grete posses-
sions been alle the thynges of this world gov-
erned./ And Salomon seith that 'alle
thynges obeyen to moneye.' "/ *2740

Whan Prudence hadde herd hir hous-
bonde avanten hym of his richesse and of his
moneye, dispreisynge the power of his adver-
saries, she spak and seyde in this wise:/
"Certes, deere sire, I graunte yow that ye been
riche and myghty/ and that the richesses been
goode to hem that han wel ygeten hem and wel
konne usen hem./ For right as the body of a
man may nat lyven withoute the soule, namoore
may it lyve withouten temporeel goodes./ And
by richesses may a man gete hym grete
freendes./ And therfore seith Pam- 1555
philles: 'If a net-herdes doghter,' seith
he, 'be riche, she may chesen of a thousand
men which she wol take to hir housbonde,/
for, of a thousand men, oon wol nat forsaken
hire ne refusen hire.'/ And this Pamphilles
seith also, 'If thow be right happy — that is to
seyn, if thou be right riche — thou shalt fynde
a greet nombre of felawes and freendes./ And
if thy fortune change that thou wexe povre,
farewel freendshipe and felaweshipe,/ for thou
shalt be alloone withouten any compaignye,
but if it be the compaignye of povre
folk.'/ And yet seith this Pamphilles *2750
moreover that 'they that been thralle and
bonde of lynage shullen been maad worthy and
noble by the richesses.'/ And right so as by
richesses ther comen manye goodes, right so

1531 shrewednesse: wickedness
1532 defenden: defend from, fight off
1541 entremetteth: interferes, meddles with

1556 Pamphilles: hero of the thirteenth-century Latin poem *Pamphilus de Amore* net-herdes: cowherd's

by poverte come ther manye harmes and yveles,/ for greet poverte constreyneth a man to do manye yveles./ And therfore clepeth Cassidore poverte the mooder of ruyne;/ that is to seyn, the mooder of overthrowynge or fallynge doun./ And therfore seith Piers Alfonce, 'Oon of the gretteste adversitees of this world is/ whan a free man by kynde or of burthe is constreyned by poverte to eten the almesse of his enemy,'/ and the same seith Innocent in oon of his bookes. He seith that 'sorweful and myshappy is the condicioun of a povre beggere;/ for if he axe nat his mete, he dyeth for hunger;/ and if he axe, he dyeth for shame; and algates necessitee constreyneth hym to axe.'/ And seith Salomon that 'bet it is to dye than for to have swich poverte.'/ And as the same Salomon seith, 'Bettre it is to dye of bitter deeth than for to lyven in swich wise.'/ By thise resons that I have seid unto yow and by manye othere resons that I koude seye,/ I graunte yow that richesses been goode to hem that geten hem wel and to hem that wel usen tho richesses./ And therfore wol I shewe yow hou ye shul have yow, and how ye shul bere yow in gaderynge of richesses, and in what manere ye shul usen hem./

"First, ye shul geten hem withouten greet desir, by good leyser, sokyngly and nat over-hastily./ For a man that is to desirynge to gete richesses abaundoneth hym first to thefte, and to alle othere yveles;/ and therfore seith Salomon, 'He that hasteth hym to bisily to wexe riche shal be noon innocent.'/ He seith also that 'the richesse that hastily cometh to a man soone and lightly gooth and passeth fro a man,/ but that richesse that cometh litel and litel wexeth alwey and multiplieth.'/ And, sire, ye shul geten richesses by youre wit and by youre travaille unto youre profit,/ and that withouten wrong or harm doynge to any oother persone./ For the lawe seith that 'ther maketh no man himselven riche, if he do harm to another wight.'/ This is to seyn, that nature deffendeth and forbedeth by right that no man make hymself riche unto the harm of another persone./ And Tullius seith that 'no sorwe, ne no drede of deeth, ne no thyng that may falle unto a man,/ is so muchel agayns nature as a man to encressen his owene profit to the harm of another man./ And though the grete men and the myghty men geten richesses moore lightly than thou,/ yet shaltou nat been ydel ne slow to do thy profit, for thou shalt in alle wise flee ydelnesse.'/ For Salomon seith that 'ydelnesse techeth a man to do manye yveles.'/ And the same Salomon seith that 'he that travailleth and bisieth hym to tilien his land shal eten breed,/ but he that is ydel and casteth hym to no bisynesse ne occupacioun shal falle into poverte and dye for hunger.'/ And he that is ydel and slow kan nevere fynde covenable tyme for to doon his profit./ For ther is a versifiour seith that 'the ydel man excuseth hym in wynter by cause of the grete coold, and in somer by enchesoun of the greete heete.'/ For thise causes seith Caton, 'Waketh and enclyneth nat yow over-muchel for to slepe, for over-muchel reste norisseth and causeth manye vices.'/ And therfore seith Seint Jerome, 'Dooth somme goode dedes that the devel, which is oure enemy, ne fynde yow nat unocupied.'/ For the devel ne taketh nat lightly unto his werkynge swiche as he fyndeth occupied in goode werkes./

"Thanne thus in getynge richesses ye mosten flee ydelnesse./ And afterward, ye shul use the richesses which ye have geten by youre wit and by youre travaille/ in swich a manere that men holde yow nat to scars, ne to sparynge, ne to fool-large — that is to seyen, over-large a spendere./ For right as men blamen an avaricious man by cause of his scarsetee and chyncherie,/ in the same wise is he to blame that spendeth over-largely./ And therfore seith Caton: 'Use,' he seith, 'thy richesses that thou hast geten/ in swich a manere that men have no matiere ne cause to calle thee neither wrecche ne chynche,/ for it is a greet shame to a man to have a povere herte and a riche purs.'/ He seith also, 'The goodes that thou hast ygeten, use hem by mesure;' that is to seyn, spende hem mesurably,/

1568 myshappy: unfortunate
1575 hou ye shul have yow: how you should behave
1576 sokyngly: slowly, gradually
1577 abaundoneth hym: devotes himself
1584 no man: any man
1590 tilien: till
1592 covenable: suitable
1599 scars: niggardly
1600 scarsetee: niggardliness chyncherie: miserliness
1603 chynche: miser
1605 mesurably: moderately

for they that folily wasten and 1606
despenden the goodes that they han,/
whan they han namoore propre of hir owene,
they shapen hem to take the goodes of another
man./ I seye thanne that ye shul fleen ava-
rice,/ usynge youre richesses in swich manere
that men seye nat that youre richesses been
yburyed/ but that ye have hem in
youre myght and in youre weeldynge./ *2800
For a wys man repreveth the avaricious
man, and seith thus in two vers:/ 'Wherto and
why burieth a man his goodes by his grete
avarice, and knoweth wel that nedes moste
he dye?/ For deeth is the ende of every man
as in this present lyf.'/ And for what cause or
enchesoun joyneth he hym or knytteth he hym
so faste unto his goodes/ that alle hise wittes
mowen nat disseveren hym or departen
hym from his goodes,/ and knoweth 1615
wel, or oghte knowe, that whan he is
deed he shal no thyng bere with hym out of
this world?/ And therfore seith Seint Austyn
that 'the avaricious man is likned unto helle,/
that the moore it swelweth the moore desir it
hath to swelwe and devoure.'/ And as wel as
ye wolde eschewe to be called an avaricious
man or chynche,/ as wel sholde ye kepe yow
and governe yow in swich a wise that
men calle yow nat fool-large./ Ther- *2810
fore seith Tullius: 'The goodes,' he seith,
'of thyn hous ne sholde nat been hyd ne kept
so cloos, but that they myghte been opened
by pitee and debonairetee'/ (that is to seyn, to
yeven part to hem that han greet nede),/ 'ne
thy goodes shullen nat been so opene to been
every mannes goodes.'/ Afterward, in getynge
of youre richesses and in usynge hem ye shul
alwey have thre thynges in youre herte/ (that
is to seyn, oure Lord God, conscience,
and good name)./ First, ye shul have 1625
God in youre herte,/ and for no richesse
ye shullen do no thyng which may in any
manere displese God, that is youre creatour
and makere./ For after the word of Salomon,
'It is bettre to have a litel good with the love
of God/ than to have muchel good and tres-
our and lese the love of his Lord God.'/ And
the prophete seith that 'bettre it is to been
a good man and have litel good and
tresour/ than to been holden a shrewe *2820
and have grete richesses.'/ And yet seye
I ferthermoore, that ye sholde alwey doon youre
bisynesse to gete yow richesses,/ so that ye
gete hem with good conscience./ And th'Apos-
tle seith that 'ther nys thyng in this world
of which we sholden have so greet joye as
whan oure conscience bereth us good wit-
nesse.'/ And the wise man seith, 'The sub-
stance of a man is ful good, whan synne
is nat in mannes conscience.'/ After- 1635
ward, in getynge of youre richesses and
in usynge of hem,/ yow moste have greet bisy-
nesse and greet diligence that youre goode
name be alwey kept and conserved./ For Salo-
mon seith that 'bettre it is and moore it avail-
leth a man to have a good name than for
to have grete richesses.'/ And therfore he
seith in another place, 'Do greet diligence,'
seith Salomon, 'in kepyng of thy freend and
of thy goode name;/ for it shal lenger abide
with thee than any tresour, be it never
so precious.'/ And certes he sholde nat *2830
be called a gentil man that after God
and good conscience, alle thynges left, ne
dooth his diligence and bisynesse to kepen his
goode name./ And Cassidore seith that 'it is
signe of a gentil herte whan a man loveth and
desireth to han a good name.'/ And therfore
seith Seint Austyn that 'ther been two thynges
that arn necessarie and nedefulle,/ and that
is good conscience and good loos;/ that is to
seyn, good conscience to thyn owene persone
inward and good loos for thy neighebor
outward.'/ And he that trusteth hym so 1645
muchel in his goode conscience/ that he
displeseth, and setteth at noght his goode
name or loos, and rekketh noght though he
kepe nat his goode name, nys but a crueel
cherl./

"Sire, now have I shewed yow how ye shul
do in getynge richesses, and how ye shullen
usen hem,/ and I se wel that for the trust
that ye han in youre richesses ye wole moeve
werre and bataille./ I conseille yow that ye
bigynne no werre in trust of youre richesses,
for they ne suffisen noght werres to
mayntene./ And therfore seith a phi- *2840
losophre, 'That man that desireth and
wole algates han werre, shal nevere have suf-
fisaunce,/ for the richer that he is, the gretter
despenses moste he make, if he wole have wor-

1610 weeldynge: control

1634 th'Apostle: St. Paul
1641 alle thynges left: all other things left aside
1644 loos: reputation

shipe and victorie.'/ And Salomon seith that 'the gretter richesses that a man hath, the mo despendours he hath.'/ And, deere sire, al be it so that for youre richesses ye mowe have muchel folk,/ yet bihoveth it nat, ne it is nat good, to bigynne werre whereas ye mowe in oother manere have pees unto youre worshipe and profit./ For the victorie 1655 of batailles that been in this world lyth nat in greet nombre or multitude of the peple, ne in the vertu of man,/ but it lith in the wyl and in the hand of oure Lord God Almyghty./ And therfore Judas Machabeus, which was Goddes knyght,/ whan he sholde fighte agayn his adversarie that hadde a gretter nombre and a gretter multitude of folk and strenger than was this peple of Machabee,/ yet he reconforted his litel compaignye, and seyde right in this wise:/ 'Als lightly,' quod *2850 he, 'may oure Lord God Almyghty yeve victorie to a fewe folk as to many folk,/ for the victorie of a bataile comth nat by the grete nombre of peple,/ but it cometh from oure Lord God of hevene.'/ And, deere sire, for as muchel as ther is no man certein if he be worthy that God yeve hym victorie [*ne plus que il est certain se il est digne de l'amour de Dieu*] or naught, after that Salomon seith,/ therfore every man sholde greetly drede werres to bigynne./ And by cause that 1665 in batailles fallen manye perils,/ and happeth outher while that as soone is the grete man slayn as the litel man;/ and as it is writen in the seconde Book of Kynges, 'The dedes of batailles been aventurouse and nothyng certeyne,/ for as lightly is oon hurt with a spere as another';/ and for ther is gret peril in werre, therfore sholde a man flee and eschue werre, in as muchel as a man may goodly./ For Salomon seith, 'He that *2860 loveth peril shal falle in peril.' "/

After that Dame Prudence hadde spoken in this manere, Melibee answerde and seyde,/ "I see wel, dame Prudence, that by youre faire wordes and by youre resouns that ye han shewed me, that the werre liketh yow no thyng;/ but I have nat yet herd youre conseil, how I shal do in this nede."/

"Certes," quod she, "I conseille yow that ye accorde with youre adversaries and that ye have pees with hem./ For Seint Jame 1675 seith in his Epistles that 'by concord and pees the smale richesses wexen grete,/ and by debaat and discord the grete richesses fallen doun.'/ And ye knowen wel that oon of the gretteste and moost sovereyn thyng that is in this world is unytee and pees./ And therfore seyde oure Lord Jhesu Crist to his apostles in this wise:/ 'Wel happy and blessed been they that loven and purchacen pees, for they been called children of God.' "/ *2870

"A," quod Melibee, "now se I wel that ye loven nat myn honour ne my worshipe./ Ye knowen wel that myne adversaries han bigonnen this debaat and bryge by hire outrage,/ and ye se wel that they ne requeren ne preyen me nat of pees, ne they asken nat to be reconsiled./ Wol ye thanne that I go and meke me, and obeye me to hem, and crie hem mercy?/ For sothe, that were nat my worshipe./ For right as men seyn that 1685 'over-greet hoomlynesse engendreth dispreisynge,' so fareth it by to greet humylitee or mekenesse."/

Thanne bigan dame Prudence to maken semblant of wratthe and seyde:/ "Certes, sire, sauf youre grace, I love youre honour and youre profit as I do myn owene, and evere have doon;/ ne ye, ne noon oother, seyn nevere the contrarie./ And yit if I hadde seyd that ye sholde han purchaced the pees and the reconsiliacioun, I ne hadde nat muchel mystaken me ne seyd amys./ For the *2880 wise man seith, 'The dissensioun bigynneth by another man, and the reconsilyng bygynneth by thyself.'/ And the prophete seith, 'Flee shrewednesse and do goodnesse;/ seke pees and folwe it, as muchel as in thee is.'/ Yet seye I nat that ye shul rather pursue to youre adversaries for pees than they shuln to yow./ For I knowe wel that ye been so hardherted that ye wol do no thyng for me./ And Salomon seith, 'He that hath 1695 over-hard an herte, atte laste he shal myshappe and mystyde.' "/

1653 **despendours:** officials who disburse money
1664 ***ne plus que . . . de Dieu:*** no more than it is certain that he is worthy of the love of God
1668 **seconde Book of Kynges:** AV 2 Samuel 11.25.
aventurouse: subject to chance

1676 **Seint Jame:** a misattribution; actually from Seneca
1682 **bryge:** strife
1684 **meke me:** humble myself
1686 **hoomlynesse:** familiarity
1690 **purchaced:** brought about
1694 **shuln** = *shullen,* should (offer peace)
1696 **mystyde:** misbetide, be unlucky

Whanne Melibee hadde herd dame Prudence maken semblant of wratthe, he seyde in this wise:/ "Dame, I prey yow that ye be nat displesed of thynges that I seye,/ for ye knowe wel that I am angry and wrooth, and that is no wonder;/ and they that been wrothe witen nat wel what they don ne what they seyn./ Therfore the prophete seith that *2890 'troubled eyen han no cleer sighte.'/ But seyeth and conseileth me as yow liketh, for I am redy to do right as ye wol desire;/ and if ye repreve me of my folye, I am the moore holden to love yow and to preyse yow./ For Salomon seith that 'he that repreveth hym that dooth folye,/ he shal fynde gretter grace than he that deceyveth hym by sweete wordes.' "/ 1705

Thanne seide dame Prudence, "I make no semblant of wratthe ne anger, but for youre grete profit./ For Salomon seith, 'He is moore worth that repreveth or chideth a fool for his folye, shewynge hym semblant of wratthe,/ than he that supporteth hym and preyseth hym in his mysdoynge and laugheth at his folye.'/ And this same Salomon seith afterward that 'by the sorweful visage of a man' (that is to seyn by the sory and hevy contenaunce of a man)/ 'the fool correcteth and amendeth hymself.' "/ *2900

Thanne seyde Melibee, "I shal nat konne answere to so manye faire resouns as ye putten to me and shewen./ Seyeth shortly youre wyl and youre conseil, and I am al redy to fulfille and parfourne it."/

Thanne dame Prudence discovered al hir wyl to hym and seyde,/ "I conseille yow," quod she, "aboven alle thynges, that ye make pees bitwene God and yow,/ and beth reconsiled unto hym and to his grace./ 1715 For, as I have seyd yow heer biforn, God hath suffred yow to have this tribulacioun and disese for youre synnes./ And if ye do as I sey yow, God wol sende youre adversaries unto yow/ and maken hem fallen at youre feet, redy to do youre wyl and youre comandementz./ For Salomon seith, 'Whan the condicioun of man is plesaunt and likynge to God,/ he chaungeth the hertes of the mannes adversaries and constreyneth hem to biseken hym of pees and of grace.'/ And *2910 I prey yow lat me speke with youre adversaries in privee place,/ for they shul nat knowe that it be of youre wyl or of youre assent./ And thanne, whan I knowe hir wil and hire entente, I may conseille yow the moore seurely."/

"Dame," quod Melibee, "dooth youre wil and youre likynge;/ for I putte me hoolly in youre disposicioun and ordinaunce."/ 1725

Thanne dame Prudence, whan she saugh the goode wyl of hir housbonde, delibered and took avys in hirself,/ thinkinge how she myghte brynge this nede unto a good conclusioun and to a good ende./ And whan she saugh hir tyme, she sente for thise adversaries to come unto hire into a pryvee place/ and shewed wisely unto hem the grete goodes that comen of pees/ and the grete harmes and perils that been in werre,/ and *2920 seyde to hem in a goodly manere hou that hem oughten have greet repentaunce/ of the injurie and wrong that they hadden doon to Melibee hir lord, and unto hire, and to hire doghter./

And whan they herden the goodliche wordes of dame Prudence,/ they weren so supprised and ravysshed and hadden so greet joye of hire that wonder was to telle./ "A, lady," quod they, "ye han shewed unto us the blessynge of swetnesse, after the sawe of David the prophete,/ for the reconsilynge which 1735 we been nat worthy to have in no manere,/ but we oghte requeren it with greet contricioun and humylitee,/ ye of youre grete goodnesse have presented unto us./ Now se we wel that the science and the konnynge of Salomon is ful trewe./ For he seith that 'sweete wordes multiplien and encreescen freendes and maken shrewes to be debonaire and meeke.'/ *2930

"Certes," quod they, "we putten oure dede and al oure matere and cause al hoolly in youre goode wyl/ and been redy to obeye to the speche and comandement of my lord Melibee./ And therfore, deere and benygne lady, we preien yow and biseke yow as mekely as we konne and mowen/ that it lyke unto youre grete goodnesse to fulfillen in dede youre goodliche wordes,/ for we consideren and knowelichen that we han offended and greved my lord Melibee out of mesure,/ so fer- 1745

1707 **worth:** worthy
1711 **konne:** be able to
1723 **seurely:** surely
1726 **delibered:** considered
1734 **supprised:** taken (by it)
1739 **science:** knowledge

forth that we be nat of power to maken his amendes./ And therfore we oblige and bynden us and oure freendes for to doon al his wyl and his comandementz./ But peraventure he hath swich hevynesse and swich wratthe to us-ward by cause of oure offense/ that he wole enjoyne us swich a peyne as we mowe nat bere ne susteene./ And therfore, noble lady, we biseke to youre wommanly pitee/ to taken swich avysement in this *2940 nede that we ne oure freendes be nat desherited ne destroyed thurgh oure folye."/

"Certes," quod Prudence, "it is an hard thyng and right perilous/ that a man putte hym al outrely in the arbitracioun and juggement, and in the myght and power of his enemys./ For Salomon seith, 'Leeveth me, and yeveth credence to that I shal seyn: I seye,' quod he, 'ye peple, folk and governours of hooly chirche,/ to thy sone, to thy wyf, to thy freend, ne to thy broother/ ne 1755 yeve thou nevere myght ne maistrie of thy body whil thou lyvest.'/ Now sithen he deffendeth that man sholde nat yeven to his broother ne to his freend the myght of his body,/ by a strenger resoun he deffendeth and forbedeth a man to yeven hymself to his enemy./ And nathelees I conseille you that ye mystruste nat my lord,/ for I woot wel and knowe verraily that he is debonaire and meeke, large, curteys,/ and nothyng de- *2950 sirous ne coveitous of good ne richesse./ For ther nys nothyng in this world that he desireth, save oonly worshipe and honour./ Forthermoore I knowe wel and am right seur that he shal nothyng doon in this nede withouten my conseil,/ and I shal so werken in this cause that by the grace of oure Lord God ye shul been reconsiled unto us."/

Thanne seyden they with o voys, "Worshipful lady, we putten us and oure goodes al fully in youre wil and disposicioun,/ 1765 and been redy to comen, what day that it like unto youre noblesse to lymyte us or assigne us,/ for to maken oure obligacioun and boond as strong as it liketh unto youre goodnesse,/ that we mowe fulfille the wille of yow and of my lord Melibee."/

Whan dame Prudence hadde herd the answeres of thise men, she bad hem goon agayn prively;/ and she retourned to hir lord Melibee, and tolde hym how she foond his adversaries ful repentant,/ knowelech- *2960 ynge ful lowely hir synnes and trespas, and how they were redy to suffren all peyne,/ requirynge and preiynge hym of mercy and pitee./

Thanne seyde Melibee: "He is wel worthy to have pardoun and foryifnesse of his synne, that excuseth nat his synne/ but knowelecheth it and repenteth hym, axinge indulgence./ For Senec seith, 'Ther is the remissioun and foryifnesse, where as the confessioun is,'/ 1775 for confessioun is neighebor to innocence./ And he seith in another place that 'he that hath shame of his synne and knowlecheth [it is worthy remissioun].' And therfore I assente and conferme me to have pees;/ but it is good that we do it nat withouten the assent and wyl of oure freendes."/

Thanne was Prudence right glad and joyeful and seyde:/ "Certes, sire," quod she, "ye han wel and goodly answered,/ *2970 for right as by the conseil, assent, and help of youre freendes ye han been stired to venge yow and maken werre,/ right so withouten hire conseil shul ye nat accorden yow ne have pees with youre adversaries./ For the lawe seith, 'Ther nys no thyng so good by wey of kynde as a thyng to be unbounde by hym that it was ybounde.' "/

And thanne dame Prudence withouten delay or tariynge sente anon hire messages for hire kyn and for hire olde freendes which that were trewe and wyse,/ and tolde hem by ordre in the presence of Melibee al this mateere as it is aboven expressed and declared,/ and preyden hem that they 1785 wolde yeven hire avys and conseil what best were to doon in this nede./ And whan Melibees freendes hadde taken hire avys and deliberacioun of the forseide mateere,/ and hadden examyned it by greet bisynesse and greet diligence,/ they yave ful conseil for to have pees and reste,/ and that Melibee sholde receyve with good herte his adversaries to foryifnesse and mercy./ *2980

And whan dame Prudence hadde herd the assent of hir lord Melibee, and the conseil of his freendes/ accorde with hire wille and hire entencioun,/ she was wonderly glad in hire herte and seyde:/ "Ther is an old proverbe," quod she, "seith that 'the goodnesse that thou mayst do this day, do it,/

1747 oblige: pledge
1757 nat yeven: i.e., give
1767 obligacioun: surety, pledge

and abide nat ne delaye it nat til tomorwe.'/ And therfore I conseille that 1795
ye sende youre messages, swiche as been
discrete and wise,/ unto youre adversaries,
tellynge hem on youre bihalve/ that if they
wole trete of pees and of accord,/ that they
shape hem withouten delay or tariyng to comen
unto us."/ Which thyng parfourned was
in dede./ And whanne thise trespas- *2990
sours and repentynge folk of hire folies —
that is to seyn, the adversaries of Melibee — /
hadden herd what thise messagers seyden unto
hem,/ they weren right glad and joyeful, and
answereden ful mekely and benignely,/ yeldynge graces and thankynges to hir lord Melibee and to al his compaignye,/ and shopen
hem withouten delay to go with the messagers
and obeye to the comandement of hir
lord Melibee./ 1805

And right anon they tooken hire wey
to the court of Melibee,/ and tooken with hem
somme of hire trewe freendes to maken feith
for hem and for to been hire borwes./ And
whan they were comen to the presence of
Melibee, he seyde hem thise wordes:/ "It standeth thus," quod Melibee, "and sooth it is, that
ye,/ causelees and withouten skile and
resoun,/ han doon grete injuries and *3000
wronges to me and to my wyf Prudence
and to my doghter also./ For ye han entred
into myn hous by violence,/ and have doon
swich outrage that alle men knowen wel that
ye have disserved the deeth./ And therfore
wol I knowe and wite of yow/ wheither ye
wol putte the punyssement and the chastisynge
and the vengeance of this outrage in the wyl
of me and of my wyf Prudence, or ye
wol nat?"/ 1815

Thanne the wiseste of hem thre answerde for hem alle and seyde,/ "Sire," quod
he, "we knowen wel that we been unworthy
to comen unto the court of so greet a lord and
so worthy as ye been./ For we han so greetly
mystaken us, and han offended and agilt in
swich a wise agayn youre heigh lordshipe/
that trewely we han disserved the deeth./ But
yet, for the grete goodnesse and debonairetee
that al the world witnesseth of youre
persone,/ we submytten us to the excel- *3010
lence and benignitee of youre gracious
lordshipe,/ and been redy to obeie to alle youre
comandementz,/ bisekynge yow that of youre
merciable pitee ye wol considere oure grete
repentaunce and lowe submyssioun/ and
graunten us foryevenesse of oure outrageous
trespas and offense./ For wel we knowe that
youre liberal grace and mercy strecchen hem
ferther into goodnesse than doon oure outrageouse giltes and trespas into wikkednesse,/ al be it that cursedly and 1825
dampnablely we han agilt agayn youre
heigh lordshipe."/

Thanne Melibee took hem up fro the ground
ful benignely,/ and receyved hire obligaciouns
and hir boondes by hire othes upon hire plegges
and borwes,/ and assigned hem a certeyn day
to retourne unto his court/ for to accepte and
receyve the sentence and juggement that
Melibee wolde comande to be doon on
hem by the causes aforeseyd./ Whiche *3020
thynges ordeyned, every man retourned
to his hous./

And whan that dame Prudence saugh hir
tyme, she freyned and axed hir lord Melibee/
what vengeance he thoughte to taken of his
adversaries./

To which Melibee answerde and seyde,
"Certes," quod he, "I thynke and purpose me
fully/ to desherite hem of al that evere they
han and for to putte hem in exil for
evere."/ 1835

"Certes," quod dame Prudence, "this
were a crueel sentence and muchel agayn resoun./ For ye been riche ynough and han
no nede of oother mennes good,/ and ye
myghte lightly in this wise gete yow a coveitous name,/ which is a vicious thyng, and
oghte been eschued of every good man./ For
after the sawe of the word of the Apostle, 'Coveitise is roote of alle harmes.'/ *3030
And therfore it were bettre for yow to
lese so muchel good of youre owene than for
to taken of hir good in this manere,/ for bettre it is to lesen good with worshipe than it
is to wynne good with vileynye and shame./
And everi man oghte to doon his diligence and
his bisynesse to geten hym a good name./
And yet shal he nat oonly bisie hym in kepynge of his good name,/ but he shal also enforcen hym alwey to do somthyng by

1807 maken feith: stand surety borwes: guarantors
1815 punyssement: punishment
1828 plegges: pledges
1832 freyned: asked

which he may renovelle his good name./ 1845
For it is writen that 'the olde good loos
or good name of a man is soone goon and
passed, whan it is nat newed ne renovelled.'/
And as touchynge that ye seyn ye wole exile
youre adversaries,/ that thynketh me muchel
agayn resoun and out of mesure,/ considered
the power that they han yeve yow upon hem-
self./ And it is writen that 'he is worthy
to lesen his privilege that mysuseth the
myght and the power that is yeven
hym.'/ And I sette cas ye myghte en- *3040
joyne hem that peyne by right and by
lawe,/ which I trowe ye mowe nat do;/ I seye
ye mighte nat putten it to execucioun pera-
venture,/ and thanne were it likly to retourne
to the werre as it was biforn./ And therfore,
if ye wole that men do yow obeisance,
ye moste deemen moore curteisly;/ this 1855
is to seyn, ye moste yeven moore esy sen-
tences and juggementz./ For it is writen that
'he that moost curteisly comandeth, to hym
men moost obeyen.'/ And therfore I prey yow
that in this necessitee and in this nede ye caste
yow to overcome youre herte./ For Senec seith
that 'he that overcometh his herte overcometh
twies.'/ And Tullius seith, 'Ther is no
thyng so comendable in a greet lord/ as *3050
whan he is debonaire and meeke, and
appeseth him lightly.'/ And I prey yow that ye
wole forbere now to do vengeance,/ in swich
a manere that youre goode name may be kept
and conserved,/ and that men mowe have
cause and mateere to preyse yow of pitee and
of mercy,/ and that ye have no cause to
repente yow of thyng that ye doon./ 1865
For Senec seith, 'He overcometh in an
yvel manere that repenteth hym of his victo-
rie.'/ Wherfore I pray yow, lat mercy been in
youre herte,/ to th'effect and entente that
God Almighty have mercy on yow in his laste
juggement./ For Seint Jame seith in his Epis-
tle: 'Juggement withouten mercy shal be doon
to hym that hath no mercy of another wight.' "/

Whanne Melibee hadde herd the grete skiles
and resouns of dame Prudence, and hire
wise informaciouns and techynges,/ his *3060
herte gan enclyne to the wil of his wif,
considerynge hir trewe entente,/ and con-
formed hym anon and assented fully to werken
after hir conseil,/ and thonked God, of whom
procedeth al vertu and alle goodnesse, that
hym sente a wyf of so greet discrecioun./ And
whan the day cam that his adversaries sholde
appieren in his presence,/ he spak unto
hem ful goodly, and seyde in this wyse:/ 1875
"Al be it so that of youre pride and heigh
presumpcioun and folie, and of youre necli-
gence and unkonnynge,/ ye have mysborn yow
and trespassed unto me,/ yet for as muche as
I see and biholde youre grete humylitee/ and
that ye been sory and repentant of youre
giltes,/ it constreyneth me to doon yow
grace and mercy./ Wherfore I receyve *3070
yow to my grace/ and foryeve yow out-
rely alle the offenses, injuries, and wronges that
ye have doon agayn me and myne,/ to this
effect and to this ende, that God of his ende-
lees mercy/ wole at the tyme of oure diynge
foryeven us oure giltes that we han trespassed
to hym in this wrecched world./ For doute-
lees, if we be sory and repentant of the synnes
and giltes which we han trespassed in
the sighte of oure Lord God,/ he is so 1885
free and so merciable/ that he wole for-
yeven us oure giltes/ and bryngen us to the
blisse that nevere hath ende." Amen.

Heere is ended Chaucers Tale of Melibee and of Dame Prudence.

1845 renovelle: renew
1858 caste yow: endeavor
1861 appeseth him: calms himself
1870 informaciouns: counsels
1877 mysborn yow: misbehaved yourselves

THE PROLOGUE OF THE MONK'S TALE

The murye wordes of the Hoost to the Monk.

Whan ended was my tale of Melibee,
And of Prudence and hire benignytee, *3080
Oure Hooste seyde, "As I am feithful man,
And by that precious corpus Madrian,
I hadde levere than a barel ale
That Goodelief, my wyf, hadde herd this tale!
For she nys no thyng of swich pacience 1895
As was this Melibeus wyf Prudence.
By Goddes bones, whan I bete my knaves,
She bryngeth me forth the grete clobbed staves,
And crieth, 'Slee the dogges everichoon,
And brek hem, bothe bak and every boon!' *3090
"And if that any neighebor of myne
Wol nat in chirche to my wyf enclyne,
Or be so hardy to hire to trespace,
Whan she comth hoom she rampeth in my face,
And crieth, 'False coward, wrek thy wyf! 1905
By corpus bones, I wol have thy knyf,
And thou shalt have my distaf and go spynne!'
Fro day to nyght right thus she wol bigynne.
'Allas,' she seith, 'that evere I was shape *3099
To wedden a milksop, or a coward ape,
That wol been overlad with every wight!
Thou darst nat stonden by thy wyves right!'
"This is my lif, but if that I wol fighte;
And out at dore anon I moot me dighte,
Or elles I am but lost, but if that I 1915
Be lik a wilde leoun, fool-hardy.
I woot wel she wol do me slee som day
Som neighebor, and thanne go my way;
For I am perilous with knyf in honde,
Al be it that I dar nat hire withstonde,
For she is byg in armes, by my feith: *3111
That shal he fynde that hire mysdooth or seith —
But lat us passe awey fro this mateere.
"My lord, the Monk," quod he, "be myrie of cheere,
For ye shul telle a tale trewely. 1925
Loo, Rouchestre stant heer faste by!
Ryde forth, myn owene lord, brek nat oure game.
But, by my trouthe, I knowe nat youre name.
Wher shal I calle yow my lord daun John,
Or daun Thomas, or elles daun Albon? *3120
Of what hous be ye, by youre fader kyn?
I vowe to God, thou hast a ful fair skyn;
It is a gentil pasture ther thow goost.
Thou art nat lyk a penant or a goost:
Upon my feith, thou art som officer, 1935
Som worthy sexteyn, or som celerer,
For by my fader soule, as to my doom,
Thou art a maister whan thou art at hoom;
No povre cloysterer, ne no novys,
But a governour, wily and wys, *3130
And therwithal of brawnes and of bones
A wel farynge persone for the nones.
I pray to God, yeve hym confusioun
That first thee broghte unto religioun!
Thou woldest han been a tredefowel aright.
Haddestow as greet a leeve as thou hast myght 1946
To parfourne al thy lust in engendrure,
Thou haddest bigeten ful many a creature.
Allas, why werestow so wyd a cope?
God yeve me sorwe, but, and I were a pope,
Nat oonly thou, but every myghty man, *3141

1891 As I am feithful man: on my faith as a Christian
1892 corpus Madrian: the body of Madrian; see n.
1893 barel ale: barrel of ale
1898 clobbed: club-shaped
1904 rampeth: shakes her fist
1905 wrek: avenge
1906 corpus bones: God's bones
1907 distaf: a small staff used for spinning thread
1911 overlad: overborne, browbeaten
1914 me dighte: hasten
1917 do me slee: cause me to slay
1921 byg: strong
1922 mysdooth or seith: the prefix *mys-* goes with both words
1926 Rouchestre: Rochester, about thirty miles from London; see n.
1927 brek nat oure game: do not interrupt our game
1929 daun John: sir John
1934 penant: penitent
1936 sexteyn: the officer in charge of the sacred vessels, vestments, and relics celerer: the officer in charge of kitchen and cellar and of the provision of food and drink
1939 novys: novice
1942 wel farynge: handsome
1944 unto religioun: into a religious order
1945 tredefowel aright: excellent copulator of fowls, good breeding stock; cf. EpiNPT VII.3451.
1950 but: unless and: if

Though he were shorn ful hye upon his pan,
Sholde have a wyf; for al the world is lorn!
Religioun hath take up al the corn 1954
Of tredyng, and we borel men been shrympes.
Of fieble trees ther comen wrecched ympes.
This maketh that oure heires been so sklendre
And feble that they may nat wel engendre.
This maketh that oure wyves wole assaye
Religious folk, for ye mowe bettre paye
Of Venus paiementz than mowe we; *3151
God woot, no lussheburghes payen ye!
But be nat wrooth, my lord, though that I pleye.
Ful ofte in game a sooth I have herd seye!"
This worthy Monk took al in pacience, 1965
And seyde, "I wol doon al my diligence,
As fer as sowneth into honestee,
To telle yow a tale, or two, or three.
And if yow list to herkne hyderward,
I wol yow seyn the lyf of Seint Edward;
Or ellis, first, tragedies wol I telle, *3161
Of whiche I have an hundred in my celle.
Tragedie is to seyn a certeyn storie,
As olde bookes maken us memorie,
Of hym that stood in greet prosperitee, 1975
And is yfallen out of heigh degree
Into myserie, and endeth wrecchedly.
And they ben versified communely
Of six feet, which men clepen *ametron.*
In prose eek been endited many oon, *3170
And eek in meetre in many a sondry wyse.
Lo, this declaryng oghte ynogh suffise.
"Now herkneth, if yow liketh for to heere.
But first I yow biseeke in this mateere,
Though I by ordre telle nat thise thynges, 1985
Be it of popes, emperours, or kynges,
After hir ages, as men writen fynde,
But tellen hem som bifore and som bihynde,
As it now comth unto my remembraunce,
Have me excused of myn ignoraunce." *3180

Explicit

THE MONK'S TALE

Heere bigynneth the Monkes Tale
De Casibus Virorum Illustrium.

I wol biwaille in manere of tragedie
The harm of hem that stoode in heigh degree,
And fillen so that ther nas no remedie
To brynge hem out of hir adversitee.
For certein, whan that Fortune list to flee, 1995
Ther may no man the cours of hire withholde.
Lat no man truste on blynd prosperitee;
Be war by thise ensamples trewe and olde.

Lucifer

At Lucifer, though he an angel were
And nat a man, at hym wol I bigynne. *3190
For though Fortune may noon angel dere,
From heigh degree yet fel he for his synne
Doun into helle, where he yet is inne.
O Lucifer, brightest of angels alle, 2004
Now artow Sathanas, that mayst nat twynne
Out of miserie, in which that thou art falle.

Adam

Loo Adam, in the feeld of Damyssene
With Goddes owene fynger wroght was he,
And nat bigeten of mannes sperme unclene,
And welte al paradys savynge o tree. *3200
Hadde nevere worldly man so heigh degree

1952 **pan:** skull
1955 **borel men:** laymen **shrympes:** shrimps, puny creatures
1956 **wrecched ympes:** weak offshoots
1959 **wol assaye:** want to try out
1962 **lussheburghes:** inferior coins; see n.
1967 **sowneth into honestee:** is conducive to propriety or decency
1970 **Seint Edward:** St. Edward the Confessor

1999 **Lucifer:** Satan

1979 ***ametron:*** hexameters, the meter of Latin heroic poetry

2001 **dere:** harm
2005 **twynne:** escape
2007 **Damyssene:** of Dammyssene
2010 **welte:** ruled **o:** one, a single

As Adam, til he for mysgovernaunce
Was dryven out of hys hye prosperitee
To labour, and to helle, and to meschaunce.

Sampson

Loo Sampsoun, which that was annunciat
By th'angel longe er his nativitee, 2016
And was to God Almyghty consecrat,
And stood in noblesse whil he myghte see.
Was nevere swich another as was hee,
To speke of strengthe, and therwith hardynesse;
But to his wyves toolde he his secree, *3211
Thurgh which he slow hymself for wrecchednesse.

Sampsoun, this noble almyghty champioun,
Withouten wepen save his handes tweye,
He slow and al torente the leoun, 2025
Toward his weddyng walkynge by the weye.
His false wyf koude hym so plese and preye
Til she his conseil knew; and she, untrewe,
Unto his foos his conseil gan biwreye,
And hym forsook, and took another newe.

Thre hundred foxes took Sampson for ire,
And alle hir tayles he togydre bond, *3222
And sette the foxes tayles alle on fire,
For he on every tayl had knyt a brond;
And they brende alle the cornes in that lond,
And alle hire olyveres, and vynes eke.
A thousand men he slow eek with his hond,
And hadde no wepen but an asses cheke. 2038

Whan they were slayn, so thursted hym that he
Was wel ny lorn, for which he gan to preye
That God wolde on his peyne han some pitee
And sende hym drynke, or elles moste he deye;
And of this asses cheke, that was dreye, *3233
Out of a wang-tooth sprang anon a welle,
Of which he drank ynogh, shortly to seye;
Thus heelp hym God, as *Judicum* can telle.

By verray force at Gazan on a nyght, 2047
Maugree Philistiens of that citee,
The gates of the toun he hath up plyght,
And on his bak ycaryed hem hath hee *3240
Hye on an hill whereas men myghte hem see.
O noble, almyghty Sampsoun, lief and deere,
Had thou nat toold to wommen thy secree,
In al this world ne hadde been thy peere!

This Sampson nevere ciser drank ne wyn, 2055
Ne on his heed cam rasour noon ne sheere,
By precept of the messager divyn,
For alle his strengthes in his heeres weere.
And fully twenty wynter, yeer by yeere,
He hadde of Israel the governaunce. *3250
But soone shal he wepe many a teere,
For wommen shal hym bryngen to meschaunce!

Unto his lemman Dalida he tolde
That in his heeris al his strengthe lay,
And falsly to his foomen she hym solde. 2065
And slepynge in hir barm upon a day,
She made to clippe or shere his heres away,
And made his foomen al his craft espyen;
And whan that they hym foond in this array,
They bounde hym faste and putten out his yen. *3260

But er his heer were clipped or yshave,
Ther was no boond with which men myghte him bynde;
But now is he in prison in a cave, 2073
Where-as they made hym at the queerne grynde.
O noble Sampsoun, strongest of mankynde,
O whilom juge, in glorie and in richesse!
Now maystow wepen with thyne eyen blynde,
Sith thou fro wele art falle in wrecchednesse.

The ende of this caytyf was as I shal seye.
His foomen made a feeste upon a day, *3270
And made hym as hire fool biforn hem pleye;
And this was in a temple of greet array.
But atte laste he made a foul affray, 2083
For he two pilers shook and made hem falle,
And doun fil temple and al, and ther it lay —
And slow hymself, and eek his foomen alle.

2012 mysgovernaunce: misconduct
2015 which that was annunciat: who (i.e., whose birth) was foretold
2018 whil he myghte see: as long as he preserved his eyesight (see line 2070)
2025 torente: tore to pieces
2026 while he was walking toward his wedding
2034 brond: burning piece of wood
2035 cornes: grain crops
2036 olyveres: olive trees
2038 cheke: jawbone
2044 wang-tooth: molar
2046 *Judicum:* the Book of Judges

2047 Gazan: Gaza
2048 Philistiens: Philistines
2055 ciser: strong drink
2056 sheere: scissors
2063 Dalida: Delilah
2066 barm: lap
2074 queerne: mill
2083 foul affray: terrifying assault

This is to seyn, the prynces everichoon,
And eek thre thousand bodyes, were ther slayn
With fallynge of the grete temple of stoon.
Of Sampson now wol I namoore sayn. *3280
Beth war by this ensample oold and playn
That no men telle hir conseil til hir wyves
Of swich thyng as they wolde han secree fayn,
If that it touche hir lymes or hir lyves.

Hercules

Of Hercules, the sovereyn conquerour, 2095
Syngen his werkes laude and heigh renoun;
For in his tyme of strengthe he was the flour.
He slow and rafte the skyn of the leoun;
He of Centauros leyde the boost adoun;
He Arpies slow, the crueel bryddes felle;
He golden apples rafte of the dragoun; *3291
He drow out Cerberus, the hound of helle;

He slow the crueel tyrant Busirus
And made his hors to frete hym, flessh and boon;
He slow the firy serpent venymus; 2105
Of Acheloys two hornes he brak oon;
And he slow Cacus in a cave of stoon;
He slow the geant Antheus the stronge;
He slow the grisly boor, and that anon;
And bar the hevene on his nekke longe.

Was nevere wight, sith that this world bigan,
That slow so manye monstres as dide he. *3302
Thurghout this wyde world his name ran,
What for his strengthe and for his heigh bountee,
And every reawme wente he for to see. 2115
He was so stroong that no man myghte hym lette.
At bothe the worldes endes, seith Trophee,
In stide of boundes he a pileer sette.

A lemman hadde this noble championn,
That highte Dianira, fressh as May; *3310
And as thise clerkes maken mencioun,
She hath hym sent a sherte, fressh and gay.
Allas, this sherte — allas and weylaway! —
Envenymed was so subtilly withalle
That er that he had wered it half a day 2125
It made his flessh al from his bones falle.

But nathelees somme clerkes hire excusen
By oon that highte Nessus, that it maked.
Be as be may, I wol hire noght accusen; *3319
But on his bak this sherte he wered al naked
Til that his flessh was for the venym blaked.
And whan he saugh noon oother remedye,
In hoote coles he hath hymselven raked,
For with no venym deigned hym to dye.

Thus starf this worthy, myghty Hercules. 2135
Lo, who may truste on Fortune any throwe?
For hym that folweth al this world of prees
Er he be war is ofte yleyd ful lowe.
Ful wys is he that kan hymselven knowe! *3329
Beth war, for whan that Fortune list to glose,
Thanne wayteth she her man to overthrowe
By swich a wey as he wolde leest suppose.

Nabugodonosor

The myghty trone, the precious tresor,
The glorious ceptre, and roial magestee
That hadde the kyng Nabugodonosor 2145
With tonge unnethe may discryved bee.
He twyes wan Jerusalem the citee;
The vessel of the temple he with hym ladde.
At Babiloigne was his sovereyn see,
In which his glorie and his delit he hadde.

The faireste children of the blood roial
Of Israel he leet do gelde anoon, *3342
And maked ech of hem to been his thral.
Amonges othere Daniel was oon,
That was the wiseste child of everychon, 2155
For he the dremes of the kyng expowned,
Whereas in Chaldeye clerk ne was ther noon
That wiste to what fyn his dremes sowned.

2098 rafte: despoiled, took away
2099 Centauros: centaurs; for another account of the labors enumerated here see Bo 4.m7.28–62.
2100 Arpies: Harpies
2103 Busirus: a king of Egypt
2104 frete: devour
2106 Acheloys: Achelous, a river god, who took the form of a bull in his fight with Hercules
2107 Cacus: a monster
2108 Antheus: a giant whom Hercules wrestled
2117 bothe the worldes endes: the eastern and western ends of the world Trophee: unidentified; see n.
2118 boundes: boundary markers pileer: pillar
2129 Be as be may: however it may be
2131 blaked: blackened
2133 raked: covered by raking
2135 starf: died
2136 any throwe: for any time
2137 this world of prees: this dangerous, difficult world
2140 glose: beguile, deceive
2145 Nabugodonosor: Nebuchadnezzar
2148 vessel: plate, vessels
2149 see: throne
2152 leet do gelde: had castrated
2157 Chaldeye: Chaldea, Babylonia
2158 fyn: end

This proude kyng leet maken a statue of gold,
Sixty cubites long and sevene in brede, *3350
To which ymage bothe yong and oold
Comanded he to loute, and have in drede,
Or in a fourneys, ful of flambes rede,
He shal be brent that wolde noght obeye.
But nevere wolde assente to that dede 2165
Daniel ne his yonge felawes tweye.

This kyng of kynges proud was and elaat;
He wende that God, that sit in magestee,
Ne myghte hym nat bireve of his estaat.
But sodeynly he loste his dignytee, *3360
And lyk a beest hym semed for to bee,
And eet hey as an oxe, and lay theroute
In reyn; with wilde beestes walked hee
Til certein tyme was ycome aboute.

And lik an egles fetheres wax his heres; 2175
His nayles lyk a briddes clawes weere;
Til God relessed hym a certeyn yeres,
And yaf hym wit, and thanne with many a teere
He thanked God, and evere his lyf in feere
Was he to doon amys or moore trespace;
And til that tyme he leyd was on his beere
He knew that God was ful of myght and grace. *3372

Balthasar

His sone, which that highte Balthasar,
That heeld the regne after his fader day,
He by his fader koude noght be war, 2185
For proud he was of herte and of array,
And eek an ydolastre was he ay.
His hye estaat assured hym in pryde;
But Fortune caste hym doun, and ther he lay,
And sodeynly his regne gan divide. *3380

A feeste he made unto his lordes alle
Upon a tyme and bad hem blithe bee;
And thanne his officeres gan he calle:
"Gooth, bryngeth forth the vesseles," quod he,
"Whiche that my fader in his prosperitee
Out of the temple of Jerusalem birafte; 2196
And to oure hye goddes thanke we
Of honour that oure eldres with us lafte."

Hys wyf, his lordes, and his concubynes
Ay dronken, whil hire appetites laste, *3390
Out of thise noble vessels sondry wynes.
And on a wal this kyng his eyen caste
And saugh an hand, armlees, that wroot ful faste,
For feere of which he quook and siked soore.
This hand that Balthasar so soore agaste
Wroot *Mane, techel, phares,* and namoore.

In all that land magicien was noon 2207
That koude expoune what this lettre mente;
But Daniel expowned it anoon,
And seyde, "Kyng, God to thy fader lente
Glorie and honour, regne, tresour, rente;
And he was proud and nothyng God ne dradde, *3402
And therfore God greet wreche upon hym sente,
And hym birafte the regne that he hadde.

"He was out cast of mannes compaignye; 2215
With asses was his habitacioun,
And eet hey as a beest in weet and drye
Til that he knew, by grace and by resoun,
That God of hevene hath domynacioun
Over every regne and every creature; *3410
And thanne hadde God of hym compassioun,
And hym restored his regne and his figure.

"Eek thou, that art his sone, art proud also,
And knowest alle thise thynges verraily,
And art rebel to God, and art his foo. 2225
Thou drank eek of his vessels boldely;
Thy wyf eek, and thy wenches, synfully
Dronke of the same vessels sondry wynys;
And heryest false goddes cursedly; *3419
Therefore to thee yshapen ful greet pyne ys.

"This hand was sent from God that on the wal
Wroot *Mane, techel, phares,* truste me;
Thy regne is doon; thou weyest noght at al.
Dyvyded is thy regne, and it shal be
To Medes and to Perses yeven," quod he. 2235
And thilke same nyght this kyng was slawe,
And Darius occupieth his degree,
Though he therto hadde neither right ne lawe.

2162 **loute:** bow down **have in drede:** venerate
2166 **tweye:** two (an error for three); see n.
2167 **elaat:** arrogant
2169 **bireve:** deprive
2170 **dignytee:** high office
2177 **a certeyn yeres:** a certain (number of) years
2183 **Balthasar:** Belshazzar
2187 **ydolastre:** idolator
2188 **assured hym:** made him confident

2208 **expoune:** explain
2212 **nothyng God ne dradde:** feared God not at all
2213 **wreche:** vengeance
2229 **heryest:** worship
2233 **weyest noght:** are of no account
2235 **Perses:** Persians
2237 **Darius:** Darius the Mede (Dan. 5.30)

Lordynges, ensample heerby may ye take
How that in lordshipe is no sikernesse, *3430
For whan Fortune wole a man forsake,
She bereth awey his regne and his richesse,
And eek his freendes, bothe moore and lesse.
For what man that hath freendes thurgh Fortune,
Mishap wol maken hem enemys, I gesse; 2245
This proverbe is ful sooth and ful commune.

Cenobia

Cenobia, of Palymerie queene,
As writen Persiens of hir noblesse,
So worthy was in armes and so keene
That no wight passed hire in hardynesse,
Ne in lynage, ne in oother gentillesse. *3441
Of kynges blood of Perce is she descended.
I seye nat that she hadde moost fairnesse,
But of hir shap she myghte nat been amended.

From hire childhede I fynde that she fledde 2255
Office of wommen, and to wodé she wente,
And many a wilde hertes blood she shedde
With arwes brode that she to hem sente.
She was so swift that she anon hem hente;
And whan that she was elder, she wolde kille
Leouns, leopardes, and beres al torente, *3451
And in hir armes weelde hem at hir wille.

She dorste wilde beestes dennes seke,
And rennen in the montaignes al the nyght,
And slepen under a bussh, and she koude eke 2265
Wrastlen, by verray force and verray myght,
With any yong man, were he never so wight.
Ther myghte no thyng in hir armes stonde.
She kepte hir maydenhod from every wight;
To no man deigned hire for to be bonde. *3460

But atte laste hir freendes han hire maried
To Odenake, a prynce of that contree,
Al were it so that she hem longe taried.
And ye shul understonde how that he
Hadde swiche fantasies as hadde she. 2275
But natheless, whan they were knyt in-feere,
They lyved in joye and in felicitee,
For ech of hem hadde oother lief and deere,

Save o thyng: that she wolde nevere assente,
By no wey, that he sholde by hire lye *3470
But ones, for it was hir pleyn entente
To have a child, the world to multiplye;
And also soone as that she myghte espye
That she was nat with childe with that dede,
Thanne wolde she suffre hym doon his fantasye 2285
Eft-soone, and nat but oones, out of drede.

And if she were with childe at thilke cast,
Namoore sholde he pleyen thilke game
Til fully fourty [wikes] weren past;
Thanne wolde she ones suffre hym do the same. *3480
Al were this Odenake wilde or tame,
He gat namoore of hire, for thus she seyde:
It was to wyves lecherie and shame,
In oother caas, if that men with hem pleyde.

Two sones by this Odenake hadde she, 2295
The whiche she kepte in vertu and lettrure.
But now unto oure tale turne we.
I seye, so worshipful a creature,
And wys therwith, and large with mesure,
So penyble in the werre, and curteis eke, *3490
Ne moore labour myghte in werre endure,
Was noon, though al this world men sholde seke.

Hir riche array ne myghte nat be told,
As wel in vessel as in hire clothyng.
She was al clad in perree and in gold, 2305
And eek she lafte noght, for noon huntyng,
To have of sondry tonges ful knowyng,
Whan that she leyser hadde; and for to entende
To lerne bookes was al hire likyng, *3499
How she in vertu myghte hir lyf dispende.

And shortly of this storie for to trete,
So doghty was hir housbonde and eek she,
That they conquered manye regnes grete
In the orient, with many a fair citee
Apertenaunt unto the magestee 2315
Of Rome, and with strong hond held hem ful faste,

2245 **Mishap:** misfortune
2247 **Cenobia:** Zenobia **Palymerie:** Palmyra, a city in Syria
2252 **Perce:** Persia
2256 **Office:** function, duty
2261 **torente:** tear to pieces
2262 **weelde:** wield, handle
2267 **wight:** active, agile
2272 **Odenake:** Odenathus, ruler of Palmyra

2286 **Eft-soone:** again **nat but:** only **out of drede:** without doubt
2287 **cast:** time
2296 **lettrure:** learning
2300 **penyble:** indefatigable
2305 **perree:** precious stones
2306 **lafte:** neglected
2308 **entende:** strive, endeavor
2315 **Apertenaunt:** appertaining, belonging to

Ne nevere myghte hir foomen doon hem flee,
Ay whil that Odenakes dayes laste.

Hir batailles, whoso list hem for to rede,
Agayn Sapor the kyng and othere mo, *3510
And how that al this proces fil in dede,
Why she conquered and what title had therto,
And after, of hir meschief and hire wo,
How that she was biseged and ytake —
Lat hym unto my maister Petrak go, 2325
That writ ynough of this, I undertake.

Whan Odenake was deed, she myghtily
The regnes heeld, and with hire propre hond
Agayn hir foos she faught so cruelly
That ther nas kyng ne prynce in al that lond
That he nas glad, if he that grace fond, *3521
That she ne wolde upon his lond werreye.
With hire they maden alliance by bond
To been in pees, and lete hire ride and pleye.

The Emperour of Rome, Claudius 2335
Ne hym bifore, the Romayn Galien,
Ne dorste nevere been so corageus,
Ne noon Ermyn, ne noon Egipcien,
Ne Surrien, ne noon Arabyen, *3529
Withinne the feeld that dorste with hire fighte,
Lest that she wolde hem with hir handes slen,
Or with hir meignee putten hem to flighte.

In kynges habit wente hir sones two,
As heires of hir fadres regnes alle,
And Hermanno and Thymalao 2345
Hir names were, as Persiens hem calle.
But ay Fortune hath in hire hony galle;
This myghty queene may no while endure.
Fortune out of hir regne made hire falle
To wrecchednesse and to mysaventure. *3540

Aurelian, whan that the governaunce
Of Rome cam into his handes tweye,
He shoop upon this queene to doon vengeaunce.
And with his legions he took his weye 2354
Toward Cenobie, and shortly for to seye,

2320 Sapor: Shapur I, king of Persia c. 240–72 A.D.
2325 Petrak: Petrarch; see n.
2335–36 Claudius, Galien: the emperors Claudius Gothicus (268–70 A.D.), Gallienus (253–68 A.D.)
2338 Ermyn: Armenian
2339 Surrien: Syrian
2351 Aurelian: the emperor Aurelianus

He made hire flee, and atte laste hire hente,
And fettred hire, and eek hire children tweye,
And wan the land, and hoom to Rome he wente.

Amonges othere thynges that he wan,
Hir chaar, that was with gold wroght and perree, *3550
This grete Romayn, this Aurelian,
Hath with hym lad, for that men sholde it see.
Biforen his triumphe walketh shee,
With gilte cheynes on hire nekke hangynge.
Coroned was she, as after hir degree, 2365
And ful of perree charged hire clothynge.

Allas, Fortune! She that whilom was
Dredeful to kynges and to emperoures,
Now gaureth al the peple on hire, allas!
And she that helmed was in starke stoures *3560
And wan by force townes stronge and toures,
Shal on hir heed now were a vitremyte;
And she that bar the ceptre ful of floures
Shal bere a distaf, hire cost for to quyte.

De Petro Rege Ispannie

O noble, O worthy Petro, glorie of Spayne,
Whom Fortune heeld so hye in magestee, 2376
Wel oghten men thy pitous deeth complayne!
Out of thy land thy brother made thee flee,
And after, at a seege, by subtiltee,
Thou were bitraysed and lad unto his tente, *3570
Where as he with his owene hand slow thee,
Succedynge in thy regne and in thy rente.

The feeld of snow, with th'egle of blak therinne,
Caught with the lymrod coloured as the gleede,
He brew this cursednesse and al this synne.
The wikked nest was werker of this nede. 2386
Noght Charles Olyver, that took ay heede

2360 chaar: chariot
2363 triumphe: triumphal procession
2369 gaureth al the peple: everyone stares
2370 helmed was: wore a helmet (i.e., fought) starke: violent stoures: battles
2372 vitremyte: probably a particular kind of woman's headdress; see n.
2374 hire cost for to quyte: to pay for her keep
2375 Petro: Pedro of Castile; see n.
2380 bitraysed: betrayed
2384 lymrod: lime-rod gleede: burning coal; see n.
2385 He: Bertrand du Guesclin brew: brewed, contrived
2386 wikked nest: a play on the name of Oliver Mauny (see n.) nede: violence, crisis
2387 Charles Olyver: Charlemagne's Oliver, faithful friend of Roland

Of trouthe and honour, but of Armorike
Genylon-Olyver, corrupt for meede,
Broghte this worthy kyng in swich a brike.

De Petro Rege de Cipro

O worthy Petro, kyng of Cipre, also, *3581
That Alisandre wan by heigh maistrie,
Ful many an hethen wroghte stow ful wo,
Of which thyne owene liges hadde envie,
And for no thyng but for thy chivalrie 2395
They in thy bed han slayn thee by the morwe.
Thus kan Fortune hir wheel governe and gye,
And out of joye brynge men to sorwe.

De Barnabo de Lumbardia

Off Melan grete Barnabo Viscounte, *3589
God of delit and scourge of Lumbardye,
Why sholde I nat thyn infortune acounte,
Sith in estaat thow cloumbe were so hye?
Thy brother sone, that was thy double allye,
For he thy nevew was and sone-in-lawe,
Withinne his prisoun made thee to dye — 2405
But why ne how noot I that thou were slawe.

De Hugelino Comite de Pize

Off the Erl Hugelyn of Pyze the langour
Ther may no tonge telle for pitee.
But litel out of Pize stant a tour,
In which tour in prisoun put was he, *3600
And with hym been his litel children thre;
The eldest scarsly fyf yeer was of age.
Allas, Fortune, it was greet crueltee
Swiche briddes for to putte in swich a cage!

Dampned was he to dyen in that prisoun, 2415
For Roger, which that bisshop was of Pize,
Hadde on hym maad a fals suggestioun,
Thurgh which the peple gan upon hym rise
And putten hym to prisoun in swich wise
As ye han herd, and mete and drynke he
hadde *3610

2388 **Armorike:** Armorica (ancient name of coastal Brittany and Normandy)
2389 **Genylon-Olyver:** i.e., a traitor like Ganelon, who betrayed Roland
2390 **brike:** plight
2391 **Petro:** Pierre de Lusignan; see n. **Cipre:** Cyprus
2392 **Alisandre:** Alexandria
2399 **Melan:** Milan **Barnabo Viscounte:** Bernabò Visconti; see n.
2401 **acounte:** recount (?); see n.
2403 **brother:** brother's **allye:** kinsman
2407 **Hugelyn of Pyze:** Ugolino of Pisa; see n. **langour:** suffering
2416 **Roger:** Ruggieri degli Ubaldini

So smal that wel unnethe it may suffise,
And therwithal it was ful povre and badde.

And on a day bifil that in that hour
Whan that his mete wont was to be broght,
The gayler shette the dores of the tour. 2425
He herde it wel, but he spak right noght,
And in his herte anon ther fil a thoght
That they for hunger wolde doon hym dyen.
"Allas!" quod he, "Allas, that I was wroght!"
Therwith the teeris fillen from his yen. *3620

His yonge sone, that thre yeer was of age,
Unto hym seyde, "Fader, why do ye wepe?
Whanne wol the gayler bryngen oure potage?
Is ther no morsel breed that ye do kepe?
I am so hungry that I may nat slepe. 2435
Now wolde God that I myghte slepen evere!
Thanne sholde nat hunger in my wombe crepe;
Ther is no thyng, but breed, that me were
levere."

Thus day by day this child bigan to crye,
Til in his fadres barm adoun it lay, *3630
And seyde, "Farewel, fader, I moot dye!"
And kiste his fader, and dyde the same day.
And whan the woful fader deed it say,
For wo his armes two he gan to byte, 2444
And seyde, "Allas, Fortune, and weylaway!
Thy false wheel my wo al may I wyte."

His children wende that it for hunger was
That he his armes gnow, and nat for wo,
And seyde, "Fader, do nat so, allas!
But rather ete the flessh upon us two. *3640
Oure flessh thou yaf us, take oure flessh us fro,
And ete ynogh" — right thus they to hym
seyde,
And after that, withinne a day or two,
They leyde hem in his lappe adoun and deyde.

Hymself, despeired, eek for hunger starf; 2455
Thus ended is this myghty Erl of Pize.
From heigh estaat Fortune awey hym carf.
Of this tragedie it oghte ynough suffise;
Whoso wol here it in a lenger wise,

2421 **unnethe:** scarcely
2425 **gayler:** jailer
2433 **potage:** soup
2443 **deed:** dead **say:** saw
2446 **wyte:** blame
2448 **gnow:** gnawed
2455 **starf:** died; see n.
2457 **carf:** cut

Redeth the grete poete of Ytaille *3650
That highte Dant, for he kan al devyse
Fro point to point; nat o word wol he faille.

Nero

Although that Nero were as vicius
As any feend that lith ful lowe adoun,
Yet he, as telleth us Swetonius, 2465
This wyde world hadde in subjeccioun,
Bothe est and west, [south], and septemtrioun.
Of rubies, saphires, and of peerles white
Were alle his clothes brouded up and doun,
For he in gemmes greetly gan delite. *3660

Moore delicaat, moore pompous of array,
Moore proud was nevere emperour than he;
That ilke clooth that he hadde wered o day,
After that tyme he nolde it nevere see. 2474
Nettes of gold threed hadde he greet plentee
To fisshe in Tybre, whan hym liste pleye.
His lustes were al lawe in his decree,
For Fortune as his freend hym wolde obeye.

He Rome brende for his delicasie;
The senatours he slow upon a day *3670
To heere how that men wolde wepe and crie;
And slow his brother, and by his suster lay.
His mooder made he in pitous array,
For he hire wombe slitte to biholde
Where he conceyved was — so weilaway 2485
That he so litel of his mooder tolde!

No teere out of his eyen for that sighte
Ne cam, but seyde, "A fair womman was she!"
Greet wonder is how that he koude or myghte
Be domesman of hire dede beautee. *3680
The wyn to bryngen hym comanded he,
And drank anon — noon oother wo he made.
Whan myght is joyned unto crueltee,
Allas, to depe wol the venym wade!

In yowthe a maister hadde this emperour 2495
To teche hym letterure and curteisye,
For of moralitee he was the flour,
As in his tyme, but if bookes lye;
And whil this maister hadde of hym maistrye, *3689
He maked hym so konnyng and so sowple
That longe tyme it was er tirannye
Or any vice dorste on hym uncowple.

This Seneca, of which that I devyse,
By cause Nero hadde of hym swich drede,
For he fro vices wolde hym ay chastise 2505
Discreetly, as by word and nat by dede —
"Sire," wolde he seyn, "an emperour moot nede
Be vertuous and hate tirannye — "
For which he in a bath made hym to blede
On bothe his armes, til he moste dye. *3700

This Nero hadde eek of acustumaunce
In youthe agayns his maister for to ryse,
Which afterward hym thoughte a greet grevaunce;
Therefore he made hym dyen in this wise.
But natheless this Seneca the wise 2515
Chees in a bath to dye in this manere
Rather than han another tormentise;
And thus hath Nero slayn his maister deere.

Now fil it so that Fortune liste no lenger
The hye pryde of Nero to cherice, *3710
For though that he were strong, yet was she strenger.
She thoughte thus: "By God! I am to nyce
To sette a man that is fulfild of vice
In heigh degree, and emperour hym calle.
By God, out of his sete I wol hym trice; 2525
Whan he leest weneth, sonnest shal he falle."

The peple roos upon hym on a nyght
For his defaute, and whan he it espied,
Out of his dores anon he hath hym dight *3719
Allone, and ther he wende han been allied
He knokked faste, and ay the moore he cried
The fastere shette they the dores alle.
Tho wiste he wel, he hadde himself mysgyed,
And wente his wey; no lenger dorste he calle.

The peple cried and rombled up and doun,

2461 **Dant:** Dante Alighieri
2465 **Swetonius:** Suetonius, author of *The Lives of the Caesars*
2467 **septemtrioun:** north
2469 **brouded:** embroidered
2473 **ilke clooth:** same robe
2479 **delicasie:** pleasure
2486 **of . . . tolde:** esteemed
2490 **domesman:** judge
2494 **wade:** penetrate, go in
2495 **maister:** teacher (Seneca)
2496 **letterure:** literature
2500 **sowple:** compliant
2502 **on hym uncowple:** attack (unleash themselves on) him
2507 **nede:** necessarily
2511 **of acustumaunce:** the custom of
2517 **tormentise:** form of torment
2525 **sete:** throne **trice:** snatch
2528 **defaute:** wickedness
2533 **mysgyed:** misguided, deluded

That with his erys herde he how they seyde,
"Where is this false tiraunt, this Neroun?" 2537
For fere almoost out of his wit he breyde,
And to his goddes pitously he preyde
For socour, but it myghte nat bityde. *3730
For drede of this hym thoughte that he deyde,
And ran into a gardyn hym to hyde.

And in this gardyn foond he cherles tweye
That seten by a fyr, greet and reed.
And to thise cherles two he gan to preye 2545
To sleen hym and to girden of his heed,
That to his body, whan that he were deed,
Were no despit ydoon for his defame.
Hymself he slow, he koude no bettre reed,
Of which Fortune lough, and hadde a game.

De Oloferno

Was nevere capitayn under a kyng *3741
That regnes mo putte in subjeccioun,
Ne strenger was in feeld of alle thyng,
As in his tyme, ne gretter of renoun, 2554
Ne moore pompous in heigh presumpcioun
Than Oloferne, which Fortune ay kiste
So likerously, and ladde hym up and doun
Til that his heed was of, er that he wiste.

Nat oonly that this world hadde hym in awe
For lesynge of richesse or libertee, *3750
But he made every man reneyen his lawe.
"Nabugodonosor was god," seyde hee;
"Noon oother god sholde adoured bee."
Agayns his heeste no wight dorst trespace,
Save in Bethulia, a strong citee, 2565
Where Eliachim a preest was of that place.

But taak kep of the deth of Oloferne:
Amydde his hoost he dronke lay a-nyght,
Withinne his tente, large as is a berne,
And yet, for al his pompe and al his myght,
Judith, a womman, as he lay upright *3761
Slepynge, his heed of smoot, and from his tente
Ful pryvely she stal from every wight,
And with his heed unto hir toun she wente.

2538 breyde: started, went
2546 girden of: cut off
2556 Oloferne: Holofernes
2557 likerously: wantonly
2560 For lesynge: for fear of losing
2561 reneyen: renounce
2566 Eliachim: Joachim in the Authorized Version

De Rege Antiocho illustri

What nedeth it of kyng Anthiochus 2575
To telle his hye roial magestee,
His hye pride, his werkes venymus?
For swich another was ther noon as he.
Rede which that he was in Machabee,
And rede the proude wordes that he seyde,
And why he fil fro heigh prosperitee, *3771
And in an hill how wrecchedly he deyde.

Fortune hym hadde enhaunced so in pride
That verraily he wende he myghte attayne
Unto the sterres upon every syde, 2585
And in balance weyen ech montayne,
And alle the floodes of the see restrayne.
And Goddes peple hadde he moost in hate;
Hem wolde he sleen in torment and in payne,
Wenynge that God ne myghte his pride
abate. *3780

And for that Nichanore and Thymothee
Of Jewes weren venquysshed myghtily,
Unto the Jewes swich an hate hadde he
That he bad greithen his chaar ful hastily,
And swoor, and seyde ful despitously 2595
Unto Jerusalem he wolde eftsoone
To wreken his ire on it ful cruelly;
But of his purpos he was let ful soone.

God for his manace hym so soore smoot
With invisible wounde, ay incurable, *3790
That in his guttes carf it so and boot
That his peynes weren importable.
And certeinly the wreche was resonable,
For many a mannes guttes dide he peyne. 2604
But from his purpos cursed and dampnable,
For al his smert, he wolde hym nat restreyne,

But bad anon apparaillen his hoost;
And sodeynly, er he was of it war,
God daunted al his pride and al his boost.

2579 Machabee: Book of Maccabees (apocryphal in the Authorized Version)
2586 weyen: weigh
2590 abate: reduce
2591 Nichanore and Thymothee: Nicanor and Timotheus, generals defeated by Judas Maccabeus
2594 greithen: prepare
2598 let: prevented
2601 boot: bit
2602 importable: intolerable
2603 wreche: vengeance
2607 apparaillen: prepare
2609 daunted: conquered

For he so soore fil out of his char *3800
That it his limes and his skyn totar,
So that he neyther myghte go ne ryde,
But in a chayer men aboute hym bar,
Al forbrused, bothe bak and syde.

The wreche of God hym smoot so cruelly 2615
That thurgh his body wikked wormes crepte,
And therwithal he stank so horribly
That noon of al his meynee that hym kepte,
Wheither so he wook or ellis slepte,
Ne myghte noght the stynk of hym endure.
In this meschief he wayled and eek wepte,
And knew God lord of every creature. *3812

To al his hoost and to hymself also
Ful wlatsom was the stynk of his careyne;
No man ne myghte hym bere to ne fro. 2625
And in this stynk and this horrible peyne,
He starf ful wrecchedly in a monteyne.
Thus hath this robbour and this homycide,
That many a man made to wepe and pleyne,
Swich gerdoun as bilongeth unto pryde. *3820

De Alexandro

The storie of Alisaundre is so commune
That every wight that hath discrecioun
Hath herd somwhat or al of his fortune.
This wyde world, as in conclusioun, 2634
He wan by strengthe, or for his hye renoun
They weren glad for pees unto hym sende.
The pride of man and beest he leyde adoun,
Wherso he cam, unto the worldes ende.

Comparisoun myghte nevere yet been maked
Bitwixe hym and another conquerour; *3830
For al this world for drede of hym hath quaked.
He was of knyghthod and of fredom flour;
Fortune hym made the heir of hire honour.
Save wyn and wommen, no thing myghte aswage
His hye entente in armes and labour, 2645
So was he ful of leonyn corage.

What pris were it to hym, though I yow tolde
Of Darius, and an hundred thousand mo
Of kynges, princes, dukes, erles bolde
Whiche he conquered, and broghte hem into wo? *3840
I seye, as fer as man may ryde or go,
The world was his — what sholde I moore devyse?
For though I write or tolde yow everemo
Of his knyghthod, it myghte nat suffise.

Twelf yeer he regned, as seith Machabee. 2655
Philippes sone of Macidoyne he was,
That first was kyng in Grece the contree.
O worthy, gentil Alisandre, allas,
That evere sholde fallen swich a cas!
Empoysoned of thyn owene folk thou weere;
Thy sys Fortune hath turned into aas, *3851
And for thee ne weep she never a teere.

Who shal me yeven teeris to compleyne
The deeth of gentillesse and of franchise,
That al the world weelded in his demeyne,
And yet hym thoughte it myghte nat suffise?
So ful was his corage of heigh emprise. 2667
Allas, who shal me helpe to endite
False Fortune, and poyson to despise,
The whiche two of al this wo I wyte? *3860

De Julio Cesare

By wisedom, manhede, and by greet labour,
From humble bed to roial magestee
Up roos he Julius, the conquerour,
That wan al th'occident by land and see,
By strengthe of hand, or elles by tretee,
And unto Rome made hem tributarie; 2676
And sitthe of Rome the emperour was he
Til that Fortune weex his adversarie.

O myghty Cesar, that in Thessalie
Agayn Pompeus, fader thyn in lawe, *3870
That of the orient hadde al the chivalrie
As fer as that the day bigynneth dawe,
Thou thurgh thy knyghthod hast hem take and slawe,

2611 **totar**: tore apart
2614 **forbrused**: badly bruised
2615 **wreche**: vengeance
2622 **knew**: acknowledged
2624 **wlatsom**: loathsome **careyne**: body
2631 **Alisaundre**: Alexander the Great **commune**: widespread
2636 **for pees unto hym sende**: to send envoys to him to sue for peace
2641 **quaked**: trembled
2647 **pris**: praise
2648 **Darius**: king of the Medes
2653 **write**: should write (pret. subjunctive)
2656 **Macidoyne**: Macedonia
2661 Fortune has turned your six (the highest throw of a die) into an ace (the lowest)
2665 **demeyne**: control
2667 **emprise**: knightly courage
2673 **he Julius**: this Julius (Caesar)
2677 **sitthe**: afterwards
2680 **Pompeus**: Pompey the Great

Save fewe folk that with Pompeus fledde,
Thurgh which thou puttest al th'orient in awe.
Thanke Fortune, that so wel thee spedde! 2686

But now a litel while I wol biwaille
This Pompeus, this noble governour
Of Rome, which that fleigh at this bataille.
I seye, oon of his men, a fals traitour, *3880
His heed of smoot, to wynnen hym favour
Of Julius, and hym the heed he broghte.
Allas, Pompeye, of th'orient conquerour,
That Fortune unto swich a fyn thee broghte!

To Rome agayn repaireth Julius 2695
With his triumphe, lauriat ful hye;
But on a tyme Brutus Cassius,
That evere hadde of his hye estaat envye,
Ful prively hath maad conspiracye
Agayns this Julius in subtil wise, *3890
And caste the place in which he sholde dye
With boydekyns, as I shal yow devyse.

This Julius to the Capitolie wente
Upon a day, as he was wont to goon,
And in the Capitolie anon hym hente 2705
This false Brutus and his othere foon,
And stiked hym with boydekyns anoon
With many a wounde, and thus they lete hym lye;
But nevere gronte he at no strook but oon,
Or elles at two, but if his storie lye. *3900

So manly was this Julius of herte,
And so wel lovede estaatly honestee,
That though his deedly woundes soore smerte,
His mantel over his hypes caste he,
For no man sholde seen his privetee; 2715
And as he lay of diyng in a traunce,
And wiste verraily that deed was hee,
Of honestee yet hadde he remembraunce.

Lucan, to thee this storie I recomende,
And to Swetoun, and to Valerius also, *3910
That of this storie writen word and ende,
How that to thise grete conqueroures two
Fortune was first freend, and sitthe foo.
No man ne truste upon hire favour longe,
But have hire in awayt for everemoo; 2725
Witnesse on alle thise conqueroures stronge.

Cresus

This riche Cresus, whilom kyng of Lyde,
Of which Cresus Cirus soore hym dradde,
Yet was he caught amyddes al his pryde, *3919
And to be brent men to the fyr hym ladde.
But swich a reyn doun fro the welkne shadde
That slow the fyr, and made hym to escape;
But to be war no grace yet he hadde,
Til Fortune on the galwes made hym gape.

Whanne he escaped was, he kan nat stente
For to bigynne a newe werre agayn. 2736
He wende wel, for that Fortune hym sente
Swich hap that he escaped thurgh the rayn,
That of his foos he myghte nat be slayn; *3929
And eek a sweven upon a nyght he mette,
Of which he was so proud and eek so fayn
That in vengeance he al his herte sette.

Upon a tree he was, as that hym thoughte,
Ther Juppiter hym wessh, bothe bak and syde, 2744
And Phebus eek a fair towaille hym broughte
To dryen hym with; and therfore wax his pryde,
And to his doghter, that stood hym bisyde,
Which that he knew in heigh sentence habounde,
He bad hire telle hym what it signyfyde,
And she his dreem bigan right thus expounde: *3940

"The tree," quod she, "the galwes is to meene,
And Juppiter bitokneth snow and reyn,
And Phebus, with his towaille so clene,
Tho been the sonne stremes for to seyn.

2689 fleigh: fled
2697 Brutus Cassius: Brutus and Cassius are here considered one person; see n.
2702 boydekyns: daggers
2703 Capitolie: capitol
2706 foon: enemies
2709 gronte: groaned
2712 estaatly honestee: dignified decorum
2716 of diyng: a-dying
2719 Lucan: author of the *Pharsalia,* which narrates the wars between Caesar and Pompey
2720 Swetoun: Suetonius Valerius: Valerius Maximus, whose *Facta et dicta memorabilia* contains stories about the Caesars
2721 word and ende: beginning and end
2725 in awayt: under observation (i.e., keep an eye on her)
2727 Cresus: Croesus, last king of Lydia
2728 Cirus: Cyrus the Great
2731 welkne: sky
2734 galwes: gallows
2740 sweven: dream mette: dreamed
2745 towaille: towel
2748 in heigh sentence habounde: to abound in good judgment, wisdom
2751 is to meene: is to be interpreted, signifies

Thou shalt anhanged be, fader, certeyn; 2755
Reyn shal thee wasshe, and sonne shal thee drye."
Thus warned hym ful plat and ek ful pleyn
His doghter, which that called was Phanye.

Anhanged was Cresus, the proude kyng;
His roial trone myghte hym nat availle.
Tragediës noon oother maner thyng *3951
Ne kan in syngyng crie ne biwaille
But that Fortune alwey wole assaille
With unwar strook the regnes that been proude;
For whan men trusteth hire, thanne wol she faille, 2765
And covere hire brighte face with a clowde.

Explicit Tragedia.

Heere stynteth the Knyght the Monk of his tale.

THE PROLOGUE OF THE NUN'S PRIEST'S TALE

The prologe of the Nonnes Preestes Tale.

"Hoo!" quod the Knyght, "good sire, namoore of this!
That ye han seyd is right ynough, ywis,
And muchel moore; for litel hevynesse
Is right ynough to muche folk, I gesse. *3960
I seye for me, it is a greet disese,
Whereas men han been in greet welthe and ese,
To heeren of hire sodeyn fal, allas!
And the contrarie is joye and greet solas,
As whan a man hath been in povre estaat, 2775
And clymbeth up and wexeth fortunat,
And there abideth in prosperitee.
Swich thyng is gladsom, as it thynketh me,
And of swich thyng were goodly for to telle."
"Ye," quod oure Hooste, "by Seint Poules belle! *3970
Ye seye right sooth; this Monk he clappeth lowde.
He spak how Fortune covered with a clowde
I noot nevere what; and als of a tragedie
Right now ye herde, and pardee, no remedie
It is for to biwaille ne compleyne 2785
That that is doon, and als it is a peyne,
As ye han seyd, to heere of hevynesse.

"Sire Monk, namoore of this, so God yow blesse!
Youre tale anoyeth al this compaignye.
Swich talkyng is nat worth a boterflye, *3980
For therinne is ther no desport ne game.
Wherfore, sire Monk, daun Piers by youre name,
I pray yow hertely telle us somwhat elles;
For sikerly, nere clynkyng of youre belles
That on youre bridel hange on every syde,
By hevene kyng that for us alle dyde, 2796
I sholde er this han fallen doun for sleep,
Althogh the slough had never been so deep;
Thanne hadde your tale al be toold in veyn.
For certeinly, as that thise clerkes seyn,
Whereas a man may have noon audience, *3991
Noght helpeth it to tellen his sentence.
"And wel I woot the substance is in me,
If any thyng shal wel reported be. 2804
Sir, sey somwhat of huntyng, I yow preye."
"Nay," quod this Monk, "I have no lust to pleye.
Now lat another telle, as I have toold."

2778 gladsom: pleasing
2780 Seint Poules belle: the bell of St. Paul's Cathedral, London
2781 clappeth lowde: talks noisily
2783 noot = *ne woot*, do not know

2764 unwar strook: unexpected stroke

2794 nere = *ne were*, were it not for
2798 slough: mud, mire
2803 the substance is in me: the meaning is in (i.e., reaches) me

Thanne spak oure Hoost with rude speche
and boold,
And seyde unto the Nonnes Preest anon,
"Com neer, thou preest, com hyder, thou sir
John! *4000
Telle us swich thyng as may oure hertes glade.
Be blithe, though thou ryde upon a jade.
What thogh thyn hors be bothe foul and lene?
If he wol serve thee, rekke nat a bene.
Looke that thyn herte be murie everemo." 2815
"Yis, sir," quod he, "yis, Hoost, so moot I go,
But I be myrie, ywis I wol be blamed."
And right anon his tale he hath attamed,
And thus he seyde unto us everichon,
This sweete preest, this goodly man sir
John. *4010

Explicit.

THE NUN'S PRIEST'S TALE

Heere bigynneth the Nonnes Preestes Tale of the Cok and Hen, Chauntecleer and Pertelote.

A povre wydwe, somdeel stape in age,
Was whilom dwellyng in a narwe cotage,
Biside a grove, stondynge in a dale.
This wydwe, of which I telle yow my tale,
Syn thilke day that she was last a wyf 2825
In pacience ladde a ful symple lyf,
For litel was hir catel and hir rente.
By housbondrie of swich as God hire sente
She foond hirself and eek hir doghtren two.
Thre large sowes hadde she, and namo, *4020
Three keen, and eek a sheep that highte Malle.
Ful sooty was hire bour and eek hir halle,
In which she eet ful many a sklendre meel.
Of poynaunt sauce hir neded never a deel.
No deyntee morsel passed thurgh hir throte;
Hir diete was accordant to hir cote. 2836
Repleccioun ne made hire nevere sik;
Attempree diete was al hir phisik,
And exercise, and hertes suffisaunce.
The goute lette hire nothyng for to daunce,
N'apoplexie shente nat hir heed. *4031
No wyn ne drank she, neither whit ne reed;
Hir bord was served moost with whit and
blak —
Milk and broun breed, in which she foond no
lak,
Seynd bacoun, and somtyme an ey or tweye,
For she was, as it were, a maner deye. 2846
A yeerd she hadde, enclosed al aboute
With stikkes, and a drye dych withoute,
In which she hadde a cok, hight Chaunte-
cleer. *4039
In al the land, of crowyng nas his peer.
His voys was murier than the murie orgon
On messe-dayes that in the chirche gon.
Wel sikerer was his crowyng in his logge
Than is a clokke or an abbey orlogge.
By nature he knew ech ascencioun 2855
Of the equynoxial in thilke toun;
For whan degrees fiftene weren ascended,

2810 sir John: contemptuous name for a priest
2812 jade: nag
2816 Yis: yes indeed
2818 attamed: begun

2821 stape: advanced
2829 foond: provided for
2831 keen: cows
2832 bour: bedchamber
2834 poynaunt: spicy, piercing
2836 cote: small farm
2837 Repleccioun: overeating
2838 Attempree: moderate
2840 lette: prevented

2844 lak: lack or fault; see n.
2845 Seynd: broiled or smoked ey: egg
2846 deye: dairywoman
2847 yeerd: enclosed garden
2848 stikkes: palings
2851 orgon: organ; see n.
2853 logge: dwelling
2854 orlogge: timepiece
2855–56 ascencioun Of the equynoxial: the time (once each hour) when each of the twenty-four imaginary points on the celestial equator rises on the horizon

Thanne crew he that it myghte nat been
amended.
His coomb was redder than the fyn coral,
And batailled as it were a castel wal; *4050
His byle was blak, and as the jeet it shoon;
Lyk asure were his legges and his toon;
His nayles whitter than the lylye flour,
And lyk the burned gold was his colour.
This gentil cok hadde in his governaunce 2865
Sevene hennes for to doon al his plesaunce,
Whiche were his sustres and his paramours,
And wonder lyk to hym, as of colours;
Of whiche the faireste hewed on hir throte
Was cleped faire damoysele Pertelote. *4060
Curteys she was, discreet, and debonaire,
And compaignable, and bar hyrself so faire
Syn thilke day that she was seven nyght oold
That trewely she hath the herte in hoold
Of Chauntecleer, loken in every lith; 2875
He loved hire so that wel was hym therwith.
But swich a joye was it to here hem synge,
Whan that the brighte sonne gan to sprynge,
In sweete accord, "My lief is faren in londe!" —
For thilke tyme, as I have understonde, *4070
Beestes and briddes koude speke and synge.
And so bifel that in a dawenynge,
As Chauntecleer among his wyves alle
Sat on his perche, that was in the halle,
And next hym sat this faire Pertelote, 2885
This Chauntecleer gan gronen in his throte,
As man that in his dreem is drecched soore.
And whan that Pertelote thus herde hym roore,
She was agast and seyde, "Herte deere,
What eyleth yow, to grone in this manere?
Ye been a verray sleper; fy, for shame!" *4081
And he answerde, and seyde thus: "Madame,
I pray yow that ye take it nat agrief.
By God, me mette I was in swich meschief
Right now that yet myn herte is soore
afright.
Now God," quod he, "my swevene recche
aright, 2896
And kepe my body out of foul prisoun!
Me mette how that I romed up and doun
Withinne our yeerd, wheer as I saugh a beest
Was lyk an hound, and wolde han maad
areest *4090
Upon my body, and wolde han had me deed.
His colour was bitwixe yelow and reed,
And tipped was his tayl and bothe his eeris
With blak, unlyk the remenant of his heeris;
His snowte smal, with glowynge eyen tweye.
Yet of his look for feere almoost I deye; 2906
This caused me my gronyng, doutelees."
"Avoy!" quod she, "fy on yow, hertelees!
Allas," quod she, "for, by that God above,
Now han ye lost myn herte and al my love!
I kan nat love a coward, by my feith! *4101
For certes, what so any womman seith,
We alle desiren, if it myghte bee,
To han housbondes hardy, wise, and free,
And secree — and no nygard, ne no fool, 2915
Ne hym that is agast of every tool,
Ne noon avauntour, by that God above!
How dorste ye seyn, for shame, unto youre love
That any thyng myghte make yow aferd? *4109
Have ye no mannes herte, and han a berd?
Allas! And konne ye been agast of swevenys?
Nothyng, God woot, but vanitee in sweven is.
Swevenes engendren of repleccioun,
And ofte of fume and of compleccioun, 2924
Whan humours been to habundant in a wight.
Certes this dreem, which ye han met to-nyght,
Cometh of the greete superfluytee
Of youre rede colera, pardee,
Which causeth folk to dreden in hir dremes
Of arwes, and of fyr with rede lemes, *4120
Of rede beestes, that they wol hem byte,
Of contek, and of whelpes, grete and lyte;

2860 batailled: notched with crenelations
2861 byle: beak jeet: jet, a gemlike coal
2862 asure: azure toon: toes
2867 paramours: concubines
2871 debonaire: gracious
2872 compaignable: sociable
2874 hoold: possession, keeping
2875 loken in every lith: locked in every limb (i.e., completely)
2879 My lief is faren in londe: "My love has departed to the country," a popular song; see n.
2887 drecched: troubled
2888 roore: roar
2893 agrief: amiss

2896 swevene: dream recche aright: interpret correctly or favorably (in an auspicious manner)
2900–01 maad areest Upon: siezed
2908 Avoy!: shame! hertelees: coward
2915 secree: discreet nygard: miser
2916 tool: weapon
2917 avauntour: boaster
2919 aferd: afraid
2920 berd: beard; see n.
2923 repleccioun: overeating
2924 fume: vapor rising from the stomach compleccioun: balance of the bodily fluids (*humours*), blood, phlegm, red or yellow bile, and black bile, which produce the sanguinary, phlegmatic, choleric, and melancholy complexions, respectively
2928 rede colera: red choleric humor
2930 lemes: flames
2932 contek: strife whelpes: dogs

Right as the humour of malencolie
Causeth ful many a man in sleep to crie
For feere of blake beres, or boles blake, 2935
Or elles blake develes wole hem take.
Of othere humours koude I telle also
That werken many a man sleep ful wo;
But I wol passe as lightly as I kan. *4129
"Lo Catoun, which that was so wys a man,
Seyde he nat thus, 'Ne do no fors of dremes'?
"Now sire," quod she, "whan we flee fro the bemes,
For Goddes love, as taak som laxatyf.
Up peril of my soule and of my lyf,
I conseille yow the beste — I wol nat lye — 2945
That bothe of colere and of malencolye
Ye purge yow; and for ye shal nat tarie,
Though in this toun is noon apothecarie,
I shal myself to herbes techen yow
That shul been for youre hele and for youre prow; *4140
And in oure yeerd tho herbes shal I fynde
The whiche han of hire propretee by kynde
To purge yow bynethe and eek above.
Foryet nat this, for Goddes owene love!
Ye been ful coleryk of complecciouns; 2955
Ware the sonne in his ascencioun
Ne fynde yow nat repleet of humours hoote.
And if it do, I dar wel leye a grote,
That ye shul have a fevere terciane,
Or an agu that may be youre bane. *4150
A day or two ye shul have digestyves
Of wormes, er ye take youre laxatyves
Of lawriol, centaure, and fumetere,
Or elles of ellebor, that groweth there,
Of katapuce, or of gaitrys beryis, 2965
Of herbe yve, growyng in oure yeerd, ther mery is;
Pekke hem up right as they growe and ete hem yn.
Be myrie, housbonde, for youre fader kyn!
Dredeth no dreem; I kan sey yow namoore."
"Madame," quod he, "graunt mercy of youre loore. *4160
But nathelees, as touchyng daun Catoun,
That hath of wysdom swich a greet renoun,
Though that he bad no dremes for to drede,
By God, men may in olde bookes rede
Of many a man moore of auctorite 2975
Than evere Caton was, so moot I thee,
That al the revers seyn of this sentence,
And han wel founden by experience
That dremes been significaciouns
As wel of joye as of tribulaciouns *4170
That folk enduren in this lif present.
Ther nedeth make of this noon argument;
The verray preeve sheweth it in dede.
"Oon of the gretteste auctour that men rede
Seith thus: that whilom two felawes wente 2985
On pilgrimage, in a ful good entente,
And happed so, they coomen in a toun
Wher as ther was swich congregacioun *4178
Of peple, and eek so streit of herbergage,
That they ne founde as muche as o cotage
In which they bothe myghte ylogged bee.
Wherfore they mosten of necessitee,
As for that nyght, departen compaignye;
And ech of hem gooth to his hostelrye,
And took his loggyng as it wolde falle. 2995
That oon of hem was logged in a stalle,
Fer in a yeerd, with oxen of the plough;
That oother man was logged wel ynough,
As was his aventure or his fortune,
That us governeth alle as in commune. *4190
"And so bifel that, longe er it were day,
This man mette in his bed, ther as he lay,
How that his felawe gan upon hym calle,
And seyde, 'Allas, for in an oxes stalle
This nyght I shal be mordred ther I lye! 3005
Now help me, deere brother, or I dye.
In alle haste com to me!' he sayde.
This man out of his sleep for feere abrayde;
But whan that he was wakened of his sleep,

2933 **humour of malencolie:** melancholy humor
2941 **Ne do no fors of dremes:** Attach no importance to dreams.
2950 **hele:** good health **prow:** profit, benefit
2955 **coleryk:** dominated by the choleric humor
2956 **in his ascencioun:** when it is high in the sky
2957 **repleet of:** filled with
2958 **leye a grote:** bet a groat (a silver coin worth four pence)
2959 **fevere terciane:** a fever that recurs every third day; see Expl. Notes to lines 2942–67.
2960 **agu:** acute fever **bane:** killer
2961 **digestyves:** medicines to aid the digestion
2963 **lawriol:** spurge laurel; the herbs named in these lines are nearly all hot, dry, and foul tasting; see n. **centaure:** centaury **fumetere:** fumaria, fumitory
2964 **ellebor:** hellebore
2965 **katapuce:** caper-spurge, euphorbia **gaitrys beryis:** rhamus
2966 **herbe yve:** ground ivy **ther mery is:** where it is pleasant (i.e., in the garden)

2976 **so moot I thee:** as I may prosper (I swear)
2983 **preeve:** proof
2984 **Oon of the gretteste auctour:** one of the greatest authors; see n.
2989 **streit of:** scanty, short of **herbergage:** lodging
2991 **ylogged:** lodged
3008 **abrayde:** awakened suddenly

He turned hym and took of this no keep.
Hym thoughte his dreem nas but a vanitee.
Thus twies in his slepyng dremed hee; *4202
And atte thridde tyme yet his felawe
Cam, as hym thoughte, and seide, 'I am now slawe.
Bihoold my bloody woundes depe and wyde!
Arys up erly in the morwe tyde, 3016
And at the west gate of the toun,' quod he,
'A carte ful of dong ther shaltow se,
In which my body is hid ful prively;
Do thilke carte arresten boldely. *4210
My gold caused my mordre, sooth to sayn,'
And tolde hym every point how he was slayn,
With a ful pitous face, pale of hewe.
And truste wel, his dreem he foond ful trewe,
For on the morwe, as soone as it was day, 3025
To his felawes in he took the way;
And whan that he cam to this oxes stalle,
After his felawe he bigan to calle.
"The hostiler answerede hym anon,
And seyde, 'Sire, your felawe is agon. *4220
As soone as day he wente out of the toun.'
"This man gan fallen in suspecioun,
Remembrynge on his dremes that he mette,
And forth he gooth — no lenger wolde he lette —
Unto the west gate of the toun, and fond 3035
A dong-carte, wente as it were to donge lond,
That was arrayed in that same wise
As ye han herd the dede man devyse.
And with an hardy herte he gan to crye
Vengeance and justice of this felonye: *4230
'My felawe mordred is this same nyght,
And in this carte he lith gapyng upright.
I crye out on the ministres,' quod he,
'That sholden kepe and reulen this citee. 3044
Harrow! Allas! Heere lith my felawe slayn!'
What sholde I moore unto this tale sayn?
The peple out sterte and caste the cart to grounde,
And in the myddel of the dong they founde
The dede man, that mordred was al newe.
"O blisful God, that art so just and trewe, *4240
Lo, how that thou biwreyest mordre alway!

3020 Do . . . arresten: have (it) seized
3029 hostiler: innkeeper
3034 lette: delay
3036 donge: spread dung, fertilize
3042 upright: face up
3043 crye out on: complain to ministres: magistrates
3049 al newe: very recently, just now

Mordre wol out; that se we day by day.
Mordre is so wlatsom and abhomynable
To God, that is so just and resonable,
That he ne wol nat suffre it heled be, 3055
Though it abyde a yeer, or two, or thre.
Mordre wol out, this my conclusioun.
And right anon, ministres of that toun
Han hent the carter and so soore hym pyned,
And eek the hostiler so soore engyned, *4250
That they biknewe hire wikkednesse anon,
And were anhanged by the nekke-bon.
"Heere may men seen that dremes been to drede.
And certes in the same book I rede,
Right in the nexte chapitre after this — 3065
I gabbe nat, so have I joye or blis —
Two men that wolde han passed over see,
For certeyn cause, into a fer contree,
If that the wynd ne hadde been contrarie,
That made hem in a citee for to tarie *4260
That stood ful myrie upon an haven-syde;
But on a day, agayn the even-tyde,
The wynd gan chaunge, and blew right as hem leste.
Jolif and glad they wente unto hir reste,
And casten hem ful erly for to saille. 3075
But herkneth! To that o man fil a greet mervaille:
That oon of hem, in slepyng as he lay,
Hym mette a wonder dreem agayn the day.
Hym thoughte a man stood by his beddes syde,
And hym comanded that he sholde abyde,
And seyde hym thus: 'If thou tomorwe wende,
Thow shalt be dreynt; my tale is at an ende.'
He wook, and tolde his felawe what he mette,
And preyde hym his viage for to lette;
As for that day, he preyde hym to byde. 3085
His felawe, that lay by his beddes syde,
Gan for to laughe, and scorned him ful faste.
'No dreem,' quod he, 'may so myn herte agaste
That I wol lette for to do my thynges.
I sette nat a straw by thy dremynges, *4280
For swevenes been but vanytees and japes.
Men dreme alday of owles and of apes,
And of many a maze therwithal;

3053 wlatsom: disgusting, nauseating
3055 heled: concealed
3057 this = *this is*
3059 pyned: tortured
3060 engyned: tortured
3061 biknewe: acknowledged, confessed
3066 gabbe: lie
3072 agayn: shortly before
3078 agayn the day: shortly before dawn
3084 viage: journey lette: give up
3093 maze: source of amazement, bewilderment

Men dreme of thyng that nevere was ne shal.
But sith I see that thou wolt heere abyde, 3095
And thus forslewthen wilfully thy tyde,
God woot, it reweth me; and have good day!'
And thus he took his leve, and wente his way.
But er that he hadde half his cours yseyled,
Noot I nat why, ne what myschaunce it eyled, *4290
But casuelly the shippes botme rente,
And ship and man under the water wente
In sighte of othere shippes it bisyde,
That with hem seyled at the same tyde.
And therfore, faire Pertelote so deere, 3105
By swiche ensamples olde maistow leere
That no man sholde been to recchelees
Of dremes; for I seye thee, doutelees,
That many a dreem ful soore is for to drede.
"Lo, in the lyf of Seint Kenelm I rede,
That was Kenulphus sone, the noble kyng
Of Mercenrike, how Kenelm mette a thyng.
A lite er he was mordred, on a day, *4303
His mordre in his avysioun he say.
His norice hym expowned every deel 3115
His sweven, and bad hym for to kepe hym weel
For traisoun; but he nas but seven yeer oold,
And therfore litel tale hath he toold
Of any dreem, so hooly was his herte.
By God! I hadde levere than my sherte *4310
That ye hadde rad his legende, as have I.
"Dame Pertelote, I sey yow trewely,
Macrobeus, that writ the avisioun
In Affrike of the worthy Cipioun, 3124
Affermeth dremes, and seith that they been
Warnynge of thynges that men after seen.
And forthermoore, I pray yow, looketh wel
In the olde testament, of Daniel,
If he heeld dremes any vanitee.
Reed eek of Joseph, and ther shul ye see *4320
Wher dremes be somtyme — I sey nat alle —
Warnynge of thynges that shul after falle.
Looke of Egipte the kyng, daun Pharao,
His bakere and his butiller also,
Wher they ne felte noon effect in dremes. 3135
Whoso wol seken actes of sondry remes
May rede of dremes many a wonder thyng.
Lo Cresus, which that was of Lyde kyng,
Mette he nat that he sat upon a tree,
Which signified he sholde anhanged bee?
Lo heere Andromacha, Ectores wyf, *4331
That day that Ector sholde lese his lyf,
She dremed on the same nyght biforn
How that the lyf of Ector sholde be lorn,
If thilke day he wente into bataille. 3145
She warned hym, but it myghte nat availle;
He wente for to fighte natheles,
But he was slayn anon of Achilles.
But thilke tale is al to longe to telle,
And eek it is ny day; I may nat dwelle. *4340
Shortly I seye, as for conclusioun,
That I shal han of this avisioun
Adversitee; and I seye forthermoor
That I ne telle of laxatyves no stoor,
For they been venymes, I woot it weel; 3155
I hem diffye, I love hem never a deel!
"Now let us speke of myrthe, and stynte al this.
Madame Pertelote, so have I blis,
Of o thyng God hath sent me large grace;
For whan I se the beautee of youre face,
Ye been so scarlet reed aboute youre yen,
It maketh al my drede for to dyen; *4352
For al so siker as *In principio,*
Mulier est hominis confusio —
Madame, the sentence of this Latyn is, 3165
'Womman is mannes joye and al his blis.'
For whan I feele a-nyght your softe syde —
Al be it that I may nat on yow ryde,
For that oure perche is maad so narwe, allas —
I am so ful of joye and of solas, *4360
That I diffye bothe sweven and dreem."
And with that word he fley doun fro the beem,
For it was day, and eke his hennes alle,
And with a chuk he gan hem for to calle,

3096 **forslewthen:** slothfully waste
3101 **casuelly:** by chance
3110 **Seint Kenelm:** See n.
3111 **Kenulphus:** Cenwulf's
3112 **Mercenrike:** Mercia
3114 **avysioun:** a prophetic dream, sent as a warning (MED)
3117 **For:** to prevent, against
3118–19 **litel tale hath he toold Of:** he had little regard for
3123 **Macrobeus:** Macrobius (fl. c. 400 A.D.), author of a commentary on the *Dream of Scipio*
3124 **Cipioun:** Scipio; for his dream see PF 29–84.
3128 **Daniel:** The book of Daniel describes Daniel's prophetic visions.
3130 **Joseph:** famous as the interpreter of Pharoah's dreams
3133 **Pharao:** Pharaoh
3134 **butiller:** steward
3135 **effect:** significance
3136 **seken:** examine **actes:** histories **remes:** realms
3138 **Cresus:** Croesus; for his dream see MkT VII.2727–60.
3141 **Ectores:** Hector's
3150 **dwelle:** delay
3154 **telle of . . . no stoor:** regard as worthless
3156 **diffye:** renounce
3163 ***In principio:*** In the beginning (the opening words of Genesis 1 and John 1); see n.
3164 ***Mulier est hominis confusio:*** woman is man's ruin
3172 **fley:** flew **beem:** beam, roost
3174 **chuk:** cluck

For he hadde founde a corn, lay in the yerd.
Real he was, he was namoore aferd. 3176
He fethered Pertelote twenty tyme,
And trad hire eke as ofte, er it was pryme.
He looketh as it were a grym leoun,
And on his toos he rometh up and doun; *4370
Hym deigned nat to sette his foot to grounde.
He chukketh whan he hath a corn yfounde,
And to hym rennen thanne his wyves alle.
Thus roial, as a prince is in his halle,
Leve I this Chauntecleer in his pasture, 3185
And after wol I telle his aventure.
Whan that the month in which the world bigan,
That highte March, whan God first maked man,
Was compleet, and passed were also,
Syn March [was gon], thritty dayes and two, *4380
Bifel that Chauntecleer in al his pryde,
His sevene wyves walkynge by his syde,
Caste up his eyen to the brighte sonne,
That in the signe of Taurus hadde yronne 3194
Twenty degrees and oon, and somwhat moore,
And knew by kynde, and by noon oother loore,
That it was pryme, and crew with blisful stevene.
"The sonne," he seyde, "is clomben up on hevene
Fourty degrees and oon, and moore ywis.
Madame Pertelote, my worldes blis, *4390
Herkneth thise blisful briddes how they synge,
And se the fresshe floures how they sprynge;
Ful is myn herte of revel and solas!"
But sodeynly hym fil a sorweful cas,
For evere the latter ende of joye is wo. 3205
God woot that worldly joye is soone ago;
And if a rethor koude faire endite,
He in a cronycle saufly myghte it write
As for a sovereyn notabilitee.
Now every wys man, lat him herkne me; *4400
This storie is also trewe, I undertake,
As is the book of Launcelot de Lake,

3175 corn: grain
3176 Real: royal
3177 fethered: clasped with his wings
3178 trad: copulated with
3179 leoun: lion
3182 chukketh: clucks
3185 pasture: feeding place
3189 compleet: completed; the action takes place on May 3; see n.
3194 Taurus: the Bull, second sign of the zodiac
3196 kynde: instinct
3197 stevene: voice
3206 ago: gone
3207 rethor: rhetorician, master of eloquence
3209 sovereyn notabilitee: notable fact
3212 book of Launcelot de Lake: the romance of Lancelot and Guinevere

That wommen holde in ful greet reverence.
Now wol I torne agayn to my sentence.
A col-fox, ful of sly iniquitee, 3215
That in the grove hadde woned yeres three,
By heigh ymaginacioun forncast,
The same nyght thurghout the hegges brast
Into the yerd ther Chauntecleer the faire
Was wont, and eek his wyves, to repaire;
And in a bed of wortes stille he lay *4411
Til it was passed undren of the day,
Waitynge his tyme on Chauntecleer to falle,
As gladly doon thise homycides alle
That in awaite liggen to mordre men. 3225
O false mordrour, lurkynge in thy den!
O newe Scariot, newe Genylon,
False dissymulour, o Greek Synon,
That broghtest Troye al outrely to sorwe!
O Chauntecleer, acursed be that morwe *4420
That thou into that yerd flaugh fro the bemes!
Thou were ful wel ywarned by thy dremes
That thilke day was perilous to thee;
But what that God forwoot moot nedes bee,
After the opinioun of certein clerkis. 3235
Witnesse on hym that any parfit clerk is,
That in scole is greet altercacioun
In this mateere, and greet disputisoun,
And hath been of an hundred thousand men.
But I ne kan nat bulte it to the bren *4430
As kan the hooly doctour Augustyn,
Or Boece, or the Bisshop Bradwardyn,
Wheither that Goddes worthy forwityng
Streyneth me nedely for to doon a thyng —
"Nedely" clepe I symple necessitee — 3245
Or elles, if free choys be graunted me
To do that same thyng, or do it noght,
Though God forwoot it er that I was wroght;

3215 col-fox: fox with black-tipped feet, ears, and tail
3216 woned: dwelt
3217 Foreseen by the exalted imagination or planned ahead with skillful forethought (?); see n.
3218 hegges: hedges (serving as a fence) brast: broke
3221 wortes: cabbages
3222 undren: the third hour, about 9 A.M.
3224 gladly: habitually
3227 Scariot: Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Christ Genylon: Ganelon, who betrayed Roland
3228 dissymulour: deceiver Synon: The story is briefly told in HF 152–56.
3231 flaugh: flew
3234 forwoot: foreknows
3240 bulte it to the bren: bolt (sift) it to the husks (separate completely the valid from the invalid arguments)
3241–42 doctour: teacher (doctor of the church) Augustyn, Boece, Bradwardyn: St. Augustine, Boethius, Thomas Bradwardyne; see n.
3243 forwityng: foreknowledge
3244 Streyneth: constrains nedely: of necessity
3245 symple necessitee: plain or ordinary necessity; see n.
3248 forwoot: foreknew

Or if his wityng streyneth never a deel
But by necessitee condicioneel. *4440
I wol nat han to do of swich mateere;
My tale is of a cok, as ye may heere,
That tok his conseil of his wyf, with sorwe,
To walken in the yerd upon that morwe 3254
That he hadde met that dreem that I yow tolde.
Wommennes conseils been ful ofte colde;
Wommannes conseil broghte us first to wo
And made Adam fro Paradys to go,
Ther as he was ful myrie and wel at ese.
But for I noot to whom it myght displese,
If I conseil of wommen wolde blame, *4451
Passe over, for I seyde it in my game.
Rede auctours, where they trete of swich mateere,
And what they seyn of wommen ye may heere.
Thise been the cokkes wordes, and nat myne;
I kan noon harm of no womman divyne. 3266
Faire in the soond, to bathe hire myrily,
Lith Pertelote, and alle hire sustres by,
Agayn the sonne, and Chauntecleer so free
Soong murier than the mermayde in the see
(For Phisiologus seith sikerly *4461
How that they syngen wel and myrily).
And so bifel that, as he caste his ye
Among the wortes on a boterflye,
He was war of this fox, that lay ful lowe. 3275
Nothyng ne liste hym thanne for to crowe,
But cride anon, "Cok! cok!" and up he sterte
As man that was affrayed in his herte.
For natureelly a beest desireth flee
Fro his contrarie, if he may it see, *4470
Though he never erst hadde seyn it with his ye.
This Chauntecleer, whan he gan hym espye,
He wolde han fled, but that the fox anon
Seyde, "Gentil sire, allas, wher wol ye gon?
Be ye affrayed of me that am youre freend?
Now, certes, I were worse than a feend, 3286
If I to yow wolde harm or vileynye!
I am nat come youre conseil for t'espye,
But trewely, the cause of my comynge
Was oonly for to herkne how that ye synge.
For trewely, ye have as myrie a stevene *4481
As any aungel hath that is in hevene.
Therwith ye han in musyk moore feelynge
Than hadde Boece, or any that kan synge.
My lord youre fader — God his soule blesse! —
And eek youre mooder, of hire gentillesse, 3296
Han in myn hous ybeen to my greet ese;
And certes, sire, ful fayn wolde I yow plese.
But, for men speke of syngyng, I wol seye —
So moote I brouke wel myne eyen tweye —
Save yow, I herde nevere man so synge *4491
As dide youre fader in the morwenynge.
Certes, it was of herte, al that he song.
And for to make his voys the moore strong,
He wolde so peyne hym that with bothe his yen 3305
He moste wynke, so loude he wolde cryen,
And stonden on his tiptoon therwithal,
And strecche forth his nekke long and smal.
And eek he was of swich discrecioun
That ther nas no man in no regioun *4500
That hym in song or wisedom myghte passe.
I have wel rad in 'Daun Burnel the Asse,'
Among his vers, how that ther was a cok,
For that a preestes sone yaf hym a knok
Upon his leg whil he was yong and nyce, 3315
He made hym for to lese his benefice.
But certeyn, ther nys no comparisoun
Bitwixe the wisedom and discrecioun
Of youre fader and of his subtiltee.
Now syngeth, sire, for seinte charitee; *4510
Lat se; konne ye youre fader countrefete?"
This Chauntecleer his wynges gan to bete,
As man that koude his traysoun nat espie,
So was he ravysshed with his flaterie.
Allas, ye lordes, many a fals flatour 3325
Is in youre courtes, and many a losengeour,
That plesen yow wel moore, by my feith,
Than he that soothfastnesse unto yow seith.
Redeth Ecclesiaste of flaterye;
Beth war, ye lordes, of hir trecherye. *4520
This Chauntecleer stood hye upon his toos,
Strecchynge his nekke, and heeld his eyen cloos,

3250 **necessitee condicioneel:** inferential necessity; see n.
3253 **with sorwe:** to his sorrow
3256 **colde:** fatal
3260 **noot** = *ne woot,* know not
3262 **Passe over:** let it be
3266 **kan noon:** am not able or do not know; see n.
3267 **soond:** sand
3269 **Agayn:** facing toward
3271 **Phisiologus:** the bestiary; see n.
3274 **wortes:** cabbages
3278 **affrayed:** frightened
3291 **stevene:** voice
3294 **Boece:** Boethius wrote a textbook on music.
3300 **brouke:** use
3303 **of:** from the
3306 **wynke:** close both eyes
3312 **Daun Burnel the Asse:** *Burnellus,* or the *Speculum Stultorum* (a satiric work of the late twelfth century by Nigel Wireker)
3320 **for seinte charitee:** by holy charity, for the love of God
3326 **losengeour:** flatterer
3329 **Ecclesiaste:** the book of Ecclesiasticus, Ecclesiastes, or possibly even Proverbs; see n.

And gan to crowe loude for the nones.
And daun Russell the fox stirte up atones,
And by the gargat hente Chauntecleer, 3335
And on his bak toward the wode hym beer,
For yet ne was ther no man that hym sewed.
O destinee, that mayst nat been eschewed!
Allas, that Chauntecleer fleigh fro the bemes!
Allas, his wyf ne roghte nat of dremes! *4530
And on a Friday fil al this meschaunce.
O Venus, that art goddesse of plesaunce,
Syn that thy servant was this Chauntecleer,
And in thy servyce dide al his poweer,
Moore for delit than world to multiplye, 3345
Why woldestow suffre hym on thy day to dye?
O Gaufred, deere maister soverayn,
That whan thy worthy kyng Richard was slayn
With shot, compleynedest his deeth so soore,
Why ne hadde I now thy sentence and thy loore, *4540
The Friday for to chide, as diden ye?
For on a Friday, soothly, slayn was he.
Thanne wolde I shewe yow how that I koude pleyne
For Chauntecleres drede and for his peyne.
Certes, swich cry ne lamentacion 3355
Was nevere of ladyes maad whan Ylion
Was wonne, and Pirrus with his streite swerd,
Whan he hadde hent kyng Priam by the berd,
And slayn hym, as seith us *Eneydos.*
As maden alle the hennes in the clos, *4550
Whan they had seyn of Chauntecleer the sighte.
But sovereynly dame Pertelote shrighte
Ful louder than dide Hasdrubales wyf,
Whan that hir housbonde hadde lost his lyf
And that the Romayns hadde brend Cartage.
She was so ful of torment and of rage 3366
That wilfully into the fyr she sterte
And brende hirselven with a stedefast herte.
O woful hennes, right so criden ye
As whan that Nero brende the citee *4560
Of Rome cryden senatoures wyves
For that hir husbondes losten alle hir lyves —
Withouten gilt this Nero hath hem slayn.
Now wole I turne to my tale agayn. 3374
This sely wydwe and eek hir doghtres two
Herden thise hennes crie and maken wo,
And out at dores stirten they anon,
And syen the fox toward the grove gon,
And bar upon his bak the cok away, *4569
And cryden, "Out! Harrow and weylaway!
Ha, ha! The fox!" and after hym they ran,
And eek with staves many another man.
Ran Colle oure dogge, and Talbot and Gerland,
And Malkyn, with a dystaf in hir hand;
Ran cow and calf, and eek the verray hogges,
So fered for the berkyng of the dogges 3386
And shoutyng of the men and wommen eeke
They ronne so hem thoughte hir herte breeke.
They yolleden as feendes doon in helle;
The dokes cryden as men wolde hem quelle;
The gees for feere flowen over the trees; *4581
Out of the hyve cam the swarm of bees.
So hydous was the noyse — a, benedicitee! —
Certes, he Jakke Straw and his meynee
Ne made nevere shoutes half so shrille 3395
Whan that they wolden any Flemyng kille,
As thilke day was maad upon the fox.
Of bras they broghten bemes, and of box,
Of horn, of boon, in whiche they blewe and powped,
And therwithal they skriked and they howped.
It semed as that hevene sholde falle. *4591
Now, goode men, I prey yow herkneth alle:
Lo, how Fortune turneth sodeynly
The hope and pryde eek of hir enemy!
This cok, that lay upon the foxes bak, 3405
In al his drede unto the fox he spak,
And seyde, "Sire, if that I were as ye,
Yet sholde I seyn, as wys God helpe me,
'Turneth agayn, ye proude cherles alle!
A verray pestilence upon yow falle! *4600
Now I am come unto the wodes syde;
Maugree youre heed, the cok shal heere abyde.
I wol hym ete, in feith, and that anon!' "

3335 **gargat:** throat
3337 **sewed:** pursued
3347 **Gaufred:** Geoffrey of Vinsauf, author of a standard textbook on rhetoric containing a lament on the death of King Richard I (*kyng Richard*); see n.
3349 **With shot:** by the shot of an arrow
3356 **Ylion:** Ilium, the citadel at Troy
3357 **Pirrus:** Pyrrhus; see n. **streite swerd:** drawn sword
3359 *Eneydos:* the *Aeneid*
3360 **clos:** enclosure, yard
3362 **sovereynly:** supremely
3363 **Hasdrubales wyf:** Her story is briefly told in FranT V.1399–1404.
3370 **Nero:** For his story see MkT VII.2463–2550.
3386 **fered for:** frightened by **berkyng:** barking
3388 **breeke:** would break
3389 **yolleden:** yelled
3390 **quelle:** kill
3394 **Jakke Straw:** a supposed leader in the Peasants' Revolt of 1381
3398 **bemes:** trumpets **box:** boxwood
3399 **powped:** puffed
3400 **skriked:** shrieked **howped:** whooped
3412 **Maugree youre heed:** in spite of all you can do

The fox answerde, "In feith, it shal be don."
And as he spak that word, al sodeynly 3415
This cok brak from his mouth delyverly,
And heighe upon a tree he fleigh anon.
And whan the fox saugh that the cok was gon,
"Allas!" quod he, "O Chauntecleer, allas!
I have to yow," quod he, "ydoon trespas,
In as muche as I maked yow aferd *4611
Whan I yow hente and broghte out of the yerd.
But, sire, I dide it in no wikke entente.
Com doun, and I shal telle yow what I mente;
I shal seye sooth to yow, God help me so!" 3425
"Nay thanne," quod he, "I shrewe us bothe two.
And first I shrewe myself, bothe blood and bones,
If thou bigyle me ofter than ones.
Thou shalt namoore thurgh thy flaterye *4619
Do me to synge and wynke with myn ye;
For he that wynketh, whan he sholde see,
Al wilfully, God lat him nevere thee!"
"Nay," quod the fox, "but God yeve hym meschaunce,
That is so undiscreet of governaunce
That jangleth whan he sholde holde his pees."
Lo, swich it is for to be recchelees 3436
And necligent, and truste on flaterye.
But ye that holden this tale a folye,
As of a fox, or of a cok and hen,
Taketh the moralite, goode men. *4630
For Seint Paul seith that al that writen is,
To oure doctrine it is ywrite, ywis;
Taketh the fruyt, and lat the chaf be stille.
Now, goode God, if that it be thy wille, 3444
As seith my lord, so make us alle goode men,
And brynge us to his heighe blisse! Amen.

Heere is ended the Nonnes Preestes Tale.

[EPILOGUE TO THE NUN'S PRIEST'S TALE

"Sire Nonnes Preest," oure Hooste seide anoon,
"I-blessed be thy breche, and every stoon!
This was a murie tale of Chauntecleer.
But by my trouthe, if thou were seculer,
Thou woldest ben a trede-foul aright. *4641
For if thou have corage as thou hast myght,
Thee were nede of hennes, as I wene,
Ya, moo than seven tymes seventene. 3454
See, whiche braunes hath this gentil preest,
So gret a nekke, and swich a large breest!
He loketh as a sperhauk with his yen;
Him nedeth nat his colour for to dyen
With brasile ne with greyn of Portyngale.
Now, sire, faire falle yow for youre tale!" *4650
And after that he, with ful merie chere,
Seide unto another, as ye shuln heere.]

3416 **delyverly:** nimbly
3426 **shrewe:** beshrew, curse

3448 **breche:** buttocks **stoon:** testicle
3451 **trede-foul:** treader (copulator) of fowls, rooster **aright:** excellent

3432 **thee:** prosper
3435 **jangleth:** chatters
3443 **chaf:** husk, chaff

3457 **sperhauk:** sparrow hawk
3459 **brasile:** a red dye **greyn of Portyngale:** a red dyestuff imported from Portugal

Fragment VIII (Group G)

THE SECOND NUN'S PROLOGUE

The Prologe of the Seconde Nonnes Tale.

The ministre and the norice unto vices,
Which that men clepe in Englissh Ydelnesse,
That porter of the gate is of delices,
To eschue, and by hire contrarie hire oppresse —
That is to seyn, by leveful bisynesse — 5
Wel oghten we to doon al oure entente,
Lest that the feend thurgh ydelnesse us hente.

For he that with his thousand cordes slye
Continuelly us waiteth to biclappe,
Whan he may man in ydelnesse espye, 10
He kan so lightly cache hym in his trappe,
Til that a man be hent right by the lappe,
He nys nat war the feend hath hym in honde.
Wel oghte us werche and ydelnesse withstonde.

And though men dradden nevere for to dye,
Yet seen men wel by resoun, doutelees, 16
That ydelnesse is roten slogardye,
Of which ther nevere comth no good n'encrees;
And syn that slouthe hire holdeth in a lees
Oonly to slepe, and for to ete and drynke, 20
And to devouren al that othere swynke,

And for to putte us fro swich ydelnesse,
That cause is of so greet confusioun,
I have heer doon my feithful bisynesse
After the legende in translacioun 25
Right of thy glorious lif and passioun,
Thou with thy gerland wroght with rose and lilie —
Thee meene I, mayde and martyr, Seint Cecilie.

3 delices: pleasures
9 biclappe: trap suddenly
12 lappe: hem (of a garment)
14 werche: work
15 dradden nevere: were never to dread
17 slogardye: sluggishness, laziness
19 in a lees: on a leash
21 swynke: earn by working
26 passioun: suffering (of a saint)

Invocacio ad Mariam

And thow that flour of virgines art alle,
Of whom that Bernard list so wel to write, 30
To thee at my bigynnyng first I calle;
Thou confort of us wrecches, do me endite
Thy maydens deeth, that wan thurgh hire merite
The eterneel lyf and of the feend victorie,
As man may after reden in hire storie. 35

Thow Mayde and Mooder, doghter of thy Sone,
Thow welle of mercy, synful soules cure,
In whom that God for bountee chees to wone,
Thow humble, and heigh over every creature,
Thow nobledest so ferforth oure nature, 40
That no desdeyn the Makere hadde of kynde
His Sone in blood and flessh to clothe and wynde.

Withinne the cloistre blisful of thy sydis
Took mannes shap the eterneel love and pees,
That of the tryne compas lord and gyde is, 45
Whom erthe and see and hevene out of relees
Ay heryen; and thou, Virgine wemmelees,
Baar of thy body — and dweltest mayden pure —
The Creatour of every creature.

Assembled is in thee magnificence 50
With mercy, goodnesse, and with swich pitee
That thou, that art the sonne of excellence
Nat oonly helpest hem that preyen thee,
But often tyme of thy benygnytee
Ful frely, er that men thyn help biseche, 55
Thou goost biforn and art hir lyves leche.

Invocacio ad Mariam: Invocation to Mary
35 after: hereafter
38 wone: dwell
40 nobledest: ennobled
41 kynde: nature (humankind)
45 That: he who tryne compas: the threefold universe (earth, heaven, sea)
46 out of relees: unceasing
47 heryen: praise wemmelees: without blemish
56 leche: physician

Now help, thow meeke and blisful faire mayde,
Me, flemed wrecche, in this desert of galle;
Thynk on the womman Cananee, that sayde
That whelpes eten somme of the crommes alle
That from hir lordes table been yfalle; 61
And though that I, unworthy sone of Eve,
Be synful, yet accepte my bileve.

And, for that feith is deed withouten werkis,
So for to werken yif me wit and space, 65
That I be quit fro thennes that most derk is!
O thou, that art so fair and ful of grace,
Be myn advocat in that heighe place
Theras withouten ende is songe "Osanne,"
Thow Cristes mooder, doghter deere of Anne!

And of thy light my soule in prison lighte, 71
That troubled is by the contagioun
Of my body, and also by the wighte
Of erthely lust and fals affeccioun;
O havene of refut, O salvacioun 75
Of hem that been in sorwe and in distresse,
Now help, for to my werk I wol me dresse.

Yet preye I yow that reden that I write,
Foryeve me that I do no diligence
This ilke storie subtilly to endite, 80
For bothe have I the wordes and sentence
Of hym that at the seintes reverence
The storie wroot, and folwen hire legende,
And pray yow that ye wole my werk amende.

Interpretacio nominis Cecilie quam ponit Frater Jacobus Januensis in Legenda

First wolde I yow the name of Seint Cecilie
Expowne, as men may in hir storie see. 86
It is to seye in Englissh "hevenes lilie,"
For pure chaastnesse of virginitee;
Or, for she whitnesse hadde of honestee,
And grene of conscience, and of good fame 90
The soote savour, "lilie" was hir name.

Or Cecilie is to seye "the wey to blynde,"
For she ensample was by good techynge;
Or elles Cecile, as I writen fynde,
Is joyned, by a manere conjoynynge 95
Of "hevene" and "Lia"; and heere, in figurynge,
The "hevene" is set for thoght of hoolynesse,
And "Lia" for hire lastynge bisynesse.

Cecile may eek be seyd in this manere,
"Wantynge of blyndnesse," for hir grete light
Of sapience and for hire thewes cleere; 101
Or elles, loo, this maydens name bright
Of "hevene" and "leos" comth, for which by right
Men myghte hire wel "the hevene of peple" calle,
Ensample of goode and wise werkes alle. 105

For "leos" "peple" in Englissh is to seye,
And right as men may in the hevene see
The sonne and moone and sterres every weye,
Right so men goostly in this mayden free
Seyen of feith the magnanymytee, 110
And eek the cleernesse hool of sapience,
And sondry werkes, brighte of excellence.

And right so as thise philosophres write
That hevene is swift and round and eek brennynge,
Right so was faire Cecilie the white 115
Ful swift and bisy evere in good werkynge,
And round and hool in good perseverynge,
And brennynge evere in charite ful brighte.
Now have I yow declared what she highte.

Explicit

58 flemed wrecche: banished exile galle: bitterness
59 womman Cananee: Canaanite woman in the New Testament story (cf. Matt. 15.22)
60 crommes: crumbs
65 space: time, space of time
66 quit: free
73 wighte: weight
75 refut: refuge
82 at: from, out of (reverence for)
Interpretacio, etc.: The interpretation of the name Cecilia that Brother Jacob of Genoa put in the Legend
86 Expowne: expound, explain
89 honestee: chastity
96 in figurynge: symbolically
100 Wantynge: lack
101 thewes: morals
109 goostly: spiritually
110 Seyen: saw
117 perseverynge: constancy
119 highte: was called

THE SECOND NUN'S TALE

Here bigynneth the Seconde Nonnes Tale
of the lyf of Seinte Cecile.

This mayden bright Cecilie, as hir lif seith,
Was comen of Romayns and of noble kynde,
And from hir cradel up fostred in the feith
Of Crist, and bar his gospel in hir mynde.
She nevere cessed, as I writen fynde,
Of hir preyere and God to love and drede,
Bisekynge hym to kepe hir maydenhede.

And whan this mayden sholde unto a man
Ywedded be, that was ful yong of age,
Which that ycleped was Valerian,
And day was comen of hir marriage,
She, ful devout and humble in hir corage,
Under hir robe of gold, that sat ful faire,
Hadde next hire flessh yclad hire in an haire.

And whil the organs maden melodie,
To God allone in herte thus sang she:
"O Lord, my soule and eek my body gye
Unwemmed, lest that I confounded be."
And for his love that dyde upon a tree
Every seconde and thridde day she faste,
Ay biddynge in hire orisons ful faste.

The nyght cam, and to bedde moste she gon
With hire housbonde, as ofte is the manere,
And pryvely to hym she seyde anon,
"O sweete and wel biloved spouse deere,
Ther is a conseil, and ye wolde it heere,
Which that right fayn I wolde unto yow seye,
So that ye swere ye shul it nat biwreye."

Valerian gan faste unto hire swere
That for no cas ne thyng that myghte be,
He sholde nevere mo biwreyen here;
And thanne at erst to hym thus seyde she:
"I have an aungel which that loveth me,
That with greet love, wher so I wake or sleepe,
Is redy ay my body for to kepe.

"And if that he may feelen, out of drede,
That ye me touche, or love in vileynye,
He right anon wol sle yow with the dede,
And in youre yowthe thus ye shullen dye;
And if that ye in clene love me gye,
He wol yow loven as me, for youre clennesse,
And shewen yow his joye and his brightnesse."

Valerian, corrected as God wolde,
Answerde agayn, "If I shal trusten thee,
Lat me that aungel se and hym biholde;
And if that it a verray angel bee,
Thanne wol I doon as thou hast prayed me;
And if thou love another man, for sothe
Right with this swerd thanne wol I sle yow bothe."

Cecile answerde anon-right in this wise:
"If that yow list, the angel shul ye see,
So that ye trowe on Crist and yow baptize.
Gooth forth to Via Apia," quod shee,
"That fro this toun ne stant but miles three,
And to the povre folkes that ther dwelle,
Sey hem right thus, as that I shal yow telle.

"Telle hem that I, Cecile, yow to hem sente
To shewen yow the goode Urban the olde,
For secree nedes and for good entente.
And whan that ye Seint Urban han biholde,
Telle hym the wordes whiche I to yow tolde;
And whan that he hath purged yow fro synne,
Thanne shul ye se that angel, er ye twynne."

Valerian is to the place ygon,
And right as hym was taught by his lernynge,
He foond this hooly olde Urban anon

133 **haire:** hair shirt
136 **gye:** preserve
137 **Unwemmed:** undefiled **confounded:** destroyed
140 **biddynge:** praying
145 **conseil:** secret
147 **biwreye:** betray

160 **clennesse:** purity
172 **Via Apia:** the Appian Way
181 **purged:** cleansed you (by baptism)
182 **twynne:** depart

Among the seintes buryeles lotynge.
And he anon withouten tariynge
Dide his message; and whan that he it tolde,
Urban for joye his handes gan up holde.

The teeris from his eyen leet he falle. 190
"Almyghty Lord, O Jhesu Crist," quod he,
"Sower of chaast conseil, hierde of us alle,
The fruyt of thilke seed of chastitee
That thou hast sowe in Cecile, taak to thee!
Lo, lyk a bisy bee, withouten gile, 195
Thee serveth ay thyn owene thral Cecile.

"For thilke spouse that she took but now
Ful lyk a fiers leoun, she sendeth heere,
As meke as evere was any lomb, to yow!"
And with that word anon ther gan appeere 200
An oold man, clad in white clothes cleere,
That hadde a book with lettre of gold in honde,
And gan bifore Valerian to stonde.

Valerian as deed fil doun for drede 204
Whan he hym saugh, and he up hente hym tho,
And on his book right thus he gan to rede:
"O Lord, o feith, o God, withouten mo,
O Cristendom, and Fader of alle also,
Aboven alle and over alle everywhere."
Thise wordes al with gold ywriten were. 210

Whan this was rad, thanne seyde this olde man,
"Leevestow this thyng or no? Sey ye or nay."
"I leeve al this thyng," quod Valerian,
"For sother thyng than this, I dar wel say,
Under the hevene no wight thynke may." 215
Tho vanysshed this olde man, he nyste where,
And Pope Urban hym cristned right there.

Valerian gooth hoom and fynt Cecilie
Withinne his chambre with an angel stonde.
This angel hadde of roses and of lilie 220
Corones two, the which he bar in honde;
And first to Cecile, as I understonde,
He yaf that oon, and after gan he take
That oother to Valerian, hir make. 224

"With body clene and with unwemmed thoght
Kepeth ay wel thise corones," quod he;
"Fro paradys to yow have I hem broght,
Ne nevere mo ne shal they roten bee,
Ne lese hir soote savour, trusteth me;
Ne nevere wight shal seen hem with his ye, 230
But he be chaast and hate vileynye.

"And thow, Valerian, for thow so soone
Assentedest to good conseil also,
Sey what thee list, and thou shalt han thy boone."
"I have a brother," quod Valerian tho, 235
"That in this world I love no man so.
I pray yow that my brother may han grace
To knowe the trouthe, as I do in this place."

The angel seyde, "God liketh thy requeste,
And bothe with the palm of martirdom 240
Ye shullen come unto his blisful feste."
And with that word Tiburce his brother coom.
And whan that he the savour undernoom,
Which that the roses and the lilies caste,
Withinne his herte he gan to wondre faste, 245

And seyde, "I wondre, this tyme of the yeer,
Whennes that soote savour cometh so
Of rose and lilies that I smelle heer.
For though I hadde hem in myne handes two,
The savour myghte in me no depper go. 250
The sweete smel that in myn herte I fynde
Hath chaunged me al in another kynde."

Valerian seyde: "Two corones han we,
Snow white and rose reed, that shynen cleere,
Whiche that thyne eyen han no myght to see; 255
And as thou smellest hem thurgh my preyere,
So shaltow seen hem, leeve brother deere,
If it so be thou wolt, withouten slouthe,
Bileve aright and knowen verray trouthe."

Tiburce answerde, "Seistow this to me 260
In soothnesse, or in dreem I herkne this?"
"In dremes," quod Valerian, "han we be
Unto this tyme, brother myn, ywis.
But now at erst in trouthe oure dwellyng is."
"How woostow this?" quod Tiburce, "and in what wyse?" 265
Quod Valerian, "That shal I thee devyse.

"The aungel of God hath me the trouthe ytaught

186 **buryeles:** burial places (in the catacombs) **lotynge:** in hiding
192 **hierde:** shepherd
208 **Cristendom:** baptism
214 **sother:** truer
243 **undernoom:** perceived
261 **soothnesse:** truth

Which thou shalt seen, if that thou wolt reneye
The ydoles and be clene, and elles naught."
And of the myracle of thise corones tweye 270
Seint Ambrose in his preface list to seye;
Solempnely this noble doctour deere
Commendeth it, and seith in this manere:

"The palm of martirdom for to receyve,
Seinte Cecile, fulfild of Goddes yifte, 275
The world and eek hire chambre gan she weyve;
Witnesse Tyburces and [Valerians] shrifte,
To whiche God of his bountee wolde shifte
Corones two of floures wel smellynge, 279
And made his angel hem the corones brynge.

"The mayde hath broght thise men to blisse above;
The world hath wist what it is worth, certeyn,
Devocioun of chastitee to love."
Tho shewed hym Cecile al open and pleyn
That alle ydoles nys but a thyng in veyn, 285
For they been dombe, and therto they been deve,
And charged hym his ydoles for to leve.

"Whoso that troweth nat this, a beest he is,"
Quod tho Tiburce, "if that I shal nat lye."
And she gan kisse his brest, that herde this,
And was ful glad he koude trouthe espye. 291
"This day I take thee for myn allye,"
Seyde this blisful faire mayde deere,
And after that she seyde as ye may heere: 294

"Lo, right so as the love of Crist," quod she,
"Made me thy brotheres wyf, right in that wise
Anon for myn allye heer take I thee,
Syn that thou wolt thyne ydoles despise.
Go with thy brother now, and thee baptise,
And make thee clene, so that thou mowe biholde 300
The angels face of which thy brother tolde."

Tiburce answerde and seyde, "Brother deere,
First tel me whider I shal, and to what man?"

268 reneye: deny, renounce
271 preface: preface to the canon of the Mass
272 doctour: Church father
276 weyve: abandon, give up
277 shrifte: confession; see n.
278 shifte: provide
282 worth: worthy
286 deve: deaf
288 a beest: i.e., lacking human understanding
292 allye: kinsman

"To whom?" quod he, "com forth with right good cheere,
I wol thee lede unto the Pope Urban." 305
"Til Urban? Brother myn Valerian,"
Quod tho Tiburce, "woltow me thider lede?
Me thynketh that it were a wonder dede.

"Ne menestow nat Urban," quod he tho,
"That is so ofte dampned to be deed, 310
And woneth in halkes alwey to and fro,
And dar nat ones putte forth his heed?
Men sholde hym brennen in a fyr so reed
If he were founde, or that men myghte hym spye,
And we also, to bere hym compaignye; 315

"And whil we seken thilke divinitee
That is yhid in hevene pryvely,
Algate ybrend in this world shul we be!"
To whom Cecile answerde boldely,
"Men myghten dreden wel and skilfully 320
This lyf to lese, myn owene deere brother,
If this were lyvynge oonly and noon oother.

"But ther is bettre lif in oother place,
That nevere shal be lost, ne drede thee noght,
Which Goddes Sone us tolde thurgh his grace. 325
That Fadres Sone hath alle thyng ywroght,
And al that wroght is with a skilful thoght;
The Goost, that fro the Fader gan procede,
Hath sowled hem, withouten any drede. 329

"By word and by myracle heigh Goddes Sone,
Whan he was in this world, declared heere
That ther was oother lyf ther men may wone."
To whom answerde Tiburce, "O suster deere,
Ne seydestow right now in this manere, 334
Ther nys but o God, lord in soothfastnesse?
And now of three how maystow bere witnesse?"

"That shal I telle," quod she, "er I go.
Right as a man hath sapiences three —
Memorie, engyn, and intellect also —
So in o beynge of divinitee, 340
Thre persones may ther right wel bee."

311 halkes: hiding places
315 we also: us as well
320 skilfully: reasonably
327 skilful: discerning
329 sowled hem: endowed them with souls
332 wone: dwell
338 sapiences three: three mental faculties—memory, imagination (*engyn*), judgment

Tho gan she hym ful bisily to preche
Of Cristes come, and of his peynes teche,

And manye pointes of his passioun;
How Goddes Sone in this world was withholde
To doon mankynde pleyn remissioun, 346
That was ybounde in synne and cares colde;
Al this thyng she unto Tiburce tolde.
And after this Tiburce in good entente
With Valerian to Pope Urban he wente, 350

That thanked God, and with glad herte and light
He cristned hym and made hym in that place
Parfit in his lernynge, Goddes knyght.
And after this Tiburce gat swich grace 354
That every day he saugh in tyme and space
The aungel of God; and every maner boone
That he God axed, it was sped ful soone.

It were ful hard by ordre for to seyn
How manye wondres Jhesus for hem wroghte;
But atte laste, to tellen short and pleyn, 360
The sergeantz of the toun of Rome hem soghte,
And hem biforn Almache, the prefect, broghte,
Which hem apposed, and knew al hire entente,
And to the ymage of Juppiter hem sente,

And seyde, "Whoso wol nat sacrifise, 365
Swape of his heed; this my sentence heer."
Anon thise martirs that I yow devyse,
Oon Maximus, that was an officer
Of the prefectes, and his corniculer,
Hem hente, and whan he forth the seintes ladde, 370
Hymself he weep for pitee that he hadde.

Whan Maximus had herd the seintes loore,
He gat hym of the tormentoures leve,
And ladde hem to his hous withoute moore,
And with hir prechyng, er that it were eve,
They gonnen fro the tormentours to reve, 376
And fro Maxime, and fro his folk echone,
The false feith, to trowe in God allone.

Cecile cam, whan it was woxen nyght, 379
With preestes that hem cristned alle yfeere;
And afterward, whan day was woxen light,
Cecile hem seyde with a ful stedefast cheere,
"Now, Cristes owene knyghtes leeve and deere,
Cast alle awey the werkes of derknesse,
And armeth yow in armure of brightnesse. 385

"Ye han for sothe ydoon a greet bataille,
Youre cours is doon, youre feith han ye conserved.
Gooth to the corone of lif that may nat faille;
The rightful Juge, which that ye han served,
Shal yeve it yow, as ye han it deserved." 390
And whan this thyng was seyd as I devyse,
Men ledde hem forth to doon the sacrefise.

But whan they weren to the place broght
To tellen shortly the conclusioun,
They nolde encense ne sacrifise right noght,
But on hir knees they setten hem adoun 396
With humble herte and sad devocioun,
And losten bothe hir hevedes in the place.
Hir soules wenten to the Kyng of grace.

This Maximus, that saugh this thyng bityde,
With pitous teeris tolde it anonright, 401
That he hir soules saugh to hevene glyde
With aungels ful of cleernesse and of light,
And with his word converted many a wight;
For which Almachius dide hym so bete 405
With whippe of leed til he his lif gan lete.

Cecile hym took and buryed hym anon
By Tiburce and Valerian softely
Withinne hire buriyng place, under the stoon;
And after this, Almachius hastily 410
Bad his ministres fecchen openly
Cecile, so that she myghte in his presence
Doon sacrifice and Juppiter encense.

But they, converted at hir wise loore,
Wepten ful soore, and yaven ful credence 415
Unto hire word, and cryden moore and moore,
"Crist, Goddes Sone, withouten difference,
Is verray God — this is al oure sentence —

343 Cristes come: Christ's coming
345 withholde: compelled to remain
347 colde: painful
361 sergeantz: officers of the law
363 apposed: questioned
366 Swape: strike this = *this is*
367 devyse: tell, narrate
369 corniculer: subordinate officer, assistant to a centurion, prefect, etc.
376 gonnen fro . . . to reve: took away from

398 hevedes: heads
405 dide . . . bete: had him beaten
406 whippe of leed: scourge with leaden balls attached lete: gave up
415 yaven: gave
417 withouten difference: without difference in rank or authority

That hath so good a servant hym to serve.
This with o voys we trowen, thogh we sterve!"

Almachius, that herde of this doynge, 421
Bad fecchen Cecile, that he myghte hire see,
And alderfirst, lo, this was his axynge.
"What maner womman artow?" tho quod he.
"I am a gentil womman born," quod she. 425
"I axe thee," quod he, "though it thee greeve,
Of thy religioun and of thy bileeve."

"Ye han bigonne youre questioun folily,"
Quod she, "that wolden two answeres conclude
In o demande; ye axed lewedly." 430
Almache answerde unto that similitude,
"Of whennes comth thyn answeryng so rude?"
"Of whennes?" quod she, whan that she was freyned,
"Of conscience and of good feith unfeyned."

Almachius seyde, "Ne takestow noon heede
Of my power?" And she answerde hym this: 436
"Youre myght," quod she, "ful litel is to dreede,
For every mortal mannes power nys
But lyk a bladdre ful of wynd, ywys.
For with a nedles poynt, whan it is blowe, 440
May al the boost of it be leyd ful lowe."

"Ful wrongfully bigonne thow," quod he,
"And yet in wrong is thy perseveraunce.
Wostow nat how oure myghty princes free
Han thus comanded and maad ordinaunce 445
That every Cristen wight shal han penaunce
But if that he his Cristendom withseye,
And goon al quit, if he wole it reneye?"

"Yowre princes erren, as youre nobleye dooth,"
Quod tho Cecile, "and with a wood sentence
Ye make us gilty, and it is nat sooth. 451
For ye, that knowen wel oure innocence,
For as muche as we doon a reverence
To Crist, and for we bere a Cristen name,
Ye putte on us a cryme and eek a blame. 455

"But we that knowen thilke name so
For vertuous, we may it nat withseye."

420 with o voys: unanimously
423 alderfirst: first of all
429 conclude: include
431 similitude: statement (comparison)
433 freyned: asked
447 withseye: deny
448 quit: free
455 cryme: accusation

Almache answerde, "Chees oon of thise two:
Do sacrifice, or Cristendom reneye, 459
That thou mowe now escapen by that weye."
At which the hooly blisful faire mayde
Gan for to laughe, and to the juge sayde:

"O juge, confus in thy nycetee,
Woltow that I reneye innocence,
To make me a wikked wight?" quod shee. 465
"Lo, he dissymuleth heere in audience;
He stareth, and woodeth in his advertence!"
To whom Almachius, "Unsely wrecche,
Ne woostow nat how fer my myght may strecche?

"Han noght oure myghty princes to me yiven,
Ye, bothe power and auctoritee 471
To maken folk to dyen or to lyven?
Why spekestow so proudly thanne to me?"
"I speke noght but stedfastly," quod she;
"Nat proudly, for I seye, as for my syde, 475
We haten deedly thilke vice of pryde.

"And if thou drede nat a sooth to heere,
Thanne wol I shewe al openly, by right,
That thou hast maad a ful gret lesyng heere.
Thou seyst thy princes han thee yeven myght
Bothe for to sleen and for to quyken a wight;
Thou, that ne mayst but oonly lyf bireve, 482
Thou hast noon oother power ne no leve.

"But thou mayst seyn thy princes han thee maked
Ministre of deeth; for if thou speke of mo, 485
Thou lyest, for thy power is ful naked."
"Do wey thy booldnesse," seyde Almachius tho,
"And sacrifice to oure goddes er thou go!
I recche nat what wrong that thou me profre,
For I kan suffre it as a philosophre; 490

"But thilke wronges may I nat endure
That thou spekest of oure goddes heere," quod he.
Cecile answerde, "O nyce creature!
Thou seydest no word syn thou spak to me
That I ne knew therwith thy nycetee 495
And that thou were in every maner wise
A lewed officer and a veyn justise.

463 nycetee: foolishness
466 dissymuleth: dissembles
467 woodeth: raves, rages advertence: mind
479 lesyng: lying
481 quyken: give life to
497 veyn: idle, foolish

"Ther lakketh no thyng to thyne outter yen
That thou n'art blynd; for thyng that we seen alle
That it is stoon — that men may wel espyen —
That ilke stoon a god thow wolt it calle. 501
I rede thee, lat thyn hand upon it falle
And taste it wel, and stoon thou shalt it fynde,
Syn that thou seest nat with thyne eyen blynde.

"It is a shame that the peple shal 505
So scorne thee and laughe at thy folye,
For communly men woot it wel overal
That myghty God is in his hevenes hye;
And thise ymages, wel thou mayst espye,
To thee ne to hemself mowen noght profite,
For in effect they been nat worth a myte." 511

Thise wordes and swiche othere seyde she,
And he weex wroth, and bad men sholde hir lede
Hom til hir hous, and "In hire hous," quod he,
"Brenne hire right in a bath of flambes rede."
And as he bad, right so was doon the dede; 516
For in a bath they gonne hire faste shetten,
And nyght and day greet fyr they under betten.

The longe nyght, and eek a day also,
For al the fyr and eek the bathes heete 520
She sat al coold and feelede no wo.
It made hire nat a drope for to sweete.
But in that bath hir lyf she moste lete,
For he Almachius, with ful wikke entente,
To sleen hire in the bath his sonde sente. 525

Thre strokes in the nekke he smoot hire tho,
The tormentour, but for no maner chaunce
He myghte noght smyte al hir nekke atwo;
And for ther was that tyme an ordinaunce
That no man sholde doon man swich penaunce
The ferthe strook to smyten, softe or soore, 531
This tormentour ne dorste do namoore,

But half deed, with hir nekke ycorven there,
He lefte hir lye, and on his wey he went.
The Cristen folk, which that aboute hire were,
With sheetes han the blood ful faire yhent. 536
Thre dayes lyved she in this torment,
And nevere cessed hem the feith to teche
That she hadde fostred; hem she gan to preche,

And hem she yaf hir moebles and hir thyng,
And to the Pope Urban bitook hem tho, 541
And seyde, "I axed this of hevene kyng,
To han respit thre dayes and namo
To recomende to yow, er that I go,
Thise soules, lo, and that I myghte do werche
Heere of myn hous perpetuelly a cherche." 546

Seint Urban with his deknes prively
The body fette and buryed it by nyghte
Among his othere seintes honestly. 549
Hir hous the chirche of Seint Cecilie highte;
Seint Urban halwed it, as he wel myghte;
In which, into this day, in noble wyse,
Men doon to Crist and to his seint servyse.

Heere is ended the Seconde Nonnes Tale.

498–99 **Ther lakketh no thyng . . . blynd:** Your bodily eyes lack nothing to make you blind (i.e., you are completely blind).
511 **myte:** a small Flemish coin of little value
513 **weex:** grew, became
515 **bath:** cauldron
518 **betten:** fed
522 **sweete:** sweat
525 **sonde:** messenger, servant
527 **for no maner chaunce:** in no way
530 **penaunce:** suffering
540 **moebles:** personal property **thyng:** things
541 **bitook:** entrusted
544 **recomende:** commend
545 **do werche:** have my house made (into a church)
547 **deknes:** deacons
551 **halwed:** consecrated

THE CANON'S YEOMAN'S PROLOGUE

The Prologe of the Chanouns Yemannes Tale.

Whan ended was the lyf of Seinte Cecile,
Er we hadde riden fully fyve mile, 555
At Boghtoun under Blee us gan atake
A man that clothed was in clothes blake,
And undernethe he hadde a whyt surplys.
His hakeney, that was al pomely grys,
So swatte that it wonder was to see; 560
It semed as he had priked miles three.
The hors eek that his yeman rood upon
So swatte that unnethe myghte it gon.
Aboute the peytrel stood the foom ful hye;
He was of foom al flekked as a pye. 565
A male tweyfoold on his croper lay;
It semed that he caried lite array.
Al light for somer rood this worthy man,
And in myn herte wondren I bigan
What that he was til that I understood 570
How that his cloke was sowed to his hood,
For which, whan I hadde longe avysed me,
I demed hym som chanoun for to be.
His hat heeng at his bak doun by a laas,
For he hadde riden moore than trot or paas;
He hadde ay priked lik as he were wood. 576
A clote-leef he hadde under his hood
For swoot and for to keep his heed from heete.
But it was joye for to seen hym swete!
His forheed dropped as a stillatorie 580
Were ful of plantayne and of paritorie.
And whan that he was come, he gan to crye,
"God save," quod he, "this joly compaignye!
Faste have I priked," quod he, "for youre sake,
By cause that I wolde yow atake, 585
To riden in this myrie compaignye."

556 Boghtoun under Blee: Boughton under the Blean Forest, about five miles from Canterbury gan atake: overtook
558 surplys: surplice (ecclesiastical gown)
559 hakeney: small riding horse pomely grys: dapple grey
560 swatte: sweated
564 peytrel: horse collar
565 flekked: spotted pye: magpie
566 male tweyfoold: a double bag
568 Al light: lightly clothed
575 paas: walk
577 clote-leef: burdock leaf
578 For swoot: to avoid sweat (running into his eyes)
580 stillatorie: still, vessel for distillation
581 plantayne: the herb plantain paritorie: pellitory (also a herb)
585 atake: overtake

His yeman eek was ful of curteisye,
And seyde, "Sires, now in the morwe-tyde
Out of youre hostelrie I saugh yow ryde, 589
And warned heer my lord and my soverayn,
Which that to ryden with yow is ful fayn
For his desport; he loveth daliaunce."
"Freend, for thy warnyng God yeve thee good chaunce,"
Thanne seyde oure Hoost, "for certein it wolde seme
Thy lord were wys, and so I may wel deme.
He is ful jocunde also, dar I leye! 596
Can he oght telle a myrie tale or tweye,
With which he glade may this compaignye?"
"Who, sire? My lord? Ye, ye, withouten lye,
He kan of murthe and eek of jolitee 600
Nat but ynough; also, sire, trusteth me,
And ye hym knewe as wel as do I,
Ye wolde wondre how wel and craftily
He koude werke, and that in sondry wise.
He hath take on hym many a greet emprise,
Which were ful hard for any that is heere 606
To brynge aboute, but they of hym it leere.
As hoomly as he rit amonges yow,
If ye hym knewe, it wolde be for youre prow.
Ye wolde nat forgoon his aqueyntaunce 610
For muchel good, I dar leye in balaunce
Al that I have in my possessioun.
He is a man of heigh discrecioun;
I warne yow wel, he is a passyng man."
"Wel," quod oure Hoost, "I pray thee, tel me than, 615
Is he a clerk, or noon? Telle what he is."
"Nay, he is gretter than a clerk, ywis,"
Seyde this Yeman, "and in wordes fewe,
Hoost, of his craft somwhat I wol yow shewe.
"I seye, my lord kan swich subtilitee — 620
But al his craft ye may nat wite at me,
And somwhat helpe I yet to his wirkyng —
That al this ground on which we been ridyng,

590 soverayn: master
596 leye: bet
601 Nat but ynough: more than enough
611 leye in balaunce: wager
614 passyng: outstanding
621 wite at: learn from

Til that we come to Caunterbury toun,
He koude al clene turnen up-so-doun, 625
And pave it al of silver and of gold."
And whan this Yeman hadde this tale ytold
Unto oure Hoost, he seyde, *"Benedicitee!*
This thyng is wonder merveillous to me,
Syn that thy lord is of so heigh prudence, 630
By cause of which men sholde hym reverence,
That of his worshipe rekketh he so lite.
His overslope nys nat worth a myte,
As in effect, to hym, so moot I go,
It is al baudy and totore also. 635
Why is thy lord so sluttissh, I the preye,
And is of power bettre clooth to beye,
If that his dede accorde with thy speche?
Telle me that, and that I thee biseche."
"Why?" quod this Yeman, "wherto axe ye me? 640
God help me so, for he shal nevere thee!
(But I wol nat avowe that I seye,
And therfore keepe it secree, I yow preye.)
He is to wys, in feith, as I bileeve.
That that is overdoon, it wol nat preeve 645
Aright, as clerkes seyn; it is a vice.
Wherfore in that I holde hym lewed and nyce.
For whan a man hath over-greet a wit,
Ful oft hym happeth to mysusen it. 649
So dooth my lord, and that me greveth soore;
God it amende! I kan sey yow namoore."
"Ther-of no fors, good Yeman," quod oure Hoost;
"Syn of the konnyng of thy lord thow woost,
Telle how he dooth, I pray thee hertely,
Syn that he is so crafty and so sly. 655
Where dwelle ye, if it to telle be?"
"In the suburbes of a toun," quod he,
"Lurkynge in hernes and in lanes blynde,
Whereas thise robbours and thise theves by kynde
Holden hir pryvee fereful residence, 660
As they that dar nat shewen hir presence;
So faren we, if I shal seye the sothe."
"Now," quod oure Hoost, "yit lat me talke to the.
Why artow so discoloured of thy face?"
"Peter!" quod he, "God yeve it harde grace,
I am so used in the fyr to blowe 666
That it hath chaunged my colour, I trowe.
I am nat wont in no mirour to prie,
But swynke soore and lerne multiplie.
We blondren evere and pouren in the fir, 670
And for al that we faille of oure desir,
For evere we lakken oure conclusioun.
To muchel folk we doon illusioun,
And borwe gold, be it a pound or two,
Or ten, or twelve, or manye sommes mo, 675
And make hem wenen, at the leeste weye,
That of a pound we koude make tweye.
Yet is it fals, but ay we han good hope
It for to doon, and after it we grope.
But that science is so fer us biforn, 680
We mowen nat, although we hadden it sworn,
It overtake, it slit awey so faste.
It wole us maken beggers atte laste."
Whil this Yeman was thus in his talkyng,
This Chanoun drough hym neer and herde al thyng 685
Which this Yeman spak, for suspecioun
Of mennes speche evere hadde this Chanoun.
For Catoun seith that he that gilty is
Demeth alle thyng be spoke of hym, ywis.
That was the cause he gan so ny hym drawe
To his Yeman, to herknen al his sawe. 691
And thus he seyde unto his Yeman tho:
"Hoold thou thy pees and spek no wordes mo,
For if thou do, thou shalt it deere abye. 694
Thou sclaundrest me heere in this compaignye,
And eek discoverest that thou sholdest hyde."
"Ye," quod oure Hoost, "telle on, what so bityde.
Of al his thretyng rekke nat a myte!"
"In feith," quod he, "namoore I do but lyte."
And whan this Chanon saugh it wolde nat bee, 700
But his Yeman wolde telle his pryvetee,
He fledde awey for verray sorwe and shame.
"A!" quod the Yeman, "heere shal arise game;
Al that I kan anon now wol I telle.

625 **up-so-doun:** topsy turvy
632 **worshipe:** honor
633 **overslope:** outer garment, cassock
634 **As in effect, to hym:** Really, for him; cf. 847.
635 **baudy:** dirty **totore:** tattered
636 **sluttissh:** slovenly
645 **overdoon:** overdone
645–46 **preeve Aright:** turn out right, succeed
648 **over-greet:** excessive
655 **sly:** expert
658 **hernes:** hiding places
665 **Peter!:** by St. Peter (I swear)! **harde grace:** misfortune
668 **prie:** look, peer
669 **multiplie:** transmute (base metals to gold and silver)
670 **blondren:** blunder **pouren:** stare, pore
681 **although we hadden it sworn:** though we had sworn the contrary
682 **slit** = *slideth,* slips away
688 **Catoun:** Cato
691 **sawe:** speech
696 **discoverest that:** reveal what
698 **thretyng:** threatening

Syn he is goon, the foule feend hym quelle! 705
For nevere heerafter wol I with hym meete
For peny ne for pound, I yow biheete.
He that me broghte first unto that game,
Er that he dye, sorwe have he and shame!
For it is ernest to me, by my feith; 710
That feele I wel, what so any man seith.
And yet, for al my smert and al my grief,
For al my sorwe, labour, and meschief,
I koude nevere leve it in no wise.
Now wolde God my wit myghte suffise 715
To tellen al that longeth to that art!
But nathelees yow wol I tellen part.
Syn that my lord is goon, I wol nat spare;
Swich thyng as that I knowe, I wol declare.

Heere endeth the Prologe of the Chanouns Yemannes Tale.

THE CANON'S YEOMAN'S TALE

Heere bigynneth the Chanouns Yeman his Tale.

[*Prima Pars*]

With this Chanoun I dwelt have seven yeer,
And of his science am I never the neer. 721
Al that I hadde I have lost therby,
And, God woot, so hath many mo than I.
Ther I was wont to be right fressh and gay
Of clothyng and of oother good array, 725
Now may I were an hose upon myn heed;
And wher my colour was bothe fressh and reed,
Now is it wan and of a leden hewe —
Whoso it useth, soore shal he rewe! —
And of my swynk yet blered is myn ye. 730
Lo, which avantage is to multiplie!
That slidynge science hath me maad so bare
That I have no good, wher that evere I fare;
And yet I am endetted so therby
Of gold that I have borwed, trewely, 735
That whil I lyve I shal it quite nevere.
Lat every man be war by me for evere!
What maner man that casteth hym therto,
If he continue, I holde his thrift ydo.
For so helpe me God, therby shal he nat wynne, 740
But empte his purs and make his wittes thynne.
And whan he thurgh his madnesse and folye
Hath lost his owene good thurgh jupartye,
Thanne he exciteth oother folk therto,
To lesen hir good as he hymself hath do. 745
For unto shrewes joye it is and ese
To have hir felawes in peyne and disese.
Thus was I ones lerned of a clerk.
Of that no charge; I wol speke of oure werk.
Whan we been there as we shul exercise 750
Oure elvysshe craft, we semen wonder wise,
Oure termes been so clergial and so queynte.
I blowe the fir til that myn herte feynte.
What sholde I tellen ech proporcion
Of thynges whiche that we werche upon — 755
As on fyve or sixe ounces, may wel be,
Of silver, or som oother quantitee —
And bisye me to telle yow the names
Of orpyment, brent bones, iren squames,
That into poudre grounden been ful smal; 760
And in an erthen pot how put is al,
And salt yput in, and also papeer,
Biforn thise poudres that I speke of heer;
And wel ycovered with a lampe of glas;
And of muche oother thyng which that ther was; 765
And of the pot and glasses enlutyng

705 **quelle:** kill
707 **biheete:** promise

721 **never the neer:** no closer to the goal, no better off
728 **leden:** lead-colored
730 **blered is myn ye:** my eye is bleary, I have been deluded
732 **bare:** impoverished
734 **endetted:** in debt
738 **casteth hym:** applies himself
739 **thrift ydo:** prosperity, or welfare, done for

743 **jupartye:** taking risks
749 **no charge:** no matter
751 **elvysshe:** strange, mysterious
752 **clergial:** scholarly, learned **queynte:** complex
753 **feynte:** grows faint
759 **orpyment:** arsenic trisulphide (auripigmentum); the scientific terms in this passage are discussed in the Expl. Notes. **squames:** flakes, scales
762 **papeer:** pepper
764 **lampe:** lamp-shaped vessel
766 **enlutyng:** sealing with "lute," clay

That of the eyr myghte passe out nothyng;
And of the esy fir, and smart also,
Which that was maad, and of the care and wo
That we hadde in oure matires sublymyng, 770
And in amalgamyng and calcenyng
Of quyksilver, yclept mercurie crude?
For alle oure sleightes we kan nat conclude.
Oure orpyment and sublymed mercurie,
Oure grounden litarge eek on the porfurie, 775
Of ech of thise of ounces a certeyn —
Noght helpeth us; oure labour is in veyn.
Ne eek oure spirites ascencioun,
Ne oure materes that lyen al fix adoun,
Mowe in oure werkyng no thyng us availle, 780
For lost is al oure labour and travaille;
And al the cost, a twenty devel waye,
Is lost also, which we upon it laye.
  Ther is also ful many another thyng
That is unto oure craft apertenyng. 785
Though I by ordre hem nat reherce kan,
By cause that I am a lewed man,
Yet wol I telle hem as they come to mynde,
Thogh I ne kan nat sette hem in hir kynde:
As boole armonyak, verdegrees, boras, 790
And sondry vessels maad of erthe and glas,
Oure urynales and oure descensories,
Violes, crosletz, and sublymatories,
Cucurbites and alambikes eek,
And othere swiche, deere ynough a leek — 795
Nat nedeth it for to reherce hem alle —
Watres rubifiyng, and boles galle,
Arsenyk, sal armonyak, and brymstoon;
And herbes koude I telle eek many oon,
As egremoyne, valerian, and lunarie, 800
And othere swiche, if that me liste tarie;
Oure lampes brennyng bothe nyght and day,
To brynge aboute oure purpos, if we may;
Oure fourneys eek of calcinacioun,
And of watres albificacioun; 805
Unslekked lym, chalk, and gleyre of an ey,
Poudres diverse, asshes, donge, pisse, and cley,
Cered pokkets, sal peter, vitriole,
And diverse fires maad of wode and cole;
Sal tartre, alkaly, and sal preparat, 810
And combust materes and coagulat;
Cley maad with hors or mannes heer, and oille
Of tartre, alum glas, berme, wort, and argoille,
Resalgar, and oure materes enbibyng,
And eek of oure materes encorporyng, 815
And of oure silver citrinacioun,
Oure cementyng and fermentacioun,
Oure yngottes, testes, and many mo.
  I wol yow telle, as was me taught also,
The foure spirites and the bodies sevene, 820
By ordre, as ofte I herde my lord hem nevene.
  The firste spirit quyksilver called is,
The seconde orpyment, the thridde, ywis,
Sal armonyak, and the ferthe brymstoon.
The bodyes sevene eek, lo, hem heere anoon:
Sol gold is, and Luna silver we threpe, 826
Mars iren, Mercurie quyksilver we clepe,
Saturnus leed, and Juppiter is tyn,
And Venus coper, by my fader kyn!

768 **smart:** brisk
770 **sublymyng:** sublimation, purifying
771 **amalgamyng:** blending, usually of quicksilver with another metal **calcenyng:** calcination, reducing a substance to powder by heat
772 **crude:** raw, unrefined
773 **conclude:** succeed
774 **orpyment:** arsenic trisulphide **sublymed:** purified
775 **litarge:** litharge, lead monoxide **porfurie:** marble, porphyry (used as a mortar)
776 **a certeyn:** a certain amount of
778 **spirites ascencioun:** vaporization of volatile spirits
779 **fix:** stable, nonvolatile **adoun:** below, in the bottom of the flask after the vaporization
790 **boole armonyak:** Armenian bole (a styptic) **verdegrees:** verdigris, copper acetate (a greenish pigment) **boras:** borax
792 **urynales:** glass flasks **descensories:** retorts, vessels for distillation
793 **Violes:** vials **crosletz:** crucibles **sublymatories:** vessels used for sublimation
794 **Cucurbites:** gourd-shaped vessels (for distillation) **alambikes:** alembics
795 **deere ynough a leek:** expensive enough at the price of a leek (i.e., worthless)
797 **Watres rubifiyng:** liquids that cause reddening **boles galle:** bull's gall
798 **Arsenyk:** an arsenic compound (orpiment?) **sal armonyak:** sal ammoniac, ammonium chloride **brymstoon:** sulphur
800 **egremoyne:** agrimony, an aromatic herb **valerian:** valerian, a medicinal herb **lunarie:** moonwort (Botrychium lunaria)
804 **fourneys:** furnace **calcinacioun:** calcination (reducing a substance to powder)
805 **watres albificacioun:** whitening by liquids (?); see n.
806 **Unslekked lym:** unslaked lime (a caustic) **gleyre of an ey:** white of an egg
807 **cley:** clay
808 **Cered pokkets:** waxed (waterproofed) small bags **sal peter:** saltpeter, potassium nitrate **vitriole:** sulphate of metal, usually iron or copper
809 **wode and cole:** wood and coal
810 **Sal tartre:** *argoille,* potassium carbonate **alkaly:** *sal alkaly,* an alkaline from ashes of plants **sal preparat:** purified salt
811 **combust:** burnt, calcined **coagulat:** solidified, cohesive
812–13 **oille Of tartre:** cream of tartar
813 **alum glas:** potash alum, crystallized alum **berme:** barm, brewer's yeast **wort:** unfermented beer **argoille:** argol, tartar from fermenting wine, a crude potassium bitartrate
814 **Resalgar:** arsenic disulphide (ratsbane) **enbibyng:** absorption of fluid, soaking
815 **encorporyng:** forming an amalgam or compound
816 **citrinacioun:** turning to a lemon color
817 **cementyng:** combining, fusing by heat **fermentacioun:** fermenting, a process causing effervescence
818 **yngottes:** ingots, molds for casting metal **testes:** cupels, crucibles for trying gold or silver
820 **spirites:** volatile substances, substances easily vaporized by heat **bodies:** metals
821 **nevene:** name
824 **Sal armonyak:** sal ammoniac
826 **Sol:** the sun **Luna:** the moon **threpe:** assert, affirm positively

This cursed craft whoso wole excercise, 830
He shal no good han that hym may suffise,
For al the good he spendeth theraboute
He lese shal; therof have I no doute.
Whoso that listeth outen his folie,
Lat hym come forth and lerne multiplie; 835
And every man that oght hath in his cofre,
Lat hym appiere and wexe a philosophre.
Ascaunce that craft is so light to leere?
Nay, nay, God woot, al be he monk or frere,
Preest or chanoun, or any oother wyght, 840
Though he sitte at his book bothe day and nyght
In lernyng of this elvysshe nyce loore,
Al is in veyn, and parde, muchel moore.
To lerne a lewed man this subtiltee —
Fy! Spek nat therof, for it wol nat bee. 845
And konne he letterure or konne he noon,
As in effect, he shal fynde it al oon.
For bothe two, by my savacioun,
Concluden in multiplicacioun
Ylike wel, whan they han al ydo; 850
This is to seyn, they faillen bothe two.
Yet forgat I to maken rehersaille
Of watres corosif, and of lymaille,
And of bodies mollificacioun,
And also of hire induracioun; 855
Oilles, ablucions, and metal fusible —
To tellen al wolde passen any bible
That owher is; wherfore, as for the beste,
Of alle thise names now wol I me reste,
For, as I trowe, I have yow toold ynowe 860
To reyse a feend, al looke he never so rowe.
A! Nay! Lat be; the philosophres stoon,
Elixer clept, we sechen faste echoon;
For hadde we hym, thanne were we siker ynow.
But unto God of hevene I make avow, 865
For al oure craft, whan we han al ydo,
And al oure sleighte, he wol nat come us to.
He hath ymaad us spenden muchel good,
For sorwe of which almoost we wexen wood,

834 outen: make public
837 appiere: appear wexe: become philosophre: alchemist
838 Ascaunce: do you imagine (literally, *as if*) light to leere: easy to learn
842 elvysshe: strange, mysterious
846 letterure: book learning
849 multiplicacioun: transmutation
852 rehersaille: enumeration
853 corosif: acidic lymaille: metal filings
854 mollificacioun: softening
855 induracioun: hardening
856 ablucions: cleansings fusible: capable of being melted
857 bible: book
858 owher: anywhere
861 rowe: rough, ugly
863 Elixer: substance that transmutes base metals to gold or silver, the "philosophers' stone"

But that good hope crepeth in oure herte, 870
Supposynge evere, though we sore smerte,
To be releeved by hym afterward.
Swich supposyng and hope is sharp and hard;
I warne yow wel, it is to seken evere. 874
That futur temps hath maad men to dissevere,
In trust therof, from al that evere they hadde.
Yet of that art they kan nat wexen sadde,
For unto hem it is a bitter sweete —
So semeth it — for nadde they but a sheete
Which that they myghte wrappe hem inne a-nyght, 880
And a brat to walken inne by daylyght,
They wolde hem selle and spenden on this craft.
They kan nat stynte til no thyng be laft.
And everemoore, where that evere they goon,
Men may hem knowe by smel of brymstoon.
For al the world they stynken as a goot; 886
Hir savour is so rammyssh and so hoot
That though a man from hem a mile be,
The savour wole infecte hym, trusteth me.
Lo, thus by smellyng and threedbare array,
If that men liste, this folk they knowe may. 891
And if a man wole aske hem pryvely
Why they been clothed so unthriftily,
They right anon wol rownen in his ere,
And seyn that if that they espied were, 895
Men wolde hem slee by cause of hir science.
Lo, thus this folk bitrayen innocence!
Passe over this; I go my tale unto.
Er that the pot be on the fir ydo,
Of metals with a certeyn quantitee, 900
My lord hem tempreth, and no man but he —
Now he is goon, I dar seyn boldely —
For, as men seyn, he kan doon craftily.
Algate I woot wel he hath swich a name;
And yet ful ofte he renneth in a blame. 905
And wite ye how? Ful ofte it happeth so
The pot tobreketh, and farewel, al is go!
Thise metals been of so greet violence 908
Oure walles mowe nat make hem resistence,
But if they weren wroght of lym and stoon;
They percen so, and thurgh the wal they goon.
And somme of hem synken into the ground —
Thus han we lost by tymes many a pound —

874 to seken evere: always to be sought; i.e., never to be found
875 temps: tense dissevere: separate, be separated
877 wexen sadde: attain stability, be satisfied
881 brat: cloak of rough cloth
887 rammyssh: like a ram, strong (in odor)
889 infecte: pollute
893 unthriftily: poorly
901 tempreth: mixes
907 tobreketh: shatters
913 by tymes: quickly, straightway

And somme are scatered al the floor aboute;
Somme lepe into the roof. Withouten doute,
Though that the feend noght in oure sighte hym shewe, 916
I trowe he with us be, that ilke shrewe!
In helle, where that he is lord and sire,
Nis ther moore wo, ne moore rancour ne ire.
Whan that oure pot is broke, as I have sayd, 920
Every man chit and halt hym yvele apayd.
Somme seyde it was long on the fir makyng;
Somme seyde nay, it was on the blowyng —
Thanne was I fered, for that was myn office.
"Straw!" quod the thridde, "ye been lewed and nyce. 925
It was nat tempred as it oghte be."
"Nay," quod the fourthe, "stynt and herkne me.
By cause oure fir ne was nat maad of beech,
That is the cause and oother noon, so thee'ch!"
I kan nat telle wheron it was long, 930
But wel I woot greet strif is us among.
"What," quod my lord, "ther is namoore to doone;
Of thise perils I wol be war eftsoone.
I am right siker that the pot was crased.
Be as be may, be ye no thyng amased; 935
As usage is, lat swepe the floor as swithe,
Plukke up youre hertes and beeth glad and blithe."
The mullok on an heep ysweped was,
And on the floor ycast a canevas,
And al this mullok in a syve ythrowe, 940
And sifted, and ypiked many a throwe.
"Pardee," quod oon, "somwhat of oure metal
Yet is ther heere, though that we han nat al.
And though this thyng myshapped have as now,
Another tyme it may be well ynow. 945
Us moste putte oure good in aventure.
A marchant, pardee, may nat ay endure,
Trusteth me wel, in his prosperitee.
Somtyme his good is drowned in the see, 949
And somtyme comth it sauf unto the londe."

"Pees!" quod my lord, "the nexte tyme I wol fonde
To bryngen oure craft al in another plite,
And but I do, sires, lat me han the wite.
Ther was defaute in somwhat, wel I woot."
Another seyde the fir was over-hoot — 955
But, be it hoot or coold, I dar seye this,
That we concluden everemoore amys.
We faille of that which that we wolden have,
And in oure madnesse everemoore we rave.
And whan we been togidres everichoon, 960
Every man semeth a Salomon.
But al thyng which that shineth as the gold
Nis nat gold, as that I have herd told;
Ne every appul that is fair at eye
Ne is nat good, what so men clappe or crye.
Right so, lo, fareth it amonges us: 966
He that semeth the wiseste, by Jhesus,
Is moost fool, whan it cometh to the preef;
And he that semeth trewest is a theef.
That shul ye knowe, er that I fro yow wende,
By that I of my tale have maad an ende. 971

Explicit prima pars.

Et sequitur pars secunda.

Ther is a chanoun of religioun
Amonges us, wolde infecte al a toun,
Thogh it as greet were as was Nynyvee,
Rome, Alisaundre, Troye, and othere three.
His sleightes and his infinite falsnesse 976
Ther koude no man writen, as I gesse,
Though that he myghte lyve a thousand yeer.
In al this world of falshede nis his peer,
For in his termes he wol hym so wynde, 980
And speke his wordes in so sly a kynde,
Whanne he commune shal with any wight,
That he wol make hym doten anonright,
But it a feend be, as hymselven is.
Ful many a man hath he bigiled er this, 985
And wole, if that he lyve may a while;
And yet men ride and goon ful many a mile
Hym for to seke and have his aqueyntaunce,
Noght knowynge of his false governaunce.

921 **chit** = *chideth,* chides **halt hym yvele apayd:** considers himself ill-used (*halt* = *holdeth,* holds)
922 **long on:** owing to
926 **tempred:** mixed
929 **so thee'ch** = *so thee ich,* as I may prosper
930 **wheron it was long:** what caused it
934 **crased:** cracked
935 **amased:** dismayed
938 **mullok:** rubbish **ysweped:** swept
939 **canevas:** canvas
941 **ypiked:** picked through, sorted
944 **myshapped have:** may have turned out badly
952 **plite:** condition
953 **wite:** blame
964 **at eye:** to look at
Explicit, *etc.*: Here ends the first part.
Et sequitur, *etc.*: Here follows the second part.
972 **chanoun of religioun:** a canon regular (not a secular canon of a cathedral or large church)
980 **hym so wynde:** so wrap himself
981 **sly a kynde:** expert a manner
982 **commune:** have conversation with
983 **doten:** behave foolishly
989 **governaunce:** behavior

And if yow list to yeve me audience, 990
I wol it tellen heere in youre presence.
But worshipful chanons religious,
Ne demeth nat that I sclaundre youre hous,
Although that my tale of a chanoun bee.
Of every ordre som shrewe is, pardee, 995
And God forbede that al a compaignye
Sholde rewe o singuleer mannes folye.
To sclaundre yow is no thyng myn entente,
But to correcten that is mys I mente.
This tale was nat oonly toold for yow, 1000
But eek for othere mo; ye woot wel how
That among Cristes apostelles twelve
Ther nas no traytour but Judas hymselve.
Thanne why sholde al the remenant have a blame
That giltlees were? By yow I seye the same,
Save oonly this, if ye wol herkne me: 1006
If any Judas in youre covent be,
Remoeveth hym bitymes, I yow rede,
If shame or los may causen any drede.
And beeth no thyng displesed, I yow preye,
But in this cas herkneth what I shal seye. 1011
In Londoun was a preest, an annueleer,
That therinne dwelled hadde many a yeer,
Which was so plesaunt and so servysable
Unto the wyf, where as he was at table, 1015
That she wolde suffre hym no thyng for to paye
For bord ne clothyng, wente he never so gaye,
And spendyng silver hadde he right ynow.
Therof no fors; I wol procede as now,
And telle forth my tale of the chanoun 1020
That broghte this preest to confusioun.
This false chanon cam upon a day
Unto this preestes chambre, wher he lay,
Bisechynge hym to lene hym a certeyn
Of gold, and he wolde quite it hym ageyn. 1025
"Leene me a marc," quod he, "but dayes three,
And at my day I wol it quiten thee.
And if so be that thow me fynde fals,
Another day do hange me by the hals!"
This preest hym took a marc, and that as swithe, 1030
And this chanoun hym thanked ofte sithe,
And took his leve, and wente forth his weye,
And at the thridde day broghte his moneye,
And to the preest he took his gold agayn,
Wherof this preest was wonder glad and fayn. 1035
"Certes," quod he, "no thyng anoyeth me
To lene a man a noble, or two, or thre,
Or what thyng were in my possessioun,
Whan he so trewe is of condicioun
That in no wise he breke wole his day; 1040
To swich a man I kan never seye nay."
"What!" quod this chanoun, "sholde I be untrewe?
Nay, that were thyng yfallen al of newe.
Trouthe is a thyng that I wol evere kepe
Unto that day in which that I shal crepe 1045
Into my grave, and ellis God forbede.
Bileveth this as siker as your Crede.
God thanke I, and in good tyme be it sayd,
That ther was nevere man yet yvele apayd
For gold ne silver that he to me lente, 1050
Ne nevere falshede in myn herte I mente.
And sire," quod he, "now of my pryvetee,
Syn ye so goodlich han been unto me,
And kithed to me so greet gentillesse,
Somwhat to quyte with youre kyndenesse 1055
I wol yow shewe, and if yow list to leere,
I wol yow teche pleynly the manere
How I kan werken in philosophie.
Taketh good heede; ye shul wel seen at ye
That I wol doon a maistrie er I go." 1060
"Ye," quod the preest, "ye, sire, and wol ye so?
Marie, therof I pray yow hertely."
"At youre comandement, sire, trewely,"
Quod the chanoun, "and ellis God forbeede!"
Loo, how this theef koude his service beede!
Ful sooth it is that swich profred servyse 1066
Stynketh, as witnessen thise olde wyse,
And that ful soone I wol it verifie
In this chanoun, roote of al trecherie, 1069
That everemoore delit hath and gladnesse —
Swiche feendly thoghtes in his herte impresse —
How Cristes peple he may to meschief brynge.
God kepe us from his false dissymulynge!

997 **singuleer:** individual
999 **mys:** amiss
1005 **By:** concerning
1012 **annueleer:** chantry priest, who sings masses for the dead
1014 **plesaunt:** pleasing **servysable:** willing to serve, attentive
1017 **wente he never so gaye:** however well he dressed
1024 **a certeyn:** a certain amount
1026 **marc:** mark, two-thirds of a pound
1029 **hals:** neck
1030 **as swithe:** immediately
1034 **took . . . agayn:** gave back
1040 **breke . . . his day:** fail to pay on the day he promised
1043 **al of newe:** for the first time
1048 **in good tyme be it sayd:** fortunately it may be said
1054 **kithed:** shown
1055 **to quyte with:** with which to requite
1058 **philosophie:** alchemy
1060 **doon a maistrie:** perform a wonderful work requiring great knowledge
1062 **Marie:** by St. Mary
1066 **profred servyse:** favors not asked for

Noght wiste this preest with whom that he delte,
Ne of his harm comynge he no thyng felte.
O sely preest! O sely innocent! 1076
With coveitise anon thou shalt be blent!
O gracelees, ful blynd is thy conceite,
No thyng ne artow war of the deceite
Which that this fox yshapen hath to thee! 1080
His wily wrenches thou ne mayst nat flee.
Wherfore, to go to the conclusion,
That refereth to thy confusion,
Unhappy man, anon I wol me hye
To tellen thyn unwit and thy folye, 1085
And eek the falsnesse of that oother wrecche,
As ferforth as that my konnyng wol strecche.
This chanon was my lord, ye wolden weene?
Sire hoost, in feith, and by the hevenes queene,
It was another chanoun, and nat hee, 1090
That kan an hundred foold moore subtiltee.
He hath bitrayed folkes many tyme;
Of his falsnesse it dulleth me to ryme.
Evere whan that I speke of his falshede,
For shame of hym my chekes wexen rede. 1095
Algates they bigynnen for to glowe,
For reednesse have I noon, right wel I knowe,
In my visage; for fumes diverse
Of metals, whiche ye han herd me reherce,
Consumed and wasted han my reednesse. 1100
Now taak heede of this chanons cursednesse!
"Sire," quod he to the preest, "lat youre man gon
For quyksilver, that we it hadde anon;
And lat hym bryngen ounces two or three;
And whan he comth, as faste shal ye see 1105
A wonder thyng, which ye saugh nevere er this."
"Sire," quod the preest, "it shal be doon, ywis."
He bad his servant fecchen hym this thyng,
And he al redy was at his biddyng,
And wente hym forth, and cam anon agayn
With this quyksilver, shortly for to sayn, 1111
And took thise ounces thre to the chanoun;
And he hem leyde faire and wel adoun,
And bad the servant coles for to brynge,
That he anon myghte go to his werkynge. 1115

The coles right anon weren yfet,
And this chanoun took out a crosselet
Of his bosom, and shewed it to the preest.
"This instrument," quod he, "which that thou seest, 1119
Taak in thyn hand, and put thyself therinne
Of this quyksilver an ounce, and heer bigynne,
In name of Crist, to wexe a philosofre.
Ther been ful fewe to whiche I wolde profre
To shewen hem thus muche of my science.
For ye shul seen heer, by experience, 1125
That this quyksilver I wol mortifye
Right in youre sighte anon, withouten lye,
And make it as good silver and as fyn
As ther is any in youre purs or myn,
Or elleswhere, and make it malliable; 1130
And elles holdeth me fals and unable
Amonges folk for evere to appeere.
I have a poudre heer, that coste me deere,
Shal make al good, for it is cause of al 1134
My konnyng, which that I yow shewen shal.
Voyde youre man, and lat hym be theroute,
And shette the dore, whils we been aboute
Oure pryvetee, that no man us espie,
Whils that we werke in this philosophie."
Al as he bad fulfilled was in dede. 1140
This ilke servant anonright out yede,
And his maister shette the dore anon,
And to hire labour spedily they gon.
This preest, at this cursed chanons biddyng,
Upon the fir anon sette this thyng, 1145
And blew the fir, and bisyed hym ful faste.
And this chanoun into the crosselet caste
A poudre, noot I wherof that it was
Ymaad, outher of chalk, outher of glas,
Or somwhat elles, was nat worth a flye, 1150
To blynde with this preest; and bad hym hye
The coles for to couchen al above
The crosselet. "For in tokenyng I thee love,"
Quod this chanoun, "thyne owene handes two
Shul werche al thyng which that shal heer be do." 1155
"Graunt mercy," quod the preest, and was ful glad,
And couched coles as the chanoun bad.
And while he bisy was, this feendly wrecche,

1077 **blent:** blinded, tricked
1078 **gracelees:** lacking (God's) favor, unfortunate **conceite:** mind
1081 **wrenches:** tricks
1083 **refereth:** applies
1084 **Unhappy:** unfortunate
1085 **unwit:** lack of prudence
1088 **weene:** suppose (this)
1096 **Algates:** at least

1117 **crosselet:** crucible
1126 **mortifye:** harden, make nonvolatile
1131 **unable:** worthless
1136 **Voyde:** send away
1152 **couchen:** arrange
1153 **in tokenyng:** as a sign that
1156 **Graunt mercy:** many thanks

This false chanoun — the foule feend hym fecche! —
Out of his bosom took a bechen cole, 1160
In which ful subtilly was maad an hole,
And therinne put was of silver lemaille
An ounce, and stopped was, withouten faille,
This hole with wex, to kepe the lemaille in.
And understondeth that this false gyn 1165
Was nat maad ther, but it was maad bifore;
And othere thynges I shal tellen moore
Herafterward, whiche that he with hym broghte.
Er he cam there, hym to bigile he thoghte,
And so he dide, er that they wente atwynne;
Til he had terved hym, koude he nat blynne.
It dulleth me whan that I of hym speke. 1172
On his falshede fayn wolde I me wreke,
If I wiste how, but he is heere and there;
He is so variaunt, he abit nowhere. 1175
But taketh heede now, sires, for Goddes love!
He took his cole of which I spak above,
And in his hand he baar it pryvely.
And whiles the preest couched bisily
The coles, as I tolde yow er this, 1180
This chanoun seyde, "Freend, ye doon amys.
This is nat couched as it oghte be;
But soone I shal amenden it," quod he.
"Now lat me medle therwith but a while,
For of yow have I pitee, by Seint Gile! 1185
Ye been right hoot; I se wel how ye swete.
Have heere a clooth, and wipe awey the wete."
And whiles that the preest wiped his face,
This chanoun took his cole — with sory grace! —
And leyde it above upon the myddeward 1190
Of the crosselet, and blew wel afterward
Til that the coles gonne faste brenne.
"Now yeve us drynke," quod the chanoun thenne;
"As swithe al shal be wel, I undertake.
Sitte we doun, and lat us myrie make." 1195
And whan that this chanounes bechen cole
Was brent, al the lemaille out of the hole
Into the crosselet fil anon adoun;
And so it moste nedes, by resoun,
Syn it so evene above couched was. 1200

1160 bechen cole: charcoal made of beechwood
1162 lemaille: metal filings
1165 gyn: contrivance
1170 atwynne: apart
1171 terved: skinned (robbed him of everything) blynne: cease
1175 variaunt: changeable abit = *abideth*, remains
1179 couched: arranged
1189 with sory grace!: bad luck to him!
1190 myddeward: middle

But therof wiste the preest nothyng, alas!
He demed alle the coles yliche good,
For of that sleighte he nothyng understood.
And whan this alkamystre saugh his tyme,
"Ris up," quod he, "sire preest, and stondeth by me; 1205
And for I woot wel ingot have ye noon,
Gooth, walketh forth, and bryngeth a chalk stoon;
For I wol make it of the same shap
That is an ingot, if I may han hap.
And bryngeth eek with yow a bolle or a panne
Ful of water, and ye shul se wel thanne 1211
How that oure bisynesse shal thryve and preeve.
And yet, for ye shul han no mysbileeve
Ne wrong conceite of me in youre absence,
I ne wol nat been out of youre presence, 1215
But go with yow and come with yow ageyn."
The chambre dore, shortly for to seyn,
They opened and shette, and wente hir weye.
And forth with hem they carieden the keye,
And coome agayn withouten any delay. 1220
What sholde I tarien al the longe day?
He took the chalk and shoop it in the wise
Of an ingot, as I shal yow devyse.
I seye, he took out of his owene sleeve 1224
A teyne of silver — yvele moot he cheeve! —
Which that ne was nat but an ounce of weighte.
And taaketh heede now of his cursed sleighte!
He shoop his ingot in lengthe and in breede
Of this teyne, withouten any drede,
So slyly that the preest it nat espide, 1230
And in his sleve agayn he gan it hide,
And fro the fir he took up his mateere,
And in th'yngot putte it with myrie cheere,
And in the water-vessel he it caste,
Whan that hym luste, and bad the preest as faste, 1235
"Loke what ther is; put in thyn hand and grope.
Thow fynde shalt ther silver, as I hope."
What, devel of helle, sholde it elles be?
Shaving of silver silver is, pardee!
He putte his hand in and took up a teyne 1240
Of silver fyn, and glad in every veyne
Was this preest, whan he saugh it was so.
"Goddes blessyng, and his moodres also,

1204 alkamystre: alchemist
1210 bolle: bowl
1212 preeve: succeed
1213 mysbileeve: skepticism
1214 conceite: opinion
1225 teyne: small metal rod cheeve: fare
1228 breede: breadth

And alle halwes, have ye, sire chanoun,"
Seyde the preest, "and I hir malisoun, 1245
But, and ye vouche-sauf to techen me
This noble craft and this subtilitee,
I wol be youre in al that evere I may."
Quod the chanoun, "Yet wol I make assay
The seconde tyme, that ye may taken heede
And been expert of this, and in youre neede
Another day assaye in myn absence 1252
This disciplyne and this crafty science.
Lat take another ounce," quod he tho,
"Of quyksilver, withouten wordes mo, 1255
And do therwith as ye han doon er this
With that oother, which that now silver is."
This preest hym bisieth in al that he kan
To doon as this chanoun, this cursed man,
Comanded hym, and faste blew the fir, 1260
For to come to th'effect of his desir.
And this chanon, right in the meene while;
Al redy was this preest eft to bigile,
And for a contenaunce in his hand he bar
An holwe stikke — taak kep and be war! — 1265
In the ende of which an ounce, and namoore,
Of silver lemaille put was, as bifore
Was in his cole, and stopped with wex weel
For to kepe in his lemaille every deel.
And whil this preest was in his bisynesse, 1270
This chanoun with his stikke gan hym dresse
To hym anon, and his poudre caste in
As he dide er — the devel out of his skyn
Hym terve, I pray to God, for his falshede!
For he was evere fals in thoght and dede —
And with this stikke, above the crosselet, 1276
That was ordeyned with that false jet,
He stired the coles til relente gan
The wex agayn the fir, as every man,
But it a fool be, woot wel it moot nede, 1280
And al that in the stikke was out yede,
And in the crosselet hastily it fel.
Now, good sires, what wol ye bet than wel?
Whan that this preest thus was bigiled ageyn,
Supposynge noght but treuthe, sooth to seyn,
He was so glad that I kan nat expresse 1286
In no manere his myrthe and his gladnesse;
And to the chanoun he profred eftsoone
Body and good. "Ye," quod the chanoun soone,
"Though poure I be, crafty thou shalt me fynde.
I warne thee, yet is ther moore bihynde. 1291
Is ther any coper herinne?" seyde he.
"Ye," quod the preest, "sire, I trowe wel ther be."
"Elles go bye us som, and that as swithe;
Now, goode sire, go forth thy wey and hy the." 1295
He wente his wey, and with the coper cam,
And this chanon it in his handes nam,
And of that coper weyed out but an ounce.
Al to symple is my tonge to pronounce,
As ministre of my wit, the doublenesse 1300
Of this chanoun, roote of alle cursednesse!
He semed freendly to hem that knewe hym noght,
But he was feendly bothe in werk and thoght.
It weerieth me to telle of his falsnesse,
And nathelees yet wol I it expresse, 1305
To th'entente that men may be war therby,
And for noon oother cause, trewely.
He putte this ounce of coper in the crosselet,
And on the fir as swithe he hath it set,
And caste in poudre, and made the preest to blowe, 1310
And in his werkyng for to stoupe lowe,
As he dide er — and al nas but a jape;
Right as hym liste, the preest he made his ape!
And afterward in the ingot he it caste,
And in the panne putte it at the laste 1315
Of water, and in he putte his owene hand,
And in his sleve (as ye biforen-hand
Herde me telle) he hadde a silver teyne.
He slyly took it out, this cursed heyne,
Unwityng this preest of his false craft, 1320
And in the pannes botme he hath it laft;
And in the water rombled to and fro,
And wonder pryvely took up also
The coper teyne, noght knowynge this preest,
And hidde it, and hym hente by the breest,
And to hym spak, and thus seyde in his game: 1326
"Stoupeth adoun. By God, ye be to blame!
Helpeth me now, as I dide yow whileer;
Putte in youre hand, and looketh what is theer."

1244 halwes: saints'
1245 malisoun: curse
1265 holwe: hollow
1271 hym dresse: address himself, go
1274 terve: skin, flay
1277 ordeyned: prepared jet: contrivance
1278 relente: soften, melt
1281 yede: went
1297 nam: took
1300 doublenesse: duplicity
1304 weerieth: wearies, tires
1313 ape: dupe
1319 heyne: wretch
1320 Unwityng . . . of: ignorant of
1322 rombled: groped noisily about
1327 to blame: blameworthy
1328 whileer: just now

This preest took up this silver teyne anon, 1330
And thanne seyde the chanoun, "Lat us gon
With thise thre teynes, whiche that we han wroght,
To som goldsmyth and wite if they been oght,
For, by my feith, I nolde, for myn hood,
But if that they were silver fyn and good, 1335
And that as swithe preeved it shal bee."
Unto the goldsmyth with thise teynes three
They wente and putte thise teynes in assay
To fir and hamer; myghte no man seye nay,
But that they weren as hem oghte be. 1340
This sotted preest, who was gladder than he?
Was nevere brid gladder agayn the day,
Ne nyghtyngale, in the sesoun of May,
Was nevere noon that luste bet to synge;
Ne lady lustier in carolynge, 1345
Or for to speke of love and wommanhede,
Ne knyght in armes to doon an hardy dede,
To stonden in grace of his lady deere,
Than hadde this preest this soory craft to leere.
And to the chanoun thus he spak and seyde:
"For love of God, that for us alle deyde, 1351
And as I may deserve it unto yow,
What shal this receite coste? Telleth now!"
"By oure Lady," quod this chanon, "it is deere,
I warne yow wel; for save I and a frere, 1355
In Engelond ther kan no man it make."
"No fors," quod he, "now, sire, for Goddes sake,
What shal I paye? Telleth me, I preye."
"Ywis," quod he, "it is ful deere, I seye.
Sire, at o word, if that thee list it have, 1360
Ye shul paye fourty pound, so God me save!
And nere the freendshipe that ye dide er this
To me, ye sholde paye moore, ywis."
This preest the somme of fourty pound anon
Of nobles fette, and took hem everichon 1365
To this chanoun for this ilke receite.
Al his werkyng nas but fraude and deceite.
"Sire preest," he seyde, "I kepe han no loos
Of my craft, for I wolde it kept were cloos;
And, as ye love me, kepeth it secree. 1370
For, and men knewen al my soutiltee,
By God, they wolden han so greet envye

1333 **oght:** anything, worth anything
1341 **sotted:** besotted, foolish
1342 **agayn the day:** just before dawn
1349 **soory:** wretched
1352 **deserve it unto yow:** repay you
1353 **receite:** recipe, formula
1362 **And nere:** if it were not for
1368–69 **I kepe han no loos Of:** I don't care to have fame for

To me by cause of my philosophye
I sholde be deed; ther were noon oother weye."
"God it forbeede," quod the preest, "what sey ye? 1375
Yet hadde I levere spenden al the good
Which that I have, and elles wexe I wood,
Than that ye sholden falle in swich mescheef."
"For youre good wyl, sire, have ye right good preef," 1379
Quod the chanoun, "and farwel, grant mercy!"
He wente his wey, and never the preest hym sy
After that day; and whan that this preest shoolde
Maken assay, at swich tyme as he wolde,
Of this receit, farwel! It wolde nat be.
Lo, thus byjaped and bigiled was he! 1385
Thus maketh he his introduccioun,
To brynge folk to hir destruccioun.
Considereth, sires, how that, in ech estaat,
Bitwixe men and gold ther is debaat
So ferforth that unnethes is ther noon. 1390
This multiplying blent so many oon
That in good feith I trowe that it bee
The cause grettest of swich scarsetee.
Philosophres speken so mystily 1394
In this craft that men kan nat come therby,
For any wit that men han now-a-dayes.
They mowe wel chiteren as doon jayes,
And in hir termes sette hir lust and peyne,
But to hir purpos shul they nevere atteyne.
A man may lightly lerne, if he have aught, 1400
To multiplie, and brynge his good to naught!
Lo! swich a lucre is in this lusty game,
A mannes myrthe it wol turne unto grame,
And empten also grete and hevye purses,
And maken folk for to purchacen curses 1405
Of hem that han hir good therto ylent.
O, fy, for shame! They that han been brent,
Allas, kan they nat flee the fires heete?
Ye that it use, I rede ye it leete,
Lest ye lese al, for bet than nevere is late. 1410
Nevere to thryve were to long a date.
Though ye prolle ay, ye shul it nevere fynde.
Ye been as boold as is Bayard the blynde,
That blondreth forth and peril casteth noon.

1384 **receit:** recipe
1385 **byjaped:** tricked
1386 **introduccioun:** introductory gambit
1394 **mystily:** obscurely
1397 **chiteren:** chatter
1402 **lucre:** profit
1403 **grame:** sorrow
1409 **leete:** let (it) alone, abandon (it)
1411 **date:** time
1412 **prolle ay:** search or prowl forever
1414 **blondreth:** blunders **casteth:** considers, reckons

He is as boold to renne agayn a stoon 1415
As for to goon bisides in the weye.
So faren ye that multiplie, I seye.
If that youre eyen kan nat seen aright,
Looke that youre mynde lakke noght his sight.
For though ye looken never so brode and stare,
Ye shul nothyng wynne on that chaffare, 1421
But wasten al that ye may rape and renne.
Withdraweth the fir, lest it to faste brenne;
Medleth namoore with that art, I mene, 1424
For if ye doon, youre thrift is goon ful clene.
And right as swithe I wol yow tellen heere
What philosophres seyn in this mateere.
Lo, thus seith Arnold of the Newe Toun,
As his Rosarie maketh mencioun;
He seith right thus, withouten any lye: 1430
"Ther may no man mercurie mortifie
But it be with his brother knowlechyng";
How [be] that he which that first seyde this thyng
Of philosophres fader was, Hermes;
He seith how that the dragon, doutelees, 1435
Ne dyeth nat but if that he be slayn
With his brother; and that is for to sayn,
By the dragon, Mercurie, and noon oother
He understood, and brymstoon by his brother,
That out of Sol and Luna were ydrawe. 1440
"And therfore," seyde he — taak heede to my sawe —
"Lat no man bisye hym this art for to seche,
But if that he th'entencioun and speche
Of philosophres understonde kan;
And if he do, he is a lewed man. 1445
For this science and this konnyng," quod he,
"Is of the secree of the secretes, pardee."
Also ther was a disciple of Plato,
That on a tyme seyde his maister to,
As his book Senior wol bere witnesse, 1450
And this was his demande in soothfastnesse:
"Telle me the name of the privee stoon."
And Plato answerde unto hym anoon,
"Take the stoon that Titanos men name."
"Which is that?" quod he. "Magnasia is the same," 1455
Seyde Plato. "Ye, sire, and is it thus?
This is *ignotum per ignocius.*
What is Magnasia, good sire, I yow preye?"
"It is a water that is maad, I seye,
Of elementes foure," quod Plato. 1460
"Telle me the roote, good sire," quod he tho,
"Of that water, if it be youre wil."
"Nay, nay," quod Plato, "certein, that I nyl.
The philosophres sworn were everychoon
That they sholden discovere it unto noon, 1465
Ne in no book it write in no manere.
For unto Crist it is so lief and deere
That he wol nat that it discovered bee,
But where it liketh to his deitee
Men for t'enspire, and eek for to deffende 1470
Whom that hym liketh; lo, this is the ende."
Thanne conclude I thus, sith that God of hevene
Ne wil nat that the philosophres nevene
How that a man shal come unto this stoon,
I rede, as for the beste, lete it goon. 1475
For whoso maketh God his adversarie,
As for to werken any thyng in contrarie
Of his wil, certes, never shal he thryve,
Thogh that he multiplie terme of his lyve.
And there a poynt, for ended is my tale. 1480
God sende every trewe man boote of his bale!

Heere is ended the Chanouns Yemannes Tale.

1422 **rape and renne:** seize and run; see n.
1424 **mene:** say
1425 **thrift:** prosperity, welfare
1428 **Arnold of the Newe Toun:** Arnaldus of Villanova, author of the *Rosarie,* an alchemical treatise
1432 **his brother knowlechyng:** his brother's (sulphur's) help
1434 **Hermes:** Hermes Trismegistus, legendary founder of alchemy
1440 **Sol:** the sun (gold) **Luna:** the moon (silver)
1450 **book Senior:** an alchemical treatise attributed to Senior Zadith
1454–55 **Titanos, Magnasia:** probably gypsum and magnesium oxide, but used as "cover names," intended to conceal the identity of the materials
1457 ***ignotum per ignocius:*** explaining the unknown by the more unknown
1470 **t'enspire:** to enlighten
1473 **nevene:** name
1477 **any thyng:** at all
1481 **boote of his bale:** remedy for his suffering

Fragment IX (Group H)

THE MANCIPLE'S PROLOGUE

Heere folweth the Prologe of the Mauncipies Tale.

Woot ye nat where ther stant a litel toun
Which that ycleped is Bobbe-up-and-doun,
Under the Blee, in Caunterbury Weye?
Ther gan oure Hooste for to jape and pleye,
And seyde, "Sires, what! Dun is in the myre!
Is ther no man, for preyere ne for hyre, 6
That wole awake oure felawe al bihynde?
A theef myghte hym ful lightly robbe and bynde.
See how he nappeth! See how, for cokkes bones,
That he wol falle fro his hors atones! 10
Is that a cook of Londoun, with meschaunce?
Do hym come forth, he knoweth his penaunce;
For he shal telle a tale, by my fey,
Although it be nat worth a botel hey.
Awake, thou Cook," quod he, "God yeve thee sorwe! 15
What eyleth thee to slepe by the morwe?
Hastow had fleen al nyght, or artow dronke?
Or hastow with som quene al nyght yswonke,
So that thow mayst nat holden up thyn heed?"
This Cook, that was ful pale and no thyng reed, 20
Seyde to oure Hoost, "So God my soule blesse,
As ther is falle on me swich hevynesse,
Noot I nat why, that me were levere slepe
Than the beste galon wyn in Chepe."
"Wel," quod the Mauncipie, "if it may doon ese 25
To thee, sire Cook, and to no wight displese,
Which that heere rideth in this compaignye,
And that oure Hoost wole, of his curteisye,
I wol as now excuse thee of thy tale.
For, in good feith, thy visage is ful pale, 30
Thyne eyen daswen eek, as that me thynketh,
And, wel I woot, thy breeth ful soure stynketh:
That sheweth wel thou art nat wel disposed.
Of me, certeyn, thou shalt nat been yglosed.
See how he ganeth, lo, this dronken wight, 35
As though he wolde swolwe us anonright.
Hoold cloos thy mouth, man, by thy fader kyn!
The devel of helle sette his foot therin!
Thy cursed breeth infecte wole us alle.
Fy, stynkyng swyn! Fy, foule moote thee falle!
A, taketh heede, sires, of this lusty man. 41
Now, sweete sire, wol ye justen atte fan?
Therto me thynketh ye been wel yshape!
I trowe that ye dronken han wyn ape, 44
And that is whan men pleyen with a straw."
And with this speche the Cook wax wrooth and wraw,
And on the Manciple he gan nodde faste
For lakke of speche, and doun the hors hym caste,
Where as he lay, til that men hym up took.
This was a fair chyvachee of a cook! 50
Allas, he nadde holde hym by his ladel!
And er that he agayn were in his sadel,
Ther was greet showvyng bothe to and fro
To lifte hym up, and muchel care and wo,
So unweeldy was this sory palled goost. 55
And to the Manciple thanne spak oure Hoost:
"By cause drynke hath dominacioun
Upon this man, by my savacioun,
I trowe he lewedly wolde telle his tale.
For, were it wyn or oold or moysty ale 60
That he hath dronke, he speketh in his nose,
And fneseth faste, and eek he hath the pose.
"He hath also to do moore than ynough
To kepen hym and his capul out of the slough;

2 **Bobbe-up-and-doun:** Harbledown, two miles from Canterbury; see n.
3 **the Blee:** Blean Forest
5 **Dun is in the myre:** Things are at a standstill; see n.
8 **lightly:** easily
9 **nappeth:** dozes **cokkes bones:** cock's bones (euphemism for God's bones)
14 **botel hey:** small bundle of hay (i.e., worthless)
17 **fleen:** fleas
18 **quene:** trollop, whore
22 **hevynesse:** drowsiness
24 **galon wyn:** gallon of wine
31 **daswen:** are dazed
33 **nat wel disposed:** indisposed, unwell
35 **ganeth:** yawns
42 **justen atte fan:** joust at the quintain; see n.
44 **dronken han wyn ape:** have reached an advanced stage of drunkenness
46 **wraw:** angry
47 **nodde:** shake his head
50 **chyvachee:** feat of horsemanship
51 **ladel:** long-handled spoon
55 **unweeldy:** feeble **palled:** grown pale
60 **oold or moysty ale:** old or new ale; see n.
62 **fneseth:** sneezes **pose:** head cold
64 **slough:** mud, mire

And if he falle from his capul eftsoone, 65
Thanne shal we alle have ynogh to doone
In liftyng up his hevy dronken cors.
Telle on thy tale; of hym make I no fors.
"But yet, Manciple, in feith thou art to nyce,
Thus openly repreve hym of his vice. 70
Another day he wole, peraventure,
Reclayme thee and brynge thee to lure;
I meene, he speke wole of smale thynges,
As for to pynchen at thy rekenynges,
That were nat honest, if it cam to preef." 75
"No," quod the Manciple, "that were a greet mescheef!
So myghte he lightly brynge me in the snare.
Yet hadde I levere payen for the mare
Which he rit on, than he sholde with me stryve.
I wol nat wratthen hym, also moot I thryve! 80
That that I spak, I seyde it in my bourde.
And wite ye what? I have heer in a gourde
A draghte of wyn, ye, of a ripe grape,
And right anon ye shul seen a good jape.
This Cook shal drynke therof, if I may. 85
Up peyne of deeth, he wol nat seye me nay."
And certeynly, to tellen as it was,
Of this vessel the Cook drank faste, allas!
What neded hym? He drank ynough biforn.
And whan he hadde pouped in this horn, 90
To the Manciple he took the gourde agayn;
And of that drynke the Cook was wonder fayn,
And thanked hym in swich wise as he koude.
Thanne gan oure Hoost to laughen wonder loude,
And seyde, "I se wel it is necessarie, 95
Where that we goon, good drynke with us carie;
For that wol turne rancour and disese
T'acord and love, and many a wrong apese.
"O Bacus, yblessed be thy name,
That so kanst turnen ernest into game! 100
Worshipe and thank be to thy deitee!
Of that mateere ye gete namoore of me.
Telle on thy tale, Manciple, I thee preye."
"Wel, sire," quod he, "now herkneth what I seye."

THE MANCIPLE'S TALE

Heere bigynneth the Mauncipies Tale of the Crowe.

Whan Phebus dwelled heere in this erthe adoun, 105
As olde bookes maken mencioun,
He was the mooste lusty bachiler
In al this world, and eek the beste archer.
He slow Phitoun, the serpent, as he lay
Slepynge agayn the sonne upon a day; 110
And many another noble worthy dede
He with his bowe wroghte, as men may rede.
Pleyen he koude on every mynstralcie,
And syngen that it was a melodie
To heeren of his cleere voys the soun. 115
Certes the kyng of Thebes, Amphioun,
That with his syngyng walled that citee,
Koude nevere syngen half so wel as hee.
Therto he was the semelieste man
That is or was sith that the world bigan. 120
What nedeth it his fetures to discryve?
For in this world was noon so faire on-lyve.
He was therwith fulfild of gentillesse,
Of honour, and of parfit worthynesse.
This Phebus, that was flour of bachilrie, 125
As wel in fredom as in chivalrie,
For his desport, in signe eek of victorie
Of Phitoun, so as telleth us the storie,
Was wont to beren in his hand a bowe. 129

65 capul: horse eftsoone: again
66 have ynogh to doone: have our hands full
72 Recall you with a lure (as a hawk)
74 pynchen at: find fault with
80 wratthen: anger
81 bourde: jest
82 gourde: gourd-shaped flask

105 Phebus: Phoebus Apollo
109 Phitoun: Python; see n.
110 agayn the sonne: in front of or in the sun
113 mynstralcie: musical instrument

90 pouped: blown
91 took . . . agayn: gave back
98 apese: remedy
99 Bacus: Bacchus, god of wine

125 bachilrie: knighthood

Now hadde this Phebus in his hous a crowe
Which in a cage he fostred many a day,
And taughte it speken, as men teche a jay.
Whit was this crowe as is a snow-whit swan,
And countrefete the speche of every man
He koude, whan he sholde telle a tale. 135
Therwith in al this world no nyghtyngale
Ne koude, by an hondred thousand deel,
Syngen so wonder myrily and weel.
Now hadde this Phebus in his hous a wyf
Which that he lovede moore than his lyf, 140
And nyght and day dide evere his diligence
Hir for to plese and doon hire reverence,
Save oonly, if the sothe that I shal sayn,
Jalous he was, and wolde have kept hire fayn.
For hym were looth byjaped for to be, 145
And so is every wight in swich degree;
But al in ydel, for it availleth noght.
A good wyf, that is clene of werk and thoght,
Sholde nat been kept in noon awayt, certayn;
And trewely the labour is in vayn 150
To kepe a shrewe, for it wol nat bee.
This holde I for a verray nycetee,
To spille labour for to kepe wyves:
Thus writen olde clerkes in hir lyves.
But now to purpos, as I first bigan: 155
This worthy Phebus dooth al that he kan
To plesen hire, wenynge for swich plesaunce,
And for his manhede and his governaunce,
That no man sholde han put hym from hir grace.
But God it woot, ther may no man embrace
As to destreyne a thyng which that nature 161
Hath natureelly set in a creature.
Taak any bryd, and put it in a cage,
And do al thyn entente and thy corage
To fostre it tendrely with mete and drynke 165
Of alle deyntees that thou kanst bithynke,
And keep it al so clenly as thou may,
Although his cage of gold be never so gay,
Yet hath this brid, by twenty thousand foold,
Levere in a forest that is rude and coold 170
Goon ete wormes and swich wrecchednesse.
For evere this brid wol doon his bisynesse
To escape out of his cage, yif he may.
His libertee this brid desireth ay. 174

139 wyf: woman
145 byjaped: tricked
149 kept in . . . awayt: watched suspiciously
158 manhede: qualities of a good man governaunce: behavior
161 destreyne: restrain
164 And give all your attention, take all pains
166 bithynke: imagine
167 clenly: carefully
169–170 hath Levere: would rather be

Lat take a cat, and fostre hym wel with milk
And tendre flessh, and make his couche of silk,
And lat hym seen a mous go by the wal,
Anon he weyveth milk and flessh and al,
And every deyntee that is in that hous,
Swich appetit hath he to ete a mous. 180
Lo, heere hath lust his dominacioun,
And appetit fleemeth discrecioun.
A she-wolf hath also a vileyns kynde.
The lewedeste wolf that she may fynde,
Or leest of reputacioun, wol she take, 185
In tyme whan hir lust to han a make.
Alle thise ensamples speke I by thise men
That been untrewe, and nothyng by wommen.
For men han evere a likerous appetit
On lower thyng to parfourne hire delit 190
Than on hire wyves, be they never so faire,
Ne never so trewe, ne so debonaire.
Flessh is so newefangel, with meschaunce,
That we ne konne in nothyng han plesaunce
That sowneth into vertu any while. 195
This Phebus, which that thoghte upon no gile,
Deceyved was, for al his jolitee.
For under hym another hadde shee,
A man of litel reputacioun,
Nat worth to Phebus in comparisoun. 200
The moore harm is, it happeth ofte so,
Of which ther cometh muchel harm and wo.
And so bifel, whan Phebus was absent,
His wyf anon hath for hir lemman sent. 204
Hir lemman? Certes, this is a knavyssh speche!
Foryeveth it me, and that I yow biseche.
The wise Plato seith, as ye may rede,
The word moot nede accorde with the dede.
If men shal telle proprely a thyng,
The word moot cosyn be to the werkyng. 210
I am a boystous man, right thus seye I:
Ther nys no difference, trewely,
Bitwixe a wyf that is of heigh degree,
If of hir body dishonest she bee,
And a povre wenche, oother than this — 215

175 Lat take: assume that one takes
178 weyveth: refuses
182 fleemeth: drives out
183 vileyns: churlish, evil
193 newefangel: fond of novelty
195 sowneth into: tends toward, is conducive to
197 jolitee: attractiveness
198 under: in addition to
204 lemman: lover
205 knavyssh: churlish
211 boystous: plain
214 dishonest: unchaste
215 wenche: low-class woman

If it so be they werke bothe amys —
But that the gentile, in estaat above,
She shal be cleped his lady, as in love;
And for that oother is a povre womman, 219
She shal be cleped his wenche or his lemman.
And, God it woot, myn owene deere brother,
Men leyn that oon as lowe as lith that oother.
Right so bitwixe a titlelees tiraunt
And an outlawe or a theef erraunt,
The same I seye: ther is no difference. 225
To Alisaundre was toold this sentence,
That, for the tirant is of gretter myght
By force of meynee for to sleen dounright,
And brennen hous and hoom, and make al playn,
Lo, therfore is he cleped a capitayn; 230
And for the outlawe hath but smal meynee,
And may nat doon so greet an harm as he,
Ne brynge a contree to so greet mescheef,
Men clepen hym an outlawe or a theef.
But for I am a man noght textueel, 235
I wol noght telle of textes never a deel;
I wol go to my tale, as I bigan.
Whan Phebus wyf had sent for hir lemman,
Anon they wroghten al hire lust volage. 239
The white crowe, that heeng ay in the cage,
Biheeld hire werk, and seyde never a word.
And whan that hoom was come Phebus, the lord,
This crowe sang "Cokkow! Cokkow! Cokkow!"
"What, bryd?" quod Phebus. "What song syngestow?
Ne were thow wont so myrily to synge 245
That to myn herte it was a rejoysynge
To heere thy voys? Allas, what song is this?"
"By God," quod he, "I synge nat amys.
Phebus," quod he, "for al thy worthynesse,
For al thy beautee and thy gentilesse, 250
For al thy song and al thy mynstralcye,
For al thy waityng, blered is thyn ye
With oon of litel reputacioun,
Noght worth to thee, as in comparisoun, 254
The montance of a gnat, so moote I thryve!
For on thy bed thy wyf I saugh hym swyve."
What wol ye moore? The crowe anon hym tolde,

228 force of meynee: power of his retinue, size of his army
235 textueel: learned in authoritative texts
239 volage: flighty, foolish
243 Cokkow: cuckoo (i.e., you are a cuckold)
246 rejoysynge: joy
252 blered is thyn ye: you have been tricked, deluded
255 montance: value
256 swyve: copulate with

By sadde tokenes and by wordes bolde,
How that his wyf had doon hire lecherye,
Hym to greet shame and to greet vileynye, 260
And tolde hym ofte he saugh it with his yen.
This Phebus gan aweyward for to wryen,
And thoughte his sorweful herte brast atwo.
His bowe he bente, and sette therinne a flo,
And in his ire his wyf thanne hath he slayn.
This is th'effect; ther is namoore to sayn; 266
For sorwe of which he brak his mynstralcie,
Bothe harpe, and lute, and gyterne, and sautrie;
And eek he brak his arwes and his bowe,
And after that thus spak he to the crowe: 270
"Traitour," quod he, "with tonge of scorpioun,
Thou hast me broght to my confusioun;
Allas, that I was wroght! Why nere I deed?
O deere wyf! O gemme of lustiheed!
That were to me so sad and eek so trewe, 275
Now listow deed, with face pale of hewe,
Ful giltelees, that dorste I swere, ywys!
O rakel hand, to doon so foule amys!
O trouble wit, O ire recchelees,
That unavysed smyteth giltelees! 280
O wantrust, ful of fals suspecion,
Where was thy wit and thy discrecion?
O every man, be war of rakelnesse!
Ne trowe no thyng withouten strong witnesse.
Smyt nat to soone, er that ye witen why, 285
And beeth avysed wel and sobrely
Er ye doon any execucion
Upon youre ire for suspecion.
Allas, a thousand folk hath rakel ire
Fully fordoon, and broght hem in the mire.
Allas! For sorwe I wol myselven slee!" 291
And to the crowe, "O false theef!" seyde he,
"I wol thee quite anon thy false tale.
Thou songe whilom lyk a nyghtyngale;
Now shaltow, false theef, thy song forgon, 295
And eek thy white fetheres everichon,
Ne nevere in al thy lif ne shaltou speke.
Thus shal men on a traytour been awreke;
Thou and thyn ofspryng evere shul be blake,

258 sadde tokenes: strong confirmatory details, proofs
262 wryen: turn, go
264 flo: arrow
268 gyterne: cithern sautrie: psaltry, a lute-like instrument
274 lustiheed: delight
275 sad: stable
278 rakel: rash, hasty
280 unavysed: recklessly
281 wantrust: distrust
283 rakelnesse: rashness, haste
290 fordoon: undone
295 forgon: lose
298 awreke: avenged

Ne nevere sweete noyse shul ye make, 300
But evere crie agayn tempest and rayn,
In tokenynge that thurgh thee my wyf is slayn."
And to the crowe he stirte, and that anon,
And pulled his white fetheres everychon, 304
And made hym blak, and refte hym al his song,
And eek his speche, and out at dore hym slong
Unto the devel, which I hym bitake;
And for this caas been alle crowes blake.
Lordynges, by this ensample I yow preye,
Beth war, and taketh kep what that ye seye:
Ne telleth nevere no man in youre lyf 311
How that another man hath dight his wyf;
He wol yow haten mortally, certeyn.
Daun Salomon, as wise clerkes seyn,
Techeth a man to kepen his tonge weel. 315
But, as I seyde, I am noght textueel.
But nathelees, thus taughte me my dame:
"My sone, thenk on the crowe, a Goddes name!
My sone, keep wel thy tonge, and keep thy freend.
A wikked tonge is worse than a feend; 320
My sone, from a feend men may hem blesse.
My sone, God of his endelees goodnesse
Walled a tonge with teeth and lippes eke,
For man sholde hym avyse what he speeke.
My sone, ful ofte, for to muche speche 325
Hath many a man been spilt, as clerkes teche,
But for litel speche avysely
Is no man shent, to speke generally.
My sone, thy tonge sholdestow restreyne 329
At alle tymes, but whan thou doost thy peyne
To speke of God, in honour and preyere.
The firste vertu, sone, if thou wolt leere,
Is to restreyne and kepe wel thy tonge;
Thus lerne children whan that they been yonge.
My sone, of muchel spekyng yvele avysed, 335
Ther lasse spekyng hadde ynough suffised,
Comth muchel harm; thus was me toold and taught.
In muchel speche synne wanteth naught.
Wostow wherof a rakel tonge serveth?
Right as a swerd forkutteth and forkerveth 340
An arm a-two, my deere sone, right so
A tonge kutteth freendshipe al a-two.
A jangler is to God abhomynable.
Reed Salomon, so wys and honurable;
Reed David in his psalmes; reed Senekke. 345
My sone, spek nat, but with thyn heed thou bekke.
Dissimule as thou were deef, if that thou heere
A janglere speke of perilous mateere.
The Flemyng seith, and lerne it if thee leste,
That litel janglyng causeth muchel reste. 350
My sone, if thou no wikked word hast seyd,
Thee thar nat drede for to be biwreyd;
But he that hath mysseyd, I dar wel sayn,
He may by no wey clepe his word agayn. 354
Thyng that is seyd is seyd, and forth it gooth,
Though hym repente, or be hym nevere so looth.
He is his thral to whom that he hath sayd
A tale of which he is now yvele apayd.
My sone, be war, and be noon auctour newe
Of tidynges, wheither they been false or trewe.
Whereso thou come, amonges hye or lowe, 361
Kepe wel thy tonge and thenk upon the crowe."

Heere is ended the Mauncipies Tale of the Crowe.

302 In tokenynge: as a sign
304 pulled: plucked
305 refte: took away
306 slong: slung, threw
307 bitake: commit
312 dight: had sexual intercourse with
316 textueel: learned in texts
319 keep wel thy tonge: hold your tongue
327 avysely: discreetly
335 yvele avysed: ill-considered
338 wanteth naught: is not lacking
339 rakel: rash
340 forkutteth and forkerveth: cuts and hews to pieces
343 jangler: chatterer
345 Senekke: Seneca
346 bekke: nod
347 Dissimule as: pretend
359 auctour: author

Fragment X (Group I)

THE PARSON'S PROLOGUE

Heere folweth the Prologe of the Persouns Tale.

By that the Maunciple hadde his tale al ended,
The sonne fro the south lyne was descended
So lowe that he nas nat, to my sighte,
Degreës nyne and twenty as in highte.
Foure of the clokke it was tho, as I gesse, 5
For ellevene foot, or litel moore or lesse,
My shadwe was at thilke tyme, as there
Of swiche feet as my lengthe parted were
In sixe feet equal of proporcioun.
Therwith the moones exaltacioun — 10
I meene Libra — alwey gan ascende
As we were entryng at a thropes ende;
For which oure Hoost, as he was wont to gye,
As in this caas, oure joly compaignye,
Seyde in this wise: "Lordynges everichoon, 15
Now lakketh us no tales mo than oon.
Fulfilled is my sentence and my decree;
I trowe that we han herd of ech degree;
Almoost fulfild is al myn ordinaunce.
I pray to God, so yeve hym right good chaunce,
That telleth this tale to us lustily. 21
"Sire preest," quod he, "artow a vicary?
Or arte a person? Sey sooth, by thy fey!
Be what thou be, ne breke thou nat oure pley;
For every man, save thou, hath toold his tale. 25
Unbokele and shewe us what is in thy male;
For trewely, me thynketh by thy cheere
Thou sholdest knytte up wel a greet mateere.
Telle us a fable anon, for cokkes bones!"
This Persoun answerde, al atones, 30
"Thou getest fable noon ytoold for me,
For Paul, that writeth unto Thymothee,
Repreveth hem that weyven soothfastnesse
And tellen fables and swich wrecchednesse.
Why sholde I sowen draf out of my fest, 35
Whan I may sowen whete, if that me lest?
For which I seye, if that yow list to heere
Moralitee and vertuous mateere,
And thanne that ye wol yeve me audience,
I wol ful fayn, at Cristes reverence, 40
Do yow plesaunce leefful, as I kan.
But trusteth wel, I am a Southren man;
I kan nat geeste 'rum, ram, ruf,' by lettre,
Ne, God woot, rym holde I but litel bettre;
And therfore, if yow list — I wol nat glose —
I wol yow telle a myrie tale in prose 46
To knytte up al this feeste and make an ende.
And Jhesu, for his grace, wit me sende
To shewe yow the wey, in this viage,
Of thilke parfit glorious pilgrymage 50
That highte Jerusalem celestial.
And if ye vouche sauf, anon I shal
Bigynne upon my tale, for which I preye
Telle youre avys; I kan no bettre seye.
"But nathelees, this meditacioun 55
I putte it ay under correccioun
Of clerkes, for I am nat textueel;
I take but the sentence, trusteth weel.
Therfore I make protestacioun
That I wol stonde to correccioun." 60
Upon this word we han assented soone,
For, as it seemed, it was for to doone —
To enden in som vertuous sentence,
And for to yeve hym space and audience,
And bade oure Hoost he sholde to hym seye 65
That alle we to telle his tale hym preye.
Oure Hoost hadde the wordes for us alle;
"Sire preest," quod he, "now faire yow bifalle!

3 **to my sighte:** from my point of view
7 **as there:** in that place
10 **exaltacioun:** zodiacal sign in which a planet has its strongest influence
12 **thropes ende:** the edge of a village
22 **vicary:** vicar
24 **breke . . . oure pley:** spoil our game
26 **Unbokele:** unbuckle, open up **in thy male:** i.e., what you have to tell
28 **knytte up:** conclude
29 **cokkes bones:** cock's bones (euphemism for God's bones)
33 **weyven:** turn aside from
35 **draf:** chaff
39 **that:** if
41 **leefful:** lawful, legitimate
42 **Southren:** That is, not from the north, where much alliterative poetry was written
43 **geeste . . . by lettre:** tell a story in alliterative verse; see n.
57 **textueel:** learned in authoritative texts
58 **sentence:** substance, essential meaning
64 **space:** time
67 **hadde the wordes for us alle:** was our spokesman
68 **faire yow bifalle:** good luck to you

Telleth," quod he, "youre meditacioun.
But hasteth yow; the sonne wole adoun; 70
Beth fructuous, and that in litel space,
And to do wel God sende yow his grace!
Sey what yow list, and we wol gladly heere."
And with that word he seyde in this manere.

Explicit prohemium.

THE PARSON'S TALE

Heere bigynneth the Persouns Tale.

Jer. 6°. State super vias, et videte, et interrogate de viis antiquis que sit via bona, et ambulate in ea; et invenietis refrigerium animabus vestris, etc.

Oure sweete Lord God of hevene, that no man wole perisse but wole that we comen alle to the knoweleche of hym and to the blisful lif that is perdurable,/ amonesteth us 75 by the prophete Jeremie, that seith in thys wyse:/ "Stondeth upon the weyes, and seeth and axeth of olde pathes (that is to seyn, of olde sentences) which is the goode wey,/ and walketh in that wey, and ye shal fynde refresshynge for youre soules, etc."/ Manye been the weyes espirituels that leden folk to oure Lord Jhesu Crist and to the regne of glorie./ Of whiche weyes ther is a ful noble wey and a ful covenable, which may nat fayle to man ne to womman that thurgh synne hath mysgoon fro the righte wey of Jerusalem celestial;/ and 80 this wey is cleped Penitence, of which man sholde gladly herknen and enquere with al his herte/ to wyten what is Penitence, and whennes it is cleped Penitence, and in how manye maneres been the acciouns or werkynges of Penitence,/ and how manye speces ther been of Penitence, and whiche thynges apertenen and bihoven to Penitence, and whiche thynges destourben Penitence./

Seint Ambrose seith that Penitence is the pleynynge of man for the gilt that he hath doon, and namoore to do any thyng for which hym oghte to pleyne./ And som doctour seith, "Penitence is the waymentynge of man that sorweth for his synne and pyneth hymself for he hath mysdoon."/ Penitence, 85 with certeyne circumstances, is verray repentance of a man that halt hymself in sorwe and oother peyne for his giltes./ And for he shal be verray penitent, he shal first biwaylen the synnes that he hath doon, and stidefastly purposen in his herte to have shrift of mouthe, and to doon satisfaccioun,/ and nevere to doon thyng for which hym oghte moore to biwayle or to compleyne, and to continue in goode werkes, or elles his repentance may nat availle./ For, as seith Seint Ysidre, "He is a japere and a gabbere and no verray repentant that eftsoone dooth thyng for which hym oghte repente."/ Wepynge, and nat for to stynte to do synne, may nat avayle./ But nathelees, 90 men shal hope that every tyme that man falleth, be it never so ofte, that he may arise thurgh Penitence, if he have grace; but certeinly it is greet doute./ For, as seith Seint Gregorie, "Unnethe ariseth he out of his synne, that is charged with the charge of yvel usage."/ And therfore repentant folk, that stynte for to synne and forlete synne er that synne forlete hem, hooly chirche holdeth hem siker of hire savacioun./ And he that synneth and verraily repenteth hym in his laste, hooly chirche yet hopeth his savacioun, by the grete mercy of oure Lord Jhesu Crist, for his repentaunce; but taak the siker wey./

And now, sith I have declared yow what thyng is Penitence, now shul ye understonde

71 fructuous: fruitful

State super vias, etc.: translated in lines 77–78
76 amonesteth: admonishes
77 sentences: teachings, opinions
80 covenable: suitable
83 apertenen: belong to

85 som: a certain waymentynge: lamenting pyneth: punishes
89 Ysidre: Isidore of Seville gabbere: foolish talker

that ther been three accioun of Penitence./ The firste is that if a man be baptized after that he hath synned./ Seint Augustyn seith, "But he be penytent for his olde synful lyf, he may nat bigynne the newe clene lif."/ For, certes, if he be baptized withouten penitence of his olde gilt, he receyveth the mark of baptesme but nat the grace ne the remission of his synnes, til he have repentance verray./ Another defaute is this: that men doon deedly synne after that they han receyved baptesme./ The thridde defaute is that men fallen in venial synnes after hir baptesme fro day to day./ Therof seith Seint Augustyn that penitence of goode and humble folk is the penitence of every day./

The speces of Penitence been three. That oon of hem is solempne, another is commune, and the thridde is privee./ Thilke penance that is solempne is in two maneres; as to be put out of hooly chirche in Lente for slaughtre of children, and swich maner thyng./ Another is, whan a man hath synned openly, of which synne the fame is openly spoken in the contree, and thanne hooly chirche by juggement destreyneth hym for to do open penaunce./ Commune penaunce is that preestes enjoynen men communly in certeyn caas, as for to goon peraventure naked in pilgrimages, or barefoot./ Pryvee penaunce is thilke that men doon alday for privee synnes, of whiche we shryve us prively and receyve privee penaunce./

Now shaltow understande what is bihovely and necessarie to verray parfit Penitence. And this stant on three thynges:/ Contricioun of Herte, Confessioun of Mouth, and Satisfaccioun./ For which seith Seint John Crisostom, "Penitence destreyneth a man to accepte benygnely every peyne that hym is enjoyned, with contricioun of herte, and shrift of mouth, with satisfaccioun, and in werkynge of alle manere humylitee."/ And this is fruytful penitence agayn three thynges in which we wratthe oure Lord Jhesu Crist;/ this is to seyn, by delit in thynkynge, by recchelees-nesse in spekynge, and by wikked synful werkynge./ And agayns thise wikkede giltes is Penitence, that may be likned unto a tree./

The roote of this tree is Contricioun, that hideth hym in the herte of hym that is verray repentaunt, right as the roote of a tree hydeth hym in the erthe./ Of the roote of Contricioun spryngeth a stalke that bereth braunches and leves of Confessioun, and fruyt of Satisfaccioun./ For which Crist seith in his gospel, "Dooth digne fruyt of Penitence"; for by this fruyt may men knowe this tree, and nat by the roote that is hyd in the herte of man, ne by the braunches, ne by the leves of Confessioun./ And therfore oure Lord Jhesu Crist seith thus: "By the fruyt of hem shul ye knowen hem."/ Of this roote eek spryngeth a seed of grace, the which seed is mooder of sikernesse, and this seed is egre and hoot./ The grace of this seed spryngeth of God thurgh remembrance of the day of doom and on the peynes of helle./ Of this matere seith Salomon that in the drede of God man forleteth his synne./ The heete of this seed is the love of God and the desiryng of the joye perdurable./ This heete draweth the herte of a man to God and dooth hym haten his synne./ For soothly ther is nothyng that savoureth so wel to a child as the milk of his norice, ne nothyng is to hym moore abhomynable than thilke milk whan it is medled with oother mete./ Right so the synful man that loveth his synne, hym semeth that it is to him moost sweete of any thyng;/ but fro that tyme that he loveth sadly oure Lord Jhesu Crist, and desireth the lif perdurable, ther nys to him no thyng moore abhomynable./ For soothly the lawe of God is the love of God; for which David the prophete seith: "I have loved thy lawe and hated wikkednesse and hate"; he that loveth God kepeth his lawe and his word./ This tree saugh the prophete Daniel in spirit, upon the avysioun of the kyng Nabugodonosor, whan he conseiled hym to do penitence./ Penaunce is the tree of lyf to hem that it receyven, and he that holdeth hym in verray penitence is blessed, after the sentence of Salomon./

In this Penitence or Contricioun man shal understonde foure thynges; that is to seyn, what is Contricioun, and whiche been the causes that moeven a man to Contricioun, and how he

95 **accioun:** effects
104 **destreyneth:** constrains, compels
107 **bihovely:** necessary
110 **wratthe:** anger
115 **digne:** worthy
117 **egre:** bitter
122 **medled:** mixed
124 **perdurable:** eternal

sholde be contrit, and what Contricioun availleth to the soule./ Thanne is it thus: that Contricioun is the verray sorwe that a man receyveth in his herte for his synnes, with sad purpos to shryve hym, and to do penaunce, and neveremoore to do synne./ And this sorwe shal been in this manere, as seith Seint Bernard: "It shal been hevy and grevous, and ful sharp and poynaunt in herte."/ First, for man hath agilt his Lord and his Creatour; and moore sharp and poynaunt for he hath agilt hys Fader celestial;/ and yet moore sharp and poynaunt for he hath wrathed and agilt hym that boghte hym, that with his precious blood hath delivered us fro the bondes of synne, and fro the crueltee of the devel, and fro the peynes of helle./

The causes that oghte moeve a man to Contricioun been sixe. First a man shal remembre hym of his synnes;/ but looke he that thilke remembraunce ne be to hym no delit by no wey, but greet shame and sorwe for his gilt. For Job seith, "Synful men doon werkes worthy of confusioun."/ And therfore seith Ezechie, "I wol remembre me alle the yeres of my lyf in bitternesse of myn herte."/ And God seith in the Apocalipse, "Remembreth yow fro whennes that ye been falle"; for biforn that tyme that ye synned, ye were the children of God and lymes of the regne of God;/ but for youre synne ye been woxen thral, and foul, and membres of the feend, hate of aungels, sclaundre of hooly chirche, and foode of the false serpent, perpetueel matere of the fir of helle;/ and yet moore foul and abhomynable, for ye trespassen so ofte tyme as dooth the hound that retourneth to eten his spewyng./ And yet be ye fouler for youre longe continuyng in synne and youre synful usage, for which ye be roten in youre synne, as a beest in his dong./ Swiche manere of thoghtes maken a man to have shame of his synne, and no delit, as God seith by the prophete Ezechiel,/ "Ye shal remembre yow of youre weyes, and they shuln displese yow." Soothly synnes been the weyes that leden folk to helle./

The seconde cause that oghte make a man to have desdeyn of synne is this: that, as seith Seint Peter, "whoso that dooth synne is thral of synne"; and synne put a man in greet thraldom./ And therfore seith the prophete Ezechiel: "I wente sorweful in desdayn of myself." Certes, wel oghte a man have desdayn of synne and withdrawe hym from that thraldom and vileynye./ And lo, what seith Seneca in this matere? He seith thus: "Though I wiste that neither God ne man ne sholde nevere knowe it, yet wolde I have desdayn for to do synne."/ And the same Seneca also seith, "I am born to gretter thynges than to be thral to my body, or than for to maken of my body a thral."/ Ne a fouler thral may no man ne womman maken of his body than for to yeven his body to synne./ Al were it the fouleste cherl or the fouleste womman that lyveth, and leest of value, yet is he thanne moore foul and moore in servitute./ Evere fro the hyer degree that man falleth, the moore is he thral, and moore to God and to the world vile and abhomynable./ O goode God, wel oghte man have desdayn of synne, sith that thurgh synne ther he was free now is he maked bonde./ And therfore seyth Seint Augustyn: "If thou hast desdayn of thy servant, if he agilte or synne, have thou thanne desdayn that thou thyself sholdest do synne."/ Tak reward of thy value, that thou ne be to foul to thyself./ Allas, wel oghten they thanne have desdayn to been servauntz and thralles to synne, and soore been ashamed of hemself/ that God of his endelees goodnesse hath set hem in heigh estaat, or yeven hem wit, strengthe of body, heele, beautee, prosperitee,/ and boghte hem fro the deeth with his herte-blood, that they so unkyndely, agayns his gentilesse, quiten hym so vileynsly to slaughtre of hir owene soules./ O goode God, ye wommen that been of so greet beautee, remembreth yow of the proverbe of Salomon. He seith,/ "Likneth a fair womman that is a fool of hire body lyk to a ryng of gold that were in the groyn of a soughe."/ For right as a soughe wroteth in everich ordure, so wroteth she hire beautee in the stynkynge ordure of synne./

The thridde cause that oghte moeve a man to Contricioun is drede of the day of doom and of the horrible peynes of helle./ For as Seint

130 poynaunt: piercing
131 agilt: sinned against
133 causes: considerations or topics for meditation that will lead one to contrition
135 Ezechie: Ezekiel
138 spewyng: vomit
149 bonde: bondsman, slave
151 Tak reward of:: have regard for
153 heele: health
154 agayns: in return for vileynsly: cruelly to slaughtre: to the slaughter
156 groyn of a soughe: snout of a sow
157 wroteth: roots

Jerome seith, "At every tyme that me remembreth of the day of doom I quake;/ for whan I ete or drynke, or what so that I do, evere semeth me that the trompe sowneth in myn ere:/ 'Riseth up, ye that been dede, and cometh to the juggement.' "/ O goode God, muchel oghte a man to drede swich a juggement, "ther as we shullen been alle," as Seint Poul seith, "biforn the seete of oure Lord Jhesu Crist";/ whereas he shal make a general congregacioun, whereas no man may been absent./ For certes there availleth noon essoyne ne excusacioun./ And nat oonly that oure defautes shullen be jugged, but eek that alle oure werkes shullen openly be knowe./ And, as seith Seint Bernard, "Ther ne shal no pledynge availle, ne no sleighte; we shullen yeven rekenynge of everich ydel word."/ Ther shul we han a juge that may nat been deceyved ne corrupt. And why? For, certes, alle oure thoghtes been discovered as to hym, ne for preyere ne for meede he shal nat been corrupt./ And therfore seith Salomon, "The wratthe of God ne wol nat spare no wight, for preyere ne for yifte"; and therfore, at the day of doom ther nys noon hope to escape./ Wherfore, as seith Seint Anselm, "Ful greet angwyssh shul the synful folk have at that tyme;/ ther shal the stierne and wrothe juge sitte above, and under hym the horrible pit of helle open to destroyen hym that moot biknowen his synnes, whiche synnes openly been shewed biforn God and biforn every creature;/ and in the left syde mo develes than herte may bithynke, for to harye and drawe the synful soules to the peyne of helle;/ and withinne the hertes of folk shal be the bityngc conscience, and withouteforth shal be the world al brennynge./ Whider shal thanne the wrecched synful man flee to hiden hym? Certes, he may nat hyden hym; he moste come forth and shewen hym."/ For certes, as seith Seint Jerome, "the erthe shal casten hym out of hym, and the see also, and the eyr also, that shal be ful of thonder-clappes and lightnynges."/ Now soothly, whoso wel remembreth hym of thise thynges, I gesse that his synne shal nat turne hym into delit, but to greet sorwe for drede of the peyne of helle./ And therfore seith Job to God, "Suffre, Lord, that I may a while biwaille and wepe, er I go withoute returnyng to the derke lond, covered with the derknesse of deeth,/ to the lond of mysese and of derknesse, whereas is the shadwe of deeth, whereas ther is noon ordre or ordinaunce but grisly drede that evere shal laste."/ Loo, heere may ye seen that Job preyde respit a while to biwepe and waille his trespas, for soothly oo day of respit is bettre than al the tresor of this world./ And forasmuche as a man may acquiten hymself biforn God by penitence in this world, and nat by tresor, therfore sholde he preye to God to yeve hym respit a while to biwepe and biwaillen his trespas./ For certes, al the sorwe that a man myghte make fro the bigynnyng of the world nys but a litel thyng at regard of the sorwe of helle./ The cause why that Job clepeth helle the "lond of derknesse":/ understondeth that he clepeth it "lond" or erthe, for it is stable and nevere shal faille; "derk," for he that is in helle hath defaute of light material./ For certes, the derke light that shal come out of the fyr that evere shal brenne shal turne hym al to peyne that is in helle for it sheweth him to the horrible develes that hym tormenten./ "Covered with the derknesse of deeth" — that is to seyn, that he that is in helle shal have defaute of the sighte of God, for certes the sighte of God is the lyf perdurable./ "The derknesse of deeth" been the synnes that the wrecched man hath doon, whiche that destourben hym to see the face of God, right as dooth a derk clowde bitwixe us and the sonne./ "Lond of misese," by cause that ther been three maneres of defautes, agayn three thynges that folk of this world han in this present lyf; that is to seyn, honours, delices, and richesses./ Agayns honour, have they in helle shame and confusioun./ For wel ye woot that men clepen honour the reverence that man doth to man, but in helle is noon honour ne reverence. For certes, namoore reverence shal be doon there to a kyng than to a knave./ For which God seith by the prophete Jeremye, "Thilke folk that me despisen shul been in despit."/ Honour is eek cleped greet lordshipe; ther shal no wight serven other, but of harm and torment. Honour is eek cleped greet dignytee and heighnesse, but in helle shul they been al fortroden of develes./ And

162 seete: throne
164 essoyne: legal excuse for failure to appear at court
171 harye: drag
172 withouteforth: outside

182 light material: physical light
190 fortroden of: trod upon by, trampled by

God seith, "The horrible develes shulle goon and comen upon the hevedes of the dampned folk." And this is for as muche as the hyer that they were in this present lyf, the moore shulle they been abated and defouled in helle./ Agayns the richesse of this world shul they han mysese of poverte, and this poverte shal been in foure thynges:/ In defaute of tresor, of which that David seith, "The riche folk, that embraceden and oneden al hire herte to tresor of this world, shul slepe in the slepynge of deeth; and nothyng ne shal they fynden in hir handes of al hir tresor."/ And moreover the myseyse of helle shal been in defaute of mete and drinke./ For God seith thus by Moyses: "They shul been wasted with hunger, and the briddes of helle shul devouren hem with bitter deeth, and the galle of the dragon shal been hire drynke, and the venym of the dragon hire morsels."/ And forther over, hire myseyse shal been in defaute of clothyng, for they shulle be naked in body as of clothyng, save the fyr in which they brenne, and othere filthes;/ and naked shul they been of soule, as of alle manere vertues, which that is the clothyng of the soule. Where been thanne the gaye robes, and the softe shetes, and the smale shertes?/ Loo, what seith God of hem by the prophete Ysaye: that "under hem shul been strawed motthes, and hire covertures shulle been of wormes of helle."/ And forther over, hir myseyse shal been in defaute of freendes. For he nys nat povre that hath goode freendes; but there is no frend,/ for neither God ne no creature shal been freend to hem, and everich of hem shal haten oother with deedly hate./ "The sones and the doghtren shullen rebellen agayns fader and mooder, and kynrede agayns kynrede, and chiden and despisen everich of hem oother bothe day and nyght," as God seith by the prophete Michias./ And the lovynge children, that whilom loveden so flesshly everich oother, wolden everich of hem eten oother if they myghte./ For how sholden they love hem togidre in the peyne of helle, whan they hated everich of hem oother in the prosperitee of this lyf?/ For truste wel, hir flesshly love was deedly hate, as seith the prophete David: "Whoso that loveth wikkednesse, he hateth his soule."/ And whoso hateth his owene soule, certes, he may love noon oother wight in no manere./ And therfore, in helle is no solas ne no freendshipe, but evere the moore flesshly kynredes that been in helle, the moore cursynges, the more chidynges, and the moore deedly hate ther is among hem./ And forther over, they shul have defaute of alle manere delices. For certes, delices been after the appetites of the fyve wittes, as sighte, herynge, smellynge, savorynge, and touchynge./ But in helle hir sighte shal be ful of derknesse and of smoke, and therfore ful of teeres; and hir herynge ful of waymentynge and of gryntynge of teeth, as seith Jhesu Crist./ Hir nosethirles shullen be ful of stynkynge stynk; and, as seith Ysaye the prophete, "hir savoryng shal be ful of bitter galle";/ and touchynge of al hir body ycovered with "fir that nevere shal quenche and with wormes that nevere shul dyen," as God seith by the mouth of Ysaye./ And for as muche as they shul nat wene that they may dyen for peyne, and by hir deeth flee fro peyne, that may they understonden by the word of Job, that seith, "ther as is the shadwe of deeth."/ Certes, a shadwe hath the liknesse of the thyng of which it is shadwe, but shadwe is nat the same thyng of which it is shadwe./ Right so fareth the peyne of helle; it is lyk deeth for the horrible angwissh, and why? For it peyneth hem evere, as though they sholde dye anon; but certes, they shal nat dye./ For, as seith Seint Gregorie, "To wrecche caytyves shal be deeth withoute deeth, and ende withouten ende, and defaute withoute failynge./ For hir deeth shal alwey lyven, and hir ende shal everemo bigynne, and hir defaute shal nat faille."/ And therfore seith Seint John the Evaungelist, "They shullen folwe deeth, and they shul nat fynde hym; and they shul desiren to dye, and deeth shal flee fro hem."/ And eek Job seith that in helle is noon ordre of rule./ And al be it so that God hath creat alle thynges in right ordre, and no thyng withouten ordre, but alle thynges been ordeyned and nombred; yet, nathelees, they that been dampned been nothyng in ordre, ne holden noon ordre,/ for the erthe ne shal bere hem no fruyt./ For, as the prophete David seith, "God shal destroie the fruyt of the erthe as fro hem; ne water ne

193 oneden: united
197 smale: delicate
198 strawed: strewn motthes: maggots covertures: bedclothes, covers
201 Michias: Micah

209 nose-thirles: nostrils

shal yeve hem no moisture, ne the eyr no refresshyng, ne fyr no light."/ For, as seith Seint Basilie, "The brennynge of the fyr of this world shal God yeven in helle to hem that been dampned,/ but the light and the cleernesse shal be yeven in hevene to his children," right as the goode man yeveth flessh to his children and bones to his houndes./ And for they shullen have noon hope to escape, seith Seint Job atte laste that "ther shal horrour and grisly drede dwellen withouten ende."/ Horrour is alwey drede of harm that is to come, and this drede shal evere dwelle in the hertes of hem that been dampned. And therfore han they lorn al hire hope, for sevene causes./ First, for God, that is hir juge, shal be withouten mercy to hem; and they may nat plese hym ne noon of his halwes; ne they ne may yeve no thyng for hir raunsoun;/ ne they have no voys to speke to hym; ne they may nat fle fro peyne; ne they have no goodnesse in hem, that they mowe shewe to delivere hem fro peyne./ And therfore seith Salomon: "The wikked man dyeth, and whan he is deed, he shal have noon hope to escape fro peyne."/ Whoso thanne wolde wel understande thise peynes and bithynke hym weel that he hath deserved thilke peynes for his synnes, certes, he sholde have moore talent to siken and to wepe than for to syngen and to pleye./ For, as that seith Salomon, "Whoso that hadde the science to knowe the peynes that been establissed and ordeyned for synne, he wolde make sorwe."/ "Thilke science," as seith Seint Augustyn, "maketh a man to waymenten in his herte."/

The fourthe point that oghte maken a man to have contricion is the sorweful remembraunce of the good that he hath left to doon heere in erthe, and eek the good that he hath lorn./ Soothly, the goode werkes that he hath lost, outher they been the goode werkes that he wroghte er he fel into deedly synne or elles the goode werkes that he wroghte while he lay in synne./ Soothly, the goode werkes that he dide biforn that he fil in synne been al mortefied and astoned and dulled by the ofte synnyng./ The othere goode werkes, that he wroghte whil he lay in deedly synne, thei been outrely dede, as to the lyf perdurable in hevene./ Thanne thilke goode werkes that been mortefied by ofte synnyng, whiche goode werkes he dide whil he was in charitee, ne mowe nevere quyken agayn withouten verray penitence./ And therof seith God by the mouth of Ezechiel, that "if the rightful man returne agayn from his rightwisnesse and werke wikkednesse, shal he lyve?"/ Nay, for alle the goode werkes that he hath wroght ne shul nevere been in remembraunce, for he shal dyen in his synne./ And upon thilke chapitre seith Seint Gregorie thus: that "we shulle understonde this principally;/ that whan we doon deedly synne, it is for noght thanne to rehercen or drawen into memorie the goode werkes that we han wroght biforn."/ For certes, in the werkynge of the deedly synne, ther is no trust to no good werk that we han doon biforn; that is to seyn, as for to have therby the lyf perdurable in hevene./ But nathelees, the goode werkes quyken agayn, and comen agayn, and helpen, and availlen to have the lyf perdurable in hevene, whan we han contricioun./ But soothly, the goode werkes that men doon whil they been in deedly synne, for as muche as they were doon in deedly synne, they may nevere quyke agayn./ For certes, thyng that nevere hadde lyf may nevere quykene; and nathelees, al be it that they ne availle noght to han the lyf perdurable, yet availlen they to abregge of the peyne of helle, or elles to geten temporal richesse,/ or elles that God wole the rather enlumyne and lightne the herte of the synful man to have repentaunce;/ and eek they availlen for to usen a man to doon goode werkes, that the feend have the lasse power of his soule./ And thus the curteis Lord Jhesu Crist ne wole that no good werk be lost, for in somwhat it shal availle./ But, for as muche as the goode werkes that men doon whil they been in good lyf been al mortefied by synne folwynge, and eek sith that alle the goode werkes that men doon whil they been in deedly synne been outrely dede as for to have the lyf perdurable,/ wel may that man that no good werk ne dooth synge thilke newe Frenshe song, *"Jay tout perdu mon temps et mon labour."*/ For certes, synne bireveth a man bothe goodnesse of nature and eek the goodnesse of grace./ For soothly, the grace of

221 Seint Basilie: St. Basil
228 talent: desire
230 waymenten: lament
233 mortefied: killed astoned: paralyzed, rendered lifeless
235 quyken: revive
243 abregge: shorten
248 *Jay tout . . . labour:* I have altogether wasted my time and effort.

the Hooly Goost fareth lyk fyr, that may nat been ydel; for fyr fayleth anoon as it forleteth his wirkynge, and right so grace fayleth anoon as it forleteth his werkynge./ Then leseth the synful man the goodnesse of glorie, that oonly is bihight to goode men that labouren and werken./ Wel may he be sory thanne, that oweth al his lif to God as longe as he hath lyved, and eek as longe as he shal lyve, that no goodnesse ne hath to paye with his dette to God to whom he oweth al his lyf./ For trust wel, "He shal yeven acountes," as seith Seint Bernard, "of alle the goodes that han be yeven hym in this present lyf, and how he hath hem despended,/ [in] so muche that ther shal nat perisse an heer of his heed, ne a moment of an houre ne shal nat perisse of his tyme, that he ne shal yeve of it a rekenyng."/

The fifthe thyng that oghte moeve a man to contricioun is remembrance of the passioun that oure Lord Jhesu Crist suffred for oure synnes./ For, as seith Seint Bernard, "Whil that I lyve I shal have remembrance of the travailles that oure Lord Crist suffred in prechyng:/ his werynesse in travaillyng, his temptaciouns whan he fasted, his longe wakynges whan he preyde, hise teeres whan that he weep for pitee of good peple,/ the wo and the shame and the filthe that men seyden to hym, of the foule spittyng that men spitte in his face, of the buffettes that men yaven hym, of the foule mowes, and of the repreves that men to hym seyden,/ of the nayles with whiche he was nayled to the croys, and of al the remenant of his passioun that he suffred for my synnes, and no thyng for his gilt."/ And ye shul understonde that in mannes synne is every manere of ordre or ordinaunce turned up-so-doun./ For it is sooth that God, and resoun, and sensualitee, and the body of man been so ordeyned that everich of thise foure thynges sholde have lordshipe over that oother,/ as thus: God sholde have lordshipe over resoun, and resoun over sensualitee, and sensualitee over the body of man./ But soothly, whan man synneth, al this ordre or ordinaunce is turned up-so-doun./ And therfore thanne, for as muche as the resoun of man ne wol nat be subget ne obeisant to God, that is his lord by right, therfore leseth it the lordshipe that it sholde have over sensualitee, and eek over the body of man./ And why? For sensualitee rebelleth thanne agayns resoun, and by that way leseth resoun the lordshipe over sensualitee and over the body./ For right as resoun is rebel to God, right so is bothe sensualitee rebel to resoun and the body also./ And certes this disordinaunce and this rebellioun oure Lord Jhesu Crist aboghte upon his precious body ful deere, and herkneth in which wise./ For as muche thanne as resoun is rebel to God, therfore is man worthy to have sorwe and to be deed./ This suffred oure Lord Jhesu Crist for man, after that he hadde be bitraysed of his disciple, and distreyned and bounde so that his blood brast out at every nayl of his handes, as seith Seint Augustyn./ And forther over, for as muchel as resoun of man ne wol nat daunte sensualitee whan it may, therfore is man worthy to have shame; and this suffred oure Lord Jhesu Crist for man, whan they spetten in his visage./ And forther over, for as muchel thanne as the caytyf body of man is rebel bothe to resoun and to sensualitee, therfore is it worthy the deeth./ And this suffred oure Lord Jhesu Crist for man upon the croys, where as ther was no part of his body free withouten greet peyne and bitter passioun./ And al this suffred Jhesu Crist, that nevere forfeted. And therfore resonably may be seyd of Jhesu in this manere: "To muchel am I peyned for the thynges that I nevere deserved, and to muche defouled for shendshipe that man is worthy to have."/ And therfore may the synful man wel seye, as seith Seint Bernard, "Acursed be the bitternesse of my synne, for which ther moste be suffred so muchel bitternesse."/ For certes, after the diverse [disordinaunces] of oure wikkednesses was the passioun of Jhesu Crist ordeyned in diverse thynges./ As thus: Certes, synful mannes soule is bitraysed of the devel by coveitise of temporeel prosperitee, and scorned by deceite whan he cheseth flesshly delices; and yet is it tormented by inpacience of adversitee and bispet by servage and subjeccioun of synne; and atte laste it is slayn fynally./ For

257 wakynges: vigils
258 mowes: grimaces repreves: insults

267 disordinaunce: rebelliousness against order aboghte upon: purchased with
270 spetten: spat
273 forfeted: sinned shendshipe: shame
276 bispet: spat upon

this disordinaunce of synful man was Jhesu Crist first bitraysed, and after that was he bounde, that cam for to unbynden us of synne and peyne./ Thanne was he byscorned, that oonly sholde han been honoured in alle thynges and of alle thynges./ Thanne was his visage, that oghte be desired to be seyn of al mankynde, in which visage aungels desiren to looke, vileynsly bispet./ Thanne was he scourged, that no thyng hadde agilt; and finally, thanne was he crucified and slayn./ Thanne was acompliced the word of Ysaye, "He was wounded for oure mysdedes and defouled for oure felonies."/ Now sith that Jhesu Crist took upon hymself the peyne of alle oure wikkednesses, muchel oghte synful man wepen and biwayle, that for his synnes Goddes sone of hevene sholde al this peyne endure./

The sixte thyng that oghte moeve a man to contricioun is the hope of three thynges; that is to seyn, foryifnesse of synne, and the yifte of grace wel for to do, and the glorie of hevene, with which God shal gerdone man for his goode dedes./ And for as muche as Jhesu Crist yeveth us thise yiftes of his largesse and of his sovereyn bountee, therfore is he cleped *Jhesus Nazarenus rex Judeorum./Jhesus* is to seyn "saveour" or "salvacioun," on whom men shul hope to have foryifnesse of synnes, which that is proprely salvacioun of synnes./ And therfore seyde the aungel to Joseph, "Thou shalt clepen his name Jhesus, that shal saven his peple of hir synnes."/ And heerof seith Seint Peter: "Ther is noon oother name under hevene that is yeve to any man, by which a man may be saved, but oonly Jhesus."/ *Nazarenus* is as muche for to seye as "florisshynge," in which a man shal hope that he that yeveth hym remissioun of synnes shal yeve hym eek grace wel for to do. For in the flour is hope of fruyt in tyme comynge, and in foryifnesse of synnes hope of grace wel for to do./ "I was atte dore of thyn herte," seith Jhesus, "and cleped for to entre. He that openeth to me shal have foryifnesse of synne./ I wol entre into hym by my grace and soupe with hym," by the goode werkes that he shal doon, whiche werkes been the foode of God; "and he shal soupe with me" by the grete joye that I shal yeven hym./ Thus shal man hope, for his werkes of penaunce that God shal yeven hym his regne, as he bihooteth hym in the gospel./

Now shal a man understonde in which manere shal been his contricioun. I seye that it shal been universal and total. This is to seyn, a man shal be verray repentaunt for alle his synnes that he hath doon in delit of his thoght, for delit is ful perilous./ For ther been two manere of consentynges: that oon of hem is cleped consentynge of affeccioun, whan a man is moeved to do synne, and deliteth hym longe for to thynke on that synne;/ and his reson aperceyveth it wel that it is synne agayns the lawe of God, and yet his resoun refreyneth nat his foul delit or talent, though he se wel apertly that it is agayns the reverence of God. Although his resoun ne consente noght to doon that synne in dede,/ yet seyn somme doctours that swich delit that dwelleth longe, it is ful perilous, al be it nevere so lite./ And also a man sholde sorwe namely for al that evere he hath desired agayn the lawe of God with parfit consentynge of his resoun, for therof is no doute, that it is deedly synne in consentynge./ For certes, ther is no deedly synne that it nas first in mannes thought and after that in his delit, and so forth into consentynge and into dede./ Wherfore I seye that many men ne repenten hem nevere of swiche thoghtes and delites, ne nevere shryven hem of it, but oonly of the dede of grete synnes outward./ Wherfore I seye that swiche wikked delites and wikked thoghtes been subtile bigileres of hem that shullen be dampned./ Mooreover, man oghte to sorwe for his wikkede wordes as wel as for his wikkede dedes. For certes, the repentaunce of a synguler synne, and nat repente of alle his othere synnes, or elles repenten hym of alle his othere synnes and nat of a synguler synne, may nat availle./ For certes, God almyghty is al good, and therfore he foryeveth al or elles right noght./ And heerof seith Seint Augustyn,/ "I wot certeynly that God is enemy to everich synnere." And how thanne? He that observeth o synne, shal he have foryifnesse of the remenaunt of his othere synnes? Nay./ And forther over, contricioun

278 **byscorned:** scorned
279 **vileynsly:** rudely
280 **scourged:** whipped
281 **Ysaye:** Isaiah **mysdedes:** sins
284 ***Jhesus Nazarenus rex Judeorum:*** Jesus the Nazarene, king of the Jews
290 **soupe:** sup
294 **refreyneth:** restrains **apertly:** clearly
299 **bigileres:** deceivers

sholde be wonder sorweful and angwissous; and therfore yeveth hym God pleynly his mercy; and therfore, whan my soule was angwissous withinne me, I hadde remembrance of God that my preyere myghte come to hym./ Forther over, contricioun moste be continueel, and that man have stedefast purpos to shriven hym, and for to amenden hym of his lyf./ For soothly, whil contricioun lasteth, man may evere have hope of foryifnesse; and of this comth hate of synne, that destroyeth synne, bothe in himself and eek in oother folk at his power./ For which seith David: "Ye that loven God, hateth wikkednesse." For trusteth wel, to love God is for to love that he loveth, and hate that he hateth./

The laste thyng that men shal understonde in contricioun is this: wherof avayleth contricioun. I seye that somtyme contricioun delivereth a man fro synne;/ of which that David seith, "I seye," quod David (that is to seyn, I purposed fermely) "to shryve me, and thow, Lord, relessedest my synne."/ And right so as contricion availleth noght withouten sad purpos of shrifte, if man have oportunitee, right so litel worth is shrifte or satisfaccioun withouten contricioun./ And mooreover contricion destroyeth the prisoun of helle, and maketh wayk and fieble alle the strengthes of the develes, and restoreth the yiftes of the Hooly Goost and of alle goode vertues;/ and it clenseth the soule of synne, and delivereth the soule fro the peyne of helle, and fro the compaignye of the devel, and fro the servage of synne, and restoreth it to alle goodes espirituels, and to the compaignye and communyoun of hooly chirche./ And forther over, it maketh hym that whilom was sone of ire to be sone of grace; and alle thise thynges been preved by hooly writ./ And therfore, he that wolde sette his entente to thise thynges, he were ful wys; for soothly he ne sholde nat thanne in al his lyf have corage to synne, but yeven his body and al his herte to the service of Jhesu Crist, and therof doon hym hommage./ For soothly oure sweete Lord Jhesu Crist hath spared us so debonairly in oure folies that if he ne hadde pitee of mannes soule, a sory song we myghten alle synge./

Explicit prima pars Penitentie; Et sequitur secunda pars eiusdem.

The seconde partie of Penitence is Confessioun, that is signe of contricioun./ Now shul ye understonde what is Confessioun, and wheither it oghte nedes be doon or noon, and whiche thynges been covenable to verray Confessioun./

First shaltow understonde that Confessioun is verray shewynge of synnes to the preest./ This is to seyn "verray," for he moste confessen hym of alle the condiciouns that bilongen to his synne, as ferforth as he kan./ Al moot be seyd, and no thyng excused ne hyd ne forwrapped, and noght avaunte thee of thy goode werkes./ And forther over, it is necessarie to understonde whennes that synnes spryngen, and how they encreessen, and whiche they been./

Of the spryngynge of synnes seith Seint Paul in this wise: that "Right as by a man synne entred first into this world, and thurgh that synne deeth, right so thilke deeth entred into alle men that synneden."/ And this man was Adam, by whom synne entred into this world, whan he brak the comaundementz of God./ And therfore, he that first was so myghty that he sholde nat have dyed, bicam swich oon that he moste nedes dye, wheither he wolde or noon, and al his progenye in this world, that in thilke man synneden./ Looke that in th'estaat of innocence, whan Adam and Eve naked weren in Paradys, and nothyng ne hadden shame of hir nakednesse,/ how that the serpent, that was moost wily of alle othere beestes that God hadde maked, seyde to the womman, "Why comaunded God to yow ye sholde nat eten of every tree in Paradys?"/ The womman answerde: "Of the fruyt," quod she, "of the trees in Paradys we feden us, but soothly, of the fruyt of the tree that is in the myddel of Paradys, God forbad us for to ete, ne nat touchen it, lest per aventure we sholde dyen."/ The serpent seyde to the womman, "Nay, nay, ye shul nat dyen of deeth; for sothe, God woot that what day that ye eten therof, youre eyen shul opene and ye shul been as goddes, knowynge good and harm."/ The womman thanne

304 angwissous: anxious
Explicit, *etc.*: Here ends the first part of Penance; and its second part follows.

320 forwrapped: concealed

saugh that the tree was good to feedyng, and fair to the eyen, and delitable to the sighte. She took of the fruyt of the tree, and eet it, and yaf to hire housbonde, and he eet, and anoon the eyen of hem bothe openeden./ And whan that they knewe that they were naked, they sowed of fige leves a maner of breches to hiden hire membres./ There may ye seen that deedly synne hath, first, suggestion of the feend, as sheweth heere by the naddre; and afterward, the delit of the flessh, as sheweth heere by Eve; and after that, the consentynge of resoun, as sheweth heere by Adam./ For trust wel, though so were that the feend tempted Eve — that is to seyn, the flessh — and the flessh hadde delit in the beautee of the fruyt defended, yet certes, til that resoun — that is to seyn, Adam — consented to the etynge of the fruyt, yet stood he in th'estaat of innocence./ Of thilke Adam tooke we thilke synne original, for of hym flesshly descended be we alle, and engendred of vile and corrupt mateere./ And whan the soule is put in oure body, right anon is contract original synne; and that that was erst but oonly peyne of concupiscence is afterward bothe peyne and synne./ And therfore be we alle born sones of wratthe and of dampnacioun perdurable, if it nere baptesme that we receyven, which bynymeth us the culpe. But for sothe, the peyne dwelleth with us, as to temptacioun, which peyne highte concupiscence./ And this concupiscence, whan it is wrongfully disposed or ordeyned in man, it maketh hym coveite, by coveitise of flessh, flesshly synne, by sighte of his eyen as to erthely thynges, and eek coveitise of hynesse by pride of herte./

Now, as for to speken of the firste coveitise, that is concupiscence, after the lawe of oure membres that weren lawefulliche ymaked and by rightful juggement of God,/ I seye, forasmuche as man is nat obeisaunt to God, that is his lord, therfore is the flessh to hym disobeisaunt thurgh concupiscence, which yet is cleped norrissynge of synne and occasioun of synne./ Therfore, al the while that a man hath in hym the peyne of concupiscence, it is impossible but he be tempted somtime and moeved in his flessh to synne./ And this thyng may nat faille as longe as he lyveth; it may wel wexe fieble and faille by vertu of baptesme and by the grace of God thurgh penitence,/ but fully ne shal it nevere quenche, that he ne shal som tyme be moeved in hymself, but if he were al refreyded by siknesse, or by malefice of sorcerie, or colde drynkes./ For lo, what seith Seint Paul: "The flessh coveiteth agayn the spirit, and the spirit agayn the flessh; they been so contrarie and so stryven that a man may nat alway doon as he wolde."/ The same Seint Paul, after his grete penaunce in water and in lond — in water by nyght and by day in greet peril and in greet peyne; in lond, in famyne and thurst, in coold and cloothlees, and ones stoned almoost to the deeth/ — yet seyde he, "Allas, I caytyf man! Who shal delivere me fro the prisoun of my caytyf body?"/ And Seint Jerome, whan he longe tyme hadde woned in desert, where as he hadde no compaignye but of wilde beestes, where as he ne hadde no mete but herbes, and water to his drynke, ne no bed but the naked erthe, for which his flessh was blak as an Ethiopeen for heete, and ny destroyed for coold,/ yet seyde he that "the brennynge of lecherie boyled in al his body."/ Wherfore I woot wel sykerly that they been deceyved that seyn that they ne be nat tempted in hir body./ Witnesse on Seint Jame the Apostel, that seith that "every wight is tempted in his owene concupiscence"; that is to seyn, that everich of us hath matere and occasioun to be tempted of the norissynge of synne that is in his body./ And therfore seith Seint John the Evaungelist, "If that we seyn that we be withoute synne, we deceyve us selve, and trouthe is nat in us."/

Now shal ye understonde in what manere that synne wexeth or encreesseth in man. The firste thyng is thilke norissynge of synne of which I spak biforn, thilke flesshly concupiscence./ And after that comth the subjeccioun of the devel — this is to seyn, the develes bely, with which he bloweth in man the fir of flesshly concupiscence./ And after that, a man bithynketh hym wheither he wol doon or no thilke thing to which he is tempted./ And thanne, if that a man withstonde and weyve the firste entisynge of his flessh and of the feend, thanne is it no synne;

330 membres: genitals
335 bynymeth: takes away from culpe: guilt
341 refreyded: cooled malefice: evildoing
351 bely: bellows

and if it so be that he do nat so, thanne feeleth he anoon a flambe of delit./ And thanne is it good to be war and kepen hym wel, or elles he wol falle anon into consentynge of synne; and thanne wol he do it, if he may have tyme and place./ And of this matere seith Moyses by the devel in this manere: "The feend seith, 'I wole chace and pursue the man by wikked suggestioun, and I wole hente hym by moevynge or stirynge of synne. And I wol departe my prise or my praye by deliberacioun, and my lust shal been acompliced in delit. I wol drawe my swerd in consentynge' " — / for certes, right as a swerd departeth a thyng in two peces, right so consentynge departeth God fro man — " 'and thanne wol I sleen hym with myn hand in dede of synne'; thus seith the feend."/ For certes, thanne is a man al deed in soule. And thus is synne acompliced by temptacioun, by delit, and by consentynge; and thanne is the synne cleped actueel./

For sothe, synne is in two maneres; outher it is venial or deedly synne. Soothly, whan man loveth any creature moore than Jhesu Crist oure Creatour, thanne is it deedly synne. And venial synne is it, if man love Jhesu Crist lasse than hym oghte./ For sothe, the dede of this venial synne is ful perilous, for it amenuseth the love that men sholde han to God moore and moore./ And therfore, if a man charge hymself with manye swiche venial synnes, certes, but if so be that he somtyme descharge hym of hem by shrifte, they mowe ful lightly amenuse in hym al the love that he hath to Jhesu Crist;/ and in this wise skippeth venial into deedly synne. For certes, the moore that a man chargeth his soule with venial synnes, the moore is he enclyned to fallen into deedly synne./ And therfore lat us nat be necligent to deschargen us of venial synnes. For the proverbe seith that "Manye smale maken a greet."/ And herkne this ensample. A greet wawe of the see comth som tyme with so greet a violence that it drencheth the ship. And the same harm doon som tyme the smale dropes of water, that entren thurgh a litel crevace into the thurrok, and in the botme of the ship, if men be so necligent that they ne descharge hem nat by tyme./ And therfore, although ther be a difference bitwixe thise two causes of drenchynge, algates the ship is dreynt./ Right so fareth it somtyme of deedly synne, and of anoyouse veniale synnes, whan they multiplie in a man so greetly that [the love of] thilke worldly thynges that he loveth, thurgh whiche he synneth venyally, is as greet in his herte as the love of God, or moore./ And therfore, the love of every thyng that is nat biset in God, ne doon principally for Goddes sake, although that a man love it lasse than God, yet is it venial synne;/ and deedly synne whan the love of any thyng weyeth in the herte of man as muchel as the love of God, or moore./ "Deedly synne," as seith Seint Augustyn, "is whan a man turneth his herte fro God, which that is verray sovereyn bountee, that may nat chaunge, and yeveth his herte to thyng that may chaunge and flitte."/ And certes, that is every thyng save God of hevene. For sooth is that if a man yeve his love, the which that he oweth al to God with al his herte, unto a creature, certes, as muche of his love as he yeveth to thilke creature, so muche he bireveth fro God;/ and therfore dooth he synne. For he that is dettour to God ne yeldeth nat to God al his dette; that is to seyn, al the love of his herte./

Now sith man understondeth generally which is venial synne, thanne is it covenable to tellen specially of synnes whiche that many a man peraventure ne demeth hem nat synnes, and ne shryveth him nat of the same thynges, and yet natheless they been synnes / soothly, as thise clerkes writen; this is to seyn, that at every tyme that a man eteth or drynketh moore than suffiseth to the sustenaunce of his body, in certein he dooth synne./ And eek whan he speketh moore than it nedeth, it is synne. Eke whan he herkneth nat benignely the compleint of the povre;/ eke whan he is in heele of body and wol nat faste whan other folk faste, withouten cause resonable; eke whan he slepeth moore than nedeth, or whan he comth by thilke enchesoun to late to chirche, or to othere werkes of charite;/ eke whan he useth his wyf withouten sovereyn desir of engendrure to the honour of God or for the entente to yelde to his wyf the dette of his body;/ eke whan he wol nat visite the sike and the prisoner, if he may; eke if he love wyf or child, or oother

355 departe: separate (as a single sheep from a flock) prise: prize, what is to be captured
360 amenuse: diminish
363 thurrok: bilge (of a ship)
368 flitte: pass away

worldly thyng, moore than resoun requireth; eke if he flatere or blandise moore than hym oghte for any necessitee;/ eke if he amenuse or withdrawe the almesse of the povre; eke if he apparailleth his mete moore deliciously than nede is, or ete it to hastily by likerousnesse;/ eke if he tale vanytees at chirche or at Goddes service, or that he be a talker of ydel wordes of folye or of vileynye, for he shal yelden acountes of it at the day of doom;/ eke whan he biheteth or assureth to do thynges that he may nat parfourne; eke whan that he by lightnesse or folie mysseyeth or scorneth his neighebor;/ eke whan he hath any wikked suspecioun of thyng ther he ne woot of it no soothfastnesse:/ thise thynges, and mo without oute nombre, been synnes, as seith Seint Augustyn./

Now shal men understonde that, al be it so that noon erthely man may eschue alle venial synnes, yet may he refreyne hym by the brennynge love that he hath to oure Lord Jhesu Crist, and by preyeres and confessioun and othere goode werkes, so that it shal but litel greve./ For, as seith Seint Augustyn, "If a man love God in swich manere that al that evere he dooth is in the love of God and for the love of God verraily, for he brenneth in the love of God,/ looke how muche that a drope of water that falleth in a fourneys ful of fyr anoyeth or greveth, so muche anoyeth a venial synne unto a man that is parfit in the love of Jhesu Crist."/ Men may also refreyne venial synne by receyvynge worthily of the precious body of Jhesu Crist;/ by receyvynge eek of hooly water, by almesdede, by general confessioun of *Confiteor* at masse and at complyn, and by blessynge of bisshopes and of preestes, and by oothere goode werkes./

Explicit secunda pars Penitentie.

Sequitur de septem peccatis mortalibus et eorum dependenciis, circumstanciis, et speciebus.

Now is it bihovely thyng to telle whiche been the sevene deedly synnes, this is to seyn, chieftaynes of synnes. Alle they renne in o lees, but in diverse manneres. Now been they cleped chieftaynes, for as muche as they been chief and spryng of alle othere synnes./ Of the roote of thise sevene synnes, thanne, is Pride the general roote of alle harmes. For of this roote spryngen certein braunches, as Ire, Envye, Accidie or Slewthe, Avarice or Coveitise (to commune understondynge), Glotonye, and Lecherye./ And everich of thise chief synnes hath his braunches and his twigges, as shal be declared in hire chapitres folwynge./

De Superbia.

And thogh so be that no man kan outrely telle the nombre of the twigges and of the harmes that cometh of Pride, yet wol I shewe a partie of hem, as ye shul understonde./ Ther is inobedience, avauntynge, ypocrisie, despit, arrogance, inpudence, swellynge of herte, insolence, elacioun, inpacience, strif, contumacie, presumpcioun, irreverence, pertinacie, veyneglorie, and many another twig that I kan nat declare./ Inobedient is he that disobeyeth for despit to the comandementz of God, and to his sovereyns, and to his goostly fader./ Avauntour is he that bosteth of the harm or of the bountee that he hath doon./ Ypocrite is he that hideth to shewe hym swich as he is and sheweth hym swich as he noght is./ Despitous is he that hath desdeyn of his neighebor — that is to seyn, of his evene-Cristene — or hath despit to doon that hym oghte to do./ Arrogant is he that thynketh that he hath thilke bountees in hym that he hath noght, or weneth that he sholde have hem by his desertes, or elles he demeth that he be that he nys nat./ Inpudent is he that for his pride hath no shame of his

376 blandise: blandish, fawn upon
378 tale: talk

Explicit, *etc.*: Here ends the second part on Penance. Now follows the section on the seven deadly sins and their subdivisions, circumstances, and species.
387 bihovely: useful, necessary Alle they renne in o lees: they all run on one leash; see n. spryng: wellspring
De Superbia: Concerning pride.

382 refreyne: bridle, restrain
384 anoyeth: damages
386 *Confiteor:* I confess, first word of the general confession of sins complyn: compline, the last service sung before retiring

391 elacioun: defined at 400 contumacie: defined at 402 pertinacie: defined at 404
395 evene-Cristene: fellow Christian

synnes./ Swellynge of herte is whan a man rejoyseth hym of harm that he hath doon./ Insolent is he that despiseth in his juggement alle othere folk, as to regard of his value, and of his konnyng, and of his spekyng, and of his beryng./ Elacioun is whan he ne may neither suffre to have maister ne felawe./ Inpacient is he that wol nat been ytaught ne undernome of his vice, and by strif werreieth trouthe wityngly, and deffendeth his folye./ *Contumax* is he that thurgh his indignacioun is agayns everich auctoritee or power of hem that been his sovereyns./ Presumpcioun is whan a man undertaketh an emprise that hym oghte nat do, or elles that he may nat do; and this is called surquidrie. Irreverence is whan men do nat honour there as hem oghte to doon, and waiten to be reverenced./ Pertinacie is whan man deffendeth his folie and trusteth to muchel to his owene wit./ Veyneglorie is for to have pompe and delit in his temporeel hynesse, and glorifie hym in this worldly estaat./ Janglynge is whan a man speketh to muche biforn folk, and clappeth as a mille, and taketh no keep what he seith./

And yet is ther a privee spece of Pride that waiteth first to be salewed er he wole salewe, al be he lasse worth than that oother is, peraventure; and eek he waiteth or desireth to sitte, or elles to goon above hym in the wey, or kisse pax, or been encensed, or goon to offryng biforn his neighebor,/ and swiche semblable thynges, agayns his duetee, peraventure, but that he hath his herte and his entente in swich a proud desir to be magnified and honoured biforn the peple./

Now been ther two maneres of Pride: that oon of hem is withinne the herte of man, and that oother is withoute./ Of whiche, soothly, thise forseyde thynges, and mo than I have seyd, apertenen to Pride that is in the herte of man; and that othere speces of Pride been withoute./ But natheles that oon of thise speces of Pride is signe of that oother, right as the gaye leefsel atte taverne is signe of the wyn that is in the celer./ And this is in manye thynges: as in speche and contenaunce, and in outrageous array of clothyng./ For certes, if ther ne hadde be no synne in clothyng, Crist wolde nat so soone have noted and spoken of the clothyng of thilke riche man in the gospel./ And, as seith Seint Gregorie, that "precious clothyng is cowpable for the derthe of it, and for his softenesse, and for his strangenesse and degisynesse, and for the superfluitee, or for the inordinat scantnesse of it."/ Allas, may man nat seen, as in oure dayes, the synful costlewe array of clothynge, and namely in to muche superfluite, or elles in to desordinat scantnesse?/

As to the first synne, that is in superfluitee of clothynge, which that maketh it so deere, to harm of the peple;/ nat oonly the cost of embrowdynge, the degise endentynge or barrynge, owndynge, palynge, wyndynge or bendynge, and semblable wast of clooth in vanitee,/ but ther is also costlewe furrynge in hir gownes, so muche pownsonynge of chisels to maken holes, so muche daggynge of sheres;/ forthwith the superfluitee in lengthe of the forseide gownes, trailynge in the dong and in the mire, on horse and eek on foote, as wel of man as of womman, that al thilke trailyng is verraily as in effect wasted, consumed, thredbare, and roten with donge, rather than it is yeven to the povre, to greet damage of the forseyde povre folk./ And that in sondry wise; this is to seyn that the moore that clooth is wasted, the moore moot it coste to the peple for the scarsnesse./ And forther over, if so be that they wolde yeven swich pownsoned and dagged clothyng to the povre folk, it is nat convenient to were for hire estaat, ne suffisant to beete hire necessitee, to kepe hem fro the distemperance of the firmament./ Upon that oother side, to speken of the horrible disordinat scantnesse of clothyng, as been thise kutted sloppes, or haynselyns, that thurgh hire shortnesse ne covere nat the shameful mem-

399 **konnyng:** understanding
401 **undernome of:** reproved for
403 **surquidrie:** arrogance, presumption
405 **glorifie hym:** exult
407 **pax:** an object made of wood or metal and used during the Mass for the kiss of peace
408 **agayns his duetee:** beyond what is due or owed to him
411 **leefsel:** bush for a tavern sign **celer:** storeroom

414 **derthe:** costliness **strangenesse:** exotic style **degisynesse:** elaborateness
415 **costlewe:** excessively expensive **desordinat:** excessive
417 **embrowdynge:** embroidering **degise endentynge:** ostentatious notching of the borders **barrynge:** ornamenting with decorative strips **owndynge:** undulating stripes **palynge:** vertical stripes **wyndynge:** folding **bendynge:** decorative borders **semblable:** similar
418 **furrynge:** fur trimming **pownsonynge of chisels:** punching designs with blades **daggynge of sheres:** slitting with shears
421 **pownsoned:** punched with ornamental holes **dagged:** ornamented with cutouts **beete:** provide for **distemperance of the firmament:** disturbance of the heavens (bad weather)
422 **disordinat:** excessive **kutted sloppes:** loose outer coats cut short **haynselyns:** short jackets

bres of man, to wikked entente./ Allas, somme of hem shewen the boce of hir shap, and the horrible swollen membres, that semeth lik the maladie of hirnia, in the wrappynge of hir hoses;/ and eek the buttokes of hem faren as it were the hyndre part of a she-ape in the fulle of the moone./ And mooreover, the wrecched swollen membres that they shewe thurgh disgisynge, in departynge of hire hoses in whit and reed, semeth that half hir shameful privee membres weren flayne./ And if so be that they departen hire hoses in othere colours, as is whit and blak, or whit and blew, or blak and reed, and so forth,/ thanne semeth it, as by variaunce of colour, that half the partie of hire privee membres were corrupt by the fir of Seint Antony, or by cancre, or by oother swich meschaunce./ Of the hyndre part of hir buttokes, it is ful horrible for to see. For certes, in that partie of hir body ther as they purgen hir stynkynge ordure,/ that foule partie shewe they to the peple prowdly in despit of honestitee, which honestitee that Jhesu Crist and his freendes observede to shewen in hir lyve./ Now, as of the outrageous array of wommen, God woot that though the visages of somme of hem seme ful chaast and debonaire, yet notifie they in hire array of atyr likerousnesse and pride./ I sey nat that honestitee in clothynge of man or womman is uncovenable, but certes the superfluitee or disordinat scantitee of clothynge is reprevable./ Also the synne of aornement or of apparaille is in thynges that apertenen to ridynge, as in to manye delicat horses that been hoolden for delit, that been so faire, fatte, and costlewe;/ and also in many a vicious knave that is sustened by cause of hem; and in to curious harneys, as in sadeles, in crouperes, peytrels, and bridles covered with precious clothyng, and riche barres and plates of gold and of silver./ For which God seith by Zakarie the prophete, "I wol confounde the rideres of swiche horses."/ This folk taken litel reward of the ridynge of Goddes sone of hevene, and of his harneys whan he rood upon the asse, and ne hadde noon oother harneys but the povre clothes of his disciples; ne we ne rede nat that evere he rood on oother beest./ I speke this for the synne of superfluitee, and nat for resonable honestitee, whan reson it requireth./ And forther over, certes, pride is greetly notified in holdynge of greet meynee, whan they be of litel profit or of right no profit,/ and namely whan that meynee is felonous and damageous to the peple by hardynesse of heigh lordshipe or by wey of offices./ For certes, swiche lordes sellen thanne hir lordshipe to the devel of helle, whanne they sustenen the wikkednesse of hir meynee./ Or elles, whan this folk of lowe degree, as thilke that holden hostelries, sustenen the thefte of hire hostilers, and that is in many manere of deceites./ Thilke manere of folk been the flyes that folwen the hony, or elles the houndes that folwen the careyne. Swich forseyde folk stranglen spiritually hir lordshipes;/ for which thus seith David the prophete: "Wikked deeth moote come upon thilke lordshipes, and God yeve that they moote descenden into helle al doun, for in hire houses been iniquitees and shrewednesses and nat God of hevene."/ And certes, but if they doon amendement, right as God yaf his benysoun to [Laban] by the service of Jacob, and to [Pharao] by the service of Joseph, right so God wol yeve his malisoun to swiche lordshipes as sustenen the wikkednesse of hir servauntz, but they come to amendement./ Pride of the table appeereth eek ful ofte; for certes, riche men been cleped to festes, and povre folk been put awey and rebuked./ Also in excesse of diverse metes and drynkes, and namely swich manere bake-metes and dissh-metes, brennynge of wilde fir and peynted and castelled with papir, and semblable wast, so that it is abusioun for to thynke./ And eek in to greet preciousnesse of vessel and curiositee of mynstralcie, by whiche a man is stired the moore to delices of luxurie,/ if so be that he sette his herte

423 boce: bulge hirnia: hernia hoses: leggings
424 hyndre: back
425 disgisynge: style of clothing flayne: stripped of skin
427 fir of Seint Antony: erysipelas, an acute inflammation of the skin
430 notifie: make known array of atyr: appearance of their dress
431 uncovenable: unseemly reprevable: blameworthy
432 aornement: adornment costlewe: expensive
433 to: too crouperes: covers for the hindquarters of a horse peytrels: horse collars
434 Zakarie: Zechariah
437 notified: made known
438 damageous: injurious
441 careyne: carrion
442 shrewednesses: wicked deeds
443 benysoun: blessing malisoun: curse
444 cleped: invited
445 bake-metes: pies of meat, fowl, or fish dissh-metes: stews castelled with papir: adorned with battlements of paper abusioun: absurdity
446 curiositee: intricate, skillful performances luxurie: lechery

the lasse upon oure Lord Jhesu Crist, certeyn it is a synne; and certeinly the delices myghte been so grete in this caas that man myghte lightly falle by hem into deedly synne./ The especes that sourden of Pride, soothly whan they sourden of malice ymagined, avised, and forncast, or elles of usage, been deedly synnes, it is no doute./ And whan they sourden by freletee unavysed, and sodeynly withdrawen ayeyn, al been they grevouse synnes, I gesse that they ne been nat deedly./

Now myghte men axe wherof that Pride sourdeth and spryngeth, and I seye, somtyme it spryngeth of the goodes of nature, and somtyme of the goodes of fortune, and somtyme of the goodes of grace./ Certes, the goodes of nature stonden outher in goodes of body or in goodes of soule./ Certes, goodes of body been heele of body, strengthe, delivernesse, beautee, gentrice, franchise./ Goodes of nature of the soule been good wit, sharp understondynge, subtil engyn, vertu natureel, good memorie./ Goodes of fortune been richesse, hyghe degrees of lordshipes, preisynges of the peple./ Goodes of grace been science, power to suffre spiritueel travaille, benignitee, vertuous contemplacioun, withstondynge of temptacioun, and semblable thynges./ Of whiche forseyde goodes, certes it is a ful greet folye a man to priden hym in any of hem alle./ Now as for to speken of goodes of nature, God woot that somtyme we han hem in nature as muche to oure damage as to oure profit./ As for to speken of heele of body, certes it passeth ful lightly, and eek it is ful ofte enchesoun of the siknesse of oure soule. For, God woot, the flessh is a ful greet enemy to the soule, and therfore, the moore that the body is hool, the moore be we in peril to falle./ Eke for to pride hym in his strengthe of body, it is an heigh folye. For certes, the flessh coveiteth agayn the spirit, and ay the moore strong that the flessh is, the sorier may the soule be./ And over al this, strengthe of body and worldly hardynesse causeth ful ofte many a man to peril and meschaunce./ Eek for to pride hym of his gentrie is ful greet folie; for ofte tyme the gentrie of the body binymeth the gentrie of the soule; and eek we ben alle of o fader and of o mooder; and alle we been of o nature, roten and corrupt, bothe riche and povre./ For sothe, o manere gentrie is for to preise, that apparailleth mannes corage with vertues and moralitees, and maketh hym Cristes child./ For truste wel that over what man that synne hath maistrie, he is a verray cherl to synne./

Now been ther generale signes of gentillesse, as eschewynge of vice and ribaudye and servage of synne, in word, in werk, and contenaunce,/ and usynge vertu, curteisye, and clennesse, and to be liberal — that is to seyn, large by mesure, for thilke that passeth mesure is folie and synne./ Another is to remembre hym of bountee that he of oother folk hath receyved./ Another is to be benigne to his goode subgetis; wherfore seith Senek, "Ther is no thing moore covenable to a man of heigh estaat than debonairetee and pitee./ And therfore thise flyes that men clepen bees, whan they maken hir kyng, they chesen oon that hath no prikke wherwith he may stynge."/ Another is, a man to have a noble herte and a diligent to attayne to heighe vertuouse thynges./ Now certes, a man to pride hym in the goodes of grace is eek an outrageous folie, for thilke yifte of grace that sholde have turned hym to goodnesse and to medicine, turneth hym to venym and to confusioun, as seith Seint Gregorie./ Certes also, whoso prideth hym in the goodes of fortune, he is a ful greet fool; for somtyme is a man a greet lord by the morwe, that is a caytyf and a wrecche er it be nyght;/ and somtyme the richesse of a man is cause of his deth; somtyme the delices of a man ben cause of the grevous maladye thurgh which he dyeth./ Certes, the commendacioun of the peple is somtyme ful fals and ful brotel for to triste; this day they preyse, tomorwe they blame./ God woot, desir to have commendacioun eek of the peple hath caused deeth to many a bisy man./

Remedium contra peccatum Superbie.

Now sith that so is that ye han understonde what is Pride, and whiche been the speces of it, and whennes Pride sourdeth and spryngeth,/ now shul ye understonde which is

448 sourden of: arise, originate from ymagined: plotted
forncast: premeditated
452 delivernesse: agility gentrice: gentle (aristocratic) birth
464 eschewynge: avoidance ribaudye: debauchery
465 large by mesure: reasonably generous
468 flyes: insects
Remedium, *etc.*: The remedy against the sin of Pride.
475 sourdeth: arises

the remedie agayns the synne of Pride; and that is humylitee, or mekenesse./ That is a vertu thurgh which a man hath verray knoweleche of hymself, and holdeth of hymself no pris ne deyntee, as in regard of his desertes, considerynge evere his freletee./ Now been ther three maneres of humylitee: as humylitee in herte; another humylitee is in his mouth; the thridde in his werkes./ The humilitee in herte is in foure maneres. That oon is whan a man holdeth hymself as noght worth biforn God of hevene. Another is whan he ne despiseth noon oother man./ The thridde is whan he rekketh nat, though men holde hym noght worth. The ferthe is whan he nys nat sory of his humiliacioun./ Also the humilitee of mouth is in foure thynges: in attempree speche, and in humblesse of speche, and whan he biknoweth with his owene mouth that he is swich as hym thynketh that he is in his herte. Another is whan he preiseth the bountee of another man, and nothyng therof amenuseth./ Humilitee eek in werkes is in foure maneres. The firste is whan he putteth othere men biforn hym. The seconde is to chese the loweste place over al. The thridde is gladly to assente to good conseil./ The ferthe is to stonde gladly to the award of his sovereyns, or of hym that is in hyer degree. Certein, this is a greet werk of humylitee./

Sequitur de Invidia.

After Pride wol I speken of the foule synne of Envye, which that is, as by the word of the Philosophre, "sorwe of oother mannes prosperitee"; and after the word of Seint Augustyn, it is "Sorwe of oother mennes wele, and joye of othere mennes harm."/ This foule synne is platly agayns the Hooly Goost. Al be it so that every synne is agayns the Hooly Goost, yet nathelees, for as muche as bountee aperteneth proprely to the Hooly Goost, and Envye comth proprely of malice, therfore it is proprely agayn the bountee of the Hooly Goost./ Now hath malice two speces; that is to seyn, hardnesse of herte in wikkednesse, or elles the flessh of man is so blynd that he considereth nat that he is in synne or rekketh nat that he is in synne, which is the hardnesse of the devel./ That oother spece of malice is whan a man werreyeth trouthe, whan he woot that it is trouthe; and eek whan he werreyeth the grace that God hath yeve to his neighebor; and al this is by Envye./ Certes, thanne is Envye the worste synne that is. For soothly, alle othere synnes been somtyme oonly agayns o special vertu,/ but certes Envye is agayns alle vertues and agayns alle goodnesses. For it is sory of alle the bountees of his neighebor, and in this manere it is divers from alle othere synnes./ For wel unnethe is ther any synne that it ne hath som delit in itself, save oonly Envye, that evere hath in itself angwissh and sorwe./ The speces of Envye been thise. Ther is first, sorwe of oother mannes goodnesse and of his prosperitee; and prosperitee is kyndely matere of joye; thanne is Envye a synne agayns kynde./ The seconde spece of Envye is joye of oother mannes harm, and that is proprely lyk to the devel, that evere rejoyseth hym of mannes harm./ Of thise two speces comth bakbityng; and this synne of bakbityng or detraccion hath certeine speces, as thus: Som man preiseth his neighebor by a wikked entente,/ for he maketh alwey a wikked knotte atte laste ende. Alwey he maketh a "but" atte laste ende, that is digne of moore blame than worth is al the preisynge./ The seconde spece is that if a man be good and dooth or seith a thing to good entente, the bakbitere wol turne al thilke goodnesse up-so-doun to his shrewed entente./ The thridde is to amenuse the bountee of his neighebor./ The fourthe spece of bakbityng is this: that if men speke goodnesse of a man, thanne wol the bakbitere seyn, "Parfey, swich a man is yet bet than he," in dispreisynge of hym that men preise./ The fifte spece is this: for to consente gladly and herkne gladly to the harm that men speke of oother folk. This synne is ful greet and ay encreesseth after the wikked entente of the bakbitere./ After bakbityng cometh gruchchyng or murmuracioun; and somtyme it spryngeth of inpacience agayns God, and somtyme agayns man./ Agayn God it is whan a man gruccheth agayn the peyne of helle, or agayns poverte, or los of catel, or agayn reyn or tempest; or elles gruccheth that shrewes han prosperitee, or elles for that goode men han adversitee./ And alle thise thynges sholde man suffre paciently, for they comen by the rightful juggement and

477 deyntee: dignity, worth
481 amenuseth: diminishes
483 award of his sovereyns: decision of his rulers
Sequitur, *etc.*: Now follows the section on envy.
484 the Philosophre: Aristotle
485 platly: flatly, directly
499 murmuracioun: grumbling

ordinaunce of God./ Somtyme comth gruchcing of avarice; as Judas grucched agayns the Magdaleyne whan she enoynted the heved of oure Lord Jhesu Crist with hir precious oynement./ This manere murmure is swich as whan man gruccheth of goodnesse that hymself dooth, or that oother folk doon of hir owene catel./ Somtyme comth murmure of Pride, as whan Simon the Pharisee gruchched agayn the Magdaleyne whan she approched to Jhesu Crist and weep at his feet for hire synnes./ And somtyme grucchyng sourdeth of Envye, whan men discovereth a mannes harm that was pryvee or bereth hym on hond thyng that is fals./ Murmure eek is ofte amonges servauntz that grucchen whan hir sovereyns bidden hem doon leveful thynges;/ and forasmuche as they dar nat openly withseye the comaundementz of hir sovereyns, yet wol they seyn harm, and grucche, and murmure prively for verray despit;/ whiche wordes men clepen the develes *Pater noster,* though so be that the devel ne hadde nevere *Pater noster,* but that lewed folk yeven it swich a name./ Somtyme it comth of Ire or prive hate that norisseth rancour in herte, as afterward I shal declare./ Thanne cometh eek bitternesse of herte, thurgh which bitternesse every good dede of his neighebor semeth to hym bitter and unsavory./ Thanne cometh discord that unbyndeth alle manere of freendshipe. Thanne comth scornynge of his neighebor, al do he never so weel./ Thanne comth accusynge, as whan man seketh occasioun to anoyen his neighebor, which that is lyk the craft of the devel, that waiteth bothe nyght and day to accusen us alle./ Thanne comth malignitee, thurgh which a man anoyeth his neighebor prively, if he may;/ and if he noght may, algate his wikked wil ne shal nat wante, as for to brennen his hous pryvely, or empoysone or sleen his beestes, and semblable thynges./

Remedium contra peccatum Invidie.

Now wol I speke of remedie agayns this foule synne of Envye. First is the love of God principal and lovyng of his neighebor as hymself, for soothly that oon ne may nat been withoute that oother./ And truste wel that in the name of thy neighebor thou shalt understonde the name of thy brother; for certes alle we have o fader flesshly and o mooder — that is to seyn, Adam and Eve — and eek o fader espiritueel, and that is God of hevene./ Thy neighebor artow holden for to love and wilne hym alle goodnesse; and therfore seith God, "Love thy neighebor as thyselve" — that is to seyn, to salvacioun bothe of lyf and of soule./ And mooreover thou shalt love hym in word, and in benigne amonestynge and chastisynge, and conforten hym in his anoyes, and preye for hym with al thyn herte./ And in dede thou shalt love hym in swich wise that thou shalt doon to hym in charitee as thou woldest that it were doon to thyn owene persone./ And therfore thou ne shalt doon hym no damage in wikked word, ne harm in his body, ne in his catel, ne in his soule, by entissyng of wikked ensample./ Thou shalt nat desiren his wyf ne none of his thynges. Understoond eek that in the name of neighebor is comprehended his enemy./ Certes, man shal loven his enemy, by the comandement of God; and soothly thy freend shaltow love in God./ I seye, thyn enemy shaltow love for Goddes sake, by his commandement. For if it were reson that man sholde haten his enemy, for sothe God nolde nat receyven us to his love that been his enemys./ Agayns three manere of wronges that his enemy dooth to hym, he shal doon three thynges, as thus:/ Agayns hate and rancour of herte, he shal love hym in herte. Agayns chidyng and wikkede wordes, he shal preye for his enemy. Agayns the wikked dede of his enemy, he shal doon hym bountee./ For Crist seith, "Loveth youre enemys, and preyeth for hem that speke yow harm, and eek for hem that yow chacen and pursewen, and dooth bountee to hem that yow haten." Loo, thus comaundeth us oure Lord Jhesu Crist to do to oure enemys./ For soothly, nature dryveth us to loven oure freendes, and parfey, oure enemys han moore nede to love than oure freendes; and they that moore nede have, certes to hem shal men doon goodnesse;/ and certes, in thilke dede have we remembraunce of the love of Jhesu Crist that deyde for his enemys./ And in as muche as thilke love is the moore grevous to parfourne, so muche is the moore gret the merite; and ther-

514 wante: be lacking
Remedium, *etc.*: The remedy against the sin of Envy.

517 wilne: wish
518 amonestynge: admonishment
526 pursewen: persecute

fore the lovynge of oure enemy hath confounded the venym of the devel./ For right as the devel is disconfited by humylitee, right so is he wounded to the deeth by love of oure enemy./ Certes, thanne is love the medicine that casteth out the venym of Envye fro mannes herte./ The speces of this paas shullen be moore largely declared in hir chapitres folwynge./

Sequitur de Ira.

After Envye wol I discryven the synne of Ire. For soothly, whoso hath envye upon his neighebor, anon he wole comunly fynde hym a matere of wratthe, in word or in dede, agayns hym to whom he hath envye./ And as wel comth Ire of Pride as of Envye, for soothly he that is proud or envyous is lightly wrooth./

This synne of Ire, after the discryvyng of Seint Augustyn, is wikked wil to been avenged by word or by dede./ Ire, after the Philosophre, is the fervent blood of man yquyked in his herte, thurgh which he wole harm to hym that he hateth./ For certes, the herte of man, by eschawfynge and moevynge of his blood, wexeth so trouble that he is out of alle juggement of resoun./ But ye shal understonde that Ire is in two maneres; that oon of hem is good, and that oother is wikked./ The goode Ire is by jalousie of goodnesse, thurgh which a man is wrooth with wikkednesse and agayns wikkednesse; and therfore seith a wys man that Ire is bet than pley./ This Ire is with debonairetee, and it is wrooth withouten bitternesse; nat wrooth agayns the man, but wrooth with the mysdede of the man, as seith the prophete David, *"Irascimini et nolite peccare."*/ Now understondeth that wikked Ire is in two maneres; that is to seyn, sodeyn Ire or hastif Ire, withouten avisement and consentynge of resoun./ The menyng and the sens of this is that the resoun of a man ne consente nat to thilke sodeyn Ire, and thanne is it venial./ Another Ire is ful wikked, that comth of felonie of herte avysed and cast biforn, with wikked wil to do vengeance, and therto his resoun consenteth; and soothly this is deedly synne./ This Ire is so displesant to God that it troubleth his hous and chaceth the Hooly Goost out of mannes soule, and wasteth and destroyeth the liknesse of God — that is to seyn, the vertu that is in mannes soule — / and put in hym the liknesse of the devel, and bynymeth the man fro God, that is his rightful lord./

This Ire is a ful greet plesaunce to the devel, for it is the develes fourneys, that is eschawfed with the fir of helle./ For certes, right so as fir is moore mighty to destroyen erthely thynges than any oother element, right so Ire is myghty to destroyen alle spiritueel thynges./ Looke how that fir of smale gleedes that been almost dede under asshen wollen quike agayn whan they been touched with brymstoon; right so Ire wol everemo quyken agayn whan it is touched by the pride that is covered in mannes herte./ For certes, fir ne may nat comen out of no thyng, but if it were first in the same thyng natureelly, as fir is drawen out of flyntes with steel./ And right so as pride is ofte tyme matere of Ire, right so is rancour norice and kepere of Ire./ Ther is a maner tree, as seith Seint Ysidre, that whan men maken fir of thilke tree and covere the coles of it with asshen, soothly the fir of it wol lasten al a yeer or moore./ And right so fareth it of rancour; whan it is ones conceyved in the hertes of som men, certein, it wol lasten peraventure from oon Estre day unto another Estre day, and moore./ But certes, thilke man is ful fer fro the mercy of God al thilke while./

In this forseyde develes fourneys ther forgen three shrewes: Pride, that ay bloweth and encreesseth the fir by chidynge and wikked wordes;/ thanne stant Envye and holdeth the hoote iren upon the herte of man with a peire of longe toonges of long rancour;/ and thanne stant the synne of Contumelie, or strif and cheeste, and batereth and forgeth by vileyns reprevynges./ Certes, this cursed synne anoyeth bothe to the man hymself and eek to his neighebor. For soothly, almoost al the harm that any man dooth to his neighebor comth of wratthe./ For certes, outrageous wratthe dooth al that evere the devel hym comaundeth, for he ne spareth neither Crist ne

532 paas: passage, process (?); see n.
Sequitur, *etc.*: Now follows the section on Anger.
536 fervent: hot yquyked: stirred, enlivened
537 eschawfynge: heating
539 jalousie of goodnesse: zeal for the good
540 mysdede: sin *Irascimini et nolite peccare:* Be angry and do not sin.

546 eschawfed: heated
551 a maner tree: a kind of tree, the juniper Ysidre: Isidore of Seville
556 Contumelie: contentiousness cheeste: quarrelling

his sweete Mooder./ And in his outrageous anger and ire — allas, allas! — ful many oon at that tyme feeleth in his herte ful wikkedly, bothe of Crist and eek of alle his halwes./ Is nat this a cursed vice? Yis, certes. Allas! It bynymeth from man his wit and his resoun, and al his debonaire lif espiritueel that sholde kepen his soule./ Certes, it bynymeth eek Goddes due lordshipe, and that is mannes soule and the love of his neighebores. It stryveth eek alday agayn trouthe. It reveth hym the quiete of his herte and subverteth his soule./

Of Ire comen thise stynkynge engendrures: First, hate, that is oold wratthe; discord, thurgh which a man forsaketh his olde freend that he hath loved ful longe;/ and thanne cometh werre and every manere of wrong that man dooth to his neighebor, in body or in catel./ Of this cursed synne of Ire cometh eek manslaughtre. And understonde wel that homycide, that is manslaughtre, is in diverse wise. Som manere of homycide is spiritueel, and som is bodily./ Spiritueel manslaughtre is in sixe thynges. First by hate, as seith Seint John: "He that hateth his brother is an homycide."/ Homycide is eek by bakbitynge, of whiche bakbiteres seith Salomon that "they han two swerdes with whiche they sleen hire neighebores." For soothly, as wikke is to bynyme his good name as his lyf./ Homycide is eek in yevynge of wikked conseil by fraude, as for to yeven conseil to areysen wrongful custumes and taillages./ Of whiche seith Salomon, "Leon rorynge and bere hongry been like to the cruel lordshipes" in withholdynge or abreggynge of the shepe (or the hyre), or of the wages of servauntz, or elles in usure, or in withdrawynge of the almesse of povre folk./ For which the wise man seith, "Fedeth hym that almoost dyeth for honger"; for soothly, but if thow feede hym, thou sleest hym; and alle thise been deedly synnes./ Bodily manslaughtre is, whan thow sleest him with thy tonge in oother manere, as whan thou comandest to sleen a man or elles yevest hym conseil to sleen a man./ Manslaughtre in dede is in foure maneres. That oon is by lawe, right as a justice dampneth hym that is coupable to the deeth. But lat the justice be war that he do it rightfully, and that he do it nat for delit to spille blood but for kepynge of rightwisnesse./ Another homycide is that is doon for necessitee, as whan o man sleeth another in his defendaunt and that he ne may noon ootherwise escape from his owene deeth./ But certeinly if he may escape withouten slaughtre of his adversarie, and sleeth hym, he dooth synne and he shal bere penance as for deedly synne./ Eek if a man, by caas or aventure, shete an arwe, or caste a stoon with which he sleeth a man, he is homycide./ Eek if a womman by necligence overlyeth hire child in hir slepyng, it is homycide and deedly synne./ Eek whan man destourbeth concepcioun of a child, and maketh a womman outher bareyne by drynkynge venenouse herbes thurgh which she may nat conceyve, or sleeth a child by drynkes wilfully, or elles putteth certeine material thynges in hire secree places to slee the child,/ or elles dooth unkyndely synne, by which man or womman shedeth hire nature in manere or in place ther as a child may nat be conceived, or elles if a woman have conceyved, and hurt hirself and sleeth the child, yet is it homycide./ What seye we eek of wommen that mordren hir children for drede of worldly shame? Certes, an horrible homicide./ Homycide is eek if a man approcheth to a womman by desir of lecherie, thurgh which the child is perissed, or elles smyteth a womman wityngly, thurgh which she leseth hir child. Alle thise been homycides and horrible deedly synnes./ Yet comen ther of Ire manye mo synnes, as wel in word as in thoght and in dede; as he that arretteth upon God, or blameth God of thyng of which he is hymself gilty, or despiseth God and alle his halwes, as doon thise cursede hasardours in diverse contrees./ This cursed synne doon they, whan they feelen in hir herte ful wikkedly of God and of his halwes./ Also whan they treten unreverently the sacrement of the auter, thilke synne is so greet that unnethe may it been releessed, but that the mercy of God passeth alle his werkes; it is so greet, and he so benigne./ Thanne comth of Ire attry angre. Whan a man is sharply amonested in his shrifte to forleten his synne,/ thanne wole he be angry, and answeren hokerly and angrily, and

561 **bynymeth:** takes away
567 **areysen:** impose **custumes:** duties (customary rents, services, or tolls) **taillages:** taxes
568 **abreggynge:** reduction **shepe:** payment **usure:** usury

572 **in his defendaunt:** in defending himself
575 **overlyeth:** lies upon
577 **unkyndely:** unnatural
579 **perissed:** killed
580 **arretteth upon:** blames
583 **attry:** poisonous
584 **hokerly:** disdainfully

deffenden or excusen his synne by unstedefastnesse of his flessh; or elles he dide it for to holde compaignye with his felawes; or elles, he seith, the feend enticed hym;/ or elles he dide it for his youthe; or elles his complecciouns is so corageous that he may nat forbere; or elles it is his destinee, as he seith, unto a certein age; or elles, he seith, it cometh hym of gentillesse of his auncestres; and semblable thynges./ Alle thise manere of folk so wrappen hem in hir synnes that they ne wol nat delivere hemself. For soothly, no wight that excuseth hym wilfully of his synne may nat been delivered of his synne til that he mekely biknoweth his synne./ After this, thanne cometh sweryng, that is expres agayn the comandement of God; and this bifalleth ofte of anger and of Ire./ God seith, "Thow shalt nat take the name of thy Lord God in veyn or in ydel." Also oure Lord Jhesu Crist seith, by the word of Seint Mathew,/ "Ne wol ye nat swere in alle manere; neither by hevene, for it is Goddes trone; ne by erthe, for it is the bench of his feet; ne by Jerusalem, for it is the citee of a greet kyng; ne by thyn heed, for thou mayst nat make an heer whit ne blak./ But seyeth by youre word 'ye, ye,' and 'nay, nay'; and what that is moore, it is of yvel" — thus seith Crist./ For Cristes sake, ne swereth nat so synfully in dismembrynge of Crist by soule, herte, bones, and body. For certes, it semeth that ye thynke that the cursede Jewes ne dismembred nat ynough the preciouse persone of Crist, but ye dismembre hym moore./ And if so be that the lawe compelle yow to swere, thanne rule yow after the lawe of God in youre swerying, as seith Jeremye, *quarto capitulo:* Thou shalt kepe three condicions: thou shalt swere "in trouthe, in doom, and in rightwisnesse."/ This is to seyn, thou shalt swere sooth, for every lesynge is agayns Crist; for Crist is verray trouthe. And thynk wel this: that "every greet swerere, nat compelled lawefully to swere, the wounde shal nat departe from his hous" whil he useth swich unleveful swerying./ Thou shalt sweren eek in doom, whan thou art constreyned by thy domesman to witnessen the trouthe./ Eek thow shalt nat swere for envye, ne for favour, ne for meede, but for rightwisnesse, for declaracioun of it, to the worshipe of God and helpyng of thyne evene-Cristene./ And therfore every man that taketh Goddes name in ydel, or falsly swereth with his mouth, or elles taketh on hym the name of Crist, to be called a Cristen man and lyveth agayns Cristes lyvynge and his techynge, alle they taken Goddes name in ydel./ Looke eek what Seint Peter seith, *Actuum quarto, Non est aliud nomen sub celo, etc.,* "Ther nys noon oother name," seith Seint Peter, "under hevene yeven to men, in which they mowe be saved"; that is to seyn, but the name of Jhesu Crist./ Take kep eek how precious is the name of Crist, as seith Seint Paul, *ad Philipenses secundo, In nomine Jhesu, etc.,* "That in the name of Jhesu every knee of hevenely creatures, or erthely, or of helle sholde bowe," for it is so heigh and so worshipful that the cursede feend in helle sholde tremblen to heeren it ynempned./ Thanne semeth it that men that sweren so horribly by his blessed name, that they despise it moore booldely than dide the cursede Jewes or elles the devel, that trembleth whan he heereth his name./

Now certes, sith that sweryng, but if it be lawefully doon, is so heighly deffended, muche worse is forsweryng falsly, and yet nedelees./

What seye we eek of hem that deliten hem in sweryng, and holden it a gentrie or a manly dede to swere grete othes? And what of hem that of verray usage ne cesse nat to swere grete othes, al be the cause nat worth a straw? Certes, this is horrible synne./ Swerynge sodeynly withoute avysement is eek a synne./ But lat us go now to thilke horrible sweryng of adjuracioun and conjuracioun, as doon thise false enchauntours or nigromanciens in bacyns ful of water, or in a bright swerd, in a cercle, or in a fir, or in a shulderboon of a sheep./ I kan nat seye but that they doon cursedly and dampnably agayns Crist and al the feith of hooly chirche./

What seye we of hem that bileeven on divynailes, as by flight or by noyse of briddes, or of beestes, or by sort, by nigromancie, by dremes, by chirkynge of dores or crakkynge of houses,

585 **corageous:** ardent
592 **Jeremye:** Jeremiah *quarto capitulo:* in the fourth chapter
593 **unleveful:** unlawful
594 **doom:** a case at law **domesman:** judge

597 *Actuum quarto:* Acts, chapter four
598 *ad Philipenses secundo:* (Epistle) to the Philippians, second chapter
600 **forsweryng falsly:** perjury
603 **adjuracioun:** exorcism **conjuracioun:** conjuring up spirits **nigromanciens:** necromancers
605 **divynailes:** divinations **sort:** divination **chirkynge:** squeaking **crakkynge:** creaking

by gnawynge of rattes, and swich manere wrecchednesse?/ Certes, al this thyng is deffended by God and by hooly chirche. For which they been acursed, til they come to amendement, that on swich filthe setten hire bileeve./ Charmes for woundes or maladie of men or of beestes, if they taken any effect, it may be peraventure that God suffreth it, for folk sholden yeve the moore feith and reverence to his name./

Now wol I speken of lesynges, which generally is fals signyficaunce of word, in entente to deceyven his evene-Cristene./ Som lesynge is of which ther comth noon avantage to no wight; and som lesynge turneth to the ese and profit of o man, and to disese and damage of another man./ Another lesynge is for to saven his lyf or his catel. Another lesynge comth of delit for to lye, in which delit they wol forge a long tale and peynten it with alle circumstaunces, where al the ground of the tale is fals./ Som lesynge comth for he wole sustene his word; and som lesynge comth of reccheleesnesse withouten avisement; and semblable thynges./

Lat us now touche the vice of flaterynge, which ne comth nat gladly but for drede or for coveitise./ Flaterye is generally wrongful preisynge. Flatereres been the develes norices, that norissen his children with milk of losengerie./ For sothe, Salomon seith that "Flaterie is wors than detraccioun." For somtyme detraccion maketh an hauteyn man be the moore humble, for he dredeth detraccion; but certes flaterye, that maketh a man to enhauncen his herte and his contenaunce./ Flatereres been the develes enchauntours; for they make a man to wene of hymself be lyk that he nys nat lyk./ They been lyk to Judas that bitraysen a man to sellen hym to his enemy; that is to the devel./ Flatereres been the develes chapelleyns, that syngen evere *Placebo.*/ I rekene flaterie in the vices of Ire, for ofte tyme if o man be wrooth with another, thanne wole he flatere som wight to sustene hym in his querele./

Speke we now of swich cursynge as comth of irous herte. Malisoun generally may be seyd every maner power of harm. Swich cursynge bireveth man fro the regne of God, as seith Seint Paul./ And ofte tyme swich cursynge wrongfully retorneth agayn to hym that curseth, as a bryd that retorneth agayn to his owene nest./ And over alle thyng men oghten eschewe to cursen hire children, and yeven to the devel hire engendrure, as ferforth as in hem is. Certes, it is greet peril and greet synne./

Lat us thanne speken of chidynge and reproche, whiche been ful grete woundes in mannes herte, for they unsowen the semes of freendshipe in mannes herte./ For certes, unnethes may a man pleynly been accorded with hym that hath hym openly revyled and repreved and disclaundred. This is a ful grisly synne, as Crist seith in the gospel./ And taak kep now, that he that repreveth his neighebor, outher he repreveth hym by som harm of peyne that he hath on his body, as "mesel," "croked harlot," or by som synne that he dooth./ Now if he repreve hym by harm of peyne, thanne turneth the repreve to Jhesu Crist, for peyne is sent by the rightwys sonde of God, and by his suffrance, be it meselrie, or maheym, or maladie./ And if he repreve hym uncharitably of synne, as "thou holour," "thou dronkelewe harlot," and so forth, thanne aperteneth that to the rejoysynge of the devel, that evere hath joye that men doon synne./ And certes, chidynge may nat come but out of a vileyns herte. For after the habundance of the herte speketh the mouth ful ofte./ And ye shul understonde that looke, by any wey, whan any man shal chastise another, that he be war from chidynge or reprevynge. For trewely, but he be war, he may ful lightly quyken the fir of angre and of wratthe, which that he sholde quenche, and peraventure sleeth hym which that he myghte chastise with benignitee./ For as seith Salomon, "The amyable tonge is the tree of lyf" — that is to seyn, of lyf espiritueel — and soothly, a deslavee tonge sleeth the spirites of hym that repreveth and eek of hym that is repreved./ Loo, what seith Seint Augustyn: "Ther is nothyng so lyk the develes child as he that ofte chideth." Seint Paul seith eek, "The servant of God bihoveth nat to chide."/ And how that chidynge be a vileyns thyng bitwixe alle manere folk,

614 **hauteyn:** haughty
617 *Placebo:* "I shall please"
618 **querele:** dispute

622 **unsowen:** unravel, undo **semes:** seams
624 **mesel:** leper **croked harlot:** crippled rascal
625 **rightwys:** just **sonde:** dispensation **meselrie:** leprosy **maheym:** bodily injury
626 **holour:** lecher
629 **deslavee:** unbridled

yet is it certes moost uncovenable bitwixe a man and his wyf, for there is nevere reste. And therfore seith Salomon, "An hous that is uncovered and droppynge and a chidynge wyf been lyke."/ A man that is in a droppynge hous in manye places, though he eschewe the droppynge in o place, it droppeth on hym in another place. So fareth it by a chydynge wyf; but she chide hym in o place, she wol chide hym in another./ And therfore, "Bettre is a morsel of breed with joye than an hous ful of delices with chidynge," seith Salomon./ Seint Paul seith, "O ye wommen, be ye subgetes to youre housbondes as bihoveth in God, and ye men loveth youre wyves." *Ad Colossenses tertio./*

Afterward speke we of scornynge, which is a wikked synne, and namely whan he scorneth a man for his goode werkes./ 635 For certes, swiche scorneres faren lyk the foule tode, that may nat endure to smelle the soote savour of the vyne whanne it florissheth./ Thise scorneres been partyng felawes with the devel; for they han joye whan the devel wynneth and sorwe whan he leseth./ They been adversaries of Jhesu Crist, for they haten that he loveth — that is to seyn, salvacioun of soule./

Speke we now of wikked conseil, for he that wikked conseil yeveth is a traytour. For he deceyveth hym that trusteth in hym, *ut Achitofel ad Absolonem.* But nathelees, yet is his wikked conseil first agayn hymself./ For, as seith the wise man, "Every fals lyvynge hath this propertee in hymself, that he that wole anoye another man, he anoyeth first hymself."/ 640 And men shul understonde that man shal nat taken his conseil of fals folk, ne of angry folk, or grevous folk, ne of folk that loven specially to muchel hir owene profit, ne to muche worldly folk, namely in conseilynge of soules./

Now comth the synne of hem that sowen and maken discord amonges folk, which is a synne that Crist hateth outrely. And no wonder is, for he deyde for to make concord./ And moore shame do they to Crist than dide they that hym crucifiede, for God loveth bettre that freendshipe be amonges folk, than he dide his owene body, the which that he yaf for unitee. Therfore been they likned to the devel, that evere is aboute to maken discord./

Now comth the synne of double tonge, swiche as speken faire byforn folk and wikkedly bihynde, or elles they maken semblant as though they speeke of good entencioun, or elles in game and pley, and yet they speke of wikked entente./

Now comth biwreying of conseil, thurgh which a man is defamed; certes, unnethe may he restoore the damage./ 645

Now comth manace, that is an open folye, for he that ofte manaceth, he threteth moore than he may parfourne ful ofte tyme./

Now cometh ydel wordes, that is withouten profit of hym that speketh tho wordes, and eek of hym that herkneth tho wordes. Or elles ydel wordes been tho that been nedelees or withouten entente of natureel profit./ And al be it that ydel wordes been somtyme venial synne, yet sholde men douten hem, for we shul yeve rekenynge of hem bifore God./

Now comth janglynge, that may nat been withoute synne. And, as seith Salomon, "It is a sygne of apert folye."/ And therfore a philosophre seyde, whan men axed hym how that men sholde plese the peple, and he answerde, "Do manye goode werkes, and spek fewe jangles."/ 650

After this comth the synne of japeres, that been the develes apes, for they maken folk to laughe at hire japerie as folk doon at the gawdes of an ape. Swiche japeres deffendeth Seint Paul./ Looke how that vertuouse wordes and hooly conforten hem that travaillen in the service of Crist, right so conforten the vileyns wordes and knakkes of japeris hem that travaillen in the service of the devel./ Thise been the synnes that comen of the tonge, that comen of Ire and of othere synnes mo./

Sequitur remedium contra peccatum Ire.

The remedie agayns Ire is a vertu that men clepen mansuetude, that is debonairetee; and

631 **uncovenable:** unsuitable **droppynge:** leaking
634 ***Ad Colossenses tertio:*** (Epistle) to the Colossians, chapter three
636 **tode:** toad
637 **partyng felawes:** partners
639 ***ut Achitofel ad Absolonem:*** as Achitophel (did) to Absalom
641 **grevous:** hostile
643 **aboute to:** busied with
644 **maken semblant:** feign, pretend
649 **apert:** clear
650 **jangles:** idle words
651 **japeres:** mockers **gawdes:** tricks
652 **knakkes:** tricks
Sequitur remedium, *etc.*: Now follows the remedy against the sin of Anger.
654 **mansuetude:** meekness

eek another vertu, that men callen pacience or suffrance./

Debonairetee withdraweth and refreyneth the stirynges and the moevynges of mannes corage in his herte, in swich manere that they ne skippe nat out by angre ne by ire./ Suffrance suffreth swetely alle the anoyaunces and the wronges that men doon to man outward./ Seint Jerome seith thus of debonairetee, that "it dooth noon harm to no wight ne seith; ne for noon harm that men doon or seyn, he ne eschawfeth nat agayns his resoun."/ This vertu somtyme comth of nature, for, as seith the Philosophre, "A man is a quyk thyng, by nature debonaire and tretable to goodnesse; but whan debonairetee is enformed of grace, thanne is it the moore worth."/

Pacience, that is another remedie agayns Ire, is a vertu that suffreth swetely every mannes goodnesse, and is nat wrooth for noon harm that is doon to hym./ The Philosophre seith that pacience is thilke vertu that suffreth debonairely alle the outrages of adversitee and every wikked word./ This vertu maketh a man lyk to God, and maketh hym Goddes owene deere child, as seith Crist. This vertu disconfiteth thyn enemy. And therfore seith the wise man, "If thow wolt venquysse thyn enemy, lerne to suffre."/ And thou shalt understonde that man suffreth foure manere of grevances in outward thynges, agayns the whiche foure he moot have foure manere of paciences./

The firste grevance is of wikkede wordes. Thilke suffrede Jhesu Crist withouten grucchyng, ful paciently, whan the Jewes despised and repreved hym ful ofte./ Suffre thou therfore paciently; for the wise man seith, "If thou stryve with a fool, though the fool be wrooth or though he laughe, algate thou shalt have no reste."/ That oother grevance outward is to have damage of thy catel. Theragayns suffred Crist ful paciently, whan he was despoyled of al that he hadde in this lyf, and that nas but his clothes./ The thridde grevance is a man to have harm in his body. That suffred Crist ful paciently in al his passioun./ The fourthe grevance is in outrageous labour in werkes. Wherfore I seye that folk that maken hir servantz to travaillen to grevously or out of tyme, as on haly dayes, soothly they do greet synne./ Heer-agayns suffred Crist ful paciently and taughte us pacience, whan he baar upon his blissed shulder the croys upon which he sholde suffren despitous deeth./ Heere may men lerne to be pacient, for certes noght oonly Cristen men been pacient for love of Jhesu Crist and for gerdoun of the blisful lyf that is perdurable, but certes, the olde payens that nevere were Cristene commendeden and useden the vertu of pacience./

A philosophre upon a tyme, that wolde have beten his disciple for his grete trespas, for which he was greetly amoeved, and broghte a yerde to scoure with the child;/ and whan this child saugh the yerde, he seyde to his maister, "What thenke ye do?" "I wol bete thee," quod the maister, "for thy correccioun."/ "For sothe," quod the child, "ye oghten first correcte youreself, that han lost al youre pacience for the gilt of a child."/ "For sothe," quod the maister al wepynge, "thow seyst sooth. Have thow the yerde, my deere sone, and correcte me for myn inpacience."/ Of pacience comth obedience, thurgh which a man is obedient to Crist and to alle hem to whiche he oghte to been obedient in Crist./ And understond wel that obedience is parfit whan that a man dooth gladly and hastily, with good herte entierly, al that he sholde do./ Obedience generally is to parfourne the doctrine of God and of his sovereyns, to whiche hym oghte to ben obeisaunt in alle rightwisnesse./

Sequitur de Accidia.

After the synne of Envye and of Ire, now wol I speken of the synne of Accidie. For Envye blyndeth the herte of a man, and Ire troubleth a man, and Accidie maketh hym hevy, thoghtful, and wraw./ Envye and Ire maken bitternesse in herte, which bitternesse is mooder of Accidie, and bynymeth hym the love of alle goodnesse. Thanne is Accidie the angwissh of troubled herte; and Seint Augustyn seith, "It is anoy of goodnesse and joye of harm."/ Certes, this is a dampnable synne, for it dooth wrong to Jhesu Crist, in as muche

655 refreyneth: restrains
657 eschawfeth: becomes inflamed (with emotion)
658 the Philosophre: Aristotle
667 outrageous labour in werkes: forced labor, service demanded beyond the customary obligations
670 yerde: stick, rod scoure: punish
Sequitur, *etc.*: Now follows the section on Sloth.
677 wraw: fretful
678 anoy: vexation

as it bynymeth the service that men oghte doon to Crist with alle diligence, as seith Salomon./ But Accidie dooth no swich diligence. He dooth alle thyng with anoy, and with wrawnesse, slaknesse, and excusacioun, and with ydelnesse, and unlust; for which the book seith, "Acursed be he that dooth the service of God necligently."/ Thanne is Accidie enemy to everich estaat of man, for certes the estaat of man is in three maneres./ Outher it is th'estaat of innocence, as was th'estaat of Adam biforn that he fil into synne, in which estaat he was holden to wirche as in heriynge and adowrynge of God./ Another estaat is the estaat of synful men, in which estaat men been holden to laboure in preiynge to God for amendement of hire synnes, and that he wole graunte hem to arysen out of hir synnes./ Another estaat is th'estaat of grace, in which estaat he is holden to werkes of penitence. And certes, to alle thise thynges is Accidie enemy and contrarie, for he loveth no bisynesse at al./ Now certes this foule synne Accidie is eek a ful greet enemy to the liflode of the body, for it ne hath no purveaunce agayn temporeel necessitee, for it forsleweth and forsluggeth and destroyeth alle goodes temporeles by recheleesnesse./

The fourthe thyng is that Accidie is lyk hem that been in the peyne of helle, by cause of hir slouthe and of hire hevynesse, for they that been dampned been so bounde that they ne may neither wel do ne wel thynke./ Of Accidie comth first that a man is anoyed and encombred for to doon any goodnesse, and maketh that God hath abhomynacion of swich Accidie, as seith Seint John./

Now comth Slouthe, that wol nat suffre noon hardnesse ne no penaunce. For soothly, Slouthe is so tendre and so delicaat, as seith Salomon, that he wol nat suffre noon hardnesse ne penaunce, and therfore he shendeth al that he dooth./ Agayns this roten-herted synne of Accidie and Slouthe sholde men exercise hemself to doon goode werkes, and manly and vertuously cacchen corage wel to doon, thynkynge that oure Lord Jhesu Crist quiteth every good dede, be it never so lite./ Usage of labour is a greet thyng, for it maketh, as seith Seint Bernard, the laborer to have stronge armes and harde synwes; and slouthe maketh hem feble and tendre./ Thanne comth drede to bigynne to werke anye goode werkes. For certes, he that is enclyned to synne, hym thynketh it is so greet an emprise for to undertake to doon werkes of goodnesse,/ and casteth in his herte that the circumstaunces of goodnesse been so grevouse and so chargeaunt for to suffre, that he dar nat undertake to do werkes of goodnesse, as seith Seint Gregorie./

Now comth wanhope, that is despeir of the mercy of God, that comth somtyme of to muche outrageous sorwe, and somtyme of to muche drede, ymaginynge that he hath doon so muche synne that it wol nat availlen hym, though he wolde repenten hym and forsake synne,/ thurgh which despeir or drede he abaundoneth al his herte to every maner synne, as seith Seint Augustin./ Which dampnable synne, if that it continue unto his ende, it is cleped synnyng in the Hooly Goost./ This horrible synne is so perilous that he that is despeired, ther nys no felonye ne no synne that he douteth for to do, as shewed wel by Judas./ Certes, aboven alle synnes thanne is this synne moost displesant to Crist, and moost adversarie./ Soothly, he that despeireth hym is lyk the coward championn recreant, that seith "creant" withoute nede. Allas, allas, nedeles is he recreant and nedelees despeired./ Certes, the mercy of God is evere redy to the penitent, and is aboven alle his werkes./ Allas, kan a man nat bithynke hym on the gospel of Seint Luc, 15, where as Crist seith that "as wel shal ther be joye in hevene upon a synful man that dooth penitence, as upon nynty and nyne rightful men that neden no penitence."/ Looke forther, in the same gospel, the joye and the feeste of the goode man that hadde lost his sone, whan his sone with repentaunce was retourned to his fader./ Kan they nat remembren hem eek that, as seith Seint Luc, 23, how that the theef that was hanged bisyde Jhesu Crist seyde, "Lord, remembre of me, whan thow comest into thy regne"?/ "For sothe," seyde Crist, "I seye to thee, to-day shaltow been with me in paradys."/ Certes,

680 wrawnesse: fretfulness slaknesse: slowness, idleness excusacioun: making excuses unlust: disinclination
685 liflode: livelihood, sustenance forsleweth: loses by delaying forsluggeth: spoils through sluggishness
689 quiteth: rewards
692 chargeaunt: burdensome
693 wanhope: despair
695 in: against
698 recreant: cowardly, confessing himself defeated (*creant*)

ther is noon so horrible synne of man that it ne may in his lyf be destroyed by penitence, thurgh vertu of the passion and of the deeth of Crist./ Allas, what nedeth man thanne to been despeired, sith that his mercy so redy is and large? Axe and have./ Thanne com- 705 eth sompnolence, that is sloggy slombrynge, which maketh a man be hevy and dul in body and in soule, and this synne comth of Slouthe./ And certes, the tyme that, by wey of resoun, men sholde nat slepe, that is by the morwe, but if ther were cause resonable./ For soothly, the morwe tyde is moost covenable a man to seye his preyeres, and for to thynken on God, and for to honoure God, and to yeven almesse to the povre that first cometh in the name of Crist./ Lo, what seith Salomon: "Whoso wolde by the morwe awaken and seke me, he shal fynde."/ Thanne cometh necligence, or reccheleesnesse, that rekketh of no thyng. And how that ignoraunce be mooder of alle harm, certes, necligence is the norice./ Necligence ne dooth no 710 fors, whan he shal doon a thyng, wheither he do it weel or baddely./

Of the remedie of thise two synnes, as seith the wise man, that "He that dredeth God, he spareth nat to doon that him oghte doon."/ And he that loveth God, he wol doon diligence to plese God by his werkes and abaundone hymself, with al his myght, wel for to doon./ Thanne comth ydelnesse, that is the yate of alle harmes. An ydel man is lyk to a place that hath no walles; the develes may entre on every syde, or sheten at hym at discovert, by temptacion on every syde./ This ydelnesse is the thurrok of alle wikked and vileyns thoghtes, and of alle jangles, trufles, and of alle ordure./ 715 Certes, the hevene is yeven to hem that wol labouren, and nat to ydel folk. Eek David seith that "they ne been nat in the labour of men, ne they shul nat been whipped with men" — that is to seyn, in purgatorie./ Certes, thanne semeth it they shul be tormented with the devel in helle, but if they doon penitence./

Thanne comth the synne that men clepen *tarditas,* as whan a man is to laterede or tariynge er he wole turne to God, and certes that is a greet folie. He is lyk to hym that falleth in the dych and wol nat arise./ And this vice comth of a fals hope, that he thynketh that he shal lyve longe; but that hope faileth ful ofte./

Thanne comth lachesse; that is he that whan he biginneth any good werk anon he shal forleten it and stynten, as doon they that han any wight to governe and ne taken of hym namoore kep anon as they fynden any contrarie or any anoy./ Thise been 720 the newe sheepherdes that leten hir sheep wityngly go renne to the wolf that is in the breres, or do no fors of hir owene governaunce./ Of this comth poverte and destruccioun, bothe of spiritueel and temporeel thynges. Thanne comth a manere cooldnesse, that freseth al the herte of a man./ Thanne comth undevocioun, thurgh which a man is so blent, as seith Seint Bernard, and hath swich langour in soule that he may neither rede ne singe in hooly chirche, ne heere ne thynke of no devocioun, ne travaille with his handes in no good werk, that it nys hym unsavory and al apalled./ Thanne wexeth he slough and slombry, and soone wol be wrooth, and soone is enclyned to hate and to envye./ Thanne comth the synne of worldly sorwe, swich as is cleped *tristicia,* that sleeth man, as seith Seint Paul./ For 725 certes, swich sorwe werketh to the deeth of the soule and of the body also; for therof comth that a man is anoyed of his owene lif./ Wherfore swich sorwe shorteth ful ofte the lif of man, er that his tyme be come by wey of kynde./

Remedium contra peccatum Accidie.

Agayns this horrible synne of Accidie, and the branches of the same, ther is a vertu that is called *fortitudo* or strengthe, that is an affeccioun thurgh which a man despiseth anoyouse thinges./ This vertu is so myghty and so vigerous that it dar withstonde myghtily and wisely kepen hymself fro perils that been wikked, and wrastle agayn the assautes of the devel./ For it enhaunceth and enforceth the soule, right as Accidie abateth it and maketh it fieble. For this *fortitudo* may endure by long suffraunce the travailles that been covenable./ 730

This vertu hath manye speces; and the firste is cleped magnanimitee, that is to seyn,

706 sloggy: sluggish slombrynge: sleeping
713 abaundone: devote
714 discovert: an exposed position
715 thurrok: bilge, storage place trufles: trifles, idle jests
718 laterede: tardy, sluggish
720 lachesse: laziness
722 freseth: freezes
723 undevocioun: lack of devotion apalled: faded
724 slough: slow, sluggish slombry: sleepy
Remedium, *etc.*: The remedy against the sin of Sloth.
728 anoyouse: noisome, harmful
730 abateth: reduces

greet corage. For certes, ther bihoveth greet corage agains Accidie, lest that it ne swolwe the soule by the synne of sorwe, or destroye it by wanhope./ This vertu maketh folk to undertake harde thynges and grevouse thynges, by hir owene wil, wisely and resonably./ And for as muchel as the devel fighteth agayns a man moore by queyntise and by sleighte than by strengthe, therfore men shal withstonden hym by wit and by resoun and by discrecioun./ Thanne arn ther the vertues of feith and hope in God and in his seintes to acheve and acomplice the goode werkes in the whiche he purposeth fermely to continue./ Thanne comth seuretee or sikernesse, and that is whan a man ne douteth no travaille in tyme comynge of the goode werkes that a man hath bigonne./ Thanne comth magnificence; that is to seyn, whan a man dooth and parfourneth grete werkes of goodnesse; and that is the ende why that men sholde do goode werkes, for in the acomplissynge of grete goode werkes lith the grete gerdoun./ Thanne is ther constaunce, that is stablenesse of corage, and this sholde been in herte by stedefast feith, and in mouth, and in berynge, and in chiere, and in dede./ Eke ther been mo speciale remedies against Accidie in diverse werkes, and in consideracioun of the peynes of helle and of the joyes of hevene, and in the trust of the grace of the Holy Goost, that wole yeve hym myght to parfourne his goode entente./

Sequitur de Avaricia.

After Accidie wol I speke of Avarice and of Coveitise, of which synne seith Seint Paul that "the roote of alle harmes is Coveitise." *Ad Thimotheum Sexto./* For soothly, whan the herte of a man is confounded in itself and troubled, and that the soule hath lost the confort of God, thanne seketh he an ydel solas of worldly thynges./

Avarice, after the descripcioun of Seint Augustyn, is a likerousnesse in herte to have erthely thynges./ Som oother folk seyn that Avarice is for to purchacen manye erthely thynges and no thyng yeve to hem that han nede./ And understoond that Avarice ne stant nat oonly in lond ne catel, but somtyme in science and in glorie, and in every manere of outrageous thyng is Avarice and Coveitise./ And the difference bitwixe Avarice and Coveitise is this: Coveitise is for to coveite swiche thynges as thou hast nat; and Avarice is for to withholde and kepe swiche thynges as thou hast, withoute rightful nede./ Soothly, this Avarice is a synne that is ful dampnable, for al hooly writ curseth it and speketh agayns that vice, for it dooth wrong to Jhesu Crist./ For it bireveth hym the love that men to hym owen, and turneth it bakward agayns alle resoun,/ and maketh that the avaricious man hath moore hope in his catel than in Jhesu Crist, and dooth moore observance in kepynge of his tresor than he dooth to the service of Jhesu Crist./ And therfore seith Seint Paul *Ad Ephesios quinto,* that an avaricious man is the thraldom of ydolatrie./

What difference is bitwixe an ydolastre and an avaricious man, but that an ydolastre, per aventure, ne hath but o mawmet or two, and the avaricious man hath manye? For certes, every floryn in his cofre is his mawmet./ And certes, the synne of mawmettrie is the firste thyng that God deffended in the ten comaundementz, as bereth witnesse in *Exodi capitulo vicesimo:/* "Thou shalt have no false goddes bifore me, ne thou shalt make to thee no grave thyng." Thus is an avaricious man, that loveth his tresor biforn God, an ydolastre,/ thurgh this cursed synne of avarice. Of Coveitise comen thise harde lordshipes, thurgh whiche men been distreyned by taylages, custumes, and cariages, moore than hire duetee or resoun is. And eek taken they of hire bonde-men amercimentz, whiche myghten moore resonably ben cleped extorcions than amercimentz./ Of whiche amercimentz and raunsonynge of boonde-men somme lordes stywardes seyn that it is rightful, for as muche as a cherl hath no temporeel thyng that it ne is his lordes, as they seyn./ But certes, thise lordshipes doon wrong that bireven hire bondefolk thynges that they nevere yave hem. *Augustinus, De Civitate libro nono./* "Sooth is that the condicioun of thraldom and the firste

733 queyntise: cunning trickery
Sequitur, *etc.*: Now follows the section on Avarice.
739 *Ad Thimotheum Sexto:* (Epistle) to Timothy, chapter six
748 *Ad Ephesios quinto:* (Epistle) to the Ephesians, chapter five
749 ydolastre: idolater mawmet: idol
750 mawmettrie: idolatry *Exodi capitulo vicesimo:* twentieth chapter of Exodus
752 taylages: taxes custumes: duties (customary rents, services, or tolls) cariages: services of providing transportation for the lord, or payments in lieu of the same bonde-men: serfs amercimentz: fines imposed at the mercy of the court
753 raunsonynge of: forcing payment from
754 *Augustinus, De Civitate libro nono:* St. Augustine, *City (of God)*, in the ninth book

cause of thraldom is for synne. *Genesis nono.*/ Thus may ye seen that the gilt disserveth thraldom, but nat nature."/ Wherfore thise lordes ne sholde nat muche glorifien hem in hir lordshipes, sith that by natureel condicion they been nat lordes over thralles, but that thraldom comth first by the desert of synne./ And forther over, ther as the lawe seith that temporeel goodes of boonde-folk been the goodes of hir lordshipes, ye, that is for to understonde, the goodes of the emperour, to deffenden hem in hir right, but nat for to robben hem ne reven hem./ And therfore seith Seneca, "Thy prudence sholde lyve benignely with thy thralles."/ Thilke that thou clepest thy thralles been Goddes peple, for humble folk been Cristes freendes; they been contubernyal with the Lord./

Thynk eek that of swich seed as cherles spryngen, of swich seed spryngen lordes. As wel may the cherl be saved as the lord./ The same deeth that taketh the cherl, swich deeth taketh the lord. Wherfore I rede, do right so with thy cherl, as thou woldest that thy lord dide with thee, if thou were in his plit./ Every synful man is a cherl to synne. I rede thee, certes, that thou, lord, werke in swich wise with thy cherles that they rather love thee than drede./ I woot wel ther is degree above degree, as reson is, and skile is that men do hir devoir ther as it is due, but certes, extorcions and despit of youre underlynges is dampnable./

And forther over, understoond wel that thise conquerours or tirauntz maken ful ofte thralles of hem that been born of as roial blood as been they that hem conqueren./ This name of thraldom was nevere erst kowth til that Noe seyde that his sone Canaan sholde be thral to his bretheren for his synne./ What seye we thanne of hem that pilen and doon extorcions to hooly chirche? Certes, the swerd that men yeven first to a knyght, whan he is newe dubbed, signifieth that he sholde deffenden hooly chirche, and nat robben it ne pilen it; and whoso dooth is traitour to Crist./ And, as seith Seint Augustyn, "They been the develes wolves that stranglen the sheep of Jhesu Crist," and doon worse than wolves./ For soothly, whan the wolf hath ful his wombe, he stynteth to strangle sheep. But soothly, the pilours and destroyours of the godes of hooly chirche ne do nat so, for they ne stynte nevere to pile./

Now as I have seyd, sith so is that synne was first cause of thraldom, thanne is it thus: that thilke tyme that al this world was in synne, thanne was al this world in thraldom and subjeccioun./ But certes, sith the time of grace cam, God ordeyned that som folk sholde be moore heigh in estaat and in degree, and som folk moore lough, and that everich sholde be served in his estaat and in his degree./ And therfore in somme contrees, ther they byen thralles, whan they han turned hem to the feith, they maken hire thralles free out of thraldom. And therfore, certes, the lord oweth to his man that the man oweth to his lord./ The Pope calleth hymself servant of the servantz of God; but for as muche as the estaat of hooly chirche ne myghte nat han be, ne the commune profit myghte nat han be kept, ne pees and rest in erthe, but if God hadde ordeyned that som men hadde hyer degree and som men lower,/ therfore was sovereyntee ordeyned, to kepe and mayntene and deffenden hire underlynges or hire subgetz in resoun, as ferforth as it lith in hire power, and nat to destroyen hem ne confounde./ Wherfore I seye that thilke lordes that been lyk wolves, that devouren the possessiouns or the catel of povre folk wrongfully, withouten mercy or mesure,/ they shul receyven by the same mesure that they han mesured to povre folk the mercy of Jhesu Crist, but if it be amended./ Now comth deceite bitwixe marchaunt and marchant. And thow shalt understonde that marchandise is in manye maneres; that oon is bodily, and that oother is goostly; that oon is honest and leveful, and that oother is deshonest and unleveful./ Of thilke bodily marchandise that is leveful and honest is this: that, there as God hath ordeyned that a regne or a contree is suffisaunt to hymself, thanne is it honest and leveful that of habundaunce of this contree, that men helpe another contree that is moore nedy./ And therfore ther moote been marchantz to bryngen fro that o contree to that oother hire marchandises./ That oother marchandise, that men haunten with fraude and

755 *Genesis nono:* Genesis, in the ninth chapter
760 **contubernyal:** on familiar terms
764 **underlynges:** inferiors, thralls
766 Noe: Noah Canaan: Ham
767 **pilen:** rob

769 **pilours:** thieves

trecherie and deceite, with lesynges and false othes, is cursed and dampnable./ Espiritueel marchandise is proprely symonye, that is ententif desir to byen thyng espiritueel; that is, thyng that aperteneth to the seintuarie of God and to cure of the soule./ This desir, if so be that a man do his diligence to parfournen it, al be it that his desir ne take noon effect, yet is it to hym a deedly synne; and if he be ordred, he is irreguleer./ Certes symonye is cleped of Simon Magus, that wolde han boght for temporeel catel the yifte that God hadde yeven by the Hooly Goost to Seint Peter and to the apostles./ And therfore understoond that bothe he that selleth and he that beyeth thynges espirituels been cleped symonyals, be it by catel, be it by procurynge, or by flesshly preyere of his freendes, flesshly freendes or espiritueel freendes:/ Flesshly in two maneres; as by kynrede, or othere freendes. Soothly, if they praye for hym that is nat worthy and able, it is symonye, if he take the benefice; and if he be worthy and able, ther nys noon./ That oother manere is whan men or wommen preyen for folk to avauncen hem, oonly for wikked flesshly affeccioun that they han unto the persone, and that is foul symonye./ But certes, in service, for which men yeven thynges espirituels unto hir servantz, it moot been understonde that the service moot been honest and elles nat; and eek that it be withouten bargaynynge, and that the persone be able./ For, as seith Seint Damasie, "Alle the synnes of the world, at regard of this synne, arn as thyng of noght." For it is the gretteste synne that may be, after the synne of Lucifer and Antecrist./ For by this synne God forleseth the chirche and the soule that he boghte with his precious blood, by hem that yeven chirches to hem that been nat digne./ For they putten in theves that stelen the soules of Jhesu Crist and destroyen his patrimoyne./ By swiche undigne preestes and curates han lewed men the lasse reverence of the sacramentz of hooly chirche, and swiche yeveres of chirches putten out the children of Crist and putten into the chirche the develes owene sone./ They sellen the soules that lambes sholde kepen to the wolf that strangleth hem. And therfore shul they nevere han part of the pasture of lambes, that is the blisse of hevene./ Now comth hasardrie with his apurtenaunces, as tables and rafles, of which comth deceite, false othes, chidynges, and alle ravynes, blasphemynge and reneiynge of God, and hate of his neighebores, wast of goodes, mysspendynge of tyme, and somtyme manslaughtre./ Certes, hasardours ne mowe nat been withouten greet synne whiles they haunte that craft./ Of Avarice comen eek lesynges, thefte, fals witnesse, and false othes. And ye shul understonde that thise been grete synnes and expres agayn the comaundementz of God, as I have seyd./ Fals witnesse is in word and eek in dede. In word, as for to bireve thy neighebores goode name by thy fals witnessyng, or bireven hym his catel or his heritage by thy fals witnessyng, whan thou for ire, or for meede, or for envye, berest fals witnesse, or accusest hym or excusest hym by thy fals witnesse, or elles excusest thyself falsly./ Ware yow, questemongeres and notaries! Certes, for fals witnessyng was Susanna in ful gret sorwe and peyne, and many another mo./ The synne of thefte is eek expres agayns Goddes heeste, and that in two maneres, corporeel or spiritueel./ Corporeel, as for to take thy neighebores catel agayn his wyl, be it by force or by sleighte, be it by met or by mesure;/ by stelyng eek of false enditementz upon hym, and in borwynge of thy neighebores catel, in entente nevere to payen it agayn, and semblable thynges./ Espiritueel thefte is sacrilege; that is to seyn, hurtynge of hooly thynges, or of thynges sacred to Crist, in two maneres: by reson of the hooly place, as chirches or chirche-hawes,/ for which every vileyns synne that men doon in swiche places may be cleped sacrilege, or every violence in the semblable places; also, they that withdrawen falsly the rightes that longen to hooly chirche./ And pleynly and generally, sacrilege

782 ordred: ordained irreguleer: in violation of the rules of his religious order
784 symonyals: simoniacs procurynge: procuring a benefice for someone or soliciting it
785 able: suitable
787 bargaynynge: fraud
788 Damasie: Pope Damasus
789 forleseth: loses completely
790 patrimoyne: inheritance
791 undigne: unworthy yeveres: givers

793 hasardrie: gambling tables: backgammon rafles: game played with three dice ravynes: robberies mysspendynge: waste
797 questemongeres: conductors of inquests, jurymen
799 Corporeel: bodily, natural met: measurement
800 of false: by means of false
801 by reson of: because of chirche-hawes: churchyards

is to reven hooly thyng fro hooly place, or unhooly thyng out of hooly place, or hooly thing out of unhooly place./

Relevacio contra peccatum Avaricie.

Now shul ye understonde that the releevynge of Avarice is misericorde, and pitee largely taken. And men myghten axe why that misericorde and pitee is releevynge of Avarice./ Certes, the avricious man sheweth no pitee ne misericorde to the nedeful man, for he deliteth hym in the kepynge of his tresor, and nat in the rescowynge ne releevynge of his evene-Cristen. And therfore speke I first of misericorde./ Thanne is misericorde, as seith the Philosophre, a vertu by which the corage of a man is stired by the mysese of hym that is mysesed./ Upon which misericorde folweth pitee in parfournynge of charitable werkes of misericorde./ And certes, thise thynges moeven a man to the misericorde of Jhesu Crist, that he yaf hymself for oure gilt, and suffred deeth for misericorde, and forgaf us oure originale synnes,/ and therby relessed us fro the peynes of helle, and amenused the peynes of purgatorie by penitence, and yeveth grace wel to do, and atte laste the blisse of hevene./ The speces of misericorde been, as for to lene and for to yeve, and to foryeven and relesse, and for to han pitee in herte and compassioun of the meschief of his evene-Cristene, and eek to chastise, there as nede is./ Another manere of remedie agayns avarice is resonable largesse; but soothly, heere bihoveth the consideracioun of the grace of Jhesu Crist, and of his temporeel goodes, and eek of the goodes perdurables that Crist yaf to us;/ and to han remembrance of the deeth that he shal receyve, he noot whanne, where, ne how; and eek that he shal forgon al that he hath, save oonly that he hath despended in goode werkes./

But for as muche as som folk been unmesurable, men oghten eschue fool-largesse, that men clepen wast./ Certes, he that is fool-large ne yeveth nat his catel, but he leseth his catel. Soothly, what thyng that he yeveth for veyne glorie, as to mynstrals and to folk for to beren his renoun in the world, he hath synne therof and noon almesse./ Certes, he leseth foule his good that ne seketh with the yifte of his good nothyng but synne./ He is lyk to an hors that seketh rather to drynken drovy or trouble water than for to drynken water of the clere welle./ And for as muchel as they yeven ther as they sholde nat yeven, to hem aperteneth thilke malisoun that Crist shal yeven at the day of doom to hem that shullen been dampned./

Sequitur de Gulâ.

After Avarice comth Glotonye, which is expres eek agayn the comandement of God. Glotonye is unmesurable appetit to ete or to drynke, or elles to doon ynogh to the unmesurable appetit and desordeynee coveitise to eten or to drynke./ This synne corrumped al this world, as is wel shewed in the synne of Adam and of Eve. Looke eek what seith Seint Paul of Glotonye:/ "Manye," seith Saint Paul, "goon, of whiche I have ofte seyd to yow, and now I seye it wepynge, that been the enemys of the croys of Crist; of whiche the ende is deeth, and of whiche hire wombe is hire god, and hire glorie in confusioun of hem that so savouren erthely thynges."/ He that is usaunt to this synne of glotonye, he ne may no synne withstonde. He moot been in servage of alle vices, for it is the develes hoord ther he hideth hym and resteth./ This synne hath manye speces. The firste is dronkenesse, that is the horrible sepulture of mannes resoun; and therfore, whan a man is dronken, he hath lost his resoun; and this is deedly synne./ But soothly, whan that a man is nat wont to strong drynke, and peraventure ne knoweth nat the strengthe of the drynke, or hath feblesse in his heed, or hath travailed, thurgh which he drynketh the moore, al be he sodeynly caught with drynke, it is no deedly synne, but venyal./ The seconde spece of glotonye is that the spirit of a man wexeth al trouble, for dronkenesse bireveth hym the discrecioun of his wit./ The thridde spece of glotonye is whan a man devoureth his mete and hath no rightful manere of etynge./ The fourthe is whan, thurgh the grete habundaunce of his mete,

Relevacio, *etc.*: The relief against the sin of Avarice.
804 misericorde: mercy
806 mysese: distress
813 unmesurable: immoderate
816 drovy: dirty
Sequitur, *etc.*: Now follows the section on Gluttony.
818 desordeynee: excessive
821 usaunt: accustomed

the humours in his body been distempred./ The fifthe is foryetelnesse by to muchel drynkynge, for which somtyme a man foryeteth er the morwe what he dide at even, or on the nyght biforn./

In oother manere been distinct the speces of Glotonye, after Seint Gregorie. The firste is for to ete biforn tyme to ete. The seconde is whan a man get hym to delicaat mete or drynke./ The thridde is whan men taken to muche over mesure. The fourthe is curiositee, with greet entente to maken and apparaillen his mete. The fifthe is for to eten to gredily./ Thise been the fyve fyngres of the develes hand, by whiche he draweth folk to synne./

Remedium contra peccatum Gule.

Agayns Glotonye is the remedie abstinence, as seith Galien; but that holde I nat meritorie, if he do it oonly for the heele of his body. Seint Augustyn wole that abstinence be doon for vertu and with pacience./ "Abstinence," he seith, "is litel worth but if a man have good wil therto, and but it be enforced by pacience and by charitee, and that men doon it for Godes sake, and in hope to have the blisse of hevene."/

The felawes of abstinence been attemperaunce, that holdeth the meene in alle thynges; eek shame, that eschueth alle deshonestee; suffisance, that seketh no riche metes ne drynkes, ne dooth no fors of to outrageous apparaillynge of mete;/ mesure also, that restreyneth by resoun the deslavee appetit of etynge; sobrenesse also, that restreyneth the outrage of drynke;/ sparynge also, that restreyneth the delicaat ese to sitte longe at his mete and softely, wherfore some folk stonden of hir owene wyl to eten at the lasse leyser./

Sequitur de Luxuria.

After Glotonye thanne comth Lecherie, for thise two synnes been so ny cosyns that ofte tyme they wol nat departe./ God woot, this synne is ful displesaunt thyng to God, for he seyde hymself, "Do no lecherie." And therfore he putte grete peynes agayns this synne in the olde lawe./ If womman thral were taken in this synne, she sholde be beten with staves to the deeth; and if she were a gentil womman, she sholde be slayn with stones; and if she were a bisshoppes doghter, she sholde been brent, by Goddes comandement./ Forther over, by the synne of lecherie God dreynte al the world at the diluge. And after that he brente fyve citees with thonder-leyt, and sank hem into helle./

Now lat us speke thanne of thilke stynkynge synne of Lecherie that men clepe avowtrie of wedded folk; that is to seyn, if that oon of hem be wedded, or elles bothe./ Seint John seith that avowtiers shullen been in helle, in a stank brennynge of fyr and of brymston — in fyr for hire lecherye, in brymston for the stynk of hire ordure./ Certes, the brekynge of this sacrement is an horrible thyng. It was maked of God hymself in paradys, and confermed by Jhesu Crist, as witnesseth Seint Mathew in the gospel: "A man shal lete fader and mooder and taken hym to his wif, and they shullen be two in o flessh."/ This sacrement bitokneth the knyttynge togidre of Crist and of hooly chirche./ And nat oonly that God forbad avowtrie in dede, but eek he comanded that thou sholdest nat coveite thy neighebores wyf./ "In this heeste," seith Seint Augustyn, "is forboden alle manere coveitise to doon lecherie." Lo, what seith Seint Mathew in the gospel, that "whoso seeth a womman to coveitise of his lust, he hath doon lecherie with hire in his herte."/ Heere may ye seen that nat oonly the dede of this synne is forboden, but eek the desir to doon that synne./ This cursed synne anoyeth grevousliche hem that it haunten. And first to hire soule, for he obligeth it to synne and to peyne of deeth that is perdurable./ Unto the body anoyeth it grevously also, for it dreyeth hym, and wasteth him, and shent hym, and of his blood he maketh sacrifice to the feend of helle. It wasteth eek his catel and his substaunce./ And certes, if it be a foul thyng a man to waste his catel on wommen, yet is it a fouler thyng wham that, for

826 distempred: out of balance
827 foryetelnesse: forgetfulness
829 curiositee: elaborate preparation
Remedium, *etc.*: The remedy against the sin of Gluttony.
831 Galien: Galen, the Greek authority on medicine
meritorie: meritorious
833 deshonestee: dishonor, shameful acts
834 deslavee: uncontrolled sobrenesse: sobriety outrage: excess
835 sparynge: moderation, frugality
Sequitur, *etc.*: Now follows the section on Lechery.

839 thonder-leyt: lightning bolts
841 stank: pond, pool
848 dreyeth: drains (dries)

swich ordure, wommen dispenden upon men hir catel and substaunce./ This synne, as seith the prophete, bireveth man and womman hir goode fame and al hire honour, and it is ful plesaunt to the devel, for therby wynneth he the mooste partie of this world./ And right as a marchant deliteth hym moost in chaffare that he hath moost avantage of, right so deliteth the fend in this ordure./

This is that oother hand of the devel with fyve fyngres to cacche the peple to his vileynye./ The firste fynger is the fool lookynge of the fool womman and of the fool man; that sleeth, right as the basilicok sleeth folk by the venym of his sighte, for the coveitise of eyen folweth the coveitise of the herte./ The seconde fynger is the vileyns touchynge in wikkede manere. And therfore seith Salomon that "whoso toucheth and handleth a womman, he fareth lyk hym that handleth the scorpioun that styngeth and sodeynly sleeth thurgh his envenymynge"; as whoso toucheth warm pych, it shent his fyngres./ The thridde is foule wordes, that fareth lyk fyr, that right anon brenneth the herte./ The fourthe fynger is the kissynge; and trewely he were a greet fool that wolde kisse the mouth of a brennynge oven or of a fourneys./ And moore fooles been they that kissen in vileynye, for that mouth is the mouth of helle; and namely thise olde dotardes holours, yet wol they kisse, though they may nat do, and smatre hem./ Certes, they been lyk to houndes; for an hound, whan he comth by the roser or by othere [bushes], though he may nat pisse, yet wole he heve up his leg and make a contenaunce to pisse./ And for that many man weneth that he may nat synne for no likerousnesse that he dooth with his wyf, certes, that opinion is fals. God woot, a man may sleen hymself with his owene knyf, and make hymselve dronken of his owene tonne./ Certes, be it wyf, be it child, or any worldly thyng that he loveth biforn God, it is his mawmet, and he is an ydolastre./ Man sholde loven hys wyf by discrecioun, paciently and atemprely, and thanne is she as though it were his suster./ The fifthe fynger of the develes hand is the stynkynge dede of Leccherie./ Certes, the fyve fyngres of Glotonie the feend put in the wombe of a man, and with his fyve fingres of Lecherie he gripeth hym by the reynes for to throwen hym into the fourneys of helle,/ ther as they shul han the fyr and the wormes that evere shul lasten, and wepynge and wailynge, sharp hunger and thurst, [and] grymnesse of develes, that shullen al totrede hem withouten respit and withouten ende./ Of Leccherie, as I seyde, sourden diverse speces, as fornicacioun, that is bitwixe man and womman that been nat maried, and this is deedly synne and agayns nature./ Al that is enemy and destruccioun to nature is agayns nature./ Parfay, the resoun of a man telleth eek hym wel that it is deedly synne, for as muche as God forbad leccherie. And Seint Paul yeveth hem the regne that nys dewe to no wight but to hem that doon deedly synne./ Another synne of Leccherie is to bireve a mayden of hir maydenhede, for he that so dooth, certes, he casteth a mayden out of the hyeste degree that is in this present lif/ and bireveth hire thilke precious fruyt that the book clepeth the hundred fruyt. I ne kan seye it noon ootherweyes in Englissh, but in Latyn it highte *Centesimus fructus.*/ Certes, he that so dooth is cause of manye damages and vileynyes, mo than any man kan rekene; right as he somtyme is cause of alle damages that beestes don in the feeld, that breketh the hegge or the closure, thurgh which he destroyeth that may nat been restoored./ For certes, namoore may maydenhede be restoored than an arm that is smyten fro the body may retourne agayn to wexe./ She may have mercy, this woot I wel, if she do penitence; but nevere shal it be that she nas corrupt./ And al be it so that I have spoken somwhat of avowtrie, it is good to shewen mo perils that longen to avowtrie, for to eschue that foule synne./ Avowtrie in Latyn is for to seyn approchynge of oother mannes bed, thurgh which tho that whilom weren o flessh abawndone hir bodyes to othere persones./ Of this synne, as seith the wise man, folwen manye harmes. First, brekynge of feith,

853 basilicok: basilisk, a fabulous serpent
854 pych: pitch
857 holours: lechers smatre hem: defile or besmatter themselves
858 roser: rosebush
860 mawmet: idol ydolastre: idolater
863 reynes: loins or kidneys (seat of the passions)
864 grymnesse: fierceness totrede: trample upon
865 sourden: arise, originate
869 *Centesimus fructus:* hundredfold fruit; see n.
870 right as he: he (i.e., the deflowerer of virgins) is like beasts in the field closure: fence
874 abawndone: yield, give over

and certes in feith is the keye of Cristendom./ And whan that feith is broken 875
and lorn, soothly Cristendom stant veyn
and withouten fruyt./ This synne is eek a thefte, for thefte generally is for to reve a wight his thyng agayns his wille./ Certes, this is the fouleste thefte that may be, whan a womman steleth hir body from hir housbonde and yeveth it to hire holour to defoulen hire, and steleth hir soule fro Crist and yeveth it to the devel./ This is a fouler thefte than for to breke a chirche and stele the chalice, for thise avowtiers breken the temple of God spiritually, and stelen the vessel of grace, that is the body and the soule, for which Crist shal destroyen hem, as seith Seint Paul./ Soothly, of this thefte douted gretly Joseph, whan that his lordes wyf preyed hym of vileynye, whan he seyde, "Lo, my lady, how my lord hath take to me under my warde al that he hath in this world, ne no thyng of his thynges is out of my power, but oonly ye, that been his
wyf./ And how sholde I thanne do this 880
wikkednesse, and synne so horribly agayns
God and agayns my lord? God it forbeede!" Allas, al to litel is swich trouthe now yfounde./ The thridde harm is the filthe thurgh which they breken the comandement of God, and defoulen the auctour of matrimoyne, that is Crist./ For certes, in so muche as the sacrement of mariage is so noble and so digne, so muche is it gretter synne for to breken it, for God made mariage in paradys, in the estaat of innocence, to multiplye mankynde to the service of God./ And therfore is the brekynge therof the moore grevous; of which brekynge comen false heires ofte tyme, that wrongfully ocupien folkes heritages. And therfore wol Crist putte hem out of the regne of hevene, that is heritage to goode folk./ Of this brekynge comth eek ofte tyme that folk unwar wedden or synnen with hire owene kynrede, and namely thilke harlotes that haunten bordels of thise fool wommen, that mowe be likned to a commune gong, where as men purgen
hire ordure./ What seye we eek of pu- 885
tours that lyven by the horrible synne of
putrie, and constreyne wommen to yelden hem a certeyn rente of hire bodily puterie, ye, somtyme of his owene wyf or his child, as doon thise bawdes? Certes, thise been cursede synnes./ Understoond eek that Avowtrie is set gladly in the ten comandementz bitwixe thefte and manslaughtre; for it is the gretteste thefte that may be, for it is thefte of body and of soule./ And it is lyk to homycide, for it kerveth atwo and breketh atwo hem that first were maked o flessh. And therfore, by the olde lawe of God, they sholde be slayn./ But nathelees, by the lawe of Jhesu Crist, that is lawe of pitee, whan he seyde to the womman that was founden in avowtrie, and sholde han been slayn with stones, after the wyl of the Jewes, as was hir lawe, "Go," quod Jhesu Crist, "and have namoore wyl to synne," or, "wille namoore to do synne."/ Soothly the vengeaunce of Avowtrie is awarded to the peynes of helle, but if so be that it be destourbed by penitence./ Yet been ther mo speces of this 890
cursed synne; as whan that oon of hem
is religious, or elles bothe; or of folk that been entred into ordre, as subdekne, or dekne, or preest, or hospitaliers. And evere the hyer that he is in ordre, the gretter is the synne./ The thynges that gretly agreggen hire synne is the brekynge of hire avow of chastitee, whan they receyved the ordre./ And forther over, sooth is that hooly ordre is chief of al the tresorie of God and his especial signe and mark of chastitee to shewe that they been joyned to chastitee, which that is the moost precious lyf that is./ And thise ordred folk been specially titled to God, and of the special meignee of God, for which, whan they doon deedly synne, they been the special traytours of God and of his peple; for they lyven of the peple, to preye for the peple, and while they ben suche traitours, here preyer avayleth nat to the peple./ Preestes been aungels, as by the dignitee of hir mysterye; but for sothe, Seint Paul seith that Sathanas transformeth hym in an aungel
of light./ Soothly, the preest that haunt- 895
eth deedly synne, he may be likned to the
aungel of derknesse transformed in the aungel of light. He semeth aungel of light, but for sothe he is aungel of derknesse./ Swiche preestes been the sones of Helie, as sheweth

879 breke: break into
880 warde: custody
885 bordels: brothels gong: latrine
886 putours: pimps puterie: prostitution
887 gladly: fittingly
891 religious: in a religious order subdekne: subdeacon hospitaliers: Knights Hospitallers
892 agreggen: aggravate, make worse
893 tresorie: treasury
894 ordred: ordained titled: dedicated

in the Book of Kynges, that they weren the sones of Belial — that is, the devel./ Belial is to seyn, "withouten juge." And so faren they; hem thynketh they been free and han no juge, namoore than hath a free bole that taketh which cow that hym liketh in the town./ So faren they by wommen. For right as a free bole is ynough for al a toun, right so is a wikked preest corrupcioun ynough for al a parisshe, or for al a contree./ Thise preestes, as seith the book, ne konne nat the mysterie of preesthod to the peple, ne God ne knowe they nat. They ne helde hem nat apayd, as seith the book, of soden flessh that was to hem offred, but they tooke by force the flessh that is rawe./ Certes, so thise shrewes ne holden hem nat apayed of roosted flessh and sode flessh, with which the peple feden hem in greet reverence, but they wole have raw flessh of folkes wyves and hir doghtres./ And certes, thise wommen that consenten to hire harlotrie doon greet wrong to Crist, and to hooly chirche, and alle halwes, and to alle soules; for they bireven alle thise hym that sholde worshipe Crist and hooly chirche and preye for Cristene soules./ And therfore han swiche preestes, and hire lemmanes eek that consenten to hir leccherie, the malisoun of al the court Cristien, til they come to amendement./ The thridde spece of avowtrie is somtyme bitwixe a man and his wyf, and that is whan they take no reward in hire assemblynge but oonly to hire flesshly delit, as seith Seint Jerome,/ and ne rekken of nothyng but that they been assembled; by cause that they been maried, al is good ynough, as thynketh to hem./ But in swich folk hath the devel power, as seyde the aungel Raphael to Thobie, for in hire assemblynge they putten Jhesu Crist out of hire herte and yeven hemself to alle ordure./ The fourthe spece is the assemblee of hem that been of hire kynrede, or of hem that been of oon affynytee, or elles with hem with whiche hir fadres or hir kynrede han deled in the synne of lecherie. This synne maketh hem lyk to houndes, that taken no kep to kynrede./ And certes, parentele is in two maneres, outher goostly or flesshly; goostly, as for to deelen with his godsibbes./ For right so as he that engendreth a child is his flesshly fader, right so is his godfader his fader espiritueel. For which a womman may in no lasse synne assemblen with hire godsib than with hire owene flesshly brother./ The fifthe spece is thilke abhomynable synne, of which that no man unnethe oghte speke ne write; nathelees it is openly reherced in holy writ./ This cursednesse doon men and wommen in diverse entente and in diverse manere; but though that hooly writ speke of horrible synne, certes hooly writ may nat been defouled, namoore than the sonne that shyneth on the mixne./ Another synne aperteneth to leccherie, that comth in slepynge, and this synne cometh ofte to hem that been maydenes, and eek to hem that been corrupt; and this synne men clepen polucioun, that comth in foure maneres./ Somtyme of langwissynge of body, for the humours been to ranke and to habundaunt in the body of man; somtyme of infermetee, for the fieblesse of the vertu retentif, as phisik maketh mencion; somtyme for surfeet of mete and drynke;/ and somtyme of vileyns thoghtes that been enclosed in mannes mynde whan he gooth to slepe, which may nat been withoute synne; for which men moste kepen hem wisely, or elles may men synnen ful grevously./

Remedium contra peccatum Luxurie.

Now comth the remedie agayns Leccherie, and that is generally chastitee and continence, that restreyneth alle the desordeynee moevynges that comen of flesshly talentes./ And evere the gretter merite shal he han that moost restreyneth the wikkede eschawfynges of the [ardour] of this synne. And this is in two maneres — that is to seyn, chastitee in mariage, and chastitee of widwehod./ Now shaltow understonde that matrimoyne is leefful assemblynge of man and of womman that receyven by vertu of the sacre-

898 **juge**: yoke; see n. **free bole**: bull allowed to run free with the village herd
900 **mysterie**: office (ministerium) **soden**: boiled, cooked
902 **harlotrie**: lechery
903 **court Cristien**: ecclesiastical court
904 **reward**: regard (of the proper purpose)
906 **Thobie**: Tobias
907 **affynytee**: relationship between persons, other than the spouses themselves, established by marriage, as distinguished from **kynrede**, consanguinity
908 **parentele**: kinship **godsibbes**: children of one's godparents or those for whom one's parents are godparents
911 **mixne**: dunghill
913 **langwissynge**: weakness **vertu retentif**: body's power to retain fluids **phisik**: science of medicine
Remedium, *etc.*: The remedy against the sin of Lechery.
916 **eschawfynges**: inflaming with passion

ment the boond thurgh which they may nat be departed in al hir lyf — that is to seyn, whil that they lyven bothe./ This, as seith the book, is a ful greet sacrement. God maked it, as I have seyd, in paradys, and wolde hymself be born in mariage./ And for to halwen mariage he was at a weddynge, where as he turned water into wyn, which was the firste miracle that he wroghte in erthe biforn his disciples./ Trewe effect of mariage clenseth fornicacioun and replenysseth hooly chirche of good lynage, for that is the ende of mariage; and it chaungeth deedly synne into venial synne bitwixe hem that been ywedded, and maketh the hertes al oon of hem that been ywedded, as wel as the bodies./ This is verray mariage, that was establissed by God, er that synne bigan, whan natureel lawe was in his right poynt in paradys; and it was ordeyned that o man sholde have but o womman, and o womman but o man, as seith Seint Augustyn, by manye resouns./

First, for mariage is figured bitwixe Crist and holy chirche. And that oother is for a man is heved of a womman; algate, by ordinaunce it sholde be so./ For if a womman hadde mo men than oon, thanne sholde she have moo hevedes than oon, and that were an horrible thyng biforn God; and eek a womman ne myghte nat plese to many folk at oones. And also ther ne sholde nevere be pees ne reste amonges hem, for everich wolde axen his owene thyng./ And forther over, no man ne sholde knowe his owene engendrure, ne who sholde have his heritage; and the womman sholde been the lasse biloved fro the tyme that she were conjoynt to many men./

Now comth how that a man sholde bere hym with his wif, and namely in two thynges; that is to seyn, in suffraunce and reverence, as shewed Crist whan he made first womman./ For he ne made hire nat of the heved of Adam, for she sholde nat clayme to greet lordshipe./ For ther as the womman hath the maistrie, she maketh to muche desray. Ther neden none ensamples of this; the experience of day by day oghte suffise./ Also, certes, God ne made nat womman of the foot of Adam, for she ne sholde nat been holden to lowe; for she kan nat paciently suffre. But God made womman of the ryb of Adam, for womman sholde be felawe unto man./ Man sholde bere hym to his wyf in feith, in trouthe, and in love, as seith Seint Paul, that a man sholde loven his wyf as Crist loved hooly chirche, that loved it so wel that he deyde for it. So sholde a man for his wyf, if it were nede./

Now how that a womman sholde be subget to hire housbonde, that telleth Seint Peter. First, in obedience./ And eek, as seith the decree, a womman that is wyf, as longe as she is a wyf, she hath noon auctoritee to swere ne to bere witnesse withoute leve of hir housbonde, that is hire lord; algate, he sholde be so by resoun./ She sholde eek serven hym in alle honestee, and been attempree of hire array. I woot wel that they sholde setten hire entente to plesen hir housbondes, but nat by hire queyntise of array./ Seint Jerome seith that "wyves that been apparailled in silk and in precious purpre ne mowe nat clothen hem in Jhesu Crist." Loke what seith Seint John eek in thys matere?/ Seint Gregorie eek seith that "No wight seketh precious array but oonly for veyne glorie, to been honoured the moore biforn the peple."/ It is a greet folye, a womman to have a fair array outward and in hirself be foul inward./ A wyf sholde eek be mesurable in lookynge and in berynge and in lawghynge, and discreet in alle hire wordes and hire dedes./ And aboven alle worldly thyng she sholde loven hire housbonde with al hire herte, and to hym be trewe of hir body./ So sholde an housbonde eek be to his wyf. For sith that al the body is the housbondes, so sholde hire herte been, or elles ther is bitwixe hem two, as in that, no parfit mariage./ Thanne shal men understonde that for thre thynges a man and his wyf flesshly mowen assemble. The firste is in entente of engendrure of children to the service of God, for certes that is the cause final of matrimoyne./ Another cause is to yelden everich of hem to oother the dette of hire bodies, for neither of hem hath power of his owene body. The thridde is for to eschewe leccherye and vileynye. The ferthe is for sothe deedly synne./ As to the firste, it is

918 as I have seyd: at 842 and 883
920 replenysseth: fills
921 right poynt: proper condition, true state
922 figured: symbolized
927 desray: disorder
932 queyntise of array: finery
936 mesurable: modest

meritorie; the seconde also, for, as seith the decree, that she hath merite of chastitee that yeldeth to hire housbonde the dette of hir body, ye, though it be agayn hir likynge and the lust of hire herte./ The thridde manere is venyal synne; and, trewely, scarsly may ther any of thise be withoute venial synne, for the corrupcion and for the delit./ The fourthe manere is for to understonde, as if they assemble oonly for amorous love and for noon of the foreseyde causes, but for to accomplice thilke brennynge delit, they rekke nevere how ofte. Soothly it is deedly synne; and yet, with sorwe, somme folk wol peynen hem moore to doon than to hire appetit suffiseth./

The seconde manere of chastitee is for to been a clene wydewe, and eschue the embracynges of man, and desiren the embracynge of Jhesu Crist./ Thise been tho that han been wyves and han forgoon hire housbondes, and eek wommen that han doon leccherie and been releeved by penitence./ And certes, if that a wyf koude kepen hire al chaast by licence of hir housbonde, so that she yeve nevere noon occasion that he agilte, it were to hire a greet merite./ Thise manere wommen that observen chastitee moste be clene in herte as wel as in body and in thought, and mesurable in clothynge and in contenaunce, and been abstinent in etynge and drynkynge, in spekynge, and in dede. They been the vessel or the boyste of the blissed Magdelene, that fulfilleth hooly chirche of good odour./ The thridde manere of chastitee is virginitee, and it bihoveth that she be hooly in herte and clene of body. Thanne is she spouse to Jhesu Crist, and she is the lyf of angeles./ She is the preisynge of this world, and she is as thise martirs in egalitee; she hath in hire that tonge may nat telle ne herte thynke./ Virginitee baar oure Lord Jhesu Crist, and virgine was hymselve./

Another remedie agayns Leccherie is specially to withdrawen swiche thynges as yeve occasion to thilke vileynye, as ese, etynge, and drynkynge. For certes, whan the pot boyleth strongly, the beste remedie is to withdrawe the fyr./ Slepynge longe in greet quiete is eek a greet norice to Leccherie./

Another remedie agayns Leccherie is that a man or a womman eschue the compaignye of hem by whiche he douteth to be tempted, for al be it so that the dede be withstonden, yet is ther greet temptacioun./ Soothly, a whit wal, although it ne brenne noght fully by stikynge of a candele, yet is the wal blak of the leyt./ Ful ofte tyme I rede that no man truste in his owene perfeccioun, but he be stronger than Sampson, and hoolier than David, and wiser than Salomon./

Now after that I have declared yow, as I kan, the sevene deedly synnes, and somme of hire braunches and hire remedies, soothly, if I koude, I wolde telle yow the ten comandementz./ But so heigh a doctrine I lete to divines. Nathelees, I hope to God, they been touched in this tretice, everich of hem alle./

Sequitur secunda pars Penitencie.

Now for as muche as the seconde partie of Penitence stant in confessioun of mouth, as I bigan in the firste chapitre, I seye, Seint Augustyn seith,/ "Synne is every word and every dede, and al that men coveiten, agayn the lawe of Jhesu Crist; and this is for to synne in herte, in mouth, and in dede, by thy fyve wittes, that been sighte, herynge, smellynge, tastynge or savourynge, and feelynge."/ Now is it good to understonde the circumstances that agreggen muchel every synne./ Thou shalt considere what thow art that doost the synne, wheither thou be male or femele, yong or oold, gentil or thral, free or servant, hool or syk, wedded or sengle, ordred or unordred, wys or fool, clerk or seculeer;/ if she be of thy kynrede, bodily or goostly, or noon; if any of thy kynrede have synned with hire, or noon; and manye mo thinges./

Another circumstaunce is this: wheither it be doon in fornicacioun or in avowtrie or noon, incest or noon, mayden or noon, in manere of homicide or noon, horrible grete synnes or smale, and how longe thou hast continued in synne./ The thridde circumstaunce is the place ther thou hast do synne, wheither in oother mennes hous or in thyn owene, in feeld or in chirche or in chirchehawe, in chirche

941 meritorie: meritorious
945 forgoon: lost
947 boyste: container
949 as thise martirs in egalitee: equal to the martyrs
954 leyt: flame
957 divines: theologians
Sequitur, *etc.*: Now follows the second part of Penance.
960 agreggen: aggravate, make more serious
961 sengle: single

dedicaat or noon./ For if the chirche be halwed, and man or womman spille his kynde inwith that place by wey of synne or by wikked temptacioun, the chirche is entredited
til it be reconsiled by the bysshop./ And 965
the preest sholde be enterdited that dide
swich a vileynye; to terme of al his lif he sholde namoore synge masse, and if he dide, he sholde doon deedly synne at every time that he so songe masse./ The fourthe circumstaunce is by whiche mediatours, or by whiche messagers, as for enticement, or for consentement to bere compaignye with felaweshipe; for many a wrecche, for to bere compaignye, wol go to the devel of helle./ Wherfore they that eggen or consenten to the synne been parteners of the synne, and of the dampnacioun of the synnere./

The fifthe circumstaunce is how manye tymes that he hath synned, if it be in his mynde, and how ofte that he hath falle./ For he that ofte falleth in synne, he despiseth the mercy of God, and encreesseth hys synne, and is unkynde to Crist; and he wexeth the moore fieble to withstonde synne, and synneth
the moore lightly,/ and the latter ariseth, 970
and is the moore eschew for to shryven
hym, and namely, to hym that is his confessour./ For which that folk, whan they falle agayn in hir olde folies, outher they forleten hir olde confessours al outrely or elles they departen hir shrift in diverse places; but soothly, swich departed shrift deserveth no mercy of God of his synnes./ The sixte circumstaunce is why that a man synneth, as by which temptacioun, and if hymself procure thilke temptacioun, or by the excitynge of oother folk; or if he synne with a womman by force, or by hire owene assent;/ or if the womman, maugree hir hed, hath been afforced, or noon. This shal she telle: for coveitise, or for poverte, and if it was hire procurynge, or noon; and swich manere harneys./ The seventhe circumstaunce is in what manere he hath doon his synne, or how that she hath suffred that folk han doon
to hire./ And the same shal the man telle 975
pleynly with alle circumstaunces; and

964 **dedicaat:** consecrated
965 **kynde:** semen **entredited:** under an interdict, prohibited from use
968 **eggen:** incite
971 **eschew:** disinclined, reluctant
974 **afforced:** violated **procurynge:** contrivance **harneys:** trappings (circumstances)

wheither he hath synned with comune bordel wommen or noon,/ or doon his synne in hooly tymes or noon, in fastyng tymes or noon, or biforn his shrifte, or after his latter shrifte,/ and hath peraventure broken therfore his penance enjoyned, by whos help and whos conseil, by sorcerie or craft; al moste be toold./ Alle thise thynges, after that they been grete or smale, engreggen the conscience of man. And eek the preest, that is thy juge, may the bettre been avysed of his juggement in yevynge of thy penaunce, and that is after thy contricioun./ For understond wel that after tyme that a man hath defouled his baptesme by synne, if he wole come to salvacioun, ther is noon other wey but by penitence and
shrifte and satisfaccioun,/ and namely by 980
the two, if ther be a confessour to which
he may shriven hym, and the thridde, if he have lyf to parfournen it./

Thanne shal man looke and considere that if he wole maken a trewe and a profitable confessioun, ther moste be foure condiciouns./ First, it moot been in sorweful bitternesse of herte, as seyde the kyng Ezechias to God, "I wol remembre me alle the yeres of my lif in bitternesse of myn herte."/ This condicioun of bitternesse hath fyve signes. The firste is that confessioun moste be shamefast, nat for to covere ne hyden his synne, for he hath agilt his God and defouled his soule./ And herof seith Seint Augustyn, "The herte travailleth for shame of his synne"; and for he hath greet shamefastnesse, he is digne to have greet
mercy of God./ Swich was the confes- 985
sioun of the publican that wolde nat heven
up his eyen to hevene, for he hadde offended God of hevene; for which shamefastnesse he hadde anon the mercy of God./ And therof seith Seint Augustyn that swich shamefast folk been next foryevenesse and remissioun./ Another signe is humylitee in confessioun, of which seith Seint Peter, "Humbleth yow under the myght of God." The hond of God is myghty in confessioun, for therby God foryeveth thee thy synnes, for he allone hath the power./ And this humylitee shal been in herte and in signe outward, for right as he hath humylitee to God in his herte, right so sholde he

976 **bordel wommen:** prostitutes
979 **engreggen:** burden
983 **Ezechias:** Hezekiah
984 **shamefast:** made with a sense of shame

humble his body outward to the preest, that sit in Goddes place./ For which in no manere, sith that Crist is sovereyn, and the preest meene and mediatour bitwixe Crist and the synnere, and the synnere is the laste by wey of resoun,/ thanne sholde nat the synnere sitte as heighe as his confessour, but knele biforn hym or at his feet, but if maladie destourbe it. For he shal nat taken kep who sit there, but in whos place that he sitteth./ A man that hath trespased to a lord, and comth for to axe mercy and maken his accord, and set him doun anon by the lord, men wolde holden hym outrageous, and nat worthy so soone for to have remissioun ne mercy./ The thridde signe is how that thy shrift sholde be ful of teeris, if man may, and if man may nat wepe with his bodily eyen, lat hym wepe in herte./ Swich was the confession of Seint Peter, for after that he hadde forsake Jhesu Crist, he wente out and weep ful bitterly./ The fourthe signe is that he ne lette nat for shame to shewen his confessioun./ Swich was the confessioun of the Magdalene, that ne spared for no shame of hem that weren atte feeste, for to go to oure Lord Jhesu Crist and biknowe to hym hire synne./ The fifthe signe is that a man or a womman be obeisant to receyven the penaunce that hym is enjoyned for his synnes, for certes, Jhesu Crist, for the giltes of o man, was obedient to the deeth./

The seconde condicion of verray confession is that it be hastily doon. For certes, if a man hadde a deedly wounde, evere the lenger that he taried to warisshe hymself, the moore wolde it corrupte and haste hym to his deeth, and eek the wounde wolde be the wors for to heele./ And right so fareth synne that longe tyme is in a man unshewed./ Certes, a man oghte hastily shewen his synnes for manye causes; as for drede of deeth, that cometh ofte sodeynly, and no certeyn what tyme it shal be, ne in what place; and eek the drecchynge of o synne draweth in another;/ and eek the lenger that he tarieth, the ferther he is fro Crist. And if he abide to his laste day, scarsly may he shryven hym or remembre hym of his synnes or repenten hym, for the grevous maladie of his deeth./ And for as muche as he ne hath nat in his lyf herkned Jhesu Crist whanne he hath spoken, he shal crie to Jhesu Crist at his laste day, and scarsly wol he herkne hym./ And understond that this condicioun moste han foure thynges. Thi shrift moste be purveyed bifore and avysed; for wikked haste dooth no profit; and that a man konne shryve hym of his synnes, be it of pride, or of envye, and so forth with the speces and circumstances;/ and that he have comprehended in hys mynde the nombre and the greetnesse of his synnes, and how longe that he hath leyn in synne;/ and eek that he be contrit of his synnes, and in stidefast purpos, by the grace of God, nevere eft to falle in synne; and eek that he drede and countrewaite hymself, that he fle the occasiouns of synne to whiche he is enclyned./ Also thou shalt shryve thee of alle thy synnes to o man, and nat a parcel to o man and a parcel to another; that is to understonde, in entente to departe thy confessioun, as for shame or drede, for it nys but stranglynge of thy soule./ For certes Jhesu Crist is entierly al good; in hym nys noon imperfeccioun, and therfore outher he foryeveth al parfitly or elles never a deel./ I seye nat that if thow be assigned to the penitauncer for certein synne, that thow art bounde to shewen hym al the remenaunt of thy synnes, of whiche thow hast be shryven of thy curaat, but if it like to thee of thyn humylitee; this is no departynge of shrifte./ Ne I seye nat, ther as I speke of divisioun of confessioun, that if thou have licence for to shryve thee to a discreet and an honest preest, where thee liketh, and by licence of thy curaat, that thow ne mayst wel shryve thee to him of alle thy synnes./ But lat no blotte be bihynde; lat no synne been untoold, as fer as thow hast remembraunce./ And whan thou shalt be shryven to thy curaat, telle hym eek alle the synnes that thow hast doon syn thou were last yshryven; this is no wikked entente of divisioun of shrifte./

Also the verray shrifte axeth certeine condiciouns. First, that thow shryve thee by thy free wil, noght constreyned, ne for shame of folk, ne for maladie, ne swiche thynges. For

990 **meene:** agent, instrument
999 **unshewed:** unconfessed
1000 **drecchynge:** continuance
1005 **countrewaite:** watch
1006 **parcel:** portion
1008 **penitauncer:** a priest with special powers granted by a pope or bishop to hear confession, give dispensations, or absolve from particular sins
1010 **untoold:** unconfessed

it is resoun that he that trespaseth by his free wyl, that by his free wyl he confesse his trespas,/ and that noon oother man telle his synne but he hymself; ne he shal nat nayte ne denye his synne, ne wratthe hym agayn the preest for his amonestynge to lete synne./ The seconde condicioun is that thy shrift be laweful; that is to seyn, that thow that shryvest thee and eek the preest that hereth thy confessioun been verraily in the feith of hooly chirche,/ and that a man ne be nat despeired of the mercy of Jhesu Crist, as Caym or Judas./ And eek a man moot accusen hymself of his owene trespas, and nat another; but he shal blame and wyten hymself and his owene malice of his synne, and noon oother./ But nathelees, if that another man be occasioun or enticere of his synne, or the estaat of a persone be swich thurgh which his synne is agregged, or elles that he may nat pleynly shryven hym but he telle the persone with which he hath synned, thanne may he telle it,/ so that his entente ne be nat to bakbite the persone, but oonly to declaren his confessioun./

Thou ne shalt nat eek make no lesynges in thy confessioun, for humylitee, peraventure, to seyn that thou hast doon synnes of whiche thow were nevere gilty./ For Seint Augustyn seith, "If thou, by cause of thyn humylitee, makest lesynges on thyself, though thow ne were nat in synne biforn, yet artow thanne in synne thurgh thy lesynges."/ Thou most eek shewe thy synne by thyn owene propre mouth, but thow be woxe dowmb, and nat by no lettre; for thow that hast doon the synne, thou shalt have the shame therfore./ Thow shalt nat eek peynte thy confessioun by faire subtile wordes, to covere the moore thy synne; for thanne bigilestow thyself, and nat the preest. Thow most tellen it platly, be it nevere so foul ne so horrible./ Thow shalt eek shryve thee to a preest that is discreet to conseille thee; and eek thou shalt nat shryve thee for veyne glorie, ne for ypocrisye, ne for no cause but oonly for the doute of Jhesu Crist and the heele of thy soule./ Thow shalt nat eek renne to the preest sodeynly to tellen hym lightly thy synne, as whoso telleth a jape or a tale, but avysely and with greet devocioun./ And generally, shryve thee ofte. If thou ofte falle, ofte thou arise by confessioun./ And though thou shryve thee ofter than ones of synne of which thou hast be shryven, it is the moore merite. And, as seith Seint Augustyn, thow shalt have the moore lightly relessyng and grace of God, bothe of synne and of peyne./ And certes, oones a yeere atte leeste wey it is laweful for to been housled, for certes, oones a yeere alle thynges renovellen./

Now have I toold yow of verray Confessioun, that is the seconde partie of Penitence./

Explicit secunda pars Penitencie, et sequitur tercia pars eiusdem.

The thridde partie of Penitence is Satisfaccioun, and that stant moost generally in almesse and in bodily peyne./ Now been ther thre manere of almesse: contricion of herte, where a man offreth hymself to God; another is to han pitee of defaute of his neighebores; and the thridde is in yevynge of good conseil and comfort, goostly and bodily, where men han nede, and namely in sustenaunce of mannes foode./ And tak kep that a man hath nede of thise thinges generally: he hath nede of foode, he hath nede of clothyng and herberwe, he hath nede of charitable conseil and visitynge in prisone and in maladie, and sepulture of his dede body./ And if thow mayst nat visite the nedeful with thy persone, visite hym by thy message and by thy yiftes./ Thise been general almesses or werkes of charitee of hem that han temporeel richesses or discrecioun in conseilynge. Of thise werkes shaltow heren at the day of doom./

Thise almesses shaltow doon of thyne owene propre thynges, and hastily and prively, if thow mayst./ But nathelees, if thow mayst nat doon it prively, thow shalt nat forbere to doon almesse though men seen it, so that it be nat doon for thank of the world, but oonly for thank of Jhesu Crist./ For, as witnesseth Seint Mathew, *capitulo quinto,*

1013 **nayte:** disclaim

Explicit, *etc.*: Here ends the second part of Penance, and its third part follows.

1027 **laweful:** decreed by (Church) law **housled:** given communion **renovellen:** renew themselves

1036 *capitulo quinto:* in the fifth chapter

"A citee may nat been hyd that is set on a montayne, ne men lighte nat a lanterne and put it under a busshel, but men sette it on a candle-stikke to yeve light to the men in the hous./ Right so shal youre light lighten bifore men, that they may seen youre goode werkes, and glorifie youre fader that is in hevene."/

Now as to speken of bodily peyne, it stant in preyeres, in wakynges, in fastynges, in vertuouse techynges of orisouns./ And ye shul understonde that orisouns or preyeres is for to seyn a pitous wyl of herte, that redresseth it in God and expresseth it by word outward, to remoeven harmes and to han thynges espiritueel and durable, and somtyme temporele thynges; of whiche orisouns, certes, in the orison of the *Pater noster* hath Jhesu Crist enclosed moost thynges./ Certes, it is privyleged of thre thynges in his dignytee, for which it is moore digne than any oother preyere, for that Jhesu Crist hymself maked it;/ and it is short, for it sholde be koud the moore lightly, and for to withholden it the moore esily in herte, and helpen hymself the ofter with the orisoun,/ and for a man sholde be the lasse wery to seyen it, and for a man may nat excusen hym to lerne it, it is so short and so esy, and for it comprehendeth in it self alle goode preyeres./ The exposicioun of this hooly preyere, that is so excellent and digne, I bitake to thise maistres of theologie, save thus muchel wol I seyn; that whan thow prayest that God sholde foryeve thee thy giltes as thou foryevest hem that agilten to thee, be ful wel war that thow ne be nat out of charitee./ This hooly orison amenuseth eek venyal synne, and therfore it aperteneth specially to penitence./

This preyere moste be trewely seyd, and in verray feith, and that men preye to God ordinatly and discreetly and devoutly; and alwey a man shal putten his wyl to be subget to the wille of God./ This orisoun moste eek been seyd with greet humblesse and ful pure, honestly and nat to the anoyaunce of any man or womman. It moste eek been continued with the werkes of charitee./ It avayleth eek agayn the vices of the soule, for, as seith Seint Jerome, "By fastynge been saved the vices of the flessh, and by preyere the vices of the soule."/

1039 pitous: pious redresseth it: directs itself toward
1040 privyleged of: endowed with
1045 ordinatly: in an orderly manner

After this, thou shalt understonde that bodily peyne stant in wakynge, for Jhesu Crist seith, "Waketh and preyeth, that ye ne entre in wikked temptacioun."/ Ye shul understanden also that fastynge stant in thre thynges: in forberynge of bodily mete and drynke, and in forberynge of worldly jolitee, and in forberynge of deedly synne; this is to seyn, that a man shal kepen hym fro deedly synne with al his myght./

And thou shalt understanden eek that God ordeyned fastynge, and to fastynge appertenen foure thinges:/ largenesse to povre folk, gladnesse of herte espiritueel, nat to been angry ne anoyed, ne grucche for he fasteth, and also resonable houre for to ete; ete by mesure; that is for to seyn, a man shal nat ete in untyme, ne sitte the lenger at his table to ete for he fasteth./

Thanne shaltow understonde that bodily peyne stant in disciplyne or techynge, by word, or by writynge, or in ensample; also in werynge of heyres, or of stamyn, or of haubergeons on hire naked flessh, for Cristes sake, and swiche manere penances./ But war thee wel that swiche manere penaunces on thy flessh ne make nat thyn herte bitter or angry or anoyed of thyself, for bettre is to caste awey thyn heyre, than for to caste awey the swetenesse of Jhesu Crist./ And therfore seith Seint Paul, "Clothe yow, as they that been chosen of God, in herte of misericorde, debonairetee, suffraunce, and swich manere of clothynge," of whiche Jhesu Crist is moore apayed than of heyres, or haubergeouns, or hauberkes./

Thanne is discipline eek in knokkynge of thy brest, in scourgynge with yerdes, in knelynges, in tribulacions,/ in suffrynge paciently wronges that been doon to thee, and eek in pacient suffraunce of maladies, or lesynge of worldly catel, or of wyf, or of child, or othere freendes./

Thanne shaltow understonde whiche thynges destourben penaunce; and this is in foure maneres: that is, drede, shame, hope, and wanhope, that is desperacion./ And for to speke first of dredė, for which he weneth that he may suffre no penaunce;/ ther-agayns is remedie for to thynke that bodily penaunce is but short and litel at regard of the peyne of helle,

1051 largenesse: generosity
1052 heyres: hair shirts stamyn: coarse woolen cloth
haubergeons: coats of mail
1055 scourgynge: whipping
1057 desperacion: despair

that is so crueel and so long that it lasteth
withouten ende./

Now again the shame that a man hath to
shryven hym, and namely thise ypocrites that
wolden been holden so parfite that they
han no nede to shryven hem;/ agayns that 1060
shame sholde a man thynke that, by wey
of resoun, that he that hath nat been shamed
to doon foule thinges, certes hym oghte nat
been ashamed to do faire thynges, and that is
confessiouns./ A man sholde eek thynke that
God seeth and woot alle his thoghtes and alle
his werkes, to hym may no thyng been hyd
ne covered./ Men sholden eek remembren
hem of the shame that is to come at the day
of doom to hem that been nat penitent and
shryven in this present lyf./ For alle the
creatures in hevene, in erthe, and in helle
shullen seen apertly al that they hyden in this
world./

Now for to speken of the hope of hem that
been necligent and slowe to shryven
hem, that stant in two maneres./ That 1065
oon is that he hopeth for to lyve longe
and for to purchacen muche richesse for his
delit, and thanne he wol shryven hym; and,
as he seith, hym semeth thanne tymely
ynough to come to shrifte./ Another is of
surquidrie that he hath in Cristes mercy./
Agayns the firste vice, he shal thynke that oure
lif is in no sikernesse, and eek that alle the
richesses in this world ben in aventure and
passen as a shadwe on the wal;/ and, as seith
Seint Gregorie, that it aperteneth to the grete
rightwisnesse of God that nevere shal the peyne
stynte of hem that nevere wolde withdrawen
hem fro synne, hir thankes, but ay continue
in synne; for thilke perpetueel wil to do synne
shul they han perpetueel peyne./

Wanhope is in two maneres: the firste wan-
hope is in the mercy of Crist; that oother is
that they thynken that they ne myghte
nat longe persevere in goodnesse./ The 1070
firste wanhope comth of that he demeth
that he hath synned so greetly and so ofte,
and so longe leyn in synne, that he shal
nat be saved./ Certes, agayns that cursed wan-
hope sholde he thynke that the passion of Jhesu
Crist is moore strong for to unbynde than
synne is strong for to bynde./ Agayns the
seconde wanhope he shal thynke that as ofte
as he falleth he may arise agayn by penitence.
And though he never so longe have leyn in
synne, the mercy of Crist is alwey redy to re-
ceiven hym to mercy./ Agayns the wanhope
that he demeth that he sholde nat longe perse-
vere in goodnesse, he shal thynke that the
feblesse of the devel may nothyng doon, but
if men wol suffren hym;/ and eek he shal han
strengthe of the help of God, and of al hooly
chirche, and of the protecciou of aun-
gels, if hym list./ 1075

Thanne shal men understonde what is
the fruyt of penaunce; and, after the word of
Jhesu Crist, it is the endelees blisse of hev-
ene,/ ther joye hath no contrarioustee of wo
ne grevaunce; ther alle harmes been passed
of this present lyf; ther as is the sikernesse fro
the peyne of helle; ther as is the blisful com-
paignye that rejoysen hem everemo, everich of
otheres joye;/ ther as the body of man, that
whilom was foul and derk, is moore cleer than
the sonne; ther as the body, that whilom was
syk, freele, and fieble, and mortal, is inmortal,
and so strong and so hool that ther may no
thyng apeyren it;/ ther as ne is neither hun-
ger, thurst, ne coold, but every soule replen-
yssed with the sighte of the parfit knowynge
of God./ This blisful regne may men pur-
chace by poverte espiritueel, and the glorie by
lowenesse, the plentee of joye by hunger and
thurst, and the reste by travaille, and the
lyf by deeth and mortificacion of synne./ 1080

1067 surquidrie: arrogance

1077 contrarioustee: opposite
1078 apeyren: injure
1079 replenyssed: filled

Heere taketh the makere of this book his leve.

Now preye I to hem alle that herkne this litel tretys or rede, that if ther be any thyng in it that liketh hem, that therof they thanken oure Lord Jhesu Crist, of whom procedeth al wit and al goodnesse./ And if ther be any thyng that displese hem, I preye hem also that they arrette it to the defaute of myn unkonnynge and nat to my wyl, that wolde ful fayn have seyd bettre if I hadde had konnynge./ For oure book seith, "Al that is writen is writen for oure doctrine," and that is myn entente./ Wherfore I biseke yow mekely, for the mercy of God, that ye preye for me that Crist have mercy on me and foryeve me my giltes;/ and namely of my translacions and enditynges of worldly vanitees, the whiche I revoke in my retracciouns:/ as is the book of Troi- 1085 lus; the book also of Fame; the book of the XXV. Ladies; the book of the Duchesse; the book of Seint Valentynes day of the Parlement of Briddes; the tales of Caunterbury, thilke that sownen into synne;/ the book of the Leoun; and many another book, if they were in my remembrance, and many a song and many a leccherous lay, that Crist for his grete mercy foryeve me the synne./ But of the translacion of Boece de Consolacione, and othere bookes of legendes of seintes, and omelies, and moralitee, and devocioun,/ that thanke I oure Lord Jhesu Crist and his blisful Mooder, and alle the seintes of hevene,/ bisekynge hem that they from hennes forth unto my lyves ende sende me grace to biwayle my giltes and to studie to the salvacioun of my soule, and graunte me grace of verray penitence, confessioun and satisfaccioun to doon in this present lyf,/ thurgh the benigne grace of 1090 hym that is kyng of kynges and preest over alle preestes, that boghte us with the precious blood of his herte,/ so that I may been oon of hem at the day of doom that shulle be saved. *Qui cum Patre et Spiritu Sancto vivit et regnat Deus per omnia secula. Amen.*

Heere is ended the book of the tales of Caunterbury, compiled by Geffrey Chaucer, of whos soule Jhesu Crist have mercy. Amen.

1081 this litel tretys: the preceding tale; see n.
1082 arrette: attribute
1086 book of the XXV. Ladies: The Legend of Good Women
sownen into synne: tend toward, are conducive to, sin.
1087 book of the Leoun: a lost work; see n.
1092 *Qui cum Patre . . . Amen:* He who lives and reigns with the Father and Holy Spirit, God, world without end. Amen.